UNSETTLING ZIONISM : DIASPORIC CONSCIOUSNESS
& AUSTRALIAN JEWISH IDENTITIES

By

BARBARA BLOCH

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Western Sydney

2005
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

..................................................
Acknowledgments

Writing a thesis is akin to the solitariness of the long-distance runner. Like the runner who needs her water, food-bearers and morale-boosters, the dissertation-writer too is indebted to a range of people who assist and support her along the way and without whom, the thesis would not be accomplished. My sincere appreciation goes to:

My supervisors, Professor Ien Ang, Dr Zoë Sofoulis and Professor Bob Hodge, for their encouragement and perspicuity throughout - from conception to birth. I have learnt much from all three.

Past and present colleagues and friends from the Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney: Drs Sharon Chalmers, Tanja Dreher, Amanda Wise, Raj Velayutham, Cristina Rocha, Meredith Jones, Glen Fuller, Greg Noble, Fiona Allon, Fiona Nicoll, Elaine Lally, Mitzi Goldman, Greg Gow and Brett Neilson. And to Maree O’Neill for administrative support.

The interviewees in Sydney and Melbourne who gave generously of their time and thoughts on some sensitive topics, and greatly enriched the quality of this work.

The Foucault reading group: Jayne Bye, Anita Devos, Jane Durie, Constance Elwood and Ann Reich, for many stimulating hours of discussions about Michel Foucault, his followers and his interlocutors.

Helen Bersten, archivist of the Australian Jewish Historical Society of NSW, for assisting me in my searches. And Marianne Dacy, of the Archive of Australian Judaica, housed at Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

Dr Geoffrey Levey, Jewish Studies program, University of NSW, for providing me with information, references and conversation, whenever I requested them.
Ali Kazak, Head of the General Palestinian Delegation to Australia & New Zealand, who responded to various queries and provided me with the photograph on the front cover.

Annie Parkinson, for timely and generous proof-reading and editing assistance.

My ‘sisters’ Annie Pfingst and Harriet Malinowitz, who have both enormously stimulated and encouraged me in the task of unsettling Zionism.

Dear friends, in particular Mary Dimech, Claudette Elaro, Kerryn Higgs, Amanda Pearce, Annie Pettit, Claire Ralfs, Marta Romer and Anne Traynor who have in their various ways provided me with much needed intellectual and emotional nourishment.

Ruby, the beloved, sadly missed kelpie, whose black furry presence at my feet beneath the desk was a constant reminder of the non-human delights in being alive.

Finally, Alissar Gazal, my partner, without whose love, good humour, encouragement and support, this thesis would never have emerged. Words cannot adequately convey my appreciation.

**Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my mother, Trudy Bloch, who never quite understood what I was writing and why, but was enormously proud of me and always wished for me to be happy in all my endeavours.
Left-hand side: The bridge that collapsed during the opening ceremony of the 15th Maccabi Games in Ramat Gan, causing the death of four members of the Australian team. 14 July 1997, photographer Yossi Aloni.

Bottom: Palestinian refugees crossing over the Allenby Bridge into Jordan from the West Bank, after Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War, June 1967, photographer from UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency).

Cover design: Annie Pfingst
# Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table of contents</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of illustrations</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prologue</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voicing the problem</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zionism as discursive practice</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zionism’s emergence</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research approach</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis narrative structure</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Unsettling Jewish identity politics</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity politics and its discontents</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘You don’t have to believe in God to be a Jew’: Jewish identities in the contemporary world</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexities in Jewish identity politics</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particularism and universalism in Jewish identity politics</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: ‘Being Jewish is a community thing’</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jewish community in Australia</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A blessing and a curse - community explored</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circling around the Australian Jewish community</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Australian Jewry became organised</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The non-universalist community</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bund in Melbourne</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community in diaspora</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diasporic consciousness - interviewees speak</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Conclusion

Chapter Three: Under contestation. Zionism in Australia prior to 1948

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Jewry under British colonial influence: a case of dual loyalty?</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Zionism’s evolution in the 1920s and 1930s</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Jewish homeland in the Kimberleys?</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of the Jewish press in shaping Zionist discourse</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Australian Jewish mainstream chooses Zionism</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Four: The 1967 Six-Day War. Zenith of Zionist discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zionism and the Australian Jewish community by 1967</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel and the Australian rural media</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses of the Jewish community in Australia following the Six-Day War</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six unsettling days – war coverage in the Australian media</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public appearance of the Holocaust</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two discourses in collaboration</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘If we are not for ourselves, who will be for us?’</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Five: David v Goliath. Perceptions of bias in the news media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framing the intifada</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media monitoring</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David vs Goliath and the underdog frame</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media responsibilities</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion – framing the moral equivalence of violence</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Six: The homeland polluted. Australian Jews respond to the bridge collapse at the 1997 Maccabi Games

Introduction
The Maccabi Games – towards a ‘muscular Judaism’
Tragedy in the family – cultural intimacy under threat
Israel – the nation as myth, the state as reality
Conclusion 16th Maccabiah – about more than a game

Chapter Seven: ‘Aborigines don’t blow up buses’. Jewish-Australian interventions in Indigenous issues

Introduction
The context
Jewish interventions in the race debates in Australia
The Jewish people – standard bearers for others who suffer?
Jewish discourses on justice
‘Land-people-spirit’: shared links with the land
Ron Castan – dealing with denial and silence
‘Perfect victims’ – Indigenous and Jewish leaders meet
Conclusion – Living with our history, differently

Epilogue: ‘The page must be turned’

Appendices

Appendix A-1: The Interviews
Appendix A-2: Interviewee attributes
Appendix A-3: Interview schedule
Appendix A-4: NVIVO coding categories for interview analysis
Appendix B: Australian archival sources

References
List of illustrations

Illustration 1: The Blue Box, 1970................................................................. 10
Illustration 2: Model of community, from Elazar 1980: 72......................... 83
Illustration 3: Roll back the desert ................................................................. 134
Illustration 4: The Australian Zionist Pioneer ............................................... 143
Illustration 5: 'Going my way?' Australian Jewish Outlook, September 1947 . 146
Illustration 6: Practical or Political Zionism, Australian Jewish Outlook, October 1947 .................................................................................................................................................. 147
Illustration 7: David and his sling, The Zionist, Dec. 1951-Jan. 1952 ............ 167
Illustration 8: David v Goliath, The Melbourne Herald, 8 June 1967 .......... 175
Illustration 9: Kron, J, AJN, 2001 ..................................................................... 214
Illustration 10: Kron, J AJN, 15 August 1997: 7 ........................................... 261
Illustration 11: Kron, J AJN, 22 August 1997: 16 ......................................... 263
Abstract

The motivation for writing this thesis derives from the lengthy conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and its effects on Jews who have been engaged politically and intellectually in challenging a paradigm most prevalent among Australian and other diasporic Jewry since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The paradigm asserts that Israelis’ right to live safely within secure borders must be of exclusive concern. To challenge this exclusivity therefore, by speaking in support of Palestinian justice and needs for similar basic conditions of life which have not yet been met, is viewed by many Jews as disloyalty and even as antisemitism.

Australian Jewry has become known as Zionism’s ‘last bastion’. What were the particular conditions in Australia that led to Zionism and identification with Israel becoming the key symbol of Jewish identity within the Jewish community? The central theoretical and empirical issue examined within the thesis is to explore the conditions for the dominance of Zionist discursive practices in Australia. The thesis analyses a number of interrelated themes: the role Zionism has performed historically and currently within the communities in Sydney and Melbourne in maintaining their cohesion and identity; the absence and condemnation of non-Zionist Jewish voices in public diasporic discourse and the interplay between universalism and particularism in Judaic traditions which influence how the Jewish community participates in Australian politics of identity today.

The Zionist project has been sustained by deeply-held metaphors. These include the historically-based claims and lived experiences of victimisation and vulnerability as Jews, whether individual and collective. I explore how these narratives are reproduced among contemporary Australian Jews and how they bolster a Zionist world-view which positions Israel in the role of the ‘victim’. The paradox I unearth in the later chapters relates to the juxtaposition of the David and Goliath trope. It usage has become ubiquitous in narratives about the Israel/Palestine conflict. Israelis, and by extension many diasporic Jews, regard Israel as David, the less powerful of the two sides, whereas, in other formulations, it is perceived as Goliath, the powerful state. In order to shed light on these questions, I have gathered and analysed discourse from Australian Jewish archival sources, printed and electronic Jewish media and in-depth interviews with a diversity of Australian Jews, many of whom expressed confusion and ambivalence in relation to the David and Goliath paradox.

Finally, through revealing and synthesising the complexities and contradictions that are inherent in Jewish-Zionist subjectivities today, the thesis hopes to illuminate more generally questions of identity formation, diaspora and community, power and victimisation, and the unifying force of discourse.
Unsettle (verb): agitate, disconcert, confuse, disturb, upset, disrupt

Unsettling (adjective): mercurial, protean, shifting, transformable, uncertain, unstable, volatile

Settlement (noun): community, colony, occupation, outpost, prerogative, resolution
Prologue

Letter to the editor

I am a Jewish Australian working on an Australian-Government-funded project for three months with a Palestinian NGO, educating and training people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. I am here because I support the Palestinian people’s right to develop a society which has all the ingredients of a modern democratic state free from human rights violations and with political and economic independence.

Every day since being here I have felt enormous shame, anger and sorrow at the humiliation and persecution that Israel carries out in the name of its occupation defending its ‘security’ and expanding its hold on the territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The past few days have been an absolute nightmare for Palestinians to live through (and die for) even though they have an experience of violence that most of us in Australia have never had to contemplate.

Once again, David (with stones) met Goliath (with sub-machine guns, shot from the ground at close range and with bullets raining down from helicopters, teargas and then tanks).

People’s lives have come to a complete halt. Shops and businesses are closed to mourn the dead. Once again the Israeli government imposes curfews and blocks roadways between towns. …

I implore other Jewish Australians to speak out against Israel’s actions. The land here is precious, not only to Jews. It must be shared.

Barbara Bloch
Written in Ramallah, Palestine
Published in The Australian, 1 October 1996
(for explanation of this letter, see page 3)

I was born in Sydney in the 1950s into a small, assimilated, Anglophilic, non-religious Jewish family from Western Europe. Although my parents were not directly affected by the Holocaust it was an event of such magnitude and trauma that no Jew could be immune from its impact. The fact of my Jewishness remained problematic for me throughout my childhood. I lied about my religion at school. I felt ashamed, although I could not articulate the reason for that shame. Possibly, it was based as much on a generalised, discomforting sense of difference that came from having a non-Anglo family in an Anglo-dominated world, as it was on anything distinctly Jewish. I went to Hebrew School but found no solace there from being among children with whom I shared a heritage. I told no one, that is, no non-Jews, that I was Jewish until after I left school and went to university.

Yet, at the age of twenty, I went to Israel for the kibbutz experience, which was a common feature of many young people’s overseas travel plans. I was curious about
the country and I had heard that there, women were treated equally, significant for me in the context of the dawning of second-wave feminism in the early 1970s. I recall the astonishment of being in a country full of Jews; I felt welcomed, yet my time there was largely dominated by partying with the non-Jewish volunteers at the kibbutz. I was unaware of the politics surrounding Israel’s existence; I had never met any Arabs in Australia. Nevertheless, after a few months there, I learned that to call someone an Arab was clearly an insult.

About ten years later, I left Australia again, arriving in London during the autumn of 1982, just after the massacre of 1,700 Palestinians living in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla, in Beirut. They had been murdered by the Lebanese right-wing phalange, while their Israeli allies watched as not-so-innocent bystanders. In London, I became involved in Outwrite, a feminist newspaper collective of mostly third-world, Black, and in this context, pro-Palestinian women. Censure of Israel was widespread among the Left, for its complicity in the killing of these Palestinians and for its recent invasion of southern Lebanon. At that time, I was bewildered by the politics surrounding Israel, and the reactions of some Jewish feminists, for whom criticism of Israel and anti-Zionist stances became blurred with antisemitism.¹ I spent the next few years reading, engaged in debates and meetings on this subject. By 1987, when the first intifada erupted in the occupied territories, with other Jewish women in London, I followed the example of women in Israel by setting up a Women in Black (WIB) group. We held weekly vigils during which we would stand in front of an appropriately symbolic place such as the offices of El Al, the Israeli airline, silently protesting against the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and in support of the intifada. By the time of the Gulf War (1991), I had returned to Sydney and with Jewish, Arab and other women, established another Women in Black group here.

WIB Sydney was active for about three years. It earned the wrath of some Jewish communal leaders who took pains to discredit us while at the same time dismissing

¹ See Nira Yuval-Davis (1984) for an incisive analysis of these issues.
us as insignificant, irrelevant, non-representative and, worst of all, traitors. This last epithet was directed at the Jewish women in the group. It was the extremity of these reactions which caused me to want to understand this hostility more, to write about it, to unsettle those discourses within the Australian Jewish community which assume, with little question, that to be a good Jew, one must loyally support the Israeli state. I wanted to understand the nature of this attachment to Israel which appeared to me to blind many Jews to the ongoing suffering of the Palestinians, attributable in the most part to the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948.

In 1996, my ongoing interest in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and its effects on diasporic Jewry, took another turn when I went to Ramallah, in the West Bank, for three months to work with a Palestinian non-government organisation. My job was to develop English language curriculum in vocational areas that might assist the employment prospects of Palestinians. During my time working and living in Ramallah, I witnessed the daily humiliations and frustrations of occupation. Some examples: the restrictions on Palestinians’ movement; the closures of towns and villages at a moment’s notice; the shortages of water; the vast Israeli hilltop settlements that displayed their green grass and swimming pools while the settlers’ untreated sewage emptied into the underground springs used by Palestinians living in villages below. Shortly after I arrived in Ramallah, an inevitable explosion occurred. The spark was the opening of a tunnel by the Israeli Government in the old city of Jerusalem, next to the Al Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site for Moslems. Fighting broke out, Palestinians throwing stones, Israeli soldiers armed with machine guns and then helicopters spraying bullets into the protesting crowd below. Hundreds of Palestinians were wounded or died. Work stopped. All shops, schools and businesses closed down for days in mourning for the shouhada, the martyrs. It was this event, and the dismay I experienced that prompted the writing of the letter with which I began the Prologue.

The following year in August 1997, I traveled to Basel, Switzerland to attend a conference organised to mark differently the occasion of 100 years of Zionism (the first Zionist Congress was held in Basel in August 1897). It was an intellectually and
politically invigorating experience. One, possibly apocryphal, anecdote narrated at
the conclusion of the conference by a long-time Israeli writer and activist, Akiva
Orr, struck me (and Orr, presumably) as epitomising the paradoxical tragedy of the
conflict. Called ‘The smallest boy’, the story was told as follows:

It was 1948, the state of Israel had been declared in May and Palestinian
villages were being emptied. In one particular village a family of mother,
father, children and grandparents had packed their belongings and were
leaving for … (who knows where?). Two Jewish soldiers confronted them.
One said to the other, ‘Let’s see if they’ve got money on them’. The other
soldier replied: ‘Yes, but we’ll have to search the whole family to find it’.
‘No, said the first soldier, it’ll be on that smallest boy, over there. I’m sure
of it. Let’s see if I am right’.

They searched the family for money and other possessions and sure
enough, the money was hidden on the smallest boy. ‘How could you be so
sure?’ asked the second soldier curiously. ‘Because in Poland in 1939’,
replied the first soldier, ‘I was the smallest boy’ (Orr 1997).

Claims by Israelis and Palestinians of victimisation by the other are deeply
embedded in this conflict and form the heart of my thesis. My interest is in
examining how the Jewish historically-based claims to, and experiences of,
victimhood still function so that many, in the words of Stanley Cohen(2001: 97),
‘can’t listen, can’t hear, can’t learn from anybody outside themselves’. I argue that
victim narratives are key to interpreting these discourses. Edward Said’s famous
statement that Palestinians have suffered greatly from being ‘victims of the victims’
remains relevant and today one can hear Zionist speakers accusing Palestinians of
occupying the victim role in the conflict, thus displacing Jews from that position.
Many Jews have real difficulty in seeing themselves, that is the Israeli State, as
oppressors and perpetrators of injustices towards Palestinians both within the
Occupied Territories and the green line that made up the 1948 borders of Israel.

It is clear that in writing such a work, I hope to provoke reflection on what it means
to be Jewish, at a time when one’s identity as a Jew has become harder to fix as
natural, instead being subject to question and multiple influences. This thesis is an
articulation of one kind of secular Jewish identity, one that would be dismissed by
many religious and/or Zionist Jews. Isaac Deutscher (a French Jewish communist)
expressed something of this articulation as he answered the question ‘What makes a Jew?’

Religion? I am an atheist. Jewish nationalism? I am an internationalist. In neither sense am I, therefore, a Jew. I am however, a Jew by force of my unconditional solidarity with the persecuted and exterminated. I am a Jew because I feel the Jewish tragedy as my own tragedy ...(1981: 51).

I take from Deutscher’s words a tension between concern for one’s own people’s tragedy and concern for the sufferings that beset the whole human race. Deutscher’s final two sentences articulate this tension, which at times, plays out as a paradox. The contradictions inherent in the dilemmas I address, and the different speaking positions Jewish subjects occupy, have provided me with both an enormous intellectual challenge and grounds for optimism. The intellectual challenge emerges from the undertaking of unsettling a discourse as thoroughly normative as Zionism. The optimism derives from the growing consciousness among many Jews, in Israel and the diaspora, that our contingent identities are sufficiently strong, grounded yet mutable, to perceive that the Palestinian tragedy has, in a sense, become part of the Jewish tragedy. As such, we cannot ignore it.
Voicing the problem

Introduction

Critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept, rest (Foucault 1988b: 154).

This thesis builds on the writings of other Jews, past and present, who have observed that ‘things are not right as they are’. I acknowledge my debt to such people as Ahad Ha’am, Judah Magnes, Martin Buber, Hannah Arendt and Isaac Deutscher, who all wrote that the establishment of a Jewish homeland and state, through the movement known as Zionism, would cause problems between the Jewish settlers and the Arab inhabitants of the land which before 1948, was known as Palestine. I also acknowledge the many contemporary writers, both within Israel and in the Jewish diaspora, who have continued and expanded upon this intellectual and political trajectory. Some, writing mainly within Israel, have become known as post-Zionists. Their work has been concerned with exposing mythologies associated with the creation of the Israeli state, and does not so much signify the end of Zionism as offer a critique of it, and of Israeli society, in order to move beyond it.

My project is underpinned by the premise that ‘things are not right as they are’ and aims to examine Zionist narratives from a specific diasporic perspective, that of Jews in Australia. Although there are numerous texts which discuss the subject of Zionism in Australia, very few subject this hegemonic discourse to critique. The research will investigate how Zionism was first contested and then became dominant in Australia, and how it maintains its hegemonic status both within the Jewish community and within the Australian populace at large. It will also reflect upon how the state of Israel, as the material expression of Zionism has contributed to the construction of a Jewish communal identity in this country. Relatedly, it will seek to understand the strength of the relationship between Israel and many in the Australian Jewish diaspora.
My project also interrogates the kind of narratives mobilised in Australia to sustain the image of Israel as weak and beleaguered across more than 50 years, from its conferral of statehood by the United Nations to its current status as chief ally and aid recipient of the world’s only superpower. It will explore these issues firstly within the context of Australia’s British colonial heritage, asking how that heritage affected Zionism’s development here, for example whether Australia’s establishment based on the legal and popular myth of *terra nullius*, land without sovereignty, affected how Australian Jews received the early Zionist myth that Palestine was ‘a land without people for a people without land’. Thirdly, in view of the historical fact that Australia has the highest proportion of Holocaust survivors of any country in the Jewish diaspora, proportional to population size, it will examine to what extent this has affected the perception of Israel’s importance for Jewish survival.

Within these broad parameters, the work will focus on a number of more specific concerns and questions. These are, firstly, in what way have Jewish attitudes towards the Israel/Palestine conflict been shaped by discourses on identity politics, which privilege the victim, historically, politically and culturally? Secondly, how has the Jewish press in Australia contributed to perpetuating a Zionist discourse? Thirdly, how have Zionist discourses and loyalty towards Israel implicitly affected some of the work of the Jewish community in Australia, for example in its relationship with and to Indigenous politics and issues? And finally, how have moments of contestation over Zionism manifested themselves within Australian Jewry?

In laying out the arguments and concerns of my project, this introduction outlines my theoretical grounding and orientation through an explication of the phrase ‘Zionism as discursive practice’. Because the thesis focuses so centrally on Zionism, though largely in its Australian context, it is necessary to provide a background and an overview of the conditions that made possible Zionism’s success – up until the establishment of Israel in 1948. The discussion revolves around the questions: How did it come about that Jews from Europe who settled in the physically alien, but
spiritually uplifting land of Palestine, were able to overlook and rationalise the presence of another people in their settlement and nation-building endeavours? What discursive resources were they able to summon? How did early Zionists interpellate the Arab presence in Palestine? The methodology for pursuing these questions is outlined in the second part of this chapter.

Zionism as discursive practice

The term ‘discourse’ has become ubiquitous within the social sciences and humanities, as well as in society more generally, over the last 35 years. Despite its ubiquity, it is a very useful term for thinking about how people come to believe what they do, how a particular school of thought becomes naturalised, comes to be seen as the only and correct way things are or could have been. My thesis is, in effect, a history of Zionism as discourse in Australia. That is, I have not written a history of Zionism but have traced the shifts and changes in how Zionist discourse has been adopted and deployed by Jews in this country; to account for its pre-eminence today. I have taken certain concepts and approaches of Michel Foucault as a means of thinking through the theoretical orientation of the thesis. For Foucault, discourse consists of a set of common assumptions which, although rarely consciously recognised, provide the basis for systems of knowledge. They are ‘practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Foucault 1972: 49). Foucault was referring to systems of thought and knowledge that at any given historical era are considered true and natural. Discourse provides an underlying structure which allows for the articulation of certain statements to be made and considered true, and others not.

---

2 Keith Sawyer (2002) provides an archeological history of ‘discourse’ pointing out firstly the different ways the term has been used in various theoretical approaches and disciplines such as post-colonial theory (as a system of domination); anthropology (as a culture or an ideology); sociolinguistics (as a speech style or register); psychology (as a physical or bodily practice) and in feminist theory (as a type of subject) (ibid.: 434 – 35). Sawyer notes that many of these applications of the concept of discourse are loosely and often inaccurately attributed to Foucault (ibid.: 435). Rather, theories of discourse, in the broad and various ways the term has been utilised over the past thirty-five years, derive from writings by British Marxists, from the Language Group at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and Althusser’s concept of ideology.
Foucault also speaks of ‘discursive practices’ to ‘highlight the intricate relationship of discourse to material forms’ (Silberstein 1996: 328). In his early writings, Foucault termed ‘practices’ or ‘material forms’, as the ‘non-discursive’ (1972: 68, 157). However, in a later article, ‘History of systems of thought’ he elaborates on discursive practices as being ‘not purely and simply ways of producing discourse. They are embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns of general behaviour, in forms of transmission and diffusion and in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them’ (Foucault 1977: 200). The following example illustrates how I employ this term in the thesis.

The small tins, mostly blue, and with a Jewish star on them, known as Blue Boxes are an example of a discursive practice. The boxes were established by the Jewish National Fund at the beginning of the twentieth century so that each Jewish family could assist the project of land purchase in Palestine. The boxes came to be seen as a symbol of Zionism and indeed, ‘the very act of collecting funds in a Blue Box strengthened the bond that the Jewish community felt with their homeland and its people’ (Salberg 2005: on-line). The materiality of the box itself, often placed on a sitting-room mantelpiece, its explicit purpose and the discourse used to explain it, as noted by Salberg, comprise a potent instance of Zionism’s discursive practice. Additionally, phrases such as ‘the Jewish community’, ‘their homeland and its people’ are articulations which absorb and displace large amounts of possible heterogeneity in favour of unity and consensus. It is the unifying force of discourse which is of primary interest in this thesis.
From the 1970 New South Wales Jewish National Fund Conference, this image exemplifies both of the points just made. ‘Most of us’ (in the community) contribute to the JNF, it is a unifying, inclusive activity. Note also the call from Israel, directed to you: ‘Israel expects your Blue Box to reflect your concern’. There are no third person pronouns in this text. Finally, the words on the side of the box summon the ancient Hebrew Prophet, Hillel, saying in effect, now is the time to act. Chapter One will explore the tensions related to this prophecy within Judaism, between the need to act for ourselves, as Jews, and the commandment to work for the betterment of all humankind.

Even growing up in a non-affiliated, secular Jewish family, I recall the Blue Box from the JNF placed on the mantelpiece in the lounge-room and collected regularly by volunteers. It has served to maintain an emotional connection with Israel, the
Jewish homeland and has provided a sense of peoplehood and connection to and for Jews who may not experience it in many other areas of their lives. It has also served to position Israel as a needy supplicant, a position which has been criticised during the 1990s by such Zionist ‘doves’ as Yossi Beilin (see Chapter Two).

The development of Zionism as a political and/or spiritual movement was itself dependent on public discourses of late nineteenth century Europe, such as nationalism, colonialism and the increasing scourge of antisemitism. These discourses continued to bolster the Zionist project into the mid-twentieth century, augmented by post-war discourses of European guilt following the Holocaust, the beginning of the Cold War, European nations’ and the United States’ immigration policies towards Jewish refugees and the development of pan-Arab identity and nationalism. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, discourses of terrorism and fears of annihilation, of security as well as religious fundamentalism have become the pre-eminent justifications for the continued necessity of Zionism. One could also say that since the establishment of Israel, the discourse of Zionism itself has dominated the efforts of Jewish diasporic communities to consolidate themselves. In fact, this thesis will show how, in Australia, the contestation and uncertainty that preceded the establishment of the Jewish homeland transformed into enthusiastic endorsement after 1948 and has become a defining characteristic of Australian Jewish identity.

A history of the present

My work aims to produce a history of the present, that is, as Alcoff (2001: 838) puts it, ‘archeological digs into the sedimentations of current thinking’. The phrase comes from Foucault (1991b) in a discussion of his deconstruction of the history of the French penal system, undertaken not in order to ‘writ[e] a history of the past in terms of the present. [But rather to write] the history of the present’ (ibid.: 31). In fact, the distinction is a subtle one, for writing about the past is always an act of interpretation.³ Thus the historical sections of the thesis serve to illuminate the

³ There is considerable literature about the role of the historian and how historical narratives are represented. On different structures of historical narratives, see White (1987); on the relationship
development of Zionist discourse in Australia in order to better understand the present situation, they are not primarily to record particular histories per se.

Foucault (1984a) presents the case for ‘effective history’ or *wirkliche Histoire* rather than ‘traditional history’. Adopting the concept of effective history as the theoretical underpinning for interpreting and analysing a history as hegemonically written about as Zionism, has been challenging. Effective history:

deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations. An event, consequently, is not a decision, a treaty, a reign or a battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it ... The forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts (ibid.1984a: 88).

This concept of history emphasises chance and contingency. Foucault suggests that ‘we want historians to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities’, in order to explain today’s dominant discursive practices as, almost transcendentally, emanating from a past that could only have one, inevitable path. Instead, he says, ‘the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference’ (ibid.: 89). The point here is that this concept of history as ‘composed by accidents and unrelated events is significant for political thinking ... Fractures in history become the material of possibility in the present to the extent that they signify weaknesses or openings in the structure of the present’ (Brown 2001: 113). In other words, possibilities for political change emerge when one realises that the present, which appears inevitable and naturalised, *could have been otherwise*. My work aims to unsettle the apparently inevitable nexus between past and present in

---

between reading (in the present) and history, the voice and viewpoint of the historian as narrator, see LaCapra (2000); on the complex nature of history as a ‘dialogic’ exchange ‘both with the past and with others inquiring into it’, see LaCapra (1985: 9); on analysis of how Foucault and Benjamin critiqued the constitution of historical knowledge, see Aronowitz (1979). Benjamin’s famous ‘Theses on the philosophy of history’ (1970: 255 - 66) offers a critique of historicism, notions of progress and what he terms ‘universal history’ (ibid: 264) as a seamless narrative written to serve the needs of the particular ideological present.

Foucault derived these concepts from Nietzsche. For an essay which expresses Nietzsche’s deep ambivalence about history’s contribution to mankind’s happiness, see Nietzsche (1937 [1949]).
relation to Zionism in Australia, a task that an effective history approach allows one to do. The aim is to explore the potential for thinking and acting differently in the present into the future. For example, as the Australian Jewish historian Mark Baker (1990: 13) argues, ‘history has taught us to prepare for the worst, even if the situation does not merit such vigilance’. A view of history in which Jews are always subjected to the worst persecution, while understandable particularly as a result of the Holocaust, has other effects, which are explored in subsequent chapters. For, as bell hooks (1989: 155) says (cited in Ahmed 2004: 33) ‘our task would be “not to forget the past but to break its hold”’. Present day discourses placing Jews at the centre of a ‘victim frame’ are evidence that the past’s hold has not been broken.

At the same time, critiquing what I have identified as a ‘dominant discourse’ ought not overemphasise ‘the solidity of discourse’ (Saukko 1998: 84). My work emphasises key moments within Zionist discursive history which illustrate instabilities deriving from contradictory or conflicting assumptions or affiliations within the Australian Jewish community, as well as those which articulate discursive norms.

**Zionism’s emergence**

As part of writing the ‘history of the present’, I now turn to a review of the key forces at work which created the Zionist movement in the first half of the twentieth century. This section will be dealt with in two parts: The first aspect considers the discursive practices that enabled Zionists from the end of the nineteenth century to lay claim on the land of Palestine, or Eretz Yisrael. The second aspect considers the effect of Zionism on the existent Arab\(^5\) population and specifically, how their presence was accounted for in Zionist discourse prior to 1948, including those who expressed unease with how an increasing Jewish presence in Palestine would impact on the indigenous population there.

---

\(^5\) In this largely historical section, I use the word ‘Arab’ rather than ‘Palestinian’ as the latter does not generally appear in the Jewish/Zionist literature until at least after the 1967 War. To use it therefore seems anachronistic.
**Zionism – a thoroughly European project**

Zionism emerged from within late nineteenth century Europe. Its discourses merged with those of European political and ideological movements spawned by the French Revolution; namely romanticism, nationalism, liberalism, socialism, colonialism and imperialism. Antisemitism, which by the final decades of that century had become ‘racialised’, was the fuel which stoked the Zionist fire. ‘At the most basic level’ writes Eyal Chowers, ‘Zionism aimed to restore to the Jews a political body they could claim as their own; national independence was seen as the venue for guarding the individual against physical threats, and the collective against the menace of assimilation and disintegration’ (1998: on-line, my emphasis). Chowers’ use of the word ‘restore’ reminds us of one of the fundamentals of Zionism; that is, its unproblematised reaching back to another historical period when, it is said, Jews constituted a ‘political body’, also critiqued as ‘ahistorical Jewish nationalism’ (Halevi 1987: 153). So much has been written in support of, against or with ambivalence toward Zionism, that it is not possible to do it justice in these few pages. What follows here illustrates some of the arguments framing Zionist discourses, and their inherent connections with European political and intellectual events and currents of the time.8

If one were to speak of beginnings, then two events are cited as marking the emergence of a tentative Zionist movement, one from Eastern, the other from Western Europe. The first of these were the pogroms in Eastern Europe which

---

8 For an account of Zionism’s appeal to Western European bourgeois Jews in terms of Enlightenment ideals and the liberalism and secularism of the new nations in Central and Western Europe, see Berkowitz (1993).
7 See Bauman (1989: 68 - 70) on how racism emerged as a product of Enlightenment philosophies; Lacqueur (2003: 29 – 30) on the transition from religious to racial antisemitism which occurred gradually over the 19th century in Europe. It should also be noted that the status of ‘race’ within antisemitism was not identical in each European country. For the differences between France and Germany at the time of the Dreyfus Affair, see Likin (2001: 139 - 40)
8 I can only note here that at the same time as Zionism was emerging, Jews were also engaged in non-Zionist national politics, specifically ‘territorialists’ who argued for a homeland, which did not necessarily have to be in Palestine (see Chapter Three on plans to develop a Jewish homeland in the Kimberleys, in north-west Australia) and ‘non-territorial Diaspora nationalism’ (Cohen, M. 2003: 4) advocated by the Jewish Labor Bund and the famous historian Simon Dubnow (Pinson 1970 [1958]). They argued for ‘national cultural autonomy for the Jews’ (Cohen, M. 2003: 5) within the Russian federation. Their concept of nationalism was not an exclusivist one, comprising only one nation or group, in contrast to the goal of Zionism. See Chapter Two for discussion on the Bund in Australia.
began in 1881 after the assassination of Tsar Alexander 11; the second was the Dreyfus Affair in France in 1894. As a result of Jewish persecution under the Tsars, a movement called *Hoveve Zion* or Lovers of Zion was formed. It derived its strength ‘from an acute awareness of the anomaly of the Jewish people among the nations, a heightened sense of living in exile, a longing for redemption and a spiritual attachment for Eretz Israel, generated by religion and tradition’ (Adler 1997: 261). A small number of Jewish intellectuals saw the need for a homeland, as they watched the ‘panic-stricken flight of thousands of Russian Jews seeking to escape the pogroms’ (ibid.: 262). Their vision centred on Palestine. Indeed, what became known as the first *aliyah*, literally, ‘ascent to the land’ began in 1882, when a few hundred devoted Jews mainly from Russia went to Palestine and set up agricultural settlements, under adverse conditions, since most had no experience of working the land (see Laqueur 2003: 75 - 9). In fact, a significant aspect of Europe’s antisemitic history was the denial of property or land to Jews. Thus, one can imagine the joy and the challenges for those early Zionists finally tilling the soil.

At this time a Jewish doctor from Odessa, Leo Pinsker, in 1882 published an influential pamphlet called *Auto-Emancipation*. Pinsker has retained his significance in Zionist discursive history for this essay, which argued that antisemitism was eternal and ubiquitous. Pinsker described Jews without a homeland as ‘ghost people’ who were ‘unlike any other in the world, and therefore feared as a thing apart; they are everywhere foreigners and nowhere hosts in their own national right’ (inHertzberg 1970: 43). There was only one workable solution according to Pinsker: Jews must organise as a group and with whatever help they could attain from others, find a country of their own.

The Dreyfus affair occurred within the cradle of emancipation, France. It was a key moment for Theodor Herzl, commonly known as the father of political Zionism as

---

9 Alfred Dreyfus was a Jewish captain in the French army. In 1894, he was unjustly tried and convicted of espionage and treason, that is, of selling military secrets to the Germans, by antisemitic French army officers. For a discussion of the Dreyfus Affair in terms of fin de siècle rhetoric of universality, in the sense of homogeneity, and Jewish particularity, see Forth (2001).

10 Walter Laqueur’s work is one of the most comprehensive historical accounts of Zionism, described on the back cover of the latest edition, as ‘critical but sympathetic’ towards his subject.
well as, in Foucauldian terms, a founder of the discursivity on Zionism.\footnote{Foucault (1984b: 114) was referring to those authors, like Freud and Marx, who were not only authors of their own work but enabled the production of ‘something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts’.

11} Herzl, an Austrian journalist and a secular Jew, was largely unaware of his Jewishness until various incidents in Austria and reporting the Dreyfus trial for his newspaper, the Viennese Die Neue Freie Presse, alerted him to the increasingly menacing antisemitism from the 1880s. The Affair had a profound effect on Herzl, for Dreyfus was a secular assimilated Frenchman, like Herzl and many Jews in Western Europe. According to Jacqueline Rose (2005), ‘\cite{Rose 2005} for Herzl, Dreyfus, together with the mounting Jew-hatred of the Hapsburg Empire, leads to a theory of Jewish identity in its agonistic mode’. Jewish identity is forged not internally ... but from the outside: ‘We are one people. Our enemies have made us one in our despite’’ \cite{Rose 2005: 113, emphasis in original}.

Rose states that in this comment of Herzl’s, he ‘is laying down a line that will become central not just to Zionism but to the whole future of the Israeli nation, \textit{the line that runs from suffering to political power}’ \cite{Rose 2005: 113, my emphasis}. Herzl’s political Zionism was in the first instance motivated by ‘both the reality of historical antisemitism and the effect of persecution against Jews on what I want to call the political Zionist mind’ \cite{ibid.: 115}. Political Zionists galvanised Jewish suffering in order to argue for a Jewish state.\footnote{Yet, Berkowitz (1993: 31) notes that at the early Zionist congresses, Herzl played down the significance of antisemitism as the drive behind the new Zionist movement, ‘stressing instead Zionism’s strong humanitarian impulses and sincere respect for Jewish tradition’.

12} Indeed, Herzl went to extraordinary lengths to exploit European antisemites for his own purposes. As he said, he had been aware of antisemitism all his life, but it was only in Paris that he began to ‘see it as a universal phenomenon, “to understand it historically and to pardon”’ \cite{Wistrich 1995: 11}. Herzl travelled through Europe attempting to gain support for his colonial project from those statesmen he thought would benefit strategically from a Jewish presence in Palestine (and their absence from Europe):

\begin{quote}
To Kaiser Wilhelm he explained that the establishment of Yiddish-speaking settlers in Palestine would enlarge the sphere of influence of German culture. To Chamberlain he would demonstrate the strategic
\end{quote}
advantages of an Anglo-Zionist alliance. To the Sultan [of the Ottoman Empire] he would dangle the prospect of Jewish money ... [And, most audaciously] [to von Plevhe, the tsarist Minister of Police responsible for the provocations, pogroms and massacres of Jews, he would explain that the strengthening of Zionism would weaken the revolutionary movement in Russia ... (Halevi 1987: 151-52).

The French historian Ilan Halevi, like Jacqueline Rose, regards Zionism as the product of, and an optic on, antisemitism (ibid.: 153). As Herzl said in *The Jewish State* (1988: 93): ‘The Governments of all countries scourged by anti-Semitism will be keenly interested in assisting us to obtain the sovereignty we want’. Without European antisemitism, there would have been no Zionism and no Jewish state. Concomitantly, without the abilities of Zionists like Herzl to manipulate for their own needs and ends the reactions to the antisemitism which existed in Europe, and without the assumptions inherent in the discursive practices of European nationalism and colonialism, there would have been no Jewish state in Palestine. Early Zionist writers responded to the milieu of the times and the Jewish place in Europe in different ways. For all of them however, there was a sense of desperation and urgency about the Jewish situation and the conviction that fighting against antisemitism in their own countries was a waste of time, and that the only solution for a persecuted minority was to establish its own homeland where it would be the majority.

As Silberstein (1996: 337-38) and other critics of Zionist discourse have commented, part of its effectiveness derived from constructing ‘a network of binary oppositions through which history and social reality were interpreted’. A number of these binaries aimed to oppose the homeland (Israel) with the outside world; hence:

Inside/outside the homeland; Zion/Exile; aliya/yeridah (immigrating/emigrating; literally ascending/descending); olim/yordim (immigrants/emigrants; literally those who ascend/descend); Israelis/diaspora Jews; ... Zionists/anti-Zionists; ... Hebrew/other languages.

In each of these binaries, the former term is the favoured; the latter is ‘other’ and inferior, there is no symmetry between the two terms (Flax 1992). During the period that Zionism developed as a political movement and an ideology, one of its most
crucial aspects was to draw clear temporal and spatial distinctions between Zion/Israel and the exilic lands. In these exilic lands, Jews were viewed as being condemned to living for a long dark period of suffering and persecution, during which they experienced only pogroms and expulsions. Yael Zerubavel (1995: 18), Professor of History and Director of the Centre for the Study of Jewish Life, Rutgers University, writes extensively of the negative view of the Jewish diaspora or exile, constructed by Zionist collective memory, as a ‘fragile existence imbued with fear and humiliation’. From this perspective, the Holocaust was the culmination of two thousand years of suffering and martyrdom.\footnote{For a critique of how the notion of Jewish exile has been used as a ‘secular ideological weapon’, to justify the Jewish historical claim on Palestine, see Rose (2004: 26 - 42).}

Many Zionists drew selectively on Jewish history to support their arguments for a ‘return’ to Palestine where they could claim exclusive political rights. They were buoyed by nationalist stirrings of other minorities in Europe at this time:

among the Poles, Serbs, Ruthenians, Czechs, Slovaks and others … And if so many entities in the context of the demographic and linguistic jigsaw puzzle of nineteenth century Europe had managed to accentuate and delineate their territorial and cultural differences, despite their uniform religions, the Jewish claim for national authenticity could not be seriously questioned (Kipen 1997: 74).

Ahad Ha’am, the famous Russian leader of what became known as Spiritual Zionism, utilised arguments from the Jewish past as ‘an independent nation in a land universally recognised as theirs and verified historically by the Bible’ (ibid.1997: 76). From these arguments, he envisaged Palestine as the cultural and spiritual centre of world Jewry, as an agricultural centre and as a focus for a revived Hebrew language. For Ahad Ha’am, the biggest danger facing Jews in Europe was not antisemitism, but assimilation (see Zipperstein 1992). His vision, unlike Herzl’s, did not include a Jewish state. And significantly, unlike Herzl, Ahad Ha’am was, from his first visit to Palestine in 1891, acutely aware of the potential significance of the Arab presence for the Jewish colonial venture.
Chowders (1998: on-line) uses the term ‘sundered history’, to describe Zionists’ need to break with the Jewish exilic and diasporic past. The independent nation to which Ha’am referred was the Jewish homeland in Palestine from which the Jews were expelled by the Romans in 70 CE. The new Jew (or Hebrew) ‘according to Zionism, must overcome this aberration of 2000 years of isolation and self-contempt [in exile] and hark back to the glory of the Maccabees’ (Wistrich 1995: 32). The Russian intellectual, Micah Berdyczewski (in Chowers 1998) wrote: ‘We have arrived at a point where two worlds collide: To be or to vanish! To be the last Jews or the first Hebrews’. The binaries in Zionist discourse are evident in this short, dramatic quotation. One can either vanish as Jews in the diaspora or survive, even prosper, as Hebrews in the Jewish homeland.15

To put this argument another way, the ‘decline narrative’ from the “golden age” of Antiquity to Jewish life in exile was to be replaced by a progress narrative beginning with the Zionist return to the Land of Israel and leading towards national redemption’ (Zerubavel 2002: 115, original emphasis). As Zerubavel (ibid.) points out, the Holocaust was the culmination of the ‘decline narrative’ of exile. The appeal to the ‘golden age’ of Jewish antiquity is evidenced in the first paragraph of the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (May 14 1948):

The land of Israel, Palestine was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books (Declaration of establishment of the state of Israel 1948).

14 For arguments which cast doubt on the notion of a Jewish nation in biblical times and critique its employment to justify the emergence of the modern Israeli nation, see Slater (2000: 20 - 21); Schwartz (1997: 120 - 22); (Whitelam 1996).
15 Silberstein (1999), analysing Zionism from a Foucauldian perspective, discusses several Russian Zionist writers as evidence of the fractured heterogeneity of Zionist discourse. For example, Ahad Ha’am took the view that Yussef Brenner’s writings had ‘transgressed the acceptable limits of Jewish nationalist discourse … and took steps to ensure that [Brenner’s] views would no longer have access to a public hearing … [hence, this is], an outstanding example of the power-knowledge nexus in Zionist discourse’ (43). Brenner totally rejected the Jewish past, including the Old Testament, thus breaking with most of his contemporaries (see Silberstein 1999: 41 - 45). One is reminded of contemporary debates within the Jewish community in Australia over the limits of acceptable debate in relation to criticism of Israel.
Foucault described this narrative of progress in historical analysis as presentism. ‘In the presentist fallacy, the historian takes a model or a concept, an institution, a feeling, or a symbol from his present and attempts, almost by definition unwittingly, to find that it had a parallel meaning in the past’ (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 118). Conversely, and equally erroneously, is finalism, whereby a ‘kernel of the present’ is found ‘in some distant point in the past [which] then shows the finalised necessity of the development from that point to the present’ (ibid.). Zionist writers and politicians have used both presentism and finalism to justify and enhance their claims to the land of Israel.

The Arab presence and Zionism’s Jewish interlocutors

I now turn to Zionism as ‘a colonising organisation’ and its effects on the Arabs of Palestine. After Ahad Ha’am’s first visit to Palestine, he reported that the country was indeed not empty. His controversial essay ‘The truth from Palestine’ (1891) earned him a ‘reputation as Zionism’s main internal critic’ (Zipperstein 1992: 353). In this essay he wrote, portentously:

If the time will come when the life of the Jewish people in the land of Israel will develop to such an extent that they will push to a lesser or greater degree the indigenous population, they will not easily retreat from their place (in Kipen 1997: 32).

On the issue of the Arab problem, as on others, Ha’am differed sharply from Herzl. The latter appeared to gloss over the significance of entering a land already peopled. In his utopian novel, Altneuland (‘Old New Land’), Herzl created an Arab character, Reshid Bey who, personifying all Arabs, said that [w]hen the swamps were drained, the canals built, and the eucalyptus trees planted to drain and “cure” the marshy soil, the natives … were the first to be employed, and were well paid for their work’ (Herzl 1997: 123). Herzl, unlike Ahad Ha’am, seemed to have a typical colonialist view of the Arabs in Palestine; the spread of European civilisation could only do good for all.16 His diary excerpts reveal a man both impressed by the Jewish history

---

16 See Dowty (2001: 34) for reference to other early Zionists who wrote, in one way or another of ‘the tremendous benefits that Arabs would reap from the modernisation and Westernisation that Jews would bring to Palestine’.
of Palestine, and horrified by its poverty and decay, which he thought the Jews would ameliorate. For example, on a difficult trip made in 1898 Herzl, tired and fevered, writes of his first glimpses of the Old City of Jerusalem:

In spite of my weariness, Jerusalem by moon-dust with its grand outline made a powerful impression on me. Magnificent the silhouette of the fortress of Zion, the citadel of David … Even in its present decay it is a beautiful city, and when we come here, can become one of the most beautiful in the world again (Avinieri 1999: 39).

One rarely cited early Zionist who emigrated to Palestine in 1886 was a Russian teacher, Yitzhak Epstein. In a piece entitled ‘A hidden question’, for Ahad Ha’am’s journal HaShiloah in 1907, he wrote:

Among the difficult questions linked to the idea of the rebirth of our people on its land, there is one question that outweighs all the others: the question of our attitude toward the Arabs. This question, upon whose correct solution hangs the revival of our national hope, has not been forgotten, but has been completely hidden from the Zionists and in its true form is scarcely mentioned in the literature of our movement. The time has come to dismiss the discredited idea, spread among Zionists, that there is in Eretz Israel uncultivated land as a result of lack of working hands and the indifference of the inhabitants. There are no empty fields …(in Dowty 2001: 39, 40).

Unlike other Zionists who either lived in or visited Palestine, Epstein writes with an extraordinary sensitivity and compassion towards the Arabs and an unusual prescience. Referring to the Jewish purchase of Arab land and the subsequent employment of the Arabs on Jewish settlements, Epstein (ibid.: 41) said: ‘the work that we give to an Arab will never be seen, in his eyes, as indemnity for the field that was taken from him; he will take the good but not forget the bad’.

How was it that most other Zionists at the time were not able to see what Epstein saw? Laqueur (2003: 215 – 17) summarises some of the debates that occurred among Zionists at the time of the early 20th century on the Arab question. In response to Epstein’s perhaps naïve suggestions for ways to gain the trust and cooperation of the Arab inhabitants, such as by creating Arab universities, it was said firstly that the Jews did not have the funds for such projects and more significantly, that Jewish
focus had to be on themselves for ‘[t]he Arabs had never ceased to be a people, and unlike the Jews, everywhere hated and persecuted, they needed no national revival’ (ibid.: 217). Laqueur made this comment in the process of summarising what he considered were the reasons that Jews at the time were not able to see the Arab presence in Palestine.

Jacqueline Rose (2005: 90) sees Ahad Ha’am’s writing as evidence of ‘Zionism diagnosing or reading itself’. Ha’am accurately diagnosed that Jewish nationalism would come at enormous cost to the Arab population as well as to the Jewish settlers in Palestine/Israel. But he was not the only one with this insight. Yitzhak Epstein played a largely unnoted role, as did a group mainly consisting of intellectuals from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who formed an organisation called Brit Shalom (Peace Alliance) in 1925. Members of Brit Shalom were Zionists, yet disturbed by the direction in which Zionism was heading. The principal idea behind Brit Shalom was ‘that Palestine should be neither a Jewish nor an Arab state, but a binational state in which Jews and Arabs should enjoy equal civil, political and social rights, without distinction between majority and minority’ (Laqueur 2003: 251).

How the historical significance of Brit Shalom is depicted, provides an enlightening exemplar of Jewish historiography. It certainly represented an increasingly minority position in the Palestine of the 1930s and 1940s. Laqueur (ibid.: 253) stresses its lack of mass support and political impact including a total lack of response from the Arab side and its inability to translate its ‘diagnosis into practical politics’. The Arabs were not interested in sharing their land with the Jews in any form of political configuration at that time.17 Laqueur accepts the fact that Arabs and Jews did not/could not reach rapprochement prior to 1948 and states, like other historians of

---

17 In Israel today, among a small minority of Jews outside Israel and from certain sectors of the radical left in Australia and elsewhere, there are calls for a binational state to be formed. As with Brit Shalom in the 1920s and 1930s, they are dismissed as unrealistic and, currently, as antisemitic, in suggesting the demise of a majority-Jewish state. See for example an article by Israeli leftist journalist, Ari Shavit (2003: on-line), on the views of Meron Benvenisti whose ‘roots lie deep in the old Zionist establishment’ and Haim Hanegbi, a ‘retired revolutionary’. Both these men are now of the view that ‘the time has come to establish one state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea: a binational state’.
Zionism, that the Jewish ‘case was the stronger, if only because European Jewry was in danger of extermination. The Jews had nowhere to go but Palestine. The Arabs could be absorbed if necessary in the neighbouring countries’ (ibid.: 268).18

The question of comparative justice and need lies at the heart of the conflict. Martin Buber (1983: 86), German-born Jewish philosopher and Hebrew University professor, was a leading member of Brit Shalom. He spoke frequently of the injustice inherent in the Zionist project, by which he meant: ‘The fact that there is no living creature which can live and thrive without destroying another existing organism has a symbolic significance as regards our human life. But the human aspect of life begins the moment we will not do more injustice to others than we are forced to do in order to exist’. According to Buber, the Zionists’ failure lay in their not having pursued ‘the right political path when there was still an opportunity to do so’ (Arkush 2001: 175); that path being acknowledgement of Jewish responsibility ‘to understand and honour the claim which is opposed to ours and so endeavour to reconcile both claims (letter to Mahatma Gandhi, in Buber 1983: 120), even in response to increasing Arab violence in Palestine in the late 1920s and 1930s.

By 1948, when it was clear that a binational state was not an option, Buber ‘reluctantly embraced the new Jewish state.’ The massive Jewish refugee problem following the end of the war, ‘created pressures that were virtually impossible to resist’. (Silberstein 1999: 50). Nevertheless Buber and his colleagues in the new organisation Ichud or Unity, which succeeded Brit Shalom, continued to work and write politically on behalf of Arab refugees and Arab civilians within the new state (Buber 1983: 291, 292 – 3; Silberstein 1999: 50).

---

18 At a lecture I attended at Sydney University, presented by Professor Gideon Shimoni (2005) from the Hebrew University, entitled ‘Rights to the Land of Israel: claims and compromises’, he too argued from a position of relative justice. Stating that both Palestinians and Jews had ‘rights’ to the land, Jews however had the ‘greater existential need. For Palestinians it is a blow, a harm but not as bad a blow as for Jews’. His argument rests on two presumptions: firstly, Jews were the only people who were historically dispersed. This therefore made their need for a state stronger and more justified. Secondly, following the Holocaust, Jews had nowhere else to go.
From another perspective, the anti-Zionist Israeli historian, Ilan Pappe (2004: 115), briefly discusses Brit Shalom’s effectiveness in relation to Arab-Jewish cooperation or cohabitation during the British Mandate period (1918 – 1948). He is referring to joint efforts made between Jewish and Arab workers and farmers to improve their working conditions. Joint strikes occurred in the oil and petroleum industry, the cigarette factories and the railway system. Cohabitation, ‘although it had very little political support, ... was a basic tenet of the Palestine Communist Party. ... The party, despite its marginal nature, contributed to an alternative course of social development by engaging in a national discourse in its leading journals’ (ibid.). As Pappe concludes, ‘[f]rom a historiographical point of view, the impression is left of an alternative history’ of cooperation, at least industrially, which could not however ‘stem the course of nationalist segregation’. According to Pappe, this nationalist segregation had ‘disastrous consequences for the indigenous population of Palestine’ (ibid.: 116).

In the preceding pages, I have provided an account of Zionism’s success in achieving the establishment of a Jewish nation-state. Zionists brought with them from Europe a potent combination of factors: the righteousness and desperation of the victimised in the face of increasing antisemitism in both Eastern and Western Europe; a certain historical and religious justification that this land was rightfully theirs, including both a religious and secular messianic belief in redemption through labouring the land (see Jacqueline Rose, J. 2005: chapter 1) and a European colonialist mentality which allowed them to purchase land19 and engage in a process of institutional capacity-building, to use a contemporary phrase, long before most Zionists had a clear concept that this would lead to a Jewish state. Additionally, this process occurred during a period when the actual territory was part of a much larger geo-political entity – first the Ottoman Empire and then, following the Turkish defeat in World War One, the British Empire. Hence, another part of this story, which cannot be told here, has to do with Zionist and Arab relationships and

19 On effects of Jewish land purchasing on Palestinian peasants who mostly did not own the land, for it was owned by absentee Arab landlords, see Pappe (2004: 97, 160 -1). On how the Jews who came to Palestine, did so as westernised Europeans, desiring and creating the ‘daily habits’ of European life, see Shavit (1991: 566 - 67).
negotiations with these bigger powers, and particularly the British, under whose mandate Palestine fell after 1918. Underpinning these factors was a Eurocentric outlook, both from those Jews who made aliyah and those Jews who stayed behind. This enabled them, along with much of the rest of the world, to be convinced that the Arab case must be fought against at all costs rather than accommodated cooperatively; that a greater justice would prevail if a Jewish state were created. The destruction wrought by the Holocaust far exceeded even the dire predictions of Herzl, Pinsker and others about the inevitability of antisemitism. After the liberation of the death camps in 1945, it became inevitable that the major powers, who had prevented large-scale Jewish immigration when it was still possible for Jews to leave Nazi Europe would recognise the justice of the Jews having their own state.

My narrative has to stop here, although as Jacqueline Rose (2005: 153) says, ‘the story told here does not get better, resolve, or complete itself’ – yet. As I wrote in the Prologue, I have been heartened by those Jews like Hannah Arendt (1978: 181) who have not taken the many tragedies which have befallen Jews over the centuries to mean that:

> We must only look out for ourselves; [that] this alone is reality, everything else is stupid sentimentality; everybody is against us … in sum, we are ready to go down fighting, and we will consider anybody who stands in our way a traitor and anything done to hinder us a stab in the back.

Arendt wrote this piece, called ‘To save the Jewish homeland, there is still time’ in May 1948, at the moment the Israeli state officially took its first breath. From the relative security of New York, she expressed grave concerns firstly about the total unanimity that had descended upon the Jewish people on the question of the Jewish state and secondly, about the apparent fact that the ‘idea of Arab-Jewish cooperation’ (ibid.: 186) seemed doomed. Within these two issues lies a conundrum which for many Jews is still of grave concern today.
Research approach

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to a deepened critique of Zionism in Australia and in particular, to consider how Zionist discourse has shaped senses of community and identity among contemporary Australian Jews. My methods have involved listening to and reading what people have had to say on this subject. So, how can this deepen a critique of Zionism? In part, this has been achieved through understanding the paradoxes in people’s thinking, in enunciating the dissonances in the discourses and considering the implications of silences – the unspoken. It is in the latter that my own perspective is most explicit and where my approach diverges from Foucault’s who was not intent on uncovering that ‘which always goes beyond what is actually said’ (1991a: 59).

However, one can also question, as Butler (1997: 139) does, what are the operations of ‘foreclosure … [that is], what remains unspeakable for contemporary regimes of discourse to continue to exercise their power?’ One does not have to be concerned with censorship, as Butler is here, to ask this question and to consider that discursive regimes are also produced ‘through the production of the unspeakable’ (ibid.). Yet, no discursive regime is ever completely closed and a subject may speak ‘at the border of the speakable [thus] taking the risk of redrawing the distinction between what is and is not speakable, the risk of being cast out into the unspeakable’ (ibid.). Additionally, the unspeakable, or the silent, can be understood as ‘discursively produced, as part of discourse, rather than as its opposite … Silence can be an effect of discourse; it can also function as resistance to regulatory discourses [such as science, medicine, law, pedagogy]’ (Brown 1998: 316). Zionism is a type of politically regulatory discourse, which has had profound effects on national, communal and individual subjects. An aspect of that effect has been its capacity to silence for, as one discourse dominates, others may be rendered mute, faint or indiscernible.

The framework I have adapted for analysing the material in this research derives from the Foucauldian concept of discourse, as he outlined it specifically in ‘Politics
and the study of discourse’ (PSD), first published in 1968, a year before *The archeology of knowledge* and before Foucault began his studies of genealogy. Thus, I have added to my framework aspects of his genealogical approach. The framework aims not to be too rigid or restrictive in terms of how the analysis is conducted, at the same time as it provides transparency and some rigor. The first four elements are based on Foucault’s concept of an *archive* by which he meant ‘a set of rules which at a given period and for a given society’ limit and form a particular discourse (Foucault 1991a: 59 - 60). The framework consists of:

**The limits and forms of the sayable.** Foucault asks ‘What is it possible to speak of?’ (ibid.: 59). In searching for how Zionism was and is articulated in Australia, I sought *patterns* and reiterations in texts, voices, and other materials that appeared to delimit how Zionism emerged, discursively. The selection of historical material in part reveals that although a discourse may limit what is sayable, these are not rules of *closure*. Discourse is never completely fixed, nor stable. Its dominance requires maintenance.

**The limits and forms of conservation.** Foucault asks ‘Which utterances are destined to disappear without any trace? ... Which utterances are put into circulation, and among what groups? Which are repressed and censored’? This element was adopted to examine how anti-Zionism changed from being part of a mainstream Jewish debate in Australia during the 1930s and 1940s, when Zionism was a discourse under formation, to becoming marginalised, and almost censored from the mid 1950s to the present.

**The limits and forms of memory.** Memory and remembrance play a large part in the Jewish religion and history. Many of these memories are of suffering, forebearance and survival. My analysis seeks to reveal how Zionism has harnessed particular memories and unaccentuated others. As Foucault puts it, ‘Which utterances does everyone recognise as valid, or debatable or definitely invalid’ (ibid.: 60)? Memory is discursive, whether it concerns what one saw on the television news the previous evening, or whether one remembers as part of a
collectivity, as in the case of remembering or commemorating events that occurred before one’s own experience or knowledge of them. The Holocaust is memory in both the individual and collective senses. Memories of antisemitism understandably play a large part in the psyches of many Jews. This thesis seeks to analyse how antisemitism, either present or past, maintains a Jewish identity as victim, which can deny the ‘complexity of power’ relations inherent in the different subject positions we occupy (Saukko 1998: 81).

The limits and forms of appropriation. This element is suggestive of Foucault’s later move to genealogy and the incorporation of concepts of power/knowledge into his research and analysis. He asks ‘How is the relationship institutionalised between the discourse, speakers and destined audience? How is struggle for control of discourses conducted between classes, nations and linguistic, cultural or ethnic collectivities’ (ibid.: 60)? Texts from the Jewish media are an example of an institutional space where Zionist discourse has been struggled over. Other institutions selected for analysis include the various state and federal umbrella organisations that were set up mostly during the 1940s to represent Jewish and Zionist interests in Australia. The aim of analysis of discourse from these institutions has been to mark the moments of struggle and rupture as well as those of continuity.

The final element is not a part of Foucault’s archive:

The limits and forms of counter-discourses. Since no discursive formation is completely closed, there is always struggle and resistance or counter-discourses. This element, which is not part of Foucault’s study of the archive, follows from the interest in forms of appropriation mentioned above and aims to provide evidence for how Zionism’s hegemony has been challenged in Australia. This aspect of the analysis has assumed a minor, yet important role in the research. I consider the effects of silence and exclusion in discourse. Unlike Foucault, I am curious about the power of the ‘silently intended meanings’ carried by discourses (60). Like Donna Haraway (1997: 269), who writes in the context of feminist science studies, I too
want to interrogate ‘critical silences, excavating the reasons questions cannot make headway and seem ridiculous, getting at the denied and disavowed in the heart of what seems neutral and rational’.

In the course of this study, these five principles emerged as the organising framework for selecting and analysing the material, to which I now turn.

**Selection strategies and analysis**

I used three sources of material as the empirical base of the thesis. These are Australian Jewish archival sources, Australian Jewish media and interviews with Jews in Sydney and Melbourne. I aimed to integrate these with the theoretical material, underpinned by the emergent discourse framework just outlined.

Firstly, I accessed several Jewish archival sources in Australia, listed in Appendix B. Jews have left a considerable written footprint of their experiences in this country. Apart from the ‘official’ histories, written by a small number of Jewish historians, there are numerous memoirs and personal recollections to be found in archives housed at state and university libraries, Jewish secular organisations and synagogues and Jewish libraries housed at Jewish museums and historical societies. As well, the National Archives of Australia has produced a research guide ‘Safe haven – Records of the Jewish experience in Australia’ (Turnbull 1999) which contains details of all government archives pertaining to Jewish immigration and experiences here. My foray into this plethora of material has necessarily been very selective. My research was limited to records pertaining to Zionism, diaspora and ‘community identity’ issues and did not include archival records on for example, religious life, Jewish welfare, immigration to Australia, the Holocaust or the Jewish day school system; all of which have a fascinating documented history. My search for records on Zionism was limited to later sources from the 1930s onwards20, as these seemed the most relevant in considering how Zionism emerged in Australia. It

---

20 Most archives concentrate on early material, for example the Percy J Marks Collection of Australian Judaica, held at the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, holds large numbers of pamphlets and other texts on Zionism, mostly from its early formative years in the first two decades of the 20th century.
is stressed that this thesis is not a historical record of Zionism in Australia. Rather, as a partial genealogy concerned to illuminate a history of the present, it reviews the history in order to trace the development of the Zionist discursive formation into the present.

The second source of material was the Jewish media, past and present, invaluable for those interested in how the ‘diasporic public sphere’ functions (Werbner 1998) – who speaks and what they say. The media I have examined were mostly the print media, since they are the most prolific. Chapter Two and following chapters provide accounts of how the press, often through their editorials, has mediated, encouraged and at times contested the prevailing orthodoxies regarding Zionism. In sum, I regard the role of the generations of Jewish community newspapers and other smaller publications, which often had small circulations and even smaller lifespans, to be complex and significant in terms of their management of Zionism’s initial rejection, and then acceptance by an apparent majority of the community. The Jewish press I have accessed includes the Australian Jewish News (Sydney and Melbourne) and its predecessors, the Australian Jewish Times (Sydney) and the Hebrew Standard (Sydney), the Australian Jewish Herald (Melbourne), the journal Generation (Melbourne), the Australian Jewish Forum (Sydney), the Australian Jewish Outlook (Perth), the newsletter Jewish Democratic Society (Melbourne).

Finally, interviews with twenty-five Jewish individuals whose thoughts do not necessarily find their way into public fora, provided material for analysing how Zionism as a discursive practice, is translated, embraced, condoned or contested by Jewish subjects in Australia. The interviews also serve to acknowledge the space ‘where most people live most of their lives’; as Robert Post (1998: 4) describes Foucault’s ‘vertiginous oscillation between extreme abstraction and minute detail’, while ‘scrupulously effac[ing]’ this in-between space. Like other discourse analysts21, I have found difficult Foucault’s ‘lack of reference to real practice by

---

individuals and also his lack of address to the practicalities of struggle and change’ (Mills 1997: 151).

Using the snowballing method to select them, the interviewees all had strong, but diverse, views on Israel. They varied in age and gender but all were from Ashkenazi (European) backgrounds. Their thoughts are not taken as representative of Jewishness or the Jewish community, but rather, are understood as illustrative of the complexity involved in speaking from within a dominant discourse. At the same time, by the act of speaking from within, they sometimes destabilised the discourse. (See Appendix A for analysis of the interviews, for the table of respondent attributes, for the list of questions on which each interview was based and for a breakdown of the analytic coding categories).

While conducting the research, I also attended seminars, conferences and fora on the subjects of Zionism and the Jewish community, part of an immersion into the field. Worth noting here, are those which were organised within the Jewish community in Sydney, suggesting the importance to the community of the issues under investigation:

11 August 2001, debate at Hakoah Club: ‘Does Australian Jewry tolerate dissent in the community about Israeli policies?’
24 August 2003, organised by the Jewish Free University, Sydney: ‘The new anti-Semitism / anti-Zionism’.
21 September 2003, organised by the Jewish Free University: ‘Who owns the Jewish community? The right to differing opinions’.
10 April 2004, Professor Gideon Shimoni, Mandelbaum Scholar in Residence at Sydney University: Lecture series called Zionism and its discontents, ‘Rights to the land of Israel’.
11 September 2005, organised by Hebrew Free University: ‘Support for Israel: The need for consensus and the right to dissent’.

**The researcher’s voice and the ‘reflexivity’ question**

The interviews were at times a difficult negotiation for me and provided moments when ‘[s]triving for dispassionate judgement [became] an emotionally taxing affair’ (Eagleton 2004: 134). Part of this difficulty has been described as the ‘insider-outsider controversy’ (Minichiello et al. 1995:182 - 86) which is, according to these authors ‘the most commonly discussed methodological issue in research examining ethnic groups’ (ibid.: 182). In my case, it is complicated. On the one hand I am an ‘insider’ by virtue of being born Jewish and identifying in certain ways with this, in terms of heritage, background and upbringing. I have a sense that Jews are ‘my people’. I knew that those who I interviewed knew I was Jewish, not always because I explicitly stated it but rather because of my name and the information sheet I had given them prior to the interview. With some of the interviewees, we shared an ‘insider’ rapport.

On the other hand, I am an outsider for a number of reasons. Firstly, I come from an assimilated Jewish family whose aim was to minimise any differences from Anglo-Australia as far as possible. Secondly, I do not participate in any Jewish mainstream organisations or religious, secular or cultural activities. Thirdly, I have acted politically upon an analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a way which places me ‘beyond the pale’ for many Australian Jews and without doubt for the community leaders. And lastly, probably as a result of a combination of the previous three factors, I have battled with a sense of not really being Jewish or not being Jewish enough. Minichiello et al (ibid.: 183) note:

‘...[although] insider status can have advantages in gaining access to the field...by the same token, that status also has its limitations if one is not

---

21 As noted in the Prologue, I was an instigator of Women in Black Sydney, I was involved in Jewish Women for an Independent Palestine and latterly, Jews against the Occupation, all small, but vibrant groups. As well, since commencing this research, I have published articles related to the thesis: Bloch (2003; 2004; 2005).
readily identified as being politically sympathetic towards the institutions under examination.\textsuperscript{23}

Additionally, the privilege of in-group understanding presupposes ‘that the ethnic community is monolithic in nature and that there is little differentiation between various individuals’ views on certain subjects’ (ibid.: 184). Indeed, this latter point was relevant to my research, as it is the very issue that I explore: how monolithic are people’s views on the topic of Israel? And how do similarities and differences translate into the concept of a dominant discourse?

Ruth Wajnryb (2001: 325), Australian Jewish writer, researcher and applied linguist, conducted research with children of Holocaust survivors, many of whom grew up in homes where the trauma and horror of the Holocaust could not be talked about. Wajnryb was one of these children. Her book delineates in detail the methodology she used in conducting these interviews. She too notes the insider controversy, as she shares descendant status, and views it as both a facilitation and constraint to the interviewing process. She sees the assumption of shared status as an impediment because:

Firstly, there were many cases where the assumption of shared views was simply not true. Secondly, the necessary characteristic of ‘naïveté’ that qualitative researchers require is less easy to construct when the researcher has and is perceived to have ‘insider’ knowledge. Being ‘naïve’ … requires the researcher to put aside assumptions, to flesh out respondents’ explanations, to take on a learner role and to understand things as though you are coming to them for the first time. And very importantly, it requires respondents to see you in this way, as a willing \textit{tabula rasa}. If they do, they are obliged to ‘translate’ terms that an insider would know.

I have pondered this notion of the naïve researcher, who comes to her interviewees and other data as \textit{tabula rasa}, a clean slate. Perhaps it is a naïve assumption on Wajnryb’s part to make this demand of any social science researcher conducting in-

\textsuperscript{23} While conducting research at the \textit{Archive of Australian Judaica} at the University of Sydney’s Fisher Library, I had an experience similar to the comment in Minichiello et al’s quote. I had sought and received permission from the Executive Council for Australian Jewry to access certain ECAJ annual reports. However, on one occasion, I requested some information from boxes of NSW Board of Deputies files. The archivist told me that I was unable to access this material. When I asked why this was so, she replied, somewhat vaguely, ‘I think it’s because of something you’ve written’. I received no further details on what I had written, and what this signified for the protectors of the archive.
depth research, such as hers or mine. Whether insider or outsider or some space in between, we are to a large extent immersed in our research, we care passionately about it. Within this overarching frame of passion and caring comes a range of ethical responsibilities: treating one’s interview respondents and other texts with respect; allowing one’s mind to remain open and curious (different qualities from naivety); being attentive to those one interviews; keeping faith with people’s narrative accounts in the retelling, that is, the analysis, even as one is interested in them as examples of discourse; being clear about what motivates the analysis and the purposes it serves, and all from within a postmodernist sensibility that recognises that one’s claims to knowledge are situated, historically-constituted and, of course, always partial (Haraway 1988).

The process of positioning one’s own voice as text within the thesis form is not straightforward. Autobiography, my voice and presence, is necessary only to the extent that it adds value to the text as a whole, assists in its sense-making and is used reflexively (Tierney 2002: 391). As Tierney goes on to say, ‘although texts need to be rightfully positioned so that the author’s stance is clear, one ought not drop a concern for understanding particular phenomena, people or ideas’ (ibid.: 392). The challenge throughout this research has been related to these questions of perspective and respectful critique. As Foucault (1988a: 265) wrote:

The work of an intellectual is not to shape others’ political will; it is, through the analyses 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 rules and institutions on the basis of this reproblematisation….

Of course, Foucault never made claims for his ideas to be taken as a method, nor did he write explicitly about the methodology he used in his research praxis. Perhaps

---

this lack of explication is why parts of his opus have been open to such diverse interpretation and use.

**Thesis narrative structure**

Further to the discussion above about the researcher as insider / outsider of a community, this thesis investigates the ‘other within’, that is, I wanted to understand how Zionism – *my* other – has developed and maintained its dominance within the formation known as the Australian Jewish community. With the consciousness that this was an explicitly political project, it was nevertheless essential that I be surprised by my material and open to its revelations.

The first three chapters situate the research, theoretically and empirically. The following four build on this through particular case studies of the discursive work of Zionism and diasporic identity in Australia. Chapter One, *Problems in the politics of Jewish identity* explores some aspects of Jewish identity in modernity. It introduces some of the interview subjects discussing the diverse ways in which Jewishness is significant to them. The chapter situates the specificity of Jewish identity politics within a more general critique of the limitations of identity politics, developed over the past twenty-five years. It discusses in particular the politics of victimhood, or victim discourses, and the tension between particularist and universalist concepts of Judaism.

Chapter Two, *Being Jewish is a community thing*, examines how the Jewish community came to be constructed, such that the term is frequently used synonymously with Australian Jewry. This chapter demonstrates in part through analysis of the interviewees’ comments and in part through development of a ‘model’ of community, that Jewish subjectivity comprises more complexity and contradiction than is encapsulated within the over-worked term, community. At the same time, using the discourse analysis framework, the chapter explains how the Jewish community has come into discursive existence, and how the notion of community delimits the domain of the speakable. It demonstrates this through
discussion and analysis of five factors, influential in creating and maintaining the cause of ‘unity in community’, particularly in relation to Israel and Zionism.

Chapters Three and Four trace the development of Zionism as a discursive formation in Australia. Chapter Three, Under contestation: Zionism prior to 1948 reveals how Zionism was promoted, strengthened and resisted in the Australian context, in the first four decades of the 20th century before the establishment of Israel. The chapter also argues that our understanding and knowledge of this history in Australia is inevitably affected by how it has been written; that is, by Jewish historians who have accepted the establishment of a Jewish state as unproblematic, inevitable and just. This view became a master narrative leaving in its wake a minority whose views of the truth were not authorised for public discourse.

Chapter Four, The Six-Day War - zenith of Zionist discourse is an illustration of the overall argument of the thesis. As a result of the Israeli victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, the discourse of Israeli and Jewish victimhood collided with the reality of Israeli power and occupation of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The chapter examines how the Six-Day War at the time was understood and mythologised by Australian Jews in the context of the victim discourse. I argue that this paradox, expressed by the metaphorical struggle between David and Goliath, remains of primary significance in struggles over Zionist hegemony, in Australia and elsewhere. Thus, the final section turns to the present, to analyse how, thirty-five years later, my interview subjects understood the significance of the Israeli occupation for both Jews and Palestinians.

In Chapter Five, David v Goliath: perceptions of bias in the news media, many Jews, including those I interviewed, felt strongly that the media presented a distorted, biased picture of Israel in relation to the conflict with the Palestinians. In 2002, when I conducted the interviews, the second intifada was well into its second year and the levels of violence on both sides had intensified, as had the media’s engagement in covering the conflict and, consequently, audience reactions to that coverage. The
purpose of the chapter is not to prove or disprove the validity of people’s claims of individual programs or journalists’ alleged biases. Rather, it is to take their claims at face value, to examine their statements within the particular ‘regime of truth’ which frames how one sees and interprets the world, and, in this case, the media. In the conclusion I focus on the question of ‘moral equivalence’, a frame used broadly by many partisans in their interpreting and critiquing media representations. I consider how Jews might think about this problematic from within a different framework by asking different questions, and decentring themselves from the frame.

The impetus for Chapter Six, *The homeland polluted*, was the July 1997 collapse of the bridge in Tel Aviv at the start of the 15th Maccabiah Games, known as the Jewish Olympics. Four Australians, from Sydney, were killed and many more injured, partly as a result of imbibing the polluted waters of the Yarkon River. It was an unsettling event for Zionist hegemony in Australia, viewed by many Jews as a tragedy within the family’. The chapter examines whether this event, which appeared to engender a crisis of confidence in Israel as the real state rather than the mythic homeland, resulted in any lasting rupture regarding discussion about the diaspora-homeland relationship.

Chapter 7, entitled *Aborigines don’t blow up buses*, analyses the discursive effects of Australian Jewish interventions in Indigenous issues. It contextualises the themes and concerns of previous chapters through an investigation of a discursive position whereby many Jews in contemporary Australia have been able to identify with and respond to a range of issues concerning Indigenous politics without appearing to question their own relationship to Palestinians in the context of Israel. I argue that discourses of genocide, dispossession and denial function to assert Indigenous-Jewish solidarity based on a shared narrative of victimhood. In the conclusion, again I provide an alternative critique. In the same way that white people in Australia and in other colonial nations have maintained a silence regarding the dispossession of Indigenous people carried out in their names, so many Jews also have remained silent about Palestinian dispossession. At the same time there are indications within mainstream Jewry, of a recognition that Indigenous Australians and Palestinians
have both suffered at the hands of a ‘coloniser’, albeit in very different circumstances. In this dual construction, Jews place themselves as whites and unsettle the voice of the victim.
Chapter One: Unsettling Jewish identity politics

Introduction

The project of identity, that is, the sense of who one is - often based on where one comes from, one's heritage or 'roots', what one shares with some others, and how one differs from other others – is one that struck Edward Said as 'colossally boring and totally off the mark' (Said 2004: 430 - 31). Nonetheless, the political ramifications of what is often disdainfully known as 'identity politics' still haunt us – and nowhere more profoundly than in the strong Jewish attachment to Israel. Indeed, the aims and achievements of Zionism are based upon the idea of one people, identifying or being identified first and foremost as Jews, having the need for and claiming the right to their own homeland and nation-state: a quintessential example of identity politics based on the identification of one nation, one people and one territory.

The overall aim of this chapter is to situate the specificity of Jewish identity politics within a more general critique of the limitations (but acknowledged appeal) of identity politics. A number of these critiques have relevance to issues of Jewish identity politics, particularly as they play out in relation to Zionist discursive practices. I discuss how the concept of a Jewish identity has been adapted to modern, contemporary times, and how some of the interviewees spoke to me of their multiple senses of Jewishness. Following this, I focus on some dilemmas within the politics of Jewish identity, most specifically that of victim discourses as they relate to one’s identity as a Jew, and to Zionism. I conclude with an exploration of the apparent antimony between universalism and particularism in Jewish thought and practice. This is a theme which appears throughout the thesis in order to problematise the concept of 'only looking after one’s own', especially in relation to the conflict with the Palestinians.
Identity politics and its discontents

We are constantly informed that to share an identity is to be bonded on the most fundamental levels: national, ‘racial’, ethnic, regional, and local. Identity is always bounded and particular. It marks out the divisions and subsets in our social lives and helps to define the boundaries between our uneven, local attempts to make sense of the world. Nobody ever speaks of a human identity (Gilroy 2004: 98).

Identity works to include and exclude and as Gilroy says, it leads us to thinking about what we have in common with only some others, not the whole human race. Judith Butler (1990), whose early work theorised and destabilised the concept of identity based on gender, speaks of ‘sites of ambivalence’ in our ‘available notions of identity. …They are the sites of both pleasure and pain’. She adds: ‘I am suspect both of the desire to eradicate identity (and its pain) and to install it as foundational (which very often seeks to forestall the “anxiety” that the tenuousness of identity implies)’ (Butler & Connolly 2000: on-line).

Before turning to a discussion about Jewish identity politics, I shall take a brief autobiographical excursion, I ‘identify’ with Butler’s abstractions in these ways. I claim a part of my identity as Jewish; this articulation is, in a sense, chosen25 in that I am sufficiently assimilated to pass in Australian society at this historical juncture. So, what ‘pleasures’ do I gain from ‘being Jewish’? These have to do with sharing this minority identity with other Jews; for me it is the ‘in-commonness’ of a shared (Ashkanazi) heritage; the humour; an ephemeral, often elusive sense of belongingness; occasional marking of Jewish festivals with friends. I have not included in this list ‘shared history of suffering’, which many Jews would assert as a primary factor in what make them identify as Jewish. Nevertheless, awareness and knowledge of that powerful history also reside, uncomfortably, within me. However, I do not choose to foreground it.

25 Yudit Kronberg Greenberg (1999: 13) makes the point about ‘choosing’ how to be Jewish in a postmodern world (she speaks of America) where economic, political and cultural success and assimilation are responsible for diminished numbers and Jewish continuity and survival is an issue for Jewish leaders everywhere. Needless to say, my use of the word ‘chosen’ is not related to the theological doctrine of Jews as the Chosen People (see Exodus 9:5; Deuteronomy 7:6-8) which, as Greenberg writes, ‘served the political and theological objectives of the Jews at different stages of their turbulent history, and contributed to their unified sense of being’.

40
I experience my Jewish identity not as ‘bounded’, as Gilroy says, but rather, as not coherent and as permeable. It leaks! I suggest that the ambivalence noted by Butler is at the site of this permeability. Ambivalence can and does bring anxiety and pain. Hence, my comments in the Introduction: ‘Am I Jewish enough?’ The question ‘how can I be a Jew and criticise Israel?’ is not personally unique. It emanates from the widespread conflation of Jewish identity with loyalty to, and support for, Israel. Israel has provided a firm basis for a Jewish identity for many diaspora Jews in Australia and elsewhere, individually but also, and more significantly for this work, on the basis of group solidarity, known as identity politics.

This personal perspective illustrates the point made by Ien Ang (2001b: 151) that no matter how much contemporary theorists have provided ‘anti-essentialist, deconstructive and postmodern critiques which have stripped “identity” as a concept, from its elevated status as the fundamental inner core of “me” or “us”’, there remains ‘the imaginaries of everyday experience ... which points to the irreducibility of identity as an operative concept’. In other words, Ang argues (ibid.) with Gilroy (above) and Hall (1996a), that although ‘identities’ may have been decentred theoretically, they nevertheless remain ‘as real, social and symbolic forces in history and politics’.

Identity politics emerges at the moment when ‘political collectivities reflect on [and act upon] what makes their binding connections possible’ (Gilroy 2004: 99). Zionism was and is an example of identity politics in action. In critiquing its performance in Australia as a discursive practice, I am critiquing the homogenising effects of this political discourse – its encouragement of unity and its intolerance of difference and disunity. In the following chapter, I discuss these concerns in relation to the homogenising entity, the Jewish community. One of the historical and contemporary concerns of Jews, as an ethno-religious group, has been to be able to maintain their distinctiveness or difference from non-Jews. Of equal concern for Jews is the acceptance of difference within the group.
The ability to recognise and accept difference, whether within one’s own family/group/community/nation or outside it, can be extraordinarily challenging and painful. Feminists have grappled with this since the 1980s throughout the West, both theoretically and politically. During the 1970s, the category woman was thought to be sufficient to argue against men’s oppression of women. It did not take long to realise, however, that woman was universalising code for white, heterosexual, first world, middle-class, and that women did not share the same experiences of discrimination, sexual abuse and so on. As Scott (2002: 11) notes: ‘We have learned – sometimes with great difficulty – to acknowledge these very different feminisms, to accept the fact that feminism refers to a multiplicity of often conflicting movements’.

The next and significant paradox in thinking through the politics of identity is the status of the victim. As Esther Benbassa puts it:

All contemporary assertions of identity are based on a memory of persecution or oppression. You are what you are, you affirm it, you proclaim it - and you do this all the more when you have been or are a victim. This does not apply only to Jews ... But this emphasis on victimisation strengthens group identity even more than individual identity (Benbassa & Attias 2004: 169).

To critique victim narratives is to engage in a delicate discursive and political argument, as one attempts to disentangle past injustices from present circumstances, while the echoes from the past, as Scott (2001) notes, remain ever present. Ang adds another element to Benbassa’s comments above, on the potency but limitations of the victim subject:

[I]n their binary simplification of the world between good and bad, and in their historical positioning of the victim subject as a true ‘goodie’, they

---

26 For an animated discussion between feminist academics about the influences of postmodernism ‘where female difference has fragmented into multiple differences and any appeal to general ideals or norms can only be considered politically questionable and theoretically naïve’ (Felski 1997: 1), see Signs: Journal of women in culture and society 1997, vol. 23, no. 1.

27 See the 1995 collection edited by John Rajchman The identity in question; and in particular Joan Scott’s chapter on multiculturalism and the politics of identity. Scott is generally critical of a growing tendency in the United States whereby any individual, regardless of status or power, can claim protection under the law through claims to victimisation. As Scott (Scott 1995: 9)says: ‘Here we have not only an extreme form of individualising, but a conception of individuals without agency.'
generally fail to grasp the moral, as well as factual, complexity of history. Identifying ourselves exclusively as historical victims not only inhibits critical self-reflexivity … but also constrains the creation of the conditions of possibility for reaching out, reconciliation and co-existence, especially with those we feel rightly or wrongly victimised by (Ang 2001a: 22).

In the process of researching and writing this thesis, I have pondered on how to avoid the binary trap of positioning Palestinians as ‘true [victim] goodies’ without simultaneously denying Jews any victim identity. I question whether I have merely replaced one discursive convention whereby Jews are, by default, always victims, with another, which inserts Palestinians in the victim role. I have identified a compelling need to challenge the ‘Jews as victims’ discourse. However, if one is to move beyond the strictures of identity politics as Ang suggests above, Jews, as historical victims, can and should reach out towards Palestinians, who are not the historical victimisers of the Jews, in attempts at ‘reconciliation and co-existence’. I do not deny the immense difficulties in accomplishing this, nor is it within the scope of this project to suggest ways that it could occur. Theoretically though, for such attempts to be made, Jews, Palestinians and other groups who have been subordinated need to confront the rhetoric and practice of ressentiment.

For Nietzsche (1969: 39), the ‘man’ of ressentiment must have an enemy:

... he desires his enemy for himself, as his mark of distinction; ... picture[s] ‘the enemy’ as the man of ressentiment conceives him – and here precisely is his deed, his creation: he has conceived ‘the evil enemy’, ‘the Evil One, and this in fact is his basic concept, from which he then involves, as an afterthought and pendant, a ‘good one’ – himself!

Ressentiment is, according to Nietzsche, the basis of slave morality. It is ‘a bitter emotion based on a sense of inferiority and frustrated vindictiveness … it is not the same as self-pity, with which it often shares the subjective stage; it is not merely awareness of one’s misfortune, but involves a kind of blame and personal outrage, an outward projection, an overwhelming sense of injustice’ (Solomon, R. 1994: 95, 103). Solomon distinguishes the emotion of ressentiment from other kindred emotions such as envy, based on a specific desire and anger which involves rage, rather than the ‘simmering’, ‘seething’ and ‘fuming’ of ressentiment.
Some feminist and other philosophers, historians and political scientists have utilised the concept of ressentiment to analyse questions of identity politics and the competing sense of injury experienced by various ‘victimised’ groups in the late modern liberal state. I focus here on more general questions of ressentiment, articulated by Wendy Brown (1995) in her essay ‘Wounded attachments’. Brown (1995: 70 - 71) argues that women and other historically oppressed groups have tended to use the rhetoric of ressentiment in an appeal to the increasingly bureaucratised, alienating state to make right their wronged status. Brown picks up on what Nietzsche calls ‘slave morality’ which, she argues:

... produces identity in reaction to power, insofar as identity rooted in this reaction achieves its moral superiority by reproaching power and action themselves as evil, identity structured by this ethos becomes deeply invested in its own impotence, even while it seeks to assuage the pain of its powerlessness through its vengeful moralising ... Politicised identity, premised on exclusion and fueled by its historically structured impotence ..., is as likely to seek generalised political paralysis ... as it is to seek its own or collective liberation through empowerment.

In this account from Brown (ibid.: 69), the modern liberal subject literally seethes with ressentiment. She raises concerns about those politicised identities who have been historically victimised such as Jewish or Black people, or those who seem to be so in the present. They have reversed their misfortunes and organised a politics around the ideas of suffering, of demanding recompense, of making amends, of holding to account – a way of making sense of a stigma by reversing it and attaching oneself to it as the very mark of one’s virtue (Rose, N. 1999: 269). Ahead of a discussion of Jewish ressentiment later in this chapter, I note here that it currently

28 For example, Tapper (1993), on how feminists have embodied ressentiment in order to situate themselves as victims of male wrong-doings; Nealon (1999), on ‘angry white men’ in America and their ressentiment at those in society, women, blacks and other ethnic minorities, gay people, who they experience as having gained from their oppression at the white males’ expense; Curthoys (1999) on a historical view of how white colonialists have positioned themselves as victims in Australia. According to Yovel’s (1997) analysis of Hegel and Nietzsche’s philosophies on the Jews, they fulfilled several philosophical and psychological purposes for Nietzsche. He abhorred antisemites, who were gaining momentum in the Germany of his birth in the late 19th Century, and exalted contemporary Jews of the diaspora. Antisemites, for Nietzsche, ‘are all men of ressentiment, physiologically unfortunate and worm-eaten... insatiable in outbursts against the fortunate and the happy’ (GM: 124). Sharing the ressentiment stage with the antisemites, were the Jewish priests who ‘created the “slave morality” that official Christianity then propagated throughout the world’ (Yovel 1997: 17). A final point: Yoval points out that when Nietzsche attacked his contemporary antisemites, he was defending ‘real Jews’, actual people whom he lived amidst.
manifests through a public discourse which is constrained and defined by a righteousness emanating from the acknowledged history of persecution against Jews. This righteousness, combined with significant cultural capital, at least in Western nations, engenders among Jews a sense of privilege and moral superiority derived from suffering and an ambivalence towards others who suffer in the present day.

‘You don’t have to believe in God to be a Jew’29: Jewish identities in the contemporary world

The post-Holocaust era ushered in an almost unlimited public acceptance of Jews and the virtual disappearance of systemic antisemitism and discrimination, certainly in Western nations. It has also led to ‘unparalleled and unprecedented Jewish achievement in the fields of culture, intellect and public affairs’ (Hobsbawn 2005: on-line). How have these dramatic and far-reaching changes in the material and psychic circumstances of most Jews affected their interpretations of what it means to be Jewish today?

Sander Gilman (1994: 365) places Jewish identity in a historical context:

Identity is a dynamic process – not a fixed point. Seen in this light, there is no such thing as ‘purely’ Jewish identity; from the prebiblical world to the Babylonian Diaspora to the world of Sepharad or Askenaz, Jews – like all people – have formed themselves within as well as against the world that they inhabited, and that defined them.

One can argue, with Gilman, against the notion of a ‘pure’ Jewish identity. From a postmodern perspective, one can explain Jewish historical longevity and survival in terms of anomaly and ambiguity. ‘Jews are insiders who are outsiders and outsiders who are insiders. They represent that boundary case whose very lack of belonging to a recognisable category creates a sense of unease’ (Biale, Galchinsky & Heschel 1998: 5). Yet these perspectives which accentuate variation, discontinuity and ambiguity, are not shared by most traditional Jewish scholars. The post-Zionist writer, Laurence Silberstein (2002: 2), drawing on Stuart Hall’s seminal writing on

29 Section title is from an interview conducted with Julia in June 2002.
cultural identity (for example, 1990; 1996b), argues that most writers and advocates of Jewish identity ‘tend to assume the existence of a core, authentic or essential “Jewish self” [which] is what all Jews, as bearers of a shared history, are said to share in common’.

To Stephen Whitfield (2002: 165, 166) for instance, Jewish history represents ‘a gesture of resistance to this interpretation and it can serve as a warning that the case for contingency and plasticity can be pushed too far’. He questions the concept of choice in the taking up or not of something as ‘intricately systemic’ as Jewish culture. He argues for Jewish identity which emphasises continuity, durability, persistence and resilience, rather than arbitrariness and self-creation.

Nevertheless, one must acknowledge that in the period since the end of the Second World War, being/remaining Jewish has become, other than for the small minority of Orthodox Jews, more and more an option, not a birthright automatically conferred or an ‘externally imposed identity’ often as a result of ‘stigma and persecution’ (Selengut 1999: 2). For most Jews in the contemporary world30, being Jewish has become a matter of ethnicity and culture, the proportion of Jews who are active believers in God is small and most people’s sense of Jewishness has come from other, secular sources, such as Zionism. In Australia, the proportion of Jews whose level of observance warrants the descriptor ‘strict Orthodoxy’ is around five percent. Additionally, according to John Goldlust (2004: 25), reporting on a 1991 study of the Melbourne Jewish community, ‘even if the notion “religiosity” were expanded to include all whose principal “mode” of Jewish identification is religious (rather than ethnic/communal or cultural) the ratio of Australian Jews in this category would probably not arise above 15 percent’.

30 ‘Contemporary world’ is a loose term. I am specifically referring to the post-Holocaust world. At the same time, processes of increasing secularisation and assimilation among Jews have been occurring unevenly in Western Europe since the French Enlightenment, followed by the Haskalah, the movement for secular enlightenment among a minority of German Jewry beginning in the second half of the 18th century.
Given the overall secularisation of Australian society, one could speculate that in 2005, the figure of 15 percent would be lower. Regardless, the question needs to be asked: If such a small proportion of Jews in Australia identify as religious, what other bases are there for claiming a Jewish identity? Selengut (ibid.: 3), in his edited collection on Jewish identity and postmodernity, cites three central elements which have substituted for ‘religious law and practice as the basis for Jewish identity’. These are: Holocaust memory and commemoration, a commitment to social justice and moral and financial support to the State of Israel. Selengut argues that these three elements are an inadequate basis for one’s Jewishness and instead suggests ‘a new Jewish theology in the making’. My argument here is not for their adequacy or otherwise of these elements in bolstering a sense of Jewishness. Rather, I recognise that Holocaust memory, social justice and support for Israel have developed into powerful discourses which at times appear to reinforce and strengthen one another amongst Australian Jews, particularly in relation to the Holocaust and the defence of Israel. Arguably though, the commitment to social justice provides a stronger motivation in the United States than in Australia (see Tatz 2004). (See Chapter Two for discussion on Jewish ethnicity in Australia and national origins).

**Speaking in Jewish-Australian**

What does being Jewish mean to you? Responses of my interviewees to this question revealed ambivalence and heterogeneity. On the issue of the religious/secular divide, most interview subjects suggested that their Jewish identity had little to do with their present sense of religiosity, although most had some Jewish religious education as children. The contemporary Jewish historian Arnold Eisen (1998: 4), in his book examining the impact of modernity on Judaic practices, comments on the ‘reinterpretations afforded Jewish ritual in the modern period [which] helps to account for the fact that many “nonbelieving” Jews have continued to hold Passover Seders, to fast on Yom Kippur, and to circumcise their newborn sons’. In relation to Jewish secularism, Eisen quotes from Yerushalmi’s book on Sigmund Freud’s Jewishness. Yerushalmi writes that ‘the blandly generic term secular Jew gives no indication of the richly nuanced variety within the species’ (Yerushalmi 1991 in Eisen 1998: 5). Eisen adds to this that the term ‘religious Jew’
also contains ‘an array of existential options’. Thus, one could say that the binary religious/secular is inadequate to describe or explain experiences and practices of many Jews in modernity, including some of those I interviewed whose integration of the religious and the secular at times revealed unexpected complexities.

As Seth, a left-wing secularist, put it:

> I mean, I know the laws! The laws and rules and regulations and explanations, and I choose not to, but I’m very proud that ... I know which rules I’m not obeying, and it’s probably important for me. And if I ever come into a better financial situation than I am at the moment, ... I want to have a copy, for example, of the Talmud in my house. Because it’s the logic of the thinking, not particularly the religious implications, is something that I relate to. I understand it, it’s not alien.

Seth’s comment illustrates how potent is the legacy of Jewish Law for some. The symbolic attachment to a work of history, thought and faith such as the Talmud represents, can give succour to even the most ardent atheist, in part because of its familiarity. Along similar lines, and illustrating the multi-faceted nature of identity, Dan said:

> And I’m Jewish, yes, Jewish through and through, and I would only be buried as a Jew. But my observance of the faith is almost non-existent, almost non-existent. I mean, the *Yahrtzeit* becomes an absolute mandatory.... and I have the *Yahrtzeit* candles there, which I buy five years in advance, so I’ve got enough of them. Because, obviously, you can’t buy them here!\(^{31}\)

Dan, like Seth, acknowledged the religious education he received as a boy from his father, which, as he said, it was his choice to reject. He considered himself ‘Jewish through and through’, yet was now non-observant except for the rituals associated with remembering the dead. In a later telephone conversation I had with Dan to confirm the transcript of his interview, he added the following comment: ‘First and foremost, I am an Australian, served for seven years in the army as a volunteer, as lieutenant, got a national service medal’.

\(^{31}\) *Yahrtzeit* is the annual memorial ceremony for a deceased relative. Dan’s reference to his stack of candles is because he lives in the outskirts of Sydney, far away from Jewish shops.
Dan was clearly proud of his Australian nationality, prioritising it over his Jewish identity. At the discursive, historical moment we now live in, Dan was not troubled by any sense of dual loyalties towards his country and/or his faith. In this he differed from the Anglo-Australian Jews of the early twentieth century who experienced just such concerns at a time when the prospect of a Jewish nation state was being debated. This story is told in Chapter Three. Serving one’s country in the armed forces, as he did during the Vietnam War, is one sure way of asserting one’s patriotism. In contrast to Dan and Seth’s rejection of formal aspects of Judaism, Rebecca, who had a non-religious upbringing, said:

And it … wasn’t probably until my twenties that I made a decision to reclaim my Jewishness. So, a whole bunch of my … teenage years and early adult years, I had nothing to do with being Jewish… at all. … I do go to a synagogue now. But, that’s mostly to be part of a Jewish community. I don’t have a religious perspective on the world, particularly. I’m quite involved in Jewish life.

Rebecca’s acknowledgement that she attended synagogue to be ‘part of a Jewish community’ although she was not religious, is a revealing statement, indicating that in the formation of the conscious Jewish subject, a number of alternatives are available. Rebecca adopted the synagogue, surely the heart of Judaism, as a place where she could feel connected with other Jews, with ‘a community’. But whereas Rebecca utilised religious structures for a variety of purposes, others, like Carol drew on Jewish secular traditions, as well as the Holocaust, for her sense of identity:

In many ways … as a very secular person … it has to be about the Holocaust, in certain ways, because that affected my parents’ lives, and as a Jew you can’t ignore that event. And ultimately, that’s where it is, I think. Which sounds very negative, but in terms of Jewish traditions that I relate to … I feel very good about what Isaac Deutscher called the Non-Jewish Jew. … And so, you know, there’s a strong strand there in the secular Jewish tradition that I relate to really strongly.

Of course, Carol was not the only interviewee who talked about the Holocaust and its tumultuous effects on generations of lives. This is discussed further in the next section. As well, there are no shortage of Jewish thinkers and writers whose Jewish
secularity one can draw on for inspiration, like Isaac Deutscher (1981: 41). The ‘non-Jewish Jew’ is one like Spinoza, Heine, Marx or Freud who, in his/her life and thoughts, ‘ha[s] gone beyond Jewry … [giving us a] message of universal human emancipation’ (ibid.).

Some of those interviewees who professed secularism were also prepared to adopt and adapt Jewish rituals, traditions, even prayers, to a secular, cultural inclination, Hence, Julia made the comment which forms the title for this section: ‘I think that’s one of the things about Judaism. It’s not the thought police. You don’t have to believe in God to be a Jew.’ Compare this with Jon Stratton’s (2000: 17) comments in the introduction to his book Coming out Jewish, the title of which ‘emphasises the cultural rather than the racial, Jewish rather than a Jew’ since, as he says, ‘we live in a time which ostensibly privileges the cultural over the racial’. I share Stratton’s preference for the adjectival ‘Jewish’ rather than the nominal ‘Jew’, which somehow seems so much more definite and defining, emphasising the cultural over the racial. I have chosen to use Julia’s words in the title in recognition of the fact that Judaism is a religion no matter how much more it is. Julia is a religio-spiritual person who practises her beliefs in non-traditional ways:

Judaism is a daily experience for me. Yeah. But I’m not necessarily mainstream with regards to …. I don’t belong to any movement. I work between them all. You know, I’m one of the rare people who work with the ultra-Orthodox and the liberal, and without … I can travel between them all … without seeming to get up people’s noses too much.

The following comment from Leah also encourages one to interrogate the word ‘secular’, its imprecision and limitations. Leah, in her forties, was very involved with the Jewish community. Like her parents and grandparents, she was a Bundist. She taught Yiddish at a Jewish school in Melbourne and was a performer in a Jewish band. She acknowledged possible contradictions in how she has adopted Judaism to suit her needs:

---

32 The American Jewish scholars Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin (1993: n15, 701) also endorse Deutscher’s proposition that ‘modern Jewish radicals who do not practise the Jewish religion nevertheless can represent an appropriate way of enacting Jewishness in the contemporary world’. 
I’ve flung back to incorporating more traditional cultural-slash-what other people would say is religious aspects in our life. But I say secular blessings at Shabbes [Sabbath] and I bless my children in a secular Yiddish way. Things that I feel comfortable with. … So, I respect other Jews’ views on living a Jewish life, however their form of Jewish expression is. The least I expect is just a respect for – I may look at things differently. Please allow me to look at things differently.

Not all the interviewees saw Jewish history only as a negative. For example, Rosa, one of the most unaffiliated of all those I interviewed, said in response to my question about what it was that she wanted to pass on to her son:

Oh, I suppose a sense of his background. A sense of where he’s come from. And I do, look … I think Jewish history is remarkable and rich, and a real testament, I suppose, to the indomitability of the human spirit. And that’s something I want to pass on to him.

Michael, in his twenties, articulated the discursive dilemma about Judaism – race or religion, discussed by Stratton (2000: 120 - 21). Interestingly, he identified his ‘roots’ and a sense of belonging not necessarily in Australia or Israel but in Europe, and said, in response to my question about what being Jewish means to him:

Yes, it’s very important, and part of my identity but, again, not in any religious doctrinaire sense … I mean, the great historical dilemma of Judaism – not just for Jews themselves but all those who’ve come into contact with them – has been: ‘Are these people a race? Are they a religion?’ … I think it’s more than a religion. I think it’s very, most definitely, a culture. A very strong, a very strong – even ‘ethnicity’ doesn’t – I can’t – it’s difficult to find the words for it, but definitely a culture and all that means – in its wider sense – that’s how I would consider my Jewishness, and it’s also a sort of identification with my Jewish past that is in Europe, very much so. Not in Israel.

Michael spoke of what he called an ‘aesthetic nostalgia’ for the post-Enlightenment period, particularly for his own background of the German culture of arts, music, film, that was so heavily influenced by Jews. He described this as ‘the golden age for Jews’.33

---

33 See, for example Mendes-Flohr & Reinhart (1995 [1980]), annotated sources on impact of modernity on Judaism; Katz (1967); also Benbassa & Attias (2004: 71) on how the second half of the nineteenth century for Western Jews was both a ‘period of anti-Semitic ferment … [but also] a great moment of liberation’.
Another interviewee, the Bundist Richard, had also faced the apparent incongruity between the religious and the secular:

To be a secular Jew is a complex thing. In order to be a secular Jew, you’ve got to understand religious customs, religious ways of life as well as other ‘Jewish things’ and I don’t just mean Reform, here. Secularism is living in a secular world as a Jew.

That’s how I view it, and that’s how the Bund views itself. Hence, it talks about ‘national cultural autonomy’, that is a separate nationality. Not a religion. So, the next question people ask me is, ‘Can you be a secular Jew and have no religion?’ And the answer is yes. … We have religious people that identify with the Bund. And people are a bit surprised by that. It’s because the Bund defines Jewish identity by nationhood, not borders, I’m talking about peoplehood. Maybe that’s a better expression.

Richard expressed the worldview the Bund formulated well over a century ago in Eastern Europe, as the Zionist movement was developing. His adoption of the terms ‘nationality’ and ‘the Jewish nation’, which he used frequently during our interview, signified an identity not attached to any particular nation-state, and certainly not to Israel. According to Richard, ‘the reason why we use that definition is because it’s inclusive. You can be an orthodox Jew, you can be a secular Jew, you can be a reform Jew, you can be a radical Jew, but we’re all Jews. That’s our nationality’. Richard’s understanding of being Jewish concurred with those Jewish post-modern writers who stress the lack of essence and multifariousness of Jewish identity and historical experiences.

At a panel discussion on Jewish identities at a conference on the Culture and Politics of the Diaspora, held at the University of NSW in 1998, a number of Jewish secular and religious leaders spoke to the theme of the diversity of Jewish identity. For example Rabbi Brian Fox (from Temple Emanuel, Woollahra, Sydney), commented that ‘to say there is the Jewish identity destroys the Jewish people’ (Sebban 1998: 11). Ian Bersten, founder of the NSW Jewish Secular Humanistic Community, reflected on ‘the identity of the unaffiliated majority’, whom he defined as ‘the 20,000 or 25,000 out of the 40,000 Jews who do not appear on any community list as reported by the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies’. Bersten’s view was that many of the
thousands of unaffiliated Jews ‘would like to be part of a community which welcomed them on their own terms. The unaffiliated see the established community as increasingly Orthodox and unbending’. His comment is significant for the connections that can be made between identity and community and the reflections on what factors might prevent Australian Jews from entering the ‘fold’. This investigation is the subject of Chapter Two.

My interviewees indicated the ways in which they have adapted religious aspects to fit in with their own values, practices and beliefs, some of which were also influenced by secular traditions in Jewish thought. I have not yet discussed one of the defining legacies of Jewish histories and experiences – antisemitism – and how awareness and experiences of racism against Jews have so profoundly affected Jewish discourses, politics and perceptions. I will do this in the next section.

**Complexities in Jewish identity politics**

One of the central arguments in this research concerns how the legacy of persecution and suffering of the Jews has translated into present-day self and communal discourses. How have Jews harnessed this terrible legacy and to what effect? In the remainder of this chapter, I begin the process of arguing the complex interrelationship between Jewish victim discourses and Zionism’s ambivalent connections between victim and persecutor in past and contemporary argumentation. Another recurrent theme is that of the concepts of universalism and particularism in Jewish tradition and politics. Here I explore the tensions between the particularity which is endemic to all movements based on identity, and the ways some Jews have espoused universalist traditions within Judaism to locate their politics of identity in order to broaden their concerns to include justice for others, as well as for Jews.

**Antisemitism**

Wilhelm Marr coined the term ‘antisemitism’ around 1870 in Germany, referring to racial political opposition to the Jews. In 1879, the first League of Antisemites was formed (Antisemiten-Liga). Prior to this, the term ‘anti-Judaism’ was more commonly
in use, signifying ‘Christian religious and social prejudice against the Jews’ (Rose, G. 1993: 89, n2). The history of antisemitism is relevant background to consideration of the psychic and discursive elements formative of Jewish identities. To this end, I draw on theorists whose work on identity recognises the necessity for the ‘suturing of the psychic and the discursive’ in the constitution of identities (1996a: 16). In another publication Hall (1995: 64 - 65) argues for:

> the importance of thinking the articulation between the unconscious and political processes without hoping, as it were, ever to square up those two continents as equivalents. ... It is ... impossible to understand politics without taking account of both the unconscious and the social, but it is equally impossible simply to translate either set of processes into the other.

The point where ‘taking account of’ is necessary, is the point that Hall names ‘identity’. For Hall, ‘identity is the meeting point, or the point of future, between on the one hand, the ideological discourses which attempt to interpolate or speak us as social subjects, and, on the other, the psychological or psychical processes which produce us as subjects which can be spoken’ (ibid.: 65). In Hall’s discussion, the ‘taking account of’ is relevant not only for considering an identity’s capacity and willingness for ‘becoming’ (the ‘point of future’) but also for considering the ‘point of past’ (individual and communal) which is always present, both in how we speak as ‘social subjects’ and also in those processes which produce us as subjects and enable us to speak.

When discussing antisemitism and victim discourses, I too find myself stepping into the terrain of the psyche; into a domain I had only wanted to engage with from a distance. Contemporary Jewish subjects are to a large measure influenced by a consciousness of antisemitism, as a result of its direct effects or imbibed through familial, historical and religious narratives of persecution and victimisation. Julia, an interview subject, described the fear of antisemitism as ‘some kind of genetic memory’. Joan Scott’s work on identity, history and what she calls its ‘fantasy
echo’ can assist us to better understand and situate how the category of Jewish identity today is linked to stories which resonate with Jewish victimhood. Firstly, Scott (2001: 285) says of identities that they:

...don’t preexist their strategic political invocations, ... categories of identity we take for granted as rooted in our physical bodies (gender and race) or our cultural (ethnic, religious) heritages are, in fact, retrospectively linked to those roots; they don’t follow predictably or naturally from them.

She considers how identity (in her example, that of women) transmits across time. How does it cross generations of ‘women or workers or members of religious or ethnic communities’, apparently maintaining a ‘continuity – the essentialist nature – of identity’ (ibid.: 287)? In order to question the latter, Scott has summoned the terms ‘fantasy’ and ‘echo’. According to Scott:

Fantasy is at play in the articulation of both individual and collective identity; it extracts coherence from confusion, reduces multiplicity to singularity...It enables individuals and groups to give themselves histories...And it can be used to study the ways in which history – a fantasised narrative that imposes sequential order on otherwise chaotic and contingent occurrences – contributes to the articulation of political identity (ibid.: 289 - 90).

‘Fantasy’ does not mean make-believe or falsehood; it allows one to make sense of one’s world and the history that one has learnt/absorbed and believes to be partially or wholly true. For many Jews, the historical narrative, or indeed the ‘fantasy echo’ of antisemitism provides an ordering, a schematic frame that accounts for a large part of Jewish identity and Jewish identity politics. Scott links her discussion of the work of fantasy to certain writings informed by psychoanalysis, ‘that treat fantasy in its unconscious dimensions’. For my purposes, I have adopted the concept to guide my analysis on the effects of the unconscious, manifesting as discourse.

In examining how a fantasised historical narrative of continuous persecution against Jews becomes a force driving their political identity, neither Scott nor I claim that

34 ‘Fantasy echo’ is a phrase that Scott carried with her since the mid 1960s when she was a teaching assistant for George Mosse, German-born professor of history. The phrase comes from a student’s inability to hear and comprehend the term fin de siecle, spoken in heavily accented German-English; instead phonetically transcribing it in his essays as fantasy echo.
sexism or antisemitism did/do not occur. Rather, when considered together with the ‘echo effect’, ‘fantasy’ provides a focus for the repetition of a historical narrative, standing in for ‘historical change’. According to Scott, in this way ‘the category of identity is retrospectively stabilised’. Regarding the fantasy of feminist history, the identity of women is secured ‘over time’. I argue that the Jewish historical experiences and narratives of antisemitism have also secured Jewish identity.

Scott plays with the literal meaning of ‘echo’ as ‘incomplete reproductions of a sound, usually giving back only the final fragments of a phrase’ as well as the metaphoric sense: ‘a reminder of the temporal inexactness of fantasy’s condensations, condensations that nonetheless work to conceal or minimise difference through repetition’ (ibid.: 292). She raises questions about the echo and identity: what is ‘the distinction between the original sound and its resonances and the role of time in the distortions heard? Where does an identity originate? Does the sound issue forth from past to present, or do answering calls echo to the present from the past?’ (ibid.) One could not say, in relation to antisemitism as an historic phenomenon, when or where the original source was, from which its echoes have sprung over time. The echoes produced by the Holocaust were the loudest and still reverberate strongly, although perhaps they are becoming more distorted with the passing years.

Jacqueline Rose (1996: 3) traverses similar territory to Scott in her exploration of the work of ‘fantasy’ when she states that fantasy is ‘not … antagonistic to social reality; it is its psychic glue. But fantasy surely ceases to be a private matter if it fuels, or at least plays its part in, the forging of the collective will’. Indeed, Rose argues that without the strength of historical fantasy acting upon the Zionist movement, the Israeli state may not have been actualised (ibid.: 4). Connecting how collective fantasy constructs a group’s fears and politics in the present-day, Rose comments:

…it seems as if Israel cannot grant statehood to the Palestinians, not just because of felt real and present danger, but also because so great is the charge of fantasy against such a possibility that, were it to be granted, the
nation would lose all inner rationale and psychically collapse in on itself (ibid.).

The concept of fantasy in relation to antisemitism is valuable in understanding how it can function as ‘fierce blockading protectiveness, walls up all around our inner and outer, psychic and historical, selves’ (ibid.). This provides some insights into the analysis my interviewee Hans has of himself as a Jew:

I’ve always had the feeling, all my life that I have a duty as a Jew to go through life endeavouring to be better than others. That must be, in the back of my mind, my upbringing, my childhood, my whatever because, I feel that, as a Jew, I cannot afford to be as bad as others!...I’ve run a business all my life, and I’ve been a boss. I’ve always had that endeavour, that knowledge, need, to be not a Jewish boss, but a good boss! The best boss! That was always my belief, that we owe it to ourselves to be better than others. It’s not good enough to be as good as others. We must endeavour to be better than others. We have to because history has given us such a bad deal and such a bad name...But maybe that’s just a characteristic of me, as a person, rather than...36

Hans had to try to be ‘better than others’ because ‘history has given us such a bad deal and such a bad name...’. His use of ‘us’ here reminded me of Rose’s ‘collective will’. Is this not how such a concept, such a discourse, is reiterated? In his narration, we hear echoes of Jewish history, in which, he said, Jews have been accused of every misdeed under the sun. In the final incomplete sentence, Hans became uncertain as to whether he was talking about ‘we’ Jews, part of a collective, or perhaps only his own individual character trait. This is of interest in considering how his sense of his own identity was hesitatingly constituted in relation to the collective identity to which he strongly adheres – the Jewish people.

35 Jacqueline Rose extends her argument about the messianic fervour which gripped both early Zionists and the state of Israel today in a later book, The Question of Zion (2005).
36 In my follow-up phone conversation with Hans to discuss the transcript, he commented that he realised he had contradicted himself in this last statement, but ‘that’s how I feel in myself’. Does he want his behaviour as a boss to be exemplary because he is a Jew or because it is ethically a good thing to do? He could not decide.
In the next extract, Dan, who, with his parents and other family members, survived the Holocaust, spoke of antisemitism in a way that illustrates the work of the echo effect, in Scott’s metaphor:

My mother and father would have told you that Germany was safer and less antisemitic than Australia. And it turned against them. And that was the story they always preached me, even from a very young age. That you never, ever know. And this is why the rise, say, of Pauline Hanson was37 worried the life out of me. To an irrational extent. I’d be quite happy to see that lady dead. Which is irrational and probably unjustified. No, it’s not unjustified. It is justified. But this is the rise of potential antisemitism, and it certainly brought the antisemitics [sic] out in their droves.

Dan found in the rise of Pauline Hanson a chilling echo of what occurred in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s, the connecting phrase being ‘you never ever know’ when another Hitler might emerge.38 Hanson was no Hitler and Dan pondered whether his comparison was irrational and unjustified, concluding that in his view, it was justified and reasonable.39 About a year before the interview with Dan, The Australian Jewish News Editorial (‘The Hanson anxiety’2001c: on-line) iterated similar sentiments in an editorial in which the fantasy echo was its theme:

Pauline Hanson sets off major anxieties in the Jewish community — understandably so. It is impossible not to invoke Germany in 1930s when thinking of extremists who begin as ‘fringe loonies’ but literally created world war. Hanson is not Hitler, and we are light years from the kind of nightmares she gives some of us. But we are right to be concerned when immigrants are denigrated, multiculturalism is rubbished and jingoistic ‘patriotism’ replaces policy. And as a community who knows more than most about such dangers, we have a genuinely patriotic duty to speak out loudly and publicly against One Nation … We owe it to our country and to ourselves.

---

37 Pauline Hanson was elected to the Australian Parliament in 1996 (for only one term) under The One Nation Party which she formed. One Nation was on the far right of Australia’s political spectrum. She was known more for her anti-Asian immigration views and denigration of Indigenous Australians, than for her expressed antisemitism.

38 Dan’s comment was made in the context of a discussion about Israel, the imagined homeland and Jewish safety net for, as he said, ‘you never ever know’. This kind of comment was made by a number of respondents.

39 It is a common feature of identity-based political discourse to compare one historical event, or figure, with another, without considering the differences between them, in order to bolster one’s own cause. One such has appeared on banners and placards at pro-Palestinian or anti-Iraq war rallies in Australia stating ZIONISM = NAZISM.
In this excerpt, one can hear the echo explicitly travelling from past to present, as Hanson gives ‘nightmares’ to ‘some of us’ and Dan said he’d be happy ‘to see that lady dead’. Yet, Hanson did not specifically direct her racism against Jews. In the second part of the paragraph, the editorial aligns the ‘community’ with the oppressed others whom Hanson had in her sights, particularly Indigenous Australians and Asians. Finally, the present echoes into the past as the community is reminded that, because of its history, it has a ‘patriotic duty to speak out loudly and publicly against One Nation’. This call is addressed to Jews as Australians simultaneously as it is to Australians as Jews. Indeed, this theme was taken up by a number of my interviewees. As Sarah explained it:

I suppose I sort of think that …. for Jews, particularly those whose families have been through the Holocaust that if we can’t learn something from that in terms of racism and, you know, that sort of thing, then that’s sad. So I suppose, in a way …. I’m not saying that only Jews should do that! I’m thinking that everybody should!

Similarly to the AJN editorial quoted above, Sarah’s view was that the echoes of the past ought to provide Jews and ‘everybody’ with an obligation to support other minorities in trouble. But, I do not want to overly labour the ‘fantasy echo’ metaphor. It does not explain the existence of antisemitism and its innumerable and enduring historical occurrences. However, as Scott concludes in her article on this notion, it can be used as ‘a tool for analysts of political and social movements as they read historical materials in their specificity and particularity’ (2001: 304) for instance, narratives which, because of past antisemitism, express the assumption of its continued inevitability. Hans expressed the ‘fantasy echo’ thus:

… there’s always that sense, that maybe it’s just a paranoia that some of us older Jews have been brought up with through our life experience, that has taught us that, given the chance, every non-Jew has an ounce of antisemitism. Which is, in my opinion, …. how it is.

---

40 See Tatz (2 May 1997). Also, Jon Stratton’s Race Daze (1998) deals extensively with Hanson’s impact on the discourse of multiculturalism and race in Australia, yet he makes no mention of One Nation’s policies or views on Jews. This is not to deny the historical alliance of far-right ideologies with antisemitism in Australia and elsewhere, nor that supporters of One Nation never made antisemitic comments.
Victim discourses

Jews have historical claims to suffering and persecution virtually unparalleled within Western historical discourse; awareness if not knowledge of which has permeated the consciousness of most people in Australia. The concept of the Jewish victim has clearly entered the discourse of popular culture. In an article about Australian films, for example, the journalist Sandra Hall (2000: 12, added emphasis) discusses a number of films. I was struck by a comment she made about one of them: ‘And in the end, you’re shown the dry, bitter ironies that are at the black heart of Australian humour – born, like the Jewish joke, out of adversity and pessimism’. I was struck by this and noted firstly how absolutely ubiquitous is the connection between Jews and misfortune. Certainly the classic Jewish joke and humour exemplify this and have been the subject of much literature.\(^{41}\) Secondly, I was struck by the comparison Hall makes between Jewish and Australian adversity as it manifests in humour and other matters besides. At an international conference in 1986 on Jewish humour in New York (where else?), Hyam Davis (1986: 5) drew parallels between Jewish humour based upon self-disparagement and adversity, and ‘the humour of Australia’.

Academic and popular critique of Jewish ‘victim discourses’ by Jews themselves is a relatively new phenomenon which has arisen specifically in response and opposition to Israel’s ongoing battle with the Palestinian people and enabled by several decades of critiques of identity politics. Many Jews recognise this as an unequal conflict in which it is difficult to place Israel, the state, as the victim, with its clear superiority in weaponry. At the same time, they acknowledge that Israelis have suffered through this conflict. Todd Gitlin (2002: on-line) explains Jewish victim discourses by saying:

\(^{41}\) As Robert Alter says, ‘it is an instructive paradox that one of the grimmest stretches in Jewish history – the recent centuries of Yiddish-speaking culture in Eastern Europe – should also prove to be the period in Jewish history that produced the most richly distinctive humor’. Alter relates a homely Yiddish proverb: “If you want to forget all your troubles, put on a shoe that’s too tight’ (Alter 1987: 25 - 26). See also Ruth Wisse’s (1971: 4) work on Jewish humour, particularly on the character of the *schlemiel*, the loveable Jewish fool who was created, according to Wisse, ‘as the symbol of an entire people in its encounter with surrounding cultures and its opposition to their opposition’.
To feel victimised has become a default position for Jews, a plain human reaction for which centuries of antisemitism are the explanation. Even in the US, Jewish achievements aren’t enough to erase Jewish fears. The fears are bad enough, but worse trouble comes when they crystallise into a politics predicated on victimhood. When this victim mentality takes the place of political argument, huge errors result. Feelings, whatever their sources, are neither moral nor political arguments. They do not justify tactics.

Gitlin’s critique of Jewish victimhood here parallels other critiques of identity politics. He suggests that the feeling of having suffered abuse or discrimination substitutes for moral or political argument. Similarly, Peter Novick (1999: 187 - 90), in his book on the Holocaust and collective memory in America, connects the growth in American society of ‘the new ethnicity’ and ‘identity politics’ in the early-mid 1960s, with a Jewish embracing of a victim identity. Novick diagnoses this kind of Jewish identity as part of a decline in strength of other ways of defining Jewishness in the diaspora:

The ‘culture of victimisation’ didn’t cause Jews to embrace a victim identity based on the Holocaust; it allowed this sort of identity to become dominant, because it was, after all, virtually the only one that could encompass those Jews whose faltering Jewish identity produced so much anxiety about Jewish survival (ibid.: 190).42

The notion of victimhood is also critiqued by Yudit Kronberg Greenberg (1999: 14) in a collection on Jewish identity in the postmodern age. She discusses antisemitism in the United States since World War Two and quotes Ellen Willis, a Jewish feminist writer, who made the statement that one’s Jewish identity offers a ‘membership in an oppressed group, [which] determines one’s legitimacy and validity as a political person’. Greenberg’s point is that although Willis may have experienced antisemitism on a personal level, ‘victim consciousness no longer applies to the general Jewish situation in America’. I make the point that although the incidence of antisemitism has increased in recent years here in Australia, as it has in the United States, it is not the dominant identity of Jews in the diaspora.

42 The Journal of Jewish Social Studies (2001: 7.3) devoted part of this issue to several critical reviews of Novick’s book. One criticism was based on the suggestion that Novick over-emphasised the significance of antisemitism as a corner-stone of Jewish identity (Lang 2001) and another described it as a ‘rhetorical ploy’ to use the ‘Holocaust as a framework for understanding Israel’s situation’ (Lederhendler 2001: 165 - 6).
States, it is comparatively low. The ‘victim consciousness’, as Greenberg names it, nevertheless manifests in the discourse of many Jews.

In the same volume Shapiro (1999: 119, emphasis added) also quotes Ellen Willis as saying: “… the very identity of the Jews – who we are in history, what we represent is totally bound up with antisemitism … Every Jew is a victim of antisemitism – a member of a pariah people”. This is an unambiguously essentialist statement – all Jews face an historical legacy only as the victims of antisemitism; this has become who we are, a people defined by pariahdom. Jews, in this strand of identity politics, have come to define themselves above all as ‘historical victims’ (see Buruma 1999).

**Israel and victim narratives**

Yes, at the heart of antisemitism lies Moses. He made a catastrophic error, a terrible mistake, and all antisemitism for two thousand years stems from his misjudgment. Moses said we Jews could remain a people without a land. He said we don’t need territory to hold only our Jewish identity. This was a disaster. It placed us in constant conflict with the world. It led directly to the pogroms and the Shoah. This is why I am a Zionist: because Diaspora leads to hatred and the Holocaust (Hari 2004: on line).

We now come to the heart of the matter: the nexus between discourses on the inevitability of antisemitism in the diaspora, culminating in the Holocaust, and those Zionist discourses which continue to view Israel as a site of victimhood. How is it that the apparent paradox of Israel, the victim and Israel, the powerful, have been sustained for such a long time? The quotation above is from an interview with AB Yehoshua, one of Israel’s leading novelists and academics, published in Britain’s *Independent* newspaper. It is a clear statement of the widely held belief that diasporic existence for Jews has always been disastrous and that Zionism could/can save Jews from past and future persecution. Tom Segev, Israeli journalist and author of a number of books challenging some of Israel’s most cherished myths, notes how Israel has acted to ‘save’ Jews in distress, most notably the several thousand Ethiopian Jews in 1991. Segev (1991: 514) reports the reaction of many Israelis and diaspora Jews as being: “‘Had we only had a country during the Second World

43 For example, Segev (1991; 2002).
War, we could have saved European Jewry as well”. This is, of course, an ideological, not a historical statement; it illustrates the great difficulty of separating rhetoric from reality’. In other words, this hypothetical and past-oriented statement serves only a rhetorical cause of reiterating the Zionist argument that it was the absence of a Jewish state and the refusal of the British to allow large numbers of Jews to emigrate there, which contributed to the millions of Jews who were murdered in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s.

The paradox is well summed-up by the French writer Alain Finkielkraut (1994: 130) in this tongue-in-cheek comment: ‘The Jewish state is that mythic character that joins the roles of victim and hero into one’. Finkielkraut’s observation about Israel’s position as both hero and victim translates into uncertainties and contradictions in the minds of many Jewish subjects, exemplified by comments from two of my interviewees who responded to the question on what Israel meant to them. Rosa said:

So, what is my sense about Israel? Well, I have conflicting views, because I have a lot of problems with what’s going on in Israel. I have a lot of problems trying to work out its place in the world, because I think it really, for me, it should be a secular state, but it’s being run by right-wing Jews … and I have a lot of problems with the way Israel deals, obviously, with Palestinians and all the rest of it, but at the same time, I am conflicted, because I do … I do have a sense that Israel is embattled, and I do … I don’t know why, in a sort of really primitive way, want Israel to exist as a safe state. I don’t know. It’s just in a time when the world is in strife. … I don’t know, it’s this kind of notion that it is always a home for Jews, that it’s kind of like a bolt-hole if ever the rest of the world collapsed. I don’t know. It’s not that I feel unsafe in Australia, but it’s a kind of … very primitive sense of, ‘this is my safety net’, in a way…. I have a lot of emotionally, I have certain feelings about Israel which are very positive, but intellectually and politically I have some unresolved issues.

Rosa’s honesty about her troubling doubts as well as her affirmation of Israel were illuminating. Her admitted confusions and contradictions are not unusual for a secular Jew who is not an ‘ideological Zionist’44, but because of Jewish history she

---

44 By this I mean someone who is actively politically committed to defending Israel at all times and prioritises Israel’s necessity for leading an authentic Jewish life. An ideological Zionist is also committed to maintaining the position of an embattled, victimised Israeli state, a state suffering from ressentiment. However, an ideological Zionist does not necessarily make aliyah.
believed like other interviewees ‘in a sort of really primitive way’ that Jews should have a safe homeland, a ‘safety net’. Her words describing Israel as ‘a bolt-hole if the rest of the world collapsed’, I take to be a flight of fancy/fantasy; for no nation, especially Israel, can survive in isolation from global or regional events or offer guarantees of safety. Yet, these ideas have a history. In view of the human capacity for denial,\(^{45}\) Rosa’s conflicted feelings were not surprising. An understanding of the dichotomous sense of Israel as representing both strength and victimhood, is expressed in the following comment from Sarah:

Sarah’s comments were part of a discussion in which she reflected on what she thought other Jews thought about Israel. She articulated in everyday language the connections she perceived other Jews made between their history as a persecuted people and what Israel represents today. It seems that if one asks the question ‘well, is it good for the Jews?’ within Zionist discourse, there can be only one response: we need to keep Israel strong and secure, whatever it takes - for this is what is good for Jews.

**Zionism and ressentiment**

How does the concept of *ressentiment* relate to the questions I have been discussing on victimhood and Jewish identity politics. My argument is that Jewish people are a minority with a politicised identity which has needs, claims and aspirations directed at the state, the media and the general populace. *Ressentiment* as a discourse rather than an individual psychological condition operates in a complex, and often indirect

\(^{45}\) For humans’ capacities for denial and avoidance in the face of violence inflicted on others, see Cohen, S (2001).
manner. Sara Ahmed (2004: 31 - 34), following Brown and Nietzsche, evokes the phrase ‘the politics of pain’ and states that a ‘commodification of suffering does not mean that all narratives have value or even equal value’ in the market place of injury claims. As Ahmed says, the differentiation between which stories are told, whose suffering and pain is heard and compensated, ‘is a crucial mechanism for the distribution of power’ (ibid.: 32). Past Jewish narratives of suffering have successfully entered the contemporary market place of injury claims. ‘Given that subjects have an unequal relation to entitlement’, writes Ahmed, ‘then more privileged subjects will have a greater recourse to narratives of injury … within the public domain’ (ibid.: 33).

The phrase, the ‘capitalisation of memory’ has been used to signify capitalisation as material, cultural and discursive accumulation. The term sheds light on the ways in which the Holocaust, the publicly articulated memory of which lay dormant in Israel as well as in diaspora communities for several decades after the second world war, has assumed iconic status as a unique event which discourages comparison with other human suffering. The ambivalence in this is captured by the phrase ‘Holocaust industry’ and indeed by the fact that one dare not write the word ‘holocaust’ in reference to the specific Jewish persecution without capitalising the ‘H’, a literal sense by which the word ‘capitalisation’ takes meaning. It is not the Holocaust as an event of unparalleled horror that I am critiquing here, but the ways in which its unforgotten wounds have entered the politics of Israel and the world at large. Stratton (2000: 242) too, notes the ambivalence in the Holocaust’s construction.

---

65 The historian Dipesh Chakrabarty brought this phrase to my attention, at a two-week Visiting Scholars Program I attended in October 2002 at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, Australian National University. The program, entitled ‘Memory, History and Cross-Cultural Research’ was an important learning experience during my doctoral research.

66 The term ‘Holocaust industry’ refers to the exploitation of the suffering of Holocaust victims and survivors. For a controversial critique of this phenomenon and of transforming the Holocaust into an ‘industry’, see Finkelstein (2000). Criticisms within Israel and in the diaspora on the uses and abuses of the memory of the Holocaust began by the late 1980s. In Israel, see Margalit (1988: 24) on Holocaust ‘kitsch’; on the Holocaust, memory and its politics, see Young (1993; Young, J. 1999); (Zertal 1998); (Novick 1999); (Yuval-Davis & Silverman 2002) on the politics of establishing a day only for commemorating the Holocaust, rather than having a more inclusive memorial day for all those who have suffered from racism.
as a transcendent event, ‘evidenced in the word’s capitalisation’ (ibid.). (See also Chapter Two for further on the Holocaust and Jewish ethnicity in Australia).

There is an ever-widening lacuna between recognition of Israel’s position as a super-power in the Middle East and the conviction deeply held by many Jews that Israel is the victim in the conflict with Palestinians and stands alone in the world. The collective identity of Israel and many Jews is invested in maintaining an identity as the injured; as Brown (1995: 73) argues, ‘it cannot cease to be invested in it without giving up its identity as such’. Both Jewish and Palestinian discourses operate within a ‘wound culture’ (Ahmed 2004: 73). Both have adopted ressentiment as a basis for their political rhetoric, blaming each other for their predicaments. For Jews to critique this culture means having to relinquish attachment to themselves only as victims of Arab hatred. They must recognise at the very least that the establishment of Israel came at the cost to the Palestinians of the dispossession of their lands, and that they too have a word to commemorate their catastrophe – the Nakba. It is necessary to have a different relationship of the past to the present. It does not mean that Israelis must forget their injuries and pain inflicted on them by Palestinians. They too, must recognise the Jewish historical legacy, especially the Holocaust and its continuing impact on the Israeli and Jewish collective psyche. Yet, from the Palestinian perspective, their own pain has not been sufficiently recognised by the world community, or at least the recognition has not been acted upon. There is still no viable Palestinian state. On the other hand, from a Zionist perspective it seems as though the world’s media, organisations such as the United Nation and many governments have turned their backs on Israel’s plight. Within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict Israelis, and therefore Jews generally, can also be the objects of the ressentiment experienced by Palestinians and Arabs. Ressentiment is in perpetual circulation around the globe and attaches itself to whichever group perceives its interests are being served by a victim discourse.
Particularism and universalism in Jewish identity politics

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
But if I am only for myself, what am I?
And if not now, when? (Hillel; Avot 1:14)\(^{48}\)

This *Avot* from the prophet Hillel at the end of the first century BCE is quoted ubiquitously, and not only in Jewish texts. I read it as a statement of self-assertion and recognition that one’s moral gaze should not only be directed inwards, but should include others as well. Mark Baker (1990: 15), a Jewish Australian historian, commenting on the second line of the *Avot* ‘If I am only for myself, who will be with me?’ writes: ‘In this one sentence, Hillel encapsulated the very essence of Judaism. The Jews’ special covenant with God is ultimately meaningless if it ignores a moral vision which transcends Jewish particularism’. Hillel’s aphorism has been given an additional contemporary resonance by Adrienne Rich (1986: 202 - 210) in her essay ‘If not with others, how?’. Jewish commentators and writers observed that following the 1967 Six-Day War, many Jews and ‘the community’ became more concerned with their own needs and priorities in anticipation of Israel’s possible annihilation by Arab forces. Although this did not occur, one of the repercussions of Israel’s victory was a continuation of this orientation and preoccupation with the concerns of the group. I argue that, as Israel gathered in strength and power and was increasingly forced to justify its occupation of Palestine to a certain section of the ‘world community’, for instance, the United Nations General Assembly, Jews in the western diaspora who perceived their identities, loyalties, fates and fortunes as interconnected with those of Israel, responded to this situation by developing what could be called a particularist sensibility.\(^{49}\)

The terms ‘particularist’ and ‘universalist’ imply firmer positions than I want to suggest. They refer to orientations, either outward looking towards the world and society at large, or conversely, a tendency to look inward toward one’s own group.

\(^{48}\) An *Avot* is a section or tractate of the *Mishnah*, which contains the basis of the Oral Law, said to have been handed to Moses at Sinai.

\(^{49}\) It was not only the Six-Day War that created changes in Jewish consciousness and concerns in Israel and the diaspora. Another significant factor was the belated public articulation of the immense trauma of the Holocaust, by its survivors and children of survivors. See Chapter Four.
There has been a tension between these orientations, probably for as long as Jewish history has been recorded. It can be summarised as follows: In a sense, all identity is particularistic, it defines itself against what it is not, and certainly Judaism has traditions and rituals which separate the community and individual Jews from non-Jews. On the other hand, as Lang (1993: 284 - 85) argues, particularism need not be an end in itself and ‘the Prophets unendingly chide those who make this mistake’. Beginning with the Noachide laws\textsuperscript{50}, there has been a tradition in Judaism which claims a common humanity.

Universalism as a set of practices and ideas emanating from the Enlightenment has been subject to considerable critique, by postmodernists and their allies as a Eurocentric concept.\textsuperscript{51} Regina Schwartz (1997: 88) succinctly distinguishes between the two senses of ‘universalism’:

Universalism comes in different shapes, as an ideal of genuine toleration, as an effort to protect [and create] universal rights, and as a kind of imperialism that insists that we are all one and that demands an obliteration of difference.

It is the former ‘shape’ that form the basis of discussion in this section.

Both the Torah and the Talmud (the latter is the oral interpretations of the Torah, codified and written down over centuries by rabbis), provide instances embracing particularism and universalism (Schwartz 1997 and Lafer 1993). The famous aphorism quoted earlier from Hillel expresses this dilemma. The Torah offers us two starkly contrasted alternatives:

\textsuperscript{50} Noachide laws were elementary rules of conduct which were revealed to the first generations of the Torah, from Adam to Noah, and are said to apply to all human beings. They ‘forbid idolatory, blasphemy, incest, murder, robbery and cruelty to animals, as well as demanding the establishment of law courts for the dispensation of justice’ (Goldberg & Rayner 1989: 274). See also this text (278 – 280) for a discussion on Judaism and particularism.

\textsuperscript{51} For example, scholars have acknowledged the ubiquity of Enlightenment discourse and its non-recognition of the ‘cultural homogeneity’ instantiated into ‘the sign of modernity’ Bhaba (see 1994: 243 - 245); Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies, (1995) volume 7, no. 1, especially contributions by Palumbo-Liu and Laclau; Sakai (1997: 155 - 57) on double oscillation between universalism and particularism; Butler (1996) on the paradox imminent in the universal, and in explicating its historical contingency (47). Also, Butler, Laclau and Žižek (2000) on the complexities inherent in identity-claims, the subject and claims to universality, in different ideological guises.
When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him ... you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. Leviticus 19: 33 - 34

Thou shalt not lend upon interest to thy brother.... Unto a foreigner thou may lend upon interest; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon interest.

- Deuteronomy 23: 19 – 20 (Lafer 1993: 177)

The first quotation from Leviticus appears to provide a clear instruction based on a concept of ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you’ and a sense of generosity based on Jews’ own negative experiences in Egypt. Thus, even in this short verse, one can see how a concept of universalism is appealed to on the basis of one’s own experience. In the second example, which illustrates the reverse, the instruction is to distinguish between ‘us’, to whom no interest should be sought and ‘them’, the foreigner or stranger with whom one has a different set of relationships. In Chapter Seven I explore the Jewish notion of the stranger in relation to land and indigeneity.

The Jewish prophets

The contemporary Israeli philosopher Avi Margalit (2002: 40) pursues the question of the ‘neighbour’ in the imperative to ‘love thy neighbour as thyself’ (Leviticus 19:18). He asks ‘who is this neighbour whom we are supposed to love and care for?’ Margalit suggests that scholars such as Moses Mendelssohn and Herman Cohen writing during and after the Enlightenment, espoused a universalist approach, so that the ‘neighbour’ could extend to ‘one’s fellow human being’. However,

53 Moses Mendelssohn (1729 – 86) was one of Judaism’s foremost thinkers and writers of the Berlin Aufklaerung (Enlightenment). His message concurred with Enlightenment thinking of the time as he saw Judaism ‘revealed to Moses for purposes of attaining the common good and human felicity, [as being] wholly intelligible and rational’ (Frank, Leaman & Manekin 2000: 340). See also discussion about Mendelssohn’s contribution to modern Jewish thought in Eisen (1998: 23 - 43).
54 Hermann Cohen (1842 – 1918) was a German philosopher who also saw that Judaism’s greatest value lay in its prophecy. ‘It was the Jewish prophetic religion which discovered the human brother and the suffering neighbour and concerned itself with the abolition of social distress as a messianic task’ (Altmann 1956: 196 in; Jacob 1979). Cohen read in the prophetic universal ideals, ‘a basis for opposing Zionism’. He understood the vision of the prophets as being concerned with all mankind, extending ‘far beyond any national interest’. Zionism is an example par excellence, of a particularist movement, even though, as Jacob notes, the prophets have been summoned in the name of Zionism along with other ‘causes’.
according to Margalit, this was by no means a standard interpretation among Jewish scholars, who were more likely to regard the neighbour as involving an obligation to other Jews only (ibid.: 41). Jonathan Boyarin too, writing about Jewish memory, makes the point that although there was a ‘universalistic side especially in the prophetic writings about redemption’ it is misleading to suggest that Jews were the only group whose redemptive creed included ‘universal recognition of their particular theologies’ (Boyarin 1992: 35). Christianity and Islam also include such teachings.

Tikkun Olam or non-universalism?
How have these terms fared in contemporary times and to what ends have they been deployed? The eminent Australian Jewish historian, William Rubinstein, writes with pride about the post-war Jewish community in Australia, that ‘it was, and still more increasingly is, non-universalistic, deliberately rejecting any universal mission of the Jewish people to bring about a wider reform or radical agenda throughout the whole of society’. It has become, according to Rubinstein (1991a: 6), ‘voluntarily reghettoised’, which he states, is not in contradiction to Jewish economic, professional and cultural successes in Australian society in general. Rubinstein makes the point that Jews in Australia since World War II have been predominantly concerned with three visions, all wholly Jewish, related to: ‘rebuilding the shattered remnants of European Jewry here, or at furthering Israel and Zionism, or a vision expressed in purely religious terms’ (ibid.: 7). In the process, he relegates Australian Jews who have a radical, left-oriented vision of the world, to the virtual paraiahdom of the back stalls, when he states: ‘Post-war Australian Jewry has never sought to change Australian society for the better through radical nostrums’.

Contrary to this blanket statement, there have of course been Australian Jews, who, whether through invoking religion or through cultural/secular discourse, have different views of their Jewishness. In a collection of writings on Jews in Australia, one contributor, Dennis Altman (in Medding 1973: 226 - 28), now a well-known Melbourne academic, wrote as a young man around the time of the Six-Day War:
But perhaps the most valuable part of being Jewish is that it offers some insight into the plight of other minority groups and the unending tension between preserving one’s cultural identity and ‘making it’ in the wider world. More poignantly, it should be possible for Jews, just because of their own experiences, to understand and empathise with Arab anger and frustration, of which we have become the principal target.

Indeed were the community less concerned to maintain its solidarity and demand loyalty from its members, Jews in Australia might contribute more not less. A community that is as intensely self-preoccupied and insular as Melbourne Jewry has little in common with that part of the Jewish tradition that stressed its role in the world and its common community with all men.

Altman relates to the tradition within Judaism that thought of the neighbour as meaning human kind. Lafer (1993: 180–181) to whom I referred earlier, states that when Jews argue for either a ‘universalist’ or a ‘chauvinist, non-universalistic’ outlook, they both ‘claim to be speaking in the name of traditional Jewish values’. Not only do both sides practise the ‘art of selective citation, but by removing principles from their religious context and inserting them into secular arguments, they have frequently distorted even those principles cited’. Jewish secularists, perhaps including Altman, who summon these values without a religious context, apply a similar distortion, as Lafer sees it. Altman contrasts what he perceives as insularity within Melbourne Jewry with the Jewish tradition that has been passed down, largely through the teachings within the Reform movement55 of tikkun olam, meaning the repair or healing of the world (see Lerner 1994). The notions embodied by the phrase tikkun olam are various and have a proud history in the United States and elsewhere, incorporating a univeralist-oriented social justice activism to many particularist causes. For example, Lotty Pogrebin (1991: 236) the Jewish American feminist writes:

Indeed if Tikkun Olam – the repair of the world – is an assignment the Jews are supposed to take seriously, Jewish feminists add to the repair kit not just the tools of Jewish ethics but the equity blue prints of feminism. We start with Judaism’s core mandate to do tzedakah – the Hebrew word meaning charity, caring and the ‘right action’ whose linguistic root means justice – and we apply that mandate to gender.

Pogrebin is not a secular Jew. She takes certain Jewish teachings seriously for themselves as well as for their applicability to feminism. In Australia, Newton,

55 For a brief history of Reform or Progressive Judaism in Australia see Meyer (1988: 342 - 43).
(2000: 6) in her account of the history of the fairly conservative National Council of Jewish Women, notes that one of the aims of the newly formed organisation was concerned with ‘both Jewish and non-Jewish philanthropic work...This charge, to heal the world, is evident in every charitable endeavour undertaken by the Council of Jewish Women’.

In the interviews I conducted in 2002, subjects spoke, often somewhat elusively, of this tradition of tikkan olam, and the need to be a good, ethical person, without necessarily naming it as such. Ruth, for example, summoned the Yiddish mensch, meaning a good human being, and wondered why being called a mensch is such a ‘wonderful compliment’. Miriam, born in the United States, connected Jewish persecution with that of the persecution of others:

> I think this is out of my American experience, that there were always Jews who came out as Jews, who battled in the civil rights movement, and I feel that, if there is a point to having a Jewish community, you know, and they want to survive, then they have to say other minorities have the right to survive. And they have to identify themselves with other minorities' struggles.

> And I remember, actually, being quite glad to hear Rabbi Lampert who was still the Rabbi at Temple Emmanuel in Sydney during the Vietnam boat people period earlier, openly identifying, in his sermons, that this was intolerable, you have to accept people who came as refugees. The Jews are refugees. We were all washed up on the shore of some other country!

Miriam was making a similar point in these two paragraphs; namely that Jews as the historically persecuted minority par excellence, are beholden to acknowledge the rights of other minorities to universalist human rights, such as a safe home/land. Her argument was based on an appeal to the social justice strand in the Jewish tradition I have been discussing. However, as Stephen Whitfield (2001: 223) argues in his chapter on the Jew as Radical in America, this strand:

---

56 However, according to Avishai Margalit (1988: 20), there is some ambiguity in the ideal of being a mensch: ‘Sometimes it referred to those sensitive to any human suffering, and sometimes to those sensitive to the suffering of Jews only’.

57 Rabbi Richard Lampert was Chief Rabbi at Sydney’s North Shore Temple Emanuel from 1977 – 2003. ‘Boat people’ from Vietnam began to arrive in Australia following the end of that war in 1975.
is certainly not the only one. [T]he long history of the Diaspora before
Emancipation fails to disclose many antecedents for modern radicalism or
even moderate liberalism … The terrors of much of premodern Jewish life
promoted a wary conservatism that cannot convincingly be invoked by
Jews in a quest of sanctions for their radicalism.

This may be so. Premodern life for many Jews and others was undoubtedly one of
immense hardship and survival and not conducive to radical activity. Yet, many
contemporary self-reflexive Jews question the motivations behind their activism and
politics. One such interrogation occurred during 2002, in an electronic discussion of
a Jewish group called Not in My Name (NIMN), of which I was a low-profile
member.58 The debate here touches on the notion embodied by the mensch, the good
human being and the theme of Jewish ‘choseness’ in relation to human rights
activism. The discussion was prompted by the death of Danny Pearl, the American
Jewish journalist from the Wall Street Journal who was murdered in Pakistan, in
February 2002. The debate concerned whether other Jews murdered for political
reasons, had acted out of a Jewish concern for, and tradition of universal values and
social justice, including the religious notion of chosenness or if it was because they
were good, courageous democrats, possibly even unaware of this tradition.

One poster, ‘A’59 named a number of Jews who had been murdered by the Ku Klux
Klan in 1964; in protest against the Vietnam War in 1970; opposing the fascist
Chilean junta in 1976; opposing the Contras in Nicaragua in 1987 and so on. He then
initiated a discussion about a core identity issue for the group:

A: I would have thought -- or hoped -- that NIMN is precisely a gathering
of people who identify their Jewishness as the very root of their
humanness and their commitment to universal human values, not one
against the other, not even one balanced with the other, but each actually
rooted in the other.

58 NIMN was formed in October 2000 following the commencement in September of the second
intifada. It was a Chicago-based local action group, as well as comprising two subscription-based
moderated email lists, general and discussion group-based, and a website (www.nimn.org). The title
Not in My Name was issued as a challenge to the Israeli government which, in the words of one of the
founders of the group in a speech made in 2000, ‘explicitly justifies its actions as necessary to save the
Israeli state, to save worldwide Judaism. Well, I am here today to make sure that Israel and other
American Jews and other Americans know that this American Jew will not accept the killing of
Palestinians in my name, on my behalf’ (Feurerstein 24 October, 2000).
59 Direct quotations from posters have been given an initial to protect their anonymity. The discussions
occurred early in 2002.
The discussion continued with ‘B’ proclaiming:

If I have managed, now and again, to do something to improve human rights, I would not want it so characterised although I am a Jew and Jewish tradition no doubt plays a role in my behavior. I would not want worthy behavior to be appropriated by one tradition.

‘C’ also confessed to a degree of scepticism about claims to Jewish moral superiority or purity. His view was that:

The old Judaic discourse of chosenness has led us to Balata, Jenin, checkpoints, Oslo, to Faris Odeh, to F-16s and Apache helicopters (unfortunately named after another ethnically cleansed, massacred, indigenous group) and crying, grieving, wounded civilians, Jewish, Christian and Muslim.

These passionate exchanges express three alternatives for understanding how Jewishness has influenced the motivations behind identity politics activism. Discussant A suggested ‘Jewish values’ and ‘universal human values’ are each ‘rooted in the other’, and are imbricated, inseparable. B was often angry with members of the group whom she accused of practising what she termed ‘Zionism-lite’.60 In her extract, she appealed to a universal sensibility imbued with human rights rhetoric; her belief was that her behaviour may be influenced by her Jewishness, but she did not want any ‘one tradition’ made responsible for worthiness and espousing justice. Finally, C named the ‘discourse of chosenness’, which, as shown in the polemical extract above, he viewed as having led to violence and oppression of Palestinians, by Israelis. The Judaic precept of being the Chosen People before God permeates classical sources of Judaism. It has also proved an embarrassment, particularly in this modern secular age, indeed, Reconstructionism, a Jewish religious movement founded in the 1920s in the United States by Mordechai Kaplan, ‘has actually repudiated the “chosen people” idea and expunged it from its prayer books’ (Goldberg & Rayner 1989: 276 - 78) (See also Meyer 1971). Poster C responded negatively to the concept of chosenness because of

---

60 By ‘Zionism-lite’, she was referring to a tendency, which could also be called left-Zionism; which believes that Israel should leave the occupied territories (militarily and administratively) and should otherwise remain as it is – a Jewish state. B, by inference, advocated a solution more radical than this.
its implication of a (false) sense of Jewish superiority. Many teachers of Judaism ‘have [also] been at pains to warn against any such notion. The Prophets, for instance, could hardly have been more scathing of the people’s sins, self-righteousness among them’ (Goldberg & Rayner 1989: 276).

The Not In My Name listserv discussion group imploded shortly after these and other exchanges, which grew increasingly acrimonious between a few members of the group, including those cited here. Reasons included an interplay of divergent and unresolvable political differences focusing on the ‘correct’ off-line strategies for the group and heightened sensitivities around the significances of Judaism, Jewishness and the extent of criticism towards Israel, combined with sometimes personal criticism that, in the sphere of the virtual, could not be satisfactorily mediated. The excerpts point to the heightened passions involved when Jews critically discuss the subject of Israel. They also reveal the complexities and tensions involved in trying to perform Jewish identity politics differently. However, it is a productive tension, one which reveals that the relationship between particularism and universalism is more complex than merely oppositional. Thus, poster A calls upon ‘Jewish values’ to argue for a commitment to universal human values; B rejects any particularist identity, including Judaism, as the basis for acting humanely; and C rejects certain Jewish values but not necessarily all.

I have ended the chapter with this small example of the paradoxes in Jewish identity politics as it seeks to redress the wounds of the past being enacted on another people: One speaks out as a Jew in order to reject other discourses enacted in the name of Jews. The movement between universalism and particularism is not unidirectional. It travels in both directions, sometimes simultaneously.

Conclusion

My emphasis in this chapter has been on the troubling discourses of victimology in (Jewish) identity politics. The undeniable long Jewish experiences of persecution, powerlessness and suffering and their reiterations through discursive strategies which limit and frame what is speakable, are inextricably interconnected with the
establishment of Israel and how its conflict with the Palestinians is understood, spoken of and analysed by most Jews today. To challenge this ‘sacrosanct model that intuitively view[s] “the Jews” as victims of the behaviour of others and [replace it] by a model that sees Jews acting in history and affecting their own fate’ (Cohen, R. 2001: 255), can be viewed as a treacherous act. Zionism gave Jews agency, according to its discourse. It radically rejected ‘Jewish history…..along with Jewish passivity and Jewish defeat’ (Wheatcroft 1996: 272). To publicly articulate the incongruence between these two discourses is viewed as disloyalty.
Chapter Two: ‘Being Jewish is a community thing’.
The Jewish community in Australia

Introduction

When a group acts more or less in unison, the politics of identity is most effectively realised. Whether the group is based on ethnicity, religion, sexuality or disability the heavily laden term ‘community’ names this work. The focus of this chapter is on what I, and others, mean by the phrase the Australian Jewish community. Is it useful? Can one dispense with it? What does it occlude? How does it contribute to the notion of dominant discourse? In this chapter, I firstly frame and clarify some of these questions through a discussion of the term ‘community’ and its utility for my argument. I then introduce the interview subjects and their diverse and contradictory views about what the Jewish community means to them. Following this, I provide a brief historiographic overview of how the Australian Jewish community became institutionalised through what have become known as its representative or roof bodies. The final sections focus on discourses of diaspora, which has been most defining in terms of assembling a notion of Jewish communal unity, especially since 1948. Although the relationship between Israel and its diaspora appears so normalised within the dominant Jewish community discourse, in fact individual Jewish subjects relate more ambivalence about the Jewish homeland than is apparent from reading official statements by Jewish leaders.

A blessing and a curse - community explored

Collective work and defense against enemies or environmental dangers bring us together … Whoever laughs with us – or weeps with us – is one of us. In laughter, as in weeping, we recognise another as our kind, and at the same time are drawn to one another. We speak of what we laugh about, what we weep over: we bless and we curse. Blessing and cursing are fundamental modes of language, and express fundamental modes of community (Lingis 2002: 15).

Rachael Kohn [radio presenter]: Do you agree with the general view that Jews have a special and perhaps an unusually large capacity to laugh at themselves?
Nathan Serry [interviewee]: I think that the Jewish history and culture of being so much on the receiving end of persecution, particularly European persecution, over so many years, … has created an environment where if
all else fails, you do have to laugh at yourself, and I think that sort of central black humour, where you laugh because there’s nothing else to do, I think that that’s an intrinsically Jewish characteristic, and I think if one speaks to Jewish people who have encountered much suffering, you invariably do see that sort of capacity to shrug your shoulders and say, Oh well, I’ve got to laugh (Kohn, R. 2003).

Lingis (above) and the Melbourne Jewish psychiatrist and satirist/comedian, Nathan Serry, also known as Rabbi Mendel Goorinsht, elucidate two factors relevant to my analysis of the notion of community. One of Lingis’ key points is that much of what is spoken or known is what he, along with Deleuze and Guattari, call ‘common sense’: ‘…. the cues, signs, watchwords, slogans and decrees that “the community” – certain individuals in the group, pack, gang, milieu or “society” – have given’ (Lingis 2002: 23). The greater the degree of assumption or common understanding amongst a group of whatever size, the more one might consider it a community. In the case of what is known as the Jewish community, the kind of shared understanding that was articulated by Nathan Serry, conjoining a capacity to laugh and cry with a long history of suffering and persecution, is one important common sense constituent of a community of Jews. Connected to this is also what Lingis calls the ‘defense against enemies’, actual or perceived, physical and/or discursive.

This thesis charts how the Jewish community in Australia has, through ‘structure, logistics, persuasion, ideology and opportunity’ (Amit & Rapport 2002: 24) in the course of defending itself against its ‘enemies’, become strong. This has occurred in part through a reiteration across the decades of a discourse invoking both unity and cohesion whilst at times it disputes that such unity exists. Often this unity is summoned in order to defend itself against perceived enemies. It can be experienced as a safe repository offering ‘the promise of mutual support and understanding, the harmony of interests, and the unity of desires’ in the face of a society distinguished by risk, uncertainty and ‘the anxiety of freedom’ (Shapiro, S. 2000: 50). Community has been described somewhat harshly in Bauman’s critique of how the political Left has espoused communitarianism, as an antidote to the individualising, neo-liberal state:
Come back community, from the exile to which the modern state confined you; all is forgiven and forgotten – the oppressiveness of parochiality, the genocidal propensity of collective narcissism, the tyranny of communal pressures and the pugnacity and despotism of communal discipline (Bauman 1997; quoted in ibid.).

Shapiro utilises Bauman’s critique of community in a postmodern world to stage the ambivalence inherent in what he terms ‘historically rooted communities’:

Struggles against colonialism, civil rights movements, the liberation of indigenous and marginalised people, all draw on those richly elaborated communal cultures that have been historically inscribed by oppression, exploitation and sometimes genocide (ibid.:51).

Yet, within ‘those richly elaborated [and enduring] communal cultures’ lies the danger of rigidity, conformity, and submission to a ‘tribal’ authority. Shapiro notes the necessity for communities to subject themselves to ‘deep reflexive scrutiny’, to avoid ‘domination, authoritarianism and discourses of justification’ (ibid.: 52 - 3).

Iris Marion Young (1986: 2) also explores the opposing forces of community, the desire for ‘social wholeness and identification’ is the same desire that ‘underlies racism and ethnic chauvinism, on the one hand, and political sectarianism on the other’. Creating and policing boundaries to keep out the other and to unite the inside is, in Young’s view, ‘doomed to failure’ (ibid.: 3).

It is difficult to avoid using the term community in its singularity, for it is within the singular that discursive dominance is articulated. This point is also made by Gerd Baumann (1996: 16). He argues that slotting ethnic minorities into communities, one per ethnic group, leads to the ‘assumption that ethnic minorities must share the same culture by necessity of their ethnic bond’. The culture becomes reified and the discourse of community is made dominant, not only by the ‘protagonists of the dominant discourse’ which for Baumann means the white majority in Britain, but also by the dominant forces within any particular community. In this analysis, Jews, like Muslims, are defined as ethnic minorities, and they become homogenised as the ‘Jewish community’ and the ‘Muslim community’ respectively. In both cases religious dimensions are conflated with an ‘ethnos’ and the ethnic heterogeneity is
eclipsed by the unifying notion of religion. In the case of Muslims, extensive ethnic, national and linguistic diversity is reified into the ‘Muslim community’ (ibid.: 23).

There are dangers of falling into an ‘allegorising trap’ by speaking of or on behalf of ‘the Jewish community’:

[as] it performs an elision of differences of origins, class, gender, sexual orientation and culture among those individuals self-identified as Jewish. [One must also be] aware of the challenges that otherwise racially marked Jews – Sephardic (Iberian, North African and Middle Eastern), Ethiopian, Asian, etc – and non-wealthy … Jews pose to the hegemonic claims of the auto-allegorised ‘Jewish community’ (Itzkovitz 1997: 197).

Itzkovitz’s reminder is worth noting, even though those Jewish others in Australia are far less numerically dominant than in the United States. Community, in its need to accentuate its ‘in common-ness’, ‘requires the estrangement of those who threaten its commonality’ (Secomb 2003: 9) whether that be within or outside that community.

**Circling around the Australian Jewish community**

Evidence of this estrangement was articulated by some of my interviewees. Before turning to them, and in order to speak about the concept of Zionist discourse and its impact on the construction of the Jewish community, I include here a model of Jewish community, a heuristic device, derived from the Jewish American sociologist Daniel Elazar who described the American Jewish community ‘… as a series of uneven concentric circles, radiating outward from a hard core of committed Jews toward areas of vague Jewishness on the fringes’ (Elazar 1980: 71, see Figure 1). In his model, Elazar imagines the core to be like a magnet ‘able to attract iron particles that come within its magnetic field … a magnet at the core pulls those who contain within them the iron filings of Judaism closer to the centre, more or less according to the degree of their iron, that is, Jewish, content’ (ibid.: 100). The core/periphery model is not an uncommon way to describe various types of social formation. In a lecture as part of a Jewish studies program for undergraduates at the University of New South Wales (15 May 2002), entitled ‘The Holocaust and Israel: The core of contemporary Jewish identity?’ the lecturer also utilised concentric circles to
discuss Jews’ identification with Israel. Here, the core epitomised total identification with Israel, which may include making aliya, while the furthest circle from the centre connoted an abstract, vague attachment. Those Jews whose sentiments and views lay beyond the furthest circle, were not accounted for.

The diagram on page 83 represents the degrees of affiliation and involvement for Jewish subjects to feel that they belong to a Jewish community. Each circle is of course permeable, in the sense that people may move away from or towards the core at different times in their lives, as my interviewees illustrate. The jagged line cutting across the circle, which is not part of Elazar’s model, represents the complications and contradictions that exist for many Jews in coming to terms with a host of influences effecting their identification as Jewish, and especially in relation to what I have identified as the dominant discourse regarding Israel.

The descriptors are Elazar’s, the descriptions mine. In this model, the four shaded rings represent the community, where the identification as Jewish is strongest. Here discourses about ‘diaspora’, ‘Israel’ and ‘Zionism’ are perpetuated and asserted most loudly and assuredly. ‘Integrals’ is the name given by Elazar for those Jews for whom Judaism and Jewishness form the central component of their identities. Some of these people will work in, and perhaps lead, Jewish secular or religious organisations.

Slightly less involved are the ‘participants’. They are likely to belong to and be active in one or more Jewish organisations, not necessarily in a paid capacity. ‘Affiliated’ Jews may also belong to Jewish organisations, although less actively than the preceding two groups. They, and the other two categories mentioned are likely to attend a synagogue, more or less often. They may participate in a Jewish chat group on the Internet, search other Jewish Internet sites, they may be involved in Jewish sports. Slightly less involved still, are the ‘contributors and consumers’. They may contribute to Jewish or Zionist charities such as the Jewish National Fund, mentioned in the previous chapter, they may attend social functions at the Hakoah Club. All four groups may have, as children, attended a Jewish day school and
youth group. It is probable that those sending their children to Jewish day schools would come from the inner two levels and are most likely to marry endogamously. It is also probable that all four of these levels would read and perhaps contribute to, the Jewish media. It is also likely that many in levels two to four would consider themselves secular, yet also ‘occasionally participate in some Jewish religious rituals and customs [and thus] continue to identify themselves ethnically or culturally as Jews’ (Goldlust 2004: 25).

Beyond the shaded areas lie the many Jews who do not identify with the Jewish community although they may identify as Jewish. For the ‘peripherals and repudiators’, as the rather negative names imply, being Jewish is a less insignificant aspect of their identity. Alternatively, the community, as they perceive it, does not meet their needs or aspirations culturally, socially or politically. There are likely to be many Jews for whom this description fits. I would place myself in this category. Finally, there are the ‘quasi-Jews’, those who are Jews by virtue of their birth, perhaps from only one Jewish parent. They show no interest in any matters related to being Jewish.
Circling around the Jewish community

Illustration 2: Model of community, from Elazar 1980: 72.
Interviewees differ on community

Having developed a schema for speaking about and defining Jewish community, I now explore the multiplicity of relationships with and connections to that community, expressed by my interviewees. They could all be placed within the first five circles, yet many expressed ambivalence and discomfort about certain aspects of the community. To the question I posed regarding their thoughts about the community, came a diversity of responses. Comments ranged from the highly positive to the very critical, exemplified by this selection of terms they used to speak about the community:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>formal</th>
<th>interesting</th>
<th>intertwined</th>
<th>passionate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tight</td>
<td>multipronged</td>
<td>mainstream</td>
<td>close</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>loving</td>
<td>organised</td>
<td>religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zionist</td>
<td>supportive</td>
<td>closed</td>
<td>prejudiced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conservative</td>
<td>fragmented</td>
<td>identifiable</td>
<td>establishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affiliated</td>
<td>loyal</td>
<td>diverse</td>
<td>rewarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oversensitive</td>
<td>belonging</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of these terms are ambiguous; their connotations dependent on the speaker’s intent. For example, ‘Zionist’, ‘conservative’, ‘fragmented’, ‘religious’ and so on can be viewed positively, negatively or as description. Fundamentally, their ambiguity is characteristic of the profound ambivalence about the very nature of community. Some see the community as a source of unity and belongingness; others see it as fragmented; close is a positive quality, closed is not; the latter reflects the universalist versus particularist dichotomy explored in the previous chapter. Sarah expressed her ambivalence in the quote below:

I don’t think I’m part of what I see as the formal community in that I’m not engaged in any of the major organisations. I suppose I see myself as dipping into bits. But, I suppose part of the identity stuff is around celebrations, really. And so, like, we’ve got ‘family’, in inverted commas, who are not blood relatives, because I haven’t got any but, you know, people I’ve sort of been very close to for thirty or forty years. And so, like, we go for Friday night dinners and stuff like that. And it’s more about
family, really ... But, I mean, that is part of my Jewishness ... A notion around family, and therefore culture, and that sort of stuff.

Sarah was disengaged from what she terms the ‘formal’ or organised community. Her need to identify with her heritage was met through her ersatz family with whom she shared major Jewish festivals and traditional celebrations. She also occasionally attended synagogue and fasted at Yom Kippur because ‘it’s part of that sort of [religious] tradition’. Sarah described how ‘I dip in and out of what I think seems to be useful or not’, suggesting the voluntary nature for non-Orthodox Jews in Australia of how much religious/cultural tradition each embraces, as discussed in Chapter One.

In other words, the way an individual Jew views the community depends on many factors connected with family background and what significance being Jewish has in her/his life. Esther earned her living by working in an educational organisation within the Jewish community in Sydney. She thought that:

in some ways...it’s a very tight community. Working in the community, I often feel like I know everybody, or I’ve met everybody, or I’ve at least heard something about everybody, and there’s the kind of sense that you’re either in it or not in it. I think that it’s quite a traditional community.

Who were these ‘everybodys’ that Esther felt that she knew or had met or had ‘at least heard something about’? Were they those Rosa described as being part of a ‘traditional core’ of the community, probably levels one and two of the model. Rosa also described the community as comprising ‘concentric circles’. She identified herself in the peripherals/repudiators camp, but ironically, sought other peripherals who shared her views:

I see myself as a Jew but, again, not part of that community. I do see it as a very insular, fatuous...oh, I don’t know. It’s kind of like, you know, they’re the Jews who give Jews a bad name! But, yeah, I just do not, I don’t feel part of it, and I don’t want to be part of it. But, you know, coincidentally, I have a number of Jewish friends who also, I suppose, reject that community and don’t feel part of it.
Joe too was conflicted about his place within the community. His words ‘early on, I think I made the classic realisation that being Jewish is a community thing’ form the title for this chapter. He made this comment in the context of telling me about how, as a young man, he was traveling abroad on his own. It was Yom Kippur and:

I thought, ‘I’ll try fasting’. You know, that’s what you do on Yom Kippur. And I lasted until midday and I just thought, ‘This is stupid!’ You know? There’s no context for this.... This isn’t Yom Kippur. This is just another day of the year. You know? Yom Kippur is something that you do with other people.

Joe has identified a fundamental tenet of Judaism, the necessity for community for practical and theological purposes (see for example Dorff 2000: 385 - 86). On the other hand, Joe’s attempts in recent years to reconnect with the Jewish community in Sydney have been conflicted for him, largely because of his minority views on a subject of overwhelming unanimity - Israel. In the following extract, he reflects on his perceptions of the community:

I find it quite closed. I find it ... I actually think it’s quite identifiable. Almost deliberately identifiable. It’s a sort of an interesting thing, because there’s a Jewish community that contains some Jews, as opposed to a Jewish community that contains all Jews. Does that make sense?......The Jewish community is a subset of Jewish Australia. I think that it defines itself. It’s obviously very politically active, very active in general, at being Jewish, and being unitedly Jewish.

Joe identified the point that many scholars and others have also made: ‘Community’ is a discursive, self-conscious construct. It serves many and varied purposes but the Jewish Community does not include all the Jews in Australia. At that point I interjected by asking him about the religious differences between Jews which have in the past mitigated against Jewish unity:

I was probably too young to know much about it, but from what I understand, those splits used to be a big issue, and those splits are really, now, just an issue for a very small number of hard line, generally Orthodox people. The rest are like, Oh, yeah, whatever.’ ... Maybe that’s naïve, but I think for most Jews now, the Reform/Orthodox thing really isn’t as big a deal...the big division is over positions on Israel. That’s where the issues are hot.... Maybe if the Israel thing goes away, it’ll rear its head again, but I don’t think so. Perhaps in some ways it has helped the Reform/Orthodox split ... It’s [identifying with Israel] something to come together on, if you
like, and realise we’re all Jews, regardless of where we come from [religiously].

Joe engaged in speculation about whether or not Jews these days were more united by Israel, and the discourse which seeks to position Israel as constantly under attack, than they were divided by religious differences. For the majority of Jews who are secular, religious differences are far less significant than the sense of unity and solidarity achieved through support for the Jewish homeland. Perhaps a community can be defined in terms of what significant issues it needs to be united on, and what contentious ones divide it.

David was one of the ‘generally Orthodox people’ Joe mentioned above. David’s life as an observant Orthodox Jew was very much about being a Jew in a traditional sense. His day began and ended with prayer, his home was fully kosher and religious ritual and rites guided his week, as much as possible when living in a non-Jewish secular world. David’s community did not need to include the broader, more secular-oriented, Jewish community, which many have difficulties finding a place within and even defining. His specific Orthodox community was more unambiguously bounded61 and it was not surprising that he articulated views about the broader community’s diversity and lack of cohesion.

Tim, a young ‘integral’ Jew, also identified the community initially in religious terms, and then more broadly as where a communal geographic space is still vital:

Well, the most obvious for me is the religious community. On Shabbat in Bondi62 you just have to walk around, you see other people walking around, they wear the black hat and ... you can see the religious guys, they’re wearing tzitzi63, or even not, but they’re walking on Shabbat, and the women are wearing fairly modest clothes...And this is a tradition that’s been passed on for thousands of generations, and that’s an amazing thing...And then, you know, obviously there’s the community attached to

---

61 For Orthodox Jews, boundaries are taken very literally. Both Sydney and Melbourne have an Eruv for use each Sabbath. An Eruv is ‘an enclosure that legally transforms a non-private public thoroughfare into a private domain’. It is an area that has been identified and blessed by a Rabbi. Within the sanctified area, pushing strollers and wheelchairs and carrying certain objects is permitted (see www.sydneyeruv.org.au).
62 Bondi is Sydney’s famous seaside suburb and the heart of Sydney Jewry in its Eastern suburbs.
63 Tassels on the outer edges of garments worn by observant Jews during the morning service.
the synagogue in a broader sense. I work at Jewish Care, so that’s an interesting hub of the Jewish community. I guess, you know, it builds links to Montefiore Homes\textsuperscript{64} and the Berger Centre. To the Holocaust, the Jewish Museum, and then the youth organisations like Netzer\textsuperscript{65}, the leadership organisations. I guess a lot of the Jewish community is sort of put together with organisations.

Hans, whom I regarded as a ‘participant’, offered a certain irrefutable logic as to what community signified for him:

Well, a certain sense of loyalty, belonging, and you feel part of a community. You wouldn’t know what it was like if you weren’t! You belong there. I mean, I contribute to whatever needs to be contributed to, to the various...the UIA\textsuperscript{66}, the JCA\textsuperscript{67}, and other Jewish charities, because I’m Jewish, although I also contribute to other charities. I’m quite orthodox on some days of the year ... particularly on the high holy days. I read the Jewish press, and I’m very interested in what I read. I don’t know whether I [always] agree with what I read, and anything Jewish is of interest to me. I’m very much part of the Jewish community, although these days I’m not an active participant on any board.

Hans identified many of the material and structural features which comprise community participation: Synagogue attendance, donations to charities such as the United Israel Appeal and the Jewish Communal Appeal, reading the Jewish press and participating on boards and committees. It is interesting to note his comment that he also contributed to charities other than Jewish ones, positioning himself as a generous Australian citizen and a Jew whose notion of charity (tzadikah) extended beyond only assisting other Jews. His sense of community seemed so certain, his ‘loyalty’ and ‘belonging’ so complete, that he could say ‘you wouldn’t know what it was like if you weren’t [part of the community]’. For Hans, it seemed that his sense of himself as Jewish and his consciousness of what the community signified for him were interwoven. As I interviewed him, I recall feeling almost a sense of envy, that this construct named the Jewish community could elicit such feelings of seemingly unambivalent belongingness and certainty.

\textsuperscript{64} Nursing homes for the elderly.
\textsuperscript{65} Reform Judaism’s youth movement.
\textsuperscript{66} United Israel Appeal.
\textsuperscript{67} Jewish Communal Appeal.
The community that Hans and Tim identified with certainty, Carol described as:

The ‘Organised Jewish Community’, because there are lots and lots of Jews that wouldn’t consider themselves part of that community, and don’t feel particularly Jewish. You know, on the left and in the trade union movement, and so on. Because they can’t relate to what the organised Jewish community stands for, and so there is both a Jewish community and there isn’t, in that sense.

At that point I asked Carol which parts of the community she thought that people did not relate to. Her response:

Oh, the religious stuff, it’s that clinging to a public unanimity at all costs, the whole issues around Israel, and its public voice is so hysterical and without any, sort of, rational or moral foundation, often, and … you know, in so far as there’s a growth in religious stuff. You know, obviously people who are secular don’t relate to that.

I then asked her if she considered herself part of it:

Yes, in a funny, cack-handed kind of way! Obviously, I speak in the Jewish community, I am known in the Jewish community, no matter how expelled from this and expelled from that I might be, you know... But I still think, despite themselves, they see me as part of the community.

Carol was an example of someone who was left-wing, secular and had taken an outspoken, pro-Palestinian, critical stance on Israel for many years although she did not consider herself anti-Zionist. Like Elazar’s metaphoric ‘iron-filings of Judaism’, she was drawn some way into the community’s orbit, even as she was heavily critical of much of its public discourse, particularly in relation to Israel. Carol had not wanted to turn her back on the community completely, perhaps viewing it as turning away from Jews themselves and her perception was that ‘despite themselves’, there was some, perhaps grudging, reciprocity involved.

In Melbourne I interviewed five people, three of whom were in their early twenties, whose parents or grandparents came from Poland and a Bundist, socialist, anti-Zionist tradition (see later in chapter for discussion on the Bund in Australia). I was

---

68 Carol was expelled from a Jewish Australian Internet discussion group because her views on Israel were unacceptable to a majority of its subscribers.
interested in how these strongly identified Jews who had different views about the significance of Israel in Jewish life, spoke about the community in Melbourne. Sam, a university student, had strident opinions on his ambivalence about the community:

The Melbourne Jewish community, I think, is very much The Lucky Community in the way that Donald Horne called Australia The Lucky Country\(^69\), in that we are led by a bunch of incompetent leaders...

I asked him why it was lucky to be led by incompetent leaders. He replied:

It’s not lucky to be led by incompetent leaders. It’s lucky despite. It’s that we have an incredibly diverse community, and a really rich community that, whether it likes to think about it in this way or not, it actually lives up to a Bundist idea of Doikait\(^70\), of activity, here, now, and in reaching out as a diaspora community. Despite the fact that the leadership of the community is very ... they’re very much hung on establishment leadership. It’s very conservative.

Jews in Australia then, like any other minority, represent diversity and do not speak with one voice. When one speaks of a community however, homogeneities emerge and certain differences are effaced in the singularity of the utterance ‘community’. Amatai Etzioni (1997: 127), a key proponent of communitarianism, defines community by two characteristics:

First, a web of affect-laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often criss-cross and reinforce one another ... and second, a measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms and meanings, and a shared history and identity - in short, to a particular culture.

Etzioni’s definition articulates an understanding of what community, in all its amorphousness and ubiquity, connotes to the many who embrace its virtues or

\(^69\) Published by Penguin Books in 1964, The Lucky Country was named ironically by its author, Donald Horne because he ‘was critiquing an Australia that did not think for itself; a country manacled to its past; and still in colonial blinkers. He said: If we are to remain a prosperous, liberal, humane society, we must be prepared to understand the distinctiveness of our own society.’ (http://www.acn.net.au/articles/luckycountry/, italics in original).

\(^70\) doikait or ‘hereness’ – a Yiddish word which incorporates the notion that Jews and Jewish communities have equal validity wherever they are and that the best place to channel your activism is in the place where you live. A strong sense of doikait is one of the pillars of Bundism.
denounce its limitations. I now turn to how the Jewish community in Australia has developed ‘a shared history and identity’ and meaning-making through the establishment of a range of institutions and organisations aiming to ‘represent’ Australian Jewry to itself as well as to government and the wider society.

How Australian Jewry became organised

A community’s institutional structure plays a significant role in its efficacy and legitimacy. In the case of the Jewish community in Australia, there were a number of circumstances which provided the need for unity among Jews, strong representation to governments and to control debate within the community itself: the crisis prompted by the impending destruction of European Jewry during the 1930s, the need to argue for a more generous intake of Jews to Australia as well as those who argued for a Jewish state. The organisations which were formed since World War Two and the elites who lead them, contribute not only to a sense of communal identity, but also, significantly, to a diasporic identity (Safran 2004: 18). As well, they contribute significantly to the discourse framing I discussed in the introduction, in particular the element on ‘the limits and forms of appropriation’, concerning the struggle for control over discourses, which can be conducted at an institutional and communal level.

In contrast to my consideration of the part played by organisations in the formation of discursive hegemonies, Jewish historiography in this country has in large measure comprised social ‘histories of immigration and settlement [and] political and institutional organisations’ (Teo 2003: 147) and has been, to a large extent, inward-looking and under-theorised. Stratton confirms Teo’s point about Australian ethnic social histories in general. He observes (2000: 195) that the Jewish case in Australia is not situated either within ‘broader ideological understandings of Jews in the West or in the context of the complex interrelationship of ideas about race and the nation-state’, as these pertain to the development of the Australian nation. In this section, I focus on how the social history of Jews in Australia has been constructed by Jewish historians and social scientists to establish and reiterate a
sense of the homogeneity implicit in community. I discuss the development of Zionist organisations separately, in the following chapter.

Formation of Jewish communal structures in Sydney and Melbourne

The differences between the Jewish communities in Sydney and Melbourne are significant because they bear on the reception and development of Zionism in the two cities. From the early years of Jewish settlement in Australia, there were demographic and thus cultural differences between the two communities in Sydney and Melbourne which to some extent, have continued until today. Jewish Sydney at the end of the nineteenth century stressed what Rutland calls ‘minority non-distinctiveness’, rather than Melbourne’s ‘minority identity’; Melbourne was more ‘Jewish conscious’ (Rutland 1997: 69). In the mid-1920s, up to 2,000 Eastern European, mainly Polish Jews came to Australia and the majority settled in Melbourne. Thus, by the end of the 1920s, there had developed in Melbourne a Jewish culture which reflected Jewish life in the ‘old countries’. A predominance of Yiddish, religious Orthodoxy, a small intelligentsia, a gathering of like-minded people from similar backgrounds living in close proximity to one another, who were keen to establish Yiddish literature, theatre and other cultural activities in Melbourne. Jews in Sydney, on the other hand, were more widely dispersed in the city, and retained Anglo sensibilities and loyalties to the British Crown, for longer. According to Kimmel (1945: 29), writing at the end of World War Two, it was an ‘indisputable phenomenon that the Jewish pulse beats more intensively with our friends in Melbourne than in Sydney’. Rubinstein’s view is that in recent decades, ‘Sydney has become much more like Melbourne … than the reverse’ (1991a: 20).

All Australian Jewish historians regard the Second World War as the watershed event which transformed communities in every state, but particularly in Sydney and

---

71 One significant example is the early establishment in 1911, of the Kadimah, the Jewish National Library and the first Yiddish cultural organisation in Australia. The Kadimah still exists in Melbourne today (Ajzenbud 1996: 7).

Melbourne, the two cities in which most refugees and displaced persons settled.\textsuperscript{73}

Prior to the war, as Suzanne Rutland, one of the most renowned researchers of Australian Jewish histories, states:

\begin{quote}
Australian Jewry was a small, well-integrated and Anglicised community. Jews ... were concerned with maintaining the high social and civic status which they enjoyed within the general community. As a result of their acceptance as social equals and the virtual absence of anti-Semitism Australian Jewry was very assimilated.\ldots\textsuperscript{10} In the 1920s the Australian Jewish Community remained a stagnant backwater, cut off from the mainsprings of Jewish life and largely untouched by nineteenth-century [European] developments in religious life, Jewish education, communal organisation and Zionism (1985: 90).
\end{quote}

It was only the influx of European Jews in sufficiently large numbers just before and after the Second World War, which allowed this picture to change. In summary, about 7,000 Jewish refugees came to Australia before World War II and about 18,000 Jewish ‘Displaced Persons’ after the war. ‘On a pro rata population basis, Australia received more Jewish refugees in this period than any other country except Israel and as a result Australian Jewry doubled in size between 1933 and 1954 from 23,553 to 48,436’ (Rutland 1988: 77). In the 1940s the centralised communal bodies emerged at the state and federal levels, and it is to this emergence that I now turn.

The formation, legitimation and successful functioning of these bodies is a key to my investigation of the means by which Zionist discourse has assumed a dominant and naturalised position within Jewish communal life in Australia. They have contributed to what Foucault (1980: 131) has famously named a society’s or community’s ‘régime of truth’, that is:

\begin{quote}
the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{73} See Rutland (1997: 287 - 290, on post-war settlement patterns between the various states in Australia). She says that Sydney, with its ‘more cosmopolitan atmosphere ... attracted a higher proportion of the relatively more assimilated German, Austrian and Hungarian Jews (ibid.: 289).
Foucault continues in this essay ‘Truth and power’ to delineate the traits which characterise ‘the political economy of truth’. Several centre around the institutions which form and maintain a discourse. In a minority diasporic community, these institutions become a source of legitimacy both within the community and externally but they also become a forum for ‘political debate and social confrontation’ (ibid.: 131 – 32). For Foucault a régime of truth is linked to ‘systems of power which produce and sustain it and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it’ (ibid.: 133). Truth and power are inherently connected. One can see this in operation in the development of the institutions which now represent the Australian Jewish community. As later chapters demonstrate, these institutions affect the production of such systems of power in relation to the dominance of Zionist discursive practices and the silencing or delegitimising of counter-discourses. A small, early example of silencing by omission comes from the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies Yearbook for the year 1955/56. It contains a page called ‘Memorable dates in Jewish history’. It cites 1897 as the year of the first Zionist Congress in Basel and then all proceeding dates relate to the establishment of the state of Israel and the Holocaust. It makes no mention of the development of the socialist Bund in Eastern Europe which also held its first meeting in 1897, a significant event for many Jews in that part of Europe, and later, also in Australia.

By the mid-1940s, forces were at work in both Sydney and Melbourne Jewry to develop more democratic communal structures than the previous institutions, which were dominated by the synagogues. In Sydney, the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies was formally established in 1945. Several years before that in 1942, the first Public Relations Committee (PRC) and Bureau of Jewish Affairs were established, whose main aim was to combat growing antisemitism (Feher no date: on-line). The PRC, from its inception in desperate times in the middle of the war, organised a work program which has stood it in good stead in the decades to come. Part reactive, part proactive, it was concerned with monitoring and fighting antisemitism wherever it occurred, as well as providing speakers and producing publications. It also saw a larger role for itself ‘which besides the fight against antisemitism would have as its aim to emphasise the merits of Jewry on the scientific, cultural and other
fields of human activities’ (Plan of work of Public Relations Committee 1942). Looked at through a Foucauldian lens, one could say that this was the beginning of an institutional assemblage of discursive practices aiming to maximise unity and cohesion and, by unstated implication, to minimise disunity and dissent.

By 1956, the NSW Board of Deputies could claim in its annual communal handbook that:

The Jews in New South Wales enjoy a degree of unity in organisation which is unsurpassed anywhere in the world ... Since the formal establishment of the Board in 1945, it has materially assisted in bringing about the happy and harmonious cohesion of the community, and it has helped to ensure that its natural growth has been healthy with every prospect of maintaining for the future the same high standards of unity and organisation which have characterised the past (A cohesive community 1956).

Both the Sydney and Melbourne advisory boards had contested beginnings prior to their foundation. The struggles were between recent arrivals and establishment figures about how far communal democracy should go. Would the boards consist only of representatives of Jewish organisations, or would they also include individual nominations voted by ‘universal suffrage’? In Melbourne, there was a protracted struggle for communal democracy, culminating in the formation of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies in 1947 known as the Jewish Community Council of Victoria since 1988. The Melbourne struggle began in the late 1920s between the establishment congregants who dominated the advisory board at that time and new arrivals, pro-Zionist Eastern Europeans who demanded inclusion and representation on the evolving new structure.

During this same period, in 1944, the Executive Council for Australian Jewry (ECAJ) was established, the national ‘roof body which – through its president and

---

24 See Chapter Six for a detailed account of Australian Jewish media monitoring which was part of the ongoing activity of the PRC.
26 See Rubinstein, H.L (1986); Rutland (1997: 215 - 16); Rubinstein, H.L. (1987: 199 - 201). Bloch (1977: 3) suggests that ‘under the impact of European migration, a ground swell developed to make the [Victorian] Board more democratic. It was alleged that in Europe, there were kehillas elected by universal franchise and that in Australia the Jewish community is run in an undemocratic manner’.
committee of management – *represents the community* at the federal level*’* (Rubinstein, H.L. 1987: 201, emphasis added). Rutland notes one clause in the constitution of the ECAJ which caused controversy at the time. One of its aims was: ‘To take such action as it considers necessary on behalf of Australian Jewry in matters that concern Australian Jewry or Jewry in other parts of the world (2004a: on-line)’.

The clause was objected to by the president of the Zionist Federation of Australia (ZFA), Samuel Wynn, ‘perhaps presaging the many periods of conflict between the ECAJ and ZFA in terms of acting as the spokesperson for the community’ (ibid.). An additional sentence was added to the clause stating: ‘It shall be competent for the Council to cooperate with any other body to carry out its objects’. Despite this concession to the strong Zionist influence, the ECAJ was clearly established to be ‘the sole organisation authorised to make representations to the government and the official spokesperson for Australian Jewry on all matters of lay concern such as immigration, anti-defamation, public relations and Jewish education’ (Rutland 1997: 218). Nevertheless, there remained until the early 1990s sporadic disputes between the two organizations as to which should represent Australian Jewry.

The ECAJ has been largely successful in the task of representing the Jewish *community*. (Although Rutland uses the term ‘Australian Jewry’, in my analysis this suggests slippage in language whereby ‘community’ stands in for ‘all Jews’). All Commonwealth governments have given the ECAJ considerable access to present its views. On the occasion of its 60th anniversary in 2004, both the Prime Minister, John Howard and the Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, wrote impassioned letters of endorsement and commendation for its work.77 Both letters make mention of the ECAJ’s work in supporting Indigenous Australians, in taking a public stand against antisemitism (as one would expect) as well as other forms of racism. This is of interest as an indication of how the community perceives and positions itself and is perceived. Support and working towards reconciliation and justice for Indigenous

---

77 Cited in [www.ecaj.org.au](http://www.ecaj.org.au)
Australians is an example of a universalist orientation, though as I will argue in Chapter Seven, there are more complex identity politics involved here.

The non-universalist community

Despite some of the recent work of the ECAJ and other Jewish organisations, W.D. Rubinstein (1991a), the prominent and prolific Jewish historian, presents a community that has become, since 1945, in his estimation overwhelmingly, and positively, inward looking, in his terms ‘non-universalistic’. Rubinstein’s overall premise is that for a number of reasons Australian Jewry since 1945 has turned its back on radical politics, on the Jewish tradition of tikkun olam, repair of the world, in contrast with a dominant section of American Jewry in the mid-twentieth century (ibid.: 6). Rubinstein argues that, on the other hand, ‘Australian Jewry … never had, and does not now have, any vision which is not, essentially, wholly Jewish, and either aimed at rebuilding the shattered remnants of European Jewry here, or at furthering Israel and Zionism, or a vision expressed in purely religious terms’ (ibid.: 7). He goes on to say that it is ‘virtually inconceivable’ that the ECAJ ‘would ever contemplate Jewish community involvement in such causes’ as nuclear disarmament (a significant issue in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s), environmentalism or civil liberties issues apart from antisemitism. He follows with:

Nor, in the recent past, was the Australian Jewish community notably hostile to the Vietnam War or notably active in any other left-wing cause, not directly involving a Jewish issue or antisemitism, since the 1950s and possibly at any time (ibid.: 8).

Rubinstein then provides six elements he considers have contributed, alone or together, ‘to produce the community we know’. These elements are:

- the pre-existing stance and leadership of the older Jewish community, the size, nature of migration patterns, and demography of the postwar community, the nature of Australian Jewry’s religious stance; the almost existential centrality of Israel and Zionism, the socio-economic status of the community and, perhaps above all, the structure and institutions of the community itself (ibid.: 8: emphasis added).
There are truths in Rubinstein’s comments, with which others have concurred. For example, a young Melbourne Jew wrote in the early 1970s, in relation to the socio-economic position of many Jews in Australia: ‘A radical politics of concern, sometimes upheld as one aspect of the Jewish heritage, seems to command little allegiance from a community which holds dinners for Liberal Prime Ministers at $100 a couple’ (Hearst 1973: 237). Another comment written in the same volume suggests the kind of insularity, or non-universalism, to which Rubinstein refers: ‘Their spokesmen are untiring, as they should be, in their concern for Russian Jews, or Israel, or local antisemitic outbursts. But beyond that - nothing. No Vietnam, no conscription, no education crisis, no party politics’ (Rosenbloom 1973: 250).

Thirty years later, several of my interviewees also alluded to their perception of the community’s relative wealth, as well as its inward-focus. Hans discussed the over-representation of Jews in the top-200 rich list, which he thought could create antisemitism or philosemitism - admiration for Jews, which could turn into envy. He said: ‘how do we dare, as half a percent of the Australian population, to figure prominently in the 200-richest list when most of them came here with nothing?’ (Miriam also made this kind of comment). Switching his pronouns from ‘we’ to ‘them’ is interesting – an initial affinity with Jews, followed quickly by a sociological, distancing third person ‘them’. Miriam called the community ‘parochial, narrow-minded and insular’, although she admitted ‘that’s the feeling I’ve got, and I’ve had very little to do with it’. Michael commented on the question of the relative affluence of Jews in Australia:

But the affluence has, sort of, the affluence has made, I think, Jews very complacent in a lot of ways. But the thing that they’re not complacent about is, still, this sensitivity to persecution, whether real or perceived. And I think that sort of obsession with the persecution in Australia. And in Israel, and in their support of Israel, it sort of blinds them to other issues that …. I would feel more willing to identify with the Jewish community if they were concerned about Aboriginal issues, or immigration, or things like that.

78 For a recent estimation of Jewish income distribution and socio-economic position in Australia, see Goldlust (2004: 17 – 19). In the same volume, Mendes (2004: 81) suggests the increasingly well-off position of many Jews in Australia, in some part accounts for their lessening identification with left politics.
Michael connected the themes of complacency that can arise from affluence, even if one has known hardship earlier in one’s life, and the lack of complacency when it concerns real or imagined persecution, antisemitism. Of course there are individuals within the community who are concerned about the external issues that Michael mentioned although he may not be aware of this. The key point is that the ‘non-universalist’ outlook Rubinstein considers a virtue was for Michael an obstacle to his feeling a ‘core’ part of the community.

Rubinstein sees that all the institutions ‘developed or favoured by Australian Jewry’s leadership in this period [the 1940s], without exception, were designed to foster Jewish survival, especially the day school movement and the barriers these schools provided against assimilation’ (ibid.: 15). A survey conducted in 2004 by the Jewish Agency’s Institute for Jewish People Policy Planning research group in Israel reports that those countries which have the most extensive Jewish education were at the bottom of the intermarriage list. Australia’s day school attendance was 65 percent, compared with South Africa and Mexico, where 85 percent attended Jewish schools, in Britain 67 percent and in the United States, 29 percent (Sheleg 2004: on-line). As well, day schools provide an inculcation into a Zionist world-view. Rubinstein and others contend that the high proportion of Holocaust survivors in Australia (60 percent) ensures that the central concern of the Jewish community was, and still is in a different way, to do with survival. ‘Israel’s raison d’être is Australian Jewry’s writ large’. Rubinstein then makes the following observation of this obsession with survival, in Australia and in Israel:

In such an environment, Jewish universalism is a luxury which cannot be afforded and which, regularly, represents an actual impediment to Jewish aspirations and, through the extreme anti-Zionism of much of the post-1967 far left, to the existence of Israel, often couched in rhetorical terms reminiscent of the pre-war extreme right; downtrodden groups assisted by Jewish universalism have an uncanny way of turning vociferously against the Jews, as many blacks in America have done (1991a: 15).

The above paragraph is an unequivocal endorsement of a discourse which, to this day, equates the survival of Jews with the survival of Israel. The Left, often referred to by Rubinstein as ‘the far Left’, has little place in this framework. His narrative
implies that ‘Jewish universalism’ is dangerous and will only lead to trouble and rejection.29

The Bund in Melbourne

For some of the reasons which Rubinstein outlines, there has not been a strong Jewish Left in Australia (1991a: 11).80 However, since 1948, there has been a less publicly acknowledged counter-discourse from Jews on the Left in Australia, offering commentary on and involvement in issues of specific interest to Jews as well as those of general political, economic and social concern, in Australia and internationally. The Jewish Labour Bund, centred in Melbourne, is one such group. My interest in the Bund comes from the knowledge that historically, it presented a world-view that did not place Israel at its centre. Additionally, it has had a ‘universalistic agenda’ (Mendes 1990: 29), unlike the more mainstream elements of the community. I was curious to examine how it perceived itself situated within the Zionist-dominated community of Melbourne in the post-war years and to this end, I interviewed five self-identified Bundists in that city.

The Bund, or General Jewish Workers’ Union, held its first meeting in 1897 in Wilno (Vilna), Poland in the same year as the first Zionist Congress met in Basel, Switzerland, although the former conducted its meeting in secret while the latter first met with great fanfare. Soon after its formation, the Bund broke with the ultra Left and has since been anti-communist. Many Bundists who migrated to Australia during the 1940s and 1950s had been persecuted in the Soviet Union. David Burstin,81 whose father, Sender, was one of the first Bundist activists to arrive in Melbourne, in 1928, asks rhetorically:

29 Rubinstein has written frequently about Jews, the Left and the Right, as well as the Jewish Left. For example, (1979); (1980), (1982); (Rubinstein, W.D. 1989); (1991b).
80 For examples of work on the Australian Left and Jews, written by Jews themselves, see Encel (1991), Goutman (1991), Mendes (1991; 1995; 2004), Taft (1991); for a political memoir from an Australian Jewish communist activist, see Rothfield (1997); on the Jewish Left in Australia, see Levey (1986); for a history of the oldest, current Jewish Left organisation, the Melbourne Australian Jewish Democratic Society, see Mendes (no date: on-line). These publications speak of a specific Jewish Left, as well as Jews involved in general left-wing politics. See Chapter Four for reasons accounting for the general decline of Jewish allegiance with left-wing politics in Australia and elsewhere.
81 Burstin is a long serving leader of SKIF (the Bundist youth group) in Melbourne, a director of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society and Chairperson of Sholem Aleichem College.
What was it like to be part of a minority Jewish group? The Bund being a minority group within the Jewish minority. What was it like to be told you are anti-Israel? What was it like to be told you are anti-religious? What was it like to be told that it was a waste of effort supporting Yiddish as it was a dying language? Also, if it wasn’t a dying language, it was not a ‘real’ language, but a ‘jargon’ (Burstin 2002: 359).

Bundist philosophy and ideology placed it somewhat on the margins of the Jewish community in Melbourne. They were non-religious or anti-religious, yet held a great love for the Jewish people, a love that was to be maintained in large part through the transmission of Yiddish – *Mamaloshen: the mother tongue*.82 They held on to ‘Judaism’s ideals of social justice’ (Rutland 1997: 5). Their philosophy was based on the view that ‘[o]nly in a society based on true equality, justice and peace, can the problems of Jewish life be solved’ (Mendes 1990: 29). In this way, the Bundists do not fit Rubinstein’s analysis of the ‘non-universalistic’ Australian Jewish community.

Freydi Mrocki, a leading Bundist and teacher of Yiddish in a Melbourne Jewish day school, states that socialism is one of the Bund’s platforms for ‘if the world is a better place for all, then the world will be a better place for the Jews’ (Kohn, R. 2004 Encounter, Radio National). The Bund was initially opposed to the establishment of a Jewish state. In 1949, in the Melbourne Bundist paper *Unser Gedank*83, Sender Burstin wrote:

A certain section of the Jewish community here as well as some of the Melbourne Jewish press are of the opinion that because of the existence of the State of Israel, all funding of aid to arriving migrants to Australia should cease. All assistance should now be concentrated in the direction of Israel. Only those who already have relations here, deserve the ‘generosity’ of our community aid in migrating to Australia (quoted in Ajzenbud 1996: 73).

These comments allude to a broader controversial discussion on Jewish post-war migration to Australia and the role of Jewish organisations in assisting them.84 The quotation makes clear the thinking of the Bund on migration matters at this time.

---

82 For a recent radio discussion on the role of Yiddish in maintaining Jewish culture, see Kohn (2004).
However, ‘like their co-thinkers overseas, [Australian Bundists] adapted their attitude to Israel in the changed circumstances of the postwar world and its dominant position in the Jewish community’ (Kuhn 1998: 6); (see Rubinstein, W.D. 1991a: 19). Burstin (ibid.: 362) put it like this:

With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the Bund was divided into two camps. Those that were having difficulty accepting the new State of Israel, represented by the left wing of the party and those that welcomed the new State. The vast majority of the Melbourne section of the Bund saw in the State of Israel a Jewish community that needed to be supported. …

David Burstin’s opinion was that the problem for many Bundistsn (Yiddish plural for Bundists) ‘was that too often support for the State of Israel often involved unequivocal support for the policies of the Government of the State of Israel’ (ibid.). He saw this as an increasing problem for Jews who voiced criticisms of Israel’s policies towards the Palestinians.

Interviewees who identified as Bundists concurred with Burstin’s statement above. Yet, for many leaders in the community, 100 percent loyalty is required in relation to Israel. According to my interviewee Leah, in the Jewish schools where she teaches, the Bund is still represented as anti-Zionist and anti-Israel. Ruby, a leader of the Bundist youth group, SKIF (Socialist Children’s Youth Federation), described her sense of relationship with the community because of her Bundist affiliation:

Well…to be honest, I don’t really see myself as part of it, but I see myself as part of the Yiddish …. sorry, the SKIF community. We are slightly in it, in the Jewish community, and one of my aims of being a leader at SKIF is to try and get us more involved, but there’s a lot that we’re excluded from because of our ideology.

I asked Ruby how the exclusion is practised:

Well, we’re not, like … things that are held, like, youth groups, for example, where leaders are invited, we’re not invited to. Last week was the first time we’ve ever been invited to something, which was just at the Jewish Museum, and they invited leaders to come, because they want us to join, become members. But that was the first time we’ve ever really socialised with a whole lot of different leaders from other youth movements. … So, we’re excluded a lot of the time.
Ruby and Leah stressed to me their partial sense of exclusion from the Jewish mainstream, yet Leah’s life in particular, fitted the pattern of an integral Jew, totally immersed in Jewish culture, education and sociality. The Bund’s continuity and adaptability in Melbourne is remarkable. It has a representative on the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and has been active for many years in Jewish Welfare activities. Australian Jewish historiography begrudgingly accords Bundists a minor place in Melbourne Jewish history that is less than evidence warrants. For example, Hilary Rubinstein remarks that the Bund ‘tries to keep alive its principles by operating two youth clubs …’ In another comment in her brief account of the Bund’s origins, she says, ‘many would add anachronistic’ (1987: 251). On the contrary, the Melbourne Bund has demonstrated that it is anything but anachronistic. Its members continue to play a significant cultural part of the Melbourne community, particularly instanced by assisting since 1987 in the organising of the annual Jewish festival ‘In One Voice: The Celebration of Jewish Life in Melbourne’. This festival according to its website, ‘is the largest Jewish cultural event in the southern hemisphere’. Interestingly, it too stresses the unity, the oneness of the community, with activities on the day called ‘with one brush’ (art), ‘with one pen’ (poetry), ‘to one beat’ (dancing and sport), ‘in one bite’ (food) and ‘with one aim’ (Jewish organisations).

The major organisational structures in Melbourne and Sydney were established at a time of devastation for world Jewry. One can understand the imperative for a unity of purpose at that time, and the appeal of ‘a sense of community [that] depends on the creation of perceived unity, arising from a discourse of oneness or sharing’ (Hiddleston 2002: 109). But this insistence on unity has continued to the present, where singularity is accentuated - one Board, one body, one voice, one community - often at the expense of difference.

See (www.inonevoice.org). See also the website of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies which, as one would expect, also accentuates its role in providing unity: It ‘speaks on behalf [of the Jewish Community] on all matters affecting the status, welfare and interest of New South Wales Jewry….. The Board provides leadership and a respected voice for the entire Jewish community to the wider community’ (www.nswjbd.org.)
Community in diaspora

The preceding two sections have demonstrated that the discourse of ‘community’ in general, and the ‘Jewish community’ in particular, accentuates homogeneity and unity. The organisations which developed during the 1940s to represent the Jews in Australia, reiterate that discourse. Any ethnic community, named in its singularity, is a political interpretation of that group and inevitably, in denying differences, cannot include all its members (Young, I.M. 1986). The Bund is an example of a group which, because of its enduring love for Jews and Jewishness, has remained both within and outside the mainstream of the Melbourne Jewish community, at some cost to individual Bundists. I now turn to the post-1948 changing notions of community with respect to ‘diaspora’. By the 1970s, the debate about the place of Israel in the identity of the community had become more complex and sometimes nuanced. This is evident from discussions on the issue of ‘dual loyalties’, to homeland and host land, and with regard to the reciprocity factor between a diasporic community and its putative homeland.

The question of the diaspora’s relationship with Israel is one that has been raised frequently since 1948 by Jewish communal leaders and other concerned Jews. Speaking in a debate on whether the diaspora should have an effective say in the affairs of Israel, which occurred at the end of 1950 in Sydney, Rabbi Brasch, an early proponent of reciprocity between Israel and its diaspora, commented:

There is no question of dual loyalty, you can be loyal to many causes. The government of Israel is not ruling just a small country, because Israel is the ‘home’ of 11 million Jews. Zionism outside of Israel must remain a dynamic movement with high ideals. The Diaspora without Israel is a clock without hands, Israel without the Diaspora is a ship without a rudder (1950: 267).

Opposing Rabbi Brasch’s motion, Dr J Schneeweiss advanced the argument that ‘there can be no privileges, without responsibilities and only the citizens of Israel can actively discharge those responsibilities’ (ibid.). In other words, Schneeweiss considered that the diaspora should not be so involved in Israel’s affairs.
Reflecting on what the establishment of the Israeli state meant for Australian Jews loyal to the British, Rutland’s historical introduction to the only survey conducted of the NSW Jewish community, states:

> Once the British withdrew [from Palestine], these problems of loyalty no longer existed for Australian Jewry, especially as the Australian Government has always firmly endorsed the existence of Israel, and was one of the first to extend *de jure* as well as *de facto* recognition in 1948 (Encel & Buckley 1978, 2nd edition: 24).

When this survey was conducted in NSW in the early 1970s, the Jewish community was strong, vibrant, possessed of a consciousness of itself and its place in multicultural, ethnically-defined Australia as well as its identity as a diasporic community. In the analysis of the Encel and Buckley survey, the authors are clear that Judaism can be defined as an ethnicity, not just as a religion. They cite five components of ethnicity which include descent, religion, culture, disadvantage and a mother country. They note that although there are differences between the Jewish case and other ethnic minorities like Greek-Australians, ‘Jewish identity is [nevertheless] inseparable from the centrality of Israel in the Jewish consciousness, and all the more so since 1948’ (ibid.: 99). Here, ethnicity as a descriptor for a homogeneous minority group, appears close to a definition of ‘diaspora’, although at that time the term was not in vogue.

Other Jewish Australian authors during the mid 1970s were reflecting upon questions of Jewish identity and Israel. In a symposium held in Melbourne in 1976, Peter Medding (1976: 5) details three basic contemporary Jewish ethnic ties: ‘A biological sense of kinship and family; a psychological sense of loyalty reinforced by a sense of humour and a cultural and national sense of shared peoplehood’. In his discussion on the concept of Jewish peoplehood, guided by ‘primordial feelings’, Medding argues that this is ‘continually reinforced by the various connections with Israel….what was previously inchoate, vague and unconscious is now real, specific and highly visible’ (ibid.: 8), since the establishment of the state. He also notes a discourse which had entered the American Jewish narrative at that time, arguing for a parallel ‘Jewish cultural and religious life… and claiming equality with Israel as a
Jewish centre’ (ibid.: 18). In other words, he argues that some American leaders have reacted against what they considered an ‘over-concern with Israel to the exclusion of all else in Jewish life’ (ibid.). Medding is convinced however that in Australia it would be very difficult to avoid focusing on Israel and its ‘magnetic attraction’ since it offers Jewish people a ‘highly meaningful and self-explanatory development of Jewish peoplehood’. Another reason he gives for the strong Australian Jewish connection with Israel is that the Australian Jewish community ‘is distinguished by the derivativeness and poverty of its Jewish religious, cultural and intellectual resources and contributions’ (ibid.: 19). In Chapter Three I discuss early Zionists’ responses to this alleged derivativeness.

At this same symposium Walter Lippmann, a leading, much-respected figure in the Melbourne community for many years, commented upon the need for Australian Jewry to enhance its intellectual and ideological resources and emphasised ‘its relevance to the general environment in which our children grow up’ (ibid.: 12). Lippmann’s priorities for communal life contrasted with those of Zionist community leaders:

Our preoccupation with public relations and with Israel is understandable; it is important but could prove to be self-defeating if we ignore other aspects of Jewish life and internal Jewish problems. The basic task which faces us is to strengthen communal cohesion and the identification with Jewish communal life of those who have drifted away or are in danger of doing so (ibid.: 15).

Lippmann suggests that preoccupation with Zionism and Israel alone are not sufficient to prevent Jews from moving away from the orbit of the Jewish community. He wanted to reinforce other centripetal forces which might bring Jews back. On the other hand, an example from one of the Melbourne Zionist leaders at the time unequivocally expresses the need of Australian Jewry for Zionism and Israel, when he states:

Almost all Jewish institutions - schools, charities, social organisations, clubs - continuously own [sic] their existence and raison d’être to Israel. Without Israel and without the idea of Zionism most of the existing community life in this country would collapse and apathy, inaction and
hedonism would very speedily obliterate Jewish life in this country (Svoray 1976: 2).

A study of Melbourne’s Jewish Community conducted in 1991 (Goldlust 1993) found that attachment to Israel was very strong, with almost three-quarters of those surveyed having visited Israel at least once. Goldlust points to the ‘emotional and psychological significance of Israel as a focus for contemporary Jewish group identity’ and that only two percent of respondents said they would not be concerned if Israel was in danger (ibid.: 33). At the same time, most respondents said they would prefer to live their lives in Australia. Despite this indication of Israel’s limited appeal as a place of domicile, Goldlust and others point to the emotional attachment to Israel which places Jews in an equivalent position to many diasporic groups with their enduring connections to their homelands ‘even after many years of settlement in a new society’. Goldlust supports Australia’s approach to multiculturalism which ‘acknowledge[s] and respect[s] this need [of attachment to homeland], as well as it challenge[s] the assumption that such tendencies are undesirable because they inevitably engender “conflicting loyalties” and/or diminished identification with the new national community’ (ibid.). The problem with Goldlust’s account is that it equates Jews with other ethnic groups who share a homeland, even though few Australian Jews actually come from Israel.\(^8\)

Stratton (2000: 238), on the other hand, presents a more complex account of Jewish ethnicisation in Australia. In multicultural Australia, Jews are identified in the census and elsewhere as one homogenous religio-ethnic group, despite coming from many countries in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Writers on Jews in Australia tend to use census data, based on the religion category, and convert it into a discussion of Jews that more closely approximates the ethnicity rhetoric to which Stratton refers above. The Australian Census has always classified Jews by their religion: ‘As a consequence, all estimates of the numbers of Jews in Australia are dependent on those who give Judaism as their religious affiliation’ (ibid.: 197).

---

\(^8\) Gold (2002: 25) reports that at the time of the 1996 Australian census, there were 5,923 Hebrew-speaking people living in Australia, most of whom were likely to be Israeli. This is about one-fifth of the Jewish population in Australia.
However, the ‘religion’ category in the census does not adequately cover either the now out-moded discourse on race where Jews were positioned in Australia as ambivalently-white, nor does it deal with the complexity of ‘ethnicity rhetoric and multiculturalism’ where migrants are categorised according to their national backgrounds (ibid.: 195 - 197). Stratton contends that ‘the lack of a national origin means that there is nothing to anchor the representation of a Jewish ethnic identity’ (ibid.: 238) ‘within the Australian multicultural nation-state’ (ibid.: 239), referring specifically to cultural representation. He follows with the proposition that the ‘Jewish Australian ethnicity is removed from problematic national origins by situating it in relation to the Holocaust as a geographically European event’ (ibid.: 242). The Holocaust both ‘normalises Jews as an ethnic group within Australia’ while at the same time, it ‘reasserts their specialness in proportion to the uniqueness attributed to the Holocaust’ (ibid.: 243). As more years pass from the Holocaust and there are no longer any survivors in our midst, it is likely that its function both to normalise Australian Jews and to make them special, will decrease.

In the present though, one can argue that Israel, like the Holocaust has served ‘teleologically as a pseudo-national origin for sections of the Jewish community’ (ibid.: 220). Additionally, Israel and Zionism provide both cultural and political anchors for Jewish identities in multicultural Australia, although, as I argue, they have become problematic ‘anchors’. The discourse surrounding Jewish diaspora since 1948 suggests a sometimes cultural, political, religious or primordial connection with Israel, not generally with another nation where they or their forebears were born.87 Certainly, this discourse has been reiterated by most community leaders since 1948, although it is expressed more ambivalently by some of the interviewees.

87 A minority exception to this sense of diaspora comes from those strongly-identified Jewish Bundists in Melbourne who perceive Jewish nationhood in a diasporic sense but with no clear identification of Israel as the primary homeland.
During the 1990s, debate in Australia and elsewhere about the respective roles of Israel and the diaspora had become more complex and divergent. One of the key players in the debate in this country was Isi Leibler, President of the ECAJ from 1978-80, 1982-85 and 1987-89 (Rubinstein, W.D. 1991a: 22), an influential Melbourne businessman and staunch Zionist. Leibler was influenced by such Israelis as Yossi Beilin who was Israel’s Deputy Foreign Minister during the early 1990s, who felt strongly that the diaspora should concentrate on its own viability for it might be in more need of funds than Israel. It is not possible to offer any analysis of the discourse at this time without referring to Isi Leibler, since his views dominated public discussion in the Jewish community and beyond. By the end of 1993, Israel had formally recognised the PLO and there were hopes for a Peace Settlement between Israelis and Palestinians as a result of the Oslo Accords. Leibler at this time suggested that these changes would mean ‘a much freer Diaspora…No more would Jewish leaders who had held back on public criticism from the Left or the Right, be as inhibited. No more would the great majority of them take their lead from Jerusalem as a matter of course’ (Lipski 1993: 1).

In the following years, the *Australian Jewish News* reported extensively on Israel-diaspora relations, basically articulating the need for a more equal partnership between the two entities and an end to the era of ‘decades of demeaning, self-denigrating “Diaspora-cringe”’. The new word to describe the relationship was ‘symbiotic’, signifying mutual dependence and cooperation, but each playing a part essential for Jewish continuity’ (Bernstein 1994: 1).

In demonstration of the importance of Israel to its Australian diaspora, the 50th anniversary meeting of the ECAJ was, under Leibler’s leadership, convened in

---

88 A selection of recent international literature on the Israel / diaspora relationship, includes Beilin (2000) on an historical and contemporary account of the changing relationship of Israel with particularly, the American Jewish diaspora, Shain and Bristman (2002) on the relationship in the light of Israel’s conflict with the Palestinians; Horowitz (1998) on contradictions within the relationship coming from Israel as a source of pride and anxiety; Chiswick (1998); Tye (2001), a journalist’s account of the strength of seven different diasporic communities; Benbassa and Attias (2004) in conversation about Jewish identities, Zionism and its effects on the diaspora in France.

89 For Australians, ‘diaspora cringe’ evokes the more general ‘cultural cringe’, a term used to explain a propensity for Australians to denigrate their own and trust that anything from overseas is necessarily superior. In recent years, cultural cringe, like its diasporic counterpart, has diminished somewhat.
Jerusalem, in part to introduce the community’s 40 strong leadership to senior Israel leaders (Tsur 1995: 162, in Appendix of ECAJ 1995 Report of Annual Conference). Leibler wanted his neo-Zionism to be promoted at ‘every level through Diaspora communities…and can be best summed up as direct personal involvement with Israel, for example by sending young people to spend a year in Israel, rather than for ‘four to six week tourist junkets’ (Leibler, I. 1994: 46). Ezer Weizman, then President of Israel, corroborated these sentiments at the conference, stressing the supreme importance of Israel for the continuity of diasporic Jewish life. He said:

To protect the Australian community from assimilation, as far as I am concerned, there is only one solution, namely Israel. If you are not Observant, come to Israel. And since the majority of you are secular in any event, then in terms of the community, the collective solution is Israel (Weizman 1995: 168).

Weizman’s comments about diaspora Jewry sparked controversy in Australia. One particularly strident opposing view came from a regular commentator with the AJN, Chaim Bermant, who wrote:

Ties between Israel and the Diaspora are about as deep as they reasonably can be. Perhaps they are deeper than they should be, not only in the sense that Israel attracts most of our money, but because it remains at the centre of our pre-occupations. We have let Jerusalem dictate our agenda and list our priorities…. What we need is a conference which would redefine the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora. This would have to recognise that the Diaspora has its own life, its own future, and that we can flourish beyond the Jewish state (Bermant 1995).

Such a conference was subsequently held in March 1998 at the Sydney-based University of New South Wales. A keynote speaker, political scientist Professor Gabriel Sheffer proposed that diaspora priorities should be reconsidered; that there was an increasing ‘lack of fit’ between Israel and the diaspora. From the Israeli perspective, there were many more priorities and concerns than the state of diaspora Jewry. On the question of sending funds to Israel, the NSW State Zionist Council President Dr Ron Wiseman, in contrast, commented: ‘We don’t give to

---

90 Weizman’s successor, President Moshe Katsav, held a similar view when for example, he ‘called on world Jewish leaders to set aside their differences and to place aliyah at the top of their agenda’. He too felt that living in Israel was the most certain remedy for Jewish assimilation (Hoffman 22 September 2000: 19).
Israel because it’s a mendicant state; Zionism is a two-way street’ (Alhadeff 13 March 1998: 8).

On the occasion of Israel Independence Day, 15 May 2000, the Sydney edition of AJN provided an analysis of how the relationship between Israel and the diaspora was perceived to have developed in the decades since 1948. It admitted that doikat – hereness, as conceived by the Bundists - had ‘passed into history’ for the majority of Jews in Australia, and ‘few have even heard of the word’. In one sense, Zionism had ‘won’, since ‘the dream of creating the State and gathering in Jewish victims of persecution was certainly realised’. However, as the editorial acknowledged, the other part of the dream, that all Jews would ‘flock to Israel’, has not come to pass, in part because of the ‘strong pull of life in the West’. Hence, as Israel entered its fifty-third year:

the picture has changed. No longer is the State a young supplicant, relying on the financial and human capital of the Diaspora for survival. No longer is the Diaspora a spiritual poor relation, filled with so-called armchair Zionists who might feel embarrassed that they had not gone on aliyah (Editorial 2000: 14).

The editorial speaks of a symbiotic relationship in which ‘the parties nurture and complement each other’. In sum, there is a sense of communal satisfaction reflected in these words, whereby Jews in Australia and elsewhere can have the best of both worlds: a strong sense of Jewish history and knowledge of Hebrew ‘without making aliyah a prerequisite of Jewish fulfillment. A healthy maturation process has taken place....’.

For those Jewish leaders and integral Jews, whose implicit roles are to manage the discourses which circulate around the community, it is necessary to speak in positive terms about the strong connection between Jews in Australia and Israel. In March 2005 when a visiting Israeli economist spoke at a public forum in Melbourne, saying that from the perspective of Israel’s national budget, “the brutal fact is

91 The role of Zionist fundraising is discussed again in Chapter Three in relation to its role in the pre-1948 years to increase Zionism’s standing in Australia and in Chapter Four, as evidence of the significance of the Six-Day War for Australian Jewry.
…[Diaspora Jewry’s fundraising for Israel] doesn’t matter one toss … and is utterly irrelevant’’ (Lipski 2005: 15), his comments were not well received. The journalist, Sam Lipski, provides two responses. One is from an executive of the United Israel Appeal, Max Shnider, who ‘pointed to the important spiritual ties and human bonds the financial support creates with Israel’ (ibid.). The act of giving provides deeper satisfaction than the mere reward of contributing monetarily. In relation to Israel itself, Lipski’s final comment alludes to the immeasurable value of Israel for the Jewish people: ‘… the real bottom line is that Israel and its people, by their mere existence and determination to survive, have repaid – and repay – Diaspora Jews everywhere daily, many times over in immeasurable currency’ (ibid.) For many Australian diasporic leaders, the consciousness of Israel as the mainstay of Jewish continuity and identity still prevails, despite the views of some Israelis.

**Diasporic consciousness - interviewees speak**

The examples in the previous section highlighted both the primacy of the Israel-diaspora relationship for Australian Jewish leaders, as well as offering some critiques of it, coming especially from the Jewish media in this country. The changes in the relationship, from the early 1950s on, reflect on the one hand, a more confident, assertive, independent Israel (the child who has grown up). On the other hand, the Australian diaspora, the parent, has also matured. Yet for many, particularly in the inner circles of the community, the need to nurture Israel – and be nurtured by her – remains. Simultaneously, there are voices from within the community seeking more separation from Israel and more focus on Jewish and other needs in this country – doikat, in fact. In this light, how do contemporary Australian Jews, like my interviewees, think about their identities in relation to the notion of diaspora?

Robin Cohen, a key diaspora theorist, categorises the various Jewish responses to the creation of the Israeli state as:

Zionists, encompassing those with the urge to make *aliyah*;
Patrons and proto-Zionists, ‘their eyes did not burn with a messianic zeal’, although they give funds to Israel;

Zealots or religious Jews who live in Israel but do not recognise the secular state – for only the messiah can reunite the diaspora with the homeland;

Religious Reform groups, who assert that the universal principles of Judaism should be practised within a diasporic existence;

Assimilationists, Jews who have abandoned their religion, but may have a range of strong feelings for Israel and finally

Post-Zionists, who would urge Israelis to understand ‘that the bona fide Jewish tradition requires sharing space with others, that there needs to be a complete separation of religion from state, that the Law of Return needs to be revoked and that they should seek to build a multinational and multicultural society’ (Cohen, R. 1997: 118 - 124). Post-Zionists would also urge a greater separation between Israel and diaspora Jewry, although there are also those in Israel who advocate this, but do not call themselves post-Zionists.

Broadly speaking, the people I interviewed encompassed all of these positions except the zealot. Cohen’s categories, however, do not reflect the ambivalence about the relationship with Israel, which is present for many loyal Jews, except perhaps the most diehard Zionists. I have focused on quotations which express some ambivalence and ambiguity, intrigued as I am by the liminal and the tensions this position reveals in the discourse surrounding this subject. Indeed, in different ways, almost all the interviewees suggested a sense of dis-ease about the connection between Israel and the diaspora, which ran alongside other, more positive feelings towards Israel. The interviewee David captured the most commonly expressed affective response about Israel:

I think most people would agree that Israel is the one place where we know you can run away to if you’re a Jewish person, if you’re having trouble in wherever country you happen to be, so it’s definitely Israel as a security blanket.
Others, however, felt disturbed by Israel’s position with regard to the diaspora.

Esther said:

Yeah, you often hear about people making statements that even if you’re not an Observant Jew and you’re living in Israel, you’re more Jewish than an observant Jew living in the diaspora, and I have issues with that as well.

I can’t imagine thinking of Israel as my homeland just because I’m Jewish. I feel like there’s … when I think of what is a home, you know, comfort and security and family and stability and all of those things, it’s nothing that Israel can offer me, personally, so… I can see the ideal in having Israel there for us if we need it, and that any Jewish person is lawfully allowed to emigrate there, and is automatically a citizen there, or whatever, but not for me, personally.

Esther was in many ways an integral Jew, in the sense that she worked in a Jewish educational establishment and she seemed, from the interview, very committed to matters Jewish. Yet, her views on the significance of Israel for Jews diverged from what I have identified as the dominant discourse, noteworthy for one whose Jewish identity played such a central part in her life. She had ‘issues’ with the primacy given to Israelis’ Jewishness. Although she did not oppose the existence of Israel and recognised its importance in times of need, she did not feel a strong connection with it and has never visited.

Sharing Esther’s lack of identification with Israel was Jeff, another committed Jew from a Bundist family. He spoke with a conviction reflecting Bundist discourse about Jews as a ‘nation’ and a ‘people’:

I don’t like being a diaspora Jew, because I’m just as important as a Jew in Israel. You know? They’re not on a higher moral ground because they live in Israel. We’re all Jews, and we’re all connected.

The term ‘diaspora’ must, at the very least, involve ‘a memory of, a cultural connection with, and a general orientation towards [a] homeland’ (Safran 2004: 10), according to most theorists. However, Jeff did not have this particular connection with Israel, nor did he see it as his homeland. The Bundist philosophy, admittedly shrinking in significance, views all Jews around the world as equal, without an orientation to one primary homeland.
In contrast, Tim, a young religious Jew and Zionist, had concerns about how Israel saw the diaspora:

You get a lot of Israelis who believe that they’re very proud of being Israelis but they’re not so concerned about … the connection to the rest of the Jewish world. I went to a conference, World Zionist Youth Conference, in ’96, and it really surprised me, the Israeli attitude. Because, I mean, we were celebrating a hundred years of Zionism, and from the Israelis’ perspective … I just didn’t get that flavour of Zionism from Israel. From the rest of the world it was much stronger. But from Israel, there wasn’t so much Israel-diaspora relations. So, there was a lot of diaspora trying to provide support to Israel, but a lot of Israel [saying], ‘Well, we can look after ourselves now, we’re a competent country and, well, … you guys, by all means, come to Israel!’

Tim’s disappointment at this experience in Israel corroborated the views of the visiting Israeli economist, cited earlier. That is, Zionism is for the diaspora, the Israelis have their homeland and state. Susanna was also an integral Jew whom I interviewed a year after her return from a decade living and working in Israel. She reflected on her time there:

I worked at a Jewish agency in the last eight months that I was in Israel, and I remember, when I first started working [at the agency] - I hadn’t worked in a Zionist organisation for a very long time - and I remember, it was like, ‘Oh, my God! That’s right! There are Jews in Israel who are Zionist! Not to do with developing settlements, just to do with a concept of the Jewish state for the Jewish people, and the development of the Jewish people. Not with the political context of it. And it was this feeling of, ‘Oh, my God! There are people in Israel that love Israel!’ You know? That feel the same way that the diaspora does about Israel.

Whereas Tim was surprised by Israeli’s lack of Zionist feeling, after nearly ten years in Israel, Susanna was surprised to find Zionist Jews. Being an Israeli, Zionism as a philosophy or ideology, with its necessary outreach to Jews in the galut, is not relevant. By contrast, Susanna thought the Jewish community in Sydney was:

---

92 Yet, the official Israeli discourse, coming from key bodies like the Jewish Agency (JA), is still Zionist. For example, the survey of world Jewry conducted in 2004 for the JA’s new Institute for Jewish People Policy Planning states that its ‘basic approach … is to view Israel and the Diaspora as one body, and not to separate Israel from the Diaspora, as was done in the past’ (Sheleg 2004: on-line). As Nimni says, the largely secular Zionist movement adopted the term to suggest ‘the lack of authenticity of Jewish life in the diaspora and the validity of its ultimate goal of ingathering the diasporas/exiles’ to Israel. The term is not now used generally in the secular English-speaking Jewish media. T’futsoth is the original
quite a Zionistic community compared to others. And that, unfortunately, I think that until recently it’s been joined together by its Zionism as opposed to its communal development.

I asked her to elaborate:

Unfortunately, because I think that that leaves a great hole for those that don’t feel connected to Israel. It doesn’t allow them an involvement that would necessarily stimulate them and their Jewish identity, or their Jewish involvement in communal activities. That’s why I say, ‘unfortunately’. But, fortunately, I see that there’s been a great change … since I left Australia, in the last ten years.

Susanna despite being a devout Jew and Zionist, could see that not all Jews felt the same connection with Israel and was keen to promote activities that were not focused around Israel. Another interviewee, Miriam, expressed ambivalent feelings about Israel which she linked to her lack of connectedness to the Jewish community and her fears of not being fully Jewish. Miriam was different to the other people I have just discussed, in that her sense of her Jewishness was not as strong, secure, or important to her. She said:

I’ve never been to Israel. That’s how little … I mean, but on the other hand, it does exist, and I do want to go there. I will. I do want to go there. Part of the reason why I haven’t gone there is that I am afraid of feeling even more uncomfortable once I do get there about not being affiliated as a Jew, not being fully identified as a Jew, not being an active part of some Jewish, diaspora, community.

One could categorise Miriam as a ‘peripheral’, circling at a distance around the community despite her secular, liberal Jewish upbringing in New York. She began with an unfinished thought ‘that’s how little…’. I assumed she was going to finish with ‘Israel means to me’. However, on rapid reflection, she realised that she did want to go there, yet her reasons for not going were revealing. She feared feeling uncomfortable because she was not ‘fully identified as a Jew’ in Australia, which meant to her, being active within the community.

---

translation of ‘diaspora’ into the Hebrew, meaning ‘dispersion’ rather than the negative ‘exile’. In Israel, it is only recently that T’futsoth has gained some currency. Nimni also comments that many Israelis are unaware of the very different connotations of the two words (2003: 133 and 151 note 50).

116
Seth, Israeli-born, performed his Jewish identity as a dissenter and a Leftist, which placed him outside the inner circles of the Jewish mainstream. He described himself as a post-Zionist and, as such, was ‘in favour of reducing the relationship between diaspora Jews and Israel’. He thought that Israel had to become more democratic, incorporating its non-Jewish citizens equally and he pointed to the reality that, given current demographic projections, in fifty years time, unless there is massive Jewish immigration to Israel which currently seems unlikely, Jewish Israelis would not comprise a majority.

Finally, a comment from Anna, who had ambivalent feelings about the Jewish community in Sydney and its diasporic sensibility, which she partly expressed in the paragraphs below:

The issue is that people still look on Israel like they did in the ‘50s and ‘60s. That it’s a struggling state that needs our support. And it’s a big mind switch to say, ‘Well, hang on. Israel is a sovereign state acting in its own self-interest and I, as a Jew, as a citizen of Australia, - no, sorry I, as a citizen of Australia, I as a Jew, have to look at the politics of Israel as I would any other state’. I think this is the problem, that a lot of people can’t make that mind shift, because it’s too emotional, and it’s very difficult to accept the fact that Israel, Jews, can behave in the way that that state behaves. Because - quote unquote - ‘Jews don’t behave that way’.

I think the most difficult thing for the diaspora Jews will be to make that mind shift. To say, ‘Right. What does it mean to be Jewish? Do I need a modern Israeli state for my Judaism?’

Anna made several related points here. The first few sentences resonate with how some Jewish leaders have expressed the changing relationship between Israel and the diaspora and that the latter should see Israel as any other state. Anna, in her hesitant self-identity as Australian citizen first, then Jewish, also admitted that it would be difficult for many people to accept ‘bad behaviour’ from the Jewish state, because ‘Jews don’t behave that way’. This last sentence was revealing and

94 Zionists argue, contra post-Zionist positions, that all nation-states still have an ‘ethnic component to their national identity and the Zionist movement’s goal [has been] to “normalise” the Jewish people [and their ‘abnormal’ and troubled diasporic existence] so that they too have immigration to Israel, a state in which to invest their ethnic identity’ (Nimni 2003: 2). In contrast, post-Zionists argue controversially for Israel to become a truly liberal democratic state, of all its citizens with ‘no ethnicity….ontologically or institutionally privileged over any other’ (ibid.).
provoked me to consider the discourses from which such a thought might emanate. Was it a response to centuries of antisemitism where Jews, as victims, had been the objects of others’ bad behaviour? Or did it come from the paradoxical situation in which Israel’s ‘fundamental affective state is the risk of death’ according to Alain Finkelkraut (1994: 129), whereas the affective state of the diaspora – at least in the West – is peace of mind? How, when the life of a nation is at risk, can it be accused of bad behaviour? Or, thirdly, Anna’s comment might have emerged from a vague religious notion of mitzvot, commandments, or rules of conduct or ritual which are ‘seen as an obligation one owes, not to any human authority, but to God Himself.’ (Goldberg & Rayner 1989: 293). Like several other interviewees, Anna related to me a view she thought was predominant among other Jews. However, in the second short paragraph, she hinted at what she thought, with the question ‘Do I need a modern Israeli state for my Judaism?’ The fact that she asked this question suggested to me that Anna herself was uncertain about providing an affirmative response.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have demonstrated the paradox of community, its ‘simultaneous impossibility and necessity’ (Secomb 2003: 9). Beginning the chapter, I noted the place of affect in the formation and maintenance of community. If there were no feelings of in-commonness, there would be no community. And certainly Jews have had plenty to ‘feel’ about. I found the idea of a circular diagram useful in order to concretise the amorphousness of community-in-abstract. However, the circles are not meant to signify that there is no movement back and forth, towards and away from, the core. There is. And for some, what the core represents is problematic. This chapter also importantly demonstrates how Zionism’s discursive practices have been integral to the Australian Jewish community.

The thoughts of some of my interviewees have revealed the complexities, confusions and contradictions that can arise when individual Jewish subjects argue with, or against the dominant discursive patterns inherent in terms such as ‘diaspora’ and ‘community’. I was surprised at the angst with which some
interviewees expressed their thoughts about the relationship with Israel at the same time as they affirmed Israel’s significance for Jews. I had thought that the question of Israel was more settled for most Jews, than appeared from some of my material. Additionally, there is the sense, not only coming from the Bundists, that Jews have a responsibility to live their lives well here – in Australia. So, how did this somewhat troubling situation come to pass? How did Israel become the anchor of identity that it is today for many Jews, and certainly for the ‘public face’ of the Jewish community in Australia? I now turn to Zionism itself in Australia, to examine how its reluctant emergence in the first decades of the 20th century transformed into the dominant and defining position it occupies today.
Chapter Three: Under contestation. Zionism in Australia prior to 1948

Introduction
The development of Zionism in Australia was intricately intertwined with the growth of the Jewish community and establishment of its institutional structures. Zionism in Australia is viewed as ‘one of [its] last bastions’, according to one of the key documenters of Australian Jewish history, Suzanne Rutland (2001: 19). In this chapter, I trace key events and influences prior to the establishment of Israel that changed the climate of Zionist discourse in Australia from an idea espoused by a small minority of Jews to a widely accepted reality, playing a hegemonic role in the discursive life of the Australian Jewish community. How has this been explained by Jewish historians and other commentators? Were there specific conditions within Australian Jewry that made it uniquely receptive to Zionist ideas or was it rather a particular instance of a movement that engulfed and propelled Jewry world-wide, from the 1940s to the present day?

Narration of Zionist history in Australia has largely been undertaken from the perspective of, and with deep sympathy for, the ‘victors’. In the early twentieth century political Zionism, the movement towards establishing a Jewish state in Palestine was still a fanciful idea for most Jews. It was an idea that was received with more hostility than support, especially from Australian Jewish leaders. The historical accounts of this time however, assume an inevitability in the eventual emergence of a hegemonic Zionist discourse. An example of ‘finalism’ in history-writing, the establishment of a Jewish homeland and nation-state are explained retrospectively as ‘the finalised necessity of the development [from a particular point in the past] to the present’ (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 118). Events related to Zionism are explained as either contributing to, or detracting from the progress towards, in this case, the establishment of a Jewish state.
The key accounts of pre-1948 Australian Zionism are from Max Freilich (1967), an ardent Zionist who wrote a memoir of his involvement in the movement, Eliyahu Honig (1990, 1995, 1997), Bernard Hyams (1996, 1998) and Hilary and William Rubinstein (1991, volumes 1 and 2). Apart from Freilich’s memoir, these texts were written fairly recently with the benefit of partial hindsight. That is, although these authors acknowledge and describe the contested nature of Zionism in the pre-1948 years, they have written with an ‘unreflective impulse’ about the justice of the Jewish claim to Israel/Palestine. This is perhaps because, as Jews and Zionists ‘they are too emotionally invested in the past that is the focus of their research’ (Endelman 2001: 63).\textsuperscript{95} In this chapter, I take a different perspective from Endelman who views the cultural studies focus on discourse and representation as an ‘intellectual plaything’ (ibid.). I explore the ways that ‘the limits and forms of the sayable’ and ‘the limits and forms of conservation’ functioned in the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century during the formation of Zionist discursive practices. What was it possible to speak of, at a given period? Which utterances were put into circulation, which became repressed?

**Australian Jewry under British colonial influence: a case of dual loyalty?**

One of the most significant factors impinging upon the uptake of Zionism in Australia in the entire period leading to the establishment of the Israeli state was the concept of ‘dual loyalty’ to the Australian nation and by extension to the British Empire, and also to a homeland in Palestine. The notion ‘that one could advocate the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine and still claim to be a loyal citizen, was seen as a contradiction in terms’ (Lee 1985: 128 – 29). There are a number of reasons for Jewish Australians’ reluctance to embrace a Jewish homeland. One of the first acts of the newly created Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 was to pass the Immigration Restriction Bill which ‘prohibited the immigration into Australia of “non-Europeans” or “the coloured races”’ (Stratton & Ang 1998: 148). The White Australia policy, which emerged from this Bill, emphasised the new nation-state’s

\textsuperscript{95} Endelman made this comment to explain why very few historians of Jews have embraced a cultural studies way of writing history, which assumes its construction and the inevitable subjectivity of historians. He considers these historians so ‘invested’ in their histories that they cannot afford not to consider them as reality.
'search for a national identity in a European culture and a British-based racial homogeneity (which inevitably implies the exclusion of racial/cultural Others)' (ibid.: 149).

The ambivalent racialisation of Australian Jews in the history of white Australia is also discussed by Stratton (2000: 195 - 219), who sees Jews as ‘caught on the horns of a dilemma’ (ibid.: 207). The national discourse of assimilation was strong and Jews were highly influenced by and benefited from it. Indeed, three Jews were members of the first Australian parliament in 1901 (Vaiben Solomon, Elias Solomon and Sir Isaac Isaacs) (Rosenbaum 2005: 13), evidence of Jews’ acceptance into the newly created national polity and society.

If Jews ‘married out’ this assisted in the assimilation process, considered a good thing in the first decades of the 20th century. At the same time, it ‘destroyed the endogamous basis of Jewish particularity – not just a religious grouping but something more’ (Stratton 2000: 207). Before the 1920s, the dominance of an Anglo-Jewish leadership continued to minimise any distinctiveness between Jews and non-Jews, apart from that brought about by religion. By 1920, most Australian Jews were born in Australia or Britain and ‘regarded themselves as British subjects and loyal Australians, more concerned with being Australian than with being Jewish’ (Rutland 1997: 106). In 1911, 63% of the Jewish population was born in Australia. By 1954, following wartime immigration, this figure had fallen to 39%. The proportion of those born in the United Kingdom dropped from 16.5% to 9% in the same period (Price 1964: Appendices A and B). Given that one of the hallmarks of Zionism is its emphasis on Jewish distinctiveness and particularity, it is not surprising that the assimilationist Anglo-Jewish community in Australia was reluctant to embrace it.

Despite this reluctance from the leadership and many influential rabbis, the period from the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1897 to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 saw the beginnings of organisational political Zionism in

---

*There was opposition from a number of rabbis to Zionism’s secularisation of ‘the Messianic idea and [they] rejected the concept that nationalism could solve the Jewish question’ (Rutland 1997: 89).*
Australia. Small Zionist societies or associations were formed in Sydney in 1908, and in Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane in 1913 (Hyams 1998: Chapter One). At the same time however:

Throughout Australia, as in other western democracies, Jews viewed political Zionism with deep suspicion, even outright resentment. They feared that if Palestine became the officially acknowledged Jewish national homeland they would be expected to move there, and would lose their British citizenship and right of domicile in Australia (Rubinstein, H.L. 1991: 534).

Comparisons have been made between Australian Jews’ responses to Zionism and the more positive ones from comparable ‘new world’ British dominions of Canada and South Africa who had both received large influxes of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe in the 1880s and 1890s (Hyams 1998: 21). Hyams states that the Australian Jewish leadership preferred ‘British citizenship to Jewish nationality and was somewhat nervous about potential anti-Semitic accusations of Jewish ingratitude for the gift of civil rights Jews enjoyed’ (ibid.). The early suspicion of political Zionism can be related to several factors. Jewish demography in Australia shifted with the arrival of small numbers of Jews from Russia, making the resident Jews anxious about arousing antisemitism in non-Jews. This anxiety was exacerbated by the fact that Australia experienced a depression during the 1890s and this coincided with Australia’s recent acquisition of nationhood, with its emphasis on white and Anglo homogeneity.

The first recorded piece of Australian Zionist political lobbying ‘probably’ occurred in early 1919 ‘when three leading Melbourne figures … obtained an interview with Senator Pearce, Minister of Defence, before his impending departure for London. They plied him with relevant literature, enlisted his sympathy for their cause and secured from him an undertaking to support the cause when he was in Britain’ (Hyams 1998: 29). The Balfour Declaration (November 1917) had signaled a general intention ‘to facilitate the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people’ (Laqueur 2003: 448). The Declaration brought with it appeals to Australia from the

---

London offices of the Zionist Bureau for ‘urgent financial support’ (Crown 1987: 231). Additionally, as Crown notes, the Declaration and the fact that Britain assumed the Mandate for Palestine following World War One, ‘allayed the fears of the Anglo-Jews [in Australia] and earned their support’ (ibid.) The fact that the Balfour Declaration was a British initiative also alleviated Australian Jewish fears of dual loyalties.

By 1920 Zionist activity was sufficiently developed that the Zionist executive in London sent its first emissary, Israel Cohen, to Australia to raise funds for the Palestine Restoration Fund (Crown 1987: 232). Cohen travelled from state to state in Australia, raising unprecedented amounts of money for the Fund - £68,000 in total, ‘a most significant amount for any Jewish cause in any country in the world at that time’ (Honig 1997: 19). The small community in Perth, which was mainly from Eastern Europe, pledged £10,000 which, according to Rubinstein, testified to the ‘community’s high level of yiddishkeit’ or sense of Jewishness (Rubinstein, H.L. 1987: 202). Many wealthy Jews participated in the fundraising and even the ‘anti-Zionist religious leaders, F.L. Cohen [Sydney] and J Danglow [Melbourne] gave tacit support, mainly because of their personal links with Cohen … in London’ (Honig 1997: 19). Israel Cohen, reflecting upon the Anglophilic Melbourne Jewish community at that time, wrote in his journal:

The devotion of the Jews to the British Crown is sincere and ever present, and struck me as more demonstrative than that of their co-religionist in the mother country. So fond were they of singing the National Anthem at the gatherings at which I appeared that I was almost inclined to think that they regarded me not so much as an emissary of the Zionist executive (but) as an envoy of His Majesty (quoted in Crown 1987: 232)\(^8\).

Hyams also notes that the extent of the loyalty to Britain was an indication of `Australian Jewry’s resistance to or apathy towards the Zionist goal that in the

\(^8\) Rumours circulated after Cohen’s departure to London to the effect that he was not the volunteer dedicated Zionist leader that he had appeared to be. Instead, it became known that he was a professional who would receive a percentage commission of the funds that had been donated. Although Cohen did not finally receive his commission, the rumours damaged the reputation of Zionism in Australia, particularly in Melbourne, whose leadership ‘felt they had been deceived and that there was a residual “bad taste” in the community for quite some time’ (Honig 1997: 36). In fact, the Victorian Zionist Organisation fell into ‘virtual abeyance’ after this (Rubinstein, H.L. 1991: 548).
future would have to be overcome’ (30). Particularly so in Sydney, where the
differences between it and Melbourne, noted in the previous chapter, were apparent
at this time. Sydney Jewry was more anglicised and had a much weaker Eastern
European influence, and was hardly committed at all to Zionism - there was strong
and vocal opposition to it – and raised less than half Melbourne’s sum from Cohen’s
fund-raising drive (Medding 1968: 127).

**Australian Zionism’s evolution in the 1920s and 1930s**

In the 1920s and 1930s Zionism was a discourse-in-the-making, as the conditions of
possibility for Zionism’s positive reception were augmented. During this period
there was inevitable contestation by those who were resistant or apathetic to
embracing Zionism’s goals. The struggle to convince Australian Jewry of the
necessity for a Jewish homeland became increasingly urgent as the 1930s
progressed. During the 1920s there were certain wealthy individuals90, a few
impassioned leaders, sympathy in some parts of the Jewish Press and support from
some, but by no means all, Jewish clergy, which together provided sufficient
material factors for Zionist ideas to slowly gain momentum, despite opposition.
Thus, in September 1927 the first nation-wide Zionist conference was held in
Melbourne, prompted by the impetus of another emissary, Alexander Goldstein,
who came to Australia also to raise funds on behalf of *Keren Hayesod*, originally the
Palestine Foundation Fund and later renamed the United Israel Appeal. This
conference and the beginnings of a federal organisation, the Zionist Federation of
Australia and New Zealand (ZFANZ), was a ‘landmark’ in Australian Zionist
history (Hyams 1998: 38), even if it needed an outsider to bring it into existence,
unlike similar initiatives in Canada and South Africa where federated structures
emerged from local Zionist bodies (Honig 1997: 47). Delegates representing ten
organisations came from five states.

One strategy to influence ‘the struggle for control of discourses’ (Foucault 1991a: 60)
is to have one’s cause legitimated through the involvement of powerful individuals,

90 For example Morris Symonds, a Lithuanian refugee who arrived in Sydney aged 17 and built up a
successful furniture business (Rutland 1997: 126), gave a gift of £5000 to the newly established Hebrew
powerful organisations and governments. This strategy has proved very successful for the Zionist movement, particularly after 1922 when Britain assumed the Mandate for Palestine, and the British Government recognised the World Zionist Organisation. Significantly for the future success of the movement in Australia, the famous (Jewish) Australian general, Sir John Monash, accepted Goldstein’s offer to be the Honorary Presidency.\textsuperscript{100} Sir John’s association with the Zionist Federation ‘helped to promote the “legitimacy” of Zionist endeavour in the minds of many who still fretted over possible charges of dual loyalty’ (Rubinstein, H.L. 1991: 549). Monash’s agreement to become the nominal head of the new organisation was pivotal to Zionism’s continuing acceptance at this time (Honig 1990: 78 - 9).

Goldstein described Monash as ‘the most representative Jew in the Commonwealth, beloved by the hundreds of thousands who had served under him in the World War, and respected in the highest echelons’ (in Honig 1997: 48). It is a curious use of the word ‘representative’, implying that the unique qualities of a renowned general could be thought of as a typical embodiment of, or symbol for, Jews as a group. Monash was certainly held in very high esteem in Australia and Britain and it is likely that, like other minority groups, Jews were pleased for someone of his stature to ‘represent’ them. This discourse derives from the notion that ‘each individual Jew is representative of all Jews and … the community as a whole will be judged by his [any Jew’s] actions’ (Medding 1968: 60). Those from the Anglo-Jewish leadership who were still opposed to Zionism, found it difficult to understand however ‘that this man should publicly associate himself with a movement that espoused the separation and distinctiveness of Jews’, anathema to their leadership (Honig 1990: 79).

Rabbi Israel Brodie, of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation was elected the first President of the newly formed Zionist Federation. Both he and Monash were held in high regard ‘with a charismatic attraction for the disparate elements in the community…. These men were a factor, if not the major factor, in influencing some

\textsuperscript{100} On reasons for Monash’s acceptance of this position and his views on Zionism at that time, see Honig (1990: 78 - 92).
of the Victorian Anglo-Jews to support the Zionist movement’ (Crown 1987: 234). Additionally, the new Federation appointed the first Zionist professional post of general secretary and organiser, a Palestinian Jew and official of *Keren Hayesod*, Mark Ettinger. This appointment was revealing for two reasons. Firstly, because the emissary Goldstein had determined there was no local man with suitable qualifications for the job, an indication of the smallness of the community and the lack of general support Zionism received from Australian Jewry at this time. Secondly and paradoxically, it also indicated ‘that the investment was worthwhile, and that Australia would soon emulate South Africa in practical Zionist work and go on to produce substantial material results, since the Head Office of *Keren Hayesod* in Jerusalem had invested extra financial resources in this position’ (Honig 1997: 51 - 52). Certainly the hyperbolic message delivered from *Keren Hayesod* in Jerusalem to the first Zionist conference was designed to rally the troops:

> Australia is becoming one of the foremost centres of the world movement to rebuild a Jewish National Home in Palestine. Your response to the *Keren Hayesod* campaign and the formation of a Zionist Federation in Australia will greatly strengthen the work leading to the realisation of the historic ideal of the Jewish people (in Honig ibid.: 52).

In 1929, which marked the second Zionist conference in Australia, its leaders were sufficiently confident of their cause to invite the Prime Minister, the Right Honorable S Bruce, to open it. He conveyed a message to the conference noting that he ‘is fully appreciative of the greatness of the work to which the Zionist Organisation is directing its activities, and that he trusts that the fullest possible measure of success may attend the deliberations of the Conference’ (*Letter from Prime Minister Bruce* 1929).

Despite this early endorsement from the Prime Minister, it was still by no means plain sailing for the dedicated Zionist leaders of the Federation to win over the hearts and minds of Australian Jewry. In fact, the 1930s was characterised by instances of apparent unity among Jews in response to a particular crisis in Palestine, followed by a period of regression and doubt about the efficacy of the Zionist endeavour. An early example in August 1929 was in response to Arab ‘riots’
in Hebron and other Jewish settlements. In Hebron, 67 Jewish men, women and children were murdered. Synagogues were burned and buildings razed, yet the British Mandate authorities ‘remained passive’ (Honig 1997: 60). There were large mass meetings in Sydney and Melbourne with Zionist and non-Zionist speakers. A Palestine Emergency Fund Appeal was launched. Ettinger, the emissary from Keren Hayesod appeared to overreact to the Jewish response to the situation in Palestine:

[He] felt that since the arch opponents of Zionism in Sydney and Melbourne had been subdued and silenced, or in some cases had even agreed to join forces, they had been won over. He reported to Brodie [President ZFA] about a great new spirit of optimism, and also indicated his conviction that the outcome clearly showed that his own work in Australia had now achieved its main goal (Honig 1997: 61).

Although Jews in Australia at this time were prepared to assist other Jews in distress, they were not ready yet to embrace Zionism and its federal organisation. At the third Annual Conference of the ZFA in July 1930, Rabbi Brodie spoke to the themes of unity and dissent in times of adversity, themes which continue to the present:

You have heard me say just now that both the Revisionists and the Brit Shalom should be heard with respect and they are entitled to express their views. But there is a time and place for everything and I submit that the only time and place for the display of Jewish differences of opinion is the floor of the [World Zionist] Congress – or at a conference such as this … in a time of anxiety such as the one we are passing through, for Jews to speak with more than one voice or through more than one mouthpiece is nothing short of treachery (ZFANZ Annual Conference, 12 – 16 July 1930, Melbourne, emphasis added).

101 The Israeli film ‘What I saw in Hebron’, directed by Noit Geva (shown on SBS TV October 2002) is a moving account of the Hebron massacre, told mostly from the view points of the now elderly Jewish survivors. The film took pains to explain how local Arabs had warned the Jews that there was to be ‘trouble’ and a few families hid Jews (their neighbours) in their cellars. It also interviewed some Palestinian Arabs who recalled the distinction they made at the time between the Jewish Palestinians who had lived in Hebron and other areas for many years, and the new immigrants, the Zionists coming from Europe who they regarded as a threat.
102 All further references to ZFANZ annual conferences are from Archive of Australian Judaica, Plenary Sessions 1927 to 1970.
103 See Introduction for discussion on these ‘strands’ of early Zionism, coming from the Right (the Revisionists) and the Left (Brit Shalom). None of the general Jewish Australian histories or the specific Zionist texts to which I refer in this chapter, mention Brit Shalom. Admittedly, this small group which came into being in Jerusalem in late 1925 was, according to Lacqueur ‘highly unpopular’. It regarded the main task of the Zionist movement to be ‘Arab-Jewish rapprochement’ (Laqueur 2003: 218, 251 - 255).
This kind of admonition that disagreement or difference is ‘nothing short of treachery’ speaks, as Foucault puts it, to a ‘will to truth’. It lays down some of the rules of exclusion whereby in any given epoch, certain discursive practices are established and maintained, others excluded or silenced. Foucault states how the will to truth relies on a plethora of institutional support such as books, pedagogy, libraries (Foucault 1972: 219). In this case, an organisation such as the ZFA was concerned from its inception to curtail divisions of opinions about the direction of Zionism and even whether there should be a Jewish state at all. As Hook reads Foucault’s famous speech on discourse (ibid.: 215 – 37), its material conditions of possibility, to which I have been referring in this section, are unavoidable:

... if we are properly to gain a fix on the formative and constraining systems governing discourse. These are the institutions, social structures and practices that limit and constrict the free flow of discourse, that both reinforce and renew it, and as such they need take their rightful places within a thorough analysis of the power of discursive practices (Hook 2001: 524).

In these years, the late 1920s and 1930s, Zionism was developing the material practices necessary to the workings of a successful discourse such as institutional support and constriction of the ‘free flow of discourse’, like the Brodie speech above. Yet, the process was by no means unimpeded. This period of Zionist history in Australia comprised power struggles over where one’s allegiances and priorities as a Jew and as a community should lie. The dominant forces within the community partaking in these struggles were and still are the Jewish press, the rabbinate, leaders of Zionist organisations and leaders of other Jewish organisations. By the mids 1930s those who opposed Zionism, or were neutral to it, continued to fear that a pro-Zionist stance would lead to increased antisemitism in Australia, ‘especially when combined with anti-refugee hysteria’ (Rutland 1997: 295). The refugees, coming from non-British countries were ambivalently welcomed to Australia, even by the established Jewish community.104

---

104 For details on how the established Jewish community and the general community received the newcomers, see Rutland (1997: 184 –192).
Max Freilich’s memoir, *Zion in our time*, attests to his dedication to the Zionist cause in Sydney from 1927 through to the late 1960s. He assesses this period of the early to mid 1930s as being one where ‘the overwhelming majority of the influential [Anglo] families still remained aloof, untouched by any feeling of the destiny or the new spirit of contemporary Jewish history. At best, the zeal and intense activity of the Zionists was tolerated; but not shared’ (Freilich 1967: 42). For example, Rabbi Cohen of the Great Synagogue in Sydney from 1905 until his death in 1934, held a consistently anti-Zionist, sometimes hostile view to the establishment of a Jewish homeland, as did many in his congregation. He had great influence among anglicised Jews ‘and his understanding of the Jew as a British citizen of Jewish faith’ made a deep impact on a large section of Australian Jewry (ibid: 137). However, in 1935 a new Chief Minister, Rabbi Levy, came to the Great Synagogue in Sydney from South Africa. In stark contrast to his predecessor, Levy ‘identified himself with every facet of Zionist activity and served the Zionist cause with zeal and dedication’ (ibid.: 43), and in 1937 he became President of the Zionist Federation.

The Sixth Australian Zionist Federation Conference (March 1937, Melbourne) was reported as being ‘a precursor of a new spirit … and the beginning of a redefinition of … the place [of the ZFA] in the community. A Young Zionist League had been formed and was represented, as were the Women’s International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) groups and the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW). There was now a feeling of new strength and confidence’ (Honig 1997: 97). One measure of the legitimacy and standing Zionism had achieved in the general community was the message of support from the Premier of NSW, Mr Stevens, read out to this conference. The message ‘breath[ed] a spirit of warm friendship towards our people’ (in ibid.) At this point in the Zionist narrative, there is evidence of an increasing acceptance and promotion of its discourse by Jewish leaders as well as by the Australian political leadership. Although probably still only accepted by a minority of ‘ordinary Jews’, the establishment of organizations such as WIZO and the YZL, who were devoted to the cause of Zionism, is a strategy for encouraging

---

105 For a detailed account of Rabbi Cohen’s life and work, including his attitude to Zionism, see Apple (1994).
the idea that a Jewish homeland was not only morally legitimate (morally) also politically feasible.

**Fundraising for Palestine**

Fundraising for Palestine/Israel has been an essential aspect of Zionism’s discursive practices since the inception of Zionist ideas in Australia. The practices of sending emissaries from Jerusalem to represent *Keren Hayesod* to Australia commenced in 1920 and continues to this day. In 1939 a permanent organisation of *Keren Kayemeth*, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) was established in Australia by a representative of the JNF Head Office in Jerusalem (Rutland 1997: 305). Zionist fundraising also has had an affective function, as previously noted in the Introduction. The tradition of sending *shaliach* or emissaries from Israel to raise funds and morale, continues. For example, at the JNF’s annual and centenary conference in Melbourne in August 2001, the acting shaliach, Zev Kedern, spoke on the role of the JNF in the life of the Jewish people. The *Australian Jewish News* reported:

> Mr Kedern said 90 per cent of settlements at the time of statehood were on JNF land, and since ownership of this land was in the hands of the Jewish people through the JNF, it meant that such land was inviolate (‘JNF’s 100 years of life support’ 2001: 20).

The heading for this article ‘100 years of life support’ indicates the kind of affective discourse to which I referred in the last paragraph. In a common sense understanding of ‘life support’, 100 years is a very long time to need it. It reiterates the bond between diaspora Jews and a life-threatened Israel. The paragraph quoted here summarises the issue of Jewish land purchase which is such that it is impossible for individuals (let alone non-Jews) to buy most land in Israel.106

---

106 The story of Jewish land purchasing in pre-1948 Palestine is a complex one. When the Jewish National Fund went into operation (1907) it assumed responsibility for supervising the Jewish acquisition of land which, at the beginning of Zionism’s history, was perceived as ‘free’ (Attias & Benbassa 2003: 153). Unlike the colonisation of Australia, where the land was conceived of as not only free but also empty, the land in Palestine had to be purchased from its Arab owners. The first Zionist Congress in 1897 suggested rules governing land purchase: so that ‘the buyer could never be dispossessed; the land could never be sold to individuals, but would only be rented to them for the limited duration of forty-nine years (153). The citizenship laws passed by Israel in 1950 ‘legalised retrospectively the expropriation of land, and the prohibition of selling to Palestinians state land (still most of the land available in Israel) or even absentee land….. [A]lmost all Palestinian-owned land was
An example of Zionism’s increasing confidence within the Jewish community during the 1930s was a resolution from the 1937 ZFANZ conference stating that ‘the Boards of Synagogues be asked to impose an annual levy of ten shillings to be included on the accounts of seat-holders – for Keren Hayesod’ (Freilich 1967: 53). But not all synagogues in Australia fulfilled this resolution. Sydney’s Great Synagogue - keeping its tradition as a ‘citadel of opposition to Zionism’, despite the arrival of Rabbi Levy - voted for a levy of only half the sum recommended by the AZF Annual Conference (ibid.: 55).

The Seventh Zionist Conference in Sydney, March 1938 is the first record of Zionist Societies’ activities and fundraising efforts. The question of the dual loyalty of Australian Jews as British subjects and Zionists was again noted by the President of the Victorian Zionist Organisation, Dr Jonas, who said: ‘It is a wonderful thing that in the British Empire … [we are] united by a wonderful bond of loyalty, that we Jews united as Zionists, could still be good loyal British citizens and citizens of the Commonwealth of Australia’. One can see how, by the end of the 1930s, the potentially negative ‘divided loyalties’ question had been turned into a virtue, due to the British Mandate in Palestine with which the Zionist movement was, sometimes ambivalently, allied.

At the Eighth Conference (March 1939, Melbourne) reference was made to the increasingly urgent situation for Jews in Europe107 and the necessity to raise funds for, and look after, the Jews arriving in Australia at this time. However ‘it was clearly recognised that settling Jews in Australia was not the solution of the Jewish problem. This could only be accomplished by the building of the Jewish National Home’ (from Mr Moses, presenting the Finance Report).

---
107 In reading the reports of the ZFA national conferences at this time, I was struck by how little was recorded about the worsening situation in Germany and other countries. This is not to say that it was not discussed but it seems clear that the recorded discourse was primarily focused on the problems in Palestine and constructing the Jewish homeland.
Between 1933 and 1939, almost 7,500 refugees had entered this country making it unsurprising that by 1939, there would be competing fund-raising needs. Indeed, WIZO in Australia had informed its London office that there would not be a fundraising campaign in 1939 because of the need to assist the European arrivals in Australia (Hyams 1998: 60). Nevertheless, Hyams reports on the proliferation of Palestine fundraising efforts, the competing campaigns conducted ‘without serious attempt at coordination’. Australian Zionists, it seems, were responding to the ‘various Palestine charitable institutions who … had “discovered” Australia’ (ibid.).

During the three-year hiatus between the conclusion of the war and the establishment of Israel, Zionists in Palestine were actively persuading European Jewish survivors to make aliya and funds were clearly required. The illustration over the page from the WIZO Jewish National Fund campaign of 1947 indicates the congruence between fundraising and the affective aspects of the Zionist enterprise. I was struck by the literalness of the image of rolling back the desert. Strong, muscular hands reveal in outline rolling hills, trees and buildings. Barrenness is transformed through the redeeming qualities of Jewish labour. For A.D Gordon, an early socialist Zionist and influence on David Ben-Gurion, ‘only labour redeems – slowly, incrementally, by the work of hands. … the significance of the land is embodied in the substance and contours of the land itself’ (Rose, J 2005: 39, my emphasis). The land provides a home for the homeless and a National Home and, in the final paragraph at the bottom of the illustration, ‘redeem’ materialises from its spiritual connotations into the act of exchange, buy back, or transfer - £60 for one acre! It is a personal, direct message – like the image of the Blue Box in the Introduction – it speaks directly to you and we, the Jewish people; it is our land.

---

108 For details of Australian Jewish organisations’ fund-raising efforts for refugees at this time see Rubinstein, W.D.; Rutland 1997:181-183.
However, there are paradoxes here. In a rarely-told story of the Displaced Persons (DP) camps established after the end of the war, Yosef Grodzinsky’s (2004) detailed archival research reveals that more than 60 percent of the camps’ Jewish population did not immigrate to Palestine/Israel between the years 1945–1951 (ibid.: 225 – 26).

‘The Jewish DP population in Germany, Austria and Italy, whose size is conservatively estimated to be 333,000 … chose other destinations, despite the fact that at any given point in time during the relevant years …, Palestine/Israel was the least difficult target location [from] which to obtain passage’ (ibid.). Despite the best efforts of the Zionists in Europe, and those in diasporic Australia and elsewhere, to raise funds to support the rise of a Jewish homeland, it was still not possible to persuade all the homeless Jews in postwar Europe to migrate to Palestine.
A Jewish homeland in the Kimberleys?

While Zionists were working towards establishing a homeland for Jews in Palestine, other Jews, called territorialists, were striving to find land in other places where Jews could live in safety. Dr. Isaac Steinberg, a Russian Jew, arrived in Australia in 1939 as secretary of the ‘Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonisation’. Founded in London in 1935, the League’s objectives were to find land for Jews to settle and to negotiate with the governments concerned. As Gettler (1993: 48) says, ‘The movement was to conduct its operations from London, the capital city of a colonial power whose dominions ostensibly had thousands of square kilometres to spare’. Unlike political Zionism, the League:

was primarily concerned with finding a sanctuary rather than a politically autonomous homeland. It did not seek a state within a state – the settlers were expected to become loyal citizens of the host nation though they were to have complete religious autonomy and the freedom to practise and develop their own culture (ibid.).

One of the League’s aims was ‘to create a Jewish Settlement in some unoccupied area for all those who seek a new home and who cannot or will not go to Israel’ (Freeland League pamphlet: 1946). Although not recognised at the time, one must comment here on the colonialist mentality underpinning this aim, the belief that there would be ‘some unoccupied area’, that could be taken or bought. The Kimberley area, named after the mountain ranges in north Western Australia, was ‘owned’ by the Miriwoong Aborigines. It also ‘belonged to the pioneering Durack family …who were willing to sell it to … the Freeland League’ (Dapin 2003: 75).

Prior to Steinberg’s arrival in Australia, investigations had been made about the possibility of settling part of the North-West of Australia for Jewish families in need of refuge (Gettler 1993: 50 - 51). The proposal, known as the Kimberley Scheme, had support from the West Australian Government. The Premier of Western Australia, J.C. Willcock stated that he had no objection to the scheme ‘provided that all the finance was raised from Jewish sources, that all Jewish settlers in the Kimberleys gave a written undertaking not to leave the area for five years and that the scheme was approved by the Commonwealth Government’ (Rutland 1997: 183). During
1938, the Kimberley plan was further developed, largely by C.H Chomley, an
Australian journalist living in London, who saw great advantages for Australia and
for European Jews who were unable to settle in other parts of Europe and were
restricted in the numbers who could migrate to Palestine.109

A pamphlet published at the time, by the ‘Friends of a Jewish Settlement in
Kimberley’ group, provided further reasons establishing a Jewish settlement in
Australia. Firstly, Australia needed more migration and secondly, the Freeland
League presented its case as being ‘a good business proposition … as it cannot
expect any country to be guided … by sentiment only’ (Stedman 1940: 5). Not only
would the League settle the Jews and develop the land at no expense to Australia,
but amongst the Jews who might populate the land were ‘men of science and men
of letters, professional men and men who controlled large industries; agricultural,
tradesmen and common labourers’ (ibid.). The leaflet also stressed the settler Jew as
a good assimilator and thus good Australian who ‘has no interests outside
Australia. The country of his adoption will become his country and the country of
his children. As the Jew has proved throughout history, he has been loyal and has
sacrificed even his life for countries which ill-treated him’ (ibid.: 9).

Despite Chomley’s, Steinberg’s and others best efforts at persuasion, the Kimberley
proposal was finally rejected in July 1944 by the Labor Prime Minister, John Curtin,
for fear of creating an ‘enclave’ (Crown 1987: 241). The 12th Annual Conference of
the Zionist Federation also rejected it (ZFANZ Annual Conference, 19 - 23 January
1945, Resolutions). Sam Wynn, a leading Zionist from Victoria, stated there that a
long-term scheme such as the Kimberley proposal was ‘a deviation from the urgent
task of making Palestine the rescue destination for European Jews’ (in Hyams 1998:
67). There were many reasons for the Freeland League’s failure to secure land for

---

109 Chomley’s reasoning is replete with racialised logic, as he writes to the London Jewish Chronicle
saying that ‘there was little chance of Australians or English people settling the area [of north west
Australia] for the next thirty years, despite its vulnerability to invading armies of “yellow races”’ (13
May 1938). No mention was made of the Indigenous Australians already living there. Jews were the
next best thing, since they had proved themselves to be loyal to the Commonwealth, (quoted in Gettler
1993: 52 - 53). Moreover, as one West Australian Member of Parliament remarked, they were preferable
to the Japanese (Dapin 2003: 77).
the Jews in North West Australia. It may have been no more fanciful than the Zionists’ early dreams of a homeland in Palestine. However, by the late 1930s, many events had collided so that the idea of a Jewish homeland, even a state, in Palestine was no longer just a dream.

In Australia, Zionists rallied against the Kimberley Scheme with such vehemence that Steinberg, who was opposed to a Jewish nation-state, noted the ‘fanatical love’ many had for Zionism (in Gettler 1993: 97). After he left Australia to go to North America in 1943, Steinberg continued to speak out against political Zionism and what he called ‘the hysteria which is now raging in the Jewish world’ (Steinberg 1946: 5). Like a minority of other Jews speaking and writing publicly at this time Steinberg was concerned about the failure of the Zionists ‘to seek full cooperation with the Arabs’. He thought that the Zionists in the Yishuv had underestimated the determination of the Arabs, who would make a ‘virile adversary’ (ibid: 6). In short, he wrote: ‘No observer, writing during the last years of the war, could fail to understand that it would be impossible peacefully to build a purely Jewish State amid the restless sea of Arab nations’ (ibid.: 5). Two years later, at the moment the state was established, Steinberg again wrote of Zionism, that it ‘demanded the creation of a Jewish state in a country where the other, the larger half of the population, the Arabs, actively and loudly opposed it’ (Steinberg 1948: 6). He vehemently opposed the creation of a state as the solution to the problems of the Jews because ‘it was not in accordance with Jewish history and spiritual tradition’ (ibid: 7). Needless to say, by this time he was expressing a minority view among Jewish leaders.

Between the beginning of World War Two and 1948, a new era had begun – which has been described as the ‘Zionisation’ of Australian Jewry (Honig 1997: 103). It is difficult to judge exactly how the general Jewish populace of Australia felt about the gathering momentum to establish a Jewish homeland, and certainly news of the impending catastrophe in Europe would have taken people’s attention as well. The size, composition and political persuasions of the Jewish population had changed dramatically by the beginning of the war, as many of the new migrants from Eastern
Europe brought with them a Zionist fervour and a number of Zionist political parties were established, including Poalei Zion (Labour Zionists), Mizrahi (Religious Zionists), Revisionists (Right-wing Zionists) and General Zionists (Centrists) (Honig 1997: 103). The newly established Executive Council of Australian Jewry (1944) was led by Zionists, and their influence on all the state Boards of Deputies and other secular organisations was increasing. ‘Even in the Synagogues, the last bastion of the conservative, non-Zionist Anglo-Jewry, there was now evidence of growing Zionist influence and leverage’ (ibid.: 107). The proliferation of Zionist political parties combined with Zionist leadership influencing the peak bodies of the community including the Synagogues, is evidence of the escalating acceptance of the idea of a Jewish homeland and state. The Jewish press during the 1930s and 1940s played a significant part in articulating an acceptance or rejection of the emerging discourse, which needed outlets to publicise the Zionist message. Zionism had not yet become hegemonic, but it was well on the way.

**The role of the Jewish press in shaping Zionist discourse**

For a community that was still comparatively small even after the great migratory influx from the 1930s to the 1950s, there has been a remarkable number and variety of newspapers, magazines, newsletter and journals, many of which did not last, often for financial reasons. A scan of the records of periodicals contained at the archive of the Australian Jewish Historical Society (NSW) indicates a decline in the scope and breadth of publications aimed at the general Jewish community, rather than at specific interests within it. This decline has occurred since the years specifically examined in this chapter – the 1930s and 1940s. For example, since 1988, only one weekly newspaper serves both Sydney and Melbourne and other cities, whereas before then, there had been at least two. One can speculate on the reasons for this: increasing costs and professionalism in producing a newspaper and more significantly, a perceived homogenisation within the organised community, so that one paper was considered sufficient. In contrast, although there were fewer Jews

---

10 Levi Eshkol, Prime Minister of Israel from 1963 to 1969, is reputed to have said: ‘Put three Zionists in a room and they will form four political parties’.

11 Nevertheless, the scope of periodicals on specific interests that have come and gone is extensive. Apart from those concerning Zionism, the archive contains texts from and about the state Boards of
earlier in the twentieth century in Australia, their publishing output was more prolific, no more evident than in the decades when Zionism was a matter of public debate.

The first major Jewish newspapers in Australia were established in the late nineteenth century: The Jewish Herald (Melbourne, 1879) and The Hebrew Standard of Australasia (Sydney, 1895). Editors’ views on matters of the day became increasingly significant, as the influence of religious leaders lessened. However, an editor never works in isolation and in a tight-knit community such as Australian Jewry, there were times when the owners of the publication and/or the Jewish roof bodies, exerted overwhelming power as in the extreme case of the closure of the Jewish Herald (see next section). The issue of dissenting voices on Zionism and Israel has, from the beginning, been one of the most controversial, sensitive and difficult for a Jewish publication to manage. The reluctance of the Anglo-Jewish ‘old’ establishment to embrace Zionism was reflected in the pages of the establishment newspapers, with the Hebrew Standard being the most recalcitrant during the stormy debates of the late 1930s and 1940s. However, other papers emerged to fill the need for a Zionist voice as well as one for the newly arrived immigrants and refugees. I now survey key periodicals and newspapers from this period, focusing on their diverse representations of the Zionist debate.

The (Australian) Jewish Herald (1879 – 1968)

The Jewish Herald began publishing in 1879 (renamed the Australian Jewish Herald in 1920), making it the oldest Jewish publication in Australia. Based in Melbourne, its readership was more Zionist-inclined, during the years in which the discourse was contested. So, for example in 1939, after the release of the British White Paper which

Deputies, the ECAJ, the various congregations in Australia, genealogy, Jewish women, students, Jewish day schools and Jewish studies, relations with Israel, Holocaust survivors, museums, historical societies, welfare societies, singles, aged care, sport, vegetarianism, anti-defamation, art and culture, ex-servicemen (from Australian armed services), Christian Jews, Bundists and Sephardim. There are no periodicals specifically for or about the Jewish Left (apart from the Melbourne Jewish Democrat, only holding 3 issues) and none explicitly non- or anti-Zionist (since 1948). See [http://www.zeta.org.au/~feraltek/genealogy/ajhs/]

restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine for the proceeding five years, the AJH decried the British decision as a “‘policy of appeasement’ in which Britain had capitulated to Arab force and violence’ (in Rutland 1997: 308). It ceased publication in 1968 due to a bitter dispute with Mark Braham, an Orthodox Jew and regular columnist to the newspaper. His minority public opposition to Zionism, which he regarded as secular and anti-Jewish, finally became intolerable to the Melbourne Zionist Jewish establishment (Rutland 1997: 322-3). In the Introduction to the book giving his account of ‘The Australian Jewish Herald Affair’, Braham (1970: xxiii) wrote:

I have abandoned hope of getting my views published in the Jewish press. There is a well-nigh universal, if unwritten, law that limits criticism of Zionism to the superficial. A generation has grown up unaware of the basic heresy and contradictions inherent in Herzlian Zionism. Those who could speak are either effectively silenced by Zionist domination of all communal bodies or have been pretty well ostracized from Jewish life by a smear campaign....

Braham’s experience came three to four decades after the years under discussion in this chapter. However, they illustrate how, by 1970, Zionist discourse had become so dominant within the mainstream of the Jewish community that a religious Jewish journalist could not criticise Israel publicly without suffering the consequences of extreme retribution.

The Hebrew Standard of Australasia (1895 – 1953)
The Sydney-based Hebrew Standard (referred to below as HS) reflected the milieu of the early twentieth century in its Anglo-Jewish establishment leanings and deferential dependence on the views of the religious leaders of the day. Sermons by the Chief Rabbi of the Great Synagogue in Sydney, Rabbi Francis Cohen, were always published on the front pages of the HS. As previously noted, Rabbi Cohen was a bitter opponent of Zionism, believing that ‘religion and politics should not mix’. The paper ‘supported Cohen’s vocal opposition to Zionism’, virtually until the final hour when Israel was established (Rutland 1995: 40). In Sydney, where Zionism gained momentum at a slower pace than Melbourne, the HS editorialised that ‘a person was a Jew by virtue of religion, not nationality, and Zionism must
work for a spiritual revival first if it were to succeed’ (Rutland 1995: 51). Consistent with the suspicion of Zionism as a national movement, arousing prospects of Jewish particularity and the possibility of dual loyalties, the HS ‘supported full integration within the general community, reflecting the ideology of non-distinctiveness advocated by communal leaders and by Rabbi Cohen’ (Rutland 1995: 53). Rutland comments that the newspaper’s conservative policy and dependence on the Great Synagogue ‘meant that [it] failed to act as an instrument for the radical changes which were sorely needed to invigorate the community’ (ibid.) during the early 1920s – significantly the threat of assimilation. Yet at this time, a pro-Zionist editor, Jonah Marks, had been appointed. Rutland observes that ‘the move to publish strongly pro-Zionist views in a newspaper serving a community which was anti-Zionist, demonstrated Marks’ belief that a Jewish newspaper should try to mould opinions, rather than merely bow to the beliefs of the establishment’ (ibid.: 66). Marks may have encouraged the then unpopular minority attitudes when he decided to devote a regular page of the HS called: ‘With the Zionists in Sydney and Abroad’ (ibid.: 65).

**Australian Jewish Chronicle (1922 – 1931)**

During the late 1920s, in the establishment of an alternative to the HS, the *Australian Jewish Chronicle*, one could see the growing influence of Zionist discourse. In 1928, a number of Zionist leaders in Sydney formed a company to manage the newspaper which ‘became a strong advocate of Zionism and the official publication of the newly formed Australian Zionist Federation’. It ceased publication in 1931, largely due to the effects of the Depression (Rutland 1995: 71). Thus for a few years, there were two Sydney-based newspapers ‘publicly attacking each other over Zionist issues’ (Apple 1994: 723), an unimaginable situation at the current time when it would appear that contestation over Zionist discourse has been settled.

**Australian Jewish News (1930) ➔ Sydney Jewish News (1939 - )**

The *Australian Jewish News (AJN)* was established in Melbourne in 1930 as a Yiddish publication that for the following two decades articulated the needs and views of the thousands of Eastern European refugees ‘over the interests of the established
community’ (Rutland 1995: 203). In 1939, an offshoot of the AJN was established in Sydney, the *Sydney Jewish News*. Its managing editor also wanted to provide ‘a medium for the refugees to discuss common problems and innovations within the community, especially in regard to Zionism’ (Rutland 1997: 212).

In contrast to the new publications, which were attentive to changing Australian Jewish demographics, and sensitive to the burgeoning Zionist fervour, the *Australian Jewish Herald* (AJH) in Melbourne and the HS in Sydney were still under similar influences; namely the Anglo-Jewish establishment, in particular Rabbi Danglow and the St Kilda congregation in Melbourne. During the late 1930s and 1940s, these two newspapers presented conservative positions regarding both Jewish immigration to Australia and Zionism. One observes a community in flux, and increasingly in trauma from the 1930s to 1950, as Australia received those fortunate enough to leave the European turmoil. Some new arrivals, after a settlement period, were prepared to exert their energies into making the community structures more democratic (Chapter Two) and inserting their voices loudly into the debate over Zionism, as the following publications demonstrate.

**Australian Zionist Pioneer (1929)**

Another publication from Sydney claimed to be the ‘official organ of the Australian Zionist Federation’ (Editorial 1929). This was the *Australian Zionist Pioneer*, whose front cover of its only issue is reproduced over the page. The cover illustrates a map of Palestine, which in 1948 became Israel, has inserted, over the water system running down the country, the words of one of Israel’s ‘founding fathers’ and first president, Chaim Weizman: Palestine is for ALL Jews. The tragic month of ‘AB’ or Av, refers to the 9th month in the Hebrew calendar, when the Jewish temple in Jerusalem was twice destroyed, once by the Babylonians and five centuries later by the hands of the Augustinian Roman Legions. Zionists give the event a very

---

113 In relation to immigration and refugee intake at this time and how these newspapers responded, see Rutland (1997: 185 - 87).

114 The event marking the beginning of the Babylonian captivity is also commemorated in the Rastafarian song 'By the Rivers of Babylon' and became for many black activists an icon of slavery. Thanks to Dr Ephraim Nimni for providing this information about the month of ‘Av’ (personal email correspondence 13 August 2005).
special significance. While in the Western imaginary the event signifies exile and captivity, for Zionists it is the destruction that anteceded their redemption.

Illustration 4: The Australian Zionist Pioneer

The message contained in the Pioneer's first and only editorial speaks to the Jewish diaspora and the benefits Zionism provides for local Jewish life: ‘Local Jewish affairs can assume a different character and a higher tone if envisaged in the light of Jewish history in the making, that is, in the light of Zionism’ (1929: 3). Zionist discourse replaced the previous ‘dominant religious-theological narrative of Jewish history’ with a ‘secular, national narrative’ (Silberstein 1999: 24). Zionism was held to be uplifting. Its effects were not only to produce a new nation for all Jews, as Weizman stated in the cover, but also to enhance the lives of those Jews still living in the diaspora. This editorial, for example, described the Zionist project as contributing to ‘Jewish rejuvenation’ (ibid.).
The Zionist (1943 – 1952)

While the 1929 Zionist Pioneer did not survive past one issue, the Zionist had a longer life. It was established during the war years as a monthly magazine, serving the AZFNZ. It saw itself as an educational and informative influence on Jewish life in Australia, ‘to interpret world events in the light of the Zionist movement, to give a comprehensible picture of the organic growth and development of the Yishuv and to comment on its intricate problems and [finally] to watch the communal activities of the local Jewish bodies and to infuse into them the spirit and ideals of Zionism’ (Patkin 1947: 71). In his first editorial for the magazine, Patkin, a leading Zionist, identified competing positions on Zionism:

The Jewish communities in this part of the world owing to many peculiar demographic and economic factors find themselves in a state of flux. … There is indeed a ‘Babel of tongues’, a confusion of thoughts and aims which make the task of finding a sound base for a creative communal policy most difficult at times. Still, our stake as Zionists, in the affairs of the community is too great not to centre our attention in its multifarious problems (Patkin 1943: 6).

The Zionist’s unequivocal certainty of the justness and necessity of their cause made the stakes high, in terms of its influence on communal policy. Although Zionism in Australia was becoming more central in the community, it had not yet reached that position. The magazine used its columns to criticise the Australian Jewish Forum’s (see next section) advocacy for the ‘unabating propaganda for a lost cause’, the Kimberley Scheme (‘Criticus’ 1945: 14). On the occasion of the establishment of Israel’s independence, the editorial pronounced passionately on what the return to Zion meant for Jews. It was not only a successful migration to a new land and ‘attainment of improved social and economic standards’:

It was a revolutionary movement for national freedom and independence, a renaissance of the Jewish soul and its liberation from the pressures of the assimilatory tendencies of the environment (Editorial 1948: 3).

Australian Jewish Forum (1941 – 1949)

A monthly journal called the Australian Jewish Forum (AJF) was established in Sydney in 1941 by Isaac Steinberg, in part as a forum to debate the Kimberley
Scheme. Also initiated in the middle of the war, the AJF’s rhetoric espoused unity among Jews, a theme it returned to time and again. It argued the case for world Jewry: ‘We have no time for indulging in futile discussions about the nature of the inner coherence of our people. Whether it is a community bound by religion and faith, or a racial unity or a nation in the modern meaning of the word, is quite unimportant in face of the fact that we all belong to ONE family’ (Editorial 1941: 2).

The AJF had many criticisms to make about the Australian Jewish community, largely centred on its perceived lack of Jewish consciousness, its assimilation or concealment of Jewishness (February 1941); that it was divided by economic status and country of origin (March 1941); that it lived in total isolation from other Jewish communities apart from English Jewry and was intolerant of outsiders (April 1942); and that its members were more influenced by their national/cultural affinity than by their Jewishness (February 1944). The magazine acted as a consciousness-raising enterprise to discourage the apathy and unawareness it detected among Australian Jewry. Thus in the July 1944 issue, it presented two opposing solutions to the Jewish problem – Zionism and Bundism - since it argued that Zionism could not provide the total answer. The AJF was not anti-Zionist – ‘no conscious Jew can be a real anti-Zionist’ (Offner 1944: 8) but, even after 1948, the editorial committee maintained that one must never forget ‘that there is only 8% of world Jewry in Israel and that 92% are outside Israel and will remain there. Important as the life and work of Jews in Israel may be, it is of equal importance to know what is happening elsewhere’. The final line of this editorial reflects the ‘universalist’ strand in Judaism. It says: ‘In serving Jewry the Forum serves humanity as well’ (Editorial 1949: 6, 7). The AJF is a prime example of the ‘new’ publications that emerged with the changing Jewish demographics. Its orientation had a Bundist flavour in its deep concern for Jewish life in Australia, as much as it supported the creation of the Israeli state.

Australian Jewish Outlook (1947 – 1948)

The Australian Jewish Outlook was published in Perth, West Australia where the Anglo-Jewish establishment remained in place for a longer period than in the two eastern states which accepted most Jewish refugees and migrants. For a brief period
before the establishment of the Jewish state, the *Outlook* promoted a different view to ‘political Zionism’. Its policy stated that it ‘favours Zionism as a humanitarian and cultural movement, offering peace and freedom to Jews who suffer racial or religious discrimination in the country of their birth or adoption. It is opposed to the creation of an independent Jewish State in Palestine or elsewhere’. It was also a mouthpiece for Sir Isaac Isaac’s thoughts on Zionism and Judaism (see next section). Its views are encapsulated in the cartoons below:

Illustration 5: ‘Going my way?’ *Australian Jewish Outlook*, September 1947
Illustration 6: Practical or Political Zionism, Australian Jewish Outlook, October 1947

I have included both cartoons here for interest, although they are expressing a similar discourse. The first cartoon ‘going my way?’ could not be clearer on how the Outlook perceived the future of political Zionism and Jewish nationalism – it was headed for a precipice. The man with the tow truck, representing ‘practical’ Zionism, wanted to tow the other away from the dangerous edge. However, the man pushing the car accuses the other of being a ‘Quisling’, a collaborator or traitor, in an early reference to Zionism’s insistence that if ‘you’re not with us, you’re against us’. The second cartoon is similarly dyadic, good and bad. Practical Zionism, according to the Outlook, was the most ‘logical and safest course … a bi-national Palestine – … one political State in which Jew and Moslem could be united in everything except their manner of approach to God (Editorial September 1948: The Australian Jewish Outlook: 1). However, a political program working towards a bi-national state, was not favoured by most of the Jewish leaders in Australia. Certainly, I have found little recorded evidence of it from mainstream Jewish leaders. Nor by 1948 was it a feasible possibility for either Arabs or Jews, for too much violence and terror had already occurred in Palestine.

This section has provided a flavour of some of the publications that provided fora for Jewish and Zionist ideas to be debated in Australia. The 1930s and 1940s were an
increasingly unsettling time for Jews in Australia and indeed, world-wide. Zionism was not a fait accompli in the hearts and minds of most Jews and the range of periodicals available then provides evidence of the contested state of the discourse. The much publicised debate by two notable Jews during the 1940s, which assume the stage in the following section, was the last significant public articulation of anti-Zionist discourse among Jews in Australia.

The Australian Jewish mainstream chooses Zionism

As World War Two raged throughout most of Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific, another kind of war was raging in Australia. This very public war was an ongoing debate between two prominent Jews in Australia – Sir Isaac Isaacs, an anti-Zionist, and Professor Julius Stone, a Zionist, reported extensively in the Hebrew Standard and other Jewish and non-Jewish press. The prolific and engaged reporting of this debate by contemporary Jewish historians is at least as interesting and revealing as the debate itself.

Sir Isaac Isaacs, along with Sir John Monash, was one of Australia’s most esteemed Jews. He was also a jurist, a member of Australia’s first parliament and the first Australian-born appointee to the office of Governor General in 1931. Isaacs died at the age of 92 in February 1948. In his latter years he became passionately involved in debate about ‘Political Zionism’ and the establishment of a Jewish homeland and state in the British mandated land of Palestine. This debate occurred at a time when Zionists in Australia and elsewhere were gaining ascendancy in their argument that Palestine was the best and only place to take the thousands of Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe. His intellectual adversary, Professor Julius Stone, had arrived in Sydney in 1942 from England as the Challis Professor of International Law and Jurisprudence at the University of Sydney. He saw Palestine as the logical place for the refugees. This position involved an ongoing criticism of the British government
and its policy in time of war. However, ‘[t]he Zionists never flinched from pursuing that line of attack’ (Lee 1985: 129).

Between 1941 and 1944, Stone and Isaacs argued with one another passionately in various public fora, in particular the anti-Zionist Hebrew Standard. During the latter half of 1941, the newspaper began publishing statement and counter-statement from these two men. The debate was complex and their views can only be summarised here. One can imagine the extreme agitation and desperation of Australian Jews who were not directly affected by Nazism (but may have had family who were) as they became increasingly aware of what was occurring to their fellow Jews in Europe. I add this speculative comment as part explanation for the high tension and acerbic tone in the rhetoric of Stone and Isaacs and their respective supporters. Indeed, each accused the other and his supporters of ‘disloyalty and betrayal’ (Docker 2001: 176).

Julius Stone, whose views are presented by all historians as representing the ‘winning team’, delineated his arguments in an open letter to Sir Isaac Isaacs in 1944, published as Stand up and be counted. Stone’s letter was part response to Isaacs, and part counter-attack. For example, he accused Sir Isaac of suggesting that ‘the proposal for a Jewish Commonwealth implies the exclusion from citizenship and equality of Arabs and Christians’ (Stone, J. 1944: 15). At the same time, according to Stone, Isaacs:

... suppresses the repeated official pronouncements of authoritative bodies, some of them very recent, that absolute equality between all inhabitants, Jewish and non-Jewish, is at the very centre of the Zionist ideal.... He produces no evidence save his own ungrounded speculations to support his grave imputation (ibid.).

The substantive part of Stone’s letter was in the imperative voice, it was accusatory and personal. In a section entitled ‘Your real concerns: the main issue’, Stone accused Isaacs of not caring about the plight of Jews, ‘there is little evidence that

---

115 In 1939, Britain issued a White Paper, which revised its policy on Palestine, restricting Jewish immigration to 75,000 over a five-year period. For more details on Australian Jewish and governmental responses to this, see Rutland (1985).
you are concerned to protect or to assist the underprivileged masses of your
suffering brethren in Europe’ (ibid.: 38). He cited Isaac’s own words in which Isaac
had argued against the proposal of a Jewish nation on the basis that it would
threaten the status of Jews in other countries like Australia and would make
Australian Jews less patriotic to their own government and Britain (ibid.: 39). He
responded to Isaac’s views on nationalism, loyalty and antisemitism in this way:

To the best of my knowledge no Zionist, not even the few most extreme
‘political’ ones (in your sense, if there be any) have ever proposed that you
and I and all the comparatively happy Jews like us, should be required to
substitute allegiance to a Jewish State for our present allegiance. All that
they say is that those Jews whose age-old oppression, now consummated
in Hitler’s Europe, drive them to seek freedom and rehabilitation
elsewhere, shall have a Homeland where they can find it. They do not seek
to compel you or me to change our home and allegiance merely because
they are driven to do so (ibid.: 40).

I discussed in the Introduction that many of the early Zionists saw Palestine as a
prospective homeland for all Jews. As the Australian Jewish sociologist, Peter
Medding (1968: 137) says: ‘The mainstream of Zionist philosophy, from its inception ...
... demanded the liquidation of the Diaspora and the emigration of all Jews to
Palestine’ However, by the early 1940s, Zionism had changed from an abstract,
possibly unlikely ideal, to a Realpolitik, facing the thousands of displaced and
homeless Jews who had to find new homes and lives. The question of encouraging
all Jews to make aliyah has always been a vexed one for Zionists, since it is clear that
most Jews from western countries have elected not to do so. Bearing this in mind,
Rutland notes that approximately 7000 Jews have migrated to Israel since its
inception, constituting almost 10 percent of Australia’s Jewish population, ‘the
highest figure on a pro rata population basis in the Western world’ (1997: 321 – 22).
This is another indication of the strength of Zionist feeling in Australia.

One of Stone’s final admonitions to Isaacs concerned the question of ‘Arab claims
and of danger to the Empire from provocations to the “Moslem world”’ (ibid.: 67).
Here, Stone pursued the argument of relative justice, that ‘there are no Arab claims,
moral or otherwise, which can reasonably be held to stand in the way of righting
this great wrong to European Jewry’ (ibid.: 19 – 20). He justified this claim through
four traditional Zionist arguments: Firstly, that the Jews only want a ‘small notch’ of the vast Arab lands, which they have already improved immeasurably. Secondly, a Jewish national home could only benefit the Arabs of Palestine. Thirdly, the Jewish state is urgently needed to alleviate the suffering of millions, and will be ‘firmly grounded on the highest moral and political principles’. Finally, the Jewish homeland ‘represents not the intrusion of alien western elements into the Arab world for strategic or economic purposes, but the revival of an indigenous culture which has shown ample sign of mutually enriching friendship with Arab civilisation itself’ (ibid.: 69).

Sir Isaac Isaacs saw the relationship with the Arabs and all other matters very differently. His views were published regularly in the Hebrew Standard, particularly during 1943 and 1944. Affected by his loyalty to Australia, Britain and the notion of Empire, Isaacs’ views have been described as ‘conservative’ and ‘establishment’ by many commentators. In his articles on ‘Political Zionism’ (Hebrew Standard, 28 October, 4 and 11 November 1943) one of his foci is his refutation of the demand for a Jewish State based on the notion that ‘JEWISH PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD ARE ONE NATION’ (28 October: 2; his capitalisation).116

Isaacs was horrified at Zionists’ recourse to the Bible and to Babylonian captivity to justify their support for a Jewish state. He quoted Psalm 137 which begins, ‘By the rivers of Babylon we sat mourning and weeping when we remembered Zion’, and goes on, ‘But how could we sing a song of the LORD in a foreign land?’ Isaacs writes that Zionists quote this Psalm:

without the slightest regard to [its] context or historical significance. Enthusiastic Zionists repeat these lines with a fervour that does infinite credit to their religious devotion, but with an utter forgetfulness of their inapplicability to the political situation of this century or the condition of the Jewish people in the world today’ (28 October 1943).

Isaacs’ second point regards the references to ‘foreign land’ in Psalm 137. He writes:

116 According to Stone, Isaacs saw the concept of nationalism only in a narrow juridical sense, not in the sense of one people/one nation.
Do the enthusiastic quoters of the third and fourth lines ... regard Australia as a Foreign Land? Do they regard themselves as Aliens? Is Australia not their homeland?... As an Australian Jew, I resent the epithets ‘homeless’, ‘exiles’, ‘wanderers’ and ‘slaves’. I resent the necessary implication of them that Australia is for the Jewish Community a ‘foreign land’ and that Jerusalem calls us to it as our political ‘Homeland’ (28 October, also 16 December 1943: emphases in original).

Isaacs was influenced by the issue of dual loyalties. If one were a loyal Jewish Australian, and therefore, also loyal to the Crown, accommodated in the diaspora, how could one simultaneously regard Australia as ‘foreign’ and Palestine one’s ‘political homeland’? What had become a discursive possibility for many Jews by this time, for Isaacs was still anathema.

Another of Isaac’s consistent themes concerns his perception that a Jewish-only state would create grave injustice towards Arabs, both Moslems and Christians. He appears to understand the likely, and by 1943, real resentment felt by the Arabs, ‘who having being under Moslem [Ottoman] rule for many centuries ...[and then] in our Empire, [would] resent any attempt to [being subjected] to Jewish domination’ (4 November 1943: 3). He thought that the only hope for Palestine lay ‘in the fellowship of RECIPROCAL RIGHTS AND RECIPROCAL DUTIES realised [by] the distinctive values to civilisation of Jew and Arab’ (4 November 1943). He continues in this vein by arguing that to make Palestine a Jewish state would be to ‘make one particular religious faith the test of citizenship’, which ‘would necessitate that there could not be political and legal equality of citizenship rights between Jews, Arabs and Christians’ (30 December 1943).

Reactions to Stone and Isaacs

Isaacs and Stone presented two alternative discourses. By the 1940s the former was increasingly seen as being in decline and Isaacs himself was considered non-representative of Australian Jewry, ‘an extreme spokesman for this minute minority’ (Stone 1944: 11) of anti-Zionists, and very different from the ‘representativeness’ of Sir John Monash mentioned earlier in this chapter. The Bodies recently established to represent the Jewish community in each state of Australia attempted to assert their right to silence anti-Zionist rhetoric in the Jewish press. For example, a letter
from the NSW Jewish Advisory Board to its representatives contained recommendations from the Public Relations Committee regarding Isaacs’s lengthy letters in the Hebrew Standard. The second resolution read:

... whilst affirming the principle that all fair and responsible shades of opinion should be afforded the opportunity to be presented in the Jewish Press, that there rests a fundamental responsibility and duty on an editor not to give prominence to letters or articles lacking in accuracy or fairness and therefore liable to be used unjustly against the Jewish Community (Wolff 1943).

The above letter excerpt demonstrates how the determination of ‘the limits and forms of conservation’ functions, how certain utterances are put into circulation while others are repressed or censored. Isaacs, too, wanted to restrict the airing of the discourse to which he was so vehemently opposed. For some time he had ‘successfully restrained the ZFANZ from publicly pressing the Zionist and Jewish case, by threatening to denounce it in the non-Jewish press’ (Medding 1968: 130). According to Stone (1944), Isaacs did just that after he requested the abandonment of a community meeting held in November 1943 in Melbourne, called to protest against the British White Paper of 1939. Despite this thinly veiled threat, the meeting was successfully held, while Sir Isaac subsequently wrote to all the newspapers setting out his reasons for opposing the meeting.

This vignette addresses two recurring themes of Jewish, and especially Zionist, politics in Australia. First is the issue of speaking out to the mainstream media (see Chapter Six) and the proscription against doing so. Second is the question of who speaks for Australian Jewry? In 1946 when Isaacs produced a publication entitled Political Zionism: Undemocratic, Unjust, Dangerous, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry officially dissociated itself from his views, ‘affirming that the Jewish community supported demands for a Jewish state and free migration to Palestine’ (Crown 1987: 243). Although the daily non-Jewish press described this controversy as ‘a crisis for the community, it was not so’ (ibid.), according to Crown, because by this time the Anglo-Jewish leadership was reduced to three vocal anti-Zionists: Isaacs, Rabbi Danglow of the St Kilda Synagogue, Melbourne and Archie
Michaelis, a conservative member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly. ‘The rest of the community appeared to support the Zionist movement wholeheartedly’ (ibid.: 244).

It was Julius Stone who recognised the forces of history that were rapidly moving in the direction of the Jewish National Home, so that he could ask at the beginning of Stand up and be counted ‘Who shall speak for the Jewish people?’, and respond that the anti-Zionist views were those:

of a minority so minute, that even the eminence of some of them in their respective spheres must suggest the thought that their positions of prestige, and in some cases, wealth or privilege or power, have isolated them from a real understanding of their fellow-Jews and their problems (11).

In this extract, like many others, Zionism was presented as the movement in touch with the real concerns and problems of other Jews, including recent migrants, as well as offering a solution to their problems. Zionism was a sign of modernity and progress, as well as humanitarianism, towards Jews. Anti-Zionism was viewed as conservative, assimilationist, anglophilic and inhumane. Like Stone, later writers have drawn similar conclusions about this era. On the changes in the community in the 1940s, Rutland, Hilary Rubinstein and Lee note, respectively:

... By this time, the anti-Zionist forces represented only a minority, even within the Anglo-Jewish community (Rutland 1995: 95).

Meanwhile, support for Zionism continued to be the communal policy on which Orthodox and Liberal Jews alike made common cause. The goal of Israeli statehood was in sight, and they did not intend to forsake it (Rubinstein, H.L. 1991: 585).

Isaac’s views by now were unpalatable to most Jews. This was reflected in resolutions adopted by the Jewish Advisory Boards of both NSW and Victoria, supported by almost all the spiritual leaders, calling for the renunciation of the [1939] White Paper (Lee, G. 1985: 133).

Historians reflecting on this turbulent and dramatic period in Australian Jewish history are able to conclude that the fact that ‘the Zionists’ cause finally won the day
[in Australia] could be attributed as much to Stone’s skill in presenting the case as to Isaac’s inability to articulate more than a discredited prescription of placing one’s trust in Britain’s bona fides’ (Lee, G. 1985: 133). Hyams acknowledges the conflict between the two men in the following way:

The dispute has been given epic proportions in modern Australian Jewish history. It has been claimed it actually enhanced the Zionist argument within and beyond Australia’s Jewish community and that it concluded with the near-annihilation of Jewish anti-Zionism, at least in Melbourne. (Hyams 1998: 68).

I would argue though, that however influential the texts of these two highly articulate and esteemed individuals, greater events were at play globally, which enabled the Zionist argument to reach ascendancy in Australia. As well, recalling that discursive practices connect discourse to material forms (Silberstein 1996: 328), one can interpret the outcome of the Isaacs/Stone debate as a result of the congruence of the desperation caused by the impending annihilation of European Jews, and the incredible determination, resources, influence and single-mindedness of Zionist leaders in this country, and elsewhere. Zionism came to be presented as the solution for the survivors of the genocide. Those against it, for whatever reasons, were spoken of as retrograde and anti-Jewish.

Hilary Rubinstein (1991: 570) describes Isaacs as ‘both a fervent British imperialist and a white supremacist, as evidenced in his outspoken defence of the White Australia policy’. She dismissively sums up his anti-Zionism as being:

based on the usual ‘Anglo-Jewish’ reservations. He believed that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine would cause Australian non-Jews to regard Australian Jews as tolerated aliens whose true home was in the new state. … He absolutely rejected the idea that Jews were in some sense a nationality and he obstinately defined them as solely a religious group. He feared that demands for Jewish statehood based on the claim that Jews constituted a nation would lead to anti-semitism in their countries of citizenship, including Australia. … He argued that by inevitably alienating the Arab world, the establishment of a Jewish state would undermine the British Empire (a cause which obsessed him) by endangering Britain’s vital trade routes and her interests in the Middle East (Rubinstein, H.L. 1987: 205 - 206).
Unlike Hilary Rubinstein who had no time for his ideas, Isaacs’ comments on this topic have particular salience for me as I explore the diversity within the Jewish diasporic public sphere regarding how the ‘Arab question’ and Zionism have been spoken about. However, I am mindful of the danger of taking his comments out of their historical context. There can be little doubt of Isaac’s loyalty to the British Empire, which at that time included a significant part of the Arab world - Jordan, Palestine, Iraq and Egypt. Therefore, Isaac’s views were coloured by his concern for Empire. Nevertheless, he was correct to realise that a Jewish state would bring trouble for itself and for its Arab neighbours and perhaps for these reasons as well as his loyalty to Empire, he was ‘concerned to understand Arab viewpoints, feelings and desires’ (Docker 2001: 178).

William Rubinstein (1987a: 309) writes some forty years later of the *Australian Jewish Outlook*’s ‘failure of imagination and daring’ and ‘pessimism’ in not being able to envisage, or think desirable, a Jewish state. The time for debate had passed and those that attempted to present alternatives were repudiated, as Rubinstein’s words strongly suggest. These alternatives were not only strongly rejected at the time they were written, but in a later historical period as well. Indeed, they became unthinkable.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a significant amount of material from the record of Australian Jewish history. There is little substantial disagreement among the recorders of that history about what happened and why. In terms of a genealogy of this period, interpretations of Zionism ‘appear as events on the stage of historical process’ (Foucault 1984: 86). According to that history, a small, Anglo-dominated community, at the turn of the twentieth century was in danger of vanishing through assimilation and small numbers, and emerged in less than fifty years as strong, determined and apparently united. The development of Zionism’s discursive dominance played a pivotal role in this. Of course, Australian Jewry (and Australian governments) were not alone in their overwhelming endorsement of a Jewish state. In writing this chapter, I have questioned the phenomenon of how Zionist discourse
transformed from the early days when it was espoused by a small minority, feared by many who were strongly influenced by Australia’s British colonial membership, until the final years before 1948, by which time the ‘anti-Zionists’ had become the small maligned minority.

One significant difference between Zionism’s development in Australia and elsewhere was that antisemitism in Australia has never been the scourge it has been for so many centuries in much of Europe. Hence, the question needs to be asked, from where did the impetus arise to argue so fervently for the necessity of a Jewish state? For Australia’s Zionism was not a reaction to rabid antisemitism within Australia, as it had been in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century.

The answers lie both within and outside Australia’s borders. Among the thousands of European Jews who migrated here, particularly from the East in the 1930s and post 1945, as well as a minority who already resided here, there were sufficient numbers with zeal to work with and influence the changes that were occurring in the Jewish communities as their numbers swelled and the power of the pulpits decreased. Thus Zionists became members of the newly-established Executive Council for Australian Jewry as well as the state-based advisory boards (the ‘limits and forms of appropriation’). For the new leaders of Jewish thinking in Australia, the establishment of a Jewish homeland became one significant mark of distinction, able to unify Jews as Jews, and an important bulwark against the blight of assimilation which threatened Australian Jewry in the early decades of the twentieth century. Perhaps Australian Jews had also become infected by the notorious ‘cultural cringe’ in this country, whereby everything from elsewhere is superior to that which is homegrown. Certainly there is historical evidence from a number of writers expressing dissatisfaction with the local Jewish ‘product’. See for example the various editorial comments cited from the *Australian Jewish Forum*.

I was also reminded of Alphonso Lingis’ words quoted at the beginning of the previous chapter, describing community: ‘Collective work and defense against enemies … bring us together …… Whoever laughs with us – or weeps with us – is
one of us’. In the years leading up to and following the Second World War, Jews were brought together as never before, in desperation, sorrow and tears. Zionism, whose beginnings long predated Hitler’s murderous years, increasingly was presented as the only positive alternative for the remnant Jewish survivors (called she’erit ha-pleyta in Hebrew); a Jewish homeland would be the place to turn their tears into joy.

Yet there is a contradiction in this presentation. Despite the fact that Israel has never been the homeland of choice for most Jews, even during those desperate, post-war years, Zionist discourse quite rapidly equated ‘Jew=Zionist’ (Grodzinsky 2004: 228) so successfully that Jewish identity became viewed as ‘necessarily Zionist’ (ibid.). Grodzinsky is referring here to the envoys from Palestine who entered the DP camps to persuade Jews, sometimes using violent means, to migrate to Palestine (ibid.: 114 – 198). How does this relate to the Australian Zionist narrative? In Australia too, this discursive construction contains the same ‘regime of truth’; that to be a Zionist has, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, come to equal Jewish identity. The struggle that occurred during the 1930s and 1940s for Zionism’s position of discursive dominance seemed to be about life and death, not just about the supremacy of one idea. This was understandable, given the unique times in Europe. The plethora of publications at that time provide fascinating insights into the debates and concerns of Jews in Australia, when nothing was settled, many views were aired, when the community itself was still under formation. Zionism was immanent to this process.

Chapter Four continues the investigation of Zionist discursive practices in Australia, examining a discourse which was no longer under contestation but had assumed centre stage among most of those who, in the words of the Australian Jewish Forum, considered themselves ‘conscious Jews’. This was no more evident than during and after the 1967 Six-Day War.
Chapter Four: The 1967 Six-Day War. Zenith of Zionist discourse

Introduction

_The love of Zionism is a fanatical love_
Steinberg (1946: 20) cited in Gettler (1993: 97)

As we saw in the previous chapter, Zionism had to overcome Australian Jews’ strong identification with Australia and the British Empire and many opinions and debates raged until the eventual establishment of Israel in 1948. By this time, the weight of opinion had become pro-Zionist. This chapter examines the period when arguably, fanatical love of Zionism that Isaac Steinberg observed amongst Australian Jewish leaders in the early 1940s had reached its apotheosis: the Six-Day War. Two interrelated discourses have appeared consistently in the literature concerning this event and its consequences. The first concerns Israel’s paradigmatic shift within six days, from David to Goliath, and the far-reaching consequences which are still felt today. The second is the delayed public articulation of the Nazi genocide and its explicit linkage to the Six-Day War. In the final section, I explore the complex ways contemporary Jewish subjects, in this case my interviewees, have understood the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, thirty-five years after the Six-Day War. What can their thoughts and interpretations tell us about Israel’s self-articulated ambivalent discursive construction as both David and Goliath? What other discourses did they summon to explain the conflict and Israel’s contested occupation of Palestinian territories?

_Zionism and the Australian Jewish community by 1967_

The immediate post-war years for Jewish community activists in Australia were dominated by support for the new Israeli state and dealing with the needs of the thousands of new arrivals from war-torn Europe. Australia provided these refugees and displaced persons with a welcome sanctuary and opportunities for a new life. In return, they provided Australian Jewry with a new lease on life. It is a supreme irony that the survivors of the Holocaust ‘gave new hope to Jewish outposts which were dying out, not through extermination but sheer inconsequentiality’, according
to Colin Golvan, a Melbourne author and broadcaster (quoted in Berman 2001: 6). However, the process of absorption and integration into an existing group takes time for any new arrivals, and specifically for the new Jews to stimulate ‘the Jewish consciousness of established Australian Jews’ (Rutland 1997: 324).

During the 1950s and 1960s Jewish writers expressed concern about the dangers of Jewish assimilation into ‘comfortable’ Australian life. Jews at this time, and since, have ‘accepted assimilation in the sense of “taking in” Australian norms – becoming Australianised – but have rejected assimilation in the sense of “being absorbed” by Australian society’ (Levey, G. 2004: 181). Three safeguards against assimilation through absorption, apart from religious affiliation, were antisemitism, Jewish Day Schools and Zionism. Each, in their own way, protected Jewish distinctiveness. Antisemitism had become, during the first two post-war decades in Australia, ‘a politically non-exploitable commodity, serving to put its exponents right outside the pale of respectability’ (Medding 1968: 58) – which is not to say it was non-existent or a non-issue within the community. Marcus (2004: 115) nevertheless, uses the term ‘nadir’ to describe the existence of antisemitism in Australia during the 1960s.

Jewish day schools in Australia have been proclaimed as one of the key discursive practices, in maintaining Jewish distinctiveness and post-war ‘non-universalism’ (Rubinstein, W.D. 1991a: 21). Both Ben-Moshe (2004: 129) and Rutland (2000: 78) point to the high proportion, over 60 percent, of Jewish children who attend Jewish day schools for at least part of their schooling. Ben-Moshe (ibid) attributes this as being in part due to the ‘embeddedness of “Israel” in Australian Jewish life’. The two reinforce each other’s significance. In 1967 there were seven Jewish day schools operating in Melbourne, with a total enrolment of 2700 children. As well in 1967, about 4000 young Jews were members of Jewish youth organisations in Melbourne. Groups such as Habonim, Hashomer Hatzir, B’nei Akiva and Betar are branches of youth movements in Israel (Reich 2002: 120).117 Sydney, on the other hand, was

---

117 Hashomer Hatzir, left-wing, linked to Israel’s kibbutz movement; B’nei Akiva, religious youth movement of Mizrachi; Betar, from the right-wing Revisionist Party (see Rutland 1997 319 – 22 on Zionist youth groups).
‘more vulnerable to assimilation [since] it has but three Jewish day schools and a total of only 400 pupils’ (Curtis 24 April 1967). Sydney did not begin to expand its day schools until the 1970s, one contributing reason for this expansion being ‘the strengthening of Jewish identity subsequent to the 1967 and 1973 Arab/Israeli wars’ (Rutland 2000: 83).

Zionist-oriented accounts of the period in Australia from the establishment of Israel in 1948 to 1967, write of the movement becoming ‘a central focus of Jewish identification’, accompanied by a concomitant decline in anti-Zionism and the conflicts that were one of the features of the previous decade (Rutland 2004b: 119). However, ZFANZ reports from their biannual conferences held during the 1950s reveal a concern about complacency relating to Israel. The struggle had been won; Jews had their nation-state. At the 20th Conference of the ZFANZ in 1962, a debate was held on ‘the role of the Zionist movement in the Australian Jewish community’. It was noted that the state of Israel did not diminish the process of assimilation, ‘but appears rather to have accelerated it, and it is the function and aim of the Zionist movement to arrest it’ (Freilich 1962: 10). Another speaker, unknown, also spoke at this conference of dangers and threats – in Israel, there were external threats, while in the golah or diaspora, the danger in a relatively peaceful country like Australia was from within the group, from seeking assimilation. And significantly, this speaker said:

> Our people has shown wonders in living and striving under adverse conditions. We still have to learn how to preserve our identity under favourable conditions. Indeed, the more favourable the circumstances, the more injurious they are apt to be to our spiritual life as a national group (AZFNZ Annual Conference Report: 28, original emphasis).

One detects patterns here. Jewish leaders express concern for the continuity of the group. Zionists see Israel and Zionism as the central solution to the problems of both continuity and assimilation. If conditions in Australia were too ‘favourable’ to allow Jewish identity to flourish, there would always be crises in the homeland to strengthen Jewish unity, resolve and ‘spiritual life as a national group’. As argued in previous chapters, a ‘victim mentality’ assists a group identity which depends on
injurious circumstances to flourish. These comments complicate those made by the Australian political scientist, Levey, quoted earlier. His evaluation is that Jews have ‘managed’ the assimilation scourge and have integrated sufficiently into Australian society to be, on the whole, a most successful minority group. At the same time, they have also managed to keep their distinctiveness and identity. Yet when one reads texts from Zionist and Jewish leaders of the time, their discourses emphasised the dangers of disappearing, through life being too good.

By the 1960s, there was criticism within the Jewish community levelled not at Israel but at the official Zionist movement. The focus on strengthening the community in Australia was not shared by Zionist leaders for whom ‘Jewish life outside Israel had little future, and therefore the only justification for deploying resources locally was to help Israel or Zionism’ (Elazar & Medding 1983: 315). An example of this cited by these authors concerned the methods for raising funds by the United Israel Appeal (the UIA), the largest Fund for Israel. Proposals were made to ‘tax all Jewish communal appeals for Israel to pay for Board [state boards of deputies] and Executive Council administrative activities’. However, the UIA ‘refused on principle to divert funds collected for Israel to local purposes. Such opposition usually generated counterclaims of “Zionist domination”’ (ibid.: 314). At the same time, the Jewish communal leadership aimed to maximise cooperative strategies between the Zionist leaders and others. Zionist leaders tended also to be put into other top organisational positions. Additionally, and significantly, delegations from the ECAJ who put the case for Israel to the Commonwealth government also included Zionist leaders, ‘in order to maximise communal unity and leadership cooperation …[This] was accepted as part of the normal modus operandi of the Australian Jewish community’ (ibid.: 315) and remains so until today.

The conflicts and tensions between the leaders of the Jewish/Zionist organisations in Australia were not ‘intensely felt’ (Elazar & Medding 1983: 315) among Jews in general. These authors note that Israel had ‘wrought a fundamental revolution in the sense of psychological security both of the average Jew and of the communal leader’ (ibid.). According to Medding’s 1962 survey of Melbourne Jews, ‘there were
no active anti-Zionists, about a quarter were positively sympathetic, if not active, and contributed to Israel’. Interestingly:

30 percent felt that Israel had completely altered the status of Jews elsewhere: that it had normalised their situation, conferred psychological security, provided defense against persecution and replaced inferiority with equality. It had granted personal self-respect and become an important part of their individual and collective self-identity. For many others, Israel represented a safe haven and an insurance policy in case of future persecution. For almost all, it engendered immense pride, warmth and praise (Elazar & Medding 1983: 315) (see also Medding 1968: Chapter 6).

Israel’s affective role could not be more transparent in this paragraph and many of those I interviewed, some forty years later, uttered similar expressions about Israel’s place as a ‘safe haven and insurance policy’ for Jews in need. On the other hand, Walter Lippmann, in April 1967, addressed the B’nai B’rith Convention and spoke of the ‘multiplicity … and intensity of Jewish activities in Australia’ but he also spoke of the Australian Jewish communities as a ‘cultural and intellectual desert’ (April 1967: 3) where Zionism had come to fulfil the function for many as the ‘counterpart to the two-day-a-year religious Jew – the “Zionist” who gives to the Israel Appeal but lacks any other form of Jewish involvement or commitment’. Lippmann’s overall point in this speech, as often in his addresses, was to shake his audience out of a perceived complacency. He had a broad vision for Australian Jewry and how it must take its place within what was beginning to be termed a ‘multi-cultural’ society. He was one of the few Jewish leaders active in the decades following World War Two who explicitly expressed the need for Jews to involve themselves with non-Jewish concerns. He stated:

We have so far failed to recognise that the future of the Jewish communal life in Australia is intimately bound up with the future of every other cultural, racial or ethnic minority group in Australia. We cannot turn our backs upon this challenge. … At the same time however, we must re-examine and re-interpret the content of Jewish life (ibid.: 6).
Israel and the Australian rural media

In contrast to the response to the Arab presence in Australia at this time, the general public held Israel and Jews in some esteem. An example of this comes from an unlikely source, the Country Women’s Association of Australia (CWA). The CWA held an annual International Day, with a different country its focus each year. In 1967, coincidently one assumes, Israel was selected for special study at small rural meetings across New South Wales and those meetings were reported on in local newspapers. At each meeting, an ‘expert’, often not Jewish, was selected to report on aspects of Israeli life. For example, from the Cessnock Eagle, on 26 May, Canon Max Redman reported on the kibbutz, ‘a unique form of human association... The first kibbutz was established in 1909. They were ... members of the Labour Zionist Movement who had left Eastern Europe to rebuild in Palestine their ancient homeland’. Mrs Anne McNeil was called upon at the last minute to talk to the Goulburn branch as a representative from the Israeli Embassy in Canberra was unable to attend. It was reported that:

‘Although not acquainted with Israel to any great extent’ Mrs McNeil gave a very interesting talk on that country... ‘Completely surrounded by Arab countries, it is like a little “Jewish Island” and is only four-fifths the size of Tasmania.’ Mrs McNeil told about the “wandering Jews” who started a new country for themselves, and changed land that was an absolute desert into fertile country (Goulburn Post 31 May 1967).

Illustrative of Zionist discourse conveyed to the country women of NSW at this time was the Bellingen Courier-Mail of 2 June. At this meeting, Mr Goldstein described Israel as ‘no bigger than a couple of outback Australian cattle stations [and] less than a fifth the size of the original Jewish country of Canaan’. He noted the ‘almost worthless, 8,000 square miles’ that was given to the Jews ... [and] bitterly opposed by Arab nationals, who refused to resettle into their own huge areas’. The comparisons made between the smallness of Israel and the vastness of Australia

---

118 Newspaper reports cited in this section are from the Archive of Australian Judaica, Jewish Board of Deputies, NSW, Box 12, files 39/40. These specific cuttings were from NSW towns only, but given that the CWA is a national organisation, it is likely that similar meetings would have occurred in other states.

119 Other CWA meetings were reported in Junee Southern Cross, Lismore Star (12 May), Tumut Times (30 May) and Bathurst Advocate (12 June).
must have served as a familiar referent for those whose knowledge of Israel was scant, and of Arabic-speaking people, even scanter. Two other articles attest to this. Using a text by ‘world-roving reporter’ E.W. Tipping from Tel Aviv, the Adelaide News (1 March) reports ‘Israel with a total area of 8,000 square miles, … one forty-seventh the size of South Australia’. On 8 March the article reappeared in the Perth Daily News, identical apart from the opening paragraph, which read: ‘Israel, with a total area of 8,000 square miles, is one-eleventh the size of Victoria’. The article stressed the dynamism of Israel, its smallness and the transformations to the land in such a short period of time. The only reference to Arabs is in the context of them as ‘hostile neighbours’ intent on pushing Israel into the sea. It was noted by every speaker that the Jews enabled the ‘desert to bloom’, part of a discourse entailed within the project of Western modernity and progress. Australians listening to stories of miraculous technological transformations of nature would have identified with similar technical feats in this country, such as the construction of the Snowy Mountain Hydro-Electric Scheme, constructed between 1949 and 1975.

**Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War**

In 1967, the Cold War was still hot. The Soviet Union had, since 1948, formed various alliances with Arab nations. The United States was embroiled in Vietnam (as, increasingly, was Australia) but was becoming more interested in the Middle East, and ‘détente’ between the two superpowers was always high on the international agenda. Hence, reporting of the effects of the June war was always in this broader context of Realpolitik in the Middle East and beyond.

The causes of any war are complex and often contested, and the June 1967 war is no exception, on either count. What follows here is a brief narrative of what appear to be the most significant moments and events surrounding the war. The most frequently enunciated ‘fact’ about the war from the Israeli/Jewish side is that Israel feared it was on the brink of extermination by the combined forces of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq, and indeed the discursive constructions discussed and analysed later in this chapter are based on this premise. Certainly, these Arab countries, and in particular Egypt, were amassing their militaries:
Nasser [President of Egypt] expelled the UN ‘peacekeeping’ troops in the Sinai, blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba, sent 85,000 troops into the Sinai ... concluded military alliances with Jordan, Syria and Iraq and prepared for the final liquidation of the Jewish state. Israel was isolated and abandoned (Editorial, The New Republic 1987: 7).

Abba Eban (1987: 22), Israeli Foreign Minister in 1967, described the days leading up to 5 June, when Israel declared war, thus:

The drama of the triumph was enhanced by memory of the fear that had gripped Israeli hearts a few days before, as Arab armies in their hundreds of thousands moved towards us from north, south and east. A cold numerical calculation of divisions and tanks, of guns and aircraft in Israel and the Arab world told us that a great doom was sweeping towards us.

There is no doubting the genuine fear of annihilation that gripped the Israeli people and Jews around the world at this time. However, there were other factors which, in retrospect, place Israel’s military position in a superior light to those of its Arab neighbours. For example, in the mid-1960s the United States began supplying Israel with weaponry (Segev 2002: 60) whereas the Arab countries received much of their equipment from the Soviet Union. After their defeat, ‘Nasser and the Syrians laid much blame for their defeat on the poor quality of Soviet equipment and on the inadequacies of both Soviet military doctrine and the training given by Soviet advisers’ (Black & Morris 1991: 233 - 34). Moreover, Israel had excellent intelligence in three areas: Humint (human intelligence), Sigint (signal intelligence) and Photint (photographic intelligence). Combined, they gave ‘the General Staff and the commanders of the IAF [Israeli Air Force] an accurate picture of the Arab, and primarily the Egyptian, air forces’ (ibid.: 225). These two factors account for Israel’s stunning first day – 5 June – during which it destroyed 304 of Egypt’s 419 aircraft, 53 of Syria’s 112 aircraft and all 28 Jordanian aircraft. This has been described as ‘one of the most devastating and decisive first strikes in military history’, its secret being, according to Black and Morris, ‘accurate intelligence’ (ibid.: 222, 223).

Five days later, Israel had ‘taken the Golan Heights from Syria and the Sinai from Egypt, ... driven Jordan’s Arab Legion from the West Bank and the Egyptian army from the Gaza Strip’ (Kimmerling & Migdal 1993: 209), as well as captured East
Jerusalem from Jordan. Almost one million Palestinians were now under Israeli occupation and control in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel was in the position of having to work out ‘how they were going to control a large and potentially hostile Arab population for the foreseeable future’ (Black and Morris 1991: 236), a problem which remains unresolved to this day.\footnote{120 For an annotated bibliography on all aspects of the Six-Day War and its after-effects, see Lederhendler (2000). For an account challenging the commonplace view that it was a war of self-defence on Israel’s side, see Chomsky (1983: 100 - 01).}

Illustration 7: David and his sling, The Zionist, Dec. 1951-Jan. 1952

The effects of those six days still reverberate profoundly; first and foremost for the Palestinians still living under occupation in the lands captured at that time, but also for the increasingly contested effects the occupation has had, not only on Israel’s standing in the eyes of the international community, but on the Jewish diaspora. In
my reading of texts of this period and successive years the biblical story of David and Goliath (1 Samuels 17) recurs over and over. A powerless David, whose only weapon was a stone from the river, slayed the giant Philistine Goliath who was wearing an armoured plate and carrying a bronze spear. This image is nicely captured on a 1952 front cover of the Australian magazine The Zionist, with David hurling his sling of rocks. The image is described as ‘the leit-motif of Jewish history’. The metaphorical significance of Jewish historical and emotional identification with David, the underdog and potential victim, cannot be overstated.

Yaron Ezrahi’s (1997: 193) analysis of the Six-Day War focuses on its uniqueness. The victory was so complete, the Israelis’ military prowess so overwhelming, that finally this ‘mitigated the sense of victimhood and vulnerability in which Jewish orientations to the uses of physical force had been coded in the past. … The force which until then had been regarded mostly through the eyes of David was transformed when seen through those of Goliath’. And then came the paradox, that despite the great victory in 1967, Israelis and by extension diaspora Jews still saw themselves as the victims in the conflict with the Arabs. At the same time there began an acknowledgement of ambivalence towards the use of force and the less noble position occupied by the victor who uses force against the defeated victim (Ezrahi 1997: 188 - 205). The ambivalence displayed by a minority of Israeli soldiers towards using force to gain victory, was not apparent in texts from the Australian Jewish community, whose jubilation at Israel’s victory seemed unhesitating. In order to situate the discussion about responses to the Six-Day War in Australia from Jews and non-Jews, I first provide an example from middle Australia to give a sense of general perceptions of Australians towards Israel in 1967.

---

121 For discussion on the origins of the Philistines (from whom Goliath came) and some scholarly doubt about whether it was David who killed Goliath or another warrior called Elhanan, see Sturgis (2001: 118 - 25). Archeologists’ disputations, needless to say, hardly impinge on the contemporary salience of certain images and narratives.
Responses of the Jewish community in Australia following the Six-Day War

Accounts of how Australian Jewry reacted in the days leading up to and following 5 June, 1967 reflect the ‘immense pride’ (Elazar and Medding 1983: 315) many Australian Jews felt about Israel’s achievements. Descriptions resounded with superlatives. For example, Nathan Beller, President of the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies (VJBD), described 1967 as ‘the most eventful year in the history of Victorian Jewry, when we, together with Jewry throughout Australia, became part of the greatest display of solidarity and unity in the history of world Jewry’ (quoted in Reich 2002: 119). And at the Annual Conference of the ECAJ (11th and 12th November, 1967), Mr Ashkanazy, the President, reported as follows:

Nothing in 1900 years has so altered the Jewish image; neither the history in the Bible, the story of the Maccabees nor the defence of Israel against the Romans, nor the outstanding qualities which Jewish officers and soldiers demonstrated in the two World Wars, nor the Warsaw Ghetto battle, nor the Suez campaign have achieved the complete transformation of the Jewish image in the eyes of the world that this heroic campaign, and battles such as the capture of the heights of Gollan [sic] achieved to the wonderment of all.

Ashkanazy, drawing on a sweep of Jewish history where Jews have defended themselves against an enemy, was able to bask in the glory of the victorious campaign, which ‘achieved the complete transformation of the Jewish image in the eyes of the world’. There seemed to be a total synchronicity between Jewish and Israeli fates and fortunes at this time. Barry Cohen, a Labor member of parliament for the Federal seat of Robertson (NSW), interviewed in The Australian newspaper four years later, reflects on the impact of the June War on his image:

‘The existence of Israel – in fact good old-fashioned militarism – has also changed the 2000-year image of the cringing, money-hungry Jew. I’m not arguing that militarism is a good thing, but it has made people look at you in a new light. It was funny after the Six-Day War. People were waiting for you to throw a punch at them if they crossed you’ (Moffitt 15 July 1971: 9).
Cohen articulates the Zionist dichotomy between the negative physical and mental stereotype of the ‘cringing, money-hungry’ diaspora Jew and the strong, assertive Israeli. His comment implies that through Israel’s astounding victory in 1967, Jews in the diaspora had become like Israelis, ready to respond to attack with physical violence, so unlike the old stereotype of the weak diaspora Jew.

Australian Jewry rallied to assist Israel in different ways. 7,000 of Melbourne’s 34,000 Jews attended a public rally and 2,500 attended a youth rally, called before the outbreak of fighting. In Sydney, over 6000 people crowded into and around the Central Synagogue (Rutland 2001: 21; Rutland & Caplan 1998: 136). In Queensland, 650 attended a rally, making it the ‘biggest function ever organised in the history of Queensland Jewry’ (Hyams 1998: 135).

**Fund-raising**

Elazar and Medding (1983: 216) declare that the Six-Day War ‘produced an outpouring of feeling that completely eradicated previous antipathies and tensions, and significantly changed the status of Israel and Zionism in the communal structure’ (316). As I have already indicated, fund-raising for Israel has a long history among Australian Jewry and its affective function has been noted. June 1967 built on this tradition in calling for financial contributions, even from those for whom Israel had previously meant very little. As one respondent said in a Melbourne survey conducted shortly after the war: ‘I found myself giving more money than I ever thought I would give to anything’ (Taft, R. 1973: 114). In NSW an Emergency Appeal for Israel was set up, from mid-May to mid-June.

Through the various Zionist fund-raising organisations, $3,824,293 was collected, approximately two-thirds more than for the previous year (Financial Report to the 23rd ZFANZ Conference, March 1968, Melbourne: 12). The amount raised in NSW for UIA was ‘$1.4 million, six times greater than the previous year’s amount’ (Report of State Zionist Council of NSW to 23rd ZFANZ Conference, March 1968, Melbourne: 17). This is an indication, according to Rubinstein, that the ‘long-standing gap between Victorian and New South Wales Jewries in their enthusiasm
for Zionism had at last been closed’ (1991b: 535; see also Encel and Buckley 1978: 29).

Australia’s Jewish youth responds

Indicating the enthusiastic response, 700 young people from Melbourne volunteered to go to Israel (Taft, R. 1973: 113). Hundreds of ‘young Australian Jews of military age inundated the Jewish Communal Affairs Centre in Kings Cross (Sydney) and Beth Weizmann in St Kilda Road (Melbourne) with offers to fight’ (Rubinstein, W.D. 1991a: 534). Taft and others comment on the high numbers of young people who became engaged with Israel at this time. Rubinstein attributes this as being, in part, the result of the socialisation of the first generation of several thousand youngsters in Jewish day schools in Australia (ibid.: 533). Reich (2002: 120) too attributes the ‘widespread support of Jewish youth … to socialisation process in their families, Jewish schools and Zionist youth movements’. Other writers suggest that the Zionists in Australia supported Jewish education ‘not in order to develop a strong local community but because it would strengthen Zionism and support for Israel by generally strengthening Jewish consciousness’ (Elazar & Medding 1983: 315). These two comments from Rubinstein and Elazar/Medding are a small illustration of a subtle difference in the discourse about this period. I read Rubinstein as considering the focus on Zionist education in Jewish day schools to be entirely positive whereas Elazar and Medding place their comment in the context of a discussion about the strength of Zionist influence during the 1960s, possibly at the expense of strengthening the local community, an issue Walter Lippmann also noted.

The Taft Survey in Melbourne

A week or two after the brief war, the psychology lecturer, Dr Ronald Taft (1973) interviewed 54 randomly selected Melbourne Jews. He found that:

The War had a definite effect on most of the respondents; generally this took the form of a boost in pride, but in several cases it also strengthened their attachment to Jewishness and to Israel. It was notable, however, that neither personal contacts with Israel nor participation in Zionist activities were related to a respondent’s degree of involvement in the Crisis.... The
involvement was not the result of social pressures but was a spontaneous and individual reaction (ibid.: 124).

Taft was surprised by the ‘spontaneous wave of feeling’ among those he had interviewed as well as Jews more generally, as evidenced by the large rallies in all Australian capital cities. This ‘spontaneous’ reaction he regarded as ‘a most unusual phenomenon’ (ibid.). He suggests that because of the Holocaust, ‘there has been an increasing feeling among Jews that it is better to fight for one’s life than to try to save it by cooperating with one’s predatory enemies’ (ibid.). Israel was seen as standing up to her enemies, unlike most of the Jews of Europe under the Nazis. As illustration of this, Taft offers a comment from one of the respondents who says, tragically:

‘This war was like a compensation for the slaughter of all those Jews in Europe. I now know that if we would have had guns then, we would have done the same to the Germans as we have done to the Arabs now’ (Taft, R. 1973: 121).

This small survey has functioned as a producer of ‘truth’ about the affective responses of Australian Jews to the Six-Day War. It has been quoted or cited by almost every historian and sociologist of the Jewish/Zionist narrative in Australia. Taft’s results were used to bolster Zionist spirit. For example, Rubinstein quotes Taft in order to discuss the profound ‘psychological effects of the Six-Day War upon the Australian Jewish community’. He concludes his discussion by noting Taft’s finding that ‘the long-term effects of the war on Jews [was] chiefly one of increased self-esteem: in one-quarter of cases “the effect was to increase feelings of attachment to Israel or Jewishness”’ (Rubinstein, W.D. 1991a: 535 - 36). It has also been cited by Lipski (16 March 1968), Rutland (1997: 358 - 9; 2001: 21) and Reich (2002: 119) to explain the unprecedented emotional outpouring in Australia and in other Jewish communities.

Three decades later, when Ruth Wajnryb (2001) interviewed children of survivors in Sydney about their memories of growing up in the shadow of the Holocaust, she reports that ‘the number of people willing to declare themselves as Jewish in the national census increased after June 1967, when Israel emerged victorious from the
Six-Day Middle East War. Perhaps, 22 years after the [second world] war, it was finally safe to come out’ (ibid.: 205). Wajnryb’s last sentence speaks volumes about Israel’s effect not only on Holocaust survivors but also their children. Israel was now strong and safe; therefore Jews everywhere could be safe and ‘come out’. This notion also confirms Taft’s results from his small survey conducted immediately after the war. He says in conclusion that its ‘effects will be felt for a long time to come’ (ibid.: 125).

Six unsettling days – war coverage in the Australian media

Subsequent to the war, Jewish commentators and academics have argued that, as a result of Israel’s decisive victory over its Arab neighbours in 1967, the media’s reporting of the conflict began to change. However at the time, official representatives of the Jewish community seemed satisfied with the media support for Israel, as the following comments reveal.

In general, with the exception of the Arab refugee question, the overall Australian press coverage of the Middle East crisis was strongly pro-Israel. There were a few negative editorials which appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald but these were exceptional.

Close contacts were maintained with journalists and relevant background information and material appertaining to Israel disseminated.

Radio and television coverage of Israel was also favourable during the crisis. The Jewish Community was called upon to provide speakers for both media.

A number of self-appointed spokesmen for the Arab cause appeared on the Australian scene for the first time. It was decided to avoid indulging in general debates with Arabs on the mass media as they had little support in the community and public confrontations would only give them increased access to the Australian public (Chairman of the Standing Committee of Public Relations, Annual Conference, ECAJ, November 1967, Melbourne: 38).

The above statements indicate on the part of the Jewish and Zionist leadership, an assuredness in dealing with journalists and a sense that justice was on their side. The Jewish press by this time had developed firm Zionist sympathies and were highly sensitised to how Jewish concerns were reported in the mainstream media (see Chapter Five). On the other hand, as the final paragraph indicates, the state of
Arab public relations at this time in Australia was poor\(^\text{122}\) and there is no doubt that their support in the general community was very low.\(^\text{123}\) According to Gouttman (7 June 2002: 17), who paraphrases from the *Canberra Times* (7 June 1967), Arab spokespeople in Australia mistakenly thought that ‘holding solidarity meetings like those held by the Jews was a waste of time, [since] an Arab victory was just there for the taking’, so it was better to be good Australian citizens and not make a fuss.

In contrast to these comments from the ECAJ made not long after the war, a later reflection and analysis has produced a different assessment of the media’s treatment of Israel. Gouttman (1998: 104) put it like this, in 1998:

> In the changed *realpolitik* of the Middle East caused by the war, the press image of Israel was dramatically transformed almost overnight from underdog to superdog. Israel was no longer perceived as a new and small state under siege, and hence worthy of the sympathy of a liberal press. From this time on, the attitudes of the Jewish State to the Arabs, and particularly to the Palestinians as refugees, would be open to serious challenge.

The media frame which demands winners and losers, victims and perpetrators, underdogs and superdogs, is particularly in evidence at times of war and conflict. Additionally, as I have already noted and will examine more closely in the next chapter, the media and partisan commentators have drawn on the David and Goliath metaphor to speak about the disparity in strength and resources formerly between Israelis and Arabs and latterly between Israelis and Palestinians. The metaphor has been so widely iterated that it has entered into popular discourse. In the cartoon below from the *Melbourne Herald* drawn half way through the war (8 June), we see an unsubtle depiction of the conflict as a boxing contest. At this point Israel is still represented as David in the person of Moshe Dayan, Israeli Defence

---

\(^{122}\) Despite strenuous efforts, including asking a number of Arab diaspora scholars in Australia, I have not been able to locate research that specifically documents the Arab-Australian community during the 1960s. My comment that Arab public relations was ‘poor’ is therefore based to some extent on educated conjecture. It was reported during the Six-Day War for example, ‘the small Arab community [in Sydney], consisting mainly of Lebanese, remained neutral’ (NSW IBD Report to ECAJ Annual Conference Report of the Chairman of Public Relations Committee NSW Jewish Board of Deputies 1967: 24).

\(^{123}\) It was reported in the *Newcastle Herald* (7 June, 2 days into the war) that a ‘Free Palestine Committee’ was formed in Canberra, to assist Arab countries. ‘The Committee was formed by representatives of the Australia-Arab Friendship Association (NSW), the Australia-Arab Friendship League (ACT) and the Australian National Front for Social Justice’.
Minister, with his characteristic eye-patch, chasing Goliath in the person of Egyptian President Nasser, who is running scared and angry back to Cairo. An anonymous Arab is in the right-hand bottom corner holding up his hands in what looks like despair and hopelessness.

Illustration 8: David v Goliath, The Melbourne Herald, 8 June 1967

In the build-up to the war, there was considerable reporting throughout Australia of Jewish communal activity in support of Israel. One article however reported on reactions to the war from the Arab community in Australia as gleaned by interviews with several Arab-Australians. Two Arabs were quoted comparing themselves to Jews in Australia by claiming their loyalty to Australia first and stating that ‘we would like to gain Australian sympathy, as the Jews have gained it’ (Moffitt 9 June 1967). However, this was not to be. Beirman (1989: 286) writes, ‘the reporting of

‘Big Jewish March of Protest through Melbourne’, 29 May, Adelaide Advertiser.
Jewish reaction to the war far outweighed the reporting of Arab responses’. His doctoral thesis also found that ‘the 1967 war saw an end of anti-Zionism or non-Zionism in the community, with a few exceptions. The community started becoming more assertive in its support for Israel and Jewishness and the Progressive congregations, which had been non-Zionist, expressed themselves to be pro-Zionist. That was a major change’ (reported in Alhadeff 1989: 19).

My research interest is how analysts, in light of the David/Goliath paradox noted above, interpreted the paradox. Gouttman’s (1998: 115) conclusions about the mainstream Australian press were that Israel had paid a price for her ‘paramount survival in the Six-Day War’. That price was that ‘her every action would be the focus of an obsessive press which at times could border on the hostile’. Interpretations of how ‘hostile’ the media has been, is a subject I examine in Chapter Five in relation to the second intifada. Here, Gouttman’s summation is as instructive as the newspapers themselves, when he notes that within days of the outbreak of the war, ‘the press made Arab dispossession a new cause to champion’ (ibid.), as though one should be suspicious of this cause and its champions. Interpretations of this conflict always have to be understood within the broader international political context.

For example, The Examiner, in Launceston, Tasmania, writes an editorial ‘Jews and Arabs’, which considers both sides of the conflict without wishing to attribute blame. Yet, it foresees that ‘hundreds of thousands of dispossessed Arabs will remain as [future] detonators’. It asks a question that remains controversial today: ‘With the doors of tolerant America, Canada, Australia and other countries open to them, do the Jews need the Israel that can be preserved only by perpetuating Arab hatred and the cold war confrontation’ (7 June: original emphasis). A correspondent from London, Frank Edmead in ‘If I forget thee, O Jerusalem’, writes of despair and danger for both sides. The ‘peculiar intractability’ of this conflict, Edmead writes, ‘is that both sides can justly claim to have right on their side’. He also asks, looking at the conflict from an Arab perspective, whether in fact the Israelis destroyed ‘the Palestinian part of the Arab nation and dispossess[ed] it of its homeland. Should not
those lost rights be restored?’ (The Australian, 7 June. Also in The Sunday Times, Perth, 11 June, 1967)). Edmead makes the additional point that Israelis ‘still seem to find it hard to acknowledge that (perhaps inevitably) injustice has been done to Arabs’. Edmead’s bracketed ‘perhaps inevitably’ is significant. It points to the argument, which I noted in my Introduction, that on Zionism’s emergence, although there was justice on both sides, the Jews had a stronger case as a result of which the creation of their homeland came ‘inevitably’ at the expense of the Palestinians.

It was of course not only in Australia that the David and Goliath metaphor achieved potency in the public sphere. One chapter in Lederhendler’s (2000) collection on the impact of the Six-Day War on world Jewry, deals specifically with American media representations of Jews passing from ‘David to Goliath’ (Moore 2000: 69 - 80). Moore commences her chapter by stating that representations of ‘Israeli Jews as David and their Arab enemies as Goliath form a leitmotif in news reporting surrounding the Six-Day War’ (ibid.: 69). Moore relates how American press metaphors ‘draw upon the biblical David selectively, merging his features with those of other American heroes’ (ibid.: 70). Thus, although the ‘biblical David’ relied on the Lord for strength and inspiration, this spiritual reference was not recognised by secular news columnists. The image of a lone Israel, surrounded by its many Arab foes, resonated with an American public used to decades of watching westerns where the solitary hero fights successfully against incredible odds to conquer the multitudinous and rampaging Indians. According to Moore, the representation of Jewish David as ‘a hero of westerns helps to account for American sympathy for Israel during the war’ (ibid.: 74). Moore concludes:

Americans elided Israelis and American Jews, rooted for David to triumph over the contemporary Philistines, and cheered when David became the new Goliath of the Middle East because they knew that he stood like Superman for truth, justice and the American way (ibid.: 79-80).

Additionally, it was reported that an American farmer from Nebraska sided with the Jews, saying to a Jewish Senator: “’I’m not Jewish … but I want you to know that all us farm people out here are with you and hope you beat the hell out of them
Arabs”’ (quoted from Newsweek 19 June 1967, in Moore 2000: 79). Similarly, in Australia, Jews emerged ‘as popular heroes in the Six-Day War’. Indeed, two years later (4 June 1969) in Australia a Gallup Opinion Poll found that 46% of 2000 respondents said their sympathies ‘in the fighting around Israel’ were with Israel; 3% were with the Arabs; 5% were with both; 15% were with neither and 31% were undecided. According to the Melbourne Herald, most people made comments like ‘The Israelis are fighting for their own land’ or ‘the Arabs are the aggressors’. In other words, assuming that in 1967, the Arabs had ‘a case’ to put, it is clear that they had not captured the imaginations of either the media or most Australians or Americans. The survey also indicates the large number, one-third, of Australians who did not have enough knowledge or understanding to express a view.

William Rubinstein sums up the theme of David and Goliath and the overwhelming general community support for Israel in the wake of the Six-Day War thus:

In Australia the reaction to the Israeli triumph was profound and far reaching; perhaps the most astonishing response occurred among the non-Jewish majority. As elsewhere in the Western world, for the first and only time in history a wave of popular philosemitism swept Australia. Israel was David to the Arabs’ Goliath; Israel was compensation and justice for the Holocaust; Israel was the ‘good guy’ (1991a: 533).

Accounting for how discourse shifts, changes and even transforms, is art as much as it is science. In the preceding discussion, I have revealed the work of the powerful David and Goliath trope in casting light on changing perceptions of and by Jews and Israel at the time of, and after, the Six-Day War. Jewish writers such as Rubinstein and Gouttman as well as several interviewees, retrospectively summon the trope to account for the apparent change in the media’s attitude to Israel in more recent times (see Chapter Five). Yet, these metaphoric and real shifts of perception are more complex and nuanced than the binary of David and Goliath suggests. For example, it is not evident that the Australian or American public immediately turned against Israel because of its decisive victory, quite the reverse. Additionally, at the time of the Six-Day War, there was another significant discursive strand under formation in Israel and the diaspora, to which Rubinstein refers in the last
sentence of his quotation, and that is the emergence of the Holocaust in public discourse.

Public appearance of the Holocaust

In view of the public exposure the Holocaust has received throughout the western world since the 1970s, it is difficult to imagine that before this time, very little was said publicly about it. It is widely written that the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961 served to place the victims of the Holocaust on the Israeli public agenda.125 Ben Gurion, the first Israeli Prime Minister ‘needed proof that he was not apathetic about the Holocaust, despite his policy of reconciliation with Germany’ (Segev 1991: 101). In an interview given to the New York Times (18.12.60), he justified the trial as ‘“proving to Israel’s younger generation that Israelis are not like lambs to be taken to slaughter, but a nation able of [sic] fighting back”’ (in Hazan 2001: 38). Eichmann’s trial, after his dramatic capture and abduction from Argentina, demonstrated Israel’s power and strength to Israelis and the world. Moreover, during the trial, ‘extensive testimonies of Holocaust survivors were broadcast nationwide, replacing the former dissociation from and silencing of these survivors’ (ibid.). Thus began what Segev has termed ‘a process of collective therapy for the entire country…[where] the ability to identify with the victims grew more profound from year to year’ (2002: 102). The victims themselves were forced, by the trial, to relive the humiliations they had suffered under Nazism (Margalit 2002: 130). The complexities of the changes occurring in Israeli society, psyche and politics during the 1960s are beyond the scope of this thesis and the reader is referred to Gonen (1978) who presents a fascinating psycho-analytic analysis of what he calls the very macho ‘Israeli national fantasy of virility’ (ibid: 242) which rose to inestimable heights after the June 1967 victory. This was contrasted with and dynamically connected to the Holocaust. Gonen quotes Israelis as saying ‘if only the six million could see us now’ (ibid.: 245). The intense response of terror felt by Israelis and other Jews in the weeks leading up to June 5 1967, is in large part explained by the heightened public awareness of the Holocaust in Israel and the diaspora in the

125 Adolf Eichmann was one of Hitler’s key officers who stood accused of ‘committing crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity and war crimes….’ (Arendt 1964: 21)
preceding years. The fear was that Israel was heading for a second Holocaust, this time at the hands of the Arabs.\textsuperscript{126}

\textit{Holocaust awareness in Australia in 1967}

Despite – or perhaps because of – Australia having the highest per capita number of Holocaust survivors of any country except Israel, the Holocaust by 1967 ‘was not yet central to Australian Jewish public consciousness’. The first memorials in Sydney and Melbourne cemeteries were not built until the 1960s (Rutland 1997: 375) and the Jewish Holocaust Museum in Melbourne was not opened until 1982. Prior to the 1970s, ‘public forms of Holocaust remembrance remained in commemorative, not pedagogic, form’ (Berman 2001: 8). One Holocaust survivor, Henia Liebman, a guide at the Jewish Holocaust Museum in Melbourne, explains the necessity for time to pass in order to be able to speak publicly about their experiences of the Holocaust:

> It has taken us, survivors, many years, not only to establish ourselves in a new country, new environment, often new trade or profession, but to let our wounds heal sufficiently, to enable us to relate our war experiences without suffering emotional breakdown (in Berman 2001: 10).

One central issue relevant to Australian Holocaust memorialising, like in Israel, was the emphasis on Jewish heroism and resistance during the war. As Berman says, as late as the 1960s, commemoration addresses in Australia still ‘paid disproportionately more attention to remembering the heroism of the thousand armed Jewish fighters who defended the Warsaw Ghetto [in 1943] than to

\textsuperscript{126} In France too, the Six-Day War marked the beginning ‘of a certain Holocaust consciousness in French public discourse’ (Wolf 1999: 105). Wolf notes the occasion for being the first time that ‘Holocaust’ was used as a ‘conceptually autonomous term’, to describe the particularity of the Nazi genocide of the Jews, as distinct from coverage of World War Two generally (134, note 3). As she states, ‘motivated by the perception that Israel was in immediate danger, Jews began to search actively for new ways to make sense both of the Holocaust and of their place in the Western world’ (106); Benbassa & Attias (2004: 96 make a similar point). These ‘new ways’ involved homogenising two moments in time; the catastrophe and trauma of the Holocaust and the possibility of something similar occurring in the June 1967 War. Thus these two events ‘became interlinked and temporally congruent in such a way that any effort to understand or assign meaning to one event directly implicated the other’ (Wolf 1999: 106). Further to this, French Jews began to articulate ‘their Jewish particularity before it would be thrust upon them’ (105). This was in contrast to how they had lived in France since the French Revolution when Jews were first granted citizenship, which was to be French citizens first and foremost and where, in this secular state, religion had to be a private affair.
remembering the six million exterminated Jewish victims of Nazism’ (ibid.: 49). Nevertheless, extensive coverage by the Australian press of the Eichmann trial, ‘seems to have stimulated a more inclusive approach to the memorialisation of the Holocaust in Australian Jewish communities’ (ibid.: 48).

Berman explains the extremity of Jewish reactions to the 1967 war, in Australia and elsewhere, as directly related to the Holocaust. She, too, cites the Taft survey in her account of the distressed reactions of Australian Jewry in June 1967. In the aftermath of the victory, Rabbi Lubofsky of the St Kilda, Melbourne, Hebrew Congregation declared, ‘We are no longer sheep to be slaughtered. We learned our lesson’ (in Berman 2001: 49).

Two discourses in collaboration

Writing only a few years after the Six-Day War, Nathan Glazer (1972: 184), well-known Jewish sociologist, concludes his book on American Judaism with an epilogue on the meaning of 1967. He reflects on the profound, and theological significance of ‘survival’:

And thus Jewish thinkers after 1967, and perhaps ordinary Jews too, began to absorb the full meaning of Auschwitz, as they were recalled to consider it by the extraordinary days of June, 1967. The Jew had almost disappeared. That was Hitler’s intention, and little enough stood in his way. Israel had almost disappeared. That was certainly the intention of the Arab leaders, and only Jewish strength stood in the way. In the light of these overwhelming facts, survival achieved a sign that made it quite impossible ever again to label it ‘mere survival’ (original emphasis).

The Six-Day War was a ‘watershed’ for Israel and many diaspora communities, as various writers have noted, for example Lederhendler (2000), Svorkin (1997: 180)127. In discursive terms the event marked the beginning of the explicit association between Zionism, Israel’s survival, and the Holocaust. As Segev (2002) writes, in an echo of Glazer, on the eve of the war, Israelis spoke about the danger of the Arabs ‘exterminating Israel’ using ‘the same term that described the Nazi genocide:

127 Hertzberg (1992: 120) on the other hand, considers 1982 and the war in Lebanon as a ‘watershed’ for American Jews because it was this war (which could not be fully justified in defence terms only) that caused American Jewry to be troubled about its connection with Israel.
extermination, thus speaking of a second Holocaust’ (ibid.: 102). However, unlike Glazer, Segev does not suggest that there was a ‘real’ threat of extermination though the fear of it was certainly real (1991: 392).

In sum, at the time of the Six-Day War there were two very potent discourses operating together. The first was that of David and Goliath, and the second was the very recent acknowledgement of the six million, allegedly passive victims of Nazism. In this interpretation, ‘David’ was not a passive victim but more like a Warsaw Ghetto fighter. Hence the six million who were not able to resist became, potentially, the Israelis about to be ‘exterminated’ by the Arab forces. In this formulation, one can understand the Jewish protests at being smeared with the ‘Goliath’ label, where Goliath ceases to signify ‘plucky victor, successful against all odds’, and instead, according to another discursive reading, becomes ‘victimiser’.

‘If we are not for ourselves, who will be for us?’

The return of the first part of the prophet Hillel’s aphorism - albeit modified to signal a collective turn - reflects what the literature tells us: that Jewish communities in both the United States and in Australia were deeply affected by the Six-Day War and the fear of Israel’s annihilation. This was an important reason, it is said, for the conclusive turn inwards, to Jewish needs and concerns.128 In 2002, thirty-five years

128 The stories of changes in American and Australian Jewries have similarities but also significant differences. The American experience is fascinating and complex, and cannot be done justice here. For an argument that the Six-Day War resulted in many young Jews of the new ‘New Left’ opting for Israel rather than taking a pre-Arab stance and that the war was a ‘historic turning point for American Jewish consciousness’, see Hertzberg (1992: 123). Many of these Jewish leftists remained ‘universalist’ in every way other than support for Israel. Waxman (2000) argues that although there is ‘considerable evidence that Israel moved from the periphery to the center in the structure and culture of the American Jewish community’ (99), as a result of the Six-Day War, he argues that it is necessary to recognise that there is a ‘vast difference between the American Jewish community and the American Jewish population. They are certainly not one and the same’ (103) For an historical overview of Jewish radicalism and radicals in the United States, as well as his reasons why Jews were overly represented in these movements, see Whitfield (2001). Svonkin’s (1997) argument is that ‘the communal priorities of American Jewry began to shift from liberal universalism to ethno religious self-assertion even before the Six-Day War and the social and political upheavals of the late 1960s’ (1997: 180). Zeitz (2000) writes against the grain of scholarly opinion on the impact of the Six-Day War on Jewish American organisational life. He takes exception to Novick’s (1999) argument that after 1967, Israel came to monopolise the American Jewish leadership’s agenda, saying ‘the truth is more complex’ (footnote 58: 283). Zeitz’s argument is that it is ‘imprecise’ to say that American Jewry turned ‘inward and rightward’ after 1967, that they and their leaders, remained ‘a linchpin of the postwar liberal coalition’ (ibid.: 286) and that black antisemitism was not the corrosive force it was alleged to be.
after the Six-Day War, I asked my interviewees what they thought about the ‘occupation’ of Palestinian lands following the war. What could their thoughts and interpretations tell us about Israel’s self-articulated ambivalent discursive construction as both ‘David’ and ‘Goliath’? How does a perception of the possibility that one’s people might be in danger relate to the idea of an inward-looking community? What other discourses did the respondents summon to explain the conflict and Israel’s contested occupation of Palestinian territories? What can they tell us about perceptions of Jewish identities in the context of a bitter, intractable military and political war?

In re-reading the interviewees’ views regarding these issues, I was struck firstly by their pessimism about how the situation could resolve and secondly, by many interviewees’ lack of sympathy for the Palestinian predicament. One must remember that our discussions occurred during the midst of the second intifada, when violence and deaths of Palestinians and Israelis were part of every nightly news report and discourse on the Israeli side focussed on that nation’s ‘right to survival’. It was another crisis and, as Esther, who was born in 1976, said:

All I can say is what I remember my parents talking about, and they’ve only started talking about it now, since the latest intifada, and what’s going on in Israel now. About how during the Six-Day War the Jews in the Diaspora came together to go to Israel to help out when everybody else was being called up to go into the army. And … I think that’s starting to happen in some ways now, as well.

For Esther’s parents, events of 2002 recalled events of 1967 when thousands of Jews in the diaspora wanted to rush to Israel’s aid. Memory is discursive and the construction of ‘Jewish collective memory’ is noted for its longevity as well as for its selectivity. In this comment of Esther’s we find at work the ‘fantasy echo’ discussed in Chapter One, where a present event evokes, echo-like, one from the past. This occurred less intensively in 2002, but it contained resonances of the days

---

129 Yosef Yerushalmi (1996: 95) in his book on Jewish history and Jewish memory, writes that ‘collective memory ... is drastically selective. Certain memories live on; the rest are winnowed out, repressed, or simply discarded by a process of natural selection...’. For a scholarly discussion on Israeli collective memory, identity and the political uses to which both have been put, see the journal *Israeli Studies* 2002 7.2.
leading up to the Six-Day War which in turn brought loud reverberating fears of a second Holocaust.

David expressed his ambivalence about how Israel’s image changed after 1967:

Well, I think that the first point is, although I don’t have any experience of this, I understand from those that do, that up until 1967 Israel’s existence was a lot more precarious than it is today. Or at least perceived [to be] by the Jewish people in the world...And perhaps even the world perceived it that way, but after 1967 Israel went from being an underdog to being, if there is such a word an ‘overdog’... Because all of a sudden, they were forcibly in control of territory that they hadn’t annexed... And all of a sudden there were all these people in refugee camps ... and they’re now seen as being oppressive and so on. So definitely, on the world stage, it changed the way that you would perceive Israel.

David, a successful Orthodox lawyer in Sydney understood the Six-Day War as a turning point for Israel in relation to what he termed its ‘underdog/overdog’ status. He stated his view that the world’s perception of Israel had changed since 1967, although further in his interview he revealed an ambivalence and discomfort with this positioning, characterising the second intifada: ‘Well, Israel has a tank. The Palestinian has the rock. They must be the underdog, and Israelis must be the aggressors. That’s a very simplistic view, but it’s definitely one you can take from it’. David, a strong supporter of Israel, recognised the objective military disparity between those who have tanks and those who have only stones to throw. He was aware of how many outside Israel understood this disparity. Yet, there was discomfort with an interpretation which placed Israel as an aggressor and oppressor in its conflict with the Palestinians. Ezrahi (1997: 180) notes in this regard: ‘As Israel has gained and held force, the need to constantly guide and justify its uses and consequences has become a modern Jewish preoccupation’.

Were the territories acquired after 1967 by Israel, ‘occupied’? Several interviewees thought not: ‘They’re “occupied” because of security, and because of security the settlements were put there’ (Ruth). Ruth queried my use of the word ‘occupation’. Several interviewees spoke of ‘the “inverted commas” occupation’, implying that they did not consider it as such, or that they found the concept of occupation
problematic. ‘And therefore, I don’t necessarily look at it as an occupation, but rather as a security zone’ (Susanna). On the other hand, those subjects who placed themselves on the Left of the political spectrum (for example Rebecca, Joe, Michael) did acknowledge that the West Bank et al were occupied territories. Rebecca reflected painfully upon the 1970s, when she first became politically active, but found it difficult to deal with being Jewish in relation to Israel. This was the time, following Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War, when it began to be criticised by the New Left for its treatment of Palestinians:130

... you know, I think I was so, sort of scared about being Jewish and about what was happening there, that I couldn’t keep anything in my mind about it, except .. whatever the slogans were. ... ‘End the Occupation’ or whatever it was, back then. ... I couldn’t stand what Israel was doing. But I didn’t really know what Israel was doing.

A number of interviewees thought that the occupation was ‘bad for Jews’. For example, Julia stated: ‘For our own sake, you know, regardless of the Palestinians, regardless of their suffering and their torment, for our sake, give it back. You know, it’s corrupting us in a very powerful way’. Julia’s use of ‘us’ suggests the identification many Jews in the diaspora feel for and with Israel’s predicament. And Susanna recalled that a few years before the beginning of the second intifada in 2000 when she was living in Israel, ‘there was a feeling that we’ve got to stop thinking about what’s right for the Palestinians and worry about what’s right for us’.

Sam, a young Bundist, adopted the strategy based on Jewish self-interest for discussing Israel with other Jews:

In the most part, in discussions with Jews that I’ve had, I don’t consider ... the Palestinians as part of the argument. It’s not about the Palestinians. It’s about the impact, for instance, of an occupation I mean, it is, because they’re there, and that’s the discussion, and I think it is a real tragedy, some of the things that happen to Palestinian communities in Israel and around Israel, but in discussions with Jews, I like to emphasise the fact that I actually think that many of Israel’s policies are bad for Jews, and that’s

130 For an overview of Jews and the Left in Australia, from the position that Jews and Left-wing politics have increasingly parted company since World War Two, see Mendes (2000; 2004). For a memoir from a long-serving Jewish member of the Melbourne Left, and founder of the Leftist group The Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and anti-Semitism, see Rothfield (1997).
why …. that’s the argument that I prefer to make. Because I don’t think you can get anywhere with most Jews in Australia arguing a line of, you know, ‘Jews should be humanitarian, should recognise the rights of displaced people’ and things like that. ... I think that’s sad, but the reality is, I think, a far better argument to make, is that it actually hurts Jews in Israel and outside of Israel.

Sam made an assessment of his fellow Jews in Australia that their inclination was to think of themselves and their own needs before those of the Palestinians, expressing a particularist tendency not confined to Jews alone: to look after one’s own first. Why should one expect Jews to behave or think differently? An alternative to the binary of universalism versus particularism is that of ‘thick’ versus ‘thin’ relations, outlined by the Israeli philosopher Avi Margalit (2002: 6, 8). He distinguishes between them:

Thick relations are grounded in attributes such as parent, friend, lover, country-man. Anchored in a shared past or moored in shared memory. Thin relations, on the other hand, are backed by the attribute of being human. Thin relations rely also on some aspects of being human, relations to the stranger and the remote. … Ethics tells us how we should regulate our thick relations; morality tells us how we should regulate our thin relations.

The preceding comments from the interviewees are examples of ‘thick relations’, summarised by Tim with the words ‘But my allegiance is always with the Jews’. Rebecca’s remark ‘but I couldn’t stand what Israel was doing’ indicates a stance between ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ whereby as a Jew she felt particular concern about Israel’s well-being but she also felt the shame experienced by many Jews, that Israel should behave badly towards Palestinians, whose fates she also cared about.

Margalit defines a nation as ‘a society that nourishes a common delusion about its ancestry and shares a common hatred for its neighbours (2002: 76). Certainly, the interview subjects were very critical of Israel’s neighbours for a host of reasons. Those whom I would describe as the most ‘Zionist’ of the interviewees, about one-quarter of them, expressed the view that regardless of what further concessions Israel made, ‘there would be another reason found for protesting against the existence of the State of Israel’ and, that ‘… even if Israel would leave the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, in the long run they would continue the fight and the hatred
against the Jews.’ These quotes from Hans and Margaret respectively are examples of a familiar, reiterated discourse which places Israel as the eternal victim of Arab enmity. For example, the formal decision by Yasser Arafat and the Palestine National Council in mid-November 1988, ‘to recognise Israel’s legitimacy … and to adopt the principle of a two-state solution’ was dismissed as a propaganda exercise by the Shamir Israeli government (Shlaim 2001: 466) and, it would seem, the suspicion of Palestinian moves towards peace still adheres today for many Jews.

Along with expressed concerns with how the war affected the diaspora, what the occupation meant and distrust of Israel’s Arab neighbours, respondents related to the perceptions that Palestinian children were being filled with hatred about Jews, so that ‘there will be distrust forever’ (Leah). Hans also spoke about ‘the indoctrination on the Arab side of hatred against Israel no matter what’. I stress the phrase ‘no matter what’ because again it speaks to a sense of hopelessness and of Jews being forever the objects of revilement.131

During the interviews I was hoping for at least a shared sense of responsibility regarding the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, a way of understanding the conflict that suggested a concern for ‘thin relations’ – no doubt reflecting my own orientation. Those on the Left such as Dan, regarded the continuing building of housing in the ‘disputed territories’ as ‘almost a distinct act of provocation’. Leah thought the ‘settlers should just get the hell out of there’. Jeff was unequivocal in his expression what he called ‘the injustice’ towards Palestinians. ‘I mean, it’s just horrible the way these people have to live when across the road people are sipping lattes and going to movies and stuff, and then you’ve got people a mile down the road in camps, living in huts and stuff. It’s awful’.

131 Not long after conducting these interviews, I received an email via the elist ‘Jews for a Just Peace’, Melbourne. It contained a letter from someone who had access to the teachings within a large Jewish school in that city. His letter described in detail class work from some Year 8 (aged 13) children who were invited to reflect on a recent suicide bombing at a discotheque in Tel Aviv. One student wrote: ‘‘Why do the Palestinians get a thrill out of killing others and ending the lives of hundreds? Israel will never give up their land. They are strong. So give up Palestine. Give up!’’ And according to the letter, the teacher commented, ‘‘Beautiful. A+’’ And the letter concludes with the rhetorical question: ‘‘… if these sorts of hard line attitudes are being encouraged in the minds and hearts of Jewish children in Melbourne, so far away from the conflict in the Middle East, what hope can there be for peace over there’ (Taylor 2003: email correspondence). Hatred is never the province of one side only.
These interview findings reflect a degree of ambivalence and confusion about Israel’s position as ‘occupier’ of another people, although it would also be evident from what I have presented, that not everyone was comfortable with the term ‘occupier’. A few interviewees had harsher criticisms to make about Israel, but I have not quoted them directly here, as I wanted to present more diversity than they suggested. Nor have I narrated in full the perplexity of Tim, a young, religious Zionist who had difficulty reconciling two realities he confronted on a religious tour of Hebron, in the West Bank: ‘I just could feel this enmity, you know [from the Palestinians]. Behind the walls and thinking, “They’ve all been locked in the whole day [the Israeli military had imposed a curfew]. And here we are dancing in the streets”’.

It is not unexpected that in the thirty-five years since 1967 of constant and high-profile media coverage, combined with the centrality of Israel for those Jews who are involved in the community, there would be defensiveness, sadness, confusion. The workings of ‘thick relations’, of primary concern for one’s own as described by Avi Margalit, were very apparent. In reading my narrative constructed from the interview data, it may seem that my own stance is apparent. It may appear that my criticisms are all directed towards Israel, with none reserved for Palestinians or other Arab nations. This is the discursive trap of ‘taking sides’ where each side can accuse the other of not being open to self-criticism, only pointing the accusatory finger at the ‘enemy’. Jews and Arabs have been doing this to each other for many decades now. As a Jew whose political loyalties are seen to be with the ‘enemy’, this has at times been as confronting for me as it must have been for Tim dancing through the streets of Hebron while Palestinians were locked up, under curfew. To focus on Israel’s role in the conflict is not simultaneously to argue that Palestinians are absolved of all responsibility for past, present and future actions to resolve it. Using my speaking position as a Jew allows me to span thick and thin relations in attempting to persuade other Jews that there may be different ways of understanding contemporary Jewish identity in relation to the intractable conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.
Conclusion

I have argued that Zionism had reached its zenith by 1967, in Australia and in other parts of the Jewish diaspora. There were a number of reasons for this. By 1967, the community of Australian Jews had consolidated itself. Those Jewish refugees and immigrants who arrived en masse from the mid-1930s to the early 1950s, settled into life in Australia and many contributed to establishing Zionism’s dominance within the community, through taking leadership positions in the roof bodies and purchasing Jewish newspapers (Rutland 1997: 322 –23, for discussion of latter). According to most of the key documenters of this period, from 1948 to 1967, the Jewish community in Australia, looked inwards for its sense of identity and strength, through the three ‘planks’ of Jewish-day school attendance, concern with antisemitism, and Israel – all bulwarks against assimilation into comfortable Australia.

By 1967, Australian Jews were ‘ready’ for the overwhelming effect that the Six-Day War induced: the experience of almost twenty years of discourse about small and beleaguered Israel’s survivalist capacities including two wars fought successfully in 1948 and the Suez War of 1956, the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem in 1962 and the beginnings of public acknowledgment of the Holocaust and in Australia, a generation of children who had been educated in a Jewish Day School – one can understand how in those six days guttural fear of another Holocaust turned into exaltation at Israel’s victory. In this context, the symbolic and discursive significance of the David and Goliath metaphor were profound. Mythology surrounding Jews as ‘David’, the victim who overcomes against all odds, is an elemental aspect of Judaism and Jewish culture. The reverse side of the myth, that is, what happens to the victim once he/she has overcome the adversary, is not part of the myth, for there will always be another adversary.

After the Six-Day War however, Jews, or Israel, acquired additional power in the form of an occupation of 900,000 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Kimmerling & Migdal 1993: 209) and the discourses concerning how Israel was
spoken about by Jews themselves and by others, slowly began to change and become contested. The reason for including some of my interviewees’ thoughts about the occupation at the conclusion of this chapter was to explore briefly the effects of over thirty years of this occupation on the discursivity of some Australian Jews. Zionism’s affective dimensions on individual Jews are profound. From abhorrence and discomfort of the occupation to denial that one should call it such, to a particularist focus which states that it – oppressing another people - is ‘bad for Jews’, to distrust of Palestinians and fears that whatever Israel does, the Palestinians will never accept Israel: these are all everyday expressions of discourses which express confusion and anger as David turns into Goliath but maintains a David persona. In the following chapter, I continue exploring this paradox, this time from the perspective of Australian Jewish engagement with the media during the second intifada.
Chapter Five: David v Goliath. Perceptions of bias in the news media

Introduction

To date, I have mainly examined the Jewish media in Australia, analysing it as a carrier of discourses about Jewish identity, the Australian diaspora’s changing relationship with Israel and its part in presenting the shifting allegiances of Australian Jewry from loyalty to Australia and the British Crown to loyalty to Australia and Israel. In this chapter, I will use the general news media as a site for further exploration of some of the themes in this research. Specifically, I will use the concept of the media frame to analyse Jewish responses to how the media have reported the second intifada, which began in 2000. Some Jewish audiences have strongly asserted that the media have sided unjustly with the Palestinians, thus adopting a biased stance against Israel, which may elide into accusations of antisemitism against Jews in general. The problem, which is both political and conceptual and has a broader focus than media and audience frames, is to investigate how might it be possible to make a critique of this conflict which does not position Israel and Jews in the centre of the victim frame?

This chapter will also investigate the politics of bias rhetoric whereby partisan audiences regard the media as biased against their own side and are accustomed to finding instances of it. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the Jewish community in Australia, from its formative days in the 1940s, has established vigorous structures, such as the Public Relations Committees in the state-based Boards of Deputies, to monitor the media for instances of antisemitism and unfavourable coverage of Israel and of Jews in this country. This discursive practice has continued to the present and is pivotal to understanding how strongly identified Jews ‘read’ the news, especially regarding Israel. Continuing from its introduction in the preceding chapter, the frame of ‘David and Goliath’ or the ‘underdog’ takes centre-stage. The intifada was well into its second year when I conducted my interviews and the levels of violence on both sides had intensified, as had, predictably, the media’s
engagement in covering the conflict and consequently, audience reactions to that coverage. The purpose of the chapter is not to ‘prove’ the validity or truth of people’s claims about individual programs or journalists’ alleged slants and biases. Rather, it is to take people’s claims and views at face value, to examine their statements within a particular regime of truth which has as its basis, the need for fair and just reporting of Israel’s position. As in any regime of truth, certain kinds of questions and historical inquiries are precluded or excluded.

In conclusion, I will argue that the concept of moral equivalence forms the basis of the dissatisfaction with the media articulated by both pro-Israel Jews and their opponents. Butler’s analysis of the post-September 11, 2001 phenomenon, which she names ‘Explanation and exoneration, or what we can hear’ is valuable here. She critiques what she sees as an ‘articulation of … hegemony’ in relation to what could be spoken of, and heard by, Americans in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and on the Pentagon. A similar discourse exists in relation to how Israeli and Palestinian violence is represented and spoken. The specific and horrific reality of suicide bombers who have targeted ‘innocent civilians’ and left Israelis in fear of their lives with a view of themselves as ‘indisputable victim[s] of violence [with] a moral justification for retaliation’ (Butler 2004: 4) and an inability to view Palestinian suffering within the same moral framework. The suicide bombings have also contributed to a strong condemnation of those, including the media, who do not condone the position of Jews as ‘indisputable victims’.

**Framing the intifada**

The media has become a ubiquitous presence in the lives of most of us and it is through its channels that we come to know about ‘world events’. The extent of its power and influence over audiences vis-a-vis the capacities of various audiences to interpret the same media text differently has been the object of considerable study and debate for many decades.\(^{132}\) I deliberately use the term ‘media’ in a vague, non-

\(^{132}\) The theoretical debate over the past three decades has oscillated ‘between conceptions of powerful media and powerful viewers’ (Livingstone 1993: 6). For example in the 1980s empirical media audience
specific way, in the ordinary, common-sense way that it is understood for, as Couldry (2000: 6) argues, ‘the potential differences between media are less important than how people interact with the institutional sphere of “the media” in general, and how this, in turn, reflects the media’s symbolic status in our generally mediated society’. He states too, that ‘many common-sense assumptions about the media’s authority operate with a sense of “the media” which is highly non-specific’ (ibid.: his emphasis). Couldry’s observation on the necessity for analysis of one’s empirical material to reflect the vagueness as well as the precision of talk about “the media” concurs with aspects of my interview data. Participants in my study frequently referred to ‘the media’ in this generalised sense when expressing their dissatisfaction about the reporting or when making general observations about its role, as for example in Susanna’s comment:

I’m not sure whether the media does it in a way that is representative of the reality, that’s all... I’m just talking about the media, and the media’s what influences the greater population.

The ‘reality’ to which Susanna referred was that of the Israeli people, suffering under the onslaught of the Palestinian suicide bombings. On other occasions and in other contexts however, interview participants were absolutely specific about which medium, which program, which newspaper and which journalist they were reacting to.

Media framing theory views both news content and audience responses as constructed and productive. My focus in this chapter is on the audience response aspect of the frame. Gitlin (1980) addresses both in his summary of media frames, which are:

... largely unspoken and unacknowledged. They organise the world for journalists who report it and to some important degree, for us who rely on their reports. Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition,

research was criticised for focusing too heavily on ‘micronarratives, outside of any effective macropolitical or cultural frame’ (Morley 1993: 16). See also Alasuutari (1999: 2 - 6) on first and second generations of audience research and Curran (2002: 107 - 126) who provides a critique of developments in this research, noting its continuities and ‘revisionism’.
interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organise discourse, whether verbal or visual (ibid: 7, emphasis in original).

The ‘symbol-handlers’ or media producers are responsible for constructing the media frames, most often through ‘unspoken and unacknowledged’ ways. Frames are potent and effective because they establish and reproduce what becomes familiar, reliable symbols and imagery which make news production and reception less complicated. Frames can operate at a micro level, with one image, one sentence or news item or at a macro or institutional level. As Wolfsfeld (1997: 32) writes in relation to political conflict in general: ‘The deepest cultural frames about a conflict may go back thousands of years. The power of [these] frames comes from the fact that they are rarely examined and are usually taken for granted’.

The frames that I have selected to write about in this chapter relate to Israel’s role in the second intifada, and how certain audiences have perceived the framing of the media’s representation. While they are not the only frames in circulation, they seem to epitomise the paradox that ‘frames’ this research, for the notion of the ‘victim’ or ‘underdog’ constitutes much response on this subject. This is unsurprising, for as Wolfsfeld (1997: 119), a leading scholar in the field of media and the Middle East, writes:

Finding victims is a central method journalists employ for defining the good guys. As one protest leader pointed out, the entire Middle East conflict is a struggle over who is the bigger victim…Victim frames represent important opportunities for challengers as long as they remain in character …. weakness is often strength.

Wolfsfeld (ibid.: 141) suggests that there are two competing meta-frames that appear regularly in insurrections and unequal wars, and which certainly pertain to both the first and second intifadas. These are the ‘law and order’ frame, generally promoted by the more powerful antagonist, and the ‘injustice and defiance’ frame, which includes ‘a call for the oppressed to confront the more powerful enemy’. Four major frames used in American news media discourse about the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948 are identified by Gamson (1992: 54 - 5), cited in Wolfsfeld (ibid.: 150). Two of the four frames clearly placed the blame on one side or the other. They
are “the Arab intransigence” frame [which] states that it is the Arabs’ unwillingness to recognise Israel’s right to exist that is the root of the problem. In contrast, the “Israeli expansionism” frame ‘places the blame on Israel as a Western imperialist state which is attempting to expand its size at the expense of its Arab neighbours’ (ibid.). The other two frames, according to Gamson’s schema, are ‘strategic interests’ which views the Middle East as a site of geo-political interest and the ‘feuding neighbours’ frame, which would conclude that the two sides both are at fault and both have rights. The former two frames in Gamson’s schema are likely to be articulated by those most invested in the conflict. ‘Arab intransigence’ and ‘Israeli expansionism’ both place the blame for the conflict squarely on the other side and are unlikely to take any responsibility themselves for what has occurred.

For example, in relation to the second intifada, many Jewish audiences view events through the frame of Arab or Palestinian intransigence and allege that the news media has unfairly reported the Palestinian side exclusively through an ‘injustice and defiance’ frame which diminishes both Israeli claims of injustice and Palestinian intransigence. Palestinian supporters on the other hand reverse this framing, interpreting events predominantly through the ‘Israeli expansionism’ frame.

‘Interpretive communities’ is a phrase used to characterise specific media audiences whose ‘framings of media texts are consolidated in conversation within the “interpretive communities” to which viewers belong’ (Liebes 1997: 27). With reference to the first three or four concentric circles of the ‘model of community’ discussed in Chapter Two, I suggest that Jews within those circles also perform as an interpretive community in their reception and framing of news about Israel. They form a relatively cohesive community with a shared historical experience of viewing Israel as having to fight for its survival and of recognising a clearly defined enemy. As well, this community maintains the tradition of a vigorous Australian Jewish press one of whose primary purposes has been to reflect and encourage the need and significance of a strong Israel as a central feature of Jewish subjectivity.

133 Lindlof (2002: 64) writes that membership in an interpretive community entails a person performing ‘media usage in ways that are recognisable and valued by others’. 
Media monitoring

‘For many generations Jews were known as people of the book’, says Jeremy Jones, executive vice-president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. ‘Now they are also known as people of the press cutting and of television and of radio because they are very concerned with the way their interests are presented in the media’.

‘When it comes to antisemitism there is a historic concern and we can’t let slow increments build. We might be paranoid, but often it is justifiably so’ (McAsey 1993).

News monitoring is a discursive practice that has been established by Jewish communal bodies in order to respond to and influence the Australian media’s treatment of news items about Jews and about Israel.134 They have been dealing with the vexed issue of public relations, one that is important to all groups that have a message to convey to a wider audience and need the media’s cooperation as a conduit. Overall, Jewish community spokespeople have been relatively successful in this task, combining a continual and immediate responsiveness, the result of close, relentless monitoring of almost all major media outlets, including foreign-language media in Australia, with an equally resolute proactiveness. The latter has been successful in large measure because of the relationships that have been established between key leaders in the Jewish community and editors and managers of specific medium. As the above quotation by Jeremy Jones indicates, Jews have had to face a long history of antisemitism and are finely tuned to responding to instances of it. Increasingly since 1967, and particularly during the period of the second intifada, Israel’s public relations have not always had a positive effect. Part of the blame for this has been placed on the media, both Australian and international. Much of the work of Jewish media monitoring and allied activities in the contemporary period has been devoted to attempting to remedy this situation; indeed to present to the media and wider audiences, alternative frames to those that are thought to dominate the evening news bulletins.

134 The section concentrates on analysis of how Jewish organisations have monitored the re/presentation of Israel and related matters in the Australian media. However, there are of course other issues about which Jews have been concerned during the post-war period to the present day; for example how new Jewish immigrants were received and discussed; ensuring equality for Jews in the workplace and other arenas; how the media reported on far right, usually antisemitic organisations in Australia, to name a few.
Wolfsfeld (1997: 42) observes that in any unequal political conflict, the players are likely to have differential access to the media, a distinction he calls either ‘front-door coverage’ or ‘back-door coverage’, where those with access to front-door coverage have a legitimised access to the power-wielders, journalists, editors and managers of newspapers and other media. The material that follows suggests that Jewish leaders in Australia have gained or assumed a consistent front-door access to the media, even if they have not always been successful in achieving a favourable outcome from a particular media outlet. As Wolfsfeld says: ‘Those with political power and resources are more likely to be treated with respect by news media’ (ibid.).

Early post-war years – 1942 – 1951

Monitoring of Australian and international media for examples of antisemitism and/or criticism of Israel by Jewish peak bodies is not a new phenomenon. Even before the official formation of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies in 1943, a Bureau of Jewish Affairs was established in NSW with an ambitious program:

It was to collect and report on all anti-Semitic statements and publications, including statements made at public meetings, in the trade union movement, in the Domain, in trams and other public places. All instances were to be investigated and appropriate action taken, even to the extent of criminal action. It was felt that the government needed to be urged to amend libel laws to make it an offence to refer to a person’s religion in a newspaper article or other published statement. … A program of lectures to interested groups including churches and trade unions, was also to be instituted (Rutland & Caplan 1998: 20).

At this frantic, desperate time in European Jewish history, New South Wales Jewry was developing organisational structures and work programs to enable it to be both pro and re-active in relation to antisemitism and to promote a strong Jewish presence in this country. Medding (1968: 70 – 71) notes that during this period there was a tendency to respond strongly ‘whenever instances of prejudice occurred … [without distinguishing] between antisemitic acts of a serious nature and those which were relatively unimportant’. Reports from annual conferences of the

135 Two examples of antisemitic graffiti which were included in a publicity pamphlet produced by the Bureau of Jewish Affairs in July 1943 said: “Jews and Gentiles don’t mix – out the Jews” and “Workers unite – Jews control your country, not the politicians!” (Rutland & Caplan 1998: 21).
Executive Council for Australian Jewry (ECAJ) provide insights into the official discourse surrounding the Jewish community’s relationship with the media, with government and with the wider community, including other minority religious and ethnic groups. As in Chapter Two, I note the institutional hegemony available to the ECAJ that allows those speaking from it, to speak with authority (Herzberg 1991: 74) and claim to represent Australian Jewry.

Public relations in the 1950s - cautious but positive

The 1950s were from many perspectives, cautious, conservative, ‘monochromatic’ (Stratton 2000: 244) years in Australia. Many Jews were recent arrivals, refugees, thankful to be alive and needing to rebuild shattered lives. Meanwhile, in almost grateful tones, the leaders of the Jewish community at this time reported that they had maintained ‘relationships with the local Press ….on a very satisfactory basis. Cooperation when required was readily forthcoming. Comments on matters of Jewish interest were always fair and impartial’ (West Australian JBD to ECAJ Annual Conference Report from Public Relations Committee, West Australian Jewish Board of Deputies 1953). By 1954 the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies Public Relations Committee noted that ‘we have had a very good press throughout the state and every opportunity has been taken to cement good relations with working journalists (ECAJ Annual Conference Report from Public Relations Committee, New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies 1954). In the same report it was also noted that incidents of antisemitism in the press ‘should be neither minimised nor exaggerated’ (ibid.). The following year (1955), a similar note of caution was sounded on how to react to incidents of antisemitism: ‘In times such as the present with the great influx of New Australians it is important to examine carefully every case reported, for there is a tendency to magnify minor issues…..’ (Jacobson 1955: 7). The tenor of many of the reports at this time reflects a self-consciousness and lack of stridency that may be part of the experience of all recent migrants, arriving into a nation dominated by the White Australia Policy. It also reflects an established Jewish leadership who
expressed an ambivalence, at best, to many of the newly arrived post-war refugee Jews mainly coming from the ‘Pale’, Eastern Europe.\textsuperscript{136}

Nineteen fifty-five also saw the start of discussion of ‘a project of importance to both Australia and Israel…the sending of Australian journalists on a visit to Israel’ (Leibler, A.S. 1955: 2). Although the first visit did not occur until a few years later, the significance of this public relations project remains to the present. In the following year (1956) the first intervention by the ECAJ to the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC)\textsuperscript{137} was recorded. Sir Raphael Cilento, a renowned surgeon, medical administrator and supporter of the far-right wing, antisemitic organisation the Australian League of Rights\textsuperscript{138}, delivered a broadcast on the ABC ‘which can be classified as anti-semitic even if it dealt mainly with Israel’s position in the Middle East’. The outcome of the negotiations was a broadcast on national radio by the President of the ECAJ, Mr Ashkanasy, ‘refuting the biased statements made by Sir Raphael Cilento’ (Leibler, A.S. 1956: 1).

The Suez Crisis of 1956 did not have a significant impact on Australian Jewry generally, in contrast to the 1967 Six-Day War (Rutland 1997: 358), but Australian Jewish leaders made efforts to ‘acquaint the Australian public with the true and correct position in the Middle East, especially through the medium of the daily press…’ (Leibler, A.S. 1956: 2). One can see here the significance of using the media in order to ensure that the public, that is other media audiences, learnt what Jewish leaders considered to be true and correct. In sum, one could say that the 1950s was a decade in which:

\begin{quote}
the promotion of Israel’s standing and ‘case’ continues to take a foremost place in our work. The high level of interest in and sympathy for Israel on the part of the general public and press give cause for satisfaction (Bloch, A. 1959: 63)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{136} See Kweit (1987) and Rutland (1997: 225 - 56) for discussion on how Australia’s Jewish establishment responded to Jewish post-war immigration to Australia.

\textsuperscript{137} The ABC became a ‘Corporation’ in 1983 (Ward 1995: 144). See page 39 of this chapter for discussion about bias in the ABC.

\textsuperscript{138} According to information contained in University of Queensland archive, found at \url{http://www.library.uq.edu.au/fryer/ms/uqfl265.doc}
Mr Bloch (no relation) also articulated unambiguously the importance of the relationship between Israel and Australian Jewry when he noted that ‘the standing of Israel in the eyes of the general community influences in large measure the standing and repute of local Jewry’ (ibid.). If the former were negatively portrayed, this reflected poorly on the latter. It seemed that any information by or about Arabs, almost always termed propaganda, had to be countered with a Jewish or Israeli perspective. Hence, at the same annual conference, the subject of Arab propaganda was discussed:

The Committee has been disturbed by the exhibition of films in schools which deal with the plight of Arab refugee children [following establishment of state of Israel in 1948]. These films it appears, are being distributed by UNESCO and the Committee is investigating the possibility of submitting, through the NSW Department of Education, films on Youth Aliyali work to the schools concerned (Goldstein 1959: 75).

Yet, the Arab (mainly Lebanese, but also Syrian and Egyptian) population in Australia was very small at this time, numbering approximately 4,000, having mostly arrived through family sponsorship. (See Aboud 2002: 81 - 84). It is unlikely that they would have been in a position to offer the press their own ‘true and correct’ account of events in the Middle East. This situation was to continue well into the 1970s.

The preceding pages have provided examples of the kind of discourse typifying relationships between Australian Jewish organisations and the press during the 1950s. It seemed that during these years, and on through the 1960s, Jewish leaders found media outlets more obliging and accommodating to their point of view than has increasingly been the case since the 1980s. In the following decades, the language used by Jewish commentators may have changed, but the discourse itself has remained consistently within the framework of defending Israel at all times and attacking those deemed to be Israel’s enemies. By the Six-Day War, the media were still considered overall to be strongly pro-Israel, apart from coverage of the ‘Arab refugee question’. There were a few negative editorials in the Sydney Morning Herald but ‘close contacts were made with journalists and relevant background information
and material appertaining to Israel was disseminated. Radio and television coverage of Israel was also favourable during the crisis and the Jewish community was called upon to provide speakers for both media’ (Leibler, I. 1967: 38).

**The turning tide**

By the end of the 1960s however, in large part because of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip following its victory in 1967, the tide began to turn incrementally for what had been a dream run for Israel’s public relations. For the image-conscious Jewish community, it seemed that any reporting of the Arab side was ‘naturally biased’, for example:

In recent times most Australian newspapers have published articles and letters to the editor, which have been quite biased towards the Arab point of view. Several articles have been written recently, including one in the Sydney *Sun*, on 20 May entitled ‘An Israeli drinks Beer in My Home while I Rot here with my Family’, which is typical of this kind of propaganda.

One of the main television channels (ABC) has shown a film on Arab guerrilla training in Jordan, three times in the last six months, and two other films have been shown once each on other channels, which were clearly of Arab origin, and naturally biased. A number of letters have been written to newspapers in various parts of Australia, by academics and other prominent people, giving a pro Arab biased viewpoint, in relation to news items, which have been published. This type of letter has shown a definite increase in the last three to four months. Some academics have been writing to daily newspapers from time to time and most of these have been answered by knowledgeable people (Report from NSW JBD to ECAJ Annual Conference Report of the Chairman of Public Relations Committee NSW Jewish Board of Deputies 1969).

By 1971, there was official acknowledgment of this turning tide. Proceedings from the ECAJ Annual Conference recorded that participants devoted considerable time to discussing\(^\text{139}\) how to handle the media, in the light of likely intensified Arab propaganda. Leibler (1971: 26) cautioned against overreacting to ‘Arab propaganda’ in the press, radio or television, which could ‘be most counter-productive’. During this conference too, there was the first reference to a contemporary concern, that of ‘extreme elements, right as well as left [substituting] Israel and Zionism for the

\(^{139}\) I should stress here that the published records of the annual conferences of the ECAJ do not, for the most part, contain evidence of disagreement or dissent among the participants. What is contained in these documents is an official recording of what specific state and national Jewish leaders have considered significant to include in their reports.
word Jew in their slogans’ (Report from Standing Committee on Israel to ECAJ Annual Conference Report of the Chairman, Standing Committee on Israel 1971).

Numerous writers have noted that both the hard and mainstream left in Australia became seriously concerned with the Palestinian cause only following the Six-Day War, the end of the Vietnam War and the rise of the New Left in the early 1970s\textsuperscript{140} linked with the rise of student radicalism at this time. There was an increasing articulation by Jewish leaders in this country of anti-Israel trends. By 1979 it was announced that:

\begin{quote}
We are not now, if we ever were, in a particularly strong position to influence the way in which the media report and analyse matters of Jewish concern. It can no longer be assumed that even the most outrageous antisemitic manifestations (not to mention anti-Zionist outpourings) will be handled appropriately by the media. It is therefore necessary for us to review the traditional panacea of running to the press whenever things ail us (Report from Standing Committee on Community Relations to ECAJ Annual Conference Chairman of the Standing Committee on Community Relations 1979: 11).\textsuperscript{141}
\end{quote}

The comment above indicates how the media had become a source of dissatisfaction for Zionist leaders in this country. They could no longer be trusted to handle ‘matters of Jewish concern ... appropriately’. By the 1980s, this concern with the media becomes more pronounced.

**1980s – the media in the spotlight**

During the 1980s, the Jewish community’s disapproval of certain media organisations began in earnest. Rather than running to the press for a remedy, the reverse was now in evidence. That is, certain sections of the media had themselves become a cause of the very illness for which a panacea was sought. From the mid 1980s to the present, there are many examples recorded of this, particularly focusing on the ABC, the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) and to a lesser extent, the Special

\textsuperscript{140} See discussion in the Australian Jewish journal *Without Prejudice*, No 2, 1991; articles by Encel, Gouttman, Mendes and Rubinstein on ‘The Australian Left and the Jews’. Other references noted in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{141} This report also recommended that the name ‘Public Relations Standing Committee’ be changed to ‘Community Relations, so as to avoid the suggestion that the Jewish community are involved in Madison Avenue-type self promotion’ (5). This reflects a sensitivity to the rise of the Public Relations industry in the United States, with its negative connotations of self-aggrandisement, marketing and perhaps selling a message using deceptive means.
Broadcasting Service (SBS). In 1982, Michael Danby, pro-Israel, now Labor Party member for the Australian federal lower-house seat of Port Melbourne, wrote an article for a Melbourne Jewish periodical in which he claimed: ‘There are two wars being fought over the Middle East. One is on the battlefield in Lebanon, the other, with its own strategy and tactics is being fought in the Western Media’ (Danby 1982: 1).

His article compared a selection of press and television coverage of the conflict in Lebanon, both in Australia and overseas, during July and August 1982. Significantly, it was written before the massacre of hundreds of Palestinian refugees at the Sabra and Shatilla camps in Beirut in September of that year, but immediately following the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon and bombing of parts of Beirut, the overall objective of this military strategy being to destroy the PLO and remove it from Lebanon (Morris 2001: 509). Danby’s article is of the tenor displayed in contemporary pieces where attention is drawn to specific headlines, over harsh adjectives, Nazi comparisons, false accusations and so on; as for example in the following paragraph:

The Sydney Morning Herald even felt constrained to write an article on our television news being censored by Israel. I have not noticed any complaints about news being received via the Syrian censor even if we accept the false equation of the bloodstained Assad military dictatorship with the democratic government of Israel. It is an interesting note on bias that despite this torrent of anti-Israel footage, Mr Vincent Smith, the News Director of the Seven Network does not believe that we are seeing as much of the Palestinian side as we should (ibid.: 2).

The frames within which Danby constructed his analysis in this paragraph follow a familiar pattern. Danby inserted the ‘false equation’ of comparing Israel with Syria (almost any other Arab state at that time would have fitted the ‘Arab intransigence’ frame); used the highly charged word ‘torrent’ to describe the anti-Israel footage and finally, expressing outrage that, in this context, a news director could still consider the ‘Palestinian side’ as deserving of more coverage. Additionally, ‘bias’ in this and other similar contexts, appeared to be synonymous with allowing the
Palestinians any public voice, whether representing themselves or through spokespeople; so unequivocally were they framed as the intransigent enemy.

Two years later, in 1984, the ECAJ provided another instance of the politics of bias. Correspondence was entered into with the Managing Director of the ABC concerning bias in programming of various radio current affairs programs. The complaint specifically concerned the allegation by the ECAJ of:

Repeated use of Dr Irwin Herrman, a committed anti-Zionist Jew and opponent of Israel as a purportedly ‘neutral’ expert and commentator on Middle East Affairs on such shows as ‘PM’ and ‘The World Today’. ... In contrast, although pro-Israeli commentators like Dr Colin Rubinstein were also employed their use was far less frequent and they were frequently described in advance as politically committed’ (Leibler, I. 1984: 20).

The specific interest in this example is the fact that Herrman was a Jew and spoke out against Israel, an unusual combination then and now. The ABC responded by detailing a range of commentators and journalists that appeared ‘in recent times’ to discuss ‘Middle Eastern Affairs’. The letter concluded by stating: ‘This variety of opinion is not the “occasional use” of balancing viewpoints you suggest, nor are we persuaded that the presentation of Dr Herrman contravenes the ABC’s charter of editorial practice...We note your concern. However, we will use Dr Herrman, on occasions as we judge to be appropriate’ (Revill 1984: 162). The ECAJ was dissatisfied with the ABC response and in turn responded. From the ECAJ’s perspective no satisfactory outcome was reached. By 1987, Mr Caplan (1987: 7), President of the ECAJ, said in relation to both the ABC and SBS:

Our experience has been that when we have a serious complaint in regard to a particular program on the basis of bias or accuracy, we are completely unable to obtain satisfaction from either the ABC or SBS.

In late 1987, the ECAJ made a submission to the ABC about its methods of handling complaints it received about errors of fact, statements that could be construed as facts but were really journalistic opinion. The ECAJ sought the establishment of an external complaints-handling procedure to deal with such complaints. The ABC did
not acknowledge the need for an external complaints-procedure. Complaints by the ECAJ, other Jewish organisations and Jewish individuals about ABC bias have continued.

**The politics of bias rhetoric**

How can one understand this dissatisfaction, particularly with the ABC, which one could now describe as ‘chronic’? It is not the point here to arbitrate on whether or how the ABC or other media outlets have produced factually or interpretively inaccurate stories, or to deny that they never occur. What is more interesting is to reflect upon the consistent pattern of the Jewish leadership’s responses on this subject and its significance. Is the concept of bias itself a meta-frame through which partisan audiences, like those on either side of the Israel/Palestine dyad, filter and interpret any news on this contested issue? It has become commonplace in discussion about bias rhetoric to acknowledge that supporters of either side of any political or other controversy regard the media as biased *against* their own side and are accustomed to finding instances of this bias. Certainly, it is interesting that despite the concept of bias no longer being of central theoretical concern in media studies (see Fowler 1991: 12), it remains of supreme significance to particular audiences who have a high stake in how a story is presented.

Hackett (1984: 253) comments that since the concepts of bias and objectivity are ‘so embedded in popular and political debate’, rather than dismissing them out of hand, one could make them, ‘as rhetorical devices and practical norms, themselves the objects of investigation, rather than the standards by which we evaluate *other* objects (eg news content)’ (italics in original). He cites Bruck (1981: 17) who proposes that we could ‘investigate the politics of the bias rhetoric, look at who raises the bias issue, when and why, and check the discourses and interests carrying it’.

---


143 Such a procedure was also sought in 1991. In 2002 the ECAJ sought a similar procedure for SBS.

144 Psychological research by Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken (1994) and Vallone, Ross & Pepper (1985) confirm this in relation to their research subjects watching news about the Arab-Israeli conflict.
Further evidence about bias rhetoric comes from Greg Philo (1990: on-line) from Glasgow University Media Group who conducted considerable research on the responses from a range of groups to divisive news events such as the 1985 Miners Strike in Britain. One of his broad conclusions was that ‘normally, if people had direct experience of an issue and this [experience] conflicted with the media account, then they would reject the media message’ (Philo 2002: on-line). This seems to be part of the story in the present discussion.

Since the 1980s there has been an increasing mobilisation of resources from Australian Jewish organizations to counter those news reports and documentary programs which have reported ‘unfairly’ on the hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians; that is, without an Israeli/Jewish perspective at the centre of the frame. Prior to this, the media could mostly be relied upon to take Israel’s perspective, with notable exceptions. The small Arab presence in Australia certainly assisted this as did the lack of reporters based in Arab countries, very different to the present situation. Chapters Two and Four have revealed the ‘mainstream’ community as having a strong attachment to Israel, reaching its crescendo in 1967 and thus an intense investment in how the news on Israel is presented and how that reflects on the Jewish community in Australia. Part of that investment includes a strong sense that right is, indeed must be, on their side and that concomitantly, if Israel is allegedly judged by different standards to other nations by the media, then the media must be ‘biased and ill-informed’ as the following quotation illustrates:

….the Western media continues to judge Israeli actions by double standards which are applied to no other country.....Israel ... has suffered consistently from biased and ill-informed international publicity for its alleged ‘intransigence’ during the past fifteen years - criticism which reached the peak of one-sided and unfair crescendos during the 1982 Lebanon War and since the beginnings of the [first] intifada.…. (Leibler, I. 1989: 19, 22).

David vs Goliath and the underdog frame

‘Epistemological vertigo’ is the phrase evoked by the anti-Zionist Iraqi Jewish writer, Ella Shohat (1992: 134), to name the condition suffered by those Jews who are unable to come to terms with the idea ‘that there might be victims of Jewish
nationalism’. Israel’s invasion of southern Lebanon in 1982 was a turning point for her international image as it was when ‘the press began to use the ironic portrayal of the Palestinian David being victimised by the Israeli Goliath’ (Wolfsfeld 1997: 150). This was the first time in Israel’s history that it was cast as the bully or perpetrator by the Western news media (ibid.) and it is in contrast to the use of the metaphor in the preceding chapter where Israel, though victorious in the Six-Day War, was still viewed as ‘David’. Wolfsfeld’s use of the word ‘ironic’ speaks to the long history of Jews as ‘David’, the weaker party, the victim, now being replaced by another victim, the Palestinian people.

In Australia, the image was evoked at the 1983 Annual Conference of the Executive Council for Australian Jewry (ECAJ) to express dissatisfaction with media reporting of the Lebanon campaign. The Chairman of the Public Relations Committee, Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies reported:

The general lopsided reporting started with the Lebanon campaign and has, to a large extent continued … I feel that the depiction [of Israel] as the military Goliath and the Arabs as the permanently suffering and humiliated underdogs has had considerable influence on shaping Australian attitudes lately……(Rosenblum November 1983: 203).

Rosenblum’s comment provides evidence of Philo’s point that in general, the power of a media message increases when an audience has no direct experience or knowledge of the issue at hand (Philo no date: on-line). In the early eighties this would have been the case for large numbers of the Australian general public, hence Rosenblum’s concern. It is important to note the historical moment when the tide appeared to turn against Israel in relation to news media’s reporting of Israel’s conflict with its Arab neighbours. This was summed up from a Zionist perspective in the 1983 ECAJ Annual Conference:

---

145 Another explanation for this change in reporting was provided by David Shipler (New York Times Jerusalem Bureau Chief 1979-1984). He argued that until 1982 ‘we always saw the war from the perspective of the Israeli side in large part because that was where information was available, where the press corps was allowed to be based…..But because of the anarchy of Beirut, because there were so many bureaus there, this was the first time in 1982 that you saw a war from the Arab perspective….And it was a fascinating transition’ (Shipler 2002).
The Australian Jewish community is coming out of the post-war euphoria of pro-Israel and pro-Jewish opinion and will have to adjust to the reality of a world where 150 million Arabs or near Arabs and immeasurable oil wealth will dominate the political thinking to our detriment (Rosenblum November 1983: 204).

Wolfsfeld (1997: 141) describes the contest over media frames in the first intifada (1987 – 1993) as being between David and Goliath as does Liebes (1997: 73), referring to the ‘victim in distress rising against a powerful oppressor’. And Shohat (1992: 134) questions how Israelis, used to knowing themselves only as victims ‘in relation to neighbouring collectivities … were to deal with the inversion of the traditional imagery of David and Goliath when Palestinian children, armed only with slings, were confronting Israeli soldiers armed to the teeth?’ By 2002, the metaphor was still used, this time by an Israeli journalist, Arieh O’Sullivan, a reporter for the Israeli English language daily, The Jerusalem Post when interviewed on the ABC Radio National program Media Report (O’Regan 2002). O’Sullivan responded to a question about whether he thought the foreign media were biased against Israel. The question itself reflects the discursive frame of the time, which was centred on assertions of bias:

Oh, without a doubt. Most Israelis think the foreign press is out to get Israel; everybody believes the foreign press is completely twisted and is serving almost as a propaganda tool for the Palestinians…. [they] are coming from the point of view that they’re the David and we are the Goliath in Israel, and that’s an easy image to sell, particularly when you have a conflict, a war zone.

This handy, if clichéd metaphor with its potent religio-cultural resonance was also used ironically by one of my interviewees, the staunchly anti-Zionist Karl, to paint the image in reverse, thus restoring it to its original, biblical significance:

Well, the Zionists would like the media to present things in such a way that Israel is little David, Palestine is Goliath, and little Israel is being bullied by this terrible Goliath. They want Israel to always be depicted in a favourable light.

---

[146] Perhaps by ‘near-Arabs’ the speaker meant Turks and Iranians.
Karl’s ironic framing of the David/Goliath narrative identified the tragedy and paradox in this conflict. Karl sought to comprehend the discursive practices whereby a nation-state with the military might and power of Israel has the need to identify, and be seen as, the victim in the contest, a victim who has also succeeded in defeating its enemies time and again since 1948. By 2000 and the beginning of the second intifada, it was alleged that the media were more disposed to framing their reporting from the perspective of the Palestinians as the victims. By 2002, the conflict had escalated and that context underpinned many interviewee responses.

Wolfsfeld’s (2004: 214) further analysis of the Middle East peace process reveals that in Israel too, there have been allegations of pro-Palestinian bias made against the quality daily newspaper, Ha’aretz. However, he states that on both sides, accounts of the other’s dead, for example, were for the most part, given minimal coverage (ibid.: 215). He calls this an ‘ethnocentric view of death’ a term which implies similar conceptual terrain to that of ‘moral equivalence’ which I discuss in the chapter’s conclusion.

Certainly, the raw numbers of those killed since 2000 are not equivalent. According to B’Tselem147, from September 2000 to November 2005, Israeli security forces killed 3265 Palestinians, including 668 minors, in the Occupied Territories. In the same time period, Palestinians killed 450 Israeli civilians within the Green Line in Israel and 227 Israeli settlers in the Occupied Territories including 118 minors in both areas (B’Tselem 2005: on-line). There are no neutral statistics in this conflict: in fact the politics of numbers is itself framed in the discourse of bias. For example, the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, in Herzliya, Israel, maintains that such reporting of unequal numbers of deaths:

is used to create an image of lopsided slaughter, with Israel cast as the villain. But such numbers distort the true picture: they lump combatants in with non-combatants, suicide bombers with innocent civilians, and report Palestinian “collaborators” murdered by their own compatriots as if they had been killed by Israel (Radlauer 2002: on-line).

---

147 The Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. B’tselem provides statistical and other data on all aspects of the conflict, from both sides (www.btselem.org/).
On the other side, there are statistics relating to the Occupation’s impact on every aspect of Palestinian life. For example, from the Palestinian Centre for Rapproachment Between People one learns that since the intifada began in October 2000, the number of homes demolished by the Israeli army in the Occupied Territories is, on average, 15 per day and the number of trees uprooted on average is 896 per day (Israeli war crimes index 'Israeli War Crimes Index' 2002). In the Gaza Strip, approximately 300 businesses, factories or schools have been destroyed or damaged until the beginning of 2003 (Palestinian Centre for Human Rights Destruction of land and property; closures, unemployment and poverty 2003: on-line). There are countless ways to measure how the ongoing conflict has affected the lives of Palestinians. Israelis too have been profoundly affected by the suicide bombings and associated impact on their daily lives. Statistics alone however cannot convey the qualitative differences in suffering.

'Underdog' reading frames interviewee responses
Individual Jews, including those I interviewed during 2002, had strong views on how the suffering and fear experienced by Israelis had not been sufficiently recognised by the media. For example, during the interview with Susanna, she commented on discrimination against the Jewish community:

I feel that discrimination comes across in the media. Because I think that if it was a more equal expression in the media of what Israeli society is having to face, not just what Palestinian society is having to face, that perhaps there would be less of an impression that it’s the big, mean Israel against the poor, struggling Palestinians. That there’s not…. yeah…there’s just not equal reporting. The media bias has an influence on the general public …. They’re just not provided with more information on the Israel side of things.

Echoing Couldry, whom I cited at the beginning of this chapter, Susanna speaks of ‘the media’ in the most generalist sense. In my inquiries about the media’s role in the conflict, interviewees often found it difficult to be specific about which media, when and so on they were referring to, indicating both the media’s ubiquity in our daily lives and also the fact that, in the context of an interview conversation, generalisation takes less effort than precision. Susanna was concerned that ‘the
media bias’ has not sufficiently presented the Israeli view to the ‘general public’. She has placed herself, like Rosenblum from the Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies, in the role of a member of an interpretive community, in contrast to the general uncritical and uninformed public. In that role, she expressed a belief that television in particular ‘sends out powerful messages whose meanings are accepted uncritically by most of [its] recipients’ (Ross 2000: 134). Susanna was concerned that an uninformed audience would accept/believe the media view that Israel was ‘big and mean’.

Hans too, spoke passionately about how he saw the media’s reporting through the ‘injustice’, ‘underdog’ frame:

I’m not the type of person who looks at everything with blinkers, that Israel is always right and the others are always wrong, because obviously they’re not! But it still amazes me that total world media has turned so violently against Israel. And I haven’t got, really, an answer for it. I don’t know why Israel totally lost the ability of having a good PR machinery, which they used to have, or if they still have it, it’s still being submerged, to a large extent, by the other side. And for whatever reason, why it suddenly happened that the Palestinians are regarded as the underdogs and therefore, dramatically, be favoured in the media, well, it’s always the case that the underdog is favoured, but why they should be consistently considered as the underdog.

Hans’ extreme response, for example his statement that the ‘total world media has turned so violently against Israel’, is indicative of a strong sentiment about the role of the media. He saw the conflict partly in terms of public relations rhetoric, and in this aspect of the conflict, it appeared Israel was losing. Wolfsfeld (1997: 153) wrote in relation to the first intifada, that Israel needed ‘damage control. The story in the territories was ugly. When the major framing question centred on who the victims were, the events in the field offered very few advantages to the Israelis’. Hans, like other interviewees could not understand why Palestinians ‘should be consistently considered as the underdog’. Presumably what was in the forefront of Hans’ mind was what he saw as Palestinian terror, the suicide bombings and their impact on Israeli society and indirectly, Jews in the diaspora. As a consequence, he was unable to ‘see’ or ‘hear’ about the effects of the ongoing occupation on the lives of the
Palestinian people. Butler (2004: 4) suggests that a framework for ‘understanding violence ... emerges in tandem with the experience, and that the frame works both to preclude certain kinds of questions, certain kinds of historical inquiries, and to function as a moral justification for retaliation’. Hence, Hans could not easily ask the question ‘why are Palestinians portrayed consistently as the underdog by the media?’ The answer would lead him into an historical inquiry that predated the latest Palestinian suicide bombing. One’s own side’s experience of violence is always seen as a ‘moral justification for retaliation’ – an analysis of the violence carried out in Israel/Palestine since 2000 would corroborate this assertion.

The following extract from Tim’s interview provides some insight into his understanding of what might be contained within the ‘media portrays the Palestinians as victims at the expense of the Israelis’ frame:

Often you’ll get paragraphs and paragraphs on the deaths, and stories about the destruction of Arab houses, and then one or two lines about, ‘another bomb has gone off in Haifa’, or whatever, you know? So, that’s a way of dishonest reporting, too. Even though it’s reporting the facts, there’s all these ways that the media changes things.

BB: Yeah. But if that’s true, say, for one particular kind of event, it doesn’t necessarily mean that the media’s doing it because they’re anti-Israel.

T: I think they’re doing it because they’re catering towards what they think the opinion of their readership is, you know? They want to create a story. If the readership is going for the underdog, you know, the Palestinians are the underdogs, so they’re more interested in finding out about how the Palestinians are suffering.

BB: Right. So, do you think the Palestinians are the underdogs?

T: I mean, if you look at it in terms of, yes, Israel is this big power, and what power does this .... I mean, they’re not even a state, Palestine.

BB: No. That’s right.

T: So yeah. In that sense, they are the underdog. But if you think, well, how much pain are the Jews suffering, and how much pain are the Arabs suffering within Israel, there’s suffering on both sides, and lives are always one plus one plus one. You know?....

BB: What do you mean by that? You mean each life should have equal value?

T: Each life counts.
BB: Yeah!

T: And I don’t think you can say, well, 200 Arabs died and 50 Israelis died, and therefore the Arab’s the underdog. I don’t think you can measure it up in that sense either.

Tim’s first statement pointed to what he viewed as an inequality in the reporting of the trauma suffered by both sides of the conflict. His view was that the balance had shifted to ‘paragraphs and paragraphs’ about death and destruction on the Arab side and only a few lines about deaths within Israel caused by the Palestinian suicide bombers. I then attempted to insert an ineffectual counter-argument, as Tim went on to express a view that the ‘readership’, that is, a generalised media audience, was now on the side of the Palestinians thus, by implication, requiring the media also to adopt this stance. This was an interesting observation on the perceived power of an audience to influence the media and suggests the dialogic relationship between audience and media. It also pointed to the complexity of the interaction between a media text and a viewer/reader whereby both the producers of news and their recipients shift, in the way that the facts on the ground of the conflict have altered over a long period of time. At the same time, the fundamental framing of the conflict has not changed for the most zealous audiences on either side.

The exchange that occurred between Tim and myself revealed his ambivalence in dealing with the power imbalance between the two sides and his difficulty in coming to terms with the effects of Israel’s existence on the Palestinian people. He admitted that Palestinians were the underdog for after all, Palestine ‘is not even a state’, but then he immediately qualified the remark with the reminder that Jews were suffering too and that for him, the quantification of dead Israelis and Palestinians was not the issue, the inequality in their numbers not withstanding. Tim’s close identification with his people made it agonising to acknowledge that ‘the Arab’s the underdog’. Within the dominant discourse there may be no ambivalence in Israel’s treatment of Palestinians, but individual Jewish subjects at times articulate less certainty.
Many comments made by my interview participants as well as the cartoon, reproduced below, indicate how deeply Jews like Tim, experienced the receiving of daily news about Israel.

Illustration 9: Kron, J, AJN, 2001

As David described it:

So my ritual is that I wake up at 6 o’clock in the morning to get ready to go to Synagogue. … the alarm goes on and I wake up to 702, the ABC station and I listen to the first news item. If the first news isn’t ‘fifteen people killed in Israel’, it doesn’t matter which side, I just go, “OK. Today’s a good day’. And switch off my radio and go and have a shower.

David’s heart-felt comment is reproduced here in part because it resonated with an aspect of my own early quotidian ritual as a researcher who is also affected by news about Israel and Palestine. The comment spoke both to how receiving the news is so much part of people’s daily routines and how its contents can affect the quality of one’s day. Finkielkraut (1994: 132) writes somewhat tongue-in-cheek that these days there are two types of practising Jew: ‘the devout who attend synagogue and the much more numerous group who produce a running (and delectable) commentary on the situation in the Middle East as their form of observance’. Leah too, expressed how her Jewish subjectivity affected her reception of news about Israel.

Because yeah. God! There’s so much anti-Israel stuff coming out! And as a Jew, you do, you sort of think oh! There’s an embarrassment: ‘I hope they didn’t do it! Oh no, don’t tell me there was a massacre!’ It’s as though you yourself had done it.
When Leah stated ‘It’s as though you yourself had done it’, she evoked something more than that contained within a victim frame, namely a strong identification with the Jewish state, whether acting as victim or aggressor. Hence her comment that she felt embarrassed if it emerged that Israel had perpetrated violence against Palestinians. She too, expressed ambivalence. She did not want to see more massacres, felt positioned as guilty by association and affected by the ‘anti-Israel stuff’ emerging in the media.

Media responsibilities

As the preceding words from my interview subjects indicate, there is no doubt that 2001 and 2002 were anni horribili for Israel and its diasporic supporters, in both a public relations and a loss of lives sense. The Australian Jewish News reported extensively on biased media coverage of the conflict and on an increase in antisemitism in Australia and also overseas, particularly in Europe. Often the two were linked in the discourse. In January 2002, the ECAJ announced that the preceding year ‘was the worst on record for physical anti-Semitic attacks…..the high level …. fits a patterns of increased international anti-Jewish violence since the beginning of the Palestinian intifada in 2000’. The President of the ECAJ, Jeremy Jones, reminded the media of its responsibilities, ‘that they are part of a social dynamic. If they allow somebody to express hostility towards any identifiable group and present them as just someone with a controversial view then they run the risk of giving a green light to physical manifestations of bigotry’ (Bialoguski 2002).

There is an implication in the final sentence that the media is not able to distinguish between ‘someone with a controversial view’ and the small minority who commit physical violence because of their bigoted views. Why is it not possible to adopt a position critical of the Israeli government without an insinuation that this stance might lead to antisemitic physical violence?

The NSW Jewish Board of Deputies has since its inception in 1943, lent its organisational power and influence towards the support of the state of Israel, including championing those who speak in its defence. One way of achieving this was to send groups of journalists to Israel to ‘see for themselves’. This has occurred
regularly in NSW from the early 1960s to the present. The thirteenth such mission occurred late in 2001, organised with the Israeli Embassy and Israeli Foreign Ministry. One journalist who went on this trip was Piers Akerman, who writes for the right-of-centre Sydney tabloid newspapers, the Daily Telegraph and the Sunday Telegraph and is well-known for his right-wing views on a range of topics. In March 2001, he addressed a Board of Deputies plenum on his visit to Israel, to what he called ‘the epicentre of terrorist phenomenon’. He then made the following comments: ‘Timing is everything, in journalism and in history. Israelis live with the reality of suicide bombing. It took September 11 to drive home to America and the rest of the world what the experience of living in Israel means’ (in Levy 2002: 10). Akerman then went on to say: ‘Arabs have been manipulating the situation since 1948. Antisemitism is rife through the Western world’. The trip had made him more hawkish on the Middle East, Mr Akerman conceded. ‘The Guardian’ or editorials about Israel begging for peace, I wonder who they have been talking to; I suspect I know’. Curiously, the headline for this article reads ‘Keep pushing for balanced coverage, urges Akerman’. Yet there was nothing in the article to suggest that he was arguing for a balanced coverage, nor indeed that he was interested in such a concept. Akerman’s comments reside within the frames that both Wolfsfeld and Liebes suggest have dominated media coverage of the Arab/Israeli conflict, namely those confirming notions of Arab intransigence and injustice, with the Israelis, rather than the Palestinians on the receiving end.

Reading many of the opinions and analyses contained within the AJN at this time was unsettling for a number of reasons. Firstly, because there was so little in the discourse to suggest that those who strongly identified as Jews acted or reacted beyond the frames, exemplified in an extreme way by Akerman’s comments quoted

---

148 The Guardian newspaper during 2001 and 2002 had many complaints levelled against it that its coverage of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict was bordering on antisemitic. At the end of May 2002, the readers’ editor asked a number of its own journalists what they thought of the newspaper’s coverage. The comment from the foreign editor sums up a number of journalists’ responses: “We were part of Israel’s foundation and it is a part of our history…The problem for our Jewish readers is that this time round we are perceived as not supporting Israel. That is a misconception. We support Israel but we do not support this government …we are committed to telling the story, to showing the terror caused by suicide bombing but also to showing the oppression – I think that is the correct word – of the Palestinians. We will not be brow-beaten into being bland” (Mayes 2002).
above. Secondly, Israel’s actions had clearly provoked an increase in hostility towards Jews in Israel and the West and, despite all those who have the political sophistication to distinguish between Israeli government and Jew in their analysis, there are also others for whom it is not in their interests to do so. Thus diasporic Jews such as Esther, one of my interviewees, reacted in distress:

And a lot of times, especially in the media, they get the two confused and they’ll call them ‘the Jewish people’ and not ‘the Israeli people’, or they’ll call them ‘the Jews versus the Palestinians’ where it should be ‘the Israelis versus the Palestinians’. They get it wrong.

Esther’s desire to distinguish between Israel and Jews points to the possibility that not all Jews support and identify with Israel, again a complexity which is not generally suggested in the Jewish media and other sources of the dominant discourse. This lack of distinction permits Jewish spokespeople also to conflate the State of Israel with the Jewish people and argue that they are synonymous. ‘Ergo, to criticise Israel is to be antisemitic, a rhetorical trick’ as Cockburn (2002: 8) calls it. This is also what Brian Klug (2005: 57) describes as a ‘one-sided mindset’ which ‘tends to see all hostility to Israel or Zionism as hostility to Jews as Jews: not to Jews as Europeans or to Jews as non-Arabs’. Klug refers here to a discourse within which Zionism is only conceived of as a liberation movement for Jews. Which it was. However, from another perspective, it was also seen as a colonising movement; Jews who came to Palestine were settlers and Europeans ‘by any other name’ (ibid.). Jews such as Klug, by articulating the construction of the ‘one-sided mindset’, provide a discursive space where it is possible for Jews to acknowledge the repercussions of that other perspective, still experienced today by Palestinians and Israelis alike.

**Conclusion – framing the moral equivalence of violence**

What is meant by the moral equivalence of violence? In simple terms, it is a rhetorical device used to condone and justify the violence conducted by one’s own side while denouncing, often in highly-charged moral tones, that the suffering ‘they’ have experienced as a result of this violence has any equivalence with the suffering experienced by ‘us’ from violence perpetrated by ‘them’, the enemy. The media’s
framing of the violence coming from both sides of the Israel-Palestine conflict is alleged to imply a moral equivalence between the two sides. This issue underpins much of the Jewish interpretive community’s fury with media representations of this conflict and can be read in some of my interviewees’ comments. It also forms the basis of the Palestinian side’s anger with the media. Here however, I focus on the Jewish discourse around this problematic and consider how Jews might think about the equivalence question from within a different framework by asking different questions.

I have suggested in this chapter that media and audience frames function dialogically and sometimes, dialectically. The history of Jewish media monitoring in Australia is evidence of this, proceeding as it did from mostly consonance between media and audiences frames in the early post-war decades through to an uneven, but overall, increase in discord which has developed until the present day, the most dissonant ever, from a Zionist perspective.149 The reasons for this dissonance are complex and can only be touched upon here. At their core, they relate to what Herzfeld (2005: 46) calls the ‘global hierarchy of value’. In this context, it means that certain lives – and deaths – usually emanating from the more powerful parts of the West, are valued and mourned more than others from other geo-political regions of our globe. The question of moral equivalence and a hierarchy of value have framed the conflict between Jews and Palestinians from its inception. I have noted previously in discussing Zionism and the formation of Israel, that it was thought a greater justice would be done by the Jews having a homeland, despite the inevitable sacrifice of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine. Moral equivalence still frames the discourse about the conflict, through the media and elsewhere. When it appeared that the media was placing more value on Palestinian lives lost than Israelis, during the second intifada, Jewish audiences responded with alarm.

149 Yet Australian governments have overall been increasingly supportive of Israel’s position. For example on 9 July 2004 the International Court of Justice (ICJ), - the United Nation’s principal judicial organ - issued an advisory opinion saying the separation barrier being built around the West Bank was illegal and that construction must stop immediately. Australia, along with the United States, was one of only six countries out of 150 that voted against the UN General Assembly resolution that the ICJ opinion should be acted upon. http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=11418&Crl-middle&Cr1-east, 20 July 2004.
After so many years of seeing Palestinians dehumanised as terrorists on our television screens, to have them portrayed perhaps as ‘more human than Israelis’ because they appeared to be receiving more column-inches or air-time, must have been very confronting. Several of my interviewees commented on an apparent greater focus placed on the deaths of Palestinian children. For example, Anna claimed her authority as a journalist to validate her view about the slanted coverage of the ABC: ‘I mean, it’s like even if it was an Israeli loss, they would still go back and show the Palestinian kids!’ And children represent innocence, the least tarnished humans of all. Butler (2004: 141), following Levinas,\(^{150}\) considers how the personification of the face of the Other within the media can ‘perform its own dehumanisation’ – for example, the faces of Yasser Arafat, Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden – ubiquitously displayed as the faces of evil. Conversely, portrayal of an anonymous face can humanise. Greater and sometimes more sympathetic exposure of Palestinians’ lives and suffering in the media in recent years has led to more sympathy for, and knowledge of, their cause.

In the days, months and years following the tragic events in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, the concept of moral equivalence was activated to suggest and refute parallels between the suffering and deaths of Palestinians and Americans at the hands of the jet-propelled suicide bombers and to invoke parallels between Israeli and American suicide-bomb victims. Butler (2004: 12 – 14) reports that a month after the September 11 carnage, the Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal visited New York, and presented a ten-million dollar cheque to Mayor Giuliani, condemning the attacks on the World Trade Centre and expressing the same moral condemnation about ‘our Palestinian brethren [who] continue to be slaughtered at the hands of Israelis while the world turns the other cheek’\(^{151}\). At a news conference, Giuliani said ‘Not only are those statements wrong, they are part of the problem.

\(^{150}\) Butler makes no mention of the apparent contradiction between Levinas’ theorising of difference and the other and his commitment to Zionism, an ideology which negates the rights of the Palestinian ‘other’. For an interview Levinas gave after the Sabra and Shatilla massacre, see Hand (1989: chapter 18).

\(^{151}\) It is unfortunate, to say the least, that the Prince also has a reputation for antisemitism (Butler 2004: 14).
There is no moral equivalent to this attack. There is no justification for it’. Mayor Giuliani returned the cheque to the Prince. Butler reflects that part of the problem with the Prince’s statement was in the word ‘slaughter’. Nazis in the Holocaust slaughtered Jews. Is it morally acceptable to use the same word to speak of Israelis slaughtering Palestinians? Butler argues that ‘one does not need to enter into the dreary business of quantifying and comparing oppressions’ (ibid: 14) to condemn the sufferings of both groups as morally repugnant.

‘The dreary business of … comparing oppressions’ is precisely what is involved here. As one angry letter-writer from Perth wrote in the West Australian shortly after 11 September 2001:

The Americans were slaughtered by an indiscriminate attack on passive civilians. The Palestinian deaths have resulted from Israel’s need to defend itself against lethal riots, mortar attacks on school buses, bus bombs, drive-by shootings and suicide bombers. … The attempt to argue some moral equivalence between the two situations is absurd and disgusting and the media should not wait for others to point this out (Berinson 2001: 16).

In chapter seven I discuss how the phrase ‘perfect victims’ has been used to align Jews and Aborigines, in contrast to Palestinians. Here, we see Americans and Israelis positioned as ‘perfect victims’, again unlike the Palestinians. The question of language is deeply embedded in the discourse on both sides of the moral equivalence ledger, or as one partisan news source (Mowbray 28 August 2003: on-line) put it: ‘The vocabulary makeover is part of the moral equivalency that is rampant in media coverage of Israeli-Palestinian issues’. The on-line Jewish World Review was referring to various media’s use of the word ‘militant’ rather than ‘terrorist’ to discuss Palestinian groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

On the other hand, ‘our own acts [of violence] are not considered terrorist’, observes Butler (2004: 6). Embedded in the moral equivalence frame, is a circular logic. I use Butler’s work in this chapter, in an endeavour to move beyond the circularity of the argument – ‘what you do to us is worse than what we do to you. No, ….’. Yet, to move beyond the circularity of this frame, we must nevertheless argue from a

particular perspective. Butler takes the perspective of the more powerful – the United States and Israel – to argue a counter-discourse which tells ‘the story in a different way, to complicate the question of agency’ (ibid.):

In order to condemn these acts [September 11, Palestinian suicide bombers] as inexcusable, absolutely wrong, in order to sustain the affective structure in which we are, on the one hand, victimised and on the other, engaged in a righteous cause of rooting out terror, we have to start the story with the experience of violence we suffered. We have to shore up the first person point of view, and preclude from the telling, accounts that might involve a decentring of the narrative ‘I’ within the international political domain (ibid.: 6–7).

In the course of reversing the David and Goliath positions in the rather crude but evocative metaphor used for narrating not only the second intifada but the entire conflict between Israel and Palestine, the Israeli (and Jewish) narrative ‘I’ has been decentred ‘within the international political domain’. That is, the ‘I’ perspective of the victim only accounts for its own suffering and concomitant revenge and does not consider how and why the violence inflicted upon it, has come to pass. The telling of the American narrative of suffering had to begin with the events of September 11, because ‘there is no relevant prehistory’ (ibid.: 6), that is, no preceding events that need to be taken into account in order to understand or explain the crimes committed on that day. Following this notion of no relevant prehistory, to speak of the Israeli actions in the intifada other than in terms of justifiable retaliation to Palestinian terrorist acts is to decentre the Israeli first-person victim narrative. Hage (2003: 122) writes about the ‘condemnation imperative’ in relation to the absolute necessity of condemning certain acts of terror, like Palestinian suicide bombings, before you can speak about them in other terms which seek explanations for why they occur, ‘otherwise you become a morally suspicious person’. Equally decentring is the discursive endeavour of simultaneously not exonerating expressions of antisemitism against Jews in Europe, whilst seeking explanations for them that go beyond the globalising rhetoric in the statement: ‘A spectre is haunting the world, but its name is not communism. Its name is antisemitism’ (Tolson et al. 20 May 2002). ¹⁵³ That is, one could ask the

¹⁵³ The monthly American journal/magazine Commentary, not exclusively but largely about a diversity of topics of interest to Jews, including a consistent defence of Israel and Zionism, has reported
question, what other material factors might account for this ‘spectre’, apart from sheer hatred of Jews (Klug 2003: 138)?

I have argued here that framing violence in terms of a question of moral equivalence is central to revealing how each side views itself and the enemy. Interestingly, Jews and Palestinians may be united in their accusations of media bias where the media is viewed as taking the ‘wrong’ stance in the moral equivalence framework. And I have begun to suggest the significance of employing an alternative discourse to enable us to move beyond the ‘moral equivalence’ frame, such as in Butler’s (ibid.: 8) proposition that we learn to ‘narrate ourselves not from the first person alone, but from, say, the position of the third, or to receive an account delivered in the second’, so that the story does not begin and end with ourselves alone. These discursive shifts appear seismic at particular moments of violence and, within the narratives framed by Jewish victimhood, seem unlikely to occur. The media may or may not assist in representing these shifts. Certainly the electronic media is not generally valued for its representation of historical and political complexity. It may be dependent on a different kind of interpretive Jewish audience to provide an analysis that the media, and other audiences, can hear.

extensively on the rise of antisemitism during 2002, especially focusing on its rise in the Arab/Moslem world/s: See Halkin (2002); Schoenfeld (2002); Gurfinkiel (2002).
Chapter Six: The homeland polluted. Australian Jews respond to the bridge collapse at the 1997 Maccabi Games

Introduction

On 14 July 1997, in Tel Aviv, the opening ceremony of the 15th Maccabi Games or Jewish Olympics, was commencing. As the 370-member Australian team was marching into the Ramat Gan Stadium on a recently and hastily constructed bridge, it collapsed under the weight of the team, causing a third of the athletes to fall into the polluted waters of the Yarkon River. Four Australians died and 65 were injured. The impact of this on the Sydney Jewish community, as all the deceased came from this city, has been devastating for many.

The previous chapter investigated how, when Israel was perceived to be under external threat, Jews in Australia reaffirmed their solidarity with and loyalty to that state. In this chapter, I take the accident at the Maccabi Games as a springboard from which to consider how it engendered a crisis of confidence in Israel and in Zionist belief. It highlights the intense, familial and now symbiotic relationship between Israel and the diasporic community in Australia (see Chapter Two). The chapter considers how the discourse on Jewish sports and physicality functioned historically and currently within Zionism. An outline of the aftermath of the events of 14 July 1997 is provided in order to understand the responses from Jews in Sydney and Jewish leaders in the ‘diasporic public sphere’. Turning to the Israeli perspective, I explore the dichotomy between ‘myth and reality’, ‘safety and security’ in relation to the state of Israel. Its responses to the dead and injured Australian athletes revealed a range of contradictions in Israeli society between a disregard for internal safety issues and an obsession with external security concerns, as well as revealing another side of the Israel – diaspora ‘symbiosis’ (Chapter Two). The chapter considers whether, some years later, the event has resulted in a significant discursive shift in the relations between Israel and those representing the Australian Jewish community. Overall, the responses from the Jewish community in

154 Maccabi and Maccabiah tend to be used interchangeably with ‘Maccabiah’ used as the noun.
Sydney reflected Herzfeld’s (2005) concept of ‘cultural intimacy’, which explores the idea that ‘cultures might have less-than-ideal aspects and that cultures also often seem to betray on the inside what they claim about themselves on the outside’ (Herzfeld 2004: 317). I explore this notion of a culture’s ‘less-than-ideal’, what Herzfeld has named ‘dirty secrets’ (ibid.: 320), with regard to the Australian Jewish community’s concerns about certain stereotypes being exposed to the general public, the ambivalence the event revealed for the Israel-disapora relationship and finally for the internal cultural norms in Israel.

The Maccabi Games – towards a ‘muscular Judaism’

David Ben-Gurion, first Prime Minister of the state of Israel, summarised the value of the Maccabi Games to the Jewish people and to Zionism as follows:

‘Maccabi is without a doubt one of the most important offshoots of the Zionist movement. Its importance is indicated in its infusion of life by bolstering the physical state of the Jewish people, weakened by centuries of exile and dispersion. Jews returning to their homeland and those born there must possess physical stamina, just as they must possess spiritual and intellectual vigour in science and technology; our existence in our ancestral home requires physical might no less than intellectual excellence’ (MaccabiCanada 2001: on-line)

According to the historical narrative told about the Maccabees, in the centuries before the common or Christian era (B.C.E.), the Jewish people were ruled by a succession of powerful men: King Cyrus of Persia during the sixth century B.C.E., Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C.E. and Seleucid Antiochus IV in the second century B.C.E. It was against the latter that the Jews rebelled under a man who became known as Judah or Maccabee, meaning ‘hammer’. The Maccabees, as they became known, were armed with stories from the Torah which ‘told the tale of their origins in a slave rebellion against another imperialist power thought to be invincible…[thus] they used guerrilla tactics to win a national liberation struggle against overwhelming odds. In 165 B.C.E. they retook Jerusalem, purified and rededicated the Temple …. and rekindled the eternal light’ (Lerner 1994: 374). In the words of Keller (1969: 9), what ‘began as a defence against the suppression of
religion … ended with political liberation. National independence, lost centuries earlier, was restored’.

Despite the brevity of this incarnation of a Jewish ‘state’ – it was only eight years before it ‘was driven straight into the arms of Rome’ (ibid.: 10) - the mythology of the brave, strong Maccabees remained in Jewish historiography. Thus Keller, writing of the abominable conditions of ghetto life for Jews living in Frankfurt in the late eighteenth century remarked: ‘Who could recognise in these hunched, frightened creatures the descendants of the courageous Maccabees …?’ (ibid: 365).

According to several websites dedicated to the promotion and history of the Maccabi Games, by the end of the 19th century in Eastern Europe, Jewish physical education was promoted as one means whereby Jews, who had suffered from pogroms and destruction of their communities, could ‘stand up to the open antagonism they suffered’. In 1895, German and Austrian Jews, who had been made to feel ‘unwelcome by the German gymnastic societies’, established the first all-Jewish gymnastic club in Constantinople. Following the Second Zionist Congress in 1898, a number of Jewish sports clubs were founded in, for example, Berlin, Hungary, Switzerland, Vienna, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem (above quotations in this paragraph from MaccabiCanada 2001: on-line). At this Congress, two leaders of the Zionist movement, Theodore Herzl and Dr Max Nordau, called for a Muskeljudentum, or ‘muscular Judaism’. Nordau was reported as saying ‘“Once again! For history is our witness that such a Jewry had once existed”’ (quoted in Breines 1990: 143). Breines, in his fascinating counter-narrative on ‘tough Jews’, discusses the Zionist-inspired focus on Jewish physical strength and prowess in late nineteenth-century Europe when antisemitic stereotypes based on a racial and racist discourse were gathering momentum. At this time too, Western European Jews had been released from the confines and debilitations of the ghetto for nearly a century. There, according to Nordeau, Jews were ‘“allowed space enough for our bodies to live again. Let us take up our oldest traditions; let us once again become deep-chested, sturdy, sharp-eyed men”’ (quoted in Breines 1990: 143); see also Berkowitz (1993: 105 - 109 on Nordeau’s influence in creating the ‘new Zionist man’).
These ideas of the new body to conquer the new land were born ‘in the intellectual milieu of nineteenth-century European nationalism, and Zionist youth was to a large extent fashioned after similar German and Austro-Hungarian youth movements’ (Hazan 2001: 7). Zionism’s masculinist emphasis on ‘muscular Judaism’ - in opposition to the image of the scholarly, devout Jew of the Eastern European shtetl who spent his day in prayer and contemplation - is evidence of the Zionist binary between the weak, feminised exilic Jew and the masculine ‘new Hebrew’, in touch with nature and his manhood in Palestine. Rabbi Danglow from Melbourne, who visited Palestine in 1913, articulates its effects. He reacts to what he saw: ‘if only… those black garbed Jewish youths would play some sport, then “their backs would be straightened” and their future more assured’” (quoted in Levi 1987: 152).

In 1927, when the Twelfth Zionist Congress met, the delegates of the Judische Turnerschaft, or Jewish gymnasia, decided to set up a new central organisation which they named the Maccabi World Union. According to the Maccabi Canada website:

The very name Maccabi pointed to the new Zionist orientation of the world union. The saga of the original Maccabi celebrated at Chanukah significated the courageous fight, thousands of years before, for freedom of conscience and religion, for autonomy and sovereignty - the very goals toward which modern Zionism strove. It was our own Chanukah story. A new emblem showed four Hebrew letters which spelled Maccabi in the form of a Jewish star (MaccabiCanada 2001: on line).

The constitution of this new organisation defined its aims which have remained essentially the same to the present day: ‘To foster physical education, the belief in the Jewish heritage and the Jewish nation and to work actively for the rebuilding of our own country and for the preservation of our people’ (ibid.). Prior to World War Two, Maccabi sporting clubs formed all over Europe, in many Latin American countries, in the Far East, the Middle East, Australia, and in Africa. In 1933 and

155 For a detailed description of how the new gymnastics and masculinity connected with nationalism, including Zionism, see Stanislawski (2001: 74 - 97).

156 Jewish Festival of Lights – ‘Chanukah’ means ‘rededication’ and refers to the year 165 B.C.E. when the Maccabees ‘retook Jerusalem, purified and rededicated the Temple, and rekindled the eternal light’ (Lerner 1994: 374).
1935, prior to the establishment of the Israeli state, Maccabi Games were held in *Eretz Israel* or the Holy Land of Israel (ibid.). In 1950, the first games were held in the new state of Israel and have continued there every four years since.

The Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon sent greetings on the occasion of the 17th Maccabi Games in July 2005. His words state unambiguously the role of the Games.

The event:

symbolises our national unity, our connection with the Diaspora and the great change which occurred in our status and self-image since Zionism took its first, practical political steps, and began a determined settling in the Land of Israel. …

The impressive gathering of athletes from 55 countries …. strengthens our belief in the eternity of Israel, and encourages the Israeli people, the Government of Israel and me to continue to act for the security and well-being of the Jewish people world-wide (Sharon 2005: on line).

The next paragraph of Sharon’s letter acknowledges the members of the Australian delegation who ‘perished here during the 15th Maccabiah’ (ibid.). The text of Sharon's letter is a clear statement of the centrality of Israel and Zionism to the continued connection of ‘all Jews throughout the Diaspora’, and how the Maccabi Games contributes to this connection. His statement that it is Israel's role to act for the ‘security and well-being of the Jewish people world-wide’ contains the paradox I explore later in this chapter. That is, the Israeli concern with ‘security’, signifying external threats contrasts with the apparent lack of concern with internal every-day threats such as shoddily-constructed bridges, which come under the rubric of ‘safety’.

**Tragedy in the family – cultural intimacy under threat**

The Israeli Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports released a report on the Maccabiah Bridge Disaster ('The bridge: report blames all parties' 1997: 4) a few months after the accident. In summary it found that the bridge collapse ‘was the result of a chain of failure which involved virtually all of the parties concerned’ (ibid.). The faults included defective and partial planning, construction of the bridge by inexperienced contractors not licensed for bridge construction, lack of
supervision and operating instructions and use of low-quality materials. The report made a number of recommendations, directed at the Maccabiah Organising Committee, the two companies which built the bridge, the engineer involved in the bridge’s construction and a number of general recommendations to do with licensing standards and public safety issues (ibid.). However, the report found nobody culpable for the incident. In December 1997 however, five individuals were charged ‘with criminal negligence and lack of professionalism’ (Tommer 1998: 6). In June 2000, sentences were handed down to the convicted officials associated with the bridge’s construction. ‘Four of the five…….were sentenced to between nine and 21 months’ imprisonment for negligently causing the death of four people and the injury of 69 at the 15th Maccabiah in 1997. The fifth convicted official, Games Organising Committee chairman Yoram Eyal, was sentenced to six months community service’ ('Outrage at Maccabiah sentences’ 2000: 1). The apparent leniency of these sentences was viewed by many involved here as a whitewash.

The charging and sentencing of those deemed responsible was not the only cause for the Jewish community’s outrage. Battles were being fought on a number of fronts – for apologies and acknowledgment of wrongdoing from the Israeli Government and from the Maccabi World Union; for financial compensation for the victims and their families; for the resignation of the World Maccabi president and chairman’ (Editorial, 'the bridge: healing, closure and lessons, 12 July 2002b: 14). The families affected were finally compensated in 2002. The length of time it took for the compensation cases to be settled was a source of extreme aggravation for many of the families and before the 16th Maccabiah Games in 2001 there was discussion about Australia not participating (Editorial 2001b: 12). In the months and years following the accident, criticism became directed more towards the leadership of the Maccabiah World Union (MWU) rather than the Israeli Government. The latter played an intermediary role in ensuring that legal aspects of the case were settled and that compensations eventually were paid. It also played an important on-going public relations role. For example, David Levy, Israel’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister assured the Australian Jewish community that it was of
‘paramount importance that the fabric of relations between the … community and Israel be preserved’ (in Freedman 1997: 3).

The MWU was condemned for lack of responsibility in relation to the accident. As Peter Wertheim, then president of the NSW Board of Deputies, said in Jerusalem to the Knesset’s Investigative Committee into the Maccabiah Bridge Disaster: ‘Unfortunately, the simple human decency of thousands of people in Israel and Australia who wished to reach out and ease the pain of those who were suffering has not at any time been reflected in the behaviour of the representatives of the Maccabi World Union’ (Statement of Peter Wertheim, President of the NSW Board of Deputies 1999:3). Wertheim then listed four pages of grievances levelled against the MWU’s disregard for the feelings of those who suffered. For example, following the 15th Maccabi Games, the MWU published an official Results Book which contained not one mention of the event or the victims in its 250 pages (ibid.: 5). In a similar ‘sin of omission’, Maccabi Canada’s website contains ‘Milestones in the History of the Maccabi Movement’, but does not mention the deaths and trauma caused to the Australian athletes under its 1997 listing (MaccabiCanada 2001: on-line). This failure to memorialise on the part of Jews for whom memorialising their own is so significant, suggests that the ‘guilty’ and their supporters were unable to acknowledge those Jews who are outside the bosom of the Israeli state, that is, in the diaspora and who became difficult victims.

Cultural intimacy

The anthropological concept of ‘cultural intimacy’ is useful for thinking through both the reactions of Jewish Australians to the bridge collapse, and the realities of life in the Jewish state in relation to issues of safety. The concept refers to the spaces of shared understandings within and between groups, for example groups within a national culture or within a community culture. Herzfeld (2005: 3), whose concept it is, defines cultural intimacy as:

the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality, the familiarity with the bases of
power that may at one moment assure the disenfranchised a degree of irreverence and at the next moment reinforce the effectiveness of intimidation.

Cultural intimacy can be seen to work at various levels. Protection of and identifying with one’s own cultural secrets can occur at national, communal, diasporic or familial levels. In the case discussed here, the Jewish communal or diasporic and the national – Israel – are frequently placed in familial relationship with each other (see also Chapter Two and Epilogue). As a minority population in Australia, Jews are outsiders in relation to the rest of Australia and insiders to their own community. In relation to Israel, Jews in the diaspora are both inside the Jewish family, as Sharon’s letter attests and also outside the Israeli population. Tensions of cultural intimacy occur when the ‘official story’ (say, that Israel cares about its people, that is, all Jews) is undermined by reality (say, it does not have in place adequate safety regulations to ensure that public utilities do not collapse). Herzfeld (1997: 14) calls this tension between official representations and ‘what goes on in the privacy of collective introspection’, ‘disemia’. The issue of ‘dirty secrets’ (Herzfeld 2004: 320) or ‘airing one’s dirty laundry’,\(^{157}\) of what one can and should reveal publicly, became a fascinating example of cultural intimacy at work, in the months and years after the bridge collapse.

In the months following July 1997, individual members of the community, as reported in the *Australian Jewish News*, reacted with outrage and hyperbole. Jewish communal leaders and editorials in the paper engaged at the same time in what could be termed ‘damage control’ in the face of, at times, virulent criticism of Israel. The community was in distress in confronting this unique situation. A principal of a Jewish Day School in Sydney stated that when the bridge collapsed:

\[\ldots\; so\; did\; a\; dream.\; That\; it\; collapsed,\; dumping\; 60\; Australians\; in\; the\; polluted\; canal,\; killing\; three\; [the\; fourth\; person\; died\; after\; this\; article\; was\; written],\; was\; tragic.\; That\; it\; happened\; in\; Israel,\; which\; prides\; itself\; on\; its\]

---

\(^{157}\) In Israel, a gay, lesbian and transgender group called “Kvisa Sh’chora” (Dirty Laundry) sprung up in 2002, linking the oppression of sexual minorities to what it saw as the Israeli oppression of the Palestinians, see [http://www.thegully.com/essays/gay mundo/020220_gay_israel_history.html](http://www.thegully.com/essays/gay mundo/020220_gay_israel_history.html).
technological expertise and where life is so precious, was incredible (Alhadeff 1997a: 5).

The son of one of the four who died, wrote to Binyamin Netanyahu, then Prime Minister of Israel, with the following message, written ‘under immense strain’:

My father came to Israel not just as an athlete, but as a Zionist...His love for Israel and everything it stood for brought him there on many occasions.... I read your Rosh Hashanah [Jewish New Year] message, received via the Zionist Federation of Australia. You mention that the power of the ‘people who may live in all corners of the globe but whose heart is with us in Israel’ represents the power of Israel...How, though, do you expect this power to survive forever when the core of your message is not being fulfilled within your own country (Alhadeff 1997b: 4).

For individuals most affected by the tragedy, the anger and outrage was maintained and rearticulated in response to specific events in connection with the collapsed bridge. One woman whose husband died as a result of the collapsed bridge ‘went hysterical’ when she heard about the sentences, finally handed down in 2000:

Until now, I never blamed the State of Israel, I blamed the men, but now it is Israel which has let them get away with it. I will never step foot in that country or support that country again, even though it’s an upsetting thing for a Jew to say. It makes me sick to my stomach to think that these men have got away with it. They have ruined our lives. (‘Outrage at Maccabiah sentences’ 2000: 1).

Another man whose sister died revealed that he was ‘absolutely devastated.....The leniency of the sentences means these deaths mean nothing to the Israeli people’ (ibid.).

Only one of my interviewees was directly affected by the bridge collapse and for the sake of his anonymity no details will be revealed. However, a number of those in Sydney had incisive comments to make which illuminated a concern with potential external embarrassment. Michael, for example, said:

I just remember thinking, when they [Jewish leaders] were trying to get compensation, my first thought was, oh, the Australian population will just think it’s the Jews trying to get more money, or something! .... You know, that equation with Jews and money.
Here, Michael positioned Jews outside the general Australian population as he articulated the old stereotype about Jews being hungry for money. He felt protective of his ‘own’ and projected fear of this stereotype. On the other hand, Esther began speaking about the culture of Judaism as being ‘this extended family all over the world’ yet concluded by placing Jews within the Australian family:

I don’t think it mattered to many Australians who they were, or where they were, or what they were participating in. I think, you know, the Aussies have that kind of culture that if anything happens to us overseas, if you hear of a plane crash or something else, the first thing we hear is that there were no Australians on board. And I think that’s a lovely thing about Australians, and I think that was quite comforting, to see how much coverage that it got. Not because we were Jewish, and not because it was the Maccabi Games, but because the Australian team was on the bridge at the time.

Esther’s comment reflected a secure, inclusive sense of belonging to the Australian nation-state which, like many nations, prioritises its own whenever an international disaster occurs. Sarah articulated a more political reflection of the situation. She observed how ‘people were very critical of Israel and the Israeli government’ and contrasted this with other debates around Palestinians, where she implied, Jews were not as critical. She wondered whether the latter debates were ‘suggesting that the state shouldn’t exist, while this is an issue which is about a government. In other words, Sarah suggested that it was safe to air grievances against Israel, the state about the ramifications of shoddy building construction, but to air one’s ‘dirty laundry’ about issues that might affect the nation’s security and existence, was a far weightier, even existential matter.

Perhaps because of the high proportion of Holocaust survivors and their descendants in Australia, fear for Israel’s security is especially pronounced. In relation to the Maccabi Games incident, the grievance and hurt came from within, from carelessness in Israel itself. Dan, the interviewee who was directly affected by the collapse of the bridge, said emotively:

Before xxx [name of relative] went to Israel, I said, ‘For God’s sake, ... be careful of the Arabs’.... Little did I know that the Jews were so effective in killing their own.
Dan’s fear for his relative’s security focused on the possibility of an attack by Palestinians, he did not think he needed to articulate the thought ‘be careful of Israeli shoddy workmanship’ and yet, as the section on Israel will demonstrate, it is an open ‘dirty secret’ that Israel is careless in its attitude towards every-day safety. There is a bitter irony in this situation.

**Mediating the response**

Tölölyan (1996: 33, note 25) states that ‘the cultural and political elites’ of any community are largely responsible for reinterpreting ‘existing immigrant practices as diasporic’ (ibid.), speak on behalf of a community and represent it to the rest of the world. In this section, I discuss how Jewish leaders and ‘elites’, including newspaper editors and sometimes journalists, were in a sense ‘reinterpreting’ and mediating the reactions of extremely angry individuals to Israel, presenting a more moderate and conciliatory position to that state and to the general Australian populace. For example, Zionist leaders in NSW, such as Peter Wertheim, President of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies in 1997, represented and mediated that shock, disappointment and anger towards Israel within the frame of the loyal Australian Zionist subject, ‘the vast majority for whom Israel remains a source of immense pride and joy’ (*Statement of Peter Wertheim, President of the NSW Board of Deputies* 1999:1).

Yet, community leaders do not speak in one voice. David Bernstein (1997b: 18), a prominent Melbourne-based Jewish journalist, writing in his infamous ‘Davkah’ column in the AJN, makes no attempts at Zionist conciliation. He regarded the ‘bridge tragedy [as] a defining moment for the Australian Jewish community, perhaps no less significant in its psychological impact than the Six-Day War was almost exactly three decades earlier’. Bernstein goes on to put his interpretation on the ‘community’s reaction’, which he assesses as:

---

158 Bernstein resigned from the newspaper in 1999 after an altercation with the publishers over a cartoon and a column written about Israel’s responsibilities towards the Palestinian exodus in 1948; see Chapter Seven. His Davkah column always aimed to ‘stir the pot’.
One of unprecedented rancour and recrimination towards the Jewish state. A visceral, totally non-ideological anger – an almost shocking realisation that we are not one people but, perhaps for the first time, adversaries.

Hence the very public, very acrimonious and very shrill demands for monetary restitution and legal retribution … that are being made on Israel. That is not to say that these demands are not justified; it’s just that they are being pressed with an insistence and in a manner one does not even begin to associate with traditional Diaspora-Israel discourse. Almost as though the claims were being made against some foreign, perhaps even recalcitrant, state. Switzerland springs to mind (ibid., emphasis in original).

Bernstein’s commentary was in the context of an overall argument he was advancing regarding the diminishing importance of Israel for the Australian diaspora. In 1997, in the dwindling years of the Oslo Accords and before the second intifada ratcheted up diasporic intensity for Israel, one could write of this possibility. Bernstein was clearly amazed by how Australian Jews had responded to Israel, in tone and rhetoric so unlike anything before in ‘Diaspora-Israel discourse’. And his suggestion that perhaps ‘we are not one people’ is perhaps the most confronting of all.

Shortly after Bernstein’s column, a lengthy article was written assessing the bridge collapse’s impact on the Australian Jewish community. The article, entitled ‘Bridge of broken dreams’ (Browne 1997: 17) summarised the concerns of individual community members and its Zionist leaders. Browne quotes Henry Sawicki, husband of Elizabeth who died from complications following the bridge collapse: ‘I’ve gone from being a complete Zionist to an anti-Zionist. I don’t like what they’ve become in Israel. Where have their values gone?’ (ibid.). According to Browne, mediating Sawicki’s response, the latter was not representative of mainstream Jewish thinking in Australia. Mark Leibler, national chairman of the United Israel Appeal, maintained in the same article that ‘[t]here will be no longstanding damage. This is one of the most pro-Zionist communities in the world with the largest percentage of Holocaust survivors outside Israel, so the emotional bond is very
strong. It will survive this’ (ibid.). Perhaps, but Zionist Federation of Australia President Ron Weiser ‘cannot recall a single incident in 25 years of communal involvement that has so fundamentally threatened the relationship between Israel and Australian Jewry’ (ibid.). Browne concluded with a different ‘bigger picture’ to Bernstein’s, which was that since the following year – 1998 - would be Israel’s 50th anniversary, ‘the Jewish state has chalked up enough credits in the minds of most Australian Jews, that the patience, and eventually the forgiveness, that communal leaders such as Mark Leibler and Ron Weiser are asking for will most likely be forthcoming’ (ibid.: 18). Indeed on 1 May 1998, Maccabi Australia (:18) took out a half-page advertisement in the Australian Jewish News thanking the many organisations, companies and individuals who had made donations to the Maccabi Bridge Victims Support Fund. It went on to ‘thank the President, Government and people of Israel for their support during and since this tragic event. We wish them a ‘Happy 50th Birthday’.

Three examples follow to illustrate the role editorials from the Australian Jewish News, Sydney Edition have performed in affirming, yet ultimately mediating the anger and disappointment from within parts of the community towards the Israeli Government and the MWU. These editorials raise themes of public/private embarrassment, of the obligation of Jews to continue to support Israel and with the perspective of a time lapse from the accident, the realisation that it is in Jews’ long-term interests not to alienate Israel. The editorial below, written shortly after the event and titled ‘Tragedy in the family’ exemplifies the workings of cultural intimacy:

It is both inappropriate, and demeaning, to … go to the Australian public for money – as though the bridge accident, however tragic, were a flood or earthquake disaster that had left thousands homeless in some impoverished Third World country.

If monetary help is needed urgently…. surely the Jewish community has the capacity to raise the sum required. And if there is to be a monetary accounting with the Israelis – as there doubtlessly must be – that should be done quietly, and out of the public gaze, without rancour or recrimination. As befits members of a family suffering a shared hurt. Even if one member has behaved less than well (Editorial 1997a: 14, emphasis added).
Like Michael in his interview excerpt cited previously, the editorial, written only
weeks after the event, already counsels moderation in how a family member should
admonish another in times of family crisis. It is best not to ‘wash one’s dirty linen in
public’. This sentiment, emphasising the need to keep it in the family when
controversies surrounding Israel have occurred, is a recurring theme within
Australian Zionist discourse. It is usually, but not always, related to the Israeli
state’s policies towards Palestinians. The issue of raising funds for and
compensating the victims of the bridge disaster is dealt with again by urging
restraint in how negotiations occur with Israel – ‘quietly, and out of the public gaze,
without rancour or recrimination’. The comparison made by the editor between a
Third World natural disaster and the collapse of the bridge acknowledges the
relative wealth of the Jewish community in Australia, which has always had a
willingness and capacity to ‘look after its own’. The statement complicates the
Jewish ‘victim identity’ elsewhere in this thesis.

The second editorial speaks to the theme of loyalty to Israel as it responds
vigorously to the article by Ashley Browne (1997), discussed earlier. It reproves
those Australian Jews who claimed to be strongly pro-Israel (excluding family and
friends of the bridge disaster’s victims) who have at this time turned away from the
Jewish State. The editorial (1997b: 16) points to an irony in the observation that
‘Australian Jews who did not waver in their support for Israel on the peace issue
[with the Palestinians], or on religious freedom, or on social justice, might now be
turning away from Israel because of the Maccabiah disaster….It smacks of “them”
and “us”’, an undesirable situation. Israel is being held to a double standard by
some Australian Jews, ‘and it does not deserve to be’ (ibid.), according to the
editorial. Australian Jews have been unable or unwilling to distinguish between the
‘ideal’ of Israel, the ‘Jewish democratic and independent state finally established …
after 20 centuries of Jewish exile and persecution’, and the ‘reality’ of Israel, the
fallible Israel, whose failings may be no better or worse than any other democratic
state.
The editorial maintains that:

on that black day in July on the Yarkon bridge, many Australian Jews were totally unprepared – emotionally, philosophically and ideologically. Many Australian Jews could not believe, quite literally, that such a thing could happen in Israel, and since it happened, they have been unable to believe that it has not been wrapped up in a few weeks; the guilty parties tried and punished, compensation paid, the Netanyahu government solicitous and sympathetic, the Yarkon River drained of all its dangerous chemicals, and the World Maccabi officials resigned or sacked (1997b: 16. emphasis added).

Why were so many Australian Jews apparently unprepared to deal with this event, as the above excerpt suggests? One line of answer comes from Stanley Cohen’s States of Denial (2001), concerned with how people respond to or deny knowledge about situations of distress either within their own societies or in others. Cohen queries whether Israel is a special case, in its ‘culture of denial’, where ‘many topics are known and not-known at the same time’ (ibid: 157). Cohen appears to be suggesting that Israel’s ‘culture of denialism’ is greater than other nations, a perspective shared by others, for example the post-Zionist historian Avi Shlaim.159 Cohen does not connect his analysis of Israeli Jewish behaviour in denial to that of diasporic Jews. Nevertheless, the case could be made, as it was in the October 1997 AJN editorial, that many Australian Jews also suffer from a form of denialism in relation to the actions of the Israeli state.

In the third editorial under discussion, attention is turned to the Maccabi World Union (MWU), the coordinating body for all the Maccabi Games, comprising each member state’s Maccabi organisation and an organising committee. The purpose of this text appears to be to reconcile or at least acknowledge the various interests of different groups inside the Jewish community, in relation to an underlying ‘long term interest in a positive and productive relationship with Israel’ (Editorial 1998: 14). As well, the editorial took the position of understanding mediator between the bereaved families’ frustrations and anger at what appeared to be the MWU’s

---

159 In a newspaper interview Shlaim, speaking about his new book The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World (2005), states in relation to Israeli diplomatic archives: ‘I knew that in every country there’s a gap between rhetoric and practice, but I don’t know of any country where the gap is as great as in Israel’ (Rapoport 2005: on line).
recalcitrance (for instance its tardiness in delivering a report about the accident) and a broader perspective. Part of this broader view was the acknowledgment that ‘there is more at stake in the rift between Israel and Australia than sport’ (ibid).

A number of Australian Jewish leaders have performed a similar role to that illustrated in the preceding editorials, the role being to acknowledge the suffering but show understanding towards Israel, for that relationship is primary. From accenting the community’s ability to look after its own, to an emphasis on Israel’s significance for Jews, regardless of its misdemeanours, to a recognition of differences within the community but again, reaffirming the significance of the relationship. One leader however, displayed no such moderation in his views. Dr Philip Bliss, then President of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, was severely criticised by other colleagues for statements he made to the Maccabiah Bridge Knesset Inquiry, hearings for which were held in Sydney and Melbourne in June 2000, for his ‘offensive Israel and Zionist movement bash’ (ibid.). Chester wrote further in a letter to the Melbourne edition of the Australian Jewish News that Bliss’ actions served to ‘undermine the cohesiveness and strength of our community’ (ibid.).

The intense and conflicting responses to the disaster reveal the paradoxes that occur when a crisis descends close to home. The dissonance between the private and community grief and anger and the upholding of public loyalty to the homeland, which is the centre of the Jewish family in Zionist discourse, became difficult to sustain. At the same time, community leaders, whose unacknowledged role is to mediate between members of the Jewish community and Israel, were placed in the position of supporting the victims and their families, whilst maintaining good relations with Israel. The AJN became the forum for a struggle to maintain the dominant discourse concerning the fundamental relationship between the Australian diaspora and Israel. It faltered, struggled, was reneged by a few, but nevertheless has continued, even if somewhat tarnished.
Israel – the nation as myth, the state as reality

What were the aspects of Israel’s cultural intimacy that so confronted many loyal members of its Australian diaspora, bearing in mind that those who attended the Maccabi Games did so not only because of their love of sport, but for what the Games symbolised for them as Jews? In this section I intend to view the impact of the event from the perspective of Israel and to explore some notions of safety and security in relation to Israel’s internally and externally directed responses to perceived threat. Many Australian Jews were confusing the ideal Israel with the real and thus were finding it difficult coming to terms with Israel’s reactions in the aftermath of the bridge collapse.

Another perspective for analysing the Australian Jewish responses to this event can be gained from considering how this contradiction of the real state and the imagined nation is played out in Israel itself. The headline from an Israeli article in the AJN encapsulates the issue: ‘From Promised Land to environmental wasteland?’ (Kurtzman 1997). The Promised Land, of course, is the biblical land of Israel, promised to the Jews in the book of Exodus and which, within the Judaic belief system, contains a self-enclosed circular logic; ‘to be “a people” is to be God’s people is to inherit his land…. in this formulation, [collective] identity is wholly dependent upon the notion of possessing the land – whether in promise, in realisation or in memory’ (Schwartz 1997: 54).

The state of Israel has become the realisation of the Promised Land, described as ‘the greatest collective landscape mirage the human imagination has ever projected for itself’ (Mitchell 2000: 213). Mitchell searched the internet and discovered the website of Neot Kedumim [www.neot-kedumim.org.il], the name for the ‘Biblical Landscape Reserve in Israel, halfway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv’, where Zion the mythic historic land of Israel as imagined in biblical writings, meets Zion, the actual, today’s Israel also virtually constructed on this website. It states, in part:

Zion is the name God gave to His everlasting dwelling place. It is his name for Jerusalem. God was the first Zionist. He invented the concept. It was
God who promised the land of Israel to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (not Ishmael and Esau)…. For centuries, Palestine (as named by the Romans) was a land of desert and swamp. When the Jews began to return, they once again tilled the soil and the land began to bring forth its produce (ibid.: 335).

Curiously, between 1998 when Mitchell discovered this website and wrote his essay and 2001, when I first checked Mitchell’s reference, it was considerably altered. Still making no mention of any Arabic or Palestinian presence in the land, all explicit references to Zionism and all biblical quotations had been deleted. Zionism had become subsumed within the Neot Kedumim biblical landscape reserve itself and the site, both virtual and actual, had become a metaphor for Zionism as it re-affirms the unbroken and originary claims Jews make to this land/cape. The website explains how this landscape was created by Israel using its resources as a wealthy country to create a biblical haven:

Thousands of tons of soil were trucked in and spread on the eroded hillsides, reservoirs were dug to catch runoff rainwater, and ancient terrace[s] restored. Habitats were created for such varied species as cedars from the snow-covered mountains of Lebanon and date palms from Sinai desert oases.

Hundreds of varieties of biblical and Talmudic plants; wild and domesticated animals; ancient and reconstructed olive and wine presses, threshing floors, cisterns and ritual baths bring to life the literal roots of the biblical tradition in the soil of the land of Israel.

By reuniting text and context, Neot Kedumim opens up before the visitor Israel’s nature as the idiom of the Bible (Kedumim 2001: on-line).

Unlike the idyllic theme park facade created in Neot Kedumim but very similar to many other over-industrialised or industrialising nations today, the present-day reality of the Israeli landscape is one of environmental wasteland in a situation exacerbated by its small size and concentrated population, scarce water resources, rapid economic development and lack of regional co-operation on environmental issues (Kurtzman 1997: 17).
Kurtzman’s article specifies as examples of this environmental degradation: the high levels of air pollution; crippling water shortages; poor recycling practices combined with landfills that have almost reached capacity; and soils and ground water that are contaminated through inadequate disposal of toxic wastes and pesticide. It was the contaminated Yarkon River which contributed to the deaths and severe injury of several of the Australian athletes who fell into that river. Even a web site entitled ‘Israeli Culture’ admitted to the filth in the Yarkon River:

The Yarkon River is, after the Jordan, Israel’s second largest river. Since ancient times, the plentiful waters and rich soils surrounding the Yarkon have attracted settlers, sailors and farmers to its banks. With the introduction of industry to the area, waste materials were dumped into the river, causing its pollution level to rise drastically. In recent years, the Yarkon resembled an open sewage channel more than a river.

One year after the disaster, the Yarkon River is still a dangerous, polluted hazard (Shuman 20 July 1998: on line).

Within Israel itself, where Israeli citizens find it less problematic to criticise the state, a joke can be made about the toxic state of Israel’s waters:

A man walks into a bank, points a child’s water pistol at the teller, and says: ‘This is a stickup! Hand over the money!’

The teller laughs and replies: ‘You think I’m scared of that toy?’

‘You should be’, says the robber. ‘The water is from the Yarkon River’ (Ben-David 1998: 16).

More seriously, Meron Benvenisti (1997: 15), an Israeli post-Zionist writer, made a savage criticism of Zionism and the Maccabi Games. The extract that follows is part

\[\text{In this arid, partially-desert terrain that comprises Israel/Palestine, the issue of water resources has been, and remains, one of the most highly contested between Israelis and Palestinians since 1967. According to Hass (2000) there remains considerable inequality in the distribution of water resources, despite additional water allotments mandated by the Oslo Agreements. This inequality means that every Palestinian must make do with around one-third to one-quarter of the amount that an Israeli uses. Enforcing a water conservation program in Israel means that people will not wash their cars and give up green lawns at the entrance to their homes. An additional water cut for the Palestinians means that tens or hundreds of thousands more will not drink enough water, use the bathroom less, not shower for a week or more, do laundry once every two weeks and risk infection and illness. (ibid.: 2)\]
of an article which first appeared in the Israeli daily broadsheet, Ha’aretz, three days after the opening of the Games. He was in no doubt that the collapse of the bridge in part symbolised the collapse of the Zionist myth, needed by Jews in the diaspora ‘because it has become a central component in their Jewish identity, a kind of secular religion’. Benvenisti wrote:

The fireworks and laser beams [part of the opening ceremony] lit up more than the horrible scene after the collapse of the bridge and its sinking in the waters of the Yarkon; they also illuminated the collapse of the Zionist myth, of cynicism and hypocrisy, the vile corruption of bureaucracies which feather their own nests, the depth of the public filth, the cupidity and the wanton destruction of the natural beauty of the homeland.

That kitschy play [which was being presented on stage as the bridge collapsed] has everything in it: exile and revival, blockade-breaking and brave defence, towers and stockades, the Holocaust and Jerusalem. This show had to go on … because it was unthinkable to allow the tragedy to spoil the tribal loyalty-oath ritual. In other words, the Zionist dream is more important than its interpretation. Who cares if the Maccabee Games are worthless as a sporting event? The main thing is that it strengthens the attachment of the diaspora to Israel (ibid.: 14 – 15).

From a more mainstream source than Benvenisti presents, an article (Ser 2001: 21) appeared four years later in the English-language Jerusalem Post, commenting on the sixteenth Maccabi Games, which had just ended. It too was derisory about the value of the Games as a sporting event: ‘If the Maccabiah were a participant in the real Olympics, it would be the Jamaican bobsled team: smacking its head along the track in a rickety old sled, praying just to finish the run in one piece’ (ibid.). He was scornful of the MWU organisers and their mismanagement of the 2001 games. And worst of all, in Ser’s cynical view, the Games even failed as a Zionist event. As he said, ‘one-bright-eyed rugby player … showed up for his first match and was told that there would be no playing of Hatikva [the Israeli national anthem] beforehand. Just a quick game and then back home to catch the sit-coms’ (ibid.). In sum, Ser concluded that ‘the Maccabiah really is one of the most important Jewish events, and one of the most important things for Israel, according to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Israelis just don’t know it’ (ibid.). How typical of Israelis is this view of Ser’s, is hard to say. His sardonic tone in the article does point to the fact that in many ways, Israel and its diaspora are indeed separate, despite much Zionist
discourse to the contrary. With every new generation born in Israel, it is likely that their sense of ‘Israeliness’ will increase, possibly at the expense of their Jewishness, unless they are religious. In this scenario, which has already begun, Israelis’ notion of the significance of the Jewish diaspora, may become more tenuous.

For a Jew in contemporary Australia to have publicly expressed thoughts similar to those presented in either of the quotations above, appears beyond discursive possibility, at ‘the limits of the sayable’, and not only because the accident directly affected Australian Jews. Benvenisti has emerged from within the Zionist fold to provide a radical and minority voice of dissent and distress at what the Zionist dream has become. In Australian publications of the Jewish community, the anger expressed by those affected by the bridge collapse was directed first at the Israeli government, then at the Maccabiah World Union, but never at the Israeli people themselves and never as a generalised criticism of Zionism and the diaspora, as Benvenisti, for example, provides.

Esther Benbassa, in conversation with Jean‐Christophe Attias (both professors of Jewish History and Culture at the Sorbonne) explains the confusion between the real and the imagined homeland:

> Israel is the homeland of Israelis and the imagined homeland of Diaspora Jews, or at least part of them. ... And since Israel is an imagined homeland, the relationship that people have to it is even more complex. ... Without beating about the bush, indeed sometimes with an extraordinary crudeness, [the Israeli] will say what he [sic] thinks about his leaders’ policies or the history of Zionism. In the Diaspora, the relationship with Israel is all the more passionate for being imagined, and Jews are quick to feel guilty towards the distant homeland (2004: 155 - 56).

Of course, as Benbassa admits, diaspora Jews express their identification with Israel in a range of ways. She does not see it as a matter of ‘dual allegiances’, as Jews in Australia and elsewhere experienced prior to 1948, as discussed in Chapter Three. Rather, she calls the dual loyalty ‘polymorphous identity’ (ibid: 156) which Jews and other diasporic minorities, have to live with. One has a different relationship with one’s lived-in homeland, to one’s imagined home – Israel. Australian Jews are quite
adept at criticising their own governments, like Israelis are in criticising theirs. The connection with the imagined place is more complex to engage with politically, if one is to do more than support it unequivocally, and can be guilt-inducing, as Benbassa notes above.

**Prioritising security over safety**

The bridge collapse was by no means the first of its kind where a serious breach of safety causing deaths and injuries had occurred in Israel. This event provided an opportunity for reflection on what one writer described as an abundance of ‘normative negligence’ (Post, M. 1998: 14). Post among others describes a blasé attitude towards issues of safety in Israel, in contrast to issues involving security, a term defined by Post as applying ‘exclusively to threats from without – from enemies of the nation’. She contrasts the immense resources spent on protecting the Israeli population from the enemy outside the borders with the lack of attention to dealing with everyday safety precautions, and the casually optimistic mind-set that exists. The disturbing laxness in safety matters is typified by a number of Hebrew words, ‘haltura, rosh katan, b’erech, smoch alei, ihiye beseder’ which roughly translate as ‘near enough is good enough’, ‘cutting corners’, ‘not taking responsibility’, ‘doing things quickly on the cheap’ and ‘rely on me, it’ll be OK’ (Zycher 1997: 15). Zycher’s examples of shoddy workmanship include another bridge, built over a highway to Tel Aviv in 1994, that was not built to withstand the weight of cars, causing three Israelis to be crushed to death as the bridge collapsed on top of them, (ibid.). Israel’s accident-prone bridges are so well known that jokes are made about them, which also serve teleologically to connect Jewish history to the present: Question: Why did Moses part the Red Sea? Answer: Because Jews can’t build bridges. Sasha Elterman told this joke on an ABC Television Four Corners interview in 1998. Sasha was the 16-year-old survivor of the Maccabiah Games bridge collapse. She was severely injured, largely because when she fell into the Yarkon River, ‘she swallowed its toxic water’ (Lee, A. 12 July 2002: 3).

The Ayalon River too, made the news in the beginning of 1998, when it began to flood its banks and threaten the livelihoods of nearby farmers because part of the
Hiriya garbage dump which is on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, collapsed in a landslide into the Ayalon. This same Hiriya dump has been attracting so many birds that aviation officials are warning of the dangers to aircraft at nearby Ben-Gurion Airport (Ben-David 1998: 16), an airport which is, at the same time, one of the most security-conscious in the world.

Since the formation of Israel in 1948 the nation has been in a constant state of war and security has become ‘such a central issue that we developed a culture which celebrates power and disregards many values for the sake of that security’ (Golan et al. 1999: 110). Another prominent Israeli to write on this subject is Yossi Beilin, Minister for Justice in the Barak Labor Government. Writing within a left-Zionist paradigm, he also recognises that the Israeli obsession with security, although necessary, has come at a price, which includes reducing the scope of tourism to Israel and deterring families with children approaching military age from migrating, as well as becoming, at times, an ‘excuse’:

When in Israel it is said that something is impossible, cancelled, or prevented due to security considerations, this is taken as a sufficient answer....It is used today to justify norms that are difficult to accept in a democratic state, such as administrative detention (until the high court of justice banned it in 1999) and the use of force by the General Security Service (GSS) in interrogating suspects (Beilin 2000: 31).

While Israelis can criticise their country more openly, diasporic Jews like my interviewees, felt they had to be more circumspect in how they spoke of Israel’s lack of regard in matters environmental and safety-related, for example. The way they spoke was a reminder of how cultural intimacy works. They knew Israel had certain faults in this respect, but somehow felt they had to excuse it, rather as one excuses the idiosyncrasies and faults of a loved family member. For example, from Julia:

I think that it was .... sloppy workmanship you know, sloppy bureaucracy, which we all knew about Israel anyway. That’s the truth of Israel. I think they see it more in terms of that, rather than a corruption of the land itself. .... I think that they just can’t believe that Israel runs like that and, you know, they see it separately from the nation itself.
There are ambiguities in Julia’s thoughts. Returning to her transcript as I write this analysis, it is no clearer exactly who ‘they’ are. I take it she meant the Australians who were affected by the bridge collapse and those who were so critical of Israel’s ‘sloppy workmanship and bureaucracy’. Her point was that ‘they’ distinguished between this side of Israel, which everyone knows about – ‘that’s the truth of Israel’ – and the other – the nation, the homeland, Zion, the Israel which has lived in the imaginations of Jews for centuries. This Israel has to be kept separate from the real state.

Ruth, an ardent Zionist, also recognised Israel as ‘sloppy’ and ‘slack’, but thought that they had ‘learnt a lesson’ and was concerned that people would use the Maccabi accident as an excuse not to contribute financially to Israel. [In 2000 there was a call for funds which were to be for Israel to be directed to the bridge families in need (Bialoguski 2000b: 4)]. For Jews like Ruth, whose feelings for Israel ran so strong and deep, an event such as this did not shake her commitment to the state, even as she recognised its faults. Hans, from Germany, who also spoke loyally about Israel, expressed a similar sentiment. He said that the event would not change his views about Israel for:

I mean, Israel is Israel, and … they will never be ‘jekkes’ [German Jews] and Israel will never be as scrupulously organised, or meticulously planned, as most Western countries, or as Germany.

Hans reflected a ‘self-stereotype that insiders express ostensibly at their own collective expense’ (Herzfeld 2005: 3). In this comment, he placed himself inside the Israeli collective, even though he has never lived there. Finally David, also a convinced Zionist and Orthodox, summarised his perspective:

Yes, well, I think this is part of this false pride in Israel because they can’t build a bridge, you know? They made a big blunder, and it was terrible. That’s an example of where Israel doesn’t perform to the image that people want to project onto it. In terms of its impact, I don’t play much sport. I’m not involved in Maccabi, so I don’t feel anything in particular.

I think that in general, we’ve moved on.
David’s comment in the first paragraph about ‘false pride’ in Israel is worth exploring. Why ‘false’? Perhaps the pride was misplaced, genuine but based on a fantasy and denial of Israel’s faults. Ahmed (2004) writes that ‘[s]hame and pride have a similar affective role in judging the success or failure of subjects [or nations] to live up to ideals, though they make different judgements’ (ibid.: 109). Shame and pride are related. David did not expand on what precisely he meant by ‘false pride’, although it would appear to relate to shame, because Israel does not live up ‘to the image that people want to project on it’. Once again, the dichotomy emerges between the imagined, idealised homeland and the real, ‘blundering’ state.

‘Safety’ and ‘security’ – these terms, heavily laden with politics and history, have developed particular resonances for Jews of Israel and the diaspora, so that one can be contrasted with the other to partially explain the actions of the nation-state to its own citizens and to Jews in the diaspora. Thus, within this distinction, the unfortunate Australian Jews who marched proudly over that ill-constructed bridge only to fall into the polluted river below, were the victims of the shoddy, deprioritised safety mentality, reserved for Israeli citizens in the homeland and apparently, diaspora Jews. In this distinction diaspora Jews fall (literally) within the Jewish family, for whom a certain slackness in safety standards is tolerated. Part of Australian Jews’ disappointment and anger towards Israel came about because Israel, in the minds of many Jews, represents a sense of security – a safety net, as many of my interviewees said, somewhat ironically in this context. On this occasion, Israel had failed its diasporic Jews miserably.

The word ‘safety’ also has other connotations. The feminist writer Adrienne Rich, in ‘If not with others, how?’ (1986: 206), regards safety in these terms:

[as] a place in which we can draw breath, rest from persecution or harassment, bear witness, lick our wounds, feel compassion and love around us rather than hostility or indifference…..But there is also the safety of the ‘armored and concluded mind’, the safety of the barricaded door which will not open for the beleaguered Stranger, the psychotic safety of the underground nuclear-bomb shelter … the safety bought with guns and money at no matter what cost. And this safety becomes a dead end in the mind and in the mapping of a life or a collective vision.
In this extract, Rich takes us on a journey from the virtues of a safe environment, possibly the kind envisaged by those Jews who, fantastically, still regard Israel as a safety net and land of refuge, to the kind of safety which is obsessed with security, fear of the other and ultimately stasis and sterility. The latter mentality has created the ‘security fence’ under construction around the West Bank and East Jerusalem. It aims to keep Israelis secure by locking Palestinians out. In doing so, it creates the conditions for another generation of Palestinian anger and resentment. Rich’s quote also resonates with Bauman’s characterisation of the ambivalent connotations of ‘community’, discussed in Chapter Two. The protection of the state and its citizens from the ‘enemy’, primarily the Palestinian people but also other Arab states, is privileged and prioritised over protection of these same citizens and of Israel’s visitors and over protecting the environment from degradation. The ‘safety vis-à-vis security’ prioritisation is exemplified by a comment from Zevi Kahanov, the Jewish National Fund-Israel’s representative in New York:

The issues facing Israel on a daily basis are still at a level of life and death. When a mother is worried about her son coming back safely from Lebanon [the south of which was under Israeli occupation from 1982-2000] the fact that there are environmental issues are secondary to her (in Kurtzman 1997: 17).

The apparent disregard for environmental and safety issues in Israel suggests that Israelis too are mainly living in an imagined state, not sufficiently engaged with, or careful of, the consequences of their real existence. How far this place has come from the days of the early Zionists when labouring in the land of Palestine was revered as ‘sacred, labor a religious task, nationhood cosmic’ (Rose, J 2005: 39). Jacqueline Rose quotes Chaim Wiezmann, Israel’s first president, writing in his memoir about his vision for Zionism: “Zionism was something organic, which had to grow like a plant, had to be watched, watered and nursed, if it was to reach maturity” (in Rose, ibid.: 41). Now that the plant has matured, perhaps it is not considered so sacred?
Conclusion 16th Maccabiah – about more than a game

The strength of the reaction to the bridge collapse demonstrates that a tragedy within the ‘extended Jewish family’ carries considerably greater moral and emotional weight than for example, those tragedies occurring to Israel’s ‘other’, Palestinians under Israeli occupation. Lynne Zines, the wife of Warren who died in the toxic waters of the Yarkon, expressed it like this, ‘my husband died at the hands of one of our own. If it had been at the hands of terrorists it would have been easier to take’ (AJN 12 July 2002: Lift-out: 2). That is, if it had been a failure in security from an external threat, it would have been more palatable.

Yet the Maccabi Games, the Jewish Olympics, continue. For those who participate and support them, the Games are ‘a living testimony of the bonds between world Jewry and Israel. They strengthen Israel’s relationship with Diaspora communities and boost the image of Israel throughout the world’ (Statement of Peter Wertheim, President of the NSW Board of Deputies 1999). Their symbolism within Zionist discourse is potent. Without disregarding the on-going private grief and anger experienced by individual Jews, mainly in Sydney, who were affected by the event, on a community level, an editorial from the AJN (2001b: 12) expressed ‘the need to move forward’ and participate in the next Maccabi Games.

As the 16th Games approached in July 2001, the debate over whether or not to participate was passionate, even causing a temporary rift between NSW and Victoria Maccabi over the decision (ibid.). Finally, it was agreed that Maccabi Australia would participate in the 16th Maccabiah, which was being held at a time when Israel and Palestine were engaged in the protracted and devastating second intifada. In fact, when it seemed that US Maccabi was to pull out of the Games because of the intifada, they were almost cancelled. This reveals the standard position underlying Israel’s existence, supported unwaveringly since 1948 by so many in the diaspora. That is, when Israel’s security is under threat from the ‘enemy without’, the diasporic Jewish family has a moral and physical duty to rally. Thus:
The fact that the Games are being held is an enormously powerful statement of solidarity with Israel at a time when it is ostracised by governments around the world and pilloried in the media over the violence of the past nine months (Editorial 2001a: 14).

By 2004, Maccabi Australia, with the Jewish National Fund, had initiated the Yarkon River Project, aiming to rehabilitate the Yarkon River. This has become a major beneficiary of JNF fundraising. The Maccabi Australia web page about the project states:

We could do nothing and just be bitter for the rest of our lives. We could turn our backs on Israel and allow a bad situation to become worse. Or we could roll up our sleeves and say ’No more. Israel is our homeland. What happened to us should never occur in the future. Not to anyone’. …As Australian Jews we should all see this as our duty, our obligation, and our responsibility to the State of Israel and in memory of our dear lost ones (Yarkon River project 2004: on-line).

Ultimately, then, the bridge collapse did not cause an ongoing significant breach in how diasporic relations with Israel are understood and spoken about, as the text above from Maccabi Australia about the project to clean up the polluted Yarkon River, demonstrates. For those Jews whose identities and belief systems are linked to Israel as the Jewish homeland, their loyalty remains firm, although for many it was shaken at the time. For some, the imagined Israel became less idealised and romantised. For others, the safety laxness of their homeland was recognised but excused – an instance of cultural intimacy.

Yet, the incident also represented a crack in the ‘unity’ between diaspora and Israel, that is a crack in the power of Zionist discourse to cement that unity, although only temporarily. The work to repair that crack was swiftly carried out, as exemplified by the moderating comments by community leaders. As well, the incident revealed another schism in Israelis’ perceptions of and need for the diaspora. How important is Zionist ideology to most Israelis? This is a question my research has not set out to answer. Nevertheless, it is clearly vital to the continued dominance of a diasporic identity in which Israel, the Jewish state and homeland, is the integral and central part.
Chapter Seven: ‘Aborigines don’t blow up buses’. Jewish-Australian interventions in Indigenous issues

Introduction

In Israel I’m used to dealing with Palestinians who, if they don’t get their own way, blow up buses and kill innocent people. You cannot compare the nonviolent claims of Aborigines with the Palestinian situation (J Gutnick, quoted in Milburn 1997: 15).

So said Joseph Gutnick, a non-practising Orthodox Rabbi, Western Australian mining magnate, a prior owner of the Melbourne Football Club and financial contributor to the Netanyahu government’s settlement program in the West Bank. He is also a supporter of Indigenous161 land rights. Gutnick was responding to criticism that his support for Australian Indigenous land rights was hypocritical, in the light of his strong allegiance to the Likud Party in Israel, a party which has been unequivocal in its refusal to return any territory to the Palestinians. The quotation provides a provocative framing for the arguments in this final chapter, illustrating a discursive position which has led many Jews in contemporary Australia to identify with, and respond to, a range of issues concerning Indigenous politics, hence manifesting a moral-political stance that goes beyond inward-looking concerns. Gutnick, however, regards the justice claims of Aboriginal and Palestinian people as being beyond comparison.

The engagement of Australian Jews with Indigenous issues is a production of identity politics. That is, Jewish expressions of solidarity come from a position of identification with certain aspects of Indigenous life, history and struggle, and a sense of empathy derived from having shared experiences of suffering and persecution. This engagement is an example of Jews seeking to better the lives of others at a time in the late twentieth century when Jews in Australia are a relatively affluent and successful community, less exposed to racism than more recent arrivals or Indigenous people. The discourses examined in this chapter reveal the tensions between the orientation towards universalism or particularism discussed in

161 In this chapter, I use the words ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Aboriginal’ interchangeably. Among Black Australians, both are used.
Chapters One and Four. Discourses on genocide and dispossession function to assert Indigenous-Jewish solidarity based on a shared narrative of victimhood. In the words of Žižek (1999: 7) there is a ‘paradox of victimisation’. Žižek’s paradox involves the Other, as victim, protected only as long as it remains a victim. ‘The moment it no longer behaves as a victim, but wants to strike back on its own, it all of a sudden magically turns into a terrorist, fundamentalist, drug-trafficking Other’ (ibid.). The Aboriginal victim Other is in Gutnick’s eyes, a ‘good’, non-violent victim, as is the Jew. The Palestinian, on the other hand, has been striking back and has no victim status in the minds of many Jews.

Before looking in detail at the discourses of Jewish-Indigenous solidarity, we need to consider the general, political context which generated debates in Australia about Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations. These discourses include those which attest to a shared history of suffering and land dispossession and/or those which argue from within specific Jewish religious and cultural traditions connecting with the oppressed and wanting to make the world a better place (*tikkun olam*). The chapter will then examine these discourses mirrored by some Indigenous leaders who perceive connections between their own struggle and that of the Jewish people, it comes also from those whose politics draw them to see analogies with Palestinian people as well as with Jews in Australia. The conclusion argues for the emergence of an alternative discourse: As white people in Australia have for many years maintained a silence regarding the dispossession of Indigenous people carried out in their names, so many Jews also remain silent about Palestinian dispossession. For many Jews, to speak about the latter carries enormous moral and political risk, it places them in the role of the ‘white’ and unsettles the voice of the victim. At the same time, as my examples will illustrate, it is possible to speak at the border of the unspeakable. The reverberations from the possibilities ‘of living beyond [one’s suffering], of identifying as something other than it’ (Brown 1998: 321), yet not forgetting – remain for the future.
The context

Indigenous Australian issues and concerns over land rights have been debated in the public domain over the past twenty or so years. Prior to that, there were struggles and debates over the civil rights of Indigenous people. Broadly speaking, these debates involved a collision of the past and the present. As Curthoys (2003: 185) puts it: ‘Aboriginal people challenged existing Australian understandings of the colonial past by emphasising their prior occupation, direct experience of invasion and racism, and their ongoing struggles for survival’. This challenge became especially visible and energised in 1988 – the Bicentenary of Australia’s colonisation. Historians, politicians and political commentators and journalists have argued about how Australia’s colonial past should be understood and represented in relation to Indigenous treatment at the hands of white colonialists and their descendants. Under the guidance of the Federal Labor Government and the Prime Minister, Paul Keating, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was established in 1991 by an act of parliament. The intent of this act was to devise some lasting ‘accommodation’ (Macintyre & Clark 2004: 144) between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, in part by educating all Australians to a deeper understanding of the history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the disadvantages they still suffer.

In the early 1990s, the long-standing legal concept of *terra nullius* was challenged by two legal decisions in the High Court of Australia on Native Title – the Mabo decision of 1992 and the Wik decision of 1996, which ruled that pastoral leases did not extinguish native title. These decisions marked the first legal recognition of Aboriginal prior ownership of the land and fuelled a popular debate about the rights of contemporary, living Indigenous Australians to that land, a debate accompanied by fear campaigns that the ubiquitous Australian backyard would be subject to legal challenge (see http://www.antar.org.au/mabo&wik.html).162

---

162 See Gale (2000) on how the media perpetuated a ‘narrative of fear’ in relation to reporting on native title claims.
In 1997, a report was released entitled *Bringing Them Home*, the culmination of two years of a National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Children from their Families, conducted by the national body, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/stolen_children/). The Inquiry heard oral testimony from ‘535 Indigenous people about the effects of separation [from their parents and families] and institutionalisation by the state’ (Hamilton 2003: 90) that occurred during most of the twentieth century. They became known as the Stolen Generations. The report shocked many Australians as it described ‘child-removal policies as genocidal, and as motivated by the desire to destroy Aboriginal identity and distinctiveness altogether’ (Curthoys 2003: 186). The plight of the Stolen Generations became the subject of fierce debate and ‘brought issues of responsibility for past wrongs to centre stage’ (Hamilton 2003: 90). One of the Report’s key recommendations was for the state to issue an apology for its past actions towards Indigenous people. To this day, the conservative federal government has refused to apologise, although most state (Labor) governments have, as have thousands of ‘ordinary’ Australians through the establishment of an annual national Sorry Day and Sorry Books. As Hamilton argues, the HREOC Inquiry brought to the fore a ‘clear political struggle … between two very different understandings of the relationship between the past and the present’ (ibid.: 91). For the victims, the Indigenous people who were still living with the effects of the past, as Hamilton says, ‘past and present are blurred. [On the other hand] for the Prime Minister and his government, the past is at a distance and quite separate from any continuing responsibility in the present’ (ibid.).

**Jewish interventions in the race debates in Australia**

I take as my starting point the observation made by several scholars, that ‘ethnic Australian history’ has failed to engage with Aboriginal history: ‘to think through issues of dispossession and racial relations between ethnic and Indigenous groups, or to examine the connection between the racialisation of Aborigines and non-British people’ (Teo 2003: 150). A focus on what Curthoys (2000: 34) calls ‘historical victim narratives’ has meant that the histories of ethnic community are not written
or understood in order to come to terms with the ‘structures and mentality of colonialism’ (ibid.) which have underwritten their experiences in this country. Instead, they have accentuated a particularist narrative, which begins with a ‘story of persecution or economic difficulty in their country of origin, experiences of racism and rejection after arrival, and the gradual building of a new life and making a contribution to Australian society at large’ (ibid.). As I argued in Chapter Two, Jewish historiography and representation in Australia largely reflects Curthoys’ schema.

Stratton (2000: 237) describes the historical connection between Jews and Aborigines as ‘less obvious, tentative’ than the historical alliance between Jews and African-Americans. In his view, the historical connection in Australia, as in the United States, is based on a ‘partial racialisation’ of Jews where they have been situated as ‘ambivalently white’.163 Jews in Australia, as in other Western nations, have become less ‘ambivalently white’ since the Holocaust and the establishment of Israel. This is not a straightforward or simple statement however. Claiming Jews as ‘white’, ‘ambivalently white’ or ‘non-white’ is homogenising and precludes the ethnic, class and gender differences among Jews themselves. These issues, as well as that of how the Israeli state has affected the construction of Jews as white (code for powerful and influential) cannot be entered into here, though they are worthy of further research.164

Tatz (2004: 160) argues that the relationship between Jews and Indigenous Australians is ‘thin ... [even] anorexic’. He, like Stratton, compares the Australian Jewish experience negatively with the activism and connections of Jews and Blacks in America and South Africa which have been ‘juxtaposed, interwoven, interconnected’ (ibid.), whereas ‘most Australian Jews have been able to live a lifetime without encountering an Aborigine or Islander in the flesh’ (ibid.). Tatz’s

---

164 For nuanced analyses by Jewish feminists on the ambivalence of Jewish ‘whiteness’ in America and how its construction is inevitably related to specific economic, social and political forces in that country, see Brodkin (1998), Kaplan (1998), Train (2000).
comparison seems a little unfair as the same statement could apply to most non-Indigenous Australians to this day, particularly well-off city-dwellers whose residences are likely to be far away from where most Aborigines live. As Barta (1985: 158) states with regard to the early twentieth century: ‘... very few Australians ... had any contact with or knowledge of Aborigines; whether struggling to make ends meet or basking in the pompous rhetoric of nation-building, they rarely if ever suffered a pang for those who once lived where their streets now ran’.

Contrary to the lack of historical connection between Jews and Indigenous Australians, and as evidence that the kinds of ethnic histories decried by Teo and Curthoys may be changing, let us briefly consider how Chinese-Australians are narrating their relationship with Aborigines. In the first conference of its kind on the historical relationship between Chinese and Indigenous Australians, held at the Australian National University, in December 2000, a paper was presented on the ‘Chinese reporting of Aboriginal issues in the Chinese media’. Within the context of growing concern expressed in Chinese newspapers about racism and reporting on racism, there has also been an increasing emphasis on ‘Aboriginal affairs’ (Yang 2000: 3).

Yang notes that in general Chinese newspapers have been very sympathetic to Aboriginal people (ibid.: 4). There is a similar identification with the ‘victim’ as is evident in Jewish media reporting. He suggests that, like the Jews, the Chinese have a ‘special relationship with Aboriginal people’ (ibid.: 5). One story from a Chinese newspaper, date and name unspecified, quoted a Chinese Australian community leader saying that Chinese and Aborigines ‘in [their] understanding [of] racism and historical experience in this country, have many things in common’. From the Indigenous perspective, an Aboriginal leader was reported to have said that ‘only Chinese and Aborigines had a special friendship among the different ethnic groups involved in Australian history’. Yang argues that this was due to the close contact between the two groups from an early stage of white settlement - namely, the
immigration of large numbers of Chinese during the Australian Gold Rushes in the late 1850s and early 1860s. He continues:

From the Aboriginal people’s point of view, the Chinese people were an acceptable group. The Chinese people brought to Aboriginal people handcraft skills, mediation and friendship but not killing. Some Chinese intermarried with Aboriginal people ... Only Chinese and Aboriginal people experienced killing because of racism (ibid.: 5).

It is interesting to consider how the identification of the two groups with Indigenous Australians differs. The link felt by the Chinese Australians is based on a tangible relationship, their contact bounded and affected by colonial history and similar experiences of racism. By contrast, the connection with Jewish Australians, as articulated by some Indigenous leaders reported in the Jewish press, is more symbolic and ephemeral than based on a concrete historical connection. Nevertheless, the value of the material assistance to Indigenous causes, such as pro bono work done on land rights cases by Jewish lawyers in recent years, is widely acknowledged.

Tatz argues that there has not been a substantial relationship between Australian Jews and Aborigines, that ‘[t]he record of “official” Australian Jewry, apart from a very small group of diverse individuals, shows a sustained expedience, a reluctance to get involved in contentious issues generally, let alone those affecting other marginalised peoples’ (ibid.: 161). Tatz’s emphasis in this statement echoes W.D Rubinstein’s ‘non-universalist’, or ‘expediential’ outlook of most Jews or at least of official Jewry, in Australia, which can be encapsulated by the inward-looking question ‘but is it good for the Jews?’

However, my research reveals a considerable quantity of discussion and debate, both within official Australian Jewry, and from Jewish groups and individuals concerning many of these issues. This began in the late 1980s and gathered momentum during the 1990s, as the issues themselves were debated with intensity, passion and hostility in the mainstream media. Although there is not much evidence of a long-standing relationship, connections have been forged in the past
decade and a half. Jewish clergy and synagogues as well as secular organisations like B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation Commission165 of Victoria have become involved in National Sorry Day activities, National Week of Prayer and Reconciliation (which began in 1994 as an activity of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation)166 and other joint activities with Indigenous people.167

This involvement emerged for two related reasons: firstly, because attempts by Aboriginal Australians to seek moral and material reparations for past injustices have been met by a post-colonial resistance from the Australian people (and governments) in response. White Australia was facing its colonial legacy, one described in the phrase ‘black armband view of history’168 by the conservative Australian historian, Geoffrey Blainey (1993: 10 - 15). Secondly, the self-identified narrative by which Australian Jews spoke of their position in relation to other ‘ethnic’ groups and society at large had shifted slightly. By the end of the twentieth century there was an acknowledgement by influential Jews that, as a group, they were not the most victimised in this country. For example, Susan Bures, the editor of the Sydney-based Australian Jewish Times during the early-mid 1980s ‘supported the need for a broader approach by Australian Jewry to issues of racism other than self-interest, [urging] communal backing for the anti-apartheid movement as well as for the broad goals of multiculturalism’ (in Rutland 1995: 182).

---

165 B’nai B’rith is a Jewish service organisation (the oldest and largest in the world). “It undertakes a wide range of activities for the Jewish and general communities such as: caring for the sick and aged; supporting Jewish education; combating anti-semitism and racial discrimination; aiding refugees regardless of origin or creed.” (Information from B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation Commission, Victoria).
166 ECAJ Media Release, 3 May 1994, ‘Strong community support for Aboriginal reconciliation’.
167 For example, 1986, a meeting at Sydney’s North Shore Temple Emanuel between Jews and Pat O’Shane (an Aboriginal leader, now magistrate) to discuss land rights (AJT, 3 April); 1993, ‘a Jewish corroboree’ at Kew Hebrew Congregation, Melbourne (AJN, 3 December); 1997, ‘Aboriginal artists share their stories’, Sydney’s Temple Emanuel, Woollahra (AJN 25 September); Social Justice Committee of Woollahra Temple Emanuel assists Aboriginal community in Northern Territory (AJN 24 October); 1998, ‘A night of reconciliation’ at North Shore Temple Emanuel (1 May); ‘Jews Aborigines share experiences at Moriah College Sydney (AJN 5 June); 2004, Meeting of representatives of NSW Indigenous and Jewish communities at Sydney Jewish Museum (17 November). As well, the Victorian Friends of the Hebrew University provides an Indigenous People’s Scholarship which was, in 1998, awarded to a young Aboriginal doctor to study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (AJN 20 March).
168 The term ‘black armband’ view of history is a term of abuse that denigrates those who have proposed that Australia’s history is more blemished through its treatment of Indigenous people, than many Australian leaders, including the Prime Minister John Howard, would wish us to believe.
Another perspective on the debate about how discriminated Jews are by the mid-1990s, comes from Isi Leibler (1995: 89), who echoed Bures’ view at the Third National Immigration and Population Outlook Conference:

We recognise that in 1995 Jews are far from the most victimised or vilified of minority groups in Australia. This is despite a noticeable increase in the incidence of racist violence directed against Jews .... Jews recognise that Aboriginals, Asian immigrants and some sections of the Islamic communities, have been more victimised than themselves. But Jews, in their own interests but also in the wider interest of the tolerant society, have developed antennae for the early-warning signals of liberal democracies moving towards intolerance.

Leibler’s speech articulates several important points. He acknowledges that there are others in Australia, including Aborigines, who are more discriminated against than Jews. At the same time, and in order to remind us that there is still hatred and violence against Jews, he alerts us to the ‘noticeable increase in … racist violence’. His final sentence alludes to a Jewish history of persecution which has led to a heightened sensitivity for signs of intolerance and racism both against Jews themselves and also other minorities. This excerpt exemplifies the kind of discourses I explore in this chapter, teasing out the complexities and contradictions within them. Jews have provided genuine material and ideological support to Indigenous people at a time when they were under attack from a conservative federal government and a more right-wing ‘One Nation’ Party and its supporters.169 At the same time, I want to inquire as to the implicit purposes the discourse serves in maintaining the Jewish ‘status’ as a suffering people, the discourse which carries within it the historical and contemporary claims to ‘Eretz Israel’. As I argued in this work’s Introduction, memory is discursive and political. In this case, do memories of the Jewish attachment to this land effect the articulation of Palestinian memories of, and claims for, this same land?

169 I provide examples of these throughout this chapter. One in particular stands out for its much-cited generosity, namely a bequest made by two Jewish social justice activists and Holocaust survivors Tom and Eva Rona, who died in a car accident in 1987. They left funds to be used for an Aboriginal project, to be allocated for elderly Aboriginal people to record their lives, culture, language, before it disappears. The project was conducted by Tranby Aboriginal Adult Education College in Sydney and is modeled on the ‘Twelfth-Hour oral history project which records the testimonies of [Australian Jewish] survivors of the Nazi death camps’ (Secord 1991).
Before turning to the Jewish discourses themselves, one small, but significant early demonstration of Indigenous support for the Jews of Germany should be remembered and acknowledged. In December 1938, a month after Kristallnacht, the Australian Aborigines’ League (AAL) passed a resolution protesting Nazi actions against German Jews. They took the resolution to the German Consulate in Melbourne, but were refused entry. This moving example of Indigenous Australians offering support at a time of crisis for Jewish people has been publicly acknowledged only recently by the Jewish community. The 1938 event was not recorded in either Rutland (1997) or Rubinstein (1987b; 1991a). By 2002 however, when activities in solidarity with Indigenous people were at their height within the Jewish community and in mainstream society, the *Australian Jewish News* reported on a ceremony and unveiling of a plaque at Melbourne’s Jewish Holocaust Centre, to honour ‘the courageous stance’ taken by the AAL (Editorial 2002a: 14), (Kohn, P. 2002a: 1; 2002b: 17), (Kohn, P. & Bard 2002: 17). Tatz (2004: 168) comments that the AAL protest was ‘quite remarkable, if not astonishing given that there wasn’t a single Jew involved in the AAL in those days, or in any form of pro-Aboriginal advocacy’. Regardless, Aborigines were clearly moved by what they had heard about the beginnings of the Jewish genocide, and motivated to act on their behalf.

**The Jewish people – standard bearers for others who suffer?**

One of the threads weaving through the Australian Jewish media from the early 1990s onwards concerned the question of whether a Jewish history of persecution and the ethical tradition within Judaism should make us more alert in our concern for others. This question prompted two editorials in The *Australian Jewish News*. The first, ‘Jews and racism’ (15 August 1997c: 4), was a reflection on whether the Jewish community had done enough for others, and whether in fact it was too parochial and ‘oblivious to the wider society’ (ibid.). It concluded that ‘for whatever reasons, [racism] does not seem to have captured the community’s grassroots’ (ibid.). The second editorial written a month later, ‘Aborigines and Jews’ (19 September 1997d: 14) reiterated a lack of Jewish concern for Aborigines. It said: ‘Treating Aborigines justly is an ethical imperative. But it also happens to be true that it serves Australia’s national interest and the interests of Australian Jews for the tolerant society to work.
It is not just *their* struggle, but *ours* too’ (emphasis in original). The two editorials express the tension between the universalist and the particularist orientations in the community and the editor’s desire for Jews at the ‘grassroots’ to become more active in their concern for Aborigines. The second editorial has positioned Jews within the national discourse on tolerance – important for a society to work and in particular important for its minorities, often the recipients of intolerance.

Illustration 10: Kron, JA\N, 15 August 1997: 7

The cartoon above illustrates the dual position Jews can adopt between concern for others and a humorous suggestion that tolerance of others’ suffering can be shared. It alludes to the ‘racism and tolerance’ debate that occurred within the Sydney and Melbourne Jewish communities during 1997-98 and is part of a short article which appeared under the heading ‘Tolerance begins at home’ (15 August 1997). In the cartoon, the character on the left is articulating a common-sense moral position that as a people, or as an individual, a history of suffering should make one more ‘tolerant’ or attentive to the suffering of another. The character on the right occupies a less generous, but equally common-sense position based on the sentiment of ‘why should we be the only ones to suffer?’ The article states:

One explanation offered for this … is that the Hansonites have not (yet?) attacked the Jews and that until that happens, Australian Jews are mostly concerned about racism only when it is anti-Semitism …. We should be wary of those, Jews or non-Jews, who expect Jews to live up to standards they do not apply to others. That is not meant to be an argument against idealism and the prophetic vision of Jews being a light unto the nations.
But it is a plea for taking care about what is being asked, and who is asking it of us (15 August 'Tolerance begins at home' 1997: 7).

Here we see again the tension between the two polarities of particularism and universalism. In the three sections of the extract, the writer firstly criticises Jews for their particularist, self-interested concern only with antisemitism. At the same time, Jews should not be expected to attain higher moral standards than others. The final sentence acts as a brake on the preceding one. Yes, Jews do have prophetic visions in their traditions and an injunction to be ‘a light unto the nations’. However, one should be wary of who is proposing this instruction and for what purposes. One wonders why the writer used the word ‘plea’ in this sentence, with its religious and imploring overtones. It suggests that other Jews are being pleaded with, but why?

In a more recent issue of the Australian Jewish News on the occasion of Shoah (Holocaust) Awareness week, the Sydney author Alan Gold (in Baden 2000: 6) spoke at a Communal Commemoration and continued this theme, but with more emphasis on the need for Jews to have learnt universal lessons from their history:

> Are there not strong moral grounds for we as Jews, who have suffered so greatly throughout history, to be the standard-bearers for a more decent and better world in which even the desire for genocide disappears off the face of the planet?

> As Australians of privilege and influence, the peddling of racism across airwaves and in political policy is our problem, regardless against whom it is directed. As people whose identity is forged as much in our suffering as in our intellect, and having been defined by the oppression of our history, let us use our understanding of that experience to prevent it happening again on any scale to any people.

Gold’s words in the second paragraph echo Leibler’s earlier in this section, as the current privileged positions of most Jewish Australians intersects with past experiences of suffering. According to Gold, Jews should summon those experiences in order to prevent future disasters to other people.

The next cartoon accompanies an article by AJN columnist David Bernstein (1997a: 17).
The cartoon suggests, with good Jewish humour, the particularist/universalist dichotomy. Either Jews have to protect themselves against antisemitism or they expect themselves to defend/protect others against racism. In my reading of the cartoon, it implies a burden of the victim in both situations; in the latter there is again the implication of Jew as ‘standard-bearer’. One notes that both aspects of the double burden emanate from within the subject: the Jew reacts to antisemitism or expects her/himself to support victimised others. Although the cartoon stages an argument around a Jewish moral imperative to attend to oppressed others, the article it illustrates takes a more ambivalent interpretation on the effects of Jewish historical experiences, which can:

serve either to heighten or to blunt our sensitivity to racism .... That is not to say Jewish Australians, like all decent Australians, should not be very actively engaged in the fight against racism. ... But, it seems to me, we are likely to be disappointed if our expectation of any kind of mass grassroots Jewish involvement rests too heavily on the fact that we are Jews (ibid.).

Bernstein articulates a less essentialist view of Jewish identity, invoking the universalist ideals of human rights and justice for all, as the basis for ‘the fight against racism’. He expresses scepticism about whether or not the Jewish experiences of antisemitism will lead to greater sensitivity to racism against others, that is, non-Jews.
The double burden voiced in Kron’s cartoon – ‘there’s no rest for Jews’ - suggests another probe into the paradoxical role power plays in the formation of the subject. In a sense, the convincing identification with and support for Indigenous suffering and struggle derives from the Jewish subject-position which identifies with its own subjection, paradoxically exerting power in the world through reiteration of its own subordination as the result of past or present antisemitism.

One can also analyse the Jewish-Indigenous relationship as a discursive enactment of two politicised identities, both of which exist as they are as the result of ‘a complex historical production’ (Brown 1995: 54). Brown poses some difficult questions, relevant not only to this analysis of contemporary Jewish Australian politicised identity/ies, but also to a range of ‘historically subordinated cultures’. She asks:

Where do the historically and culturally specific elements of politicised identity’s investments in itself, and especially in its own history of suffering, come into conflict with the need to give up these investments, to engage in something of a Nietzschean ‘forgetting’ of this history, in the pursuit of an emancipatory democratic project? (ibid.: 55)

To attempt an engagement with Palestinians, despite the undeniable difficulties, would in my view be the type of ‘emancipatory democratic project’ Brown argues for above. Nietzsche’s statement, alluded to here by Brown, suggests that if one remembers pain, it burns into the memory. Would this engagement then only be possible if the remembered hurt, to paraphrase Nietzsche170, is cauterised, smouldered or at least singed, to enable different, less painful memories to reside, in an unburned state?

Through discursive engagement with Indigenous politics, Jewish Australians are able to maintain and remember their own ‘history of suffering’, through identification with another people whose past and present harsh misfortunes have

170 ‘If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory. ... Pain is the most powerful aid to mnemonics’ (Nietzsche 1969: 61).
had little direct impact on most Jewish immigrants to this country\textsuperscript{171}. Jewish ‘investments’ in their own suffering have not been relinquished, subjection continues. At the same time, the engagement is productive and indicative of a community very much at home in Australia, living lives of doikat (hereness) and dealing constructively with the debates and contradictions that Australian society produces.

**Jewish discourses on justice**

Discourses on Jewish traditions of justice have also been summoned in discussions about the need to involve ourselves with the Other, the stranger. An early example comes from *Tikkun Olam*, The Sydney Jewish Left. In 1988, the year of Australia’s Bicentenary, the group placed a statement in the *Australian Jewish Times* (*Jews for Aboriginal land rights* 1988), which said in part: ‘We Jews are also taught: “Justice shall you pursue” (Deuteronomy 16:20). That tradition requires us to recognise the prior ownership of Australia by Aboriginal people. We support Justice and Land Rights for Black Australia in 1988’.

During the 1990s, there were a number of articles in the Jewish press which also stressed this tradition and the type of discourse illustrated below by Rabbi Fred Morgan (2000a: 32), of Temple Beth Israel (Reform Judaism), Melbourne.

\[O\]ver the past two centuries the Jewish people have felt more and more free to speak out on behalf of the stranger. Jews have been at the forefront of campaigns for social justice – a drive borne from our sense of responsibility to treat the stranger with dignity and respect ... Biblical teachings have easily been extended beyond their original purpose, to promote fair treatment for refugees, for Indigenous peoples and for all those treated as aliens in our modern world (ibid.).

Rabbi Morgan asks ‘to whom does the term “stranger” apply?’ Needless to say, as discussed in Chapter One, the biblical and non-biblical meanings have changed over time. According to Morgan, when Israel was sovereign the term applied to anyone who lived in that land but was not Jewish. During the thousands of years after the

\textsuperscript{171} Bartrop (1997) compares Aborigines and Jews in early colonial Australia and their vastly different experiences of dispossession.
Temple was destroyed and the Jewish people exiled, the same term (*ger* in Hebrew) was then attributed only to those ‘proselytes’ who sought to join the Jews, that is, converted to Judaism. For all those other ‘strangers’, Morgan states that ‘lacking sovereign power anywhere in the Diaspora, Jews had no means by which to help or hinder the stranger, unless the stranger deliberately crossed that invisible boundary and joined the Jewish people’ (ibid.).

Morgan’s brief account here of Jewish existence before the eighteenth century and the European and Jewish enlightenments suggests passivity and lack of contact with non-Jews. However, lack of ‘sovereign power’ does not signify a total lack of agency. The discourse connecting the Jewish attitude to the stranger, the oppressed and the powerless as being ‘... the very essence of the Jewish identity’, appears in the left-leaning, Melbourne-based *Australian Jewish Democrat*. Peter Wertheim (1994: 11) sets out his arguments for establishing a Social Justice Committee within the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies in the face of some opposition. He calls on the Torah to outline the principles of justice which led to ‘the Jewish instinct to identify with the powerless and the oppressed’, this ‘instinct’ coming from both religious teachings and Jewish history. He suggests that ‘following our social conscience is ultimately in our own interests. If others are not safe from oppression and injustice, neither are we. Ultimately it is a question of courage’ (ibid.:12). Wertheim’s argument culminates in the declaration of what Jews and Aborigines share, above all else: They have both been, in the words of Elie Wiesel, ‘perfect victims’ (ibid.) whereby ‘absolute good’ and ‘absolute evil’ have been in diametric opposition. Wiesel was of course referring to the Holocaust. One of the reasons Wertheim sees Aboriginal people also as ‘perfect victims’ is because they have ‘been untainted by acts of retaliatory violence’ (ibid.:13) in contrast to other groups such as Palestinians. Wertheim concludes his article with arguments disputing any similarities between the struggles of Indigenous Australians and Palestinians, as Joseph Gutnick also stated in the quotation heading this chapter.172 Gutnick and Wertheim do not

---

172 There are similar articles from the *Australian Jewish Democrat, Generation* and elsewhere, which promote Jewish social justice and compassion towards Aborigines, refugees and asylum seekers and others on the basis of Jews’ unique, often tragic, history. See for example Varga (2002: 4); Sife (2002: 17);
mention that in the first decades of Australia’s colonisation, Aboriginal people did resist the invaders.

‘Land-people-spirit’: shared links with the land

So far in this chapter, I have examined the discourses Jews mobilise in discussing the obligation derived from our history and experiences, to lend support to the Other, in this case Aboriginal Australians, and the moral burden and even wariness which can accompany the attendance to others as well as ourselves. I now turn to discourses suggesting similarities between Jewish and Aboriginal relationships to land. A traditional concept of history is often implicitly employed to explain how the notion of the Jewish ‘stranger’ relates to Aboriginal people and land. Jen Glaser’s (1992: 28) article in the Melbourne Jewish quarterly Generation demonstrates how. As she correctly argues, the paradigm of the stranger cannot be based on the experience of the Jews in Egypt, where they were ‘strangers in a strange land’, since Australia is not a strange land for Indigenous people. Nor can a comparison be made with the Holocaust, because ‘it happened on foreign soil rather than within the very land which gave birth to our spirituality and identity as a people’. ‘Rather’, says Glaser:

we have to look to those times when we, as a people in our own land, experienced exile, times during which we, as inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael, lost our independence and our power…. [For example], the invading Assyrian and Babylonian forces [of Samaria and Judah] had little tolerance for the integrity of our Jewishness or understanding of the inextricable unit of land, people and faith which lay at the very centre of our being. Indeed we experienced galut [exile] within our own land prior to expulsion (ibid.:28).

Glaser has evoked an ancient history to compare the sense of exile and loss felt by Aboriginal people within their own land to a similar loss experienced by Jews between 850 and 586 BCE. It is the shared experience of exile within one’s own land which is the driver behind Jewish empathy and support for Aboriginal loss. She


173 Foucault (1984: 84 – 85) contrasts ‘traditional’ and ‘effective’ histories. Traditional history ‘always encourages subjective recognitions and attributes a form of reconciliation to all the displacements of the past’ (ibid.: 86). Effective history, by contrast, is about chance and contingency and singular events which do not transpose into a ‘necessary continuity’ (ibid.: 88) with other, past events.
goes on to suggest a shared ‘conception of the unity between land, spirit and people’ and again acknowledges that for ‘the Koori community’ there has been, and still is, a ‘struggle for survival within a dominant culture that separates nationhood from peoplehood and from the life of the spirit’ (ibid.: 29). By using a traditional concept of history which focuses unproblematically on origins to explicate the present (Foucault 1984), Glaser is able to suggest strongly that Jewish spiritual identity today, like Indigenous identity, can only be fulfilled through a primal ‘interconnectedness of land with the life of the spirit and our identity as a people’ (ibid.). The remarkable recourse to biblical accounts is a discursive move which adopts a symbolic/mythic connection that suppresses the real complexity of contemporary Jewish diasporic identities, a complexity revealed in my discussions with diverse Australian Jews. Although these interviewees come from a variety of religious and national backgrounds, they often expressed complicated feelings about their relationships to the land of Israel.

The following example from the Australian Jewish News provides a critical instance of how the concept of traditional history is employed in this debate. Rabbi Marcus Solomon (1998: 23), a Perth-based legal adviser both to mining companies and native title claimants wrote ‘Land Rights and Halachah’, at a time when Aboriginal people’s land claims were being contested in the High Court. Its aim was to consider ‘some interesting and thought-provoking parallels between Mabo and the Jewish notion of “native” title…not withstanding very significant differences’. The explicit intent of Solomon’s argument is to urge committed Jews to recognise as bona fide ‘a relationship between the Indigenous people and their land that is merely a “spiritual” connection rather than a physical occupation’. Thus, his penultimate paragraph states that:

As a people who has been forcibly dispossessed of their land but have [sic], against all odds, maintained its bond often through a ‘mere’ spiritual

---

174 Halachah is translated from the Hebrew as ‘the Way’, or the Path on which one walks. Yerushalmi (1996: 113) describes it as ‘the complex of rites and beliefs that gives a people its sense of identity and purpose’. 

268
connection, I do not believe it behoves the Jewish people to dismiss such a notion (ibid.).

Solomon stresses the value the High Court placed on ‘observance of traditional laws’, as well as the actual physical occupation of the land, when it adjudicated a land claim; hence his parallel with the extreme importance Jews place on the Land of Israel as a spiritually-connected home. Much of the article cites examples from Jewish tradition, from biblical, liturgical and rabbinical sources to support his argument on the parallels. For example, Solomon notes that ‘Indigenous culture emphasises an obligation to the land rather than proprietary right in the land. Although Jewish law encompasses a sophisticated regime of interests in land, the notion of an obligation to land is reflected in Jewish tradition’ (emphasis in original). Here again, this biblical narrative - which played a fundamental part in Zionist discourse and provided a justification for the mainly secular Zionist leaders in the late nineteenth century to select the land of Palestine as a Jewish homeland - is used to establish Jewish and Aboriginal historical similarities. What Solomon does not articulate is the present-day narrative of the ‘land’, now comprising a nation-state called Israel where Jewish ‘proprietary right[s] in the land’ are exercised daily.

The article in the AJN which ‘quite comfortably’ parallels the Australian High Court’s notion of native title with the ‘Jewish approach to its national title in the Land of Israel’, conflates two very different historical trajectories, the Jewish and the Aboriginal, and to what discursive effect? Solomon’s article, by comparing these two ‘native title’ claims so apparently effortlessly, with a bare acknowledgment of the vast spaces between them, avoids having to recognise the present day rights of Palestinian claims to their historical connections to land, both spiritual and physical. It seems that the two discourses contained in ‘Jewish rights to the land’ and ‘Palestinian rights to the land’, unlike Australian Indigenous rights, cannot be spoken of simultaneously. One discursive moment occludes and silences the other.

In one of Solomon’s few admissions to any distinction between the Mabo judgement and the ‘traditional Jewish approach to land’, he compares the question of indigeneity and land. In Australia, in his view, it is uncontestable as to who the
Indigenous peoples are. However, in Israel, ‘the dispute over title to the land of
Israel is fraught with conflicting claims as to precisely who constituted the
Indigenous population’. This statement obfuscates and denies contemporary history
and the particularities of the Palestinian struggle in Israel since 1948. The
Palestinians do not have to lay claim to ‘we were here first’ in order for that struggle
to have current legitimacy and justice. However, one cannot deny that the
Jewish/Zionist attachments to, and claims on, land on the basis of a kind of
indigeneity and spirituality, have provided a complexity around these discourses
even for such ‘diasporised’ Jews as Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin (1993: 714), who
point out:

It is profoundly disturbing to hear Jewish attachment to the Land decried
as regressive in the same discursive situations in which the attachment of
native Americans or Australians to their particular rocks and deserts is
celebrated as an organic connection to the earth that ‘we’ [roughly
signifying Westerners] have lost.

This passage considers the issue of ‘two diametrically opposed moments in the
Jewish discourse of the Land’ (ibid.). One ‘moment’ is their need to acknowledge the
discursive parallel between Jewish conception of the Land of Israel and that of most
other Indigenous peoples in the world: ‘Somehow the Jews have managed to retain
a sense of being rooted somewhere in the world through twenty centuries of exile
from that someplace’ (ibid.). Groups such as Native Americans, Indigenous
Australians and Palestinians, for example, have rights to their land based on ‘real,
unmysterious political claims’. The Jewish attachment to the Land is profound and
cannot be denied, although the Boyarins are not claiming that it is based on the
binary other that they have constructed – that is, ‘mystified autochthony’ (ibid.: 715)
and they recognise that the spiritual attachment has been coopted by the state. So,
what is it based upon?

The other ‘moment’ that the Boyarins consider is that ‘the biblical story is not one of
autochthony but one of always already coming from somewhere else’, which seems
to imply the opposite condition to notions of autochthony or indigeneity, indeed an
'unsettlement' of these notions, an ancient diasporic moment.175 The Boyarins argue for the Jewish right to have a traditional attachment to the Land, to be able to live as Jews in the land of Palestine, which does not have to be based upon either claims to indigeneity or autochthony. They propose a more nuanced and complex reading of Jewish history and connection with the land than is endemic to most Zionist discourse. The ‘final betrayal’ (ibid.: 717), the Boyarins argue, is the formation of Israel, whose 1948 Declaration of Independence states that ‘the State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the ingathering of all exiles’. The Boyarins put forward two conflicting narratives: One, the Zionist story in which the People return triumphant to their ‘natural Land, like ‘all of the nations’. The alternative story of Israel begins with a people forever unconnected with a particular land, a people that calls into question the idea that a people must have a land in order to be a people’ (ibid.: 718). The Boyarins are on the ‘side’ of diasporic identity which they celebrate as ‘a disaggregated identity. Jewishness disrupts the very categories of identity because it is not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these in dialectical tension with one another’ (ibid.: 721).

This interpretation of diasporic Jewish identity accords with self-representations of some of the interviewees in this work, for example Esther, a non-Zionist, who despite being a committed Jew, opposed the notion of needing to identify strongly with a Jewish homeland. Another perspective came from Julia, a deeply spiritual Jew. I asked about her connection with Israel and her response spoke of the kind of ‘spiritual Zionism’ expounded most famously by Ahad Ha-am:

It’s more along mystical lines, if you like. ... You know, we have this imperative in Judaism which is, um .... [an] existential imperative, so that ... every festival, we can, sort of, transcend time and space, and in fact, we must transcend time and space, and stand, let’s say, at the base of Mount Sinai, and receive again the Torah. ... So, there’s something about this existential thing which is about us not being people of the land, but people of the book, and it allows us to exist beyond the land, whereas Aboriginal culture, the land stories them. ... That’s a different way of seeing it to the Jews. We story the land. We return to the land psychically, beyond time and

175 As in Genesis 12:1-7: ‘Yahweh said to Abram, “Leave your country, your family and your father’s house, for the land I will show you”.....At the time the Canaanites were in the land. Yahweh appeared to Abram and said, “It is to your descendants that I will give this land”'.
space, and story it again, … you know, experience the story again. So we
don’t have to be in the land [emphasis added].

In saying ‘the land stories them’, Julia differentiated between Aboriginal and Jewish
ingress relationships to land. Like the Boyarins, Julia was not saying that the physical land
of Israel had no significance for her, indeed she said the fact that it is there is the
reason ‘we can return to it psychically’. However, she made the point that ‘we don’t
have to own it’ and she later explained that the purchasing of land, and then the
Land, was ‘our great undoing’. Julia, whose primary concerns did not lie in the
world of Realpolitik, wanted the ‘extraordinariness of Israel’ to be available to
Christians, Muslims and Jews because the myths of those three religious traditions
reside there.

The preceding sections have explored three discourses, invoked by Jews to explain
the imperative to support the Indigenous struggle: Jew as standard-bearer; justice
and powerlessness; and the historical connections of Jews to the land of
Israel/Palestine. These are all hallmarks of Jewish secular and religious discourses.
The discourses imply through reiteration that the basis of this support comes from
the notion of Jews as historical victims. Victim narratives in the contemporary world
of identity politics carry a certain moral and political weight, which can be used for
positive or negative causes. Yet Jews in Australia, as a group, also have considerable
agency, influence and even power in certain senses. Many Jews have called upon
‘strategic victimhood’ (Hamilton 2003: 95) and combined it with their professional
expertise and influence to support and assist Indigenous people – a fourth
discourse. These well-established discourses have structured the field in which
Jewish/Indigenous issues have been explored, in such a way as to avoid drawing
another parallel, between Aboriginal and Palestinian peoples. The latter are
however, silently present in narratives of suffering, justice and land rights.

Ron Castan – dealing with denial and silence
To round off my critique of the discursive engagement of Australian Jews with
Indigenous and mainstream political realities in this country during the 1990s, I
discuss a paper by the late Ron Castan (1993) entitled ‘Australian Catharsis – Coping with Native Title’ (further page numbers refer to this text). Presented in 1993 as the Annual B’Nai B’rith Oration, it was provoked by the ‘reaction, and over-reaction’ by Australian leaders to the High Court Mabo decision of the previous year. Ron Castan QC, who died in 1999, was lead counsel in the landmark Mabo land rights case. Indeed, Geoff Clark, then chairperson of the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Commission (ATSIC) stated that ‘it would be fair to say that if there had not been a Ron Castan, there would not have been a Mabo or Wik case in the High Court ‘ (in Editorial 2002a: 14). Castan’s significance lays in the groundbreaking legal work he did on behalf of Aboriginal people, as well as in his writings, which were important for other Jews working in this area.

Castan constructs a persuasive argument in his oration, commencing with what he considers to be a ‘perversity’ that given Australia’s ‘relaxed approach to [its] nationalism’, the nation has ‘chosen to rely so heavily on a battle fought in a war on the other side of the Globe, on behalf of an Empire which has not been in existence for 45 years’ (1), that is ANZAC Day, the annual commemoration of Australian soldiers who fell in Gallipoli, during World War 1.176 The point he makes, by way of explanation for this apparent perversity, ‘may be derived from the fact that so much of Australian history has been built on a denial of the true facts concerning the settlement of this country and the building up of the great nation of which we are all part’ (1).177

Castan’s oration develops its theme of ‘denialism’ through quoting from ABC Radio’s 1968 Boyer Lectures, entitled ‘After the Dreaming’ presented by the

176 Curthoys (2000: 33) understands the Gallipoli event as evidence of white Australia’s identification as an historical victim, with a liking for ‘stories of defeat’.

177 Other Australian scholars and public intellectuals have written on the culture of denial around Australia’s treatment of its Indigenous people, for example on the belief that Australians suffer from habitual amnesia Manne (2001); Stone (2001); on the ‘discomfort’ caused by the creators of a ‘new’ Australian history Attwood & Foster (2003: 11), who sought to write ‘Aboriginal history’ challenging myths of ‘British colonisation [of Australia] as a peaceful act of discovery and settlement’; Curthoys (2003: 187) on white victimhood and Australians’ rejection of the notion ‘that Australia has a racist or violent past’.
anthropologist and sociologist, Professor Bill Stanner.\textsuperscript{178} He discusses Stanner’s concept of ‘a cult of dis-remembering’ - of ‘dis-remembering the Aborigines for so long that we were hard put to keep them in mind even when we most wanted to do so’ and he acknowledges that this dis-remembering ‘found legal, structural and political expression within the very organs that go to make up the basis upon which Australia was governed’ (10). The oration also contains a number of examples which link the plight of Indigenous Australians to that of the Jews during the 1930s in Germany and to Jews worldwide:

The Anglican Archbishop of Perth has properly pointed out that the Western Australian Premier’s proposal to have a Referendum to take away native title is equivalent to the passage by the Nazis of laws which deprived the Jews of their property. The notion that it would be ‘democratic’ if a majority comprising 98.5\% of the population agreed to take away the rights of the minority constituting the other 1 1/2\% of the population, has a very strong resonance for those of us within the Jewish Community (4-5).

It is said that many [Australians with Aboriginal ancestry] are seeking to capitalise on what is somehow thought to be a new era of benefit, or beneficial treatment by reason of that identity. These criticisms are also ill-founded and naïve. As Jews we ourselves have endured the shame and pain of being identified as Jewish, in societies in which to be identified as a Jew was to be condemned to a pariah status. And as Jews in Australia we now refuse to deny our identity, or to permit the events of our history to be suppressed merely because it might embarrass those who have sought to destroy us (12).

Invoking ‘the events of our history’ permits Castan to make statements about Australia’s past which, as increasing evidence in Israel suggests, could also be applied to the history of the State of Israel. It enacts its own form of denialism with respect to injustices and injuries inflicted on the Palestinian people, probably the most fundamental of which concerns 1948 and whether or not Palestinians voluntarily ‘left’ their homeland.\textsuperscript{179} Regarding Australia, Castan writes:

\textsuperscript{178} Stanner was then the Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at the Institute of Advanced Studies at the Australian National University.

\textsuperscript{179} For well-known and respected Israeli historians who have produced critical assessments of Israel’s past, notably regarding the Palestinian exodus from their homeland during 1947 – 49, see Morris (2001: especially chapter 6), Pappe (2001), Segev (1998: especially Part One), Shlaim (2001: chapters 1 and 2).
We have engaged in an exercise of denial, of suppression of the truth, of sweeping away the realities of the foundation of this nation, which is breathtaking in its scale (5).

In relation to personal and national guilt and the question of the apology, Castan makes another resonant comparison with Nazism:

The issue is not whether one bears personal guilt. The issue is whether as a nation, we can hold up our heads and deal with the reality of our own history and our relationships with the Indigenous people who were dispossessed in the violent and brutal way that is recorded in official documents dealing with our history...It is a cute forensic trick, to argue about guilt. One can equally well say that the current generation of Germans and Austrians are not personally guilty for what happened during the Second World War .... We must live with our history, not deny it (11).

Castan’s commentary on Australia’s racist past and present is laudable, particularly his speaking out in support of Indigenous Australians at a time when ‘the cathartic experience of Mabo’ (14) was working its way through Australian society, often in less than pleasant ways. Given that his oration was addressed to a largely Jewish audience, it is unsurprising his impassioned associations were with his own people’s struggles and sufferings. Could another discourse be possible? One that positioned Jews differently in relation to Australian Indigenous histories and contemporary realities as well as incorporating Palestinians’ narratives within the frame, and avoided both Australian and Israeli denialisms of their pasts? Before turning to this subject, let us hear from a few Indigenous voices who have engaged with the politics under discussion in this chapter.

‘Perfect victims’ – Indigenous and Jewish leaders meet

Noel Pearson: Racism should be the problem of the racist, not our problem. My insight into this – I’ve really taken it from the Jewish example, because they are the most vigilant defenders against racism. They never let people forget about history, the truth of history. And they ensure that there is proper acknowledgement and people aren't allowed to be obscurantist about the truth. History is not a burden to them either, you know? They're striving for the future, they're engaging in the future (interview on 'Australian Story', ABC Television Grasswill 2002: on-line).

The Jewish Australian engagement with Aboriginal causes has been sustained by reciprocity on the part of some Aboriginal leaders, for example Noel Pearson, Black
Australian lawyer and Indigenous leader from Cape York, whose interview is quoted above. Those Indigenous leaders who engage with the Jewish community and/or organisations, have done so largely out of admiration and, in Pearson’s case, an understanding that Jews have not only been recognised for their past suffering but also have learnt to engage with the future, without forgetting, or letting others forget ‘the truth of history’, particularly the Holocaust.

Other Indigenous leaders have spoken at Jewish community forums and meetings and articulated a similar discursive strategy to that reflected by some of the Jewish speakers and writers discussed earlier. Aiden Ridgeway, another Indigenous leader, speaking at Moriah College (a Jewish day school in Sydney), said: ‘Aborigines, like Jews, have been exiles and refugees and have been dispossessed’. The College was celebrating Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day) where students narrated the story of the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, after the Six-Day War. The article in which Ridgeway was quoted also noted erroneously that ‘Indigenous Australians were given the vote the same year’ (Labi 1998: 27). This juxtaposition of two, seemingly unrelated events, based on two ‘victims of history’ having cause for celebration, provided another moment for this constructed relationship to be re-iterated and re-presented.

Aiden Ridgway, by late 2000 a Senator in the Australian parliament, gave the keynote address to the Annual Young Business Forum Dinner of the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce. As reported in the AJN (Bialoguski 2000a: 10), Ridgeway pointed to the:

many parallels between the Jewish people in Israel and the Aborigines in relation to Australia, stemming from the concept of memory – that is, remembering things in relation to traditional values and believing the things that give a sense of belonging and identity and spiritual essence. It gives you a sense of being part of something and of the relationship between land and people.

180 In fact, it was in 1962 that the Commonwealth Electoral Act was amended to give the franchise to all Indigenous people, at a federal level. The 1967 Commonwealth referendum resulted in the Commonwealth Government being able to legislate on Aborigines; Aborigines being counted in the census and being granted citizenship.
The ‘concept of memory’, politics and historiography holds a key to the relationship between some Indigenous Australian leaders and members of the organised Jewish community. One could say this is somewhat expedient, both using it to support their own political positions. Jacqueline Rose (1996: 52) asks: ‘[n]o less than personal memory, political memory is highly selective and tendentious. How far back, through how many generations, should we go?’ Here, Rose critiques Edward Said’s *The question of Palestine* (1992: 119) in which he writes of the links between Palestinians and South African Blacks, and ‘the difference between white settlers in South Africa and Jews fleeing European antisemitism’ (ibid.). Yet, when Said compares the ‘wounds and scars’ of the victims of Africa and Palestine (ibid.), Jews are, according to Rose’s analysis, dropped from the shared suffering of the other two. ‘As if’ writes Rose ‘– as I read the omission – the Jews fleeing European anti-Semitism to Israel cease, with the acquisition of national identity, to be “wounded and scarred”. As if there was only so much suffering to go around. …. One link recognised, another immediately put back beyond memory, pushed underground’ (Rose, J. 1996: 52). For discourses can try and deal with contradictions by ignoring the alternative position.

Finally, what evidence is there that Indigenous writers or leaders have looked to ‘the Palestinian plight as their more appropriate metaphor’ (Tatz 2004: 175)? It is not surprising that within the Jewish media, with a few exceptions, there is little evidence of this, an exception being a 1993 interview with Gary Foley, long-time, outspoken Indigenous activist, in which Foley expressed sadness and perplexity that on those occasions when ‘I have promoted [the] proposition that the Palestinians ought to have a voice in the Australian community to balance things a bit, I’ve been accused of being anti-Semitic’. He recalled that in the early 1970s, ‘some Aboriginal people started to draw similarities between the situation of the Palestinians [and themselves] … there was a reaction by significant people within the Jewish community’ (in Shtargot 1993: 11). At the same time Foley could acknowledge the ‘sufferings of the Jewish people’, as a Koori person ‘I could relate to that’. In other words, Foley was able to contain both people’s sufferings, historical and present-time. For Foley, recognising ‘the Palestinian plight’ did not negate past
Jewish persecution.\textsuperscript{181} It is unlikely however, that he would be invited to a mainstream Jewish community event.

**Conclusion – Living with our history, differently**

Throughout this chapter, I have alluded to the silencing effect of the Jewish-Aboriginal narrative on the Palestinian one. Within the discursive parameters of speaking within the Jewish community, it is difficult to articulate publicly any uncertainty about the question of the land in Israel/Palestine; as the notion of it contains opposing images of blooming deserts and land cultivation on the one hand, and destruction of Palestinian villages after 1948 on the other. Perhaps these paradoxes contain the seeds for why Palestinians do not feature in the very Australian story about the (mal)treatment of its Indigenous people, a story that is in part based on the parallels Jews themselves make between their identification with Aboriginal suffering and shared loss of the land, that is, the land of *Eretz Israel*.

Many Zionists though, would deny that any parallels should be drawn between Palestinian stories of dispossession and occupation and those of Indigenous Australians. I have noted at the head of this chapter, Joseph Gutnick’s disclaimer that any comparison is viable. In a newspaper interview given in 1999, when asked ‘how many Palestinians there were in Israel, [he] replied: “Too many” ’ (Rabinovich 1999: 24). Writing at the commencement of the Oslo Peace Accord period (1993), Peter Wertheim (1994: 13) provides four reasons why Palestinians are far from the ‘perfect victims’ that Aborigines are. These reasons are firstly, that Palestinians had the opportunity of having their own state, through the United Nations partition resolution in 1947 which they rejected, whereas Aborigines have never had a comparable opportunity. Secondly, Wertheim contends that ‘there has never been any genocide or attempted genocide against the Palestinian people as there has been against Australian Aborigines’. Nor, according to Wertheim, has Israel prevented the Palestinians from following their religious beliefs or traditions. His third reason concerns the Arab world’s historically intransigent attitude towards Israel and its

\textsuperscript{181} See additionally Foley’s comparative essay on Australian dispossession of Aborigines and the Holocaust (Foley 1997: on-line).
refusal to accept the Israeli state; his view being that antisemitism in the Arab world constitutes ‘a very virulent form of racism’ (ibid.: 14). Wertheim’s final point involves the two ‘settlers’ or ‘colonisers’ in this argument, namely the Zionists/Jews and the British. The latter had no connection to Australia prior to 1788, in contrast to the Jewish relationship to the land of Palestine which:

cannot simply be ignored or set aside as if it means nothing. It is no mere matter of sentimentality, but a powerful force which has moved millions of Jewish men and women to action over the last hundred years or more. To ignore or discount that historical connection is to falsify history (ibid.: 14).

While Wertheim makes some valid points here, that the British and Jewish connections to the respective territories are not comparable, and that Arab countries have not welcomed a Jewish state in their midst, his discourse produces a complete disavowal of the Palestinian point of view, and the claim that they too may have a valid right to the land. Wertheim is one of many proposing a view of Israeli history which consistently presents Jews as the victims in the battle with the Palestinians and the Arab world generally. The discourses I have highlighted in this chapter also produce an ‘implicit censorship’ (Butler 1997: 130) imposed upon the Palestinian narrative to avert it being juxtaposed with the Jewish one. As I discussed in the Introduction, the vexed question of comparing two people’s claims and needs for justice was in one sense resolved when Israel was established as a state for the Jews. In another sense, however, the question of justice and the equivalence of Israeli/Jewish and Palestinian/Arab claims remain disputed and unresolved.

Since no discursive regime is totally enclosing, there are always ‘break outs’, speech which transgresses and ‘subjects who speak at the border of the speakable’. These subjects, Butler (1997: 139) contends, ‘take the risk of redrawing the distinction between what is and is not speakable, the risk of being cast out into the unspeakable’. In the context of the argument in this chapter, let us examine two instances of ‘border speech’, both taken from within the mainstream of the Jewish media. The first concerns the demise in 1999 of the acting editor and journalist of the Australian Jewish News (Melbourne edition), David Bernstein. The circumstances
leading to his resignation from the position of acting editor are too complicated to enter into here (see Baker 1999, for full account). However there were two discursive events that appeared to be pivotal to his resignation. The first concerned a cartoon that was published in the 9 April edition, comparing the then Kosovo crisis with the situation in the Middle East in 1948. The text of Kron’s cartoon, as usual containing two characters who like to contradict or challenge each other, read: ‘What’s happening in Kosovo is as bad as the Holocaust’. ‘No’, counters the other Jew, ‘it’s more like what happened to the Palestinians in 1948’ (in Baker 1999: 43). The cartoon was approved by Bernstein, although he had censored an earlier version where the second character speaks in the active, rather than the passive voice, saying, ‘No, it’s like what the Israelis did to the Palestinians’ – a revealing piece of grammar and politics. Bernstein, who himself was later censored, also engages in his own silencing of one version of a cartoon he correctly thought would be too provocative for the paper’s publisher and its readership.

The paper did receive a number of letters outraged at the implications of the published cartoon. More significantly, the publishers withdrew Bernstein’s weekly column Davkah182, because he published the ‘offensive’ cartoon. In its place was a blank space, a literal erasure of the written word. The column, entitled ‘A grey arm-band’183 was available on the internet and was included in the Baker article quoted from above. Its non-publication was the immediate reason for Bernstein’s resignation. His censored article draws on Ron Castan to articulate connections similar to those this chapter has been suggesting:

Would that history were so simple, clear-cut and one dimensional, Australia’s as well as Israel’s. But it patently is not, and the outcry that has greeted Kron’s cartoon in last week’s AJN for daring to suggest otherwise is a symptom of the misapprehension that it is.

Israel’s national myth has been challenged in recent years, just as Australia’s has, by several Israeli historians, none of them any more

182 The Yiddish davkanik has a job to ‘irritate, prod, and exasperate through obstinacy combined with chutzpah’ (Baker 1999: 44).
183 The title refers to the debate between Australian historians and politicians over how our history should be portrayed. For an account of the history wars in Australia, see Macintyre and Clark (2004).
'masochistic' or 'self-hating' than Ron Castan and many other like-minded Australians (in Baker 1999: 47).

Bernstein is at the border of the 'unspeakable', placed there partly through his own agency and partly through the 'non-legal regulatory domain' of those who monitor the norms within the 'Jewish community'. In one sense his views were silenced and yet, as both Butler (1997) and Brown (1998: 321) have argued, since speech and silence are not really opposites, but rather constitutive of one another, other possibilities emerge from the silenced or censored. What repercussions might there be for both Jews and non-Indigenous Australians who take the step of acknowledging the effects the pasts of their nations have had on Aborigines and Palestinians?

One other surprising instance of this acknowledgement comes from another editorial in the AJN (Sydney). Editorials from this newspaper have featured heavily in this research. They are informative, provide a thermometer-like check on the editors’ perceptions of the temperature of its readership and occasionally, they are discursively risk-taking. Two sentences, in the middle of an editorial to mark Australia Day, January 2003, struck me for their boldness in breaking the implicit silence I have been critically discussing. It said, in relation to reiteration of the strong ties between the Jewish and Aboriginal communities:

> While there are clear and distinct differences, Australia Day is in many ways to the Aboriginals what Yom Ha'atzmaut [Israel Independence Day] is to the Palestinians. For both peoples, our celebration is a reminder of their dispossession (Editorial 2003: 14, emphasis added).

Here was an extraordinary recognition that Israel’s successes have been at great and enduring cost to another people, as Australia’s colonisation has been. In the last sentence, with the use of the word ‘our’, Jews are positioned as white Australians and implicitly, as dispossessors of Palestinians. Jews celebrate two events which are also occasions for Aborigines and Palestinians to mourn. In the epilogue to this work, as well as summing up, I contemplate the effects such a recognition could have on the extremely loyal diasporic Jewish community in Australia.
Epilogue: ‘The page must be turned’

To the late Lea Loève, friend and comrade, born in Cairo in 1926 and died in Sydney on 11 September 2001.

The French Jewish historian Ilan Halevi (1987: 252) concludes his fine work on a history of the Jews with the reflection: ‘There must be a way out of this sad history. A way of neither remaining prisoners of its ancient parameters, nor remaining entranced by the turn of phrases, the echo of visions, the texture of the paper. The page must be turned’. To acknowledge the tragic history of many Jews but not remain trapped by it, or in it, has been an aim of my work. In essence, this research attempts to turn the page, arguing the reasons why, in my view and that of other ‘dissenting’ Jews, a new leaf in Jewish history and politics is necessary. In the final part of the epilogue, I will sketch some ideas on what the turned page might reveal for a diasporic community like Australia’s Jewry.

One fundamental message I have received as a result of researching this subject concerns the powerful nexus between the existence of Israel and Jewish survival for Australian and other diasporic Jewry. Although my project has not focussed explicitly on the Holocaust, it has suggested that its traumatic effects lie strongly in the present. It is from the aftermath of the Holocaust – the most profound of all the many instances of antisemitism that the paradox lies, which has formed the argument in this work. The paradox, or irony, as the communist Jewish writer Ronald Aronson (1980: 67) names it, is this: ‘[W]hat was survival for the decimated Jews meant dispossession for the Palestinian Arabs. National liberation for one people meant homelessness for another. The Holocaust produced an impulse to create a Jewish state at all costs and without regard to whoever had to pay the costs as long as they were not Jews’. Though as noted in my Introduction, the Holocaust had the effect of strengthening a pre-existent minority Jewish ‘impulse to create a Jewish state’. In the aftermath of that terrible war, the Western powers and the Soviet Union eventually acquiesced to a Jewish state in Palestine – for no European nation or the United States wanted the remnant of Jews en masse, living in their midst, a further ironic element in this tragic situation.
My purpose in exposing this paradox was to consider the possibilities for a different relationship between past and present for Jews; one that would allow them/us simultaneously within the same discursive construct, to remember our own sufferings and to recognise and take some responsibility for the ongoing injustices towards the Palestinians. My research has returned again and again to the question of Jewish victimhood and, more generally, its immanence within identity politics. I have provided numerous examples of how Zionist discursive practices operate within a victim frame. The contradiction embedded in the David and Goliath metaphor whereby Israel purports to be David while it acts as Goliath, has been turned on its head to dizzying effect. In not acknowledging Israel’s vulnerability and only focusing on its strength, and Palestinians’ pain, critics have been labelled antisemitic and in effect, the Jewish victim takes centre stage again. It is no wonder that faced with this rhetorical quagmire, many of my interview subjects expressed confusion and distress about how to understand the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Here I deliberately interchange ‘Israeli’ and ‘Jew’. This slippage in language, whereby many potential antisemites do use the word ‘Jew’ when they mean ‘Israeli state’, is unfortunate. Perhaps they do so because they dislike Jews. But perhaps they recognise the umbilical connection between the diaspora and the Jewish homeland that Zionist discourse perpetuates. Some Jewish critics of Israel take great pains to distinguish between the two. Yet, we speak as Jews because we say that Israel speaks for, exists for, all Jews. At the same time, we (dissenting Jews) say ‘Israel does not act in our name’. Perhaps, as post-Zionists and other Israelis suggest, we need further separation between Israel and Jews around the diaspora.

What has my research revealed about the conditions for Zionism’s discursive dominance in Australia? The concept underlying the analysis is based on the Foucauldian premise that discourses are supported by a range of institutional practices which underpin the production of truth, such as pedagogy and universities, social structures and institutions ‘that limit and constrict the free flow of discourse, that both reinforce and renew it, and as such they need to take their rightful places within a thorough analysis of the power of discursive practices’ (Hook 2001: 524). Discourse analysis extends beyond a textual reading to examine
the ‘relations of power’ (Foucault 1980: 114) within which the text resides. I take ‘power’ to incorporate both material and symbolic forms. The process of analysis was iterative and inductive and resulted in conclusions regarding truth-making within discourse, which I discuss below:

**Community is discourse-confining and confirming**

In Chapter Two I provided a schema of community, applicable to the Jewish community and to many others. It was designed to demonstrate the levels of involvement a Jewish subject can have with her community. The closer she is to the ‘core’, the more likely she is to accept those precepts, values and norms which are essential to communal and discursive functioning. I have identified Zionism as one of the key beliefs necessary for acceptance as a member of the Jewish community in Australia, and one of the most controversial to debate publicly. Simultaneously, through examples from my interviewees, I have demonstrated that even those Jews who situate themselves within the inner circles of the community may have conflictual and contradictory thoughts about Zionism and Israel. Nevertheless, these thoughts do not as a rule find their way into the diasporic public sphere, although they may appear in the *Australian Jewish News*.

To underscore this point, I note the impassioned debate which occurred in Sydney in early 2000 over the community’s acceptance of gay and lesbian Jews, when confronted with their desire to appear in the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras as Jews, under the banner ‘the stars of David come out’. The *Australian Jewish News* was reproached by a minority section of the mainly Orthodox, community, for its public support of lesbian and gay Jews. Vic Alhadeff, then the newspaper’s editor, took a position that:

> our [the AJN’s] task is to reflect, and cater for, the *entire spectrum* of the Jewish community. That means every Jewish individual – Orthodox, Reform, republican, monarchist, heterosexual, homosexual, left-handed, right-handed. And that means covering Jewish news as it pertains to, and reflects the entire Jewish community (Alhadeff 2000: 3, added emphasis).
The omission of ‘anti-Zionist’ or even ‘non-Zionist’ or ‘post-Zionist’ ‘Jewish individuals’ from Alhadeff’s list was I believe, not accidental. These terms do not fit within the levels of the circle that signify, in the mind of Alhadeff and many others, ‘the entire Jewish community’. In my analysis, the Australian Zionist experience is both similar to, and different from, other Jewish diasporas. The particular strength of ‘Zionistic’ – a term many of my interviewees used – discourse in Australia derives from a set of contingent and context-specific material conditions of possibility, which have ensured its hegemony. These are mostly historically-based but their effects are consonant in the present:

- During the 1920s and 1930s, the small size of the Jewish population in Australia, the fears of assimilation and its distance from the major centres of Judaism partially accounted for strongly-articulated Zionist loyalties which brought ‘Australian Jewry into the mainstream of global Jewish life’ (Rutland 1997: 295) (Chapter Three).
- The high proportion of Holocaust survivors and their descendants in part explains the firm adherence to Israel as the ‘safety-net’, and the equation of Israel’s survival and Jewish survival (Chapters Four and Six).
- A highly structured leadership and roof bodies were established when European Jewry was in crisis and have effectively assumed the mantle for representing Jews/Jewish community - the terms become synonymous. This synonymy is part of a problematic which some of my interviewees thought necessary to disassemble (Chapter Two).
- After the establishment of Israel, those few remaining who had concerns about its formation were conclusively defeated, as the story is told. They had no organisational support and were relegated to the communal margins (Chapters Three and Four). The Bund in Melbourne is an example of a group which began in Europe with an anti-Zionist ideology but, in the words of its adherents, ‘moved with the times’. It would not call itself anti-Zionist today. Yet, its place within the Melbourne Jewish community reveals a struggle for acceptance because of its past ideological position (Chapter Two).
With respect to Australia’s colonial history, there was not significant evidence that Jews in Australia identified with Zionist pioneers on the basis of a shared history of white settlement/colonisation. However, the attempt to set up a Jewish colony in the Kimberleys is evidence that some Jews, at least, thought of that part of Australia as ‘a land without people….’ That is, in the 1930s ‘Jewish settlers saw the settlement of an apparently empty Australia – the Aboriginal peoples are nowhere in sight – in the same terms as the settling of Palestine’ (Dock 2001: 172) (Chapter Three). Just over fifty years later, within the discourse that the politics of identity demands, Jews altruistically supported Indigenous Australians, the victims of the Australian colonial venture. Simultaneously, as I argued in Chapter Seven, the effect of this alliance is to remind Jews and others, of our history of persecution; for is this not the basis on which Jewish subjects most profoundly identify? Yet, I have also suggested that the idea of Jewish victimhood is unsettled by the identification as /with white Australians.

Discursive dominance requires institutional and individual reiteration

I have written about the role played by the roof bodies in Zionism’s enduring acceptance in Australia. As Nikolas Rose (1996: 132) writes in his genealogy of subjectification: ‘Who is accorded or claims the capacity to speak truthfully about humans, their nature and their problems, and what characterises the truths about persons that are accorded such authority?’ The history of Jewish communal politics in Australia contains many instances of conflict over who (which person) or what (which organisation) can represent and ‘speak truthfully’ about Jewish and Zionist interests. Like a family, the parents, or roof bodies, have admonished those Jews who dared to air perceived ‘dirty laundry’ through the mainstream media, outside the Jewish family. When it was announced that the Palestinian leader and peace advocate Hanan Ashrawi was to be awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in November 2003 a furore erupted within a number of key Jewish organizations who disapproved strongly of Ashrawi receiving the prize. The controversy spilled over into the mainstream media. One of the consequences of the ‘Ashrawi Affair’, as it became known, was the perception of Jewish over-control concerning what was
spoken about, and by whom. This can back-fire, can have deleterious and unanticipated consequences, such as accusations of the ‘heavy-handed Jewish/Zionist lobby’ attempting to apply undue influence over politicians (see Levey, G.B. & Mendes 2004; Lowenstein 2004).

The Jewish media have also been significant in the collective subjectification of Zionist subjects in Australia. In Chapter Three I provided examples of the diversity of texts published during the period when Zionism was unsettled and there were many disagreements between newcomers and the ‘old guard’ about how to be Jewish in this country and whether a Jewish state was important to fight for. Since the 1950s, the publications have decreased. Now there is one weekly community newspaper serving the entire very literate Jewish population in Australia (not including small interest-specific periodicals). The AJN endeavours to cover issues and take editorial positions that at times are provocative, sometimes reassuring and identity-confirming, and at other times still, such as during the Maccabi Games bridge collapse fallout (Chapter Six), it presents moderate and conciliatory views. Recent data from the Sydney and Melbourne editors of the AJN reveal that approximately half of the letters to the editor concern Israel (Ben-Moshe 2004: 130), indicating the importance of Israel to the newspaper’s constituency. Vic Alhadeff’s comment quoted earlier that the AJN aims to represent the ‘entire community’ suggests that there are unspoken borders around the ‘community’ and that this paper meets the needs of those Jews who identify with that community.

Another principal condition for discursive dominance relates to how history ‘bear[s] on the present’ (Brown 2001: 140). Wendy Brown laments ‘the failure of conventional historiographies to provide useful maps for developing historically conscious political orientation in the present’ (ibid.: 141). I would argue that the Jewish Australian ‘conventional historiographies’ have developed a present-day ‘historically conscious political orientation’ among Australian Jews. They have achieved this through an adherence to what Brown calls ‘brute facticity’ (ibid.: 140); they hold positivist accounts of history which however, are unable to challenge ‘the complex political problem[s] of the relation between past and present, and of both to
the future’ (ibid.: 141; original emphasis). A significant example is the interrelationship between the establishment of Israel, its attendant displacement of hundred of thousands of Palestinians after 1948, the second intifada and the increase in antisemitism around the world in the last few years (Chapter Five). The historical accounts of the Jewish presence in Australia, including the development of Zionism, were similar in approach, methodology and (unstated) political orientation, and do not deal with such complex and contentious political problems as the interconnections just outlined. There were no significant areas of disagreement, no history wars among Australian Jewish historians, unlike among their counterparts in Israel in the last two decades and among Australian historians during the last decade (Macintyre 2004). Most Jewish Australian scholars reveal no ambivalences in arguing the case for Israel, once that state was established. They write from within the community and have become the legitimisers of Australian Jewish historical discourse. 

**Discursive dominance and dissonance**

The interview material has assumed more prominence than I had originally anticipated. In part this is because so many interviews were insightful and provided the kinds of paradoxical and provocative views I had hoped for. From my interview subjects, we have heard a diversity of views about how they situated Jewishness in their lives. They provided indications of some of the ways it is possible to ‘speak in Jewish’ in today’s Australia. They came from the left and the right of the political spectrum, some were strongly diasporist, and/or were protective of both Israel’s ‘reality’ as well as what it symbolises for Jews. Some confirmed the dominance of the Zionist position, others wrestled with it. Many Jews felt bewildered, ambivalent and angry because of Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories, and degradation of Palestinians. One cannot underestimate the effects of the power of the dominant discourse on individual Jewish subjects: psychic dissonance, ambivalence, pain, denial, silence. There were two related reasons for the unsettling individuals experienced. The first was the distress derived from Israel, the Jewish state, conducting itself in ways that induced shame, as well as the effects of the on-going conflict on Israelis. The second reason, less powerfully felt, was the impact of the
occupation on the Palestinians. At the same time, there were similarities in the interviewees’ articulation of a visceral fear for Israel’s security and survival, which seemed to be more disturbing than the fear of antisemitism rising in Australia. This fear brings us back to the Holocaust and to Zionist discourse which, Palestinian violence not discounted, still accentuates Israel as a victim with little power, despite its extensive weaponry and aid from the United States.

Another theme emerging from the research was the oscillating tendencies between universalism and particularism, relevant to any study of identity politics in action, and specific to Jewish law, traditions and how and a collectivity remembers after centuries of persecution. Julia, one of my interviewees, expressed the complexity of the experience of being a minority which has become accustomed to the possibility of antisemitism or racism, of ‘looking over one’s shoulder’. She said:

I’m sure Aborigines look over their shoulders too. I’m sure the Arabs are looking over their shoulders … it’s not just a Jewish experience. But we like to claim it as such, because we’re so used to, you know, looking out for it...

Julia continued by discussing the Jewish community’s response to the issue of refugees and asylum seekers, which has dominated the Australian political agenda for the past decade or so. She felt that Jewish racism towards the predominantly Moslem asylum seekers prevented Jews from being as involved in their defence, as perhaps they ought to have been. She then speculated: ‘… if we considered our own racism, if we considered our own, it would be more likely that we’d stop looking over our shoulder. I think they’re connected’. And in a later part of the interview, with regard to Palestinians, Julia noted: ‘…. in a universal sense, because I think that in the end, we have to treat human beings like human beings. Especially us. I wouldn’t say “especially us” publicly, because I think people are so sick of Jews saying “especially us”, you know’.

I have included these incisive comments of Julia’s here because they encapsulated a number of the dilemmas in this research. ‘Looking over one’s shoulder’ to check if others are inflicting harm on us, is an understandable and common sense response
of all minorities accustomed to discrimination. Less common is the inclination to look in the other direction to check the harm one might be doing to others. Julia briefly reflected upon this and its connection with the heightened sensitivity towards antisemitism. I was reminded of Nietzsche’s writings on slave morality and ressentiment: ‘this need to direct one’s view outward instead of back to oneself’ (1969: 36 - 37, original emphasis), to blame others in the first instance. Julia was aware of this condition and of the suspicion that can come from the Jewish double-edged insistence that ‘we’, ‘especially us’, ought to understand and act on behalf of others’ sufferings (Chapters One and Seven). It is double-edged because on the one hand it is said that the particularist suffering of Jews should lead us to a morality based on a universal desire for all human beings to be able to live decently. On the other hand, the cry of the particularist ‘especially us’, can induce ressentiment in others, who are ‘sick’ of Jews claiming a special place for themselves because of their history of suffering. Yet, as demonstrated in Chapter Seven, Aboriginal leaders also drew strength and encouragement from the particular Jewish experience, for it indicates the capacity to survive, even or especially, in hard times.

And now to Lea, 184 whom I first met in January 1991 when we established Women in Black in Sydney (see Prologue). Lea’s work and negotiations with the Jewish community in Sydney provide an example of the complexities inherent in Jewish identity today, the limits of communal acceptance and belonging and the unifying force of discourse. Lea’s narrative is by no means typical of the picture I have painted of the Zionist, Ashkenazi-dominated community in this country. Her distinctiveness provides a bridge connecting present realities with future possibilities for Jews in Australia and elsewhere. Lea was a woman who understood her politics of identity to extend to supporting many ‘others’, as well as Jews. She was the converse of the ‘non-universalistic’ Jew admired by William Rubinstein (Chapters Two and Four). In her forty-four years in Australia, she was active in a range of causes concerned with the rights and needs of migrant women in areas of health, employment and industrial relations. However, it was her actions and

184 Note that this is not the Lea who appears earlier as one of my interviewees. My thanks to Lea’s son, Roland, for her private papers about this episode, sent to me after her death.
identity as a Jew that are of relevance here. Born in Egypt, Lea identified strongly as an Arab and as a secular Jew. She had an abiding love for her Arabic heritage as well as for Jewish traditions and did not see the two in conflict, despite her family having to leave Egypt in 1958 because of the Suez War in 1956, a growing Egyptian nationalism and concomitant scapegoating of non-Moslems, and despite discourse which portrays the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as emanating from a long-standing enmity between Jews and Arabs.

Throughout her life in Australia Lea made many attempts at involvement with the ‘mainstream’ of the Jewish community. However, her Mizrahi (Middle Eastern Jewish) background placed her in a minority amongst the Australian Jewish community and more significantly, her known activism in Women in Black and as a founding member of the Sydney Jewish Left caused her difficulties (neither group exists any longer). In 1998, Lea decided to apply to join the Anti-Defamation Commission (ADC) of B’nai B’rith.185 Her reasons for wanting to join the ADC were quite simply that she ‘wished to contribute … with my experience in the areas of racism, discrimination and antisemitism for the past 25 years of my life in Australia’ (Loève 1999). However her request for membership was declined with no formal reasons given.

Of course, any organisation has the right to decide on its membership. Nonetheless, B’nai B’rith’s reasons articulated by its then president, Henry Krug, shed more profound light on the politics of community belonging, than that of one person’s rejection from an organisation. According to Krug, Lea:

‘openly sided with the perceived enemy’ and made statements that were ‘almost perceived to be treacherous. It’s not that Israel can’t do anything wrong. I also criticise Israel, but I don’t go around saying it occupies Arab lands when we have five percent of the real estate and they have 95

185 ‘Through its membership base and network of volunteer supporters, B’nai B’rith is involved in a wide range of activities in the areas of human rights and anti-discrimination, promoting inter-ethnic and inter-religious understanding, social justice, community welfare, youth and young adults, senior citizens’ housing, education and health, and support for the State of Israel. Far from concerning ourselves only with the Jewish community, **most of these projects reach out into the wider world for the benefit of all Australians and New Zealanders** (Welcome to B’nai B’rith Australia/New Zealand 2005: on-line, emphasis added).
percent. That’s outrageous. I cannot understand any Jewish person siding with people who blow up buses’.

‘A person with such strong political views who joins our organization is likely, in a moment of anger, to make statements which people will perceive to be B’nai B’rith policy. With a touchy subject like Israel, we can’t take that risk. Perhaps if she re-applies in five years’ time, the unit would accept her. Everything changes’ (quoted in Sebban 1999: 7).

Perhaps had Lea applied to join in 2005, she would have been accepted, perhaps not. This research has critiqued the discourse within which one can speak of ‘siding with the perceived enemy’, as having views one could name ‘treacherous’, which by implication, are dangerous to attend to. Despite B’nai B’rith’s long history of human rights and anti-discrimination activities, the organisation at that time did not feel able to take the risk of accepting someone like Lea, a woman also passionately committed to human rights, including those of the Palestinians. The risk of hearing from those whose diasporic consciousness and political analysis takes them to a different understanding of this enduring and troubled conflict, was too great for Australian Jews whose loyalties lie unambiguously with Israel’s well-being and security.

Towards a post-Zionist diaspora

There are certainly no easy solutions to the dilemmas I have wrestled with throughout this work. Ultimately, the fate of Israel and its relationship with the Palestinians does not rest with diaspora Jewry. Nevertheless, 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. The relationship between Israel and the diaspora has never been conclusively settled. Fundamentally, although Jewish leaders in Australia and elsewhere have nurtured and encouraged the bond between diaspora and homeland, the majority of Jews in the West have not been inclined voluntarily to make aliyah, even in the early post-war years when many European Jews were homeless and stateless. And now, many Israelis deny the
necessity for this financial/emotional connection (Chapter Six). At a recent forum I attended, Neil Lazarus, an Israeli Zionist, spoke of Israel as the child who had grown up. According to Lazarus, the diaspora, the parent, was reluctant to loosen the strings and allow the child to go its own way. By this he meant that the diaspora could support Israel, but did not have the right to criticise its governments. His comments brought howls of protest from the audience who were affronted by Lazarus’s blasé attitude to their sincere concern and love for Israel. One man responded by describing the relationship instead as a marriage, in which the two parties have to make compromises. This is a more equal imaginary, but both metaphors signify intimacy.

Post-Zionist discourse is primarily about challenging historical and contemporary Zionist mythologies in Israel. Many see it as a movement towards Israel becoming a state for all its citizens, Jews and non-Jews alike. What would a post-Zionist diaspora entail? In what senses is it not a contradictory concept? Should one try to persuade those many Jews who have a sincerely-held love for Israel, to desist, on the grounds that Israel oppresses another people? For how much longer will the Holocaust be used to rationalise this oppression? If Israel ceased to be a focal point for young Jews in Australia, would this increase the likelihood of assimilation and decrease Jewish continuity? What effects would Israel’s reconciliation with its Arab neighbours have on the unifying force of Zionism in a loyal diasporic community, such as Australian Jewry? How might a post-Zionist outlook position Jews differently within Australian multiculturalism? And finally, how might this outlook challenge Jewish identity embedded within a victim narrative?

These questions synthesise the paradoxes I have examined in this research: between loyalty towards Israel and recognition of its much-criticised behaviour towards Palestinians; between the strength and resources of the Jewish community in Australia and the reckoning with the ‘fantasy echo’ of past antisemitism, still minimally present today; and between the propensity of any group to protect its

186 ‘Support for Israel – the need for consensus or the right to dissent’, organised by the Hebrew Free University, Hakoah Club, Sydney, 11 September 2005.
own interests and the urge to take care of others – *tikkun olam* or repair of the world. Many promote the Australian Jewish community as an exemplary ‘ethnic group’, which has integrated successfully into this country while maintaining its traditions, culture and a strong sense of identity. So, what needs to change?

Post-Zionism in the diaspora would mean less focus on Israel as the ‘unavoidable bifurcation between diaspora Jews and Israelis’ (Nimni 2003: 144) becomes more pronounced. The troubling nexus between victim identity discourses and Israel might become less dominant. From the academic to the popular, more Jewish writers are expressing discomfort with the ‘identity of victim’, shedding of which means, in the words of Naomi Klein (20 January 2004: on-line), that ‘you have to face your people’s capacity for being oppressors as well’. In an Australian context, I have written of the silencing and denial of that construction. Many Australian Jews have taken to heart what ‘collective responsibility’ might mean for Australia’s dark past in relation to Indigenous people (see Rossiter 2002 on what it means for Australians to assume a collective responsibility for its past). What would it mean for Jews in this country to publicly acknowledge the effects of Israel’s statehood on the Palestinians, in view of their identification as being part of white Australia?

It would mean having a less censorious and hostile attitude to those who do recognise shameful aspects of Israel’s past and publicly support Palestinian rights. It would mean encouraging dialogue on these difficult subjects between Jews and Arabs living here. It would mean listening to painful, even antisemitic utterances, while challenging them. Relatedly, it would include more awareness that a critique of the Israeli state is not identical to antisemitism. And, it would mean viewing the conflict from a different perspective, a shift in frame. It could mean expressing solidarity with Palestinians as well as Indigenous Australians. It would be deeply unsettling but ultimately, it could be the most productive, life-affirming, non-victimising discursive practice since Zionism first presented itself to Jews just over one hundred years ago, as a fanciful, ideational dream.
Appendices

Appendix A-1: The Interviews

I conducted twenty-five one-hour interviews with Jews in Sydney and Melbourne, between May and October 2002. They were selected by means of the snow-balling recruitment method, whereby the researcher uses ‘group of informants with whom [she] has made initial contact and ask[s] them to put [her] in touch with people in their networks … [and so on] as long as they fit the criteria for the research project’ (Minichiello et al. 1995: 161). This proved to be an effective way to reach people whose basic ‘qualification’ for the interview was that they had an interest in Israel and its significance for Jewish people. My concern was that the selection be diverse in age, gender and most importantly, reflected a variety of opinions and feelings about Israel and related topics. There were roughly equal numbers of men and women in the sample, similar numbers were born overseas and in Australia; 7 were in their 20s, 2 in their 30s, 5 in their 40s, 4 in their 50s, 2 in their 60s, 3 in their 70s and 2 in their 80s. More than half lived in Sydney. An express motivation for interviewing people from Melbourne was to talk to Bundists, and their descendants, who came mainly from Poland. The Bund arose at the same historical moment as Zionism, in Eastern Europe but held anti-Zionist views about the formation of a Jewish state (Chapter Two).

All respondents came from Ashkenazi (European Jewish) backgrounds and most were tertiary-educated.187 I began my search for potential respondents hoping to interview people from other backgrounds, Sephardi (Jews from Spain) or Mizrahi (Jews from the Middle East and North Africa). Despite strenuous efforts on my part, this proved a difficult task, partly because they comprise a small minority of each community in Sydney and Melbourne (see Gale, N. 1990 on Sephardi immigration to Australia). Finally I decided that since Zionism was quintessentially a European project, although effecting non-Ashkenazi Jews as well, interviewing those from

187 For an analysis of Jewish demography from the 2001 Australian Census, including socio-economic and education data, see Goldlust (2004).
European backgrounds was appropriate to my aims. Indeed, conducting research on Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews in Australia and their views about Israel, would make a fascinating future project.

Most of the interviews were conducted and taped in the homes of the interviewees, in a fairly relaxed manner, through semi-structured questioning. Each interviewee was sent a copy of the questions in advance, with an information sheet which explained the research and the purpose of the interview. Much has been written about the advantages and pitfalls of the interview, as a technique in social research.\(^{188}\) A poststructuralist approach to interviewing is not concerned to truthfully interpret the interviewees’ words but rather focuses on the contexts producing local, specific discourses or knowledges. An interview is an example of a ‘messy text’ in the sense that they (the texts) ‘insist on an open-endedness, an incompleteness and an uncertainty’ (Marcus 1998: 392); the exchange between interviewee and interviewer is always contingent on many factors such that the exact interview could not be replicated at another time. The ‘product’ (that is, the transcribed tape) is an artifact based on the explicit and implicit assumptions of the researcher. These shape the questions which then inform the informants’ narratives as well as the assumptions that each person brings to the interview about the interview, its purpose and the researcher herself.

A significant contextual issue for example, was that the interviews were conducted during 2002, at a time when the intifada was at its height, with Palestinian suicide bombings in Israel and the Israeli army making incursions into the Occupied Territories, under the codename Operation Defensive Shield. The people interviewed were clearly affected by these events and how they were portrayed through the media. In fact, the intensity of many interviewees’ responses regarding the perception that ‘the media was biased against Israel’ prompted me to devote a separate chapter to this subject (Chapter Five).

\(^{188}\) For example Sarantakos (1993: 177 - 202); (Kvale 1996); (Kirsch 1999) on ethical dilemmas in interviewing and other qualitative forms of research.
Analysis of interviews

Analysis of the interviews took place in a number of stages. The tapes transcripts were returned to each interviewee for checking, and in a few cases, the subject requested that a particular sentence be amended, which I did on the grounds that ‘textual meaning, even in the case of a written conversation, can no longer be deemed to coincide completely with the original intentions of the speakers’ (Kearney 1984: 129). For example, one interviewee felt that a comment he had made about Palestinians during the interview seemed ‘too harsh’ when written down and asked me to change it.

I had decided early in the research not to quarantine the interview analysis to a separate chapter, a common feature in social science research. Instead, from a discourse perspective, I viewed them as constructed stories, truths told in a particular way to a specific audience. Excerpts are incorporated into relevant chapters. The purpose of the interviews was to gain a sense of embeddedness of and diversity in people’s experiences and to understand Jewish subjectivity at the level of the individual subject, in relation to the issues under investigation. In fact, I learnt much more from these interviews than I was able to include in the thesis. Because of the theoretical approach of this work, the ‘individualness’ of each interviewee disappears to a significant extent, and becomes an example of discourse within a discursive field. At the same time, I did not want the interview subjects to completely vanish, out of respect for them and acknowledgement of the time they gave me. I therefore have given them minimal identities, names and brief, non-identifying descriptors. These ‘facts’ however, are not used in the analysis to infer causality between attribute x and statement y, or to make generalisations based on a specific demographic characteristic.

I used NVIVO (a qualitative data-management and analysis program) to code and categorise the interview scripts. NVIVO demands close reading of each narrative, as a preliminary step to coding the data, in order to develop a sense of common themes which emerged across the cohort. At a macro level, the questions I asked reflected the concerns the thesis was investigating and the high-level coding
reflected the questions. At a micro level, the ‘nodes’ (NVIVO jargon for codes) were based on statements common to a number of interviews. I developed eight ‘trees’, and sixty-nine nodes. The trees or major categories were: Speaking of Zionism (7 nodes); speaking about Muslims (1 node); speaking of the Australian Jewish community (9 nodes); speaking sense of Jewishness (11 nodes); speaking of the media (6 nodes); speaking of Israel (8 nodes); speaking of the Israel/Palestine conflict (14 nodes, 5 of which were divided into 4 sub-nodes). Using the phrase ‘speaking of’ assisted me to focus the coding on ‘discourse’, that is how an event, a feeling or thought was spoken about, rather than focusing on the event itself.
Appendix A-2: Interviewee attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Aust.born</th>
<th>O’seas born</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Parents’ birth-places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Germany, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans</td>
<td>80s</td>
<td></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl</td>
<td>70s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sth Africa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Scotland, NZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Poland, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>70s</td>
<td></td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>60s</td>
<td></td>
<td>German</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Germany, Lithuania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leah</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sth Africa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td></td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>80s</td>
<td></td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>70s</td>
<td></td>
<td>England</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>England, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seth</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td></td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Lithuania, Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susanna</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Australia, Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Slovakia, Hungary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>60s</td>
<td></td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sth Africa</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A-3: Interview schedule

General:

1. Demographic details – ie born here/elsewhere? If elsewhere, when did you come to Australia?

2. What does being Jewish mean to you?

3. (How) has antisemitism affected you / your life in Australia? Do you think Jews are a threatened group in the world today?

On community in Australia:

4. Do you have a sense that there is an identifiable entity called “the Jewish Community”?

5. What would be some of its defining characteristics?

6. Do you consider yourself part of it?

7. What activities/involvements do you participate in, that you’d consider as being part of the community?

8. Do you have views on spokespeople for the Jewish community speaking out publicly as Jews on ‘non-Jewish-specific’ issues eg latest asylum seekers controversy, or issues concerning indigenous people (stolen generations, the apology, land rights legislation and so on); racism in the community directed at other minority groups?

On relationship with Israel – for individual and community:

9. What is Israel’s importance to you?

10. Has its significance changed over time? If so, has it been in response to particular events occurring there or elsewhere in the world?

11. What do you think is the current importance of Israel to Jews in Australia and elsewhere? (If different to above discussion)

12. Do you think that significance has changed since 1948? If so, how has it changed?

13. Can you recall the June 1967 Six Day War – what impact did that have on you/Jews around the world/ yours and others’ perceptions of Israel? Positive and/or negative?
14. How does your understanding of the Occupation (of West Bank and Gaza Strip) affect your attitude towards Israel?

15. In relation to failure of Oslo Agreement to solve the problem of Palestine/Israel and the current violence, how does that impact on security for Jews in Israel – what would make Israel a more secure place for Jews to live?

16. Do you think the current violence has changed the relationship of Jews in the diaspora to Israel? If so, how?

17. Have you ever /would you ever consider aliya? Why? Why not?

18. Does the existence of Israel make you feel more or less at home in Australia?

19. Do you consider Israel as a ‘second home’?

20. What does Zionism mean to you?

On the 1997 Maccabiah Games Bridge Collapse:

21. What impact did that event have on you / people around you, in relation to how the Israeli government dealt with events following the collapse of the bridge over the Yarkon river? Do you think it has had any longer-lasting impact in the Jewish community here, as a whole?

On Israel and the media:

23. Do you particularly follow news about Israel? If so, what sources do you use?
   - Australian mainstream print/radio/TV? Jewish media in Australia (which?)
   - Jewish media in Israel (which) English and/or Hebrew? Other?
   - Electronic sources

Which do you most prefer? Why?

24. In relation to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, do you think the media treats this complex issue fairly?

25. If yes, or no, can you give specific examples of either fairness or bias?
Appendix A-4: NVIVO coding categories for interview analysis

Number of Nodes: 69

(1) /speaking of zionism
   (1 1) /speaking of zionism/antizionism and antisemitism
   (1 2) /speaking of zionism/relations with diaspora
   (1 3) /speaking of zionism/and racism
   (1 4) /speaking of zionism/as a religion
   (1 5) /speaking of zionism/benefits of diaspora
   (1 6) /speaking of zionism/dissent
   (1 7) /speaking of zionism/other positions

(2) /speaking about Muslims
   (2 1) /speaking about Muslims/muslims in media

(3) /speaking of the AJC
   (3 1) /speaking of the AJC/Views on AJC-neg
   (3 2) /speaking of the AJC/View on AJC-pos
   (3 3) /speaking of the AJC/Views on AJC-mixed
   (3 4) /speaking of the AJC/Dissent
   (3 5) /speaking of the AJC/politics of community
   (3 6) /speaking of the AJC/israel
   (4 7) /speaking of the AJC/unity
   (3 7 1) /speaking of the AJC/unity/silence
   (3 8) /speaking of the AJC/youth groups
   (3 9) /speaking of the AJC/sydney v melbourne

(4) /speaking sense of Jewishness
   (4 1) /speaking sense of Jewishness/childhood sense of Jewishness
   (4 2) /speaking sense of Jewishness/family’s level of observance
   (4 3) /speaking sense of Jewishness/family’s sense of jewishness
   (4 4) /speaking sense of Jewishness/anti-semitism–victimhood
   (4 4 1) /speaking sense of Jewishness/antisemitism–victimhood/support of other minorities
   (4 4 2) /speaking sense of Jewishness/anti-semitism–victimhood/what makes Jews ‘special’
   (4 4 3) /speaking sense of Jewishness/antisemitism–victimhood/WW2 & Holocaust
   (4 4 4) /speaking sense of Jewishness/anti-semitism–victimhood/anti-sem & Israel
   (4 4 5) /speaking sense of Jewishness/anti-semitism–victimhood/in Aust
   (4 5) /speaking sense of Jewishness/religious-cult-trad
   (4 5 1) /speaking sense of Jewishness/religious-cult-trad/yiddish & bund
(5) /speaking of the media
   (5 1) /speaking of the media/media's analysis of Israel
   (5 1 5) /speaking of the media/media's analysis of Israel/media negativity
   (5 2) /speaking of the media/media & AJC
   (5 3) /speaking of the media/sources
   (5 4) /speaking of the media/palestinians
   (5 5) /speaking of the media/language
   (5 6) /speaking of the media/Israeli media

(6) /speaking of Israel
   (6 1) /speaking of Israel/family support for Israel
   (6 2) /speaking of Israel/Israel as normal
   (6 3) /speaking of Israel/Personal significance of Israel
   (6 3 2) /speaking of Israel/Personal significance of Israel/Israel as homeland
   (6 4) /speaking of Israel/six day war
   (6 5) /speaking of Israel/dual loyalty
   (6 6) /speaking of Israel/Maccabiah Games & israel
   (6 7) /speaking of Israel/Israel as safety
   (6 8) /speaking of Israel/Jerusalem

(7) /Israel–Palestine Conflict
   (7 1) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/Arab responsibilities towards Palest
   (7 2) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/political views on occupation
   (7 2 1) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/political views on occupation/destruction of Israel
   (7 2 1 2) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/political views on occupation/destruction of Israel/Arabs
   (7 2 10) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/political views on occupation/effects of occupation
   (7 2 10 1) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/political views on occupation/effects of occupation/settlements
   (7 2 10 2) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/political views on occupation/effects of occupation/on Jews
   (7 2 10 3) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/political views on occupation/effects of occupation/on Palestinians
   (7 3) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/history
   (7 4) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/chance for peace
   (7 5) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/fear
   (7 6) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/suicide bombers
   (7 7) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/Jewish values
   (7 8) /Israel–Palestine Conflict/hatred
Appendix B: Australian archival sources

National Archives of Australia

Series A 981, item 2101, Canberra, 13 May 1929

Archive of Australian Judaica, Fisher Library, University of Sydney

Patkin Collection, S Steingrad to B Patkin 24/12/36

Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand Annual Conference Reports – Plenary sessions 1927 – 1970

NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, Newspaper cuttings, Boxes 12 and 13

Australian Jewish Historical Society, Mandlebaum House, University of Sydney

Boxes AB 86, 87 and 88 – Annual Conferences of ECAJ
Serials – M1 – M31

LaTrobe Library, State Library of Victoria

Walter Lippmann Collection, A1050, Boxes 11 - 19
References


Adler, J 1997, Restoring the Jews to their homeland, Jason Aronson Inc., New Jersey.


Attias, J-C & Benbassa, E 2003, Israel, the impossible land, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California.


Bermant, C 1995, 'Need to speak out to outspoken Weizman', *Australian Jewish News*, Sydney, 1 June.


Boyarin, J 1992, Storm from paradise: the politics of Jewish memory, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.


Braham, M 1970, Jews don’t hate -how a Jewish newspaper died, Thomas Nelson (Australia) Limited, Sydney and Melbourne.


*Chairman of the Standing Committee on Community Relations*, 1979, ECAJ Annual Conference, Melbourne.


A cohesive community, 1956, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, Sydney.


Curtis, A 24 April 1967, 'Youth - the way to survival', The Australian, p. unknown.

Dapin, M 2003, 'The Israel that wasn't', *Sydney Morning Herald*, pp. 75 - 78.


Dowty, A 2001, "'A question that outweighs all others": Yitzhak Epstein and Zionist recognition of the Arab issue', *Israel Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1. pp. 34 - 54.


....... 1948, 'The battle for Israel', *The Zionist*, vol. 5, no. 9. p. 3.

....... 1949, 'A word to our readers', *Australian Jewish Forum*, vol. 9, no. 76. pp. 6 - 7.


312


2000, 'In Peter Pan country', The Sydney Morning Herald, pp. 1, 12.


Herzfeld, M 2004, 'Intimating culture: Local contexts and international power', in A. Shryock (ed.) Off stage on display, Stanford University Press, California.


Kearney, R (ed.) 1984, Dialogues with contemporary continental thinkers, Manchester University Press, Manchester.


Kirsch, G 1999, Ethical dilemmas in feminist research: The politics of location, interpretation and publication, State University of New York, Albany.


*Letter from Prime Minister Bruce*, 1929, National Archives of Australia, series A 981, item 2101, Canberra, 13 May.


Loève, L 1999, *Why am I here tonight and why have I applied to become a member of the ADU?*, Unpublished, speech presented to meeting of Anti-Defamation Unit, Sydney.


Marcus, G 1998, 'What comes (just) after "post"? The case of ethnography', in N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (eds), The Landscape of Qualitative Research, Sage, London.


...... 1976, Ethnicity in Australian society: the cultural dilemmas of Jewish peoplehood, Melbourne Symposium.


Milburn, C 1997, 'Miner touches the spirit of the Wik dream', *The Age*, Melbourne, 6 December. p. 15.


15 July 1971, 'I'm glad I was born Jewish', *The Australian*, Sydney,


Morgan, F 2000a, "For you were strangers in the Land of Israel", *Australian Jewish News*, Sydney, 16 June. p. 32.


O'Regan, M 2002, Reporting the Middle East, radio, ABC, Sydney, 18 April.

Orr, A 1997, 'The smallest boy', paper presented at One hundred years of Zionism - liberation or oppression, Basel, Switzerland, 15 - 17 August.


Patkin, A 1943, 'To our readers', The Zionist, vol. 1, no. 1.


....... no date, Media Effects and the Active Audience, Glasgow Media Group, viewed 9/12/02 <http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/sociology/Effects.htm>.

Plan of work of Public Relations Committee, 1942, NSW Jewish Advisory Board, Sydney.


Price, C 1964, Jewish settlers in Australia, Australian National University, Canberra.


327


Rosenblum, L November 1983, 'Public Relations Committee Report, Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies', paper presented at *Annual Conference. Executive Council for Australian Jewry*, Melbourne,


Sarantakos, S 1993, Social research, Macmillan Educational, Australia, South Melbourne.


Shavit, A 2003, Cry, the beloved two-state solution, accessed on 5 January, 2005, <email from e.nimni@unsw.edu.au>.


Shimoni, G 2005, 'Rights to the land of Israel: claims and compromises', paper presented at Zionism and its discontents, Mandelbaum House, University of Sydney, 10 April.


Sife, DJ 2002, 'If not me, then who?' Australian Jewish News, Sydney, p. 17.


Staedter, J & Kimmel, H 1950, Israel, diaspora complementary, Dr H Kimmel, Sydney.


Stedman, S 1940, A Jewish settlement in Australia, Friends of a Jewish Settlement in Kimberley.

Steinberg, I 1946, 'End the war!' Freeland, December.

1948, 'This is not the way (the failure of Jewish diplomacy)', Australian Jewish Forum, vol. 8, no. 65.


Tatz, C 2 May 1997, 'Pauline Hanson's Aborginal 'Blood Libel'', Australian Jewish News, Internet edition,


Tolson, J, Grose, T, Kim, L, Cue, E & Sutherland, B 20 May 2002, 'An old hatred's new day: Does a wave of anti-Jewish attacks around the world mean antisemitism is on the rise?' *U.S. News and World Report*, vol. 132, no. 17, p. 42.


Weizman 1995, 'A message to diaspora Jews', paper presented at Annual Conference of the ECAJ, Melbourne, ECAJ.


Wolff, H 1943, Letter from the New South Wales Jewish Advisory Board, Sydney, 8 December.


Zeitz, J 2000, "'If I am not for myself...': The American Jewish establishment in the aftermath of the Six-Day War", *American Jewish History*, vol. 88, no. 2. pp. 253 - 86.


