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“Contextualizing Diaspora: Studies in Jewish Emplacement,  
Social Construction, Materiality, and Memory”

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Religious Studies

by

Daniel Paul Hotary

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March 2016

The dissertation of Daniel P. Hotary is approved.

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January 2016

“Contextualizing Diaspora: Studies in Jewish Emplacement, Social Construction, Materiality, and  
Memory”

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By

Daniel P. Hotary

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## ABSTRACT

Contextualizing Diaspora: Studies in Jewish Emplacement,  
Social Construction, Materiality, and Memory

by

Daniel P. Hotary

This dissertation explores the experience of diaspora and traces how it appears, changes, and operates within Judaism. I present case studies that question issues such as origins, reflections on travel, and intergenerational conflict. Each study exposes gaps found in previous studies of diaspora and posits how certain aspects of the phenomenon can be reexamined. I explore these gaps with theoretical models that one would not necessarily associate with diaspora in order to better understand how diaspora operates. I argue that diaspora exists due to its imagined quality and necessity of having to be remembered, through juxtaposition of early Israel's archaeological and textual origins. From consideration of early Israel as partial indigenous peasantry to textual accounts locating Israel's cultural memory as originating elsewhere, a new dimension of diaspora emerges. Emplacements, both spatial and temporal, obscure diaspora, which is an ever-present condition originating as an act/commemoration of remembrance.

Another portion of my work confronts how one writes about travel, home, and homeland, especially once one has in fact physically returned; and asks, "To what shall one commit?" To answer these questions I look at representative examples of Hebrew fiction and later extend the scope of the investigation to look at more social-scientific and journalistic reflections in Israel. Many scholars studying the Jewish diaspora continue the prevalent understanding of physical homecoming to the Land as a *fait accompli*, which, according to some

interpretations, prohibits creativity and presupposes an already achieved redemption. This approach, however, misunderstands the calls for continued alienation and separation, regardless of location, thus denying access to more ways in which diaspora exists. By employing the theoretical frameworks of the chronotope (time-space literary analysis), as well as threshold and liminal moments, I delve into the possibilities for uncovering recollections and making present unanticipated memories as offered at such moments of confrontation (with the Land, with a sight, a smell, a sound, etc.). Such individual and collective confrontation destabilizes that which has become taken-for-granted and thus renews creativity.

When applied to Israeli reflections on intergenerational belonging and outlook, while acknowledging physical emplacement, a tension results from the inability of succeeding generations to identify with and recount the motivations and passions of previous generations. Through writing from the situation of emplacement, we see societal cleavages, continued alienation, and renewed separation. Through an exploration of these gaps we are left asking the same questions of living individuals as we did of literature: "To what shall one commit, and how shall one commit, if at all?" The resulting intentional separation of confrontation that we see in these works makes the quotidian extraordinary and the already achieved something to be anticipated. I argue that the Land remains contingent, never accomplished, and is always in a state of "permanent revolution," thus placing into question notions as "post-Zionism." Even while being emplaced, possibilities exist for re-diasporization – the need to feel distanced from the Land considered "home" in order to return to the condition prior to homecoming. This threshold that re-presents unforeseen memories is a call for ethical action now, and in the future, of the yet unredeemed, of being in imagined diaspora.

The fourth subset explores the ways in which Jewish genetic diseases are understood within Jewish communities and what genetics research offers in terms of complements to

foundational myths of Judaism. In both diaspora studies and genetics research the history of the phenomenon and an understanding of what constitutes it offer different, but necessarily concomitant, myths/authoritative narratives. Through the continuing use of Walter Benjamin's call for contextualization across space and through time, I echo those who advocate for incorporating both the biological and socially constructed aspects of identity. This approach, rather than privileging one perspective, allows for a better understanding of migration, and acknowledges that genetic markers help place into question notions as kinship (to whom one feels connected), from what one feels displaced, etc., thus offering a more comprehensive view to constructed identity. We already always are displaced, have multiple homes, and struggle to articulate this complexity using only one paradigm. These concerns are reflected in the Jewish concept of brit (covenant), which includes both biology and social construction; only through the use of both aspects does a more comprehensive appreciation of "home," "origins," belonging, separation, and community/commitment emerge.

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## Chapter One Occupying the Diaspora: Places of Departure and Settlement

### Looking Back: Scholarly Confrontations with Diaspora

Within the past two and a half decades studies of diaspora have become increasingly multidisciplinary. One outcome of this variegated approach to understanding this phenomenon is more specialized and narrowly defined studies that concentrate on certain constituent elements associated with the phenomenon itself (e.g., boundaries, space, and mobility). To date, the field of religious studies has not dealt significantly or explicitly with the experience as such,<sup>1</sup> and as a result, the discipline has yet to take up many issues that have emerged in diaspora studies. It thus lags behind in its theoretical engagement with this burgeoning field. This dissertation situates religious studies into a discourse on diaspora through an engagement with a subset of the category: Judaism, in both Israel and the United States. Within this subset we will juxtapose standard foci of diaspora studies, such as archaeology, literature, personal reflections, and even biology with theoretical concerns not usually associated with diaspora. The result will be to view diaspora as a commemorative performance and to include in any study of diaspora the process of collective memory, which acknowledges diaspora's multivalence without offering attempts at reconciliation between individual memory and history. The resultant tension between these outlooks creates the ground for continued creativity and the potential for deeper contextualization.

Academic studies of diaspora reflect a number of tensions, emanating from both the phenomenon itself and through scholarly analysis of the category. These tensions can be grouped along a general spectrum of concerns that includes: summary of the field/proposals for

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Tweed's *Our Lady of the Exile* is discussed here, and the only other exception is a doctoral dissertation. See Ellen Posman, "There's No Place Like Home': An Analysis of Exile in Judaism and Tibetan Buddhism" (Ph. D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2004), although her study does not explicitly question the analytical category of "diaspora."

defining the phenomenon; investigations into what constitutes the phenomenon, which provide nuance to the definition; and inevitably, reflection on the usefulness of the term “diaspora” itself. Contributing to the proliferation of constituent elements has been the need to respond to issues of globalization, postmodernism, and the inability of master frameworks to continue unquestioned. Throughout this array of self-fashioned identities and ways of belonging scholars have noted tensions between locality and mobility, often with the latter and more “routed” forms of belonging being privileged; between radical particularisms/individualized signifiers and the need for definitional anchoring to something specific (i.e., definitional parameters, thus constituting the phenomenon under study); and between individual memory and history. Underlying all of these concerns is a reluctant and concomitant warning of sinking into a situation of being unable to say anything cohesive about the very phenomenon under study: diaspora.<sup>2</sup>

Early writings on diaspora concentrated on defining the term, deciding what constituted a diaspora, and detailing the histories of what became standard, paradigmatic cases, most notably the experiences of Jews and Armenians.<sup>3</sup> In his own recent review of studies on diaspora, Steven

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<sup>2</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 2005): 2-3. Brubaker states that the use of the term has proliferated to such an extent, cf. n. 3, and its meaning stretched to accommodate various applications and designations, that it is useless. With so many disparate groups, with varied histories, memories, consciousness, *et cetera* being referred to under the same rubric, it is becoming increasingly difficult to identify phenomena and make distinctions.

<sup>3</sup> In what has become a standard reference in the field of diaspora studies, Robin Cohen’s *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997) begins with an etymology of the word. He states that it is derived from the Greek verb “to sow” combined with the preposition “over,” thus corresponding to the ancient Greek conception of diaspora (especially of Greek expanded settlement of the Mediterranean world in the Archaic Period, 800-600 BCE, in which the empire expanded through plunder, conquest, colonization, and migration of citizens to populate the new strongholds), as migration and colonization (Ibid., ix, 2). What all diasporas have in common, he asserts, is that their members form communities settled outside their natal or imagined-natal territories (Ibid.). Cohen’s singular contribution to the study of diasporas is his generated typology: victim, labor, trade, imperial, and cultural diasporas. Some groups have multiple forms; their corresponding typologies change over time. Complicating these types are collective memories, reasons for dispersal (oftentimes voluntary, not forced), and reasons for not returning to the homeland once that option becomes available (Ibid., 21). These counter-narratives place into question the category of diaspora itself, as well as whether a group can continue its self-designation as such. Also, see William Safran, “Deconstructing and Comparing Diasporas,” in *Diaspora, Identity, and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research*, eds. Waltraud Kokot, Khachig Tölölyan, and

Vertovec explains that the term itself comes from the Greek *diaspeirein*, “to distribute.” This word is itself a compound of two components: *speirein*, “to sow, to scatter,” as one would disperse grain, and *dia*, “from one end to the other.” The Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, the Septuagint, used the term “diaspora” to refer to God scattering the Jews as punishment (e.g., Deut. 4:27 and Is. 36:19). Yet, as Vertovec explains, “[...] the Hebrew verb *galah* and noun *galut* – each expressing deportation and exile...designate...the period from the destruction of the second Temple in 70 AD until the creation of the state of Israel [in 1948]. Hence a distinction is made by a number of scholars between *diaspora* – implying free movement, especially pertaining to ancient Jews living among Greeks – and *galut* implying involuntary movement due to a conquest of territory that was/is considered home.”<sup>4</sup> Based off of this biblical paradigm (albeit somewhat clumsily), scholars used the term to designate displacement from a “home” location and ensuing action based off of that focus.

Later studies contributed to these checklists by expanding the definition. This move included more groups as being in diaspora and allowed more perspectives about the phenomenon to emerge.<sup>5</sup> Yet, analyses of the causes of diaspora were limited, as was the amount

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Carolin Alfonso (London: Routledge, 2004), 10. Safran concludes that diasporas are certain kinds of immigrations. They have retained a memory, some cultural connection to general orientation toward that home, have institutions reflecting that home, still harbor doubts about full acceptance in their current locations, are committed to survival as a distinct community, and to that end retain myths of return.

<sup>4</sup> Steven Vertovec, “Religion and Diaspora,” in *New Approaches to the Study of Religion, vol. 2: Textual, Comparative, Sociological, and Cognitive Approaches*, eds. Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, and Randi R. Warne (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 275-76.

<sup>5</sup> Any survey of the literature on diaspora includes in its bibliography the pioneering works of Khachig Tölölyan, who in 1991 started the academic journal *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, see Khachig Tölölyan, “The Nation-State and Its Others: In Lieu of a Preface,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 4-5. In this introductory remark to the first issue, he already presented a rough overview of the field and the themes that subsequent scholars delved into more thoroughly in their respective, more narrowly focused studies. He states that the term “diaspora” originated with specific overtones to describe an experience of a particular people, in a specific time and place, and scholars increasingly have been applying the term to denote peoples, experiences, and causes for those experiences in ways that far exceed its limited, and more modest, origins. He claims that scholars have altered the semantic field to include as being “in diaspora” groups ranging from immigrants, expatriates, refugees, guest workers, overseas communities, to ethnic communities more generally. As Martin Baumann states in his article, “Genealogies of Semantics and Transcultural Comparison,” *Numen* 47, no. 3 (2000): 313, 322, since the

of attention given to the groups' reception in the host societies.<sup>6</sup> Groups were seen as operating within bounded environments, and the factors uniting the groups presupposed a high degree of homogeneity, specifically with factors as religion, culture, and language. Toward the late 1980s, scholars of diaspora became more attuned to the porousness of the boundaries of the nation-state and to the disparateness of the actors who traversed the globe. From a narrowly conceived application to biblical Israelites, to more formalized categories that shared certain numbers of characteristics, to general applications of movement more broadly, diasporic groups were

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1960s the term's semantic applicability has broadened and at that time was applied in African studies to the historical mass movements of people during the period of slavery, as well as to categorize the results of newer immigration laws and labor recruitment schemes of the decade. Since the 1970s, with John Armstrong's definition of "diaspora" as any ethnic collectivity lacking a territorial base within a given polity, the term denotes almost any group living away from its ancestral or former homeland. In William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 83-84, Safran repeats Tölölyan's acknowledgment that the term's original usage designated a specific experience for a particular people. What he adds to this review of the use of the term is a list of six defining elements that in his view comprise the phenomenon: 1) dispersal from a specific, original center; 2) retention of a collective memory, vision, and myth of the homeland; 3) a belief that the dispersed group is not fully accepted by the host society; 4) an insistence that the ancestral homeland is the group's true, ideal home and that ideally the group should return to it; 5) a belief that the group members collectively should be committed to the homeland's maintenance and/or restoration; and 6) a continual personal and vicarious relation to the homeland. In his study of diaspora, Steven Vertovec, "Three Meanings of 'Diaspora' Exemplified among South Asian Religions," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 6, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 277, recognizes as well that the word describes practically any population that is deterritorialized or transnational, any group that originated in a place other than that in which it currently resides, as well as any group whose social, economic, and political networks cross borders of nation-states.

<sup>6</sup> The underlying condition, and sentiment, of diaspora is the sense of being in exile, of leaving one's own culture and settling elsewhere, according to Ninian Smart, "The Importance of Diasporas," in *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution, and Permanence in the History of Religions*, eds. S. Shaked, D. Shulman, and G. G. Stroumsa (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), 289. Implicit in this definition is the possibility of having an exilic consciousness, of being out of context regardless of physical location. For Smart, diasporas are a microcosm of more general religious transformation. Examining diasporas allows for the opportunity to understand how groups adapt to a new environment and undergo processes of self-identification. Inevitable in every movement of people is the necessity of having to give an account of itself to others, of fitting itself into general principles; this often includes innovation within the tradition's doctrine (Ibid., 108). The aspect of a diasporic consciousness, which includes having specific relationships bound by history, geography, created by forced or voluntary migration, maintenance of identity tied to myths of common origin, ties to co-ethnic members, and the belief that group members (those with similar consciousness of being apart) are not fully accepted where they are is one adopted by Vertovec "Three Meanings of 'Diaspora,'" 277-78. As a type of consciousness, members of diaspora groups possess a particular awareness. They are both here and there. Especially true in the modern world, increased capacities for communication allow for greater interaction among members, and cultural artifacts can be shared, imagined, created, recreated together, and collective memory of another time and place expands the web of involvement. Yet, as Vertovec points out, these collective memories, however expanded and inclusive, do not always serve to consolidate identities (Ibid., 282). The multiple realities of life within a location among various groups are contested, negotiated, and revised through engagement in the public sphere (Ibid., 284), and just as individuals can be bilingual, he states, so too can they be multicultural.



understood as a subset of characters epitomizing navigation among multiple-identities.<sup>7</sup> In his attempt to reign in the various proposed definitions of the term, which are needed if the term is to continue signifying something, Vertovec states that “the topic can be distinguished in terms of underlying depictions...as a social form...as type of consciousness...or as mode of cultural production,”<sup>8</sup> involving groups in relation to what they conceive of as “home” and their distance from it.

### Limited Roaming: Situating Diaspora’s Unboundedness

The qualities of subjects being unbounded and settling in likewise unbounded locales, to which they either sojourned temporarily or eventually came to call “home,” highlight the problematics of locality, space, and performance. Diasporic groups congregate and commemorate together in order to foster identity as a group set apart, residing elsewhere. Often a tension develops between the group and the host society (due to the former’s attachment to an elsewhere while residing “here”), as well as between how scholars understand, often disparagingly, a group’s forming an attachment to any physical locale, given the scholars’ heralding and privileging of diaspora’s identification as a mobile entity. Spheres of action and in which meaning, identity, and cohesion occur are necessarily situated and located. Yet, any process of place making entails the possibility of potentially excluding others from that place. Nevertheless, in order for a group to maintain its distinctiveness, it must enact itself, and this requires locality (i.e., being located in a place). While groups can and do travel, oftentimes out of

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<sup>7</sup> In approaching the recognition of groups maintaining multiple connections, Baumann stresses the significance of diasporic constellations, similar to a network or web, though which various gravitational centers emerge. This opens up the possibility of having numerous voices articulating what comprises these collective identities, and definition is not reduced to a single center, see Baumann “Genealogies,” 327, 331. Others have proposed metaphors likewise focused on connection and recognition of the trans- aspect, cf. Khachig Tölölyan, “The Contemporary Discourse of Diaspora Studies,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 27, no. 3 (2007): 650, in which he likens diasporic activity to electricity. Just as electricity does not simply flow across space but rather between relatively fixed nodes or poles, so too does transnational, diasporic life necessitate sedentariness and differences produced there along with mobility.

<sup>8</sup> Vertovec “Religion and Diaspora,” 279.

necessity, and thus adapt themselves and their self-identifications accordingly, being sedentary is essential for many groups.<sup>9</sup>

The experiences of a group in a locale, often spent recounting and reliving life from elsewhere, highlight issues of individual memory, history, and collective memory. In fact, the debates regarding how one recreates, how one remembers, and how groups present to themselves narratives about themselves, is precisely what the term “tradition” includes, a central category in religious studies. While the group has an established connection to the events of the narrative and a connection to the place where the events occurred, the group members do not directly remember the events (of the origin of the group, of the origin of the dispersal, etc.), and thus the very real connection is imagined, as is the community formed around such connections. Yet, by commemorating these narratives the group reinvigorates itself and adds itself into the unfolding of the very narrative being told, recounted, and remembered. It matters little if direct memory is involved, because the group itself is the narrative embodied. Diasporic groups establish locatedness even while maintaining a longing and attachment to another locale, either temporally or spatially.

Competing claims are a result of locatedness, and attention to history and memory is important. Developed tradition and practice, as stated, become tied to place and anchor the community wherever it is and to other members expressing similar identifications. So often, though, groups are denied access, even in their newer host societies, to location, to place, and thus to avenues for commemoration. Partly as a result of this lack of access to place, and partly as a result of a general change in intellectual sensibilities, previously submerged and hidden voices break through into the discourse and reflection on a particular place. These relate

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<sup>9</sup> See in particular Susanne Schwalgin, “Why Locality Matters: Diaspora Consciousness and Sedentariness in the Armenian Diaspora in Greece,” in *Diaspora, Identity, and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research*, eds. Waltraud Kokot, Khachig Tölölyan, and Carolin Alfonso (London: Routledge, 2004); Sean Carter, “The Geopolitics of Diaspora,” *Area* 37, no. 1 (March 2005): 54-55.

experiences of exclusion from it, memory of it, and developed practices in relation to it.<sup>10</sup> It is in this way that literature about diaspora, written both by diasporans themselves and by scholars, provides access to otherwise marginalized, if not erased, perspectives. Diaspora involves incorporation of counter-memories, other ways of being in the world; it necessitates contextualization. Experiences of estrangement, feeling not at home, and expressing desires to “return” are both individual and collective. Yet, studies on diaspora often lack that contextuality and instead focus on only the objective experience, or the historical condition of life being lived in an elsewhere, etc. without any attempt at recognizing that any narrative is only a partial version.

Contributing to an articulation of this experience is the likewise tension-wrought process of collective memory, which oscillates among history, narrative, and individual memory. Collective memory also incorporates elements from both the recent past as well as what Fernand Braudel called the *longue durée*, a focus on long-term, historically persistent structures and ideas; Braudel’s method resonates with Walter Benjamin’s emphasis on recognizing the hidden, although persistent and continuous, memories and histories that operate as simply everyday occurrence. As well, studies of collective memory allow for an inclusion of Michael Taussig’s notion of the “optics of the nervous system.” This dissertation examines recent engagements within Jewish experiences of diaspora and shows that the category of diaspora, as explored through collective memory, is a condition that operates simultaneously on many levels. While the postmodern turn has done away with the top-down imposition of definitions of phenomena and opened up access to various groups and experiences, this does not do away with definitional

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<sup>10</sup> The emergent literature focusing on these types of reflections is abundant. In particular see many of the contributions in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory*, eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Marlene Kadar, “Wounding Events and the Limits of Autobiography” and Anh Hua, “Diaspora and Cultural Memory,” both in *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home*, ed. Vijay Agnew (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005). It should be noted that these attempts to redress oversights in previous representations of space, power, and history are critiqued later on in this study.

concerns. In some ways, the phenomenon, or rather the invocation of the category, insists on parameters.

It is worth noting that the aforementioned developments in the field of diaspora studies likewise have their parallels in memory studies. Within the former, scholars have noted a shift from modernist concerns with systematic, stable definitions as the criteria through which to judge whether or not a group is “diasporic” (and if so, into which type it can be placed) to contemporary, “postmodern” foci on individualistic senses of displacement and alienation more broadly. In the field of memory studies, scholars have noted the replacement of supposedly unified collective pasts that present one version of how things came to be (often legitimating the regime currently in power), to a decline in these utopian narratives. The result of this decline has been the proliferation of identity politics and inspiration for repressed, often individualized, identities to emerge on par with investigations into more stereotypical historical accounts of the past.<sup>11</sup> Within studies of both diaspora and memory, the general trend follows the move from imposition of a definition to a phenomenon and projection of (forced) unitary pasts in order to legitimate the present (and thus future projects), to the dissolution of such endeavors in the face of competing claims and more individualized points of reference.

#### From Here to There and Back Again: Category Formation in Religious Studies

Previous studies on diaspora remained tied in some way to the earlier definitional proposals, even while entering domains that rendered the very phenomenon obsolete. Yet, studies on diaspora, including even recent forays, have not dealt adequately with religion, tradition, ritual, collective memory formation, and their implications for the category of diaspora. The field of religious studies investigates these very concepts and understands them as existing together, not as independent tools used at variance with one another. Regarding the interactions

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<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, “Introduction,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, eds. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

of bounded entities making sense of one another and thus of themselves is something that religious studies has encountered in the very subjects under its purview: religious traditions, communities, and the very understanding of the category “religion.” Religious traditions have undergone the processes associated with modernity for millennia, and it is only recently that the field has brought the outlooks of others to these topics. Studies of diaspora need to pay attention to collective memory and commemorative performance as ways to approach the aforementioned elements.

It is in this juxtaposition between attempts at forming restrictive definitions to being inundated with free-floating signifiers, and between attempts at developing systematic historical accounts to wading through the dross of sentimentalized personal reflections, that attention must be brought to the very enterprise of “history of religions.” As Jonathan Z. Smith points out, the field that has become religious studies has a long background in navigating these types of issues. Yet paradoxically, there are no critical investigations by scholars of religion into the category of diaspora utilizing these methodologies or insights. Smith details how Mircea Eliade reveled in the “labyrinthine complexity of elements which will yield to no formula or definition whatever.”<sup>12</sup> The descriptions that Eliade provided in his studies of ritual, symbol, myth, and other categories offered no explanation or sense of causation; history and contextual development, to which Smith attests, are given up in favor of “descriptive, systemic complexity.”<sup>13</sup>

As Smith relates in his critique of Eliade, the systems that these examples supposedly comprised were not defined, but rather were simply enumerated. How they all hung together, or

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<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 83.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

changed over time, or could be seen through other perspectives, remained absent. Eliade presented a catalogue of the forms in a detailed manner, but did not account for historical, chronological, or causal transformation.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, the archetype located in the morphological system is static, resulting in what Smith describes as “an internal feedback mechanism, achieving equilibrium by reverting to type.”<sup>15</sup> So while Eliade recognized alterations within the general form, the system eventually comes full circle, and the cause for the change is left unexplored; it remains external to, and unaccounted for within, the system.

In his own work, Smith deals explicitly with issues of definition and comparison. He remains within the tradition of “history of religions,” but departs significantly from Eliade by presenting a veritable *longue durée* account of any respective phenomenon. He pays attention not only to changes within a system, but also to causes of and implications of such transformation. In his collection of studies on the imagined characteristics of “religion,” a move that foreshadowed Benedict Anderson’s understanding on nationalism, Smith explicitly explains his methodology. The phenomenon under study, the exemplum, has no ontological existence on its own, as it does in Eliade; it is the construct of the investigator, and the example must be thoroughly understood and contextualized. As well, the exemplum should be used to further a particular theory and to better explain a fundamental question for the investigator. Furthermore, there must be a way to evaluate and relate other components in the category to each other.<sup>16</sup> In other words, Smith ties in together the field of “history of religions” with that of category creation. He also details how other fields deal with category creation and maintenance, what religious studies can take from them, and how further studies should proceed in this endeavor.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Z Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi-xii.

The Linnaean system in biology, for example, posits the existence of an object by means of reducing its characteristics to particular traits; taxonomy, then, is a monothetic practice that attributes to the constituent members of the taxon shared common features, and these members differ from other taxa by certain definitive features. Overtime, as Smith recounts, changes in time need to be accounted for in the classificatory system, and variability further complicated the endeavor of defining species and subspecies.<sup>17</sup>

The result is a method that Smith adapts to religious studies. He rejects the imposed definitional reductionism of earlier biologists, paralleled by scholars of diaspora, for instance, and even the unwieldy morphological constructs of Eliade, in favor of a self-consciously polythetic mode of classification. No longer is there a goal of finding and preserving a unique, single taxonomy. Rather, a category necessitates a set of properties, and a constituent member possesses a large, albeit unspecified amount, of the properties associated with that phenomenon. As well, no one property is shared by every example, at all times.<sup>18</sup> Finally, Smith proposes a methodology for how such a study will proceed. According to Smith, the first step is to select a “taxic indicator” that exists in a tradition as a way to set apart a phenomenon from others. In this case, the indicator is diaspora, movement across both space and time. The second step is to investigate this indicator as it appears, changes, and operates in various bodies of materials within that tradition. For this study, I look at presentations/understandings of the category in archaeology, Modern Hebrew fiction, contemporary Israeli reflections, and genetic disease to explore how diaspora is understood in each as representative of the case of Judaism.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 9.

In deciding how to approach an understanding of diaspora, I used a distinctively Smithian approach. The examples chosen for the four subsequent chapters contribute to a polythetic mode of classification. In order to help achieve this goal of polythetic analysis I pursue Benjamin's call for contextualization (i.e., an awareness of time and what has been overlooked, forgotten, etc., in order to better understand one's current condition), particularly as he presents them in his works "One-Way Street," "A Berlin Chronicle," and "On the Concept of History"; his considerations provide a way to better understand how diaspora functions through time and across space. Part of this endeavor entails addressing the mutually reinforcing realms of collective memory and commemoration. The result is to view diaspora as an experience in which diaspora itself is a commemoration that needs to be remembered and enacted.

Chapter Two deals with a particular academic debate within Syro-Palestinian (i.e., biblical) archaeology regarding the reintroduction of materiality into the study of "origins," while remaining cognizant of the impossibility of there ever having existed a perfect, unique, and essential characteristic that could expose the basis of a group's beginnings. I juxtapose biblical archaeologist William Dever's studies of early Israel as being a conglomeration of migratory peoples as well as "indigenous" peoples, including displaced Canaanites, with literary theorist Jan Assmann's textual study of Deuteronomistic history. The places where textual accounts and material remains overlap in an effort to provide a broader understanding of what was occurring is what Dever calls "convergences," and this more comprehensive view opens up our investigation into diaspora. This chapter emphasizes the notion that location matters, and that contrary to many detractors, archaeology does have something to contribute to representations of early Israel (ites), but which remains both overlooked and of little import to the construction of collective identity and memory. I argue that diaspora emerges not through physical departure,



especially in light of archaeological evidence, but rather due to its imagined quality and necessity of having to be remembered. From consideration of early Israel as partial indigenous peasantry to textual accounts locating Israel's cultural memory as originating elsewhere, a new dimension of diaspora emerges.

Chapters Three and Four ground the theoretical debate in an engagement with Hebrew writings, most notably in three texts by S. Y. Agnon, two ethnographic works, and reflections by Israeli journalists and scholars. These mixtures of fiction and autobiography highlight ways in which people have imagined, recollected, remembered, and conceived of home, travel, and return. In these subsets I ask a straightforward question: "Once one has physically returned, how does one write about travel, home, and homeland?" Many scholars studying the Jewish diaspora continue the prevalent understanding of physical homecoming to the Land as a *fait accompli*, which, according to some interpretations, prohibits creativity and presupposes redemption. This approach, however, misunderstands the calls for continued alienation and separation, regardless of location, thus denying access to more ways in which diaspora exists. The texts in these two chapters place into question concepts such as group formation, location, bounded communities, tradition, generational divides, and the implications of representation. They highlight ways of including different and conflicting voices and incorporating self-reflective change.

To better grasp the importance and ways in which space exists alongside of and often in tension with memory (i.e., time), I explore the insights of Benjamin, Thomas Tweed, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Abraham Joshua Heschel. These scholars elucidate the interplay one has on the other and what the resulting contextualization means for ethics. By employing the theoretical frameworks of the chronotope (time-space literary analysis), as well as threshold and liminal moments, I delve into the possibilities for uncovering recollections and making present unanticipated memories as offered at such moments of confrontation (with the Land, with a

sight, a smell, a sound, etc.). Such individual and collective confrontation destabilizes that which has become taken-for-granted and thus renews creativity.

In Chapter Four I examine some works by Israeli intellectuals who offered reflections on Israeli society. Through the writings of Eliezer Schweid, Amos Elon, Amos Oz, David Grossman, and Ari Shavit we gain an appreciation for the tensions that develop between generations in how each views the land and understands peoplehood. Through utilizing the aforementioned theoretical perspectives that advocate for confrontation, we see societal cleavages, continued alienation, and renewed separation. A tension results from the inability of succeeding generations to identify with and recount the motivations and passions of previous generations.

Through an exploration of these gaps we are left asking the same questions of living individuals as we did of literature: “To what shall one commit, and how shall one commit, if at all?” The resulting intentional separation of confrontation that we see in these works makes the quotidian extraordinary and the already achieved something to be anticipated. I argue that the Land remains contingent, never accomplished, and is always in a state of “permanent revolution,” thus placing into question notions as “post-Zionism.” Even while being emplaced, possibilities exist for re-diasporization – the need to feel distanced from the Land considered “home” in order to return to the condition prior to homecoming. This threshold that represents unforeseen memories is a call for ethical action now, and in the future, of the yet unredeemed, of being in imagined diaspora.

Finally, in Chapter Five, the last subset, I delve into the operation of myths and narratives that people tell themselves about themselves. We find, through an examination of genetic disease, that even contemporary humanity maintains its reliance on myths. Despite, or perhaps because of, impressive technological advances, we still remain partial and incomplete in

our self-understanding. Through an examination of ways in which people imagined Jews and Judaism over time using biological insights as they became available, we can trace how people developed two general myths about identity, although some scholars note that the language to describe identity often compounds one view with notions from the other. People tend to rely on either socially constructed aspects of identity or impose a biological determinism to their concepts of kinship, the body, etc. A result of focusing on one perspective to the exclusion of the other is to present a view of history and memory that is partial in scope. Through the use of historical studies about Judaism and race, to more biologically explicit accounts of disease and what genes can help elucidate about migration and human connectivity, I explore how in both diaspora studies and genetics research the history of the phenomenon and an understanding of what constitutes it offer different, but necessarily concomitant, myths/authoritative narratives. Through the continuing use of Benjamin's call for contextualization across space and through time, I echo those who advocate for incorporating both the biological and socially constructed aspects of identity and argue that we already always are displaced, have multiple homes, and struggle to articulate this complexity using only one paradigm. These concerns are reflected in the Jewish concept of *brit* (covenant), which includes both biology and social construction.

Following Jonathan Z. Smith, the aim of incorporating issues such as archaeology, fiction, personal reflection, and biology in a work on diaspora is to more fully explore the phenomenon in its many valences as a way to responsibly provide the characteristics of a feature of Judaism. This endeavor allows for the discussion to be bounded by reference to its properties and to map its appearance and operation through a variety of materials. This will provide a multi-perspectival approach to its character, in order to “gain appreciation of the range of its application.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

## Persistently Lurking: Diaspora's Hidden Stories

Amidst the proliferation of studies in both diaspora and memory studies is a tension among historical accounts, personal accounts, collective reflection, remembrance/commemoration, and questions about the categories themselves. Each component claims validity and truth in some regard. Often it is difficult to know where, and how, to get an “accurate” view of “what happened,” of how a state of affairs came to be, or if such an endeavor is even worthwhile/possible. To help reconcile these tensions in memory and diaspora, between experience and alienation, and between history and memory, it is useful to turn to Walter Benjamin. His aphorisms, and even his longer writings, capture the inherent problems of modernity (i.e., trauma more generally, the shattered projects of the past), presented in an almost postmodern method. Yet, any attempt to apply his theories, as they develop out of his disparate writings and snapshots of life, reveals a view of humanity and human identity that is in fact tied to overarching concerns with redemption and wholeness (perhaps a longed-for return to unity?); in a way this denies him a postmodern appraisal, but provides him entrée into, and proposals for dealing with, a distinctively Jewish worldview of alienation, memory, history, and longing (i.e., of being in diaspora).

Benjamin ties together the fate of the individual with that of humanity, and he places into question the stability of the past. Benjamin shows us in “One-Way Street” a journey that is not a linear street in the least, but in a more general way a path that implicates the individual and the group with one another and also exposes the dangers of not cultivating a “presence of mind” in the present. This latter endeavor is what necessitates being cognizant not only of individual memory, but also of the effects of the continuous presence, albeit hidden, of persistent currents from the past accumulated in disguised form – *la longue durée*. Not to recognize these other dimensions/registers of reality is to revel in the idiosyncratic, the individual, and the apparent.

Remaining one-dimensional denies the cultivation of a presence of mind and thus disallows the liberation and redemption of the individual and society, of memory, and of history. As opposed to developing context as a way to explore meaning and contribute depth to a created identity, all is left to mire in never-ending spirals of (individual) signification.

Benjamin begins “One-Way Street” with the “Filling Station,” a place that bespeaks individualism, “convictions,” and “facts.” He warns of the needed recognition of a scenario’s multivalent characteristics; accounts need both the universal and individual, the quantifiable and documented as well as the recollected and uncovered. Yet, opinions aid in this pursuit only if used sparingly and at the appropriate times.<sup>21</sup> The end of the path is the Planetarium, a place that reveals experience and knowledge of history and humanity, of the universal and of individual identity. Yet, given modernity’s entrenchment within the individualized convictions of “poetics” (i.e., individual, subjective prisms of interpretation), we lose sight of the fact that “man [sic] can be in ecstatic contact with the cosmos only communally. It is the dangerous error of modern man to regard this experience as unimportant...and to consign it to the individual as the poetic rapture of starry nights.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, humanity exists in a predicament; it has forgotten and glossed over the ways that allowed for its current rendition to occur, and instead it mistakenly assumes that the individual interpretation of truth will suffice.

The decisive moment in many of Benjamin’s writings was the First World War, although this is understood more broadly as terror, alienation, and rupture. Humanity endured a shock, and this put into relief many of the previously held notions that constituted the supposed stability of life at the time. Warfare changed the world economy; unprecedented monetary collapse ensued, empires likewise collapsed, world systems were overturned in revolution, and

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<sup>21</sup> Walter Benjamin, “One-Way Street,” in *Selected Writings: Volume 1: 1913-1926*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1996), 444.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 486.

social orders and the role of the individual were being torn apart and examined. Benjamin noted, however, that the prewar years, in which many people believed that they had prospered, were in fact not always pleasant. For many people, the years consisted of “stabilized wretchedness.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, what once were thought to be stable and encompassing narratives of imagined previous wholeness unraveled upon closer examination. Entire worldviews and perspectives changed in a matter of a few years.

As Michael Taussig relates, it is not only the First World War that exposed aporia where once there was presumed stability and coherence. Scholars may argue about when the “process” began, but what Taussig points out, using Benjamin’s notion of history being a state of siege, is that contemporaneity is conditioned by anxiety and nervousness. What is thought to be controlled, ordered, and systematic (e.g., world systems, states, the military, etc.), in fact is fragile and riddled with instability and incongruence.<sup>24</sup> In such a world, linearity erodes, as does the assumed singular connection between cause and effect, as well as how knowledge is disseminated. For Benjamin, in the state of siege (now characteristic of contemporaneity) order is frozen, and disorder and tension mount beneath the surface; this state of affairs becomes normality. Therefore, if this is the case, humanity needs to rethink categories. Center, location, and certainty become de-centered, unstable, and uncertain. Calls for certainty equate to “dream-images” and hopeful illusions for peace in circumstances that do not allow for stability; nervousness and precariousness predominate.<sup>25</sup>

Benjamin states that since the First World War, storytelling (i.e., the ability to provide personal narrative, relate experiences, and equally the ability of others to empathize – to place

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 450-51.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 2.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 10.

themselves into another's perspective) has declined, if not become impossible to perform. Individuals have experienced such horror, contradiction, and despair that they are unable to communicate effectively,<sup>26</sup> and all individuals likewise are mired in their own isolation, distanced in many ways from other connections. As well, the traditional modes of communication in which information is passed from mouth to mouth is less frequent, and people are less able to imagine experiences and to place themselves in the role of the narrator. With the decline of this mode of communication, people do not incorporate these experiences of others into their lives. The type of information that is received, however, is that which is already colored by explanation from others; it is mediated and thus indirect. Consequently, the lessons it can convey are tainted.<sup>27</sup>

The implications of such a reality, in which modernity is de-stabilized and grand narratives are dethroned and made subject to suspicion, entail not only the questioning of such narratives and of state-sponsored pronouncements, but also the upending of the security with which people engage in everyday interactions.<sup>28</sup> Because people are torn and unable to navigate quotidian activities with any certainty, and in which everybody becomes a representative of a sort of individualized ultimate truth, everything is believed, and yet, nothing is believed. Related to this unmooring in our everyday lives, Taussig states that people must turn a reflexive, and reflective, gaze onto their own involvement in this state of affairs. Individuals oscillate between revelation and concealment, and often people conceal the terror in their own lives, histories, and memories,<sup>29</sup> thus forestalling further revelations.

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<sup>26</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 83-84.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.

<sup>28</sup> Taussig *Nervous System*, 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

Concomitant with Taussig's indictment of contemporaneity is Benjamin's awareness that latent and hidden histories of terror exist wherever one superficially sees victory and validation (i.e., reality, as in the phenomenon of diaspora, contains disparate registers, operating simultaneously). Benjamin's concept of history includes what Taussig dubs the "optics of the nervous system,"<sup>30</sup> which is the ability to understand what is actually occurring and to recognize the double-ness is inherent in life. This recognition allows one to see both ways at once – the surface superficialities included in the terror and the underlying, hidden histories, which also include terror. As Benjamin describes it, the usual perception of victory is that the mighty won and took with them cultural booty of the vanquished, of the now dispossessed. Yet, even these cultural treasures have a history. The history is not about solely the people who created the artifacts, but also includes an associated terror; Benjamin notes, "they [i.e., the cultural treasures] owe their existence not only to the efforts of great geniuses who created them, but also to anonymous toil of others who lived in the same period."<sup>31</sup> In other words, those who are now vanquished were themselves once victorious and acted with similar disdain to those they vanquished, and that past will never escape those treasures. The stable past, then, was for many people stable wretchedness, albeit hidden in the possessions of the then victorious.

As Taussig closes, he states that what are important are not the "facts" (for there are so many, often undisclosed or unrecognized), so much as it is acknowledging the shift in location in which facts are now placed. Different memories and histories emerge when locations change.<sup>32</sup> While it may seem that Benjamin offers a rather predictable trajectory of thought, a trenchant critique of modernity that can easily be translated and transposed onto contemporaneity, his

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>31</sup> Benjamin *Illuminations*, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 391-92.

<sup>32</sup> Taussig, 27.



presentation of memory, history, and identity is much more nuanced than simple historical materialist interpretations proffer.

As Benjamin pointed out, grand narratives are suspect, there exist hidden memories and histories, one's experiences are unable to be expressed, and what information is received is already altered and explained. For all intents and purposes, grand narratives are seemingly dismissed. Yet, Benjamin's view of humanity is not quite the postmodern cornucopia in which an individual's own self-explication is left unexamined, in which people are left to revel in their own created truths as though they were ultimate truths. Humanity has accumulated dross of these particularisms, and Benjamin points us in the direction to something larger – the notions of redemption and the messianic. His vision of humanity transcends any political program and involves a connection that unites generations, although this has become tenuous, and as a result prohibits the fulfillment of humanity in the time of now.

Working with the notion that interpretation and explanation are impediments to human fulfillment and redemption, Benjamin states that people must avoid interpreting their actions for potential future rewards, but rather must live accordingly to their inner intimations of coming events. According to Benjamin, each day people have the opportunity to grasp direct experience anew and have the ability to be aware of the present. Inevitably people squander that opportunity by turning to others' interpretations and explanations of those experiences and signs that constantly confront people; individuals turn to others for help in understanding how things fit together, rather than using their own awareness of the present to do so. As he states, "Awareness of the present is more decisive than knowing beforehand of distant events." People must recognize the signs around them, and use them, rather allow others to interpret them. People need to act decisively and directly. Only if humanity can do this can it connect with its past and break away from the terror of the state of siege in which it lives and can re-establish the

connection to memory. This connection shows people life, how it has been lived before, and what to look out for.<sup>33</sup> In other words, having a presence of mind in the time of now parallels in many ways Taussig's optics of the nervous system.

Benjamin's relation to Judaism exists in such a way as to point out the various conditions of alienation, displacement, and estrangement that are exhibited in writings on Jewish history, which have been encapsulated in Jewish writing over the years, and reflected in scriptures. But he also points out the underlying narrative that is contained in the shifting parameters of tradition: the narrative of generational connection and methods of attaining a presence of mind. Yet, inevitably, as he relates, there are hidden and latent memories and histories, and in this way people remain alienated from their own narratives and memories. The further the tradition accumulates the dross of individualized, unnarratable, inexpressible, and intransmissible experiences, the more its members become alienated and entrenched in diaspora; people, and the tradition, remain unredeemed and disconnected from themselves. People have numerous origins, numerous sources from which they are displaced, and numerous ways through which they can return; the difficulty rests in recognizing the signs and acting on inner intimations without recourse to external interpretation and explanation. What this entails for Judaism remains obscure, for few examples of its application exist, but it is something with which any study on diaspora must grapple.

#### Rinse and Repeat: Diaspora's Scholarly Standstill

Two recently published books on the category of diaspora grapple with oftentimes-complex theoretical perspectives on issues of history, memory, representation, identity, and space. Yet, both books, Irving M. Zeitlin's *Jews: The Making of a Diaspora People* (2012) and Marianne Hirsch's and Nancy K. Miller's edited volume *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the*

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<sup>33</sup> Benjamin *Illuminations*, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 253-54, 255, 260; Benjamin *Selected Writings*, "One-Way Street," 482-83.

*Politics of Memory* (2011), fail to address, let alone integrate, the double-ness of which Taussig wrote and to which Benjamin alluded. Thus, their contributions toward a better understanding of the category remain locked within the dichotomy of the general/“fact” and the individual/opinion that Benjamin describes as constitutive of the path. Zeitlin relies on Max Weber’s construct of the ideal-type as a tool to “make clear and explicit the unique individual character of a social phenomenon.”<sup>34</sup> Rejecting previous attempts at using and imposing a prototype or archetype as the defining example of a phenomenon to which all other cases are to be judged, which follow a checklist of characteristics that supposedly comprise the category, Zeitlin proposes studying a historically specific phenomenon, for example of a group outside of its presumed/assumed original place and its point of departure, and then analyzing its circumstance, and only later attributing a name to it.<sup>35</sup> As Stéphane Dufoix notes, in the past scholars identified groups based on similarities to pre-existing terms, to an archetype, and this practice resulted in reifying the category, in presenting the dominating exemplar as the only ontologically “real” member of the category, and in having at times to qualify the checklist of qualities necessary for membership in the group. Paradoxically, this latter result oftentimes placed into question even the prototype itself.<sup>36</sup>

After having rejected the methodology of the prototype, as presented for example in Robin Cohen’s *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (1997),<sup>37</sup> in favor of that of the ideal-type, Zeitlin proceeds to state that Jews, owing to their distinctive historical experiences, are the ideal-typical

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<sup>34</sup> Irving M. Zeitlin, *Jews: The Making of a Diaspora People* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> See n. 3 for a presentation of Cohen’s scheme.

diaspora people.<sup>38</sup> While this approach at first seems to be precisely what Smith calls for in a study of a category in religious studies, Zeitlin's project stops before it even commences. He does not explain any further about the category of diaspora. Before he explains the outline of his proposal of the ideal type, he engages in a review of Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin, Paul Gilroy, and James Clifford.

Zeitlin focuses his review on the Boyarins' understanding of the cultural power of Jewish diasporic existence. Briefly summarized, the Jewish experience, according to the Boyarins, is typified by historical statelessness. Any power that Jewish communities acquired was founded not on force, but rather operated in the cultural sphere. Diaspora power, then, is the attainment, preservation, and development of cultural goods.<sup>39</sup> Due to their vulnerability and political weakness, Jews' only option for action was spiritual revolt. In this way, oppression and persecution of Jews resulted in an inversion of the values of the politically victorious. In other words, if the "noble-warrior" values could not be adopted in particular circumstances, Jews adopted "slave morality."<sup>40</sup> In this understanding, the Boyarins stress the significance of the bottom layers of society, where the Jews operated, which are gendered feminine, in contrast to the politically and militarily dominant male roles. Later Zionist undertakings, then, were uncharacteristically forceful and male Jewish pursuits and alternatives, in their reading.

The Boyarins' reading, which could be seen as a foray into the double-ness as part of the attainment of the presence of mind in the now, however, is based on texts, rabbinic and other, not on actual historical experiences of Jews in diaspora, according to Zeitlin.<sup>41</sup> Thus, even this

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 23.

attempt is a perpetuation of the entrapment in delusion characteristic of modernity. He proceeds to point out that Gilroy's example presents both males and females subverting the dominant power structures; this tactic was not limited to the Jewish experience, and the characteristically "Jewish" narratives of return, forced separation, suffering, and redemption through these experiences resonated as well with North American black communities, and there is no evidence that in descriptions of their struggles and cultural tactics black men were portrayed as feminine, as the Boyarins propose with Jews.<sup>42</sup> What is curious, though, is that in his discussion of Gilroy, Zeitlin does not touch on notions of space that characterize much of the reviews of Gilroy's work, such as hybridization, but rather focuses on a Boyarin gloss of power as presented in Gilroy's examples. Yet, Zeitlin does not explicitly relate power to performance or representation.

It is only with Clifford that Zeitlin engages explicitly with the theme of space. He notes Clifford's unease with the notion of return that predominates in many black and Jewish experiences and literature, for this notion presupposes a center, an actual territory that is not a book, a tradition, or any other portable means for unity.<sup>43</sup> This implies a future exclusion of others, a surrendering to nationalistic and potentially authoritarian impulses. Zeitlin ends his discussion of the theorists by stating that he appreciates their focus on the historically creative aspects of Jewish diaspora cultures, and he agrees with their admonitions against ascribing eternal, immutable traits to groups. But he insists that Jews, as do all groups, possess a uniqueness that is graspable; it has a set of unifying principles.<sup>44</sup>

These principles usually are overlooked in studies on Jewish communities and histories, he asserts. Studies on Jewish history tend to downplay and overlook the interconnected nature

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 28.

of Jewish life, which rests on the unifying principles that he lays out, and which have been commented on by others throughout history. For example, ancient historians noted Jews' lack of idols, of resting one day a week, and of teaching their children the Law (comprised of the Pentateuch, Prophets, Psalms, Samuel, and other "books"). Out of a desire to remain pure, both ritually and to guard against polytheistic influences (i.e., culturally), Jews designed distinct religious communal organizations and new institutions. Original Jewish ritual segregation to avoid pollution developed into a sort of antipathy toward many practices of the host society, and over time, as he relates, this antipathy was reciprocated. When Jews returned to Judea, they continued the practices and organization developed elsewhere, and then when they were re-exiled, they continued the self-segregation that translated into later distinct economic and political positions elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> Zeitlin's project of the ideal-type entails a detailing of Jewish history that relies on underlying principles as guiding forms for culture, operating trans-geographically, wherever Jews happened to be, through time, as a diasporic people.<sup>46</sup>

Yet, for all of his detailed descriptions of and denunciations of previous theories of diaspora and of understandings of Jewish existence, he provides little in the way of integration, analysis of the category of diaspora itself, and he simply extends Weber's understanding of the conditions that led Jews to being a "pariah people" (due to the experiences listed above) into the modern period. This recent approach to diaspora targets the communal aspect that Benjamin presents as necessary for redemption of memory, experience, and identity, but falls short on developing a cognizance of double-ness.

At the other end of the spectrum on approaches to history, memory, and identity, is Hirsch's and Miller's *Rites of Return*. This collection pays particular attention to the poetics of

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 33.

memory at the expense of the histories of those spaces; sentimentality is privileged over an investigation into how sites came to possess contested histories and memories. The point of departure for the project is laid out in their preface, a step in the direction of double-ness. They invoke the “legacy of violence” that precipitates the development of a set of rites – both individual and collective – that aims to reconstruct past histories, retrieve lost memories, activate historical sites, and quest for origins.<sup>47</sup> The result, however, is a very presentist activity, grounded only in emotional attachment.

Hirsch and Miller quote Simone Weil in that “every human being needs multiple roots.”<sup>48</sup> They proceed to regale readers with the example of Alex Haley’s set of rites (e.g., the journey that resulted in his book) through which he performed the reconstruction of past histories, retrieval of lost memories, activation of historical sites, and quest for origins. This exemplary experience “gave name and shape to the longing for verifiable identification of personal and cultural beginnings.”<sup>49</sup> They invoked Haley’s search for roots as a way to target both action and writing, of the personal within the general,<sup>50</sup> and rites as a performance of roots seeking. Yet, they also caution against quests for rootedness, for they echo the fear of the Boyarins and Clifford, among others, who state that it leads to territorialism, cultural chauvinism, and “triumphant ideology.”<sup>51</sup> Following so many others, they herald marginality, the embrace of the border, and of diaspora existence as a “corrective” to essentialist identity politics.

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<sup>47</sup> Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller, “Introduction,” in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory*, eds. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), xi.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Benjamin *Selected Writings*, “One-Way Street,” 444.

<sup>51</sup> Hirsch and Miller, 3.

The chapters in the collection emphasize (self-) construction as a performative process and a reinterpretation of attachments and dwelling. The result is that attempts to uncover the hidden or glossed over dimension of injustice, for example, so often presented in popular and scholarly representations of events lose their specificity and impact because they are not grounded in “history” or in any investigation, archival or otherwise. In presenting memories based on reflection and philosophical speculation (i.e., “poetics”), they allow for one narrative to be transposed onto another, often unintentionally, which would stand at-odds with the intended purpose of the author, if such a re-re-interpretation were to be offered in its stead. The overall effect of the chapters is a diluted, free-floating impression, rather than the counter- or revisionist history hoped for by the authors and editors. History becomes autobiographical, and thus its presentation lacks confirmed, external evidence. In this way, the marginal and marginalized voices included in *Rites of Return* likewise fall victim to entrenchment in perspectives that lack contextualization. In other words, the accounts in the collection are already mediated snapshots of and reflections of vague meaning, with transposable and interchangeable/malleable components, albeit based on personal sentiments, which do need expression.

What is more, the notion of rites of return proves even more unpersuasive when its very premise, of “verifiable identification of personal and cultural beginnings,” spurred on by Haley’s *Roots*, was exposed as un-verifiable and fabricated, a combination of both fact and fiction. As attested to in Hauke Dorsch’s chapter “Griots, Roots, and Identity in the African Diaspora,”<sup>52</sup> the griot, bard/official storyteller, whom Haley used for information regarding the clan of his African ancestor, Kunta Kinte, was not a “properly” trained bard; his expertise regarding the

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<sup>52</sup> Hauke Dorsch, “Griots, Roots, and Identity in the African Diaspora,” in *Diaspora, Identity, and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research*, eds. Waltraud Kokot, Khachig Tölölyan, and Carolin Alfonso (London: Routledge, 2004), 104.



Kinte clan was suspected of being fabricated.<sup>53</sup> Yet, this is precisely Taussig's point when he says that based on the overwhelming amount of stories, experiences, and circumstances of these injustices suffered and inflicted, he believed them all, but believed none of them. So while Haley's intended goal was shown to be corrupted, the overall effect remained an example of a diasporic existence. It even highlights the notion that "return" itself must be questioned.

The enterprise of *Rites of Return* exists on the opposite end of the spectrum as *Jews*. The former presents interchangeable snapshots based on memories guided by sentimentality. It is thus representative of individual and personal reflection on forms of alienation and displacement. The latter is grounded too heavily on common, recycled, uncritical historical narrative. Both are mediated, explained, and interpreted, and in fact fail to do justice to the "optics of the nervous system." Each is enmeshed, blindly so, in a program, which thus prohibits its being cognizant of the double-ness necessary for a better understanding of what constitutes a diasporic existence. As well, Benjamin already provided testament to the storyteller being unable to communicate (in this case falsely communicating, perhaps knowingly) and people being unable to relate to what is being attempted. Zeitlin, and Hirsch and Miller are worlds apart from one another, as well as from the audiences approaching these texts, to effectively communicate directly. In a sense, they both represent examples of reflections on diaspora in a state of diaspora. They are removed from the very condition they attempt to explain and offer no insight into the category itself; they present mirrors to their respective surfaces and theoretical perspectives, the ideal-type and poetics, respectively.

The result is a replacement of the hegemony of history written by elites by the hegemony of the individual. As Benjamin, Taussig, and others attest, uncovering hidden, repressed, and suppressed experience and memories is a necessary endeavor. Nevertheless, the reliance on

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

“poetics” and positional accounts, to the exclusion of qualitative history, does not clarify a category, experience, or offer redemption and liberation to memory and identity. Rather, it mires the study in the new status quo in which one account is no more “complete” than any other. The author is not beholden to context and gains no access to the *longue durée*, in which case history, experience, and memories are accepted at face value. Double-ness remains elusive, and understanding of transformation within the system is unfulfilled because focus remains on the replacement, on the change, not on the system itself. These recent examples of studies in diaspora are symptoms of the problem rather than new directions toward a better understanding of the category.

### **Spaces of Diaspora: Articulating Movement**

As the scholar within religious studies proper who has explicitly contributed to the literature on diaspora, Thomas Tweed incorporates into his theory of “diasporic religion” not only the elements and their concomitant critiques from the aforementioned theorists, but also the perspectival concerns of Benjamin and Taussig. Tweed maintains that diaspora is a condition of dispersal from a center, but he resists the metaphors of state and territory because his emphasis is on movement, although its (re) presentation is located in time and place.<sup>54</sup> According to Tweed, the dispersed members of a group share a common culture that includes language and symbols, which bridge “homeland and new land.”<sup>55</sup> For Tweed the significance of the location in which diaspora communities find themselves rests in it being a symbolic space that offers opportunity to target practices and beliefs that “overcome opposition between here

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<sup>54</sup> Thomas A. Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 84.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

and there, us and them.” In this way, diasporic religion, and the locations in which these religions operate, is a tirtha, a crossing place that highlights difference but also unites.<sup>56</sup>

The process of migration affords opportunities for the group to make sense of itself as a displaced group. Through the experience of departure, arrival, and settlement the group needs to imaginatively (re) construct its symbols and their meanings.<sup>57</sup> These spaces of dispersal are sites in which confrontation and negotiation over symbolic practices, images, and relations occur not only among different groups, but also within the group itself.<sup>58</sup> Exiles, diasporans, and other members of the dispersed groups more generally struggle over the meaning of the symbols used in the settled locations, and the symbolic forms used in these practices often share in the creolized ethnic and cultural mixture.<sup>59</sup> It is these symbols that help the group members make sense of exile, identify with the homeland from which they, and the images, came, and serve to connect the otherwise disparate group members into a coherent diaspora group making sense of itself in a new home as a group displaced.<sup>60</sup>

Despite intragroup differences, its members nevertheless are bound together by sadness and longing, disorientation of exile, among other sentiments and responses to this process. The

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>57</sup> See n. 5 for Smart’s account and noted implications of this process.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). As a result of large-scale interactions within the past five hundred years, the world appears as continuously growing, people are alienated and rootless, but also connected in unprecedented ways, especially electronically (p. 29). The world has taken on the quality of pastiche, and people can inhabit worlds of memory that pertain to experiences they never had or lost (p. 31). Disparate, but interconnected, flows (of people, information, technology, etc.) suggest that objects follow non-isomorphic paths, and thus sentiments, usually seen as geared toward a political state and locality, now can be transported elsewhere quite easily. Also, cf. Stanley Tambiah, “Movements, Diasporas, and Multiple Modernities,” *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (Winter 2000). Here he explains that the postmodern condition is marked by increased multiculturalism and massive influxes of people. These populations share many elements, but also differ in their combination of other elements, choices they have made, etc. As a result, societies undergo multiple modernities. Societies may share modernizing goals, but are simultaneously operating on multiple versions and divergences (p. 180).

<sup>59</sup> Tweed, 10, 63, 66.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

new locations, then, become sites for the enactment of peoplehood.<sup>61</sup> Diasporic religion, which can be generalized to include the multiple ways that dispersed groups make sense of themselves as being dispersed and of their dispersal, is an ongoing cultural process through which people constantly map their “symbolic landscapes” and construct their “symbolic dwellings.”<sup>62</sup> In this way, religion is a spatialized and spatializing cultural form incorporating symbols that are both transtemporal and translocative. Group members operate simultaneously on multiple registers; they move across space (translocative) and also across time and history (transtemporal).

Tweed recounts how in rituals performed in diasporic communities, for instance, time is fluid and easily fluctuates from a constructed past, to imagined future, all while being performed, recollected, and represented in the present, which is itself displaced and dispersed and in a state of longing. All registers inform the experience and the symbolization of the present.<sup>63</sup> Rituals symbolically move members between the homelands, and festivals/holidays and other occurrences of collective remembering position members in fluid time, connecting the present to times that were important to those community members of the past. They also are prospective in that they position the members in an imagined future.<sup>64</sup>

In this way, Tweed articulates a distinctively Durkheimian understanding of religion and community, albeit accounting for mobility and historical perspective. The meanings that the group attributed to shared symbols and practices varied over time and thus are dynamic and in

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 222. Here Hall asserts that identity is never an accomplished fact. It is a production that always is in process and constantly in flux; as well, it never can be sustained for long periods of time. Ruptures and discontinuities are necessary elements of identity (p. 225). As well, over time, the originary homeland subsequently has changed, and the people comprising the “group” are an amalgamation that has been created, imagined, and unified through incorporating difference (Ibid.), and in this way it is impossible to return home, for home itself is in flux, always already fused with other elements, and is itself a hybrid construction.

<sup>63</sup> Tweed, 94.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 131-32.

flux. The group, now deterritorialized, is supralocal and transregional, and in recreating its home and concomitant practices elsewhere is likewise a moral community mapped onto a new location but tied in many ways to the former.<sup>65</sup> Tweed's pairing of the simultaneously operative registers of the translocative and transtemporal highlights the double-ness, presence of mind, and "optics of the nervous system" to which Benjamin and Taussig presciently called for in any study of contemporaneity, lest it becomes just another symptom of the time rather than an analysis. Tweed's insistence on accommodating the aspect of movement while acknowledging location allows for a more responsible accounting of the construction, maintenance, and propagation of identity in relation to history and memory.

#### Betwixt and Between: Refining Diaspora's Lexicon

Tweed's vocabulary of the translocative and transtemporal provides a framework through which the element of movement can be accounted for, while not overlooking the situatedness out of which such movement emerged and from which it reflects. In one of his later writings, Tweed acknowledges his indebtedness for the metaphor of travel to better understand diasporic religion to James Clifford.<sup>66</sup> For Clifford, travel implies a two-way process, and he juxtaposes his suggestion to investigate movement from previous, more localized studies, which shied away from the blurred boundary areas and historical realities that exist outside the respective ethnographic frame.<sup>67</sup> As will be noted, it is precisely in these blurred boundary areas that other significant diaspora theorists revel, such as Paul Gilroy and Homi Bhabha.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 8.

<sup>67</sup> James Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 99-100.

Once one recognizes the interplay of the local and/with the global (the aptly-named “glocal”),<sup>68</sup> then one more easily can recognize and appreciate issues of domination, resistance, historical encounters, and the resultant co-productions of such encounters and modes of thinking/consciousness among interacting groups.<sup>69</sup> Clifford’s suggested “program” entails studying the “native,” the traveler, the exile, the migrant, as well as the route, and the specific histories of those movements undertaken. Such a comparative study of histories, tactics, and everyday practices of both dwelling and travelling allow one to appreciate the “traveling-in-dwelling” and the “dwelling-in-travelling.”<sup>70</sup> It must not be overlooked, however, that in calling for such an expansive scope in future proposed studies, Clifford was one of the first scholars advocating for, albeit implicitly, an approximation of Benjamin’s and Taussig’s presence of mind and “optics of the nervous system.”

Clifford’s advocacy of shifting emphases from studies detailing defining characteristics (of a particular people, location, diasporic group, *et cetera*) to the diaspora’s borders, against which the group defines itself (i.e., for an incorporation of movement encompassing the translocative) also allows for inclusion of the element of time. The populations under study come from elsewhere, maintain allegiance and practical connections to that elsewhere, and in a sense exist within a lived tension between their currently lived, performed, and imagined identity here and their previously held conceptions of themselves as a group,<sup>71</sup> which resided “there.” In other words, they live “here” and remember, desire, and long for “there,” another place. They

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<sup>68</sup> Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in *Global Modernities*, eds. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London: Sage, 1995).

<sup>69</sup> Clifford “Traveling Cultures,” 101.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>71</sup> James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (August 1994): 306-07.

are separated but simultaneously entangled.<sup>72</sup> Clifford's recognition of diasporic groups being both routed and rooted broadens the conversation to include a questioning of space more generally, while also highlighting the tensions created in consciousness, remembrance, history, and identity construction regarding those concepts.

During the period in which Clifford was advocating a break with previous anthropological ethnographic methods, and thus proposing new avenues for humanistic scholarship that included studying groups traversing borders (i.e., diasporic populations), Paul Gilroy engaged in a revision of cultural historical methods by examining previous conceptions of culture. He placed into question that which people had understood (i.e., national, cultural, and ethnic identity) to be immutable, with notions of creolization and hybridity. As a result of interaction, exchange, and contact the once-thought immutable concepts of culture and identity are reworked and rearticulated, and something new emerges.<sup>73</sup> The developed cultures, however, which were neither "purely" any one form, worked to maintain their new community, preserved and recovered selective traditions, and customized them in hybrid, often antagonistic ways.

Overtime the telling of stories about how the hybrid groups came into being, in which people would detail the community's origins and development of its identity, was part of the process of slaves becoming citizens, for example. Storytelling organized the group's consciousness, and through the processes of storytelling and music making, among other practices, alternative public spheres are created that aid in the negotiation of and navigation among these groups and the larger locale. Through the intermixture of various components, histories, and identities, notions of purity and stability (of a posited African past, for example)

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 2.

broke down, and the interstitial spaces became ex-centric, unstable, non-traditional cultures that eventually formed their own traditions. In these new developments, people are less concerned with “what really happened,” than with the self-construction of forms that eventually became integral parts of their “counter” cultures.<sup>74</sup> Pasts, and previous locations, lose their status as revered entities. Attention shifts to idolizing a culture into which one hopes to return and instead turns to the newly created identity.

Through the processes of movement, interaction, and contact along with its concomitant result of new hybrid formations, Gilroy exposes the conception of identity as an on-going process of self-making and social interaction. As Gilroy states, identity is not an object to be possessed; it is not reified into a thing.<sup>75</sup> In this way, Gilroy’s understanding of “identity,” broadly conceived, parallels Tweed’s understanding of “religion” as an on-going cultural process that is never completed and entails contestation of symbols and their meanings. Diaspora, for Gilroy, is a relational network involving mobility, selection, and creation; it thus challenges the anchored and moored notions of land, territory, soil, and rootedness. Gilroy’s seeming dismissal of investigating “what really happened” is tempered somewhat by Bhabha’s explication of the “third space” (i.e., the in-between and the counter-narrative, which is co-implicated with the traditional history).

Like Clifford and Gilroy, Bhabha understands the “subject” (e.g., the individual, the diasporic group) to be articulated, created, and imagined only in the passage between here and there, the interstitial space in-between more stable points.<sup>76</sup> For Bhabha, the monolithic

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>75</sup> Paul Gilroy, “Diaspora and the Contours of Identity,” in *Identity and Difference*, ed. Kathryn Woodward (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 307.

<sup>76</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 300. See n. 6 for other examples of diaspora using metaphors of webs and electricity.



structures of “nation” and “tradition,” among others, are eroded by the production of amalgamated counter-narratives that develop in the emergent voices speaking in the interstices between time and place.<sup>77</sup> As with Clifford and Gilroy, Bhabha advocates the study of being neither inside nor outside but rather in some combination between them, and this instability of previously stable categories is found on the boundaries, a hybrid realm. In this way, Bhabha approximates Tweed’s understanding the diaspora as a tirtha, a crossing place that highlights difference while also serves to unite into something new but that retains elements of the old.

The nation, for instance, contains thresholds of meaning; in other words, categories contain boundaries, conceptions of what is in and what is out. As a result of this recognition, modes of identification and identity-construction are never complete.<sup>78</sup> One is never outside or beyond “us,” but rather emerges within the discourse itself. As with Gilroy, the process of hybridity gives rise to new areas of negotiation and meaning. When applied to history and not particular, more localized, and more narrowly conceived communities (when taking the approach of *la longue durée* as opposed to the conjecture or the event, to use *Annales’* parlance), the history of colonialism has yet to be written alongside the history of the West’s democracy, he states. In this way, Bhabha can be seen as identifying a call to include Benjamin’s and Taussig’s double-ness on a large scale. Colonialism, for example, is a counter-history/-narrative to the traditional history of the West,<sup>79</sup> and through its inclusion in presenting a history and understanding of the West, one can gain an appreciation of the co-implication of one in the other, of the West in the identity of the colonized and vice versa. Often, group narratives and myths rely on and involve the Other in depicting itself, but these necessarily are only one side of

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>78</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “Introduction: Narrating the Nation,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 4.

<sup>79</sup> Jonathan Rutherford, “Interview with Homi Bhabha: The Third Space,” in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 218.

the Janus-faced in-between. The story is never complete, is always evolving, and entails reflexivity regarding one's production as well.<sup>80</sup>

### **The Diaspora (Re) membered: Inscribing and Incorporating the Past**

The previous section dealt with space, a here and a there, but more importantly with the creative processes undertaken/emergent within the location in-between more rooted locales; mobility, movement, and routes enable translocality and new forms of identity that are neither tethered here nor moored to a there, but which were created out of the journey itself. This section deals with the various ways in which individuals and groups are constructed and “informed” socially and often unconsciously through time, and how societies and individuals contain implicit, but pervasive, memories. Theorists have posited that both the group and the individual contain existences/realities that transcend the mere sum of their parts. In other words, operative at “hidden” levels are forces that shape and guide social and personal life; they do so over long periods of time and serve to connect the present to the past and the represented past to the future. In order to uncover these powerful forces it is necessary to investigate their duration and transformations over the course of many years. The effect of studying effects both

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<sup>80</sup> See Anthony D. Smith, “The Origins of Nations,” in *Becoming National: A Reader*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). He reiterates scholars who note the on-going processes and inclusion of sentiment as necessary for nation-formation, but develops the idea of ethnic, a symbolic community that manifests the characteristics of a common set of myths of common origin, common historical memories, common history, territory, language, customs, religion, and sense of solidarity (p. 108). Ethnicities are either lateral or vertical. The former are communities that originated aristocratically, cover a wide territorial base, but do not possess deep social entrenchment. The sentiments, myths, language, and other shared features are the purview of a select, elite cadre of individuals. Vertical ethnicities are demotic, may be geographically dispersed, but possess deep entrenchment within all strata of the community. Modern nations, regardless its type of ethnicity, have roots in premodern eras and cultures, and it is those ties that must be traced (p. 124), thus situating Smith among those calling for inclusion of the *longue durée*. Regarding the various contents of these “ties,” see Prasenjit Duara, “Historicizing National Identity, or Who Imagines What and When,” in *Becoming National: A Reader*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). National identification is a form of consciousness that is constructed out of fluid relationships, which necessarily involve contestations and negotiations (p. 152); thus, there always exists the possibility of potential disunion and new formations. Scholars must acknowledge and incorporate into their studies of nationalism these contingencies, as well as the mechanisms that present this construction as unitary and cohesive (p. 164); cf. Balibar, n. 95.

translocatively and transtemporally is a recognition that what meets the eye is rarely to be trusted as constituting all that needs to be known about any particular phenomenon.

Émile Durkheim noted that, “religion is an eminently social thing.”<sup>81</sup> It is through experiencing life in a group that an individual learns how to conceive of space, comes to understand the “group,” and recollects memories.<sup>82</sup> He posited that located within an individual are both the singular, biological entity (the individual being) and also the social being, a representative of collective morals, values, and behavior.<sup>83</sup> These observations set in motion the ability of later theorists to establish not only the social basis of memory, but also the embodied aspect of reality; as well, through Durkheim’s theory of the interconnected aspects of the social foundation of mental categories, group cohesion, and the ability of an individual to unconsciously encapsulate the norms and mores of particular groups we are able to connect the category of “diaspora” with the study of memory. Because one can overcome neither individuality nor the social, it is necessary to engage with Durkheim. His work emphasized context, both the subjective and the collective, co-implicated elements that later both Benjamin and Taussig claimed have become overlooked. They added the recognition of the dimension of time, an element with which Durkheim’s study did not deal.

It is to this other aspect of double-ness (i.e., of the body incorporating both the singular biological entity along with its inculcated sociality) that Marcel Mauss developed what was left unexplored in Durkheim. Habits and ways in which an individual knows how to move, gesture, and behave have their basis in a socially informed existence. As Mauss states, it is due to society that there is an intervention in consciousness; an individual immersed and raised in a society is

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<sup>81</sup> Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* [1912], trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 9.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

endowed with knowledge about how to utilize that body without having explicitly studied what societal traditions have prescribed regarding behavior or what society expects that body to do.<sup>84</sup> Categories of existence (i.e., what is prohibited, allowed, and the methods used to bring about those distinctions) are reinforced, and common sentiments are made manifest and strengthened, in groups and common action.<sup>85</sup>

As a younger colleague and later collaborator with Durkheim, Maurice Halbwachs preserved Durkheim's emphasis on the social and collective frameworks through which individuals and groups create images of themselves, and with this consideration he directed his focus explicitly to memory creation. For Halbwachs it is through the group that an individual preserves, reproduces, and perpetuates memories. One's imagination and reproduction of the past occurs within and through the collective in which one lives.<sup>86</sup> The sentiments, thoughts, and interests common to a group orient its members, help to articulate what is important, what is remembered and the way it is envisioned, and generally serve to distinguish what is included or not in the group's image of itself, its past, and therefore what is passed on in future recollections.<sup>87</sup> As well, as Halbwachs notices, individuals usually are unaware that their convictions and feelings come not from themselves so much as from the group in which one currently is located. In other words, social influences that people respond to and obey pass unnoticed and are unperceived.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body" [1934], in *Incorporations*, eds. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (New York: Zone, 1992), 475.

<sup>85</sup> Durkheim *Elementary Forms*, 421.

<sup>86</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* [1952], trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 43, 47.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 52, 73.

<sup>88</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 45.

While Durkheim's focus remained on the collective and the result of gatherings in terms of collective solidarity, reinforcement and perpetuation of boundaries, and the image that the group has of itself as seeming to exist outside of and beyond the respective group members themselves, Halbwachs recognized that memory is mediated by the individual, although the individual's viewpoint and memory changes as do his/her positions and relationships, respective to various social milieus.<sup>89</sup> In fact, Halbwachs provides nuance to Durkheim's insistent focus on society writ large by acknowledging that an individual is part of as many collective memories as the number of subgroups within society, or elsewhere, to which that individual belongs.<sup>90</sup>

In this way, Halbwach's understanding of collective memory differs from "history" in that while the academic discipline of writing history, at least in the earlier part of the twentieth century, was to periodize and divide the course of time into sequences of centuries and periods, collective memory presents continuity and unity. As opposed to operating under the impression that there exists a universal account of time through which changes are recorded, groups conceive of and present themselves as unchanging through time. Such a view necessitates having a group continue a memory of it as existing as such without that image fading away. These groups, moreover, do not take into their consideration of themselves the details that erode as members die or leave. There is seldom explicit reflection on how the group itself transforms, for the group retains an unbroken connection to that past through its periodic gatherings and retellings of its story;<sup>91</sup> this is similar to Durkheim's collective effervescence, albeit in diminutive form.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 82.

In order to carry this analysis of memory further to account more for change and transformation through time, regardless its recognition by the respective group under study, it is helpful to turn to the Annales School of the 1920s, which understood human experience as comprised not only of individual events, but as a composite result of the interaction of many phenomena.<sup>92</sup> Following Durkheim, the Annales School adopted the view that an individual can be comprehended meaningfully only in a social context, and its scholars extended their study to include analyses of enduring structures, both mental and physical, which contributed to individual and collective behavior. To understand those structures, the scholar must open the study to the continuities and discontinuities over long durations, otherwise known as the *longue durée*.<sup>93</sup> History, thus comprehended, is the composite result of bundles of systems/structures, each of which has its own coherence. The *longue durée* is juxtaposed to and differentiated from the medium-term study, called conjecture, which deals with modifications in the structure, and from the short-term focus, which confines itself to individual events.

Another component of the Annales School dealing with enduring structures, and which Mauss picked up on later in his career and theorized somewhat differently, is the notion of mentality. It is this element that makes the Annales School a logical connection between the social foundation of memory and the popular conception of embodiment, or how individual beings become repositories of society's mores, norms, and expectations, which structure their lives and in turn are structured by continued accretions of human behavior and action; the result is a self-perpetuating, unconscious, cycle that persists over generations. In the Annales' usage of "mentality," as Jacques Le Goff explains, the term signifies a collective psychology, a way of thinking and feeling particular to a group (similar to the German notion of *Weltanschauung*,

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<sup>92</sup> Colin Lucas, "Introduction," in *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology* [1974], eds. Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 4.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

worldview).<sup>94</sup> The history of mentalities operates on the level of everyday “automatisms of behavior” (i.e., the history of bodily techniques), which normally would not be included in historical studies because they reveal impersonal content of an individual’s thoughts and actions.<sup>95</sup> The Annales School opened up for study the gestures, spontaneous words, and behavior that seemingly have no origin and which appear to be reduced to (cultural) improvisation, but which in fact carry deep roots in systems/structures of thought.

In an effort to make the connection among the individual, the collective, and both the explicitly and implicitly inculcated feelings, behaviors, and actions more apparent, Paul Connerton relates that if one posits the existence of such a social memory, then one presupposes that it would be found in commemorative ceremonies (thus recognizing Durkheim), and ceremonies are commemorative so long as they entail performance. That which is performative and social, and most likely recurrent, entails aspects of habit (thus recognizing Mauss). Habit, then, necessitates bodily automatisms, and all modes of existence are based on the premise that the body already possesses “predisposed frameworks” that were not consciously learned or studied but rather incorporated into one’s habit through repeated bodily movements so that one simply “knows” how to behave in a given situation.<sup>96</sup>

Important for our purposes is Connerton’s differentiation between the sociological level of analysis, which confines itself to recorded history, and the habituated bodily substrate of the

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<sup>94</sup> Jacques Le Goff, “Mentalities: A History of Ambiguities,” trans. David Denby, in *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology* [1974], eds. Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 171.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>96</sup> Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 5-6. Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* [1972], trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), in which he resuscitates the term “habitus” from Mauss, a term denoting a system of durable, transposable dispositions; it encompasses structured structures that likewise serve as structuring structures (p. 72). The structures can be regulated and regular, but they do not follow explicit rules, express an explicit end (aim, goal), and are not imposed by someone who controls the environment (i.e., they operate below the level of discourse) (p. 87).

performance, which operates below the level of explicit discourse; in other words, he juxtaposes overt “inscription” of bodily action with implicit “incorporation,” in which a being unconsciously takes in teachings that become part of the body’s habits and mode of thinking.<sup>97</sup> In this way Connerton engages in analysis closely related to the principles presented by the Annales School. For Connerton, ritual, for example, should not be looked upon as exemplifying simply a type of cultural value expressed in myth (i.e., that which is inscribed and consciously taught/learned), but also should highlight the performative aspect encoded in gestures, postures, and movements.<sup>98</sup> Memory, for Connerton, can be preserved not only through inscribing a narrative in text, myth, and images, but also can be incorporated into the body itself so that one’s habits, one’s behavior, and the ways in which one moves hold and convey information, and this is learned through unconscious repetition.<sup>99</sup>

Of course, it must be noted that Connerton’s study, while providing a much needed investigation into the functioning of instruction and inculcation, which operate simultaneously on many levels, is limited in scope in that its perspective is presented as a monologue, not the dialogue or multivocal component needed in cultivating a presence of mind or a better

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<sup>97</sup> Etienne Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology,” trans. Chris Turner, in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, eds. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (London: Verso, 1991). Balibar states that the nation is presented as an already established narrative, and it appears to its members that the current form of the nation is the only way that things could have been (p. 86). From birth individuals are already situated into the nation form; they are socialized into becoming national, and through daily apparatuses and practices people are constituted as *homo nationalis*, while also being *homo economicus, religiosus, politicus, et cetera* (p. 93). In this way, the nation, as does every other social community, functions through imagination, the projection of individuals into the form of a narrative (Ibid.). Also, on the notion of imagination in nation formation, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991). He defines the nation as an imagined political community. Because its members will never meet and thus never know all of their co-members, the nation is imagined. Communion resides in the mind of each individual (p. 6). Because the notion of togetherness, community, and comradeship exists in group life, the nation is a community (p. 7). What permits this mental development to form is what Anderson describes as “homogeneous empty time,” which incorporates temporal simultaneity that is imaginatively experienced translocatively (p. 24-25). Individuals, now constituted as co-nationals, gain reassurance that the imagined world of the nation writ large is rooted in quotidian practices (p 35-36), cf. Kertzer, n. 111, and Confino, n. 109.

<sup>98</sup> Connerton, 61.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 72-73.



appreciation of the “optics of the nervous system.” His analysis, and others like his, paves the way to a deeper understanding of the necessarily multivalent quality of any study that purports to study things social, but still falls short of any recognition of the diversity of meanings of symbols and their associated communities of action and memory.

Resituating the Diaspora: Symbolically Constructing the Whole

Such multivocality in the various ways that groups come to imagine, reflect upon, remember, and commemorate themselves finds expression in the works of Pierre Nora, Jan Assmann, and Alon Confino. Nora, emerging from the Annales School, is interested in dismantling chronological and teleological continuity and thus focuses his attention on the symbolic fragments that combine into and relate to the symbolized whole. In other words, Nora situates the scholar’s attention on the scrutiny of the “building blocks” that form otherwise traditional representations of what people consider to be stable entities, such as the group and nation.<sup>100</sup>

According to his understanding, people operate today under the assumption/consciousness that traditions have ended, that globalization, democratization, and the proliferation of mass culture/media have upset societies.<sup>101</sup> Institutions that once transmitted values inter-generationally no longer operate as they did in the past, and one’s perception of the past is now supplanted by current events.<sup>102</sup> “Sites of memory,” such as museums, as well as the ways in which traditions are passed on, safeguard what little is left of memory. In this current environment, he asserts, old symbols no longer evoke in group members the same sort of

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<sup>100</sup> Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, vol. 1, Conflicts and Divisions* [1992], ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xix.

<sup>101</sup> Nora, 2.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

response as they might have in previous generations, but their energy and potential still remain.<sup>103</sup>

Jan Assmann, writing out of a Halbwachian tradition, notes that Halbwachs was influential in shifting attention away from biological frameworks of memory to cultural ones.<sup>104</sup> Assmann furthers the social embeddedness of memory by differentiating between communicative and cultural memory. The former is what is gained through everyday communication, which is limited in the degree of that interaction and information gained to the extent of basic temporal considerations, such as human longevity, while cultural memory is grounded in fateful events. The memory of such events is maintained through developed institutional structures.<sup>105</sup> Repeating a refrain familiar to those in religious studies, Assmann states that everyday, communicative time is interrupted by rites, festivals, images, *et cetera* that relate to and reflect different temporal dimensions. As people experience those collective “interruptions,” meaning crystallizes and is accessible to any given present across time that continues to encounter those phenomena.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 7. This acknowledgment is common in religious studies literature. Cf. Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory* [1993], trans. Simon Lee (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), in which she posits that religion is a particular mode of believing, and an adherent is a member of a chain of tradition/memory; belonging to it situates the believer into a community. The process of anamnesis, of recalling the past to memory, often is observed as a rite through which a group of believers demonstrates both to itself and to the outside world its adherence to a tradition. Yet, this line of descent, which gives the group significance and justifies its relationship to the present, suffers attenuation in modernity (p. 125). Social change alters the ability of the collective to establish and propagate its ideals, thus loosening social bonds (p. 25); and Joseph Campbell, *The Flight of the Wild Gander: Explorations in the Mythical Dimension* (New York: Viking Press, 1969), where he claims that despite the numerous “de-centerings” humanity has experienced (e.g., Copernicus, encountering unimagined cultures and “worlds,” the positing of internal, psychological forces, such as the superego and id), which as a result have lessened the once dominant hold that religious traditions and myths had on people, the need for spiritual quests persists (p. 226).

<sup>104</sup> Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (Spring-Summer 1995): 125.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

Through development of practices, in relation to those transtemporal phenomena, the group utilizes a body of reusable texts, images, and rituals that aid in the stabilization of the group's self-image, and the group becomes aware of itself and thus becomes visible to others as possessing a cultural heritage.<sup>107</sup> Assmann stresses the fact that the cultural dimension of memory is communicative, not just embodied and lived. More importantly, memory's cultural dimension operates in different temporal structures from other dimensions of memory. While it is true that within a group people live among markers that allow for one to observe a tradition, contexts do change and may change to such a degree that individuals are not reminded, in the new environment, of commitments made previously and the situations leading to having made such commitments. In this way, Assmann notes memory's relativity, similarly to Nora's assessment of society's changing responses to symbols over time.

Certain elements of cultural life, like religion, operate in ways that support the maintenance of memories, despite the change in circumstance.<sup>108</sup> These rituals, according to Assmann, exhibit counterfactual elements. They introduce into new situations, environments, and periods of time components that are both distant and alien (e.g., previously made commitments, recollections and accompanying practices from elsewhere). In this way, the concept of ritual (cultural) memory serves as bonding memory; it brings meaning, significance, and memories from the past to the present and works to stabilize those components and the life of the group in the present, new situation.<sup>109</sup> Cultural memory "disseminates and reproduces a

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 131-33.

<sup>108</sup> Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 10-11.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 16.

consciousness of unity” and does so through texts, which answer questions that are both normative (“What should we do?”) and formative (“Who are we?”).<sup>110</sup>

In his analysis of national identity more specifically, Confino provides solid examples of how individuals, often from disparate circumstances, turn national, and demonstrates how a common denominator arises linking their particular local place to the abstract, national world.<sup>111</sup> In a move reminiscent of Nora, Confino posits the idea that it was through the emergence of small-scale, local, and village (*heimat*, homeland) museums in Germany that regional, political, and religious differences were overcome and the notion of a German nation developed. The idea of *heimat* was so vague so as to allow adherents of those differences to remain loyal to their own causes and aims while at the same time informing a transcendent national community.<sup>112</sup> The local museum, as site of memory, bonded identification of its inhabitants to a national sentiment of belonging, and this developed emotive understanding transcended time and space.

The *heimat*, he asserts, was not a system of articulated concepts (akin to Connerton’s understanding of “inscription”); rather, it was a system of sentiments that united locals to their particular places of residence, reminded them of home (their villages, their parishes, their families), which when reflected upon while away from those locations, at war for instance, attached the “coziness” of the hometown to the larger region and eventually to the nation as a

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 38. Cf. Ernest Renan, “What Is a Nation?” [1882], in *Becoming National: A Reader*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Already by the late 1800s, Renan notes a discrepancy in the writings on the nation. While the “essence” of a nation is that its members have much in common (e.g., language, religion, history, location), it is through forgetting that the nation is formed. Often unity is a result of coercion, brutality, and violence, but the developed recollection that members have of their group does not remember such origins of its unity (p. 45). The nation results from the convergence of many divergent facts (i.e., it is a symbolic entity), and it requires sentiment for coherence and cohesion. Renan states that a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle that simultaneously operates with a connection to the past, while being situated in the present, and projects its hopes for continuation into the future (p. 52).

<sup>111</sup> Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), xii.

<sup>112</sup> Alon Confino, “The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Heimat, National Memory, and the German Empire, 1871-1918,” *History and Memory* 5, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 1993): 50.

whole.<sup>113</sup> Confino presents Nora's program of studying the symbolic components that tie in to the larger symbolized whole. The conglomeration of often contradictory and opposing memories and sentiments added up to something more than the sum of its parts (as depicted and located in local museums). Local uniqueness was preserved in the museum, and the *heimat* became the denominator uniting the various locales into the abstract whole. In this way, Confino highlights how this novel form of consciousness (i.e., nation- and peoplehood) can be understood as comprised of memories and recollections of the specific location that is enlarged through later manipulation by various means to form attachment to a larger (imagined) entity. The locales imagined together, identified with each other, and belonged to a united idea.

### **Judaism, the Exemplum: Approaches to Emic Contextualization**

As Arnold Eisen notes in his study of the concept of *galut*, the Hebrew term used to denote historical exile and dispersion of Jews from Judea and later emigration from the land of Israel, both political and metaphysical dimensions are implicated;<sup>114</sup> and in this way, he acknowledges that the term carries a multiplicity of ways in which people use it, identify with it,

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 8. Cf. David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988). He maintains that through participation in rites, a participant is able to identify with forces existent beyond the purely local, which are seen and understood only in symbolic form. Ritual is a mechanism through which individuals, mediated through the group, give meaning to the world (pp. 1-2). Yet, rituals do not carry the same meanings for all involved participants. He proposes understanding ritual as being comprised of two processes: condensation, in which respective symbols unify a diversity of meanings; and multivocality (i.e., many registers operating simultaneously), in which different meanings may be attached to the same symbol. Due to the ambiguous quality associated with some symbols, identification of the local with the national, for example, may be more easily attained because individuals can stipulate their own connections, sentiments, and importance as to how the pieces fit together, as opposed to follow rigid orthodoxy of belief (p. 21). Kertzer also notes that one potent way in which a group is bound together is the simultaneity of symbolic action (p. 23), although he recognizes that many competing interests and available interpretations present themselves to individuals through which counter-narratives can be constructed, thus implicitly recognizing Halbwachs's assertion that an individual belongs to more than one available schema through which experiences can be interpreted and recollected.

<sup>114</sup> Arnold M. Eisen, *Galut: Modern Jewish Reflections on Homelessness and Homecoming* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), xviii.

and enact it.<sup>115</sup> The biblical texts, for example, depict a world in which all people are displaced and not at home. Humanity became estranged from its originary center, its Paradise (and later utopia), and as Eisen notes, this inherent state of dispersion, of already having come from elsewhere, is later rearticulated in the founding narratives of Judaism itself.<sup>116</sup>

Throughout his treatment of the biblical texts, Eisen focuses on three specific narratives of exile/dispersion: Adam and Eve heeding the serpent's suggestion, not God's, thus disrupting humans' relation to the earth, which resulted in banishment and ceaseless wandering; Abraham's sojourn to Canaan; and Jacob's later descent into Egypt. It is in Egypt that the Hebrews encountered the combination of both political and metaphysical exile.<sup>117</sup> Eisen notes that from Abraham onward, the pattern of relations between what became the people Israel and the rest of humanity becomes fixed (i.e., a paradigm and heuristic tool are created).<sup>118</sup> What God gives can

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<sup>115</sup> For a critique of presentations of the "Jewish diaspora" in scholarly literature, see Jonathan Ray, "New Approaches to the Jewish Diaspora: The Sephardim as a Sub-Ethnic Group," *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 1 (Fall 2008). He acknowledges that there is a tendency in diaspora studies to view the Jewish diaspora as a monolithic and undifferentiated whole (p. 11), and as a way to temper this approach, he suggests viewing it as a series of diaspora communities. These smaller diasporas do not reject the importance of Judaism as a cultural common ground, but they direct their attention to sub-ethnic factors and secondary homelands as constituting their community boundaries (pp. 12-13). For example, Iberian Jewry on the eve of expulsion demonstrated a high level of success, social status, and intellectual productivity. Yet it would be a mistake, he cautions, to characterize and attribute to those communities a pan-Iberian or pan-peninsular identity. In these cases, identity rarely transcended a community's city or region, and in this way, the "Jewish" community of Spain really was imagined (p. 18), although present.

<sup>116</sup> Other scholars have used this information to argue against later Jewish (i.e., Zionist and other) claims of Judaism having originated in some way in a particular location (i.e., the land of Israel). Arguments against this claim rest on the statements in the biblical texts demonstrating that Israel is not "originally" from that location, and their movement there resulted in the displacement of those who "originally" were from there. Following this line of textual reasoning, however, there is little, if any, information on the other inhabitants themselves. To rely on texts to dismiss one group's later claims to a place by invoking experiences of others, from the same texts that remain silent about the "prehistory" of those other groups, is to add dimensions to the texts otherwise not present (i.e., the double-standard of applying historical claims to Jews and not to others). From what the texts present, the other inhabitants of the land are likewise in exile, simply by being human, yet as "nations" they are of unknown provenance, and there is no reason to attribute to them origins simply by being located in a particular space at a particular time.

<sup>117</sup> Eisen, 4.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10. Cf. Yitzhak F. Baer, *Galut*, trans. Robert Warshow (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), 12-13, in which he explains that Abraham is the primal ancestor of Israel as well as the prototypical pilgrim. He proceeds to state that in the developed (Jewish) tradition the historical events of the past (as presented in the texts) established the paradigms that are repeated throughout time (p. 110). On the development of how this theme is

be taken away, and how those physical possessions are handled depends on what Israel does with them and how it lives.<sup>119</sup> For example, while in Egypt Moses persuades the people of the possibility of living a life they have never before known, of living according to a defined way. Through their wandering the people continually are re-directed to the memory of God's words at Sinai and are reminded along the way that they (i.e., the people) consented to those dictates. Set in motion, then, was a state of being, and consciousness, in which every object and event (retroactively for the past, present, and into the projected future) are endowed with ultimate meaning.<sup>120</sup>

Throughout his text Eisen points out that Israel conceived of itself as the midpoint between origin and destination, and in order to enact the dictates to which it consented, it needed space. Because Israel had been politically exiled and lacked access to that designated land, its leaders continued to distinguish sacred/holy from the profane, as dictated by God, but had to do so in a "small sanctuary" (i.e., the developed Torah), which served as a portable homeland that would safeguard the community in its wanderings.<sup>121</sup> For Jewish communities, each dimension of exile was intimately connected to and (co-) implicated in the others; political homelessness was a cause of anxiety because it exposed Jews to the metaphysical exile that was lessened in its (i.e., in God's) own land.<sup>122</sup>

The metaphysical dimension eventually gained ascendancy over the political in the development of the sixteenth-century Lurianic Kabbalah, in the wake of the political expulsion

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treated across the spectrum of Jewish life and through representative texts of those periods, see Yosef H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982).

<sup>119</sup> Eisen *Galut*, 15-16.

<sup>120</sup> See Assmann's discussion of communicative, bonding, and cultural memory.

<sup>121</sup> Eisen *Galut*, 36-37.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

from Spain in 1492. In this system, God was understood to have contracted Himself, to make room for creation. This meant that even before the onset of Creation there existed divine exile.<sup>123</sup> As part of the process of creation, the light of the primal energy burst its container (another exile), and thus the task bequeathed to humans, especially to Jews, according to the kabbalists, was to gather the sparks to aid in the re-creation of a unified God. In effect, humans aid in the redemption not only of humanity, but of the world, and of the divine.

Throughout their wanderings, which eventuated into prolonged settlements elsewhere, Jews learned to maintain certain mental reservations about their continued exile (metaphysical, political, etc.), to which their religious laws were adapted and accounted for, while maintaining an inner acknowledgement that this condition was temporary and conditional; that is, they still had (religious, communal, humanitarian, etc.) tasks to perform.<sup>124</sup> With political emancipation in Europe in the late eighteenth century, Jews were promised the possibility of being at home, politically, in that elsewhere. Zionist thinkers noted that (the people) Israel had to become less Jewish in order to become like, and accepted by, other nations.<sup>125</sup>

With the later creation of the political State of Israel, tensions oscillate between the metaphysical and political dimensions of exile. Different registers are emphasized at different times, for different purposes, and for different communities. Possession of land served a political purpose, but as Eisen makes clear, exile is more than physical dispersion. Wherever there is a sense of “spiritual obtuseness,” *galut* exists.<sup>126</sup> As Eisen notes, “The Jewish people has

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 171-72. See n. 5, in which both Smart and Vertovec speak of a diaspora consciousness and awareness, of people and groups being both “here” and “there,” with “there” influencing the type of life aimed at and hoped for “here.”



come home. It has not come Home.”<sup>127</sup> Already it is becoming clear that to be in diaspora entails being 1) a human with a history of migration from Africa, or any other primordial site of origination, 2) possibly a human who adheres to biblical texts for meaning, thus seeing oneself as constituting humanity as having been exiled from Eden, 3) possibly a Jewish human who understands Judaism as “originating” through wandering to a (promised) elsewhere, 4) possibly a Jewish kabbalist who understands that all of Creation and God Itself is exiled and concomitantly in the process of restoration of lost unity, 5) someone who either voluntarily or through coercion was politically forced to leave and (re)settle elsewhere, and 6) someone who feels out of place and feels as though one’s identity has been created through experiencing various periods of respite and continued wandering, searching, and travel. For many people, these registers come to the fore at different times.

#### While Standing on...Both Feet?: Judaism’s Ambiguous Territorial Positionality

William Safran’s investigations into the concept of “diaspora” are situated within the discourse on space and groups’ receptions by the hostland, and responses to the hostland, within that space. He notes that traditionally understood, the concept of “diaspora,” or of being in diaspora, for Jews has taken on connotations of deracination, legal disabilities, oppression, and adjustment to a hostland whose conditions may be unreliable. The host population may wish that the incoming population’s presence will be temporary. As is often depicted in standard histories of Jewish communities over time, though, the incoming population (in this instance Jewish groups) has developed institutions, social patterns, and symbols that unite it and cohere

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<sup>127</sup> Eisen *Galut*, 178.

its disparate elements, while retaining an idea of “return,” which is often left undefined.<sup>128</sup> As is readily noted in contemporary studies on Jewish life outside the reestablished land of Israel, socio-political, and economic, conditions have witnessed fewer and less severe instances of oppression toward Jewish communities and in fact have exhibited an openness that makes it easier for people to “opt out” of particularistic communities, if many elements of identity are assumed by the larger, host society.<sup>129</sup>

In fact, it is this very situation of Jewish prosperity, in the face of a tradition and developed paradigms that posit states of precariousness and misery while in dispersion, that some scholars use in their development of a new critique and understanding of contemporary Jewish life worldwide. For example, Caryn Aviv and David Shneer posit a new category, “new Jews,” and they see an end to the Jewish diaspora. They claim that a majority of Jews worldwide no longer possess a self-understanding of being in diaspora; rather, they conceive of their current locations as home and do not pine for a “Promised Land.”<sup>130</sup> “Home” may continue to be mythic, but the reality of Jews’ situation is rootedness on earth in a respective dispersed community. They claim that this tension between the spiritual and the physical, between rooted life and spiritual rootlessness, is exemplified scripturally in Jeremiah’s call on Jews to oscillate between being at home (in the world, wherever they are) and recalling the mythic homeland.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> William Safran, “The Jewish Diaspora in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective,” in *Sociology of Diaspora: A Reader*, eds. Ajaya Kumar Sahoo and Brij Maharaj (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2007), 337.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 341-42.

<sup>130</sup> Caryn Aviv and David Shneer, *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), xvi.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. While Aviv’s and Shneer’s analysis may be accurate for many people whom they interviewed, the authors did not take adequate account of Steiner’s existential caveat to Ezrahi; external conditions often are quite precarious, and it is these conditions that are necessary for the allowance of Jewish difference to exist publicly.

While Aviv's and Shneer's counter-narrative to more traditional understandings of Jewish existence is necessary and may more adequately reflect current thinking, it nonetheless is still a rather staid monologue. In other words, there is no incorporation of history, methods of transformation, and "religion" in their presentation of Jewish life around the world. They recognize that Jews always had multiple diasporas and homelands, that Jews have understood themselves as rooted in various, respective places of residence, and have exercised various methods of identifying and marking locations as "Jewish."<sup>132</sup> Yet, what is absent from their analysis, similar to the marked absences in Hirsch and Miller, is any explicit grappling with how Jews connect with other Jews beyond using the nominal designation "Jew."<sup>133</sup> There is no sense of how this rootedness and connection to Judaism is created, maintained, envisioned, enacted, recollected, and perpetuated, let alone the many other registers in which Jews, and others, exist diasporically.

As one who does target aspects of sedentary and rooted life that in fact help to foster connections across boundaries, thus effecting a diasporic consciousness on many levels, Safran

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 6-7. Strategies for marking Jewish space include hanging *mezuzot* on doorposts, constructing cemeteries, and erecting *eruvim*, see discussion on Mann and n. 138. Perhaps the most glaring omission in the book is that the rooted, (re-) created Israel, as a nation-state, is not afforded the same significance and meaning with which spatialized, territorialized, and concretely located Jewish communities elsewhere are allowed to endow their respective locales. In Israel this rootedness is understood as a failure to the very spiritual and religious bases that the authors fail to enumerate and expound in their book, but which supposedly Jewish communities around the world, except in Israel, experience, share, and enjoy. They state that to call a place home is a statement of power, and that by arguing a place is home Jews express a sense of entitlement, control, and familiarity (p. 23). In Israel, however, these sentiments carry pejorative and condemnatory overtones for the authors, although their explanations for it assume that only Jews have those desires and sentiments, and are the only ones who call for making a space a place and thus "erasing" the stories of those who share identification with that space. That this book presents a monologue, no presence of mind, and privileges the "poetics" of the authors' reading of the interviews is an understatement.

<sup>133</sup> See, Baer, *Galut* (p. 119), in which he explained that what remained for Jews in the "contemporary" world (i.e., 1947, at the time of publication) is to question how they stand in relation to the established foundations that have stabilized the community for thousands of years. He recognized and alerted future Jewish communities to this conundrum, which continues to confront Jewish life. As well, this falls into Zeitlan's observation of scholars presuming (religious) coherence without accounting for its elements and ways of operating. That is, they do not acknowledge the "work" that religion does in creating bonding and cultural memory, let alone the implications this (i.e., even more registers on which dispersion and being displaced occur) adds to an understanding of the category of "diaspora," and of diaspora consciousness.

invokes religion explicitly. He notes that for Jews religion has been an important element of diaspora reality. This element is reflected in the idea of the “homeland” being the locus of holy sites, the location where the national religious identity developed, and where the sacred writing originated.<sup>134</sup> While located abroad, which as stated, in locations that became quite settled and conducive to merging in many regards into the surrounding environs, Jewish communities maintained connection with that homeland, however it was imagined. For example, Jews provided financial support to issues related to there, adopted its language and culture, and simply participated in rituals dictated in religious texts themselves that were directed to that place.<sup>135</sup> As Confino demonstrated, it is these quotidian actions and investments in daily life that people make with regard to “home” that helps break down the center/periphery model.

In writing specifically about Jewish relationships to particular places, Barbara Mann investigates various elements implicit in any understanding of place, ties together many of the themes Eisen invoked, and relates them to contemporary concerns about the (political) results of identification with particular places (and enactments of possessing those places). In alluding to Jewish religious conceptions of space, and time, she claims that one cannot think about wholeness (redemption, unity) without thinking of and remembering its loss.<sup>136</sup> The Garden (Eden), then, is a symbol of an irretrievable past, of stability, and of sovereignty. Taken along with Jerusalem, they constitute Judaism’s main symbols of lost centers.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Safran “The Jewish Diaspora,” 341-42.

<sup>135</sup> Regarding Jewish texts’ relation to and reenactment of life within Israel, see Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987). He explains that “ritual” is “a mode of paying attention,” and that Judaism’s development of the Mishnah, for example, the not so “small sanctuary” was a structure that was approachable and that prescribed rituals directed to and in reference to a place, but which was independent of place (p. 94). Jewish engagement with it, however, enacted that place and consciousness of it.

<sup>136</sup> See Eisen’s discussion of Lurianic Kabbalah.

<sup>137</sup> Barbara E. Mann, *Space and Place in Jewish Studies* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 28.

She also notes that throughout Jewish history there have been experiences of communities understanding themselves to be ideologically in exile while being existentially at home.<sup>138</sup> Repeating a refrain that Eisen already established, she notes that scriptural descriptions of the land (of Israel) depict it as a site of contestation, as being filled with others, and as never totally belonging to anyone. Israel's possession of it is conditional.<sup>139</sup> Its loss is recognized by and in prayer, which replaced the sacrificial offerings in the Temple. Mann reiterates that diaspora connotes being uprooted, displaced, but also as entailing processes of (re-) rooting.

Space, as she makes clear, is determined by geography, but also by activities performed in it. An example of Jewish grappling with the conundrum of maintaining "Jewish place" in an otherwise non-Jewish space is the rabbinic development of the *eruv*, a physically enclosed area (usually demarcated by a wire boundary) that symbolically extends the private domain of a household, thus permitting activities allowed in the home but normally forbidden in public on the Sabbath, such as carrying objects.<sup>140</sup> This construction is a ritual related to space, that of the neighborhood conceived of as a home, which transforms space into a particular place,<sup>141</sup> without it being dependent on a group's claiming sovereignty over that area.

### Texts, Social Imaginaries, and Exigencies: Quandaries over Levels of Reality

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 36. For examples within the Jewish past where this state of affairs also held true, see Erich S. Gruen, "Diaspora and Homeland," in *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity*, ed. Howard Wettstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). He relates that Jewish communities during the Second Temple period did not confront a notion of displacement/diaspora as something to be overcome (p. 20). Hellenistic Jewish writers did write of diaspora as exile, and they understood the scattering of co-religionists/-ethnics as a result of failure to heed the commandments. The biblical allusions are warnings to the current communities not to lapse again, not as indications that current life away from Israel/Jerusalem was deplorable (pp. 21-22). Jews, while part of larger settlements elsewhere, part of larger metropolises, did not feel themselves to be cut off from the center; they retained rituals directed toward that center, payment of the Temple tithe, and other bonding devices (p. 28).

<sup>139</sup> Mann *Space and Place*, 59.

<sup>140</sup> Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Vered Shemtov, "Introduction: Jewish Conceptions and Practices of Space," *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2005): 5.

<sup>141</sup> Mann *Space and Place*, 145-46.

As exemplified in the discussion on ways in which scholars of Judaism have dealt with Jewish views toward, and enactments within, particular space, even more levels/registers of diasporicity exist than simply being geographically separated from somewhere. Even the rabbinic allowance for a bounded, imagined construct demonstrates that the rabbis invested energy in detailing symbolic dimensions necessary for “inscribing communal identity onto a lived environment,”<sup>142</sup> while never abandoning the recognition that the necessity of such a construct was due to being dispersed in many ways. The very development of a religiously sanctified “home,” as resulting from the guidelines for an *eruv*, for instance, places into question the very category of “diaspora,” if control of space is one of the underlying factors of being in diaspora.

It is to this tension, between the imagined and the lived, which encapsulates subsequent research on (Jewish) diaspora studies. The need for context, which necessitates focus on time, space, history and autobiography, memory and collective belonging, displacement, and settlement, highlight the fact that Benjamin’s and Taussig’s cautions are all the more prescient and in need of address. Representing the major streams within this genre are Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi and George Steiner. Ezrahi delves into an analysis of the worlds of Jewish fiction as a way to critique the current political situation. Her underlying question rests on asking what it is that the authors she analyses actually remember in their writing about home, travel, and return. Throughout her analysis of various authors’ styles and literary characters, she juxtaposes the portable, open, and malleable creation of rabbinic culture and of Jewish life structured by it to the (re-) territorialized, closed (re-) creation of a Jewish state.<sup>143</sup>

For many of the authors that she discusses, their point of departure is reference to sacred memory, to sacred place/space, and to the ensuing pilgrimage of return. They present

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<sup>142</sup> Fonrobert and Shemtov “Introduction,” 6.

<sup>143</sup> Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 10.

voyages that are linear, although the path is quite circular. In these depictions of Jewish travels, the wanderers are not possessors; speech is privileged, and the actual destination is absent and remains vague.<sup>144</sup> After the Shoah (i.e., the Holocaust of the Second World War), though, she notes that many authors questioned space more generally because survivors could not find “home” anywhere. Because there once was a home, many authors demanded reconcretization (i.e., particular places).<sup>145</sup> For other authors, existence itself was questioned, not just place and home. If at least physical remains of previous lives were not totally effaced, then “return” to even dilapidated homes would be bearable, but to be confronted with having left no trace, to being erased, leaves survivors outside historical time and memory.<sup>146</sup>

Throughout her discussion of these authors’ imagined worlds, albeit worlds often reflecting lived exigencies, Ezrahi presents her analysis. If visions remain unrealized (i.e., if possession of that goal, concrete place, utopia, which would mean physical place located somewhere and inhabited by others – as presented in the biblical texts, for example – is unfulfilled), then an “infinite elasticity” connects dreamers and the object of their faith (i.e., physical return and solidification of imagination).<sup>147</sup> In this way, Ezrahi presents the Jewish teleology, as is commonly understood. She states that what is remembered (by the authors, by Jewish communities, for example) is also imagined. Banishment from the Garden is the moment when myth becomes history. From that moment on, history becomes a narrative with a posited utopian goal: projected repatriation and alternative sovereignty.<sup>148</sup> To finish the

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 135-36.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>148</sup> Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, “Our Homeland, the Text...Our Text the Homeland: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination,” *Michigan Quarterly Review* 31, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 465.

narrative, then, is to provide closure, and this threatens imagination and creativity in the now. In her view, exile (and being in diaspora) enables the storyteller and scholar to produce, to imagine, to create, and not to (dis) possess.<sup>149</sup>

While Ezrahi presented an analysis of Jewish fiction and the supposed (religious, political, and artistic) implications of actually succeeding in working to enact a dream of “return,” George Steiner presents a view of diaspora as understood by G. W. F. Hegel, but cautions against a total privileging of texts and social imaginaries over physical concerns and acknowledgment of history. Steiner states that Hegel’s understanding of Judaism was one in which Judaism broke the bonds of human unity. According to Hegel, Abraham’s leaving Ur destroyed the bonds that connect a group to its ancestors; Abraham dismissed his childhood, and this repudiation of the past produced estrangement from the rest of humanity, the result of which was Judaism’s eternal longing for and incapability of achieving self-integration.<sup>150</sup>

In this way, Hegel continues, the Jewish claim to nearness to God, accessed and approached through the text, came at a cost of self-ostracism from earth and relations among humans. Foreignness, of being in diaspora, gains an ontological status in Judaism. What is tragic to Hegel, however, is for others the secret to Jewish survival: locating home in the text, which

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 467. For another example in which the condition of being in diaspora is presented as an idealized form of existence, see Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, “Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity,” *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (Summer 1993). They explain how in diaspora difference and identity can be maintained without having to risk the dispossession of others in gaining that opportunity (p. 711). Instances of particularity coupled with control of power produces exclusivity and dominance (p. 713). Therefore, in order to avoid exclusivity (and thus the control of difference) and dominance, Israel, for example, should maintain its diasporic consciousness: a notion of the Jewish collective as being one people (at odds with Aviv and Shneer), although now sharing space with others. How this is to be accomplished, especially without taking into account the position of the “others” remains to be theorized politically with any of the involved parties. They advocate for the tension between universal souls and Jewish bodies (p. 721), which maintains the possibility of keeping a distinctive culture without controlling land, and thus without controlling and dispossessing others.

<sup>150</sup> George Steiner, “Our Homeland, the Text,” *Salmagundi* 66 (Winter-Spring 1985): 5.



forever will be with each community. Each commentary, then, is a homecoming.<sup>151</sup> He proceeds to relate how the development of Christianity contributed to another sense of Jewish diaspora. Christianity's development, in particular Pauline universalism, could have diffused Judaism's identity into Christianity itself, he asserts, had the early Church not become a political-territorial structure, later following and serving the militancy of secular states.<sup>152</sup> Underlying all of these examples of being in diaspora (philosophically, religiously, and thus socially wherever Judaism was a minority presence), Jews were in precarious positions. For Jewish "survivors" of the concrete politico-historical realities, such as the Dreyfus Affair, the Shoah, among others, homeland needed to be re-found. Mere textual homecoming was no match for (potential, and actual) physical persecution.<sup>153</sup>

### Looking Forward to the Past

In his discussion of the origins of Israelite religion P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. explains how Israel went through a process of ethnic self-identification in Canaan; it drew boundaries between itself and other peoples.<sup>154</sup> In coming to this conclusion, he discusses the various avenues and perspectives he had to consider. In other words, he adopted, from the Annales School, a view of the *longue durée*, which included an examination of texts (of archaic poetry, specifically), archaeology, weather patterns, economic and militaristic history, and considerations of social

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>154</sup> P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., "The Origins of Israelite Religion," in *The Rise of Ancient Israel*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1992), 129.

scientific investigations into ethnicity, all in light of, and juxtaposed to, various proposed theories of the emergence of early Israel.

After a consideration of the available data, he states that from disparate groups a single people developed by drawing ethnic boundaries and developing a genealogy.<sup>155</sup> An important part of this boundary was religion; Israel comprised those who worshipped Yahweh, God of Israel. This factor was not unique in Iron Age religions, in which devotion to a chief national god was characteristic. Included in this discussion, which he expands upon later, are issues of boundaries (territorial, spatial, ideological), narrative, and genealogy/kinship (ethnicity). The setting of this prehistory of the Israelite community is the central hill country, the highlands, in which settlements and villages developed during the Early Iron Age.<sup>156</sup>

Israel became an ethnic group united by kinship. While often defined by biology and expressed by genealogy, kinship also may have non-biological ways of manifesting itself. Boundary markers, such as language, religion, dress, and diet, as well as various combinations of such elements, help to create a sense of being apart, and a part.<sup>157</sup> The result, as McCarter highlights, is that by the time of the Iron Age the communities in the central highlands demonstrated ideas and customs that were no longer Canaanite and in fact were actively distancing themselves from the surrounding cultures.

As mentioned, underlying McCarter's presentation are the three pillars of space, narrative, and genealogy. It is through an examination of each element that we can glimpse experiential precursors to Bhabha, Gilroy, Halbwachs, Confino, and others. Without taking into consideration McCarter's view of the *longue durée*, we could not see how Israelite ethnogenesis

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 133.

occurred in the space in between Egyptian control, Canaanite culture, and various movements of peoples during the general malaise at the end of the Late Bronze Age. We also could not appreciate the development by later redactors of Israelite texts and narratives, which present a particular description of events that do not correspond to events “on the ground,” but which do incorporate, interspersed throughout the writings, fragments of historical realia from earlier centuries that aid in creating and complementing the formation of rituals and ethos that continue the ethnic markers of the group.

Each of the considerations regarding boundaries, narrative, and genealogy contribute to an understanding of the category of diaspora. Various scholars have attempted to deal with components of those elements, but instead of clarifying categories and understandings, they rather have produced chaos and indiscriminate musings (poetics) that resonate little with others in the same predicament. The result, as Brubaker observed, is a “diaspora” diaspora, but more importantly, a lack of presence of mind in the time of now. People are distanced from their own pasts, which entails alienation from a true understanding of their current actions and considerations, as Benjamin cautioned.

McCarter’s engagement with archaic poetics, for example, demonstrated that while cultural borrowings and mixture occurred over time,<sup>158</sup> with for example the Canaanite god El becoming one of the designations for the divine in early Israel (and throughout the rest of Jewish tradition), there developed coherence in the service of an overarching goal. It is through investigating how these various strands (movements of people, space, narrative and texts, genealogy and ethnic markers) emerged, came together, and developed that McCarter’s poetics

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<sup>158</sup> He presents an example of archaic poetry found in the biblical texts, which, while produced in the ninth century BCE, can be dated, due to form and content, to Iron I composition (1200-1000 BCE) (Ibid., 123). The use of the designation El, one of the names of the God of Israel, but also the king of gods in the Canaanite pantheon (Ibid.,125) reflects a divinity that is a warrior and as coming from the southeast of Judah and Israel, from Teman, or Edom, or from Sinai. Jewish tradition attests this much by portraying the first encounter between Yahweh and Israel in Midian, which suggests that Yahwism originated in the south and east of Judah (Ibid.,128-29).

distinguishes itself from Hirsch's and Miller's, for instance; whereas for Hirsch and Miller poetics are ends in themselves, for McCarter (archaic) poetics represent a contributing strand to an interweaving of components that persist under an overarching, developed people. With this in mind, it is to debates within Syro-Palestinian (biblical) archaeology of Israel's "origins" that we now turn, for it is in this period that the three pillars emerge, which continue to today.

## Chapter Two

### Digging the Diaspora: Convergence and the Elusive Quest for Reconciliation

#### Archaeology and the Materiality of Early Israel

In attempting to gain a better understanding of the origins of early Israel, some scholars focus primarily on texts and textual analysis. For example, P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. uses linguistic, grammatical, and other literary techniques to help date biblical texts to an approximate period. Others, like biblical archaeologist William Dever, utilize approaches that are grounded, quite literally, in material remains in order to reconstruct the beginnings of early Israel. Dever has spent his professional career as an active archaeologist and also has been thoroughly involved in debates about how to incorporate both biblical texts and material remains in a better appreciation of often competing forces that shaped what we think of today as the biblical world and the peoples who inhabited it. In an attempt to gain a more well-rounded view of “Israel’s” supposed beginnings, Dever advocates for what he dubs “convergences,” instances where textual and archaeological finds overlap, before making any “truth” claims about the humanly distant past.<sup>1</sup> Such an endeavor stands as a response to scholars who claim that the relatively late composition of the Hebrew biblical texts in the Hellenistic period, ca. third-second centuries BCE, implies that they are entirely fictitious and thus that ancient/early Israel never existed.<sup>2</sup> Yet, late editing, Dever claims, does not equate to late composition. Remains from the past

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<sup>1</sup> William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?: What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 271. Dever includes in his critique of such scholars examples of their accusations. Niels Peter Lemche, for example, is quoted as saying that the Hebrew Bible is the original Zionist myth, a Hellenistic phantasmagoria that is a product of the imagination of the “beleaguered” Jewish community, see William G. Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel: Where Archaeology and the Bible Intersect* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 13. Keith Whitelam, for instance, argues that searching for traces of the existence of early Israel (i.e., pre-monarchical Israel of the Iron Age) is illegitimate; rather, scholars should be writing a history of the Palestinian people (p. 14).

persisted in the developed cultural memory of the group, and hits to that past are scattered throughout the texts.

This chapter uses the archaeological sources that Dever presents in his studies and juxtaposes them with the theoretical analysis of cultural historian and Egyptologist Jan Assmann, who likewise deals with Israel's origins, albeit in texts that reflect the period out of which Dever's material remains originate. When biblical archaeology and cultural memory studies are used alongside one another, we are able to construct not only a more viable understanding of the emergence of a people, but also a much broader appreciation of the many levels in which the category of diaspora operates, in which it can be constituted, and the means through which it is conveyed. To aid in this endeavor I look to Benjamin again, but this time as Tomoko Masuzawa uses him in her understanding of origins and reproductions of things considered to be originary. Our context is provided by the literary and material, the socially constructed and the physical remnants of people from then. Through Benjamin's concept of the grid and reproducibility, we gain further insight into how diaspora operates and how it is always already a condition within which we exist.

When considering the archaeology of early Israel alongside the formation of its cultural memory, especially as depicted in the biblical books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges, one can understand how diaspora "originates" through remembrance of an imagined past, which is continually commemorated.<sup>3</sup> Viewing diaspora as an experience, which is itself a commemoration, complicates the broader orientations toward which historians, political scientists, and even some literary theorists gravitate. In these understandings, something external

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<sup>3</sup> These biblical books comprise part of the Deuteronomistic History. Throughout his later books, and thus forming the core of his argument against "revisionist" historians and literary theorists, Dever hones in on the convergences between material remains from the Bronze and Iron Ages and the textual accounts of this History, which, as he describes, comprises the books of Deuteronomy plus Joshua through Kings. See Dever *The Lives of Ordinary People*, 1-2.

precipitates a group into a diasporic existence. Yet, when incorporating points of convergence among multiple elements, across both time and space, into the discussion (i.e., including archaeology as a supplement to textual sources in order to provide better contextualization), more levels of diaspora emerge that further forestall attempts at reconciliation. The “emergence” of a diasporic existence becomes much more complex and intangible, thus frustrating easy identification with an experience and “people.”

Using both archaeological material of the biblical world and cultural analytical approaches to the book of Deuteronomy (and the Deuteronomistic History more generally) is not intended as a pretext to engage in Pentateuchal or biblical criticism, certainly not as an exercise in philological study of the biblical texts, or an examination of debates in biblical archaeology regarding “origins” of the patriarchs, of Israelite settlement, etc. Rather, this chapter will explore a broader issue: How ancient Israel imagined itself and how that imagination was realized or not in the archaeological record. This is a study of a way to target how the category of diaspora functions in delimited situations and debates. Throughout the discussion of Dever’s explanation of archaeological excavations of what archaeologists understand to be the purported origins of Israel, it is clear that biblical archaeology has many interlocutors, including collective and cultural memory studies, and nationalism more broadly. Guiding questions underlying an investigation into how scholars approach material remains of a people and literary theoretical reflections on a text, which happen to retrojectively describe the period of the physical remains themselves, include “When does diaspora begin?” and “How is it remembered?”

#### Poetics and the Betrayal of History

As attested, the earliest portion of the biblical texts, at least chronologically in terms of composition, is archaic poetry. These excerpts, notably the Song of Deborah (Judges 5, thus part of the Deuteronomistic history) are dated to the Early Iron Age (1200-1000 BCE). The texts

present the God of Israel as a warrior coming from the south and east of historical Israel and Judah.<sup>4</sup> Dever states that most scholars regard this material, which includes the experience of later, monarchical Israel as well as its preceding formative period, as a composite work that incorporates older sources woven together into a national epic. Included in these early texts purportedly are Israel's history from its emergence in Canaan in the twelfth century BCE to the fall of Jerusalem and the beginning (Babylonian) exile in the sixth century BCE.<sup>5</sup> According to Dever, the later compilers of this material put the narration of this history in the mouth of Moses and claimed that the material was found, recovered. That the compilers "recovered" material that supposedly came from Moses served to legitimate both the reformers themselves and their goals under Josiah (ca. 650-609 BCE); the reformers used this "recovered" law to urge their co-religionists/-ethnics (i.e., the people Israel) to repent and spiritually re-coalesce in the face of neo-Babylonian advance. This resuscitated law thus represented a "pure" past from which later generations, including the one about to be exiled, deviated, and a past to which they needed to return.<sup>6</sup>

Scholars date the writing of this material to the seventh century BCE and its final redaction to the exilic period of the sixth century BCE, or even later. While the authorship of the texts is unclear, its intention, according to Dever, is to present a grand sweep of history about a people united in faith, living a covenanted life; it is didactic literature that describes the past in order to impart moral lessons.<sup>7</sup> This literature about the emergence of the people of Israel, then, was written hundreds of years after the events it purports to describe occurred. Yet,

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<sup>4</sup> McCarter "The Origins of Israelite Religion," 125-28.

<sup>5</sup> Dever *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 100.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.; William G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 236.

<sup>7</sup> Dever *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel*, 3-4.



as Dever attests, the sources of this material rest on traditions and knowledge of earlier times, as reflected in fragments such as oral traditions and earlier documentary sources like the Song of Deborah, combined with events contemporaneous to the later time of authorship and compilation.<sup>8</sup> Continuities, as well as deviations, can likewise be found in pottery styles, housing and agricultural developments, and in cultivated religious outlook between Late Bronze Age Canaanite culture and that of Early Iron Age Israelites.

Throughout these texts glimpses of earlier legacies occur, which date back to the Middle Bronze Age, ca. 1880s-1500s BCE, a period corresponding to the Joseph story in the Israelite perspective and to the period of the Hyksos in ancient Egypt.<sup>9</sup> An example of convergences between literary and archaeological remains exists in the form of scarabs with the name of Jacob on them, as one of the Hyksos kings, thus attesting to the plausibility of earlier ancestral lore in Israelite collective memory with roots attested to externally. The Hyksos are described as foreign rulers, “interlopers” from Canaan, who were one of the many groups arriving and leaving from Egypt between the 1600s-1400s BCE.<sup>10</sup> What are now considered the Jewish scriptures reflect back on Egypt and Canaan of the Bronze Age from the perspective of the Babylonian exile, with some interspersed writings from the Iron Age located throughout those materials. Earlier in the book of Genesis, we are told that Israel (Jacob) sojourned to Egypt due to famine in Canaan; while there he found Joseph who earlier had been sold into slavery. This period is attested to in the Amarna letters, Egyptian documents describing drought and famine in Canaan, the sale by

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<sup>8</sup> Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 8; Nadav Na’aman, “The ‘Conquest of Canaan’ in the Book of Joshua and in History,” in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, eds. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na’aman (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 222.

<sup>9</sup> Baruch Halpern, “The Exodus from Egypt: Myth or Reality?” in *The Rise of Ancient Israel*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1992), 98-99.

<sup>10</sup> Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 11; Na’aman “The ‘Conquest of Canaan,’” 245; Hershel Shanks, “Defining the Problems: Where We Are in the Debate,” in *The Rise of Ancient Israel*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1992), 22.

Canaanite families of individuals to Egypt in exchange for grain, and of Semitic “invaders” who later controlled Egypt, but who were later expelled back to Canaan in the mid-sixteenth century BCE.<sup>11</sup>

Baruch Halpern understands these external writings, events, and their later implementation by the authors of the Jewish texts as ways that Egyptian memory and experience influenced Israelite tradition. The author(s) of these particular excerpts from the Bible demonstrate literacy and familiarity with knowledge of the history of this earlier time, of a particular historical *milieu*, and identification with the traditions of the Hyksos, in this case.<sup>12</sup> In this way, much of the Exodus story correlates with realities on the ground during the Middle Bronze Age. Many elements of the story are topologically true, such as the fact that Moses’s name is Egyptian. Yet, many scriptural descriptions seem unlikely, given scholars’ understanding of demographics of the time as well as from details gained from external texts of the time. It is unlikely that three million people left Egypt, for instance.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, a people identified with the experiences of the Hyksos, albeit unnamed in the texts, escaped into the desert, migrated through the land of the Shasu, of other pastoralists, of Yhwh, came into contact with peoples migrating down the King’s highway in Transjordan, and found compatibility with one

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<sup>11</sup> Halpern “The Exodus from Egypt,” 92. See Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 172-73, in which Dever provides information about the content of the letters. They provide valuable information regarding conditions in Canaan during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE. Much of the material in the letters details complaints and appeals by Canaanite chiefs to Akhenaten (Amenophis IV, ca. 1370-1353 BCE) about the ‘Apiru being a disruptive element, about local competition among chiefs, tribute chiefs paid to the Egyptians in an attempt to buy them off of one another, revenue extracted from the populace, etc. Also see William G. Dever, “How to Tell a Canaanite from an Israelite,” in *The Rise of Ancient Israel*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1992), 58, in which he tells us that based off of reading the Amarna letters, archaeologists know that the Canaanite city-state system was collapsing by the 1400s BCE, that there was a mass exodus from the Canaanite cities, and that the rural population was in flux. The hill lands offered ample opportunities for retreat.

<sup>12</sup> Halpern “The Exodus from Egypt,” 94.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

another.<sup>14</sup> Overtime, as Halpern describes, these peoples coalesced around/subscribed to a national myth of escape from Egypt, mediated by a god residing in the south, and established a nation in Canaan. The narrative that developed was a “call to arms,” a call to xenophobia against Canaanites elsewhere in the land (i.e., in lowland areas, not those in the central hills) whose ancestors did not participate in the exodus and who did not identify with those who experienced such an event, imagined or not.<sup>15</sup>

Those peoples who did identify with the established cult, including those whose stories constituted the kernel(s) out of which the narrative developed, understood themselves as being guided by liberation from slavery and national enfranchisement. This was the developed paradigm, which excluded those who did not adhere to such a self-understanding. The narrative encodes certain symbolic structures (e.g., social and territorial boundaries, and genealogy) and common values into the culture, regardless of one’s biological ancestry. To be Israelite meant that ancestors, spiritual or emotive or collective, had “risen from Egypt to conquer Canaan.”<sup>16</sup>

#### Putting Humpty Dumpty Back Together Again

As soon as one takes issue with the description from the biblical tradition and attempts to dismantle the narrative to find convergences with the archaeological record, one interjects into the story/narrative pieces that do not cohere, however accurate and necessary they are to the narrative itself. To date, there are four models through which scholars have understood the “historical” and archaeological emergence of Israel; often these models accord well with the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. See also Ann E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel, 1300-1100 B.C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 152, in which she posits that the story of the exodus does not represent a single, specific, historical moment, but rather a merging together of numerous exoduses of many runaway Asiatic slaves, such as the Hyksos, which have been “telescoped” into a single event.

<sup>15</sup> Halpern “The Exodus from Egypt,” 107.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 88.

developed tradition, but usually their findings serve to complicate the ways in which people identify, with what it is they identify, and expand the ways in which “diaspora” originates.

William Dever, paraphrasing the conquest model as presented in the book of Joshua, states that according to biblical tradition the people who later formed Israel entered the land from the east, via Jericho, fanned out northward, then southward, and later overran the entirety of the area, annihilating its native population and apportioning territories amongst the tribes.<sup>17</sup> In fact, located in the Bible are two versions of how people took possession of the land. The first, from the book of Joshua, exemplifies the idea that Israelites invaded the land and possessed it. The other occurs in the book of Judges, which essentially is a reversal of the description in Joshua. Judges presents territorial allotment before possession.<sup>18</sup> The understanding of Israelites conquering the land and its inhabitants, often quite violently, is quite prevalent, even in contemporary scholarly interpretations of Jewish identity.<sup>19</sup> Yet, as Dever points out, not a single destruction layer around 1200 BCE can be ascribed to the Israelites. Many sites mentioned in our biblical texts were not even occupied at that time, let alone destroyed or annihilated at the purported time of “conquest.”<sup>20</sup>

Archaeological evidence in the land of Israel until the 1960s corroborated some sort of military campaigns by foreign peoples in Canaan of the late thirteenth, early twelfth centuries BCE, but by the late 1960s, the conquest model as depicted in the Bible (i.e., a large-scale, concerted military invasion) was dismissed by serious archaeologists due to a lack of external

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<sup>17</sup> Dever “How to Tell,” 31.

<sup>18</sup> Shanks “Defining the Problems,” 3.

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin’s assertion that the biblical story is one not of autochthony but always already coming from somewhere else, in Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, “Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity,” *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 715.

<sup>20</sup> Dever “How to Tell,” 32.

material evidence supporting such a claim. Of the more than forty sites that biblical texts claim were conquered, only about two or three of them would fit the descriptions of Israelites from 1250-1150 BCE, the period in which it is believed that Israel became a significant presence in the region.<sup>21</sup>

During the 1920s-1930s some archaeologists, most notably Albrecht Alt, proposed a new model. Looking instead to biblical depictions of Israel's ancestors as mobile, tent-dwelling shepherds, scholars posited a peaceful infiltration model, in which they attest that the central hill region was almost empty and offered nomadic tribespeople from the semi-arid regions of Transjordan respite and allowed their transformation into a small-scale and rural agricultural society with egalitarian ideals. In other, more populated areas of Canaan, such as the plains and fertile valleys, military clashes ensued with the infiltration of these outsiders.<sup>22</sup> Yet, as Dever adds, this model of small-scale, peaceful sedentarization of nomads does conflict with other strands of the biblical tradition, presents a romanticized ideal of the Bedouin life, and even fails to appreciate the real dynamics of sedentarization. According to some literature in anthropology, urban authorities forcefully settle nomads because the nomads are considered a nuisance.<sup>23</sup>

During the early 1960s a third model appeared, which was supported by scholars such as George Mendenhall and Norman Gottwald. The peasant revolt model posited the notion that the Israelites were indigenous peasants to Canaan, revolted and left the coastal urban centers at the end of the late Bronze Age, went to the hill country out of economic, not theological, reasons, and only later developed a religion based on worship of Yhwh, thus evolving into the

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<sup>21</sup> Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 45, 71.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 51; Shanks "Defining the Problems," 6.

<sup>23</sup> Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 52.

people of Israel.<sup>24</sup> In other words, this model understands the Israelites as part of an indigenous, internal revolution, which might have had religious motivation. There was no overnight military conquest by foreigners, but rather a drawn out sociocultural and religious revolt, undertaken by local Canaanites acting out against their overlords; these “rebels” formed a new ethnic entity and society. Yet, as Dever is quick to point out, this model relies too heavily on Marxist thought and reads back onto the peoples of the Late Bronze Age motivations and consciousness that would be anachronistic, but more importantly, lacks archaeological support.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, the fourth model, loosely dubbed the symbiosis model, and which is attributed to Volkmar Fritz, understands the Israelites, or the proto-Israelites, as a people living alongside the Canaanites and who emerged out of the Late Bronze Age Canaanite culture and society.<sup>26</sup> This model also states that about 300 small agricultural villages were founded *de novo* in the late thirteenth, early twelfth centuries BCE, often on hilltops adjacent to arable land and good springs, and they usually were defenseless, unwalled villages. These villages were scattered in the central hills from the lower Galilee in the north to around Beersheba in the south. None of the villages was founded on the ruins of destroyed Late Bronze Age sites, and they all are in areas conspicuously devoid of Canaanite urban centers.<sup>27</sup>

Adding to the debates about the origins of the Israelites and their emergence in the central hills of what became known as Israel and Judah, Israel Finkelstein argues that the long-term settlement history and demography of the land is in fact characterized by oscillations between nomadization and sedentarization. The Early Iron Age represents only the third wave

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<sup>24</sup> Shanks “Defining the Problems,” 9, 13-14.

<sup>25</sup> Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 53-54.

<sup>26</sup> Dever “How to Tell,” 30.

<sup>27</sup> Dever *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 110.

of this cyclic process. According to Finkelstein, nomads who had been displaced by the upheavals of the Middle Bronze Age, and who remained nomadic throughout the Late Bronze Age, gradually resedentarized. The Middle Bronze Age origins of the Iron Age settlers can be attested to by their lack of fortifications, domestic architecture, and pottery, among other elements. There is no evidence for a direct shift from the lowlands to the highlands in the Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age transition, thus adding further nuance to the symbiosis model.<sup>28</sup>

As Dever concludes his assessment of the older models, he reiterates that it is important to note that the conquest, peaceful infiltration, and peasant revolt models are obsolete. Many sites that ostensibly were conquered by the Israelites, such as Heshbon, Aran, 'Ai, and Hebron, were not occupied in the Late Bronze Age; as well, through various means, most notably pottery style, archaeologists see that Late Bronze Age culture was gradually destroyed over many years, thus contradicting the rapid conquest tradition in the Bible. Furthermore, the establishment of Transjordanian kingdoms of Ammon and Moab, according to the conquest tradition, antedates the penetration of Israel into Canaan. In actuality they were contemporaneous with the rise of the later Israelite monarchy, ca. late eleventh century BCE. Edom emerged even later. This provides further evidence that the conquest tradition was written at a time when the rise of Transjordanian states was forgotten.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 155-56.

<sup>29</sup> Na'aman "The 'Conquest of Canaan,'" 223. As Dever attests, the authors/redactors of the biblical texts under discussion, with the notable exception of fragments of archaic poetry, were retrojections from the context of the Babylonian exile of the seventh century BCE. These authors demonstrated little familiarity with Iron Age topographical and settlement patterns. See Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 31. Na'aman furthers this critique by noting that the depiction of the five Amorite kings in Joshua in fact reflects the later five Philistine kings whom King David defeated. As well, many of the Judean cities mentioned in Joshua as being conquered by the Israelites parallel the number and name of cities of later battles among the Israelites and Assyrians and have nothing to do with Iron Age I. In other words, Na'aman states that the authors took later military events as a model for their depiction of early Israel's ordeal, of David's fight against the later Philistines and Sennacherib's (Assyrian) campaign to Judah. See Na'aman "The 'Conquest of Canaan,'" 254-60.

While the older models are obsolete, given recent archaeological excavations and debate, Dever does acknowledge that Gottwald et al. were correct in claiming that the early Israelites were displaced Canaanites, displaced both geographically and ideologically.<sup>30</sup> There did occur a demographic upsurge in the Early Iron Age (1200-1000 BCE) in the hill country; those settlers were not foreign invaders, as attested to by their unwalled villages; their overall settlement process was gradual, perhaps reflecting cyclical patterns in the region; and there are significant continuities with Late Bronze Age material culture, in pottery, for example. The culture that emerges in the highlands during the Early Iron Age is heterogeneous and reflects an ethnic mix.<sup>31</sup>

Dever maintains that the Bible is not history, and it does not pretend to be. Rather, he states that it is literature, and a peculiar brand of theological literature at that. It is a reconstruction of the past after the past was over. It was written, edited, and put together in its present form long after even the collapse of both the northern and southern kingdoms, ca. seventh century BCE; in other words, it refracts and reflects the past, much as how Halbwachs described collective memory.<sup>32</sup> In this way, Dever understands the Bible as a kind of revisionist history, and I might add, one of the first diaspora polemics.

#### Location, Location, Location: Context in Service of Theory

In order to better appreciate how biblical material culture can factor in to a discussion of diaspora, it is helpful to gain some context of the region at the time of the assumed “origin” of Israel. During the final centuries of the Late Bronze Age, around 1400-1200 BCE, the southern Levant was characterized by well-developed commercial and political contacts, rise of empires,

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<sup>30</sup> Dever “Ethnicity,” 210.

<sup>31</sup> Na’aman “The ‘Conquest of Canaan,’” 154.

<sup>32</sup> Dever “How to Tell,” 28.



and regional imperialism. Objects, as well as people, as we have seen in the case of the groups migrating in and out of Egypt, were exchanged. Results of these exchanges include cross-fertilization of knowledge, technology, concepts, ideologies, political systems, and cultural practices. During this period, Egypt was the major political force in Canaan, with the Hittites, Assyrians, and Greeks the major powers to the north. By the late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries BCE, the Hittite empire was destroyed, the centralized palace system of the Mycenaean world was beginning to disintegrate, and Egypt suffered economic and political deterioration. As well, the Canaanite urban centers were destroyed or in decline. Many of the areas in the lowlands were taken over by the incoming Sea Peoples. In addition to this systemic collapse, natural disasters, such as severe seismic activity and earthquakes in the region, ca. 1225-1175 BCE, contributed to the destruction of Hittite sites and palaces in mainland Greece. Climactic change also brought extended drought.<sup>33</sup>

Another consequence of this fragmentation and destruction was that Egypt gradually withdrew from Canaan, leaving a vacuum in its wake. Appearing out of this chaos were uprooted peoples and nomads who joined the already mobile Hyksos and ‘Apiru, a group known as renegades and “social dropouts” who lived on the margins of Canaanite society. Control was left to the local chiefs as detailed in the Amarna letters, and the major lines of communication and trade were replaced by local contacts and regional workshops.<sup>34</sup>

As well, this large-scale disruption caused upheaval in the Canaanite urban areas of the lowland coastal plains, causing the nomadization of a portion of its population into the

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<sup>33</sup> Killebrew *Biblical Peoples*, 34-35.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 12, 26-28; Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na’aman, “Introduction: From Nomadism to Monarchy – The State of Research in 1992,” in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, eds. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na’aman (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 12, 16; Itamar Singer, “Egyptians, Canaanites, and Philistines in the Period of the Emergence of Israel,” in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, eds. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na’aman (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 295.

highlands frontier; it forced pastoralists to settle elsewhere, where they mixed with other migrants from the Aegean-Anatolian-Syro-Palestinian region.<sup>35</sup> Until just after the death of Rameses III in 1153 BCE Egypt had maintained control over parts of Canaan, albeit in progressively diminishing extent. During the first half of the twelfth century BCE, Canaan was a mosaic of cultures, including Canaanites (themselves an assortment of disparate city-states), Egyptians, Israelites, and various Sea Peoples (including, but not limited to, the Philistines). A century or two before the Sea Peoples arrived the settlement process in the central highlands began in Canaan.<sup>36</sup> Toward the end of this period, new power centers emerged, such as the empires of Moab and Ammon along the Jordan River, and the southern coastal plains were colonized by the Aegean Sea Peoples (i.e., groups including the Philistines).<sup>37</sup>

External artifacts attest to the existence of a group known as Israel around 1200 BCE. The stele of the nineteenth-dynasty Pharaoh Merneptah, which was erected at Thebes during the second year of his reign (ca. 1210 BCE), celebrates the Egyptian victory over a number of enemies in Canaan. The mention of Israel in this list is followed by the Egyptian plural gentilic, or determinative sign, which signifies a people, rather than kingdom or city-state, like the other names on the stele: Ashkelon, Gezer, and Yeno'am, city-states that are recorded as surrendering to the Egyptians.<sup>38</sup> In other words, it designates an ethnicity. Israel is identified as a tribally

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<sup>35</sup> Dever "How to Tell," 68; Na'aman "The 'Conquest of Canaan,'" 237.

<sup>36</sup> Lawrence E. Stager, "Forging an Identity: The Emergence of Ancient Israel," in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 123.

<sup>37</sup> Killebrew *Biblical Peoples*, 12; Finkelstein and Na'aman "Introduction," 12; William G. Dever, "Ethnicity, and the Question of Israel's Origins," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 58, no. 4 (December 1995): 206; Singer "Egyptians, Canaanites, and Philistines," 295.

<sup>38</sup> Singer "Egyptians, Canaanites, and Philistines," 286.

organized pastoralist or agriculturalist group, with or without territorial boundaries, and it was one group, settled or not, which threatened Egyptian control and order in central Canaan.<sup>39</sup>

Another text that Dever uses to attest to the characteristic of Israel as a loose confederation of peoples is the Song of Deborah in Judges 5, which Dever dates to the twelfth century BCE. In returning to this excerpt, Dever explains that the poem portrays a theopolity known as the people of Yhwh that exists in niches on both sides of the Jordan River. The groups were committed kindred of Yhwh, and they did not always act in concert. An understanding of themselves as kindred to a deity accords well with the Egyptian designation of Israel as a people,<sup>40</sup> although that is a claim to which archaeology remains silent. Increased settlement in the central highlands at this time also attests to a confluence of peoples and ideas, which persisted and continued into the time of the united monarchy.

During the Late Bronze Age the Canaanite urban areas along the coastal plains experienced a shortage of labor as the Canaanite city-state system declined, along with the decline of other major empires during this period. Archaeologists believe that these forces caused peasant farmers to settle beyond the urban areas, on the frontiers of state control. The pastoralists found opportunities in the hills and even shifted toward different means of

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<sup>39</sup> Stager “Forging an Identity,” 124-25. This example of external evidence is cited in all major reference sources on this period. Cf. Dever “Ethnicity,” 209, in which Dever states that in this context Israel is a people, not a nation or state like others mentioned on the stele. In Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 206, Dever presses the point that based on this inscription it is clear that already by the thirteenth century BCE there existed in Canaan a group known as Israel that had not been under Egyptian domination in the lowlands, but rather was on the frontier in the central hill lands. Also see Shanks “Defining the Problems,” 19; Na’aman “The ‘Conquest of Canaan,’” 247-48; and Dever *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 118. Regarding the plausible territorial location of Israel, see Dever *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 119, in which Dever asserts that given that Egypt controlled Canaan, Hurrians were in the north, Shasu-Bedouin were in the Negev and Transjordan, and that less than a generation later the Philistines and other Sea Peoples became entrenched along the coast, what other area would be left for Israel than located in enclaves in the central hills.

<sup>40</sup> Stager “Forging an Identity,” 126-27.

subsistence.<sup>41</sup> The overall trend was toward decentralization and ruralization, in essence a type of diasporic existence.

The new settlements in the highlands appear to be deliberately isolated.<sup>42</sup> Their dispersed pattern of settlement and small stature suggest a nonurban society and economy. If one looks at the settlement type, there is a marked shift from a few large urban centers to numerous small villages in the hill country. The settlements are characterized by a lack of monumental architecture, the appearance of pillared houses, and various installations such as silos and cisterns, which were rare in Late Bronze Age sites. These features, particularly the terraces, silos, and cisterns, were introduced gradually in the twelfth-eleventh centuries BCE, and were not common before the tenth century BCE.<sup>43</sup> In fact, the hallmark of the highland settlements was the four room pillared house, later dubbed the “Israelite house.”<sup>44</sup> Many archaeologists consider house plans and village layout to be reliable ethnic indicators, and these types of houses have no substantial predecessors in the history of Canaan; they appear only in the thirteenth/twelfth century BCE and sporadically in Transjordan. They reflect a preference for a rural society, given the cisterns and silos, as well as a close-knit grouping that is self-sufficient.<sup>45</sup>

There is no extensive agriculture, but rather small-scale horticulture, cultivation of olives and grapes, dry farming of cereals, stockbreeding, and herding.<sup>46</sup> At the end of the Late Bronze

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>42</sup> Killebrew *Biblical Peoples*, 14.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 171; Dever *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 110; Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 117.

<sup>44</sup> Killebrew *Biblical Peoples*, 175.

<sup>45</sup> Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 105.

<sup>46</sup> Dever “Ethnicity,” 208. Also see Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 107, 178, where Dever explains that the inhabitants of these settlements produced grains: wheat, barley, cereals, and legumes. They were farmers and

Age, ca. thirteenth century BCE, the population of the hill country was about twelve thousand, which grew to fifty five thousand by the late twelfth century BCE, and then to seventy five thousand by the eleventh century BCE. The dramatic increase in population cannot be attributed to natural increase alone, or even to natural increase combined with settled nomads. Therefore, archaeologists posit that it is due in part to in-migration.<sup>47</sup>

The absence of defensive walls suggests that the newcomers were not invaders, but rather political refugees, revolutionaries, social bandits, or simply immigrants from elsewhere in Canaan.<sup>48</sup> Of the 687 twelfth-eleventh century BCE sites, 633 of them are new foundations, and they are small and unwallled villages.<sup>49</sup> The technological changes suggest some continuity with earlier Late Bronze Canaanite culture, but some additions to suit the needs of the highlands. Some archaeologists even point out that references in Judges, Samuel, and Kings to ways in which people identify themselves, as belonging to the House of the Father, the *bet av*, accord well with the evidence of the housing units of the immediate and extended family.<sup>50</sup> The classic patriarchal family, *bayit* (house), was the focus of village life, and one's identification extended outward in concentric circles. From *bayit*, one would belong to the *bet av*, to the *shevet* (tribe), to the *am* (people), to the *shivte-israel* (tribes of Israel), and *bene-israel* (sons of Israel).<sup>51</sup> In other words, in addition to archaic poetry, there are other scattered references throughout the biblical

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stockbreeders who demonstrated previous experience with local agriculture, something that nomads would not have been able to acquire so easily. As well, see Dever *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 113, in which he notes that the absence of pig bones in the excavated remains may suggest the traces of an ethnic marker.

<sup>47</sup> Dever "Ethnicity," 208; Dever *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 110.

<sup>48</sup> Dever "Ethnicity," 208.

<sup>49</sup> Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 98.

<sup>50</sup> Dever "How to Tell," 39.

<sup>51</sup> Lawrence E. Stager, "The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 206 (Autumn, 1985): 20-22.

texts comprising the Deuteronomistic History that betray knowledge of and familiarity with earlier periods, thus demonstrating strands of continuity from the Iron Age into the later period of biblical redaction and developed Jewish tradition and ways of belonging.

Another good indicator of the relative isolation and perhaps ethnic distinctiveness of these highland enclaves is pottery.<sup>52</sup> At the lowland sites, now occupied by the Sea Peoples/Philistines, ceramic wares and other containers, such as collared rim jars, large pithoi, and storage jars, are not locally manufactured, rather transported overland from neighboring areas, including Cyprus and the Greek mainland. In contrast, the pottery in the highland sites provides signs that they are locally produced, thus indicating a social boundary.<sup>53</sup> The local pottery shows an absence of decoration and imitation of imports, including the popular Philistine bichrome of the period, as well as an absence of luxury wares.<sup>54</sup> There are no cult vessels, which may suggest that the economy is rural and agricultural-pastoral, and self-sustaining, rather than focused on an elaborate cult and organized religious personnel.<sup>55</sup> The continuation of Late Bronze Age pottery types in the highland sites suggests that these settlers emerged from within Canaanite society itself; they were not intruders, at least wholly.<sup>56</sup> In fact, the only new Israelite pottery is that of large jars, which are not found in Canaanite city-states of the period; these jars are ideal for the storage of agricultural surplus needed to survive in isolation.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Dever *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 117. Dever is quick to assert that no single list of traits can be created about what constitutes ethnicity, and material culture alone provides nothing definitive. Additionally, nothing definitive can be said about ethnicity in premonarchic Israel at all.

<sup>53</sup> Killebrew *Biblical Peoples*, 180.

<sup>54</sup> Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 125.

<sup>55</sup> Dever "Ethnicity," 204-05.

<sup>56</sup> Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 125; Dever "How to Tell," 40.

<sup>57</sup> Dever "How to Tell," 43.

The fact that pottery provides rather accurate information on chronology, settlement shifts, local culture, degree of isolation or contact within cultures, level of technology, social structure, stratification, subsistence, adaptation to environment, trade, and aesthetic traditions makes its analysis invaluable to the study of the emergence of early Israel. The pottery remains in the central highlands of the Early Iron Age indicate that there were many scattered villages in marginal zones, rather than a few concentrated urban areas; there occurred a shift from the urban areas to rural settlement; and there is strong continuity in these isolated enclaves with Late Bronze Age Canaanite repertoire, while the lowlands developed more sophisticated styles and even imported objects from elsewhere.<sup>58</sup>

These settlement patterns are not new, however. Israel Finkelstein notices that there existed earlier waves of migration in the region dating even to the Middle Bronze Age, in the nineteenth-eighteenth centuries BCE. Yet, what sets this Early Iron Age movement off from earlier periods of transition are the dramatic increase in number of sites and that sedentary activity in the central hills continued to large-scale development, thus bringing about a territorial state in the area. The process of unification and consolidation of these inhabitants ended with the establishment of the monarchy, which resulted in fixed boundaries; this made it easier to identify and define Israelites from Canaanites.<sup>59</sup> The process of shifting from urban civilization to a mixed rural pastoral society and back to urban system was fixed for the time being.

The point that Dever makes is that the Israelites were a composite culture, including both old and new features. Many elements of household architecture were new, as were some

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<sup>58</sup> Dever "Ethnicity," 204-05.

<sup>59</sup> Israel Finkelstein, "The Emergence of Israel: A Phase in the Cyclic History of Canaan in the Third and Second Millennium," in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, eds. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 170-71; Finkelstein and Na'aman "Introduction," 17.

social and economic structures (e.g., more egalitarian villages, no evidence of elite monumental structures), but many aspects of technology were continuous with previous Canaanite Late Bronze culture.<sup>60</sup> As stated, he argues that it is helpful to think of a significant portion of the highland settlers as displaced Canaanites, displaced both geographically and ideologically. This group also included the urban refugees, social dropouts, and other immigrants from places affected by socioeconomic upheaval of the thirteenth century BCE. These proto-Israelites had sufficient solidarity to constitute an ethnic group.<sup>61</sup> Through Dever's explication of the material record, we see diaspora existing on multiple levels. The highland settlers were spatially displaced from the urban coastal cities and elsewhere, these disparate groups bonded together through ideology and developed consciousness (accessed through differences in housing and pottery styles). Later generations of the same community, however, did not take into account this history in their recollection of their own foundation, an alienation that persisted in the writing of Deuteronomistic History and even in many of today's understandings of the Jewish past.

As Dever asserts, the main editors of the biblical tradition were people from the House of Joseph, parts of Benjamin, Judah, and Manasseh, and it is possible that parts of their families

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<sup>60</sup> Dever "Ethnicity," 52.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 210. For Dever's understanding of ethnicity, see Dever *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 192-93. He uses Fredrik Barth's five elements that constitute ethnicity to claim that the (proto-) Israelites were a people who: 1) were biologically self-perpetuating; 2) shared fundamental, recognizable, and relatively stable set of cultural values – including language; 3) constituted a partly independent interaction sphere; 4) defined membership, as well as had membership defined by others, as a category distinct from others of the same order; and 5) perpetuated self-identity by developing and maintaining boundaries but also participated in interethnic social encounters. As noted earlier, McCarter understood early Israelites as engaging in a process of ethnic self-identification through which they created a genealogy linking these disparate groups to each other; part of this genealogy came to include religion (p. 129). Finally, Killebrew interprets this process as ethnogenesis, in which out of the mixed multitude in the central highlands, many of whose origins were largely indigenous, emerged a group identity comprising: 1) stories of primordial deeds (e.g., revelation, exodus, covenant, etc.); 2) undergoing a change as a result of the primordial deed (i.e., becoming a people identified with those deeds); and 3) the existence of ancestral enemies that serve to cement group cohesion (p. 149). In this way, according to Killebrew, Israelite ethnicity can be understood only in the context of the larger eastern Mediterranean context; it is a circumstantial, situational identification, one in which allegiance is a "result of political and economic interests and strategies" (p. 8). For Killebrew, the Israelite ethnogenesis was flexible and a response to changing circumstances. For all scholars who delved into Israelite ethnicity, it is understood as dynamic and takes place on many levels among the various groups, and it is used for political/defensive purposes.



had been in Egypt and went through the exodus and imposed that experience onto others who came from Canaan. This is similar, he notes, to how Americans celebrate Thanksgiving as though we ourselves all had come aboard the Mayflower. Spiritually, he states, we are all pilgrims, and that is what makes us Americans. We are what we believe we are.<sup>62</sup> Israel was a confederation of peoples, and the Bible even hints at it. The literary tradition maintains this remembered ancestry, but incorporated all Israel into one family story, unified by Yahwism, although that is not available archaeologically.<sup>63</sup>

### **Cultural Memory: Making the Past Present, Regardless the Price**

What does the archaeology of the emergence of Israel in the Early Iron Age have to do with contemporary discussions about collective memory and diaspora? As outlined in the first chapter, Halbwachs described how memory is determined socially, through language, action, communication, and an individual's emotional ties to one's social existence. As Jan Assmann makes clear, through remembering, one descends not only into the interior reaches of the self, but gains appreciation of the order and structure of socially conditioned life, thus linking the individual to the social world. In this way, he reminds us, consciousness and memory are socially mediated.<sup>64</sup>

For Halbwachs, memory is lived and embodied. For Jan Assmann, cultural memory is communicative, but exists in a different temporal structure than does collective memory. It

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<sup>62</sup> Dever "Ethnicity," 211. See also Dever *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 121, in which he argues that the developed story of the exodus, which might have stemmed from a family's experience in Egypt but which should be seen as true in that they convey the people's sense of self-awareness, is an assumption that speaks for all Israel, despite the fact that most of Israel's ancestors had been Canaanites. Ethnicity for Dever is a sense of belonging that is reaffirmed and rearticulated during Pesach and the participation in the *seder*, as though we all had come out of Egypt.

<sup>63</sup> Dever "How to Tell," 57.

<sup>64</sup> Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 1-2.

incorporates not just the group remembering through everyday communication, but also fateful events, whose memory is maintained through institutional structures.<sup>65</sup> In this way, memory and symbolism become intertwined. People constantly confront markers that enable them to live in a tradition, to belong to, and to realize their membership in a community.<sup>66</sup> A major vehicle for this sort of recollection is ritual. As Assmann states, rituals “dramatize the interplay of the symbolic with the corporeal.” In other words, symbolic action acts as a memory aid, a sort of bonding mechanism that through its enactment connects its actor to the obligations, intentions, and purpose of the original circumstance,<sup>67</sup> despite the change in context. In fact, most major elements of cultural life, and more particularly everything that is associated with religion, affect memory retention. Often these actions contain counterfactual elements and introduce into the present sentiments, memories, and circumstances that are alien to the present *milieu*. Therefore, their repetition at regular intervals is needed in order to prevent such memories from disintegrating. Collective identity, and memory, is brought about through processes of symbolic dramatization.<sup>68</sup>

#### Deuteronomy: The Act of Living across Time and Space

Between the seventh through the fifth centuries BCE, the Israelite community established what cultural historian Jan Assmann describes as a bonding memory based on the foundation of certain prescribed memory techniques. The Book of Deuteronomy impressed on this community a memory that was to aid its transition into a new existence. As depicted in Deuteronomy, the Israelites, at the time when Moses recounted to them their experiences thus

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<sup>65</sup> Assmann and Czaplicka “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” 103.

<sup>66</sup> Assmann *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 9.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

far, were poised to depart the desert and to enter fertile land; wandering was coming to an end, at least spatially.<sup>69</sup> What was addressed to the eyewitnesses who embodied this experience of exodus and wandering was the presentation of something to be handed down and recounted, relived, and forever remembered by succeeding generations. In other words, biographical memory of those who supposedly experienced the wandering was to give way to cultural memory, the content of which was accessed through the techniques and rituals spelled out and prescribed in Deuteronomy: education, visibility on doorposts, as well as by markings on the body, and the commemoration of festivals of collective remembrance.<sup>70</sup> As Assmann states, Deuteronomy is the canonization of the text of the covenant.<sup>71</sup> Deuteronomy codifies the transition from the lived, embodied tradition to one of learning, from direct witness to living memory. In this way, he states, Israel became a community of learning and remembering.<sup>72</sup>

Assmann continues in his explication of Deuteronomy to state that what is being presented to the community is a counter memory, a counterfactual account. It introduces into the present something alien.<sup>73</sup> It presents a recollection of a way of life that is not buttressed or

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 16-17. Assmann describes this scene as a liminal situation, one marked by crossing of the Jordan River. Spatially the crossing represented the transition from desert to fertile land; temporally, he asserts, it represented the end of wandering, from embodied memory to tradition that was to be handed down generationally. This was a change from nomadic life to settled existence. See n. 54 for another way to think of this snapshot. It is helpful to remember what Tweed said about the location in which a diaspora community finds itself; symbolic space affords the group an opportunity to highlight difference but also to unite as a whole. Such a space is a tirtha, a crossing place, in which the group makes sense of itself as a displaced group. Through departure and arrival, and later settlement, the group imaginatively (re) constructs its symbols and their meanings.

<sup>70</sup> Assmann *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 18-19.

<sup>71</sup> Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 196-99.

<sup>72</sup> Assmann *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 19. Yet, when seen in light of the aforementioned understanding of the place of presentation of Deuteronomy, of the liminal tirtha itself, in every moment that was prescribed for recounting those memories, for recollecting Israel's symbols, Israel also enacts and becomes a community of semiotizing, of giving meaning to the changed circumstance, wherever such remembering occurs. Memory and meaning co-constitute one another, are mutually reinforcing structures in identity, see Assmann *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 60.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 16.

called for by the framework of their soon-to-be new environment, their envisioned reality in the Land of Canaan. While the Israelites are poised to overcome their spatial separation by returning to the Land of Canaan, they simultaneously begin a separation or alienation in time and consciousness. Deuteronomy's injunction that the Israelites maintain in their new location that which they gained during their wandering in the desert (e.g., the covenant at Sinai, food laws, etc.) inaugurates disorientation and also a change of existence. This knowledge gained along the way to their (re) emplacement in the Land is to be remembered through rituals enacted in the present, thus preparing the way for a future redeemed life.

Deuteronomy is a normative text detailing what should be done through the transmission of practical knowledge regarding correct action, which serves to answer the question of who the community believes itself to be.<sup>74</sup> In this way, Deuteronomy serves as a consolidation of memory.<sup>75</sup> These are extraterritorial and revealed (i.e., something not of natural occurrence) laws coming from elsewhere, and through obedience to them the Israelites become strangers not only on earth, but also in the region and, especially, even paradoxically, in their renewed home, where it is assumed that they will be tempted to forget that which they agreed to in the wilderness (i.e., the covenant itself).<sup>76</sup> The memory techniques found in Deuteronomy prescribe and inscribe Israel into the prototype of a nation,<sup>77</sup> and the community is formed

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 161-62, 9.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 38, 53-54. Assmann continues by stating that Deuteronomy disseminates a consciousness of unity. It assumes that in the Promised Land the Israelites will forget everything, thus it is a book based on the fear of forgetting. In the midst of abundance this people is expected to recollect its nomadic past, an experience not confirmed by its current reality (p. 53).

<sup>77</sup> Assmann *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 57. Assmann states that traditions are not normally written, but rather hoped to become habit, something implicit (p. 64). Therefore, to ensure identity and a guide to action, a group needs preservation of its traditions (memory techniques), retrieval, and communication. In other words, it needs poetic form, ritual performance, and collective participation (p. 39). In a move following Durkheim, Assmann states that a group acquires its cultural memory through coming together, communal assemblies, and festivals,

through the imperative to keep and remember. They become a new people<sup>78</sup> in the land, with dictates gained elsewhere.

Because the Israelites were enjoined to resist forgetting their identity, it can be argued that Deuteronomy is the constitution of an ethnic resistance movement.<sup>79</sup> Included in this self-definition is the attempt to forget the community's polytheistic past, and in this way, Deuteronomy's call to remember is also a call to forget.<sup>80</sup> Ronald Hendel is more explicit in his characterization of the identity that is created from Deuteronomy's prescripts. He states that Deuteronomy allows the Israelites a religion of interior choice and commitment; one is to obey the law that God has now inscribed in one's heart, and the rituals are reminders of this commitment and law. As well, God is transcendent and single, not a multiplicity of local deities. The implication of such injunctions is the condemnation of old shrines as foreign. Israel's developed distinctiveness entails alienation from its native traditions.<sup>81</sup> In other words, Israel set itself against the other indigenous groups, which now were interpreted as oppressive and contrary to the foundational, normative stories that Israel told of itself to itself, and thus not part of their ethnic domain.

To carry the point further of Israel's newly developed sense of ethnicity, Deuteronomy includes a ban on mixing with the other inhabitants of the land; this injunction would not have

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which impart knowledge that establishes identity and its reproduction. An example of this is the Israelite enactment of Pesach upon their arrival in the Land, as depicted in Deuteronomy.

<sup>78</sup> Assmann *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 16.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 139. Assmann attests that in Deuteronomy religion and ethnicity are joined. The confederation of tribes understands itself as a people, which is holy, and following the dictates of the covenant, becomes a "congregation of the Lord" (pp. 138-39).

<sup>80</sup> Assmann *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 57. In this way, Assmann's explication of Deuteronomy approximates Renan's understanding of a nation, see n. 108. It is through forgetting that the nation is formed, and its members do not remember such origins of its unity.

<sup>81</sup> Ronald Hendel, *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory, and History in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 26-27.

been so pronounced, Assmann argues, if it were not for the fact that the Israelites did not have to protect against the “Canaanites residing in their own hearts.”<sup>82</sup> Through its composition while in exile, Deuteronomy interiorized identity, which previously had been enacted publicly and institutionally, for example by pilgrimage to the Temple before exile. Afterward, spiritual Israel could exist wherever the group assembled. For Assmann, Deuteronomy developed an art of memory that separated identity from territory,<sup>83</sup> akin to others’ literary and textual understandings of Israel’s diaspora. Spiritual Israel, then, could be assembled whenever groups gathered to study the texts and revive the memory.<sup>84</sup>

#### Text, Memory, and History: Who Mediates What, and When?

It bears repeating that despite outward appearances this chapter is not intended as an exercise in biblical criticism, or in philological study, or in historical reconstruction, although the latter is a necessary component. This explains why such a significant portion of this chapter was devoted to recounting the results of biblical archaeologists, such as Dever. Rather, this chapter is intended as an examination of the imagination of origins, with, or despite of, actual physical attestations that corroborate those narratives.

What is important to keep in mind in this description of Deuteronomy and its concomitant vision of the new community of Israel is that Deuteronomy was written six hundred years or so after the events it describes occurred. It follows Maurice Halbwachs’s

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<sup>82</sup> Assmann *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 190. For Assmann, Israel was a community that was excluded from its own culture (i.e., the surrounding Levant, and more particularly, its environs in Canaan). The journey from Egypt, when seen in this light, is a journey from the profane to the holy, on recognizing one God, thus cutting itself off from inter-ethnic community. Membership and communion could be affected only through conversion, and the Shema Jisra’el was a “declaration” of commitment to that identity (p. 185).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-93.

<sup>84</sup> In this way, according to Hendel, ethnicity is more a matter of belief and custom than of common (biological) descent. Ethnic groups, as well as nations, are imagined communities, imagined into existence, he argues, by those who believe in and enact them (p. 7).

assertion that the past can survive only in the reconstructed framework of the cultural present; the past, then, is a cultural production of a projection into that past. Only from within the social frames of the present (which for our purposes includes the seventh through fifth centuries BCE while the Israelites were in exile in Babylonia, and henceforth every periodic recreation) can an individual, and a community, recollect the past, and only those past events that people can recollect can be reconstructed within the framework of the present.<sup>85</sup> It is this constructed recollection that is continually recreated in ritual.

The picture that emerges from Deuteronomy is one of a community reentering a land in which its forebears had lived, from which it departed, and in which its descendants will establish a covenanted life as a new people, a holy nation guided by commandments. These commemorative commandments originated elsewhere (At Sinai? On the eastern side of the Jordan River? In Babylonia?), but will be enacted in this renewed land, and the enumerated dictates are necessary in order to ensure the continuity of this memory in a land that may provide countless temptations for deviation, a land that supposedly will not buttress a holy life, either internally or externally. As well, this narrative was written while the community as depicted in the story became exiled from that land again in the future, now retelling its foundation myth. Diaspora (i.e., alienation and separation) already exists on multiple levels, operating simultaneously. Yet, we must dig deeper.

As Assmann attests, the stories of exodus, revelation, and the re-presentation of those events, occurred extraterritorially, independent of the land (of Canaan), and thus they remain universally valid wherever Jews found themselves.<sup>86</sup> The Israelites took on commitments while in their wanderings (i.e., revelation), were enjoined to keep them in the renewed land with all of its

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<sup>85</sup> Assmann *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 170.

<sup>86</sup> Assmann *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 180.

temptations, and furthered this isolation and alienation by declaring their monotheistic intention that included not intermarrying with others, which as Assmann surmises, frustrated the formation of inter-ethnic community.<sup>87</sup>

This developed tradition, and condition, then, is most definitely mediated, and in the process lost the Israelite's actual presence in the Land; it lost Israel's (partial) indigeneity. As Assmann reiterates, memory develops through socialization; while the individual possesses the memory, its contents are created collectively. Therefore, what one learns and hears from others, and how others respond to what others consider to be significant, all depend on social intercourse. In this way, there is no memory without a perception that is already conditioned by existing social frames of attention and interpretation.<sup>88</sup>

Such a state of affairs places into relief Benjamin's proposal for the development of a presence of mind in the time of now and also whether or not such an attainment can occur. Is it possible to have a community, and any identification beyond the merely individual, which is not already mediated? In other words, is presence of mind a call for isolation and repression of memories, all the while presenting itself as in fact the way to incorporate, re-member, and re-incorporate a more complete picture of that past? In light of those who insist that individual, subjective poetics are the responsible way to represent the past and memory (e.g., the *raison d'être* of *Rites of Return*), which privilege individual feeling and autobiographical memories as the way to include otherwise absent perspectives/voices, then tensions emerge. Such methods of historiography fail to acknowledge the interplay among an autonomous individual with particular memories, contextualization of a group's past into larger frameworks of consideration, and any understanding of how these endeavors relate to international law, for instance. All narratives

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 183-84.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 22.



seemingly speak past one another, and each explanation presents only a narrow understanding of what constitutes diaspora.

As we are coming to see, however, diaspora is not necessarily precipitated by a physical departure, especially in light of archaeological evidence. Rather, it results from an ever-present condition originating as an act of remembrance. Yet, any attempts by those who perhaps do not identify with the developed “religious” narrative but who still maintain connection genealogically (not biologically, necessarily) to attested and verifiable presence, experience, and who wish to maintain those memories as part of their developed identity, are hastily marked as nationalists, colonizers, etc., when in fact interspersed throughout that religious narrative, in the poetics of that “spiritual constitution,” are glimpses of actual history and physical presence, in the case of early Israel and Judaism. In this way, poetics betray realia and there is a mixing of the personal, communal, memory, and history.

We must not forget that in cultural battles, the Boyarins are correct: No group is autochthonous. Factions of what became the Palestinians, for instance, themselves have foreign, colonizing, and migrating elements, too. In highlighting how narratives themselves are relative, Benjamin speaks not only to the muddled authority with which various myths/narratives can be approached, but also the partiality of their messages. He states:

[...] all rulers are the heirs of prior conquerors. Hence, empathizing with the victor invariably benefits the current rulers...Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which current rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried in the procession. They are called “cultural treasures”...in every case these treasures have a lineage which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great geniuses who created them, but also to the anonymous toil of others who lived in the same period. There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is never free of barbarism, so barbarism taints the manner in which it was transmitted from one hand to another.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Benjamin “On the Concept of History,” 391-92.

When seen in this light, storytelling, myth telling, and even ritual, let alone “history” and “personal reflection,” acquire an air of suspicion and are approached with doubt.

It is in this way that Bernard Lewis may help in sorting through the various ways in which people re-present “history.” He explores how people utilize history, and in fact how people envision and imagine their pasts, for various purposes. In doing so, he differentiates among remembering, recovering, and inventing the past. As he states:

There are many ways of defining and subdividing history; traditionally, by why, and when, and where; then, in a more sophisticated age, by topic – by what, and how, and, for the intellectually ambitious, why; methodologically, by types of sources and the manner of their use; ideologically, by function and purpose – of the historian more than of the history, and many others. The classification used here...is into three types, as follows: (1) Remembered history. This consists of statements about the past, rather than history in the strict sense, and ranges from the personal recollections...to the living traditions of a civilization...It may be described as the collective memory of a community or nation or other entity...(2) Recovered history. This is the history of events and movements, of persons and ideas, that have been forgotten...for some reason rejected by the communal memory, and then...recovered by academic scholarship...But reconstruction begs the basic question, and disguises what would be better described as construction...(3) Invented history. This is history for a purpose...devised and interpreted from remembered and recovered history where feasible, and fabricated where not.<sup>90</sup>

In other words, history, however it is presented, is necessarily partial – in both outlook and content. As well, it behooves those who engage it to self-consciously question what is being presented, who is presenting it, and why it is being presented. After all, as Benjamin points out, the storyteller (i.e., historian, scientist, myth teller) has as much difficulty relating experiences as modern humanity has in contextualizing them. The result, often, is confusion and partial knowledge, thus faulty grounds for self-understanding and action based off such information.

In the material dealing explicitly with this chapter, we see as operative each element that Lewis details in his study. For example, developed Jewish tradition, which takes the

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<sup>90</sup> Bernard Lewis, *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 11-12.

Deuteronomistic History as constitutive in the image of Jewish self-construction, the past has been remembered in a certain way that has been described as a counter-memory. Some archaeologists, such as Keith Whitelam,<sup>91</sup> have continued inventing history in the same vein of earlier “pan-Arabists,” who, according to Lewis, retroactively extended the lifespan of Arabism by millennia, set an early date to Arab claims to the Middle East in asserting that Canaanites were Arabs, thus “proving” that Arab claims to Palestine antedate Israelite settlement, among others. As Lewis states:

In other Arabic-speaking countries, the reaction to the recovered ancient past was later, slower, and, on the whole, politically less significant. The Iraqis paid some attention to Assyria and Babylon, but did not identify themselves with them to the extent the Egyptians did with the Pharaohs. In Lebanon, the Phoenicians were claimed more particularly by the Maronites and were therefore denounced by the Muslims as representing an anti-Arab or anti-pan-Arab force...During the heyday of pan-Arabism a solution to this problem was found by the retroactive posthumous naturalization of all the ancient Semitic peoples, except one, as Arabs. This served several purposes. In the first place, it accentuated and underpinned the Arab identity of these countries and countered any dangerous tendencies towards what they contemptuously called the “pharaonism” of the Egyptians and its analogues elsewhere. In the second place, it extended the time-span of Arabism by millennia and vastly increased the Arab contribution to humanity, by claiming for it the achievements of all, or nearly all, the Semitic peoples of the ancient orient. In the third place, it set an early date on Arab claims to the Middle East – and, in particular, by claiming the Canaanites as Arabs, was even able to produce an Arab claim to Palestine antedating the first Israelite settlement. It had a further use in that, through the Carthaginians, it served to extend the range of ancient Arabism even to North Africa. Since, according to this doctrine, the ancient Semites, apart from the Israelites, who are still extant and therefore excluded, were all Arabs, the great Islamic expansion of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries was not a conquest but a liberation, and indeed is so presented in schoolbooks – as the liberation of Arabs from Persian, Byzantine, and other imperialisms.<sup>92</sup>

In this way, locating one’s origins, and even the enterprise of origination itself, is self-created to a large extent. Endeavors to interject origins, either imaginatively through remembered tradition

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<sup>91</sup> See n. 2.

<sup>92</sup> Lewis *History*, 35-37.

or imaginatively through “professional’ historiography, are never one-time occurrences, but like collective memory are dependent on present interests to determine what is considered originary.

That concerns in the present determine the usefulness of the past raises questions about boundaries, as well as issues of origination. As a result of the activities of the present regarding the past, such as inventing it to suit particular socio-political desires, much harm is caused to those who became the unwitting objects of displacement (i.e., those whom the concerns of the present overlooked or erased). Time is highlighted as being susceptible to issues of (ir) relevancy, but what we have seen is that underlying the fluidity of time is the inescapability of actual presence in some instances, such as ancient Israel. This presence serves to disrupt whatever conceptions of origination with which others replaced it. In fact, as in the case of Jewish tradition, the presence of early Israelites disrupts the self-conception that Jews had concerning even their own past. The remembrance of this past recovered a presence that provides a foil to the later invention of traditional narrative. The result of these disruptions is a complication of the category of diaspora, questioning the ways in which people feel distance and alienation, and from what it is they believe they are separated.

Another way of approaching this convolution of planes of diaspora is to examine Tomoko Masuzawa’s investigations into “origins.” Throughout her perusal of the writings by scholars of religion regarding the purported origins of the phenomenon of religion, Masuzawa emphasizes that origin itself comes under suspicion.<sup>93</sup> The now taken-for-granted idea that myths are creation stories and that their enacted ritual is simply periodic “recreation” of mythic

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<sup>93</sup> The quest for origins brings to mind debates around the “Big Bang” and more mystically of *Ein Sof*—entire modes of scientific and religious lifestyles devoted to the recovery and re-discovery of first origins, of the primordium of existence itself.

times, of some primordium, an “axial” event, unravels when pushed further.<sup>94</sup> She likens the search for origins of religion to Benjamin’s study of art in his “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” The study of origins, like the invention of photography for Benjamin, decreases the distance between a purportedly original work and the viewer, or practitioner. New technologies and the investigations of the scholar into origins diminished what Benjamin called “aura,” the “forbidding” atmosphere of distance around an object, thus bringing that object closer, diminishing its autonomy and independence. Now all reproductions contain that aura, albeit in diminished, recreated, and repetitive form.<sup>95</sup>

Behind every representation, Benjamin argues, was thought to be a unitary origin, a primordium. This presumption changed when the avant-garde artists heralded the idea of the grid; they divested their work from prior creations and saw each moment as one of creation in the here and now. As Masuzawa explains:

[...] the avant-garde artist divests everything that has hitherto claimed priority of its power, and reinvests it, in toto, in the very moment of his or her own creation, that is, in the *Hier und Jetzt* of the avant-garde artist him- or herself, and in the ground zero of his or her creation...The avant-garde, eager to disown every claim placed on it by what supposedly comes *before*, almost universally favors this form, the grid, which carries with it no precedents or tradition, no authorship or copyrights that might threaten the present with the nightmarish weight of the past...it is everywhere without beginning. More important than this ubiquity, the pristine structure of the grid emblemizes the absolute present; for this structure shuts out the possibility of a prior origin – what comes *before* – in the form of a model in nature.<sup>96</sup>

It never was, but in the sense of its immediate creation, it always was. The implication of this revolutionary concept of creation without prior origin, as Masuzawa points out, is continual

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<sup>94</sup> Tomoko Masuzawa, *In Search of Dreamtime: The Quest for the Origin of Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 1-3.

<sup>95</sup> Tomoko Masuzawa, “Original Lost: An Image of Myth and Ritual in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *The Journal of Religion* 69, no. 3 (July 1989): 311.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

(self-created) repetition. As she argues, because the grid, or the blank slate, exists in the public domain and without author, any enactment of the work is already a repetition, albeit one without a fixed point of reference.<sup>97</sup> Any attempt to live in, build off of, engage with, and enact this endeavor of immediate newness is fated to be a repetition, an ongoing list of fresh starts without appeal.

When Masuzawa applies this art-historical concept to the study of religion, she confronts Eliade's notion of the myth of the eternal return, a thesis that posits "archaic" people's relation to time and history, which is echoed in the works of Assmann on ritual. As Masuzawa attests, in this framework all rituals refer to cosmogony, a primordial event, and they attempt to dwell in that "paradise of archetypes." As she states:

[...] a cult always presupposes a certain narrative of the beginning of time, and this narrative organizes, justifies, and gives meaning to ritual behavior and all other types of behavior, insofar as they are "meaningful"...It is certainly a striking picture of the "archaic" person; we are struck by the image of his violent conservatism – his "revolt" against the unprecedented occurrence, his demand for the "abolition" of nonparadigmatic temporality...he is "imprisoned within the mythical horizon of archetypes and repetition." Even as he dwells in the "paradise of archetypes," archaic man forever suffers from cosmic nostalgia.<sup>98</sup>

Yet, she maintains, if her argument is correct in that it is the objects of the scholars' studies who engage in this behavior and search for origins, then the archaic is the "other" of us, a double to modern (Western) scholars and those who purport to have overcome the ill-fated search for origins that can never be located. Masuzawa states:

The archaic, the other of the modern, is at once the other of us, the contemporary scholars of religion. But the other of oneself is always a double of oneself, a mirror image, a picture in reverse, a representation that doubles and couples the self and the other. This other – the archaic – is presented as peculiarly marked by a singular obsession with the moment of origin. What does this reflect, vis-à-vis the modern scholarship on myth and ritual...This

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 323.

scholarship is peculiarly marked by its obsession with cosmogony, paradigms, archetypal narratives...Does this not signal a certain displacement? A certain shifting that repeats and veils – which is a telltale sign of repression – a displacement, that is, of that very desire which we once renounced and continue to deny ourselves?<sup>99</sup>

Hence, modern scholarship itself is marked with displacement and repression. The modern scholar is displaced from that which he renounces and denies himself: origins.

When seen in this light, this very chapter can be said to deal with the two aspects of Masuzawa's study: investigating the content of "origin" of early Israel, at least materially, and assessing the pronouncements of scholars regarding the idea of early Israel's origins. We have seen how the content of the book of Deuteronomy interweaves with the materiality of early Israel's beginnings, at times implicitly and at other times more overtly. The force of Masuzawa's analysis, however, comes to the fore when applied to scholars who denounce, for whatever reason, the (partial) indigeneity of early Israel and instead posit a beginning elsewhere, if anywhere at all. For instance, we see the trend of scholarly questing after origins operating in the works of Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin, and even Assmann himself, who, in claiming that Israel "originated" elsewhere, imply that they know that it did not begin in any particular place, let alone where biblical archaeologists have claimed (i.e., the central hill lands of present-day Judea and Samaria). Its origination occurred elsewhere, which as yet, for them at least, is undefined and need not ever become defined due to the "message" that they have selectively culled from Judaism's sources (an ironic conclusion, given the materiality of Israelite presence in the place from which the Boyarins disallow Israelite "origination," at least materially/physically).

This also raises the question of what exactly these scholars refer to when they speak of "originating." Are they speaking of an ethnos, an ideology, a literary tradition, etc.? Ancient Israelites exist in many locales: archaic poetry, historical accounts from external sources, the

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 324.

material excavations by archaeologists such as Dever, and in literary accounts of their own tradition of ethno-genesis. To which locale are the Boyarins, et al., referring when they state Israel did not originate somewhere, especially if all locales are interwoven with each other, both in the imagination of the people and in the physical remains? Even their denunciation of purported origins, albeit for something less specific, still cannot dissociate itself from the quest of beginnings, thus signaling disquiet with the alleged implications of origin, either theoretically or politico-historically.

Space is important, and it exists. Acknowledging this fact raises many questions about the significance of the grid for diaspora studies. If the grid, or the construction of a tradition that has no traceable point of origination (at least materially?), is itself a displacement, a separation, a diaspora, then from what are we displaced? We may be displaced, or at least out of touch, temporally – but this is not to say that space is relative. In fact, it is quite real, and the results of actions directed to it, and the implications of actions taken in its name, are the most real. In this vein, it is the grid itself, the open space of speculation and supposed clearance, that is originary, and whatever guise one places onto it assumes ultimate significance; this action of emplacement, then, is forever recurring, by many invested parties, for various purposes, with both recovered and invented bases, but all of which claim remembrance. Diaspora is ever-present, but never realized/actualized, let alone ended/overcome, and attempts at reconciliation fail on both the temporal and spatial planes. One cannot return, even through ritual, to the beginning time, since there are conflicting sources about when that was, and one cannot wholly return to the space because that “site” is contested and given different meanings over time, despite recurring repetitions of attested ritual meaning and scholarly dismissals of the findings of other scholars. As Eisen stated, even if one is home, one still is not Home.



Furthermore, if we take seriously Masuzawa's assertion that the project of origins, the obsession scholars have with the primordium, is an otherness of ourselves, a reflection of ourselves, then we must question what this means for displacement from that obsession, from the origin that never was but that always is and has been. To what do we hope to return? If not to where, since Masuzawa seems to hone in on time and not space, then to when? How could we leave that which never existed or that which is still here, unless we confront the idea that arrival itself is an impossibility, or has already been achieved but not as we imagined it to be? How else could it be as we imagined it because imaginary primordium is so ill defined and self-created?

Assmann asserts that rituals realize meaning, and the Pesach *seder*, for instance, the Jewish repetitive, annually recurring ritual that marks Israelite "origins" in space and purported time, makes present the story of the Exodus and the precursor to revelation through songs, homilies, anecdotes, and discussions. The meaning of this text is kept alive, he states, by constant adaptation to changing circumstances.<sup>100</sup> Yet, as Ronald Hendel points out, inherent in the story of the Exodus is already recognition of Benjamin's presence of mind. He states that following the Annales School's breakdown of the event, conjecture, and *longue durée*, the Exodus memory partakes of all three scales. In the story, including its presentation in the Deuteronomistic history, are elements of the temporal rhythm of everyday life, processes of social time such as the rise and fall of empires and economic cycles, as well as geological time and other long-term patterns.<sup>101</sup> Just as Deuteronomy is a counter-memory, which sought to

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<sup>100</sup> Assmann *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 75.

<sup>101</sup> Hendel, 72.

revise and replace a previous accepted memory of the past,<sup>102</sup> so too is any attempt to engage with the text, history (including archaeology), and memory now, such as during the *seder*.

Diaspora always was a condition of Israelite narrative, and its operation continues to be present temporally and spatially, a constant negotiation with memories and representations of the past.<sup>103</sup> What has become tradition, was “originally” presented as a counter-memory, an assumption about the people who were instructed to live a certain way, who were instructed not to forget, but who in their instructions were not presented with the entirety of what it is they were to remember. Furthermore, this instruction was given to a people who were told that they were strangers, but who in “actuality” continued to propagate an at-least partial indigeneity. Being a stranger, then, one who is in a diasporic state, is itself an imagined condition. Origins, in many instances, are self-created, but biblical poetry, poetic construction, external attestations to the people (e.g., the Merneptah stele), and other archaeological realia help to recover physical presence. While any presumed “Ur” fades further into the hazy past, we must recognize the possibility that it is ever-present and thus continually recurrent. Yet, each (re) construction, while seemingly new, carries over traces of a once before. Digging beneath it may help in the recovery of history, or may prove to be an invention, but we must continue to question what any reconciliation between time and place would mean.

It is to the coalescence of the elements of space and time that we segue into Chapter Three. One underlying theoretical framework that we can add to the Benjamin-Taussig stream underlying this study, which is buttressed by Masuzawa, is Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea of the chronotope. It is this notion that allows for the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 33.

relationships as expressed in literature” to come to the fore.<sup>104</sup> Whereas Dever concentrated his attention primarily on space, Assmann focused his on the element of time, and Masuzawa allowed for a more in-depth discussion into one, if not both, of them as related to beginnings (both of the scholar and of the content of scholarly investigations), Bakhtin attempts to understand narrative in various guises, with disparate elements, which conjoin both space and time in our understanding of the present and of separation. In particular, Bakhtinian analysis will place into question the notion of homeland, from which we are now exiled, and the ways in which that imagining occurs through time and across space.

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<sup>104</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84.

### Chapter Three

#### Imagining the Diaspora: Travel, Reflection, and the Convolutions of Emplacement

Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi asks a simple question of the various Jewish authors (mostly novelists and poets) whom she discusses in *Booking Passage*: What is it that they, and in particular the characters they created in their fiction, actually remember in their works about exile, home, homelessness, return, the future, and travel? Throughout her reading of these texts, she noticed that the authors juxtaposed images of the Land of Israel as pristine, but also as ruinous. The imagined pristine Land came to embody a point of reference for these characters, an idealized place of yore as depicted in scripture and foil to current unredeemed homelessness. The Land lying in ruins, a physical reality at the time those authors were writing, offered hope of recovery, re-connection, excavation, and eventual closure. In other words, the Land in ruins offered an idealized image of a past they hoped to resuscitate and work to implement in the future; it offered a *telos*, an encompassing goal, which influenced how they perceived themselves, which in turn guided their actions in the present.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter we explore similar questions in representative examples of Hebrew literature by S.Y. Agnon, in particular his novels *In the Heart of the Seas*, *To This Day*, and *Only Yesterday*. These texts, as well as those in Chapter Four, deal with the themes of group formation, travel, separation, (physical) return, and enactments once there. Scholarship that understands physical return to the Land as a *fait accompli* misunderstands the calls for continued alienation and separation, regardless of location, and leaves unexamined many components of diaspora. Through a consideration of the theoretical frameworks of Walter Benjamin's explanation of the threshold, Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the "chronotope," Thomas Tweed's theory of religion as necessitating acknowledgement of both its transtemporal and translocative elements, and

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<sup>1</sup> Ezrahi *Booking Passage*, 6-7.

Abraham Joshua Heschel's claim that the Land itself is a chronotope, a threshold, and thus requiring emplacement for ethical decision making, that in moments of encounter, while being emplaced, one uncovers recollections and makes present unforeseen and unanticipated memories. These shocks and confrontations destabilize that which has become taken-for-granted and thus present opportunities to renew creativity, even, and especially, while being physically emplaced. In effect, even while being emplaced, possibilities exist for re-diasporization. Self-reflective thought allows one to feel distanced from the Land considered "home" in order to return to the condition prior to homecoming. As stated, this threshold that re-presents unforeseen memories is a call for ethical action now, and in the future, of the yet unredeemed, of being in imagined diaspora.

### **How to Write about Home**

As Ezrahi explains, for Jews in exile, writing (and thus imagination and projection) became a response to displacement, an alternate form of sovereignty. She explicitly states that until the Second World War and the Shoah (i.e., Holocaust), Jewish fiction dealt with a constructed future as a projection of a lost past. While the teleology seemed rigid in these texts (entailing past wholeness, current loss, recollection of wholeness, repatriation, return, and closure), the adventure to that projected future was open-ended. The destination remained deferred,<sup>2</sup> which served to strengthen the creativity of the diasporic imagination. Just as the ancient rabbis created a portable Jewish civilization that could be read and performed anywhere after the physical Temples had been destroyed and Jews dispersed away from that center, so too did Jewish authors before the creation of the State of Israel allow for creativity, imagination, and projection without the need for (re) territorialization and thus closure. This supposed closure,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 10.

she writes, produces the end of physical wandering and of creative alternatives to geographical rootedness, and also raises the specter of negative implications associated with emplacement.

In her periodization of the authors, Ezrahi states that the pre-Holocaust (-Shoah) authors depicted and imagined the Land, and Jerusalem more particularly, as a ruined shrine waiting to reacquire redemption.<sup>3</sup> The language used to describe the Land in these authors' texts took on elements of metaphysical longing and recognition that traveling to that Land promised both mental and physical anguish.<sup>4</sup> Jews living in exile maintained an unredeemed Land in their imaginations/memories, and the Land represented suspended time, potential for redemption.<sup>5</sup> When Jews imaginatively traveled to this Land, their point of departure was not so much "home," she states, as it was exile, and they realized that they could never reclaim or settle the Land by themselves. She states:

Pilgrimage presupposes travel within the known and 'complete' world to a previously established site of revelation...In the Jewish vocabulary, the point of departure is, by definition, not home but exile...there remains a profound distinction between the travel narratives defined as pilgrimage and those defined as voyages of discovery, commerce, education, or speculation...Because the Jewish pilgrimage to the Holy Land was being redefined at the end of the nineteenth century as a mission of reclamation and settlement, the return to the (profane) diasporic source takes on added valence as a skeptical gesture, as a refusal to find anchorage in that dream and in the aesthetic it generated.<sup>6</sup>

Jews inevitably returned to and re-emerged into their diasporic existence, due to their inability to "find anchorage" in the Land of ruins, which remains a dream and recollection.

Even though Ezrahi includes the works of S. Y. Agnon in this category, despite his writing after the Shoah, she understands his fiction as in fact offering redemption to both the wandering Jew and to the tortuous voyage itself. Through the Jewish voyager's eventual death in

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 39-49.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

the Land, the wandering Jew, here personified in Agnon's figure of Isaac Kumer, gained "eternal life" and unification with the Land.<sup>7</sup> An actual life enjoyed in the Land, however, never materializes in the work of these authors. Because of this, Ezrahi claims that creativity prospers and there is no concomitant socio-political dilemma associated with such physical return.

Throughout these voyages and travels in the pre-statehood era, Ezrahi sees creativity and the potential for redemption because the Land has not been settled, re-territorialized. Once that later reality is reflected in Jewish literature, by Israeli authors and others, she issues a challenge to writers reflecting on and depicting that imagination-turned-reality: to keep images of return and of the Land itself from becoming concrete, heralded presuppositions; she discourages their reification. Ezrahi hopes that Jews after emplacement will keep archaeology from becoming eschatology.<sup>8</sup> In other words, she argues exactly what many others have cautioned, both before and after her exposé on the anticipated state of contemporary Israeli writing – that physical homecoming need not be a *fait accompli* that prohibits creativity and presupposes an already achieved redemption. Rather, it seems as though Ezrahi offers an unarticulated desire. I understand Ezrahi as arguing that even while being emplaced, possibilities exist for "re-diasporization." In fact, the example that Ezrahi uses in Agnon's writing, which she feels exemplifies unification with the Land, and thus supposedly achieved redemption, anticipated closure to creativity, and the beginning of social turmoil in the Land, rather represents the birth pangs of re-diasporization. Agnon's "return" signaled not the death knell to diaspora creativity, but the emergence of creativity of emplacement.

In other words, one needs to feel distanced from the Land considered "home" in order to return to the condition prior to homecoming. This realization, once enacted from a situation

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

of emplacement, is a threshold that has the potential to re-present unforeseen memories and serve as a call for ethical action now, in the time of the yet unredeemed. Thus, regardless of location and mindset, one must always be in imagined diaspora, even if one has physically returned “home.” This mindset and the actions issuing from it present an ethical and creative alternative to studies that echo Ezrahi’s presentation of emplacement as enclosure and restriction. This opens up the possibilities of what constitutes diaspora, once its physical component has been “overcome.”

### **Moving from Then to Now, while Here...and There**

To better understand the call for viewing emplacement in the Land of “home” as something contingent and not as something achieved and accomplished, this chapter will consider the theoretical frameworks of Walter Benjamin’s explanation of the threshold, as recounted in his autobiographical account “A Berlin Chronicle;” of Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope, as presented in his *The Dialogic Imagination*; of Thomas Tweed’s theory of religion as necessitating acknowledgement of both its transtemporal and translocative elements, as recounted in *Crossing and Dwelling*; and of Abraham Joshua Heschel’s claim that the Land itself is a chronotope, a threshold, and thus requiring ethical decision making, an argument he makes in *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*. These authors emphasize the moment of encounter, the practice of travel, and the possibilities for uncovering recollections and making present unforeseen memories, as offered at the moment of such confrontation. These situations destabilize that which has become taken-for-granted and renew creativity. It is through these frameworks that we can contextualize and make more explicit the fundamental anxiety that Ezrahi pinpoints.

We have seen various attempts by different scholars to address the interweaving of and interconnected valences of space and time. For example, the Annales School situates any study in the *longue durée*, a concept that we discussed in Chapter Two. This is reflected in Killebrew’s



description and analysis of early Israel's development and later reflection on itself in the world of the changing Near East and eastern Mediterranean from the Bronze to the Iron Age. We also have seen Benjamin's and Taussig's calls for attempting to break free from a reliance on explicitly mediated experience in order to gain a better appreciation for how things came to be as they are, or seem. All of these attempts can now be brought to bear on Jewish fiction through the literary device of Bakhtin's chronotope, in Tweed's account of movement across both space and time and the reflexivity of the interpreter herself, in Benjamin's travel around Berlin and the unforeseen remembrances such sightings bring about in him, and the theological call to reassess writing about the Land now that Jews have physically and politically returned. One way to make these frameworks more accessible will be to explore their applicability to fictional works in which they find expression. As our case studies for this chapter we will examine three of S. Y. Agnon's quasi-autobiographical novels: *In the Heart of the Seas* (Bilvav Yamim, 1933), *Only Yesterday* (Timol Shilshom, 1945), and *To This Day* ('Ad Hena, 1952 rev. ed.).<sup>9</sup>

#### Punctuating the Space-Time Continuum: Relativity's Ethical Dimension

In his attempt to fashion a theory of religion that addressed the complexity of movement and difference entailed in human practices of contact, exchange, configurations of time and memory, as well as the role of the individual doing the reflecting, Tweed noted that religion involves purposeful wandering.<sup>10</sup> Someone occupying a particular place at a particular time reflects on those travels, and that individual must account for the vast stretches of time and space in which practitioners envision and imagine themselves and their communities. As Tweed

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<sup>9</sup> Many of these themes are reflected and echoed in the more contemporary, journalistic writings of Israeli authors Eliezer Schweid, Amos Elon, David Grossman, Amos Oz, and Ari Shavit, which we will delve into in Chapter Four.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 11.

notes, religions move across time and space, and they leave traces that transform people, places, and the social arena. He states:

If religions can be imagined as flows, what kind of flows? I suggest that these flows are spatial and temporal...[they] move through time and space. They are horizontal, vertical, and transversal movements...They are movements through time, for example as one generation passes on religious gestures to the next...And religious flows move across varied 'glocalities,' simultaneously local and global spaces.<sup>11</sup>

Tweed explicitly acknowledges the term "chronotope" of Bakhtin as the preferred conception of the work that religion does. We are dealing with flows cross "space-time," as well as the tension between the individual and the collective.

Bakhtin posited in the idea of chronotope (time-space) an intrinsic connectedness and inseparability of the temporal and spatial.<sup>12</sup> Bakhtin describes these moments that allow for greater realization and awareness (of the intricacies and interconnectedness of space and time) as organizing centers for narrative events. As he states:

What is the significance of all these chronotopes? What is most obvious is their meaning for *narrative*. They are the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative. We cannot help but be strongly impressed by the *representational* importance of the chronotope. Time becomes, in effect, palpable and visible; the chronotope makes narrative events concrete...An event can be communicated, it becomes information, one can give precise date on the place and time of its occurrence...It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events.<sup>13</sup>

This journey, which offers chance encounters that bring forth unexpected memories, reminiscences, past events, and recourse to the many ways that contemporaneity emerged, is similar in outlook to Benjamin's interest in "related possibilities."

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>12</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 250.

In other words, one thing gives rise to the next; one sight, sound, smell, etc. opens up pathways to previously un-accessed memories and remembrances from one's past. All of these possibilities are spurred on, emergent from, and related to the encounter. Benjamin likens this occurrence to the opening of a fan of memory, whose unfolding of segments is never completed. He states:

He who has once begun to open the fan of memory never comes to the end of its segments...he has seen that it can be unfolded, and only in its fold does the truth reside; that image, that taste, that touch for whose sake all this has been unfurled and dissected; and now remembrance advances from small to smallest details...while that which it encounters in these microcosms grows ever mightier.<sup>14</sup>

Only in its folds does the truth reside; all else is but a semblance to wholeness and thus is partial, incomplete, and not yet accomplished.

Benjamin continues by explaining that one who wishes to extend this process of (self-) discovery must perform activities similar to an archaeologist; one must dig repeatedly and be unafraid to encounter the same material in order to turn it over and over, each time gaining new insight. As Benjamin states, “[...] the matter itself is only a deposit, a stratum, which yields only to the most meticulous examination what constitutes the real treasure hidden within the earth: the images, severed from all earlier associations.”<sup>15</sup> This is a repeated call for unmediated access to memory, and history, and we must not forget that those uncovered images still can take on various associations and be placed into countless guises (i.e., used for different purposes). As Lewis cautions, the unfolding segments may themselves be personal memories, but also recovered pasts that fit into more general contexts, or even inventions to fit a contemporary

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Benjamin, “A Berlin Chronicle” [1970], in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 6. See also Walter Benjamin, “A Berlin Chronicle,” in Walter Benjamin *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, 1927-1934, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Others (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999), 597.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin *Reflections*, 26; Benjamin *Selected Writings*, 611.

circumstance. The point is that one encounter, in the here and now, brings forth unforeseen and unanticipated remembrances of past places and times in unfolded segments.

It may seem that an individual's carrying with himself these experiences, in memory, wherever he happens to be, is just a variation of the "portable civilization" that the Talmud afforded the Jews through time and space, offering a way to engage imaginatively with the past and projected future (in the Land of the past) without having to be in the space of occurrence. Yet, if we follow Heschel's pronouncements on the qualities of these recovered images/remnants (of the Land, in this case), we will see that these unfolded segments take on spiritual significance only after they have first been emplaced. In fact, as Benjamin makes clear through his presentation of his "chronicle," the encounter that spurs the unfolding of the fan of memory is made possible only in moments of emplacement.

Benjamin likens the multivalence of the encountered symbols (such as a coffeehouse, for instance) as a social map of Berlin society, of a particular generation, at a particular time. As he reflects:

In an attempt to create a "physiology of coffeehouses," one's first and most superficial classifications would be into professional and recreational establishments...When the German economy began to recover...the physiology of the Romanische Café began to change. The "artists" withdrew into the background...while the bourgeois...began to occupy the place as a place of relaxation...The history of the Berlin coffeehouses is largely that of different strata of the public, those who first conquered the floor being obliged to make way for others gradually pressing forward, and thus to ascend the stage.<sup>16</sup>

One encounter elicits many "related possibilities" and associations. Other examples of chronotopes are the road and parlors/salons, both places associated with encounters, intersections of spatial and temporal paths, places where "webs of intrigue" are spun, where

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<sup>16</sup> Benjamin *Reflections*, 22-23; Benjamin *Selected Writings*, 608.

dialogues occur, etc.<sup>17</sup> The individual, group, subjective reflection, and more contextual histories coalesce, opening up unforeseen vistas of interconnection among the various constituent elements.

In his usage of the chronotope, Tweed focuses on the body, home, homeland, and cosmos as places where religion negotiates collective identity, where one can imagine the group's shared space, establish social hierarchies within the group, and create taxonomies beyond it into which all else is placed.<sup>18</sup> In this way, religion itself positions the body, the individual, and the group in relation to other chronotopes as a way to assess and recognize the image individuals have of the group through time and across space.

There exists a particular type of chronotope in which time falls out of the normal course of biographical experience, however; things become instantaneous during the chronotope of the threshold, or the instance of crisis and breakage.<sup>19</sup> Tweed refers to these as limit situations. During these moments an individual approaches the threshold of the humanly possible and faces the limitations of embodied existence. As Tweed states, “[...] members of a society cross thresholds (*limen*) that lead from one social status to another. Through rites of passage the individual leaves one status, passes through a liminal, or transitional, state, and arrives at a new developmental stage and social role.”<sup>20</sup> It is during these instances that individuals are “propelled to imagined pasts and desired futures, but also summoned to the present,” and much of this work is done by religion. Yet, as Tweed cautions, the work of translocative and

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<sup>17</sup> Bakhtin *Dialogic Imagination*, 243-44, 246.

<sup>18</sup> Tweed *Crossing and Dwelling*, 97-98.

<sup>19</sup> Bakhtin *Dialogic Imagination*, 248.

<sup>20</sup> Tweed *Crossing and Dwelling*, 143-44.

transtemporal experience is never done, never totally accomplished.<sup>21</sup> It is in this way that the chronotope and the way that religion operates here correspond to Ezrahi's call to be wary of thinking that redemption, via physical arrival/return, is imminent, if not already achieved. The threshold, while reached during moments of immediacy during emplacement, ought not be equated with achievement and fulfillment, but rather potentiality on the way to an elsewhere, itself often unspecified.

Throughout his recollections of his youth spent in Berlin, Benjamin recounts times that confronting an image or object that brought to mind boundaries, enclosures, and walls evoked in him a remembrance of encountering poverty and those who lived outside of his social class environment. The notion of crossing the threshold, of crossing frontiers both socially and topographically, opened up networks that were exciting and unknown. Yet, he states that he hovered on the brink, on the edge of the void, and he never committed to the crossing over into the new.<sup>22</sup> This prolonged liminal phenomenon (i.e., the threshold itself) is the presentation of a choice on performance – to enact the new or to remain on the brink/void/threshold, to cross over or to remain/retreat, etc. This is an opportunity to question to what one shall commit himself, with what to identify. In Benjamin's other reflections we see that these choices at the *limen* entail ethical issues from which one can never escape. Peter Demetz refers to these experiences as ontological thresholds that entail speculative potentialities, which determine what sort of individual one will become.<sup>23</sup> Individuals at moments of encounter, and especially while digging to uncover more of those confrontations, bear the responsibility of deciding how to

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 162-63.

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin *Reflections*, 11; Benjamin *Selected Writings*, 600.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Demetz, "Introduction," in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), xviii.

engage and deal with the past, be it remembered, or recovered, or invented. The decision remains.

These moments that concretize events that may have happened a long time ago or in a different place (ritual), or that alter one's status and that present a sense of immediacy and struggle (rites of passage and threshold experiences), also are moments of decision; they are laden with moral ambiguity, and thus offer possibilities for ethical action. The individual or group experiencing this moment, like the interpreter who relates and explains it to others, is situated, and from that emplacement he negotiates public power; people have a choice in how to present and enact their identities. It is through these decisions that one enacts moral principles and constructs meaning.<sup>24</sup> Not everything related to the group or individual was revealed in that moment. Even not everything relevant to the particular occurrence each time it occurs is revealed the same way each time these moments take place.

Therefore, it behooves the practitioner and interpreter to recognize that the represented world "can never be chronotopically identical with the real world it represents." As Bakhtin states, all that becomes an image in a literary work and which enters its chronotopes, is a created thing and should not be confused with the force itself that creates. He continues, "Every image is a created and not a creating thing."<sup>25</sup> This holds true for representations and reflections on one's autobiographical details as culled from memories sparked by a sound, image, smell, etc., as well as for depictions and projections of "home" and homeland, even when one has returned home. Emplacement, in fact, entails creativity and potential possibilities for action. The chronotopes, memories, and ethical choices are never exhausted, are always changing, but always in need of being emplaced and situated. They emerge out from somewhere and point toward an

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<sup>24</sup> Tweed *Crossing and Dwelling*, 26.

<sup>25</sup> Bakhtin *Dialogic Imagination*, 256.

imagined future, and it is a mistake to confuse mere emplacement as already having completed the *telos*. Rather, it is creativity and potential.

### Recreating the Wheel: Modernity's Perilous Forgetfulness of Myth

In one section of his “chronicle” Benjamin asserts that when events from the past reach us in the present it is as if one is experiencing an echo awakened by a call. An individual who is cognizant of this moment of encounter confronts a sound heard before in the darkness of past life. This shock of the unforeseen, albeit previously enacted and thus constitutive of contemporaneity, arrives in the form of a sound, a word, a tapping, and a rustling that enables one to be transported.<sup>26</sup> While this may seem rather uncharacteristically passive for Benjamin, the metaphor of the past striking one as an echo resonates with Heschel’s adage that in Jerusalem, and not only for Jews, the past is present, and heaven is “almost” here. All history (relevant to that Place) is within reach, and the location itself is a witness, an “echo of eternity.”<sup>27</sup> All one has to do is “stand still and listen.”

The problem with this literal call (to action) that both authors see, especially in Heschel, is that modernity can be characterized by a general human inability or failure, according to him, to take scripture seriously. As he laments, “Its [i.e., the Bible’s] grandeur is becoming inaccessible, a preserve of the past, not a perspective of the present. Its challenge vanishing from

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<sup>26</sup> Benjamin *Reflections*, 59; Benjamin *Selected Writings*, 634. This metaphor also resembles Emil Fackenheim’s insistence that the power and force of the past (for his intentions he was speaking of the destruction and associated imperatives of Auschwitz) reach us today as a *shofar* blast, demanding attentiveness and appropriate action, c.f. Emil L. Fackenheim, “Israel and the Diaspora: Political Contingencies and Moral Necessities; or, The Shofar of Rabbi Yitzhak Finkler of Piotrkov,” in *The Jewish return into History: Reflections in the Age of Auschwitz and a New Jerusalem* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 189. The *shofar* (ram’s horn) arouses one to worship, to repentance, to danger, and it arouses God. Fackenheim offers reflections on the two horns of the ram sacrificed in Isaac’s stead. The first “ushered in Jewish history” when it was blown at Sinai, and the other will mark Judaism’s eschatological end. What happened in the interim? A new moral necessity, argues Fackenheim. A third horn exists, and the question remains whether or not people heard it and the manner in which they acted, or not. Israel, both the State and the people, remain for Fackenheim moral necessities to the world and to their own continued existences. They point out others’ inaction and inability/refusal to hear the blasts and subsequent need to spur on themselves (the people) to act accordingly: morally, while being emplaced in the Land.

<sup>27</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), 7.



our thinking, from our convictions, it survives for illustration, for edification, remaining outside our imagination or our decisions in shaping thoughts, deeds.”<sup>28</sup> People are increasingly alienated from the myths and stories of their past. This contemporary dismissal of or inability to take scripture seriously is ironic given, as Heschel states, its incomplete nature. He insists that the Bible, for example, is not sealed and completed; it lives on, always being written and “continuously proclaimed.” The myths, laws, and injunctions reverberate in our anxiety, according to him,<sup>29</sup> but they are not recognized as things of which to take heed. We have not heard the *shofar* blast.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, Heschel devoted the entirety of his theological treatise on Israel to resuscitating not only how people respond to and understand scripture, but also the Land and its intimate relationship to this dialectic of encounter, reappraisal, and call to action. He asserts that history lacks genuineness when people act, or believe, with detachment from any commitment to the past, access to which can be gained partially through scripture. For Heschel, history is the encounter between the eternal and temporal.<sup>31</sup> This encounter with time, however, is not solely imagined; it continues to operate in the world, and people (Jews and non-Jews alike) need to heed its morals. Myths in the Bible risk being forgotten or dismissed to the peril of those who choose to abandon the moral undergirding of life in the Land. “Before God sanctified time,” cautions Heschel, “God created things of space.”<sup>32</sup> In order to master things of time, one first needs space from which to act. Time needs space, but time is eternal. Yet, it is not always

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>30</sup> See n. 26.

<sup>31</sup> Heschel *Israel*, 129.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 146.

sanctified. Living a sanctified time, then, is what is genuine, and this occurs under two conditions: committing oneself to acknowledgement of the past, and occupying a space from which to perform acts of sanctification. In seeming dialogue with scholars who wrote three decades or so after Heschel wrote his treatise, he targets the implied universality of Judaism, which entails possibility of enacting it any where, at any time (and thus implicit denial of any need for temporal territoriality) by stating that the light of a spirit is not a thing of space, imprisoned in a particular place. Yet, in order for the spirit of Jerusalem to be everywhere, it must first be somewhere (i.e., the Land).<sup>33</sup>

Heschel's seeming nationalist justifications are tempered with indictments of misunderstanding and misuse of scripture by those in the post-statehood era, particularly by his co-religionists in the Land. If Jerusalem is more than just a place in space to the glories of the past, as he attests, if it is a prelude, an anticipation of days to come, then Jews have lost the key to the gate (of understanding and of appropriate action). He reflects:

Who will fan and force the fire of truth to spread across the world, insisting that we are all one, that mankind is not an animal species but a fellowship of care, a covenant of brotherhood?...Let Jerusalem inspire praying: an end to rage, an end to violence. Let Jerusalem be a seat of mercy for all men...Jerusalem must not be lost to pride or to vanity. All of Jerusalem is a gate, but the key is lost in the darkness of God's silence. Let us light all the lights; let us call all the names, to find the key.<sup>34</sup>

Many people have approached the Land, especially after physical and political return to it, as simply a place to visit, a place of pleasure and tourism. He laments the fact that Jews have not continued the act of clarifying its meaning, using it as an opportunity for spiritual renewal and moral re-examination. Jews, he points out, have disregarded the challenge of the Land, a fear

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

echoed years later by Ezrahi et al.<sup>35</sup> He states that familiarity destroys any sense of surprise and that Jews have become beset by what he dubs “spiritual amnesia.” Those currently in the Land, as either citizens or sojourners, have taken the Land for granted; they see the state functioning normally and believe that it has always been this way. They lack any notion of distress and strain, of longing and dreaming of those who worked to enact this state of affairs; not only has the *shofar* blast been silenced, but so too has knowledge of the conditions that occasioned its blasting.

What Heschel describes is a theological reflection/dimension of the theoretical frameworks of the threshold and moment of encounter described by Tweed, Bakhtin, and Benjamin. Heschel relates that people celebrate the Land now as completed, rather than realizing that its economic, political, social, and spiritual developments are still in their initial stages. The Land, he argues, is itself a spiritual revolution, continuously adapting and changing, not a one-time event. He offers a contemporary *midrash*, a commentary on a scriptural passage in order to elucidate meaning and message. When the People Israel approached Sinai, he relates, God lifted up the mountain and held it over their heads offering a choice: accept Torah or be crushed. During the days of distress (i.e., the Six-Days War, of 1967) Jews around the world especially those in the Land, felt as if the mountain were again held over their heads. They either accepted the commitment to Zion or risked being crushed. Many times this supreme test, according to Heschel, has been imposed on the people, and now that emplacement exists, all eyes (of previous generations and of the future) are on the people and how they decide to act.<sup>36</sup>

The Land itself is a threshold, and it demands ethical decisions. Being alive, Heschel reminds us, means being exposed to contradictions and defiance, facing challenge and

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 202-03.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 204.

disappointment. The actual physical return to the Land is a creative challenge to previous stabilization (relatively speaking, of course). While the past entailed numerous (existential) challenges and much suffering, Jewish reflection on the Land remained stable and constant, as Ezrahi has demonstrated. Emplacement shakes up inertia and demands new action, he argues, contrary to Ezrahi's perhaps premature apprehensions. Life in the Land is a challenge to us. Furthermore, he states that it is the religious duty of a Jew to participate in the process of continuous redemption, which has not yet been achieved. As he poignantly argues, "To be or not to be is not the question. We all want to be. How to be and how not to be is the essence of the question. This is the challenge we face. The Bible is the challenge and the way."<sup>37</sup> For Heschel, tradition, also, is the homeland. It does not matter if one actually resides in the Land, for community entails being a community of concern, regardless of distance. He states, "Community means community of concern, sharing joy and anxiety...The state may be thousands of miles away, but the care we feel is intimate and strong. Such care may serve as an example to all mankind. To be concerned for the security and well-being of man everywhere is a concern that we must cultivate all the time without qualification."<sup>38</sup> He argues that we must learn how to be responsive.

To be responsible for our tradition and to sanctify the Land, in particular Jerusalem and time itself, we need (that) space. The Land, then, is that liminal phenomenon from which, and out of which, or toward, we make ethical decisions for action. As we have seen, this encounter needs constant reappraisal. The fact that Heschel wrote this after the Six-Days War is testament not only to his general worldview, but also is his indictment to the world, especially the Arab world, for having failed yet again to live up to the world's ideals; many of these ideals were culled

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 211-12.

from the Bible that he argues is the challenge. As well, it is his challenge to the Jews, and Israel, on how to act now that more land is under their political control.

### Constructing Liminality: Myth and the Selective Uses of History

While staying enclaved in the Land, and with an eye toward Lewis's division of history as being remembered, or recovered, or invented, Nachman Ben-Yehuda alerts us to some of the ways in which Jewish history has been selectively used to construct a particular sequence of events and thus impression for current generations. He states that there is a large number of pasts, and each one is not entirely divorced from any other.<sup>39</sup> He cites Victor Turner's adage that myth is, or functions as, a liminal phenomenon, which presents people with the opportunity to rethink and reevaluate their cultural ancestry, and thus to what they now want to commit.<sup>40</sup> According to Ben-Yehuda, and following Halbwachs, myth is a particular sequence of events (real or imagined) that is distinguished from a "regular" historical account by its aim to convert and transmit attitudes and feelings of those receiving the story. These narratives are special and peculiar, and they help to create attitudes, stir emotions, and construct social realities for a particular purpose.<sup>41</sup>

The social effects of myths, in this vein, are to bind people together in an integrative belief in a shared past, which shapes personal identities, and creates an ethos and image;<sup>42</sup> after all, as Heschel reminds us, communities share concern. Using Halbwachs's observation that memories of a shared past are preserved by members of specific groups who experience them and that there are many different collective memories for many different groups, which together

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<sup>39</sup> Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 280.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 282-83.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

form society, Ben-Yehuda offers that collective memory is an act of remembering together. What is more, the past that the group uses is socially constructed to fit the needs of the present group, which usually requires deception and fabrication of that past. What that said, he asserts that there is no “past;” various groups in the present construct different pasts that can thus appear and disappear, depending on how those pasts are constructed in and for the present.<sup>43</sup>

An example of this phenomenon is the construction of the Masada narrative. Scholars and authors in the twentieth century, who resuscitated the ancient story for modern purposes, ignored selected facts regarding the nature of the community of Jews living on Masada, dismissed the fact that they were contrary to most other Jewish groups of the time, glossed over their often violent and bloody military exploits, and deleted the fact that the community members arrived to Masada before the siege of Jerusalem was completed; they were not, as later scholars presented them, the last remnant surviving from that siege.<sup>44</sup> Masada has come to symbolize a heroic last stand, and its mythical narrative is used to create cohesion and social integration on many levels, but ignores many aspects of how the myth came to be what it is. Lewis explores examples like this and many more, which are commonplace, even in so-called objective “histories” of locations, peoples, events, etc. This serves to complicate the processes of unfolding and digging for which Benjamin advocated.

The process that Ben-Yehuda noticed in how scholars and others constructed this past has three steps: leveling, the reduction in the amount of information included in the construction and thus its simplification; sharpening, in which the message becomes shorter, simpler, and sharper; and assimilation, where information is freely subtracted and added to the original narrative, thus making it coherent and conform to the needs of the present group doing

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 272-73.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 13.

the construction.<sup>45</sup> While it may seem that there is discontinuity between the past and the present, given the explicit threefold process he outlined, Ben-Yehuda maintains that there does exist continuation between the past and present, but that there is no one indisputable past. Rather, the “past” is an endless collection of selected events, usually sequential, which those in contemporaneity mold for their purposes; the result of this construction, which differs from Lewis’s invention because the events in fact happened albeit in altered or diminished or omitted form, is that the “past” shapes our understanding of the present.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, he insists that the lack of an indisputable past does not equate to the opposite supposition, in which there likewise is a lack of indisputable facts about such past(s).<sup>47</sup> Even an invented past relates in some way to “actual” events to which it purports to be part, and it is up to later generations who inherit that past to question its historicity and place within their continued, created identity and attribution of meaning to the group.

The absence of questioning, then, is the pitfall into which many groups fall. The challenge is that we need to be cognizant of both elements: selected events and the fact that the recognition of their being selected, if not altered, does not negate historicity and accuracy of whatever “truth” one group is compelled to tell. Whatever the actual historicity may be regarding a particular claim, or narrative, or assemblage of “facts” that tell a story, it is important to remember that this constructed story connects the past with the immediate present, bridging gaps of often thousands of years, and helps people to make sense of the present and the past; the times and the places are linked in the presentation of the constructed myth.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 239.

## **One Part Dream, One Part Reality, Mix: S. Y. Agnon's Transversality**

We return to the beginning quandary of the chapter, just how does one write about home and homecoming, especially once one has in fact returned “home,” and what is it that one remembers? Three of Agnon's novels deal explicitly with the experience of travel (“home”), and accordingly, each contains within it numerous chronotopes and moments of encounter, thus exemplifying the themes spelled out by Tweed, Benjamin, and Heschel. In Agnon's texts we encounter forces beyond individual control, the Land, and with oneself, as they are presented at varying times and as they travel across space. Before we delve into the respective chronotopes and ways of remembering/myth construction, it is useful to present brief summaries of each story.

### Myth, Fantasy, and the Question of Truth

*In the Heart of the Seas* is a tale about Hananiah, his journeys both physical and spiritual, the faith of his co-religionists who likewise join him on these journeys, and their eventual arrival/return to the Land, from Eastern Europe. Agnon starts the story with an individual, Hananiah, who begins to have doubts about whether or not the Land actually exists. He therefore sets out on a quest to travel there, despite the hardships he encountered along the way. Even though he ends up traveling for quite some time, even sojourning through lands that make him lose track of time and forget what day it is, thus transgressing the Sabbath and holidays, he reasons to himself that it would be better to perish on the way than to lose faith in the Land.<sup>49</sup> He eventually reaches a village where he encounters a group of ten men, and their wives, who also desire to travel to the Land. Hananiah helps them prepare for the trip, all the while doing nothing to aid himself, except have unrelenting faith in the reasons for his trip.

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<sup>49</sup> S. Y. Agnon, *In the Heart of the Seas: A Story of a Journey to the Land of Israel*, trans. I. M. Lask (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), 8.



Agnon provides accurate geographical details about the route their boat takes as it navigates the Danube River until it reaches the Black Sea, thus mixing elements of fantasy and reality in the tale.<sup>50</sup> Once on the Mediterranean Sea, after passing through Constantinople, those villagers on the boat experience many travails, such as pangs of severe doubt, being attacked by hordes of mosquitoes, and noticing that Hananiah is not among them. Telling themselves tales of the Land is their only comfort. When they look out to sea, they occasionally see a light sparkling on the waters with a kerchief floating on it like a ship; Hananiah's sole belonging was a kerchief, his clothes and shoes having been stripped from him during his trip to the village. On this floating kerchief was the image of a man with his face toward the east, the direction in which they are traveling to the Land.<sup>51</sup>

Even though the ship got caught in a storm and actually ended up back near Constantinople, the villagers were so committed to their journey that they did not despair and proceeded again, arriving in Jaffa only five days later. What they encountered there, however, was far from paradise. The Land was too hot for them, yet they endured, despite the absence of Hananiah.<sup>52</sup> Eventually they encounter him and realize that he had arrived before them, on the kerchief. They live out their lives in the Land, and when Hananiah dies, they cover his face with the kerchief and bury him in the Land.

*To This Day* (sometimes translated *Until Now*) is, using Agnon's own words as the narrator describing the topic of the book, "[a] story about a man who had neither country nor room, left the land he lived in and went elsewhere, where he lost his room...[going] from

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 101.

neighborhood to neighborhood, street to street, house to house.”<sup>53</sup> Eventually the “narrative I” who is recounting the story is unable to find a room in Germany so he returns to Palestine, where, we learn throughout the story, the narrator had lived prior to moving to Germany. The story takes place during the First World War, and “nothing in the country was functioning normally.”<sup>54</sup> In fact, in a rare instance of insight into the world around him, in which he is emplaced, rather than discussing only himself, the narrator explains that due to it being wartime there were no longer any human beings, just soldiers, officers, casualties, prisoners, and enemies.<sup>55</sup> After many chance encounters throughout the country, the various cities he traveled among, and the numerous neighborhoods in Berlin in which he attempted to live, the narrator returns to Palestine, buys land, builds a house, and tells us that because of the many things that befell him, which he survived and has lived to tell us about, he is calling the book “To This Day,” in the language of thanksgiving for the past and as a prayer for the future.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, *Only Yesterday* is the story about Isaac Kumer, the son of a poor shopkeeper but who descends from a somewhat religiously distinguished lineage, who left his country and city, his “home,” to go to the Land, to build it, and to be rebuilt by it.<sup>57</sup> In fact, Isaac’s entire focus while living at home in Europe was to be in the Land. He leaves for Palestine alone, leaving behind his father and siblings (his mother having passed away earlier), and as Arnold Band

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<sup>53</sup> S. Y. Agnon, *To This Day* [1952], trans. Hillel Halkin (New Milford, Conn.: The Toby Press, 2008), 99.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>57</sup> S. Y. Agnon, *Only Yesterday* [1945], trans. Barbara Harshav (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3.

explains, this sense of homelessness leaves him open to temptations, of secularity (despite his being a Zionist and not a religious pilgrim), of his ideals, etc.<sup>58</sup>

The structure of the book, which is by far the longest and most intricate of the three novels outlined here, presents the character of the protagonist, his commitment to an idea, and his setting out to live that idea, all in the Prologue. We encounter Isaac establishing himself in his hometown as a committed Zionist focused solely on doing what he can to support pioneering efforts in the Land, while living a traditionally religious life. He secures his father's approval to go to Palestine, who helps him prepare for his journey by buying what he considers to be appropriate clothes, and finally Isaac boards a train that will take him to Trieste, Italy, where he will find his way to a ship, which will sail to Jaffa, Palestine. Along the way, on both the train and ship, Isaac has numerous encounters, which we will explore further, and once he arrives in the Land, his idealized expectations are met with the state of reality of the Second Aliyah (immigration to the Land during the years 1903-1914) as well as an environment distinctly different from Eastern Europe. He remains in the Land making trips from Jaffa to Jerusalem, and back again. He finally settles in Jerusalem, gets engaged, and soon after his wedding dies a tragic death.

In his analysis of the three novels, Band begins to explore some of the many themes relevant to travel, encounter, and transversal movement. The important elements of *In the Heart of the Seas* are the tripartite division of characters: the enthusiastic ones/inspired ones, the rest of humanity (i.e., those not "possessed" by the ideal of the Land), and the miraculous Hananiah.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Arnold J. Band, *Nostalgia and Nightmare: A Study in the Fiction of S. Y. Agnon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 440.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

Band states that this story fits the genre of fantasy literature, as a figment of the author's imagination, but nonetheless, each detail carries deep symbolic meaning.<sup>60</sup>

As stated, in *To This Day (Until Now)* the “narrative I” is projected into the past of the First World War. This projected time, also a time of war, allowed Agnon to speak of fighting and turbulence but not of the time in which he was writing, the post-Second World War and War of 1948 era. Band states that Agnon projected the narrator into this earlier period to create detachment from his own contemporaneity in order to call into question the moral implications of personal detachment in a period that called for total commitment,<sup>61</sup> both periods of war and questioning of previously-held identities. Agnon's narrator is an unsympathetic character; he moves through a world of pain, suffering, literal shellshock, corruption, and tragedy but complains of only his personal inconveniences, which are petty in comparison.<sup>62</sup> Band quotes Agnon's character as explaining that during times of war, every person is anxious only for himself. Individuals are not open to the troubles of others.

The narrator walks around aimlessly, divorced from the trials surrounding him, forming no binding relationships with others, and while of military age, does not share in the realities of his contemporaries. The narrator is an Austrian subject, but considers himself Palestinian, a Jew transplanted to a predominantly non-Jewish society; he does not identify with wartime Germany.<sup>63</sup> Along the way he encounters a shell-shocked soldier, around his age whom he dubs the “golem,” a traditionally non-Jewish character formed from earth lacking the human characteristic of a soul. This soldier, who also is aimless in a society he once knew but now so

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 330-31.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 348-49.

transformed, is actually the son of the narrator's former landlady. Once the soldier finds his way home, the narrator is again without a home, however temporary as it originally was.

Band explains that in the story Agnon divided the first seven chapters among the narrator's geographical wanderings, meeting in each place different people in varied social settings. The remaining chapters are more limited in the scope of travel, focusing on the narrator's migration from apartment to apartment within Berlin, his second trip to Leipzig, his return to Berlin, and finally his return to the Land.<sup>64</sup> What is intriguing about this description of war-torn Germany is that nowhere in Agnon's writing does one find mention of (in) famous battles, or graphic depictions of specific upheavals. What is encountered is the turbulence of the human spirit and experience, and a grappling with fundamental human questions of the "apocalyptic" days.<sup>65</sup> Also evidenced in Agnon's writings, especially in these three novels, is an antithesis between *galut* (exile)/diaspora and the Land. The former is characterized by violence, coldness, poverty, foreignness, and the profane, while the latter is the opposite.<sup>66</sup> This is epitomized nicely in the scene from *In the Heart of the Seas* when Abraham, the town *mohel* (circumciser) symbolically passes the scalpel underneath the feet of the "enthusiastic ones," a gesture that "separates them from the soil of the *galut*."<sup>67</sup>

#### "Are You My Mother?" Or, Is Home Where the Heart Is?

The notion of tension between life in the diaspora and the idealized image of life in the Land occupies a central place in *Only Yesterday*. For example, one of the stops during Isaac's train ride was to Lemberg (in Yiddish and German, L'viv in Ukrainian, Lwów in Polish, Lvov in Russian), capital of Galicia, and home to the "great Zionists of the [Austro-Hungarian] Empire."

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 350.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 328.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 266.

While there Isaac saw magnificent and gorgeous things, but like his ancestor Reb Yudel, covered his eyes so that he would not be too pleased with the beauty Outside the Land before his ascent to Palestine.<sup>68</sup> He met with dignitaries who were impressed that he was going to the Land; Agnon states that they were accustomed, rather, to going only to (Zionist) Congresses in Europe, not with actual travel to the Land. Isaac and the narrator (perhaps Agnon himself, or another omniscient and omnipresent voice) recount to themselves that for many Jews outside the Land, particularly for Zionists, the Land was “the end of all ends,” yet when these people realized that the “end” was far away and difficult to reach, and that the means nearer to them were close and easy to attain, they traded the distant and difficult for the close and easy.<sup>69</sup> Isaac, alone in this way, broke with others over his commitment to maintaining action directed solely toward this ideal. While for Ezrahi this dichotomy may in fact highlight the teleology/creativity divide she articulated, in which Isaac’s monomaniacal focus on emplacement “there” bespeaks a future lack of creativity upon arrival, Agnon proves a less than predictable cultural commentator than Ezrahi presents him to be.

Amos Oz states that the direction of *Only Yesterday* proceeds from the cold diaspora to the warm, beautiful Land, but that once emplaced in the Land, the direction is reversed, from the hot desert to his home that he abandoned, to Galicia.<sup>70</sup> Yet, this is not necessarily always accurate. For Isaac, the direction is always unidirectional, with occasional fluctuations and punctuations of challenge (i.e., with encounters and confrontations that expand his fan of memory). While there may be moments of fortuitous situations that impede but also spur his actions, his imagination, even while in the Land, remains constant amidst changing landscapes.

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<sup>68</sup> Agnon *Only Yesterday*, 10.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>70</sup> Amos Oz, *The Silence of Heaven: Agnon’s Fear of God*, trans. Barbara Harshav (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 102.

Even Oz seems to echo Ezrahi's analysis. Yet, perhaps both miss Agnon's portrayal of "diaspora," and both certainly overlook the insights of Benjamin, Bakhtin, Tweed, and Heschel.

Oz emphasizes this tension by explaining that the Land of Israel as Garden of Eden and the lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as Garden of Eden are in fact part of the same continuum, revealed as two in one. One is always slipping away to whatever "side of the sea" one happens to be on when one is fantasizing.<sup>71</sup> In *To This Day*, Agnon's narrator says that when he was in Galicia he wanted to live in Germany, and now that he is in Germany he wishes to be back in Galicia. He concludes that perhaps this is all that Zionism amounts to: wishing to be in the Land, but once there realizing that you miss "home."<sup>72</sup> Agnon continues this strand of personal recollection by having the narrator state that when he was in Berlin he wanted to be in Lunenfeld, and when in Lunenfeld he wanted to return to Berlin. All the while he was in Berlin, he desired to be elsewhere, yet he was returning to Berlin because it was impossible to live anywhere else; living in Berlin also proves to be only a dream.<sup>73</sup>

Yet, the notion of travel and the purposes for it differ among these stories. *In the Heart of the Seas* is a tale inspired by religious faith and devotion, guided by the miraculous, albeit undertaken by human initiative. Travel and migration in *To This Day* reveal elements of longing, but longing for what exactly remains undefined. The narrator chances upon events and moves accordingly, never feeling satisfied wherever he happens to be. The desire to settle down with his scholar friend's collection of traditional Jewish books, which is his original motivation to travel from Berlin to Lunenfeld, remains in the background of the story and ends up being the reason he builds a house in Palestine. Yet, this desire is not overtly expressed as a guiding principle for

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>72</sup> Agnon *To This Day*, 53-54.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 68.

the continued wandering. Isaac Kumer, in *Only Yesterday*, travels as a secular, Zionist ideologue, not as a religious pilgrim as was his ancestor, Reb Yudel.

Oz goes so far as to claim that Isaac, being of the acculturated, assimilated, and bourgeois milieu of Theodor Herzl, wished to carry out Herzl's vision of establishing a new Vienna in Palestine,<sup>74</sup> as opposed to a religious outpost of sorts. But in contrast to Herzl, Isaac has a religious component inherited from Reb Yudel and simply from his upbringing. Perhaps a different way to view this is to say that the chronotope of Isaac the sojourner epitomizes Agnon's transversality; in it/him we see both history and memory coalesce. These components otherwise are differentiated from and opposed to each other in the images of the *shtetl* (small Eastern European town with significant Jewish populations) and in Herzlian political Zionism (i.e., in the images of the religious and secular Jews).

Agnon best represents this dichotomy in a scene from *Only Yesterday*, in which Isaac meets an elderly Jewish couple on the ship. They ask him why he is traveling to the Land, and he responds to work it. The old man inquires whether the Land was not made only of synagogues and prayer houses; was not the Land in fact designed only for prayer? What, he asked, did working the Land (alluding to the mostly secular pioneers in the pre-state period who acquired tracts of land to establish communities – different in character from other, pre-existing Jewish settlements of religious Jews who were in the Land as prelude to the coming of the Messiah) have to do with the needs of heaven? The old man believed that Isaac was part of the cadre of individuals who wished to strip the Land of its holiness and make it like all other lands. Isaac did not respond verbally. Rather, he asked himself why he should argue with someone who was going to the Land simply to add to it another grave.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Oz *Silence of Heaven*, 129.

<sup>75</sup> Agnon *Only Yesterday*, 28.



### Forgetting and Purifying: Two Necessary Steps for Travel

Some of the accusations leveled at the character of Isaac is that he begins to forget his purpose, his goal, because on his travels he encounters unforeseen worlds of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and places that he never imagined while living in his small village.<sup>76</sup> This is not entirely true, however, for elsewhere on his train journey he passed through Przemyśl, a city supposedly known as a citadel, a fortress as the entire state. He had heard legends about what is there, but as the train approached, entered, and left the citadel, he saw nothing of its storied qualities.<sup>77</sup> Agnon gently interweaves elements of fantasy, of reality, and of his own autobiography into the stories; the result is a creation of fiction that smoothly and unobtrusively glides between differing realms of time and place, all while being on a train and a boat.

Oz states that the vision that Isaac, and the readers, had of shaking off the dust of the exile is proven wrong, for wherever the characters turn, they carry the exile with them.<sup>78</sup> This characterization is somewhat more accurate, and it reflects Tweed's assessment that the work of transversality is never done, never reconciled. Isaac's vision, imagination, belief, and trust orient him to other chronotopes along the way, and those encounters are always shifting. Perhaps it could be argued that this "forgetting" is just symptomatic of the occasional punctuation of his imagination and revealing of the fact that he is still in diaspora; his diasporic existence is not yet purified. Yet, when he visits Vienna, he descends the train and walks around. While the city is as magnificent as he imagined the capital of the Empire to be, he does not forget his end, his goal (which for Ezrahi still is the end of creativity and the beginning onset of socio-political turmoil, but also the supposed end to diaspora). Here Isaac's *telos* reemerges and is seen to remain as his

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<sup>76</sup> Oz *Silence of Heaven*, 78.

<sup>77</sup> Agnon *Only Yesterday*, 14.

<sup>78</sup> Oz *Silence of Heaven*, 78-79.

motivating force. Periodically throughout his visit to the city, he thinks to himself things that most other people, even Zionists themselves, have forgotten – that perhaps he is standing in places where Herzl once stood and that if it were not for Herzl Jews would live out their days only in exile and not go to the Land.<sup>79</sup> In this case, it is precisely because he is (still) in the diaspora that his commitment to his imagined end is strengthened and overcomes others' forgetfulness, mire in exile, and false consciousness.

The tension that reviewers see in Agnon between the diaspora and the imagined Land also finds expression in *Only Yesterday* between Isaac and those Zionists who have lost sight of the goal. While Isaac occasionally thinks back on his hometown, his mind also wanders to girls. Yet, unlike his contemporaries whom he chastises for dismissing what he considers to be the true goal for more ephemeral and temporary pleasures, Isaac's sexual fantasies betray another level of focus. He sees himself as a savior figure to the imagined maidens in the Land, helping them fight off unwanted advances by other men and aiding them in the field physically with manual labor.<sup>80</sup> His life is one lived through biblical paradigms. The conclusion of these fantasies is not sexual fulfillment, but rather a giving of himself totally to Zionism and the hoped-for recognition he would receive from others upon realization of his strength and prowess gained from that devotion.

We are beginning to see that the unfolding segments of memories and paradigms operative in Isaac's mind, all uncovered through random encounters, entail continued creativity, but also a renewed existence in diaspora. The biblical period has ended, and Isaac straddles both "reality" and an imagined life in the renewed Land through projections into it of the lost past. This oscillation between the two and ability to navigate between them is not an either/or

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<sup>79</sup> Agnon *Only Yesterday*, 19.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.

scenario for Isaac. Just as he is neither a man solely of imagination nor of pragmatism, so too is he not just a hybrid of the two. He represents a life within both imagination/idealization and the socio-political world of contemporaneity, at times emphasizing one more than the other, but always encapsulating a chronotope within himself.

#### Sisyphus Redux: Physical Return and Emotional Revolt

On the ship, the old man asked Isaac whether or not Isaac had family in the Land. To this Isaac responded with a rather postmodern sensibility, or rather a decidedly modern way à la Marx. He explained to the old man that he did not need relatives (read as biological relatives), for all children of Israel are comrades, especially in the Land.<sup>81</sup> The old man responded by saying that in theory all people assent to this sentiment, but in practice it is more difficult to succeed in the Land without already having family there. Isaac's mind was not changed until their eventual arrival to Jaffa, where those aboard ship were met by all sorts of relatives. In stereotypical Isaac fashion, he began to imagine that those people were coming aboard to meet him and invite him home with them. He relates that (actual) events are one thing and imagination is another.<sup>82</sup> Agnon concluded the Prologue by claiming that as people were being ferried to shore, and Isaac was left alone on the deck of the ship amidst the bustle, he was orphaned many times over.

Oz echoes this idea when he says of Isaac that while in his hometown his imagination took him to the land of the pioneers, while in the Land his imagination carries him to an ersatz home, an orthodox family that represents elements of the diaspora within the Land. Oz states that Isaac travels from one family to another, never quite reaching home, albeit while being

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

emplaced in his idealized home (land).<sup>83</sup> The experience of travel, in all three of these novels, presents the main characters in liminal situations, in encounters that push the boundaries of the humanly possible, both internally and externally, and it is to these situations that the characters must respond.

As with the arrival of the villagers to Jaffa in *In the Heart of the Seas*, Isaac's initial experiences in the Land are "sobered" by the harshness of the weather, and of the social conditions there. Isaac went to an inn, decided the following day to look for work in the fields (working the land), but the innkeeper persuaded him to eat breakfast. By the time Isaac finished, the innkeeper told him that the wagon going to the fields had already left and that another was not coming until the next day. Quickly Isaac understood that the innkeeper would find things with which to delay Isaac, and for which to charge him.<sup>84</sup>

Isaac traveled by foot, and by the time that Isaac finally found someone with whom to talk, it turned out to be a worker who mocked Isaac's Eastern European accent. The two eventually became amiable toward one another, entered a coffeehouse for lemonade, and tried to cool off. To Isaac's surprise, he found many idle workers, not having worked in the fields, but rather sitting around complaining about the conditions in the Land. They told Isaac that contractors would not hire them because they could find cheaper work with others, that the government officials were corrupt and self-serving and looked down on the mere workers, and throughout all of it, Isaac came to realize that his clothes (from the diaspora) were insufficient for the weather of the desert.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Oz *Silence of Heaven*, 98.

<sup>84</sup> Agnon *Only Yesterday*, 40.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

Nevertheless, the narrator in *Only Yesterday* explains that included in the midst of the workers' list of complaints about current conditions were reminiscences about the earlier settlers, and the idle "workers" proceeded to recount the earlier settlers' exploits. They came to see, however briefly and to no tangible ensuing action, that those who were there before them were heroic in that they came to a wilderness, dealt successfully with reducing cases of malaria, handled their own corrupt officials, and built a life. They actually made it to the Land, endured the troubles, and built communities. Throughout this discussion, Isaac understood what they were saying about the economic conditions created by the contractors, but failed to understand how this could happen in the Land. Throughout the discussion of the list of grievances, Isaac was happy to reflect on the fact that this conversation occurred in Hebrew, among comrades, all while being emplaced in the Land.<sup>86</sup> While on the one hand, as Isaac moves closer to the Land he grows increasingly alienated, from family, from the idea of home, and from the comforts of both. On the other hand, he endures the travails because of his imagination of the Land and those who reside there, both then and now. These images, challenges, contradictions, and uncertainties are things to be happily endured, so long as he is there. Perhaps in his liminality Isaac embodies Heschel's vision and call to action.

### **Final Destination as an Impossible Mission**

Band characterizes much of the motivation to leave home as tied to the disintegration of traditional religious practice and belief, as well as to a general tastelessness of life, which he says is symptomatic of a generation.<sup>87</sup> Isaac finds tranquility only moments before he dies (i.e., when he gets married, lives a relatively religious life, is not intent on becoming a pioneer, and whose Zionism, according to Ezrahi, supposedly had been fulfilled simply by moving to the Land).

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>87</sup> Band *Nostalgia and Nightmare*, 421.

This attainment of tranquility of spirit, however, is short lived, and only the narrator and reader realize that it has been reached. Isaac strives for meaning in his life, and before he can understand what it is exactly, he departs from the story. This is hardly redemption and unification with the Land as Ezrahi concludes. Isaac's creativity was not abandoned or outgrown. Agnon left it unfulfilled and open, but emplaced.

Yet, what are we to learn from this state of affairs? Is metaphorical return to tradition, to previously moored beliefs and myths, the only way to attain redemption and tranquility, which may or may not necessitate actual physical departure and travel at all? Is nostalgia, and not physical (re) territorialization, all that is needed for unification to be realized? Agnon's sophistication as a storyteller and revealer of truth betrays the answer to that question. Band relates that Agnon portrays the world of pious Jews in many ways, crossing generations in their commitment to belief, etc., wherever they happen to be located. Yet, in modernity these yearnings cannot be realized, or fulfilled. The "golden world" is nothing but fantasy, and in this way nostalgia, he claims, turns into nightmare. The ideal world can never be (re) captured.<sup>88</sup> This is to say that redemption (unification?) is always deferred. The moment of arrival/encounter is not a closure or end to diaspora, except as the culmination, perhaps, of part of a physical trip, and it certainly is not a restriction on creativity. Rather, it is an ethical call, a *shofar* blast, an echo – especially for Isaac who so evidently lived a bifurcated existence between explicit biblical motifs and immersion in harsh reality. These stories do not depict, as Ezrahi claims, concretized myths for realization in our world, but rather various quests exposing us to possibilities and ways of being, for which Heschel pleads.

Isaac, and even the narrative I in *In the Heart of the Seas*, are denied the possibility of return through repentance and physical return. If we follow Band's assessment of Isaac as not

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 449-50.

solely an individual, a typical pioneer of the Second Aliyah, but rather as a chronotope of all of Western civilization that behaved without moorings, or with moorings that were misunderstood about how they could be brought about, during the 1930s and 1940s (when he published this work),<sup>89</sup> then there is no redemption at all for humanity, or it is eternally deferred. There are things that prohibit and frustrate these efforts at (psychological, spiritual, etc.) return, despite physical return. In other words, even though he re-emplaced himself in his “home” (away from home?), Isaac, and the narrative I, remain in diaspora.

The traditional promise of redemption, of being steadfast in faith, loses its valence in modernity, or at least in the particular way that it was hoped it would be achieved. As Oz states, the promise of a Zionist utopia has to remain a promise.<sup>90</sup> One cannot settle for the status quo, for what was hoped for was not achieved or accomplished. The narrative I eventually found what it was looking for, but it remains to be seen how it actually panned out, especially given the restlessness so characteristic of the uncommitted individual. Even for the deeply committed individual, such as Isaac, the many layers of his life are never reconciled with one another. Jaffa, the new life, of labor, of national revival, and of the pioneer woman who rejected him are left un-integrated with Jerusalem, a return to religious behavior, tradition, and to his religious wife who perhaps he could have found even in his home village in Europe. Furthermore, once he actually achieves marriage and a “stable” life in Jerusalem, he dies soon thereafter. Both of these experiences, these liminal situations, are likewise not integrated into his experiences with his family, his “home,” his past. The many realities of his life are incompatible with his imaginations, his imagined realities. Isaac’s travel, then, is perpetual, and so, too, is the creativity each encounter demands.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 417.

<sup>90</sup> Oz *Silence of Heaven*, 187.

Oz sums up this conundrum by stating that from Agnon truth emerges, as it is for Benjamin with the unfolding of the fan of memory. That which was broken (i.e., tradition, the life, practices, and outlook of Reb Yudel, for instance), was broken irremediably. Things collapsed under their own contradictions, and thus there is no way back. Those who “take refuge in the shadow of wisdom, return to ruins,” and those ruins are not to be confused with the return to “home.”<sup>91</sup> Physical return is possible, and other types of return are dependent on how one answers the inherently ethical call of the confrontation with the threshold, and this liminal position that emerges, especially once physical return and emplacement have been reached, is itself the place of re-diasporization.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 6.



## Chapter Four “Re-Diasporization”: Emplacement, Generation, and the Choice of Jewish Diaspora Creativity

### **Life Imitating Art Imitating Life**

While Chapter Three dealt with the theme of travel, along with concomitant elements encountered throughout the journey, such as chronotopes, unforeseen recollections and memories, and the ethics necessitated by decisions made regarding those memories, this chapter focuses on issues related to being physically situated, once the travel to “there” has supposedly ended. Agnon’s characters, for instance, returned and became emplaced, although in various ways. In *To This Day*, the narrator considered himself to be Palestinian and ended up back in the Land after spending time in Europe; in *In the Heart of the Seas*, the characters are portrayed as religious pilgrims who, while traveling real routes and dealing with real struggles along the way, are guided and accompanied by the miraculous. This travel/return, however, is to a place that they felt attached to and separated from, albeit imagined – the Land of their dreams and collective history. In *Only Yesterday*, Isaac travels to the Land, to the place of his longing, although where he “ends up,” it could be argued, was in a situation that could have been attained in his other, natal home. In this way, Isaac returned to tradition, to a life that was expected of him elsewhere.

As well, whereas Chapter Three engaged texts that can be classified as fiction and novels, albeit interspersed with autobiographical components from Agnon’s life (e.g., his origination in Galicia, emigration to Palestine, return sojourn to Berlin, and final settlement back in the Land), this chapter deals with texts that are considered journalistic and as ethnography (i.e., “nonfiction” narratives). A caveat, however, is needed. The themes of ethnography, reportage, and constructed and presented identity, especially as practiced in the initial ethnographies, blur the lines of fiction and nonfiction. The methods and personalities involved in the creation of

these ethnographies and later accounts involve accusations of, if not actual implementation of, deception, (dis) guise, a constant tension between concealing and revealing, and the desire to include as many voices as possible in the process. This latter endeavor has the effect of upending many previously held conceptions regarding characteristics of certain identities. It must be recognized, however, that the process of identity creation, especially one that attempts inclusivity of voices and perspectives, is never-ending and is wrought with many pitfalls. As well, all parties involved confront often-troubling aspects of their pasts found as a result of this inclusion.

Now that we are emplaced, however, we are better able to confront issues of generation, commitment, and rebellion – all concomitant elements of the threshold. As we posited in Chapter Three, this is how emplacement has come to be interpreted/enacted. Involved in this assortment of “related possibilities” are the elements of fabrication, masking, “passing,” and ultimately of questioning whether the product is hybridity or something else. The overriding concern of this chapter, then, is to gain an understanding of emplacement as a site of challenge, creativity, tension, and the ground from which to transmit ethics, values, and concerns, both from one’s imagination and lived realities. In this way, achieved identity, as overcoming longing and reaching origins, remains unfulfilled and one becomes re-diasporized (i.e., able to identify to what it is one will commit) from within bounded space. It is through being emplaced that one achieves perspective on movement, one’s situation into tradition, historical and autobiographical contextualization, and appreciation of the past. Emplacement is a location of liminality, out of which one co-produces and enacts diasporic identity. This conception places into question stances that advocate for location’s eraser and dismissal of its importance, both in its necessity for identity construction and acknowledgement of its entrenchment in socio-political *realpolitik*.

The themes of identity in these stories have been depicted and spelled out in social scientific, anthropological, and ethnographic works of the twentieth century. To make better

sense of these connections we will begin with the juxtaposition of two ethnographies about Jewish life in the pre-Shoah period (i.e., the life of the *shtetl*) in Eastern Europe. The presentation of Mark Zborowski's and Elizabeth Herzog's *Life is with People* and S. An-sky's Jewish Ethnographic Expedition, his work from forty years earlier, highlight issues such as "generation(s)," generational gaps and conflicts, and the construction of identity and social presentation of the self/group. To make sense of these issues we will examine both Margaret Mead's and Pierre Nora's understandings of the concept of "generation" and all that this implies for society and the various groups comprising it.

To bring this discussion back to the issue of diaspora and the Land, we will apply these insights to Israeli reflections on the ways that various generations have approached the Land and ask whether or not reconciliation is possible, or desirable, and what this means for one's supposed return. I consider Eliezer Schweid's *The Land of Israel*, Amos Oz's *In the Land of Israel*, David Grossman's *The Yellow Wind*, and Ari Shavit's *My Promised Land*. While acknowledging the fact of being physically emplaced, a tension results from the inability of succeeding generations to identify with and recount the motivations and passions of previous generations. It is by being emplaced that we see societal cleavages, continued alienation, and renewed separation. Through an exploration of these gaps we are left asking the same questions of living individuals as we did of characters in literature: "To what shall one commit, and how shall one commit, if at all?" The resulting intentional separation produced by self-reflective confrontation makes the quotidian extraordinary and the already achieved something to be anticipated. This counters previous understandings of the Jewish diaspora and "homecoming." The Land remains contingent, never accomplished, and always in a state of "permanent revolution."

## Ambiguities of Identity

In the Preface to the 1962 edition of *Life is with People* (originally published in 1952), Margaret Mead stated that the purpose of the Columbia University series of ethnographies devoted to contemporary cultures, which was co-headed by Ruth Benedict and funded by the Office of Naval Research, was to “light up” the inner meanings of these peoples and cultures as they were carried from one place to others before they were destroyed.<sup>1</sup> She recognized, however, that this created product, this picture into the “inside” of a culture, was in fact drawn from the outside, through the eyes of other cultures as well as disciplines used to present the findings, as is the case with most ethnographies. The co-author of central importance in this study devoted to Jewish life in Eastern Europe was Mark Zborowski, a person who, as Mead states:

[...] combined in one person the living experience of shtetl culture in the Ukraine and Poland and the disciplines of history and anthropology through which to interpret his memories and readings...For him, this book is a realization of a plan cherished for many years...<sup>2</sup>

The goal of this project was to experiment with research methods “developed to test working on cultures at a distance...[distance] whether provided by time – cultures no longer existed as organized societies, only in the minds of individuals...or by distance [erected by] man-made barriers.”<sup>3</sup> The *shtetl* culture no longer existed after the Second World War due to its eraser by the Bolshevik Revolution and later destruction by the Nazis.

In order to undertake this study, the Jewish Research Group at Columbia interviewed Eastern European Jews, observed their life and households (in the United States), studied their

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Mead, “Foreword,” in *Life is with People: The Culture of the Shtetl*, by Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog [1952] (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 14.

histories and literatures, read their drama, and investigated relevant pictorial records and films.

As opposed to “traditional” anthropology, Mead relates that:

In this new kind of anthropology, members of different disciplines, from different modern cultures, work together, using the senses, the memories, the perceptions and insights, the organizational skills and capacity to develop and test hypotheses, of the different members of the group, as a delicate and unique research tool.<sup>4</sup>

The goal, as Mead states, was to gain access to the “dialectics of the shtetl” through the microcosm of the seminar.<sup>5</sup> What resulted in the book was “a portrait rather than a series of photographs, a composite picture of a way of life, not the factual record of a single village.”<sup>6</sup> This amalgamation was justified, for as she attests, the Jews for whom this was a study in their disappearing culture, “lived as communities within a larger society, who themselves did not constitute a nation, and who therefore had always to include in any picture of themselves the picture which their neighbors...had of them.”<sup>7</sup> Mead acknowledged that this study presented a “composite picture” and not a series of photographs, “not the factual record of a single village.” What this ethnography did present, though, was a “common core” that all *shtetl* Jews supposedly shared. This admission allowed for the researchers much leeway in how to organize and discuss the lives under investigation.

This totalizing endeavor is echoed in the Introduction, in which Zborowski and Herzog claim, “[...] this is a portrait of a culture and not a...diagram. Its subject matter is not ethnographic minutiae but rather prevailing patterns...Despite countless local variations, the Jews of Eastern Europe had one culture...the culture portrayed is that of the *shtetl* and not that

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 19.

of all Jews”<sup>8</sup> Constructing the study in such a way, of identifying a “core culture,” allowed the editors to by-pass the “shades and levels of acculturation...in such developments as secularized schools, modifications of dress, political and labor activities, and generally increased participation in the life of the larger society.”<sup>9</sup> The composite picture did away with lived reality and understood Jewish (i.e., *shtetl*) life as in fact frozen and immutable. They reduced the “locality” of the *shtetl* and the life therein to the minds of its descendants. As the editors claim, “The effort is to portray the living culture rather than to trace the origin of its manifestations. The emphasis is on interrelations rather than on initial causes.”<sup>10</sup> They even went to far as to claim that the *shtetl*’s locality and physicality were secondary to the people who lived in it. They state, “My shtetl’ means my community, and community means the Jewish community. Traditionally, the human rather than the physical environment has always been given primary importance. Emphasis on the Jewish portion of the community was inevitable, for historical developments had excluded it from membership in the larger community. Socially and legally it was an entity in itself.”<sup>11</sup> While this acknowledges the emplacement of the *shtetl* within distinct temporal and spatial confines, it denies any agency to the people living within it, except as pawns in the pre-ordained, determined life of Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Judaism.

For the editors of this study, *shtetl* life was contained within a veritable hermetic bubble. As they relate/construct:

[...] the small-town Jewish community of Eastern Europe – the shtetl – traces its line of march directly back to Creation. The Exodus from Egypt, the giving of the law on Mount Sinai...[are] historical events no less real than the Spanish

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is with People: The Culture of the Shtetl* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), 23.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

Inquisition...According to the shtetl, the Children of Israel have survived solely because of the Covenant made with God – accepting His Law.<sup>12</sup>

The history and involvement of Jews in Europe are reduced to intermittent migrations, the establishment of a few centers of learning, being shut off from surrounding cultures and knowledge, and the building and maintaining of a consciousness that extends from Creation and continues, unabated, into the small Jewish culture of Europe.

In their composite portrait, the editors denied the inhabitants of the *shtetl*, here given personification itself, any involvement in the surrounding *milieu*. As they claim:

[...] despite the multiple impacts from without, until the late nineteenth century, a very large proportion of the shtetl population grew up in ignorance of the world beyond...The whole world was commonly assumed to be just one shtetl after another...Space and time...were fluid, vague concepts...The geographical data of the Bible were fused and confused with the names of contemporary countries...Isolation was most complete during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. From then on the waves from without pounded increasingly against the Gates of Torah...From the mid-eighteenth century, however, there was ever-strengthening attack from within. Its most effective manifestation was the Enlightenment, the *Haskala*, which emanated from Germany and spread across Europe. It was the intellectualized form of rebellion against legalism...<sup>13</sup>

Such a presentation ignores other, well-known and attested to forms of identification that Jewish communities used during this period. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett states:

[...] the team identified *shtetl* with Jewish community. Second, they imagined its spatial organization in terms of isolation, self-containment, and homogeneity. Third, they envisioned it as timeless...the authors did not distinguish clearly between *shtetl* (town), *kehile* (corporate Jewish community), and an anthropological notion of communities as the “basic units”...of an organization and transmission within a society and its culture. The book argued... “My *shtetl*’ means my community, and community means the Jewish community,” an identification they attribute to the exclusion of Jews from “membership in the larger community.” However, a single *kehile* often had jurisdiction not only over

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 158-61.

the Jews in a particular town, but also over smaller Jewish settlements in the environs.<sup>14</sup>

She continues to note that Jews were not isolated, a counter-notion further borne out by the fact that hasidic life, for instance, transcended borders of towns, as did other specialized institutions of Jewish life, such as membership in *yeshivot* (schools of advanced study of Talmud).

That the *shtetl* as the editors presented it is seen as timeless (i.e., that its inhabitants see it as continuing Jewish life from time immemorial) and that it is being bombarded from without by economic, political, and intellectual threats but does not change, allows Jewish life no recourse except abandonment and destruction; change and creative, reciprocal interaction with the surrounding *milieu* is not allowed in this scheme. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett points out that this presentation deals inadequately with its own inconsistencies. As she states:

General claims that the *shtetl* was “not a static universe,” that it was a “whole” made up of “conflicting and interacting parts,” and that “through the centuries the tradition has been both tested and invigorated by the impact of influences from without” have limited analytic consequences. They do however provide a rationale for integrating inconsistent data and, as disclaimers, they tacitly acknowledge the book’s overwhelming emphasis upon continuity.<sup>15</sup>

The *shtetl* is a unified whole existing somehow amidst the larger, European backdrop.

As acknowledged, the main architect of this project was Mark Zborowski. He was born in 1908 in the Ukrainian city of Uman, population around 60,000. He and his family later moved to the Polish cities of Lwow and Lodz, both relatively large and well-known locales. In 1928 he moved from Poland to France in order to study anthropology.

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<sup>14</sup> Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Introduction,” in *Life is with People: The Culture of the Shtetl*, by Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog (New York: Schocken, 1995), 5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.



It was there that a Soviet agent approached him and offered him the opportunity to study in Russia, tuition-free, if he would monitor and provide information to the Soviet authorities on the activities of anti-Soviet Trotskyists.<sup>16</sup> By 1941 Zborowski and his wife fled France for the United States. While he continued to report on anti-Soviet Russians abroad, he also furthered his involvement in studying Jewish life by securing a job as a librarian at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City. While there he met both Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead.<sup>17</sup>

The book was published in 1951, and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett tells us that already within two years of its publication allegations spread about Zborowski's activities as a spy; he even was implicated in the death of Trotsky's son. For some scholars, such a revelation casts doubt on the merits of the produced volume and the selected emphases that the editors presented as characterizing Jewish life. Questions emerged over how Zborowski understood the *shtetl* and the relationship of the Jewish community to its larger surroundings. Steven Zipperstein tells us that Zborowski "exerted decisive influence on all aspects of the book,"<sup>18</sup> and as we have seen, other scholars called into question the ways in which Zborowski portrayed *shtetl* life. Zborowski presented himself as in fact coming from such a background, but Uman, for many scholars, did not constitute a *shtetl*; it was a city. Zborowski maintained, however, that the *shtetl* was a state of mind, not delimited to its physical scale.

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<sup>16</sup> Steven J. Zipperstein, "Underground Man: The Curious Case of Mark Zborowski and the Writing of a Modern Jewish Classic," *Jewish Review of Books*, Summer 2010, 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 3; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett "Introduction," 14.

<sup>18</sup> Zipperstein "Underground Man," 4.

As many observers have noted, there exists a link between ethnography, espionage, and surveillance. One not only observes, but records. Both reveal that which is concealed. Both ethnographers and spies are strangers, ask many questions, and attempt to situate themselves into a location to gain trust, and truth, while concealing aspects of their own identities from those they hope will trust them.<sup>19</sup> The process is what Nathaniel Deutsch calls strategic dissimulation. The link between the two was made explicit with Zborowski in *Life is with People*, for the co-author of the book was in fact a Russian spy who interjected his own biased recollections into the interpretation of others' memories and into his readings of secondary material about Jewish life in Eastern Europe, a world out of which he originated but from which he was estranged. That he spent his professional life reporting on the activities of others, in an effort to have them silenced and even killed, casts doubts on his credibility as an anthropologist, who was supposed to present a total account of Jewish life through documenting all ways that people there existed.<sup>20</sup> The effect of *Life is with People* is, as Deutsch points out, a synthesized product of local differences into a "representative portrait of a single *shtetl*." The book created an imagined and imaginary land, unlike other ethnographies that strive to present reality as it is lived while it is being lived. Zborowski's account was a heavily mediated representation of the imagined world that he claimed to embody.

Even though Zborowski was a Russian spy, should that negatively impact one's appreciation of his study of Jewish life, definitional issues of "shtetl" aside? Kirshenblatt-Gimblett asks, "...is there any aspect of the volume we might explain in terms of Zborowski's

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<sup>19</sup> Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Jewish Dark Continent: Life and Death in the Russian Pale of Settlement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 25.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 318-19.

biography that could not be accounted for just as persuasively without reference to his life?”<sup>21</sup> After all, he did not write the book alone. Others agreed to the presentation of *shtetl* life as such. Nevertheless, she argues, once the book took on its current characteristics and mode of presentation, in which Jewish life in Eastern Europe is seemingly frozen, isolated, and focused on what Zborowski et al. stated it focused on (e.g., personal status, wealth disparities, and also continuity – in fact the very elements that factored in to his estrangement from his father), Zborowski had no need to explain himself or his own interjections. In fact, as she argues, such a constructed view provided a “safe haven” for him.<sup>22</sup> Zborowski’s imagined *shtetl* became so entrenched in the collective imagination about Eastern European Jewish life that he even wrote the 1971 entry for “shtetl” in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, a serious reference work in English. As such, we are left with the view that the *shtetl* was a “planned whole, designed and governed by the Almighty...It is a complex whole, but basically it is characterized by order, reason, and purpose. Everything has its place, its course, its function...the universe of the *shtetl* is an unbroken continuum.”<sup>23</sup> This constructed image, however, is the severely mediated production of interviews, research, and the dubious impositions of the editor’s sentiments and own imagined recollections.

#### Guise of Disguise: Or, Deception in the Service of Truth

The author and playwright S. An-sky, born Shloyme-Zanvl Rappoport in 1863, in the town of Chashniki in the Vitebsk province, and he received a traditional Jewish upbringing. Similar to many youths his age, he began reading literature produced by those “enlightened” Jews of the Haskalah, and he also immersed himself in Russian literature, becoming entranced

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<sup>21</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett “Introduction,” 20.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Zborowski and Herzog *Life is with People*, 409-27.

by the idea of the (common) people.<sup>24</sup> Turning his back on any religiously defined concept of Jewish identity, he traveled to Paris in the early 1890s to surround himself with secular, European culture. While there he encountered East-European born Yiddish-speaking intellectuals and their works, such as the poems of I. L. Peretz and novels by Sholom Aleichem, as well as other Jews influenced by the emerging enthusiasm of the Zionist Congress and the creation of the Jewish Socialist Labor Bund. This was an association that aimed to unite Jewish workers into a party in order to more effectively join the Russian Socialist Democratic movement. Both the Zionist Congress and the Bund were founded in 1897.

He came to realize that Jews, contrary to popular belief among his non-Jewish neighbors and even some secular co-“religionists,” were a people, and they were his people.<sup>25</sup> Nathaniel Deutsch quotes An-sky, in which An-sky recounts his transformation:

When I first entered literature 25 years ago I wanted to labor on behalf of the oppressed, the working masses, and it appeared to me, mistakenly, that I would not find them among the Jews...possessing an eternal longing for Jewishness, I [nevertheless] threw myself in all directions and left to work for another people. My life was broken, split, torn...I lived among the Russian folk for a long time, among their lowest classes. Things are different for us now than when I wrote my first story. We have cultural, political, and literary movements.<sup>26</sup>

Slowly he incorporated all elements, the Russian revolutionary and focus on the *narod* (the people) as well as the split Jewish revolutionary/Zionist/secular and traditional *shtetl* life, into his creative *oeuvre*; he began writing Yiddish poetry, and in 1902 he composed “Di Shvue” (“The Oath”), a poem that was adopted as the emblem of the Bund.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Steven J. Zipperstein, “Introduction: An-sky and the Guises of Modern Jewish Culture,” in *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*, eds. Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 3-4.

<sup>25</sup> Deutsch *The Jewish Dark Continent*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> Zipperstein “Introduction,” 5.

An-sky is known for many works, in particular: 1) “Di Shvue”; 2) his reporting on the destruction of Jewish life in the Russian lands during wartime (“Khurban Galitsye,” “The Destruction of Galicia”); and 3) his play “The Dybbuk” (originally called “Tsvishn Tsvey Veltn,” “Between Two Worlds”) a tale of spirit possession in a hasidic village. Yet, it is his ethnographic work (the Jewish Ethnographic Expedition) that is of interest to us here. After leaving his hometown to live an assimilated life as a Jewish intellectual in Western Europe, but after being influenced there by secularized Jews producing works in Yiddish as well as by the emerging Zionist movement(s), he maintained his interest in the *narod* (people) but desired to create a distinctively Jewish ethnography. It was this medium, he believed, which would allow for travel to and immersion in the lives of (his) people. He carried this interest with him, however modified, from his interest in Russian literature, and it was strengthened by his experiences confronting the reality of Jews.

However much Russian Jews identified with the proletariat, they could never be identified as belonging to the Russian people, despite their similar socio-economic conditions. During the 1880s he lived through the passage of the May Laws, a series of restrictions on Jews that specified how they were to conduct business, which imposed school admittance quotas, and instituted more residence restrictions; these policies increased Jewish marginalization, impoverishment, and contributed to Jewish political radicalization. It strengthened the stereotype among the Russian populace of Jews as economically parasitic, as social aliens, as lacking attachment to land and legitimate forms of labor, and whose culture was defined by reactionary religious traditions.<sup>28</sup> He was a native of the Pale of Settlement, a region on the western end of the Russian empire bordering Galicia and Prussia in which Jews were allowed to

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<sup>28</sup> Deutsch *The Jewish Dark Continent*, 3.

reside, dating from the late 1700s to the Russian Revolution of 1917. Yet, he spent many decades outside its confines in Western Europe, and he ended up identifying with both.

In 1909 he began to secure funding for an ethnographic expedition, in which he and his retinue of musicologists, photographers, and fieldworkers would tour *shtetls* in the Russian provinces of Podolia, Kiev, and Volhynia. Over the course of two years he visited 60 towns, took 2,000 photographs, transcribed over 2,000 folktales and legends, recorded and transcribed 1,500 folksongs, and produced a book-length questionnaire with more than 2,000 questions that covered material dealing with daily life, work, and general experiences from birth to death and beyond. In order to get a better sense of the scope of this questionnaire, it is helpful to see just what sorts of topics it covered.

The questionnaire was broken into five sections and numerous subsections. The first section dealt with the child, from conception to *kehayder* (traditional Jewish instruction). Subsections include pregnancy, types of cravings the expecting mother has, whether or not a midwife will be sued, the location of giving birth, incantations, what the couple will do with the placenta, what happens if the child is born with extra fingers, how the mother will nurse the newborn, what prayers are said, circumcision, gifts, when the first haircut will occur, etc. The second section covered the period from *kehayder* until the wedding. Its subsections include preparation for school, who takes the child, whether there is a teacher's assistant, the curriculum, punishments, manners in school, if the children learn hasidic philosophy, the role of secular and heretical books, if children run away, payment, how to educate girls, military conscription, converts, etc. The third section covered the wedding. Its subsections include matchmaking, interviews of potential matches, breaking off matches, scheduling the wedding, entertainment on the Sabbath before the wedding, musicians, dancing, veiling the bride, unusual wedding vows, false ceremonies, ritual cleanliness, etc. The fourth section covered family life. It asked about

boarding the bride and groom when the son-in-law is a religious scholar or works in the father-in-law's business, in-laws, love and beauty, quarrels, unknown fathers, kinship, barrenness, divorce, widows/widowers, deserted spouses, inheritance, senility, illness, exorcisms, and dying. Finally, the fifth section dealt with death. It asked about body purifications, shrouds, graves, mourning, the Angel of Death, the afterlife, reincarnation, and resurrection.

An-sky also had specific instructions for how to answer the questions. He paid particular attention to the age of the informants, their locations, how they came to know the answers to each question, information about people who told them answers, etc. The endeavor ended with the outbreak of the First World War. An-sky died in 1920.<sup>29</sup> By going to the people and immersing himself within their *milieu*, he would not ask them to erase or choose between competing interests in presenting their identities; his project would enable Jews, from all realms, to present themselves as they say fit,<sup>30</sup> just as he was doing for himself.

In this way An-Sky's project was similar to but ultimately differed from that of Zborowski's, as well as from Bhabha's and Gilroy's understandings of identity. Gilroy's presentation of black identity, for example, which emerged out of the experiences of slavery, movement among Africa, the Caribbean, the United States, and England is one of "new configurations," creolization, métissage, mestizaje, and hybridity. He states that through the chronotope of the ship, which signifies motion, movement across space, and embodiment by those populating it, one gains access to the traversed space, the Atlantic. This produces, as he claims:

A complex unit of analysis...of the modern world [which produces] an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective...The fractal patterns of cultural and political exchange and transformation that we try and specify through manifestly inadequate theoretical terms like creolisation and syncretism indicate how both

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<sup>29</sup> Zipperstein "Introduction," 26.

<sup>30</sup> Deutsch *The Jewish Dark Continent*, 29.

ethnicities and political cultures have been made anew in ways that are significant not simply for the peoples of the Caribbean but for Europe, for Africa...and of course, for black America...Britain's black settler communities have forged a compound culture from disparate sources.<sup>31</sup>

Gilroy explicitly states that such movement and the identities that developed from it intermixes distinct cultural forms. It cannot be understood simply in nationalistic or ethnic terms. He states, "The specificity of the modern political and cultural formation I want to call the black Atlantic can be defined...through this desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity."<sup>32</sup> He continues by juxtaposing explicit political and cultural movements, such as Afrocentrism, with the idea of the black Atlantic that he articulated.

Other movements fail to include the elements of flows, exchanges, and "in-between" elements that he sees operating in his conception of identity construction. As he relates, "The Africentric movement appears to rely upon a linear idea of time that is enclosed at each end by the grand narrative of African advancement. This is momentarily interrupted by slavery and colonialism, which makes no substantial impact upon African tradition or the capacity of black intellectuals to align themselves with it."<sup>33</sup> In a move similar to that of Afrocentrism, Zborowski amalgamated disparate accounts of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, as well as his own recollections and interests, into a coherent picture of an idealized locale. He created a place for which others would feel nostalgic and which disallowed change, even within a system that supposedly was tethered and connected to ideas of a chain of continuity. Zborowski's *shtetl*

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<sup>31</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 15.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.



identity maintained a clear linear trajectory, and it dismissed the otherwise-revolutionary movements of Enlightenment and Zionism.

By contrast, An-sky presented his ethnography as encountered *in situ*. As we will see, though, he did offer his own interpretation of Jewish identity, but he did so without imposing it onto the experiences of others. Bhabha and Gilroy understand identity as created in the interstitial spaces and movements, in the third space, between otherwise relatively fixed, albeit transformed, locations. Theirs is a melding, but one attuned to and cognizant of confluence, a hybridity. An-sky's product, on the other hand, is not a hybrid identity, but rather a new paradigm as a way of being in the world. His personification, as well as his hope for the Jewish folk he was studying, was one of being comfortable with multiple positions, not their mixture into something new. An-sky did not wish to transcend European, or "Jewish," or secular, or religious categories. Rather, he envisioned the complexity of Jewish experiences as a means to resuscitate Jewish sense of peoplehood and creativity, wherever one happened to be situated. The results of his Expedition were meant to demonstrate how such emplaced identities are living formations, embodied by practices that showcase continuity and reciprocity.

Jewish life and folk culture, he thought, was common to non-Jewish folk as well, although Jews maintained distinct characteristics uniting them with experiences as recounted in their scriptures. As Deutsch points out:

Jewish folk culture *was...different...in* two fundamental ways: it valorized spiritual over physical qualities and it reflected an unbroken tradition extending all the way back to the Hebrew Bible...this distinctively Jewish ethos was grounded in the most fundamental Jewish difference of all, the adherence to monotheism, which served as a unifying thread for all stages of Jewish cultural production from the biblical period to the modern era...Jews were at once profoundly like their neighbors...and fundamentally different from them; Jewish culture was constantly being influenced by (and influencing) the cultures around it, and yet it also exhibited an essential unity from the Bible on. In short, Jewish culture was universal *and* particular, same *and* other.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Deutsch *The Jewish Dark Continent*, 33.

In An-sky's view, it was this everyday living that constitutes the Oral Torah. The usual designation of this category is applied to the teachings, interpretations, and instructions that accompanied the Written Torah from generation to generation, which were finally committed to writing after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, took the name the Mishnah, and which later was expanded into the Talmud. An-sky played around with this designation and applied the term Oral Torah to ways that everyday people take on roles as culture producers and interpreters.

His project had a dual goal: to expose to non-Jews the legitimacy of Jewish life, with its folk culture that was both distinctively Jewish but embedded within a local environment, and to expose to Jews, especially the assimilated ones, a deeper knowledge and appreciation of their own folk traditions. He hoped that Jews would redeploy the traditions encountered in his exhibits as the building blocks for new, "authentically Jewish" creations, a continued propagation of the Oral Torah.<sup>35</sup> Ethnography, then, is An-sky's way that people perform Judaism,<sup>36</sup> and this intra-Jewish category, then, and method of enacting it, was applicable to all Jews, at all times, in all locations. It was not confined to a period of time or locale. Yet, its enactment, its act of being emplaced, was not something to be transcended, but rather incorporated into its living engagement. In the same way that the Oral Torah is ongoing and renewable for changing circumstances, so, too, were Jewish traditions. An-sky saw the various ways Jewish communities, of every strand of Judaism even then, believed themselves to be

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 35.

faithfully transmitting traditions but constantly incorporated new things into their lives, thus being both Jewish and fully embedded in their surrounding environment.<sup>37</sup>

### **What a Difference a Day Makes: Generation and the Problems of Commitment**

The elements that emerge from these two examples of how to do ethnography both conform to and depart from generalized notions of anthropological work that developed in the twentieth century. In fact, An-sky prefigured many of the criticisms that later theorists, such as Clifford, leveled at the presuppositions of anthropologists regarding ethnography and the issue of boundaries, as discussed in Chapter One. While for the most part both An-sky and Zborowski studied populations within territorial confines, variously conceived, An-sky's study allowed for a malleability of identity construction that was unlike ethnographies even fifty years after he wrote. Judaism was not limited to a particular locale, but developed and was enacted from within them, albeit inherently in relation to each other. Jewish identity, in its many guises, was, as he stressed, both universal and particular. His concept of Oral Torah was flexible enough to allow for an incorporation of both continuity and innovation, the given and the performed/translated. What both studies share, however, is that they gave shape and expression to the daily lives, both imagined and enacted, within a given realm of existence, a location, an emplacement. Once this ground has been laid, we can return to Mead in another of her areas of inquiry: generation and the question of commitment.

#### The Blind Leading the Blind: Generation, Liminality, and Committing to the Unforeseen Future

Once Zborowski and An-sky determined what populations to study, and where and how they would study them (both utilizing the methods of "ethnography"), questions of how to represent peoples emerged. As we have seen, Zborowski's product was an amalgamation of difference into an idealized, coherent, and imagined whole, while An-sky's product was an

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 42.

attempted comprehensive look into the minutiae of local communities, which nonetheless shared an attachment to “Judaism,” however they conceived of, contributed to, and enacted it. What makes these two studies even more remarkable is that An-sky conducted his fieldwork forty years before Zborowski’s project commenced, and the understandings of what constituted not only Judaism but ethnography itself were quite different from one another. An-sky foreshadowed postmodernist critiques of identity (even providing a new paradigm that nuances their insights) well before their time. As Deutsch explains:

[...] he [i.e., An-sky] emphatically chose not to anchor [Jewish identity] in divine revelation but, rather, in the workings of the Jewish “soul,” “heart,” and “thought”...a profound transvaluation of Judaism itself. Just as generations of rabbinic scholars had devoted themselves to compiling, learning, and legally interpreting the traditional Oral Torah, so An-sky imagined that the Jews of his own day and of future generations would devote themselves to collecting, studying, and creatively reappropriating the Oral Torah of the “common folk.”<sup>38</sup>

In other words, people would co-produce their tradition in a sort of “auto-ethnography,” while being committed to its situation in a continuity of reflection on itself. No one “class” of Jews would carry any more significance than another in defining what was “Jewish” life or how to live it. What mattered, then, was the desire to identify as Jewish and understand oneself as living a life of Judaism.

Given this outlook on reapproaching both Judaism and the lives of Jews in Eastern Europe, it seems inevitable that tensions would emerge among various groups with different conceptions of what it is that constitutes their lives and tradition. Margaret Mead also has reflections on how to integrate these discrepancies, as well. It was the same Margaret Mead, who hired the Russian spy Zborowski, who in 1969 delivered a series of lectures devoted to what she presciently perceived as a conflict of generations. In these lectures she delved into what is a generation, explored how societies have dealt with the category in the past, and proposed a way

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 35.

to address it in the future. The central concern for Mead, which, as it turns out, is the central concern for Benjamin, Heschel, and for the later Israeli authors, is that of commitment. She asks “to what past, present, or future can idealistic youths commit themselves?”<sup>39</sup> In her view, as cultures developed and changed according to and in conjunction with events around them, commitment became a matter of choice among systems of thought. To phrase it differently, Mead highlighted the fact that cultures were perched on a brink, on the *limen*, the threshold, and what the situation demanded was decision. These actions would impact society as a whole; in this way, what constituted a generation was commitment, and this was an ethical concern.

In her presentation of the various models of generations, she discusses three variations. The first is what she dubs “postfigurative” cultures. This model is the one that scholars have used in generalized understandings of socialization and “usual” progressions of cultural transmission. Children learn primarily from forebears; authority is derived from the past. The entire system exists, in which there are three representative figures, each denoting a distinct generation: 1) grandparents, 2) parents, and 3) children, and the system repeats with the preceding generation taking the place of the former as the former gives way to the next; parents become grandparents as children become parents, etc. In this linear depiction of generations, the answers to questions are predetermined. While each generation is expected to rebel, as individuals mature and grow they will be expected in turn to become the figures against which they rebelled as youths.<sup>40</sup> Continuity is maintained by smoothing over the issues of former generational rebellions, which might have disturbed a sense of developed identity.

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<sup>39</sup> Margaret Mead, *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), xi.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 15.

Another model, which often operates simultaneously with those cultures adopting a postfigurative positionality, is that of “cofigurative” identity. In this model people learn from their contemporaries, not the older generation, and this often occurs in experiences of migration to a new location. This moment of confrontation, of becoming emplaced elsewhere, has the potential to cause relative unease and create gaps. Mead states:

[...] all these variations introduce a new element into the grandparents' comments. “In the old country” it was different. This awareness of difference opens the way to a new choice for the child. He can listen and absorb the sense of there and here as being different places...he may cherish the contrast...or he may find these ancestral memories burdensome...Past grandeur is poor fare for an empty pot and does little to keep the wind from whistling through the chinks. So it is not surprising that many peoples...in the land to which they have migrated, let much of the past go.<sup>41</sup>

There is a sense of discontinuity from the past, and this awareness opens up opportunities for the older generation to romanticize the past and for the youth to choose how they want to proceed.

In this model the past does not quite provide a precedent for the new, and the young learn to form bonds among themselves through which they can navigate new conditions. As she states:

Whether the young are the first native-born generation of a group of immigrants, the first birthright members of a new religious cult, or the first generation to be reared by a group of successful revolutionaries, their progenitors can provide them with no living models suitable for their age...Pioneers and immigrants...had no precedents in their own experience on which...they could base the way they reared their children...In its simplest form, a cofigurative society is one in which there are no grandparents present...With the removal of the grandparents physically from the world in which the child is reared, the child's experience of his future is shortened by a generation and his links to the past are weakened...The expectation is that children will go away from or beyond their parents...When these who move...are all members of one culture, the locus of power is not the elders...but a younger age group, and the first

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 20.

generation of adopted children set a style that may perpetuate a thinner version of the older culture...The new culture often lacks depth and variety.<sup>42</sup>

Children's ties to the past are weakened, and the expected experience of the future is shortened because the older generation did not experience youth in the same way or with similar expectations as the current generation does. Grandparents are not expected to be models for grandchildren here, and parents have tenuous control over their children.

Writing at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, Mead occupied a vantage point that in retrospect could see the generational divisions between the postfigurative and cofigurative forms and through which she could see a new form emerging. She states:

I believe a new cultural form is emerging; I have called it prefiguration. As I see it, children today face a future that is so deeply unknown that it cannot be handled...as a generation change with cofiguration, within a stable, elder-controlled and parentally modeled culture in which many postfigurative elements are incorporated. I believe that we can...apply to our present situation the pioneer model – the model of first-generation pioneer immigrants into an unexplored and uninhabited land. But for the figure of migration in space (geographical migration), I think we must substitute a new figure, migration in time. Within two decades, 1940-60, events occurred that have irrevocably altered men's relationships to other men and to the natural world...all these have brought about a drastic, irreversible division between generations. Even very recently, the elders could say, "You know, I have been young and *you* have never been old." But today's young people can reply: "You never have been young in the world I am young in, and you never can be." This is the common experience of pioneers and their children...the young are being transformed into strangers before our eyes.<sup>43</sup>

In this new period the youth take on authority, and they face a future that is completely unknown, which calls for a new way of handling and preparing for it, a way that cannot be handled as the current, cofigurative model has been.

In the introduction to their collection of primary documents that best represent the decade of the 1960s, Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Edward Albert provide an overview of the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 29-34.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 48-49.

“seeds” of dissent, which later came to epitomize the 1960s. Many of those seeds originated in the 1950s, and the editors explain how they manifested themselves in later years. As they state, when the Korean War ended in 1953, “The demagoguery and national insecurity of the early 1950s began to give way to a mood of self-satisfied boastfulness while the prevailing economic boom prompted an ongoing celebration of ‘our way of life.’”<sup>44</sup> Despite this boom, many people still lived impoverished lives, and even the 1954 ruling that segregation in public education was unconstitutional did little to change the status quo for America’s minority communities, especially blacks. *De facto* segregation still existed, and children in those communities received inferior education. By 1955 Martin Luther King, Jr. led demonstrations to bring this inconsistency to greater public attention.

In the fall of 1955 Allen Ginsberg publicly read his poem HOWL, which portrayed America as repressed and warlike, but it offered a hope of redemption. The “beat generation” epitomized travel, smoking, jazz, and more relaxed sexual encounters. By the late 1950s, C. Wright Mills, “analyzed and condemned national power elites that consisted of interpenetrating military industrial, corporate hierarchical structures.” He rejected the popular notion that political power in America was “dispersed democratically,” and economists began stating that American diplomacy resorted to solving problems through military and other forms of conquest. Eric Fromm, “asserted that life in America was becoming a ‘joyless quest for joy.’”<sup>45</sup> The improvisational sit-ins spread across the country, and new forms of political rebellion emerged. The Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) arose in 1960, which strove to help

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<sup>44</sup> Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Edward Albert, eds. *The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



develop black-led nonviolence movements and link other civil rights groups together in a network providing support and coordination.<sup>46</sup>

By 1962 Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) wrote the Port Huron statement, a document that posited a vision for the “new left.” It depicted American society as undemocratic, militaristic, burdened by bureaucracy, and addicted to worship of material objects. The result was a populace of isolated and estranged individuals. SDS called for a society based on love and community, in which all were equally involved in decision-making processes.<sup>47</sup> By 1964 this movement advocating for recognition that societal change was needed, if not already occurring, erupted on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley in the form of the Free Speech Movement (FSM). The initial cause of the demonstrations, sometimes drawing crowds as large as 7,000 people, and concomitant police amassment on campus, was the university’s announcement that it, and not the city of Berkeley, owned a strip of land at the entrance to campus. This land had been used for “off-campus” student political activity and viewed as a place where students could demonstrate and gather without interference.<sup>48</sup>

This announcement, and subsequent police intervention that prompted threats of violence, prompted protest meetings, rallies, silent vigils, and some violation of university rules. Emerging as a major spokesperson for FSM was Mario Savio, a Berkeley graduate student at the time. He portrayed the movement as reacting to “the greatest problem of our nation – depersonalized, unresponsive bureaucracy.”<sup>49</sup> He stated that campus officials, like all bureaucrats, operated under the notion that history and time had stopped – in the 1950’s

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>48</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset and Sheldon S. Wolin, “Introduction,” in *The Berkeley Student Revolt: Facts and Interpretations*, eds. Seymour Martin Lipset and Sheldon S. Wolin (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1965), xi.

<sup>49</sup> Mario Savio, “An End to History,” in *The Berkeley Student Revolt: Facts and Interpretations*, eds. Seymour Martin Lipset and Sheldon S. Wolin (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 216.

conviction of national prosperity, order, and unquestioned rule of authority. Savio argued that, “Someone may advocate radical change in all aspects of American society, and I am sure he can do this with impunity. But if someone advocates sit-ins to bring about change in discriminatory hiring practices, this cannot be permitted because it goes against the status quo of which the university is a part...an important minority...coming to the front today have shown that they will die rather than be standardized, replaceable, and irrelevant.”<sup>50</sup> University students, in their departure from home and value-transmitting institutions, differentiation from their parents’ generations, and adaptation to new environments epitomized “radical” politics of the 1960s, as well as Mead’s concept of generation and possibilities for commitment while being emplaced.<sup>51</sup>

Albert and Albert stress that it was the escalated military intervention in Vietnam that governed the direction of the protests of the 1960s. By the mid-1960s, America’s “patriotic apathy” gave way to idealism and dissent. The presidency of John F. Kennedy was a time of “rising expectations.”<sup>52</sup> In a few years, though, as more people became influenced by counterculture messages of “love and good vibes,” those in civil rights movements saw increasing fragmentation and disenchantment within their own ranks. The continued poverty and hopelessness of minority communities was fertile ground for voices like Malcolm X, who advocated taking political, cultural, and even military control over their own communities. The editors state that between 1964 and 1967 101 major riots occurred across the country, police made 28,932 arrests, Martin Luther King was murdered in 1968, and by the end of that year “racial upheavals led to a total of 208 deaths.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 218-19.

<sup>51</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, “University Student Politics,” in *The Berkeley Student Revolt: Facts and Interpretations*, eds. Seymour Martin Lipset and Sheldon S. Wolin (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1965), 4-5.

<sup>52</sup> Albert and Albert *The Sixties Papers*, 13.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

The late 1960s also saw the emergence of the Black Panther Party, the student strike at Columbia University, a massive anti-war sit-in on the steps of the Pentagon in 1967, a worker uprising in France, and the election of Richard M. Nixon in 1968. He fueled this societal agitation by playing to voters' fears of "disruptive radical activity," which helped him push through wiretaps and break-ins into homes of even suspected "radicals." By 1969 New York City witnessed riots against police harassment of homosexuals, and Chicago endured the indictment of the "Chicago 8," organizers of the demonstrations during the Democratic National Convention. One result of this trial was to highlight growing discontent among other activists, especially women, who felt that the "Chicago 8," all men, did not represent all struggles around the country. As well, many female activists claimed that the men on trial, and to a larger extent the men who still controlled the many activist movements, were not accountable to any constituency except themselves and continued the perpetuation of traditional gender roles.<sup>54</sup> Needless to say, Mead's vision of the pioneer encountering uncharted territory could very well be applied to the culture out of which she was writing in 1969/70.

Mead questions those theorists who insist on making parallels between the past and present regarding the generation gap but who fail to see the irreversibility of changes that have occurred since the beginning of the industrial revolution. She stresses that we, and the condition persists to today, if not being more pronounced now than in 1970, live in a world in which events are presented to us in all of their complexity immediately; we no longer can rely on old distinctions, for example between war and peace, friend and foe, etc., for they have lost their meanings. Children, by and large, can no longer share in the responses their parents, and

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 46.

especially their grandparents, had to events, or know how those generations lived firsthand.<sup>55</sup> What is more, she argues, the older generations are alienated too; this is not a conflict experienced solely by the younger generations. It is not only that the parents and grandparents are no longer guides, but rather, she states, that guides are no longer available in general. We lack a common language to describe this situation, for it is unprecedented. Therefore, she concludes that we must take the notion of the pioneer and apply it, in both time and space, to the future, among generations. Society needs a willingness to learn each others' languages and to explore the premises of all generations, to engage in dialogue.<sup>56</sup> Questions that others never thought to ask must be pursued, and we must recognize that "the future is now."<sup>57</sup>

It is this new cultural form that presents possibilities for commitment. We can decide what it is we wish to commit to, and whatever the decision may be, it entails (ethical) action. Mead's approach to generations does not specify what a generation is except to say that it includes elements of time, groups of people making commitments, and that it most likely will occur in some place. Her understanding of contemporaneity, stretching from 1970 to the present, places into question Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* and ways of being in the world, but more pointedly, it highlights the fact that we exist in the *limen*; our new generation, which she argues includes all those here (i.e., grandpast, past, present, and future) is itself a liminal situation, existing within the threshold.

Furthermore, it is important to note that there are no predetermined or preformed models for what comes next. Identity and action can continue elements of the past, but how that will look in the future, which must encompass all involved, is yet to be foreseen because it is

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<sup>55</sup> Mead *Culture and Commitment*, 59.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

being constantly re-approached. This raises an issue with scholarship regarding ritual and the processes of action, which presupposes that there exist discrete units of identifiable performance: beginning, middle, and end, which can be completed. As Mead states:

We must place the future, like the unborn child, in the womb of a woman, within a community of men, women, and children, among us, already here, already to be nourished and succored and protected, already in need of this for which if they are not prepared before it is born, it will be too late. So, as the young say, The Future is Now.<sup>58</sup>

We see here that existing within the “middle,” the threshold is the new paradigm, with an unknown future, and less-than-distinct past. This mode of existing is distinctively An-skyian, not the static model dictated by Zborowski.

#### Generation and the Self: Situating Difference within the Group

Likewise writing on the concept of generation, Pierre Nora begins by pointing out that even in France the Revolution was intrinsically generational; people saw it as an initiation and passage from one state of affairs to another, from the old to the new in which the old law no longer prevailed.<sup>59</sup> Yet, the youthful aspect of its harbingers was not noticed, he states. When he turns his gaze to the worldwide events of the late 1960s, the same period in which Mead was reflecting on generation, he states that the generational symbolism was made explicit. The events of the 1960s constituted a “symbolic rupture,” in his view, in which horizontal identity (i.e., unity among contemporaries) triumphed over forms of vertical solidarity (i.e., heritage, lineage, tradition, etc.). He states:

[...] what happened in '68 was a symbolic rupture...A generation is a category of representative comprehension; it is a violent affirmation of horizontal identity that suddenly dominates and transcends all forms of vertical solidarity...The “youth movement” developed throughout the world, yet it had no crucial shared experience on which to find common ground, unless it was the experience of

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>59</sup> Pierre Nora, “Generation,” in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, vol. 1, Conflicts and Divisions* [1992], ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 502.

having missed such traumatic engagements as the World War II resistance against fascism...it occurred at the peak of a period of rapid economic growth and in a time of full employment, as orthodox revolutionary ideologies were crumbling.<sup>60</sup>

By questioning the concept of “generation,” Nora examines just what it was that held together the “Chicago 8” and their feminist detractors, who claimed that the men did not represent the struggles of all, despite their all being radical activists of the “counterculture,” for example.

Despite his insistence on the concept of generation entailing the bringing of something new, not necessarily continued from the past but in some way connected to it, Nora maintains that the concept is full of contradictions and uncertainties. Some scholars have claimed that generation is solely a collection of age cohorts, a group of people whose sentiments and lifestyles are similar to one another’s, and whose physical, intellectual, and moral conditions have much in common. Others insist that generation is rather just a cohort, a group of people given in a certain year. As he posits:

Most writers who use the notion have moved from a flexible, concrete, almost natural definition to a rigid mathematism, or vice versa. After World War I, for example, François Mentré saw a generation as embodying “a new way of feeling and understanding life, opposed to or at least different from what went before.” And until World War II...[generation was defined] as “united initially by shared hostilities and by having been subjected to the same influences between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, if not earlier.” Yet neither writer had the slightest hesitation about drawing up endless, tedious tables demonstrating the march of generations from some arbitrarily chosen initial date...The generational concept would make a wonderfully precise instrument if only its precision didn’t make it impossible to apply to the unclassifiable disorder of reality...one is left with a situation in which some authorities confidently see a dozen literary generations from 1789 to the present where others see only five.<sup>61</sup>

Regardless of delimitations to inclusivity in the concept, the problem that Nora uncovers is one of representativity. He concludes that generation is a concept that essentially is an individual phenomenon but that makes sense only when seen collectively.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 503-04.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 505-06.

As well, it makes sense only in terms of rupture and discontinuity; in this sense, it has a necessary connection to an idea of standing within a continuous tradition in some way. As Nora points out:

[...] a generation is by its very nature a purely individual phenomenon that only makes sense when seen collectively. And...although the notion originated in a philosophical framework of continuity, it makes sense only in a framework of discontinuity and rupture...We are all conscious of belonging to several generations, to which we feel connected in varying degrees...What accounts for the special interest in this very distinctive type of periodization...is not the material and temporal determinism that it fatally entails but the dynamics of belonging that it authorizes.<sup>62</sup>

To phrase it differently, Nora, as well as Mead, posit that the category of generation itself constitutes a threshold, itself a self-conscious chronotope that consistently needs to decide what to include in its community.

The issue of how this community of concern, to borrow from Heschel, represents itself of course is a concern uniting all groups, regardless of the issues about which its members are concerned. The fact that the concept at basis is individualized means that it becomes atomized and banal; in effect, as Nora points out, the concept of generation takes on many of the same characteristics as does the grid, as Masuzawa presented it, as discussed in Chapter Two. Because it is individual, it maintains its transgressive quality; old categories are done away with, and they are replaced by newly conceived identities. Generation is both a “simplified and complicated network of social allegiances,” but because of its plasticity and extensive permeation of society, the “void that it fills is now its content.”<sup>63</sup> Due to its use by all people at all times to denote separation from something and creation of something new, albeit consciously distinct from others, it is a psychological category, a private and individual form of identity.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 507.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 509.

Yet, Nora is quick to demonstrate that despite the seemingly individualized ties of allegiance that proliferate within society, and thus ability to be the ground of its own origination/generation, the concept of generation would be meaningless without a connection to that against which it differentiates itself.<sup>64</sup> It is in this way that generation and grid depart from one another conceptually. Generation is not necessarily always a repetition, except that its existence itself is not new. For generation to exist it needs durable, constant elements. In this way, Nora argues, the category of children needs that of parents. Without the “investment of fathers in sons [sic], without a summons to complete the fathers’ work by killing them off,” he states, “it would be impossible to understand how a phenomenon that is in essence one of rupture and negation could also incorporate aspects of continuity and revival of tradition.”<sup>65</sup> In this way, one difference between Judaism and Christianity can be seen as one generation (i.e., emergence of a community of concern) ending and another beginning. Judaism does not see an end to a generation, and Christianity sees itself as replacing and finishing an older generation. The latter needs the former, while the former continues in its way unhindered by the development of a “new” generation. Of course disputes inevitably arise regarding the often co-constitutive aspects of each throughout their developments.

Nora maintains that another aspect of generation is its mixture of memory and history, the amounts of each shifting over time. Nora states, “A generation is not something that emerges spontaneously from the heat of action: it is an observation, a summing up, a self-examination for the purpose of giving firsthand historical account. A generation is a product of memory, an effect of remembering. It cannot conceive of itself except in terms of difference and

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 516.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 518.



opposition.”<sup>66</sup> As the concept progresses, however, especially more into the individual and atomized experience, one moves more into the realm of pure memory; in this guise, generation ignores and bypasses lapses in time, historical issues of cause and effect, and generations themselves become realms of memory that form the fabric of constructed identities. These sites become symbolically significant, and they “find expression” in public spaces, in which case they are individual collections of concerns, organized ex-post-facto, externalized, and then become available for personal re-appropriation.<sup>67</sup>

In this way, Nora argues, each individual becomes his or her own historian, and the expressed memories become increasingly separated from history and time itself. Yet, through its very creation and existence, generation converts memory into history; it institutionalizes and objectifies its inventions. This creation is a constant interplay and dialectic of memory and history, of a past that remains present, and of people who become witnesses to their own creations, and these witnesses are thus transformed into actors, and it is left to each generation to (re) write its own generational history.<sup>68</sup>

In a Halbwachian (and thus Durkheimian) fashion, Nora explores the ways through which individuals, who coalesce around shared memories and sentiments, construct their own communities of concern, thus becoming a generation. It is to this experience that its members commit and propagate themselves into the future, all with a view of themselves as having broken with the confines of the past. The generation, then, exists within the threshold and is poised to confront the unknown together, recognizing that each member co-constitutes the very ideas of generation and tradition themselves (which the generation has become, once expressed in public

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 522.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 526.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 530-31.

spaces). Before both Mead and Nora reflected on these ideas, An-sky heralded his idea of auto-ethnography and “Oral Torah,” as the ways to enact Judaism and identity, concepts that he saw as always changing but nonetheless as durable (i.e., as possessing the characteristics of a generation).

### **Out with the Old, in with the New?: Re-conceptualizing Identity through An-sky**

Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern comments that many scholars have tried to portray An-sky as embodying the paradigm of return; he left Jewish *shtetl* life, integrated himself as best as possible into Russian culture, committed himself to socialism, came to see himself as a Jewish populist, through his encounter with secularized Yiddish life in Western Europe “reinvented” the Judaism into which he attempted to return, and at the end of his life understood Hasidism according to the image he had of the Jewish culture he left as a young adult.<sup>69</sup> Other scholars take issue with this representation, asking whether or not An-sky actually returned, and answering in the negative, they present him rather as a new paradigm, that of “meshulah,” or messenger. According to this scheme, An-sky comes from another world and beckons us into a world that is difficult for us to understand. The messenger is a “go-between,” an intermediary between two worlds: that from which he was sent and to that which he was sent, and in the process transmits the two worlds into one another.<sup>70</sup>

In this way, An-sky himself embodies the threshold; he is a paradigmatic liminal figure, representing one who is “neither here nor there,” but rather is of and in both.<sup>71</sup> An-sky prefigures Erving Goffman’s symbolic interactional presentation of self in everyday life, replete

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<sup>69</sup> Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, “‘We Are Too Late’: An-sky and the Paradigm of No Return,” in *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*, eds. Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 83.

<sup>70</sup> Sylvie Anne Goldberg, “Paradigmatic Times: An-sky’s Two Worlds,” in *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*, eds. Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 45.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

with Goffman's dramaturgical interpretation of action, and he certainly predates later scholars' views of identity as being performed/enacted, not given and predetermined. In fact, An-sky adopted a stance toward ethnography that was based on a mixture of dramaturgy, participant-observation, and espionage, and he would practice dressing like, speaking as, and acting like a traditionally observant Jew in order to gain access to his objects for his Expedition, for example. In the process, however, he often was perceived as an object by his objects, thus blurring the line between ethnographer and participant, subject and object; many participants believed that he was a spy for the Russian government. This is a sardonic twist given what we now know of the later "ethnographer" Zborowski, who in fact was an actual spy, and given the purposes of each. Zborowski created an idealized "Yiddishland" that was portrayed as a preindustrial backwater, which was disconnected from its surrounding environment – an image based primarily off texts and his own interjections; An-sky collected material *in situ* and demonstrated for both Jews and non-Jews alike the interconnected nature of both cultures with one another, and especially how ordinary, everyday folk co-constituted the traditions that they perceived to be immemorial.<sup>72</sup>

An-sky was a Jew, and an individual, ahead of his time. He was a Jew in a Russian *milieu*, but not entirely of it or the Russian people; also, when he was living abroad, he was not entirely of the assimilated world either, for he carried with him remnants and interests of Jewish life from Russia and of "his" folk (in this way betraying a Bourdieuan notion of *habitus*, gained early in life via unconscious means). He thus occupied a nowhere land, but he was not lost, according to Sylvie Anne Goldberg. He was paving his own path through his various constituent realms of

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<sup>72</sup> Jack Kugelman, "The Father of Jewish Ethnography?" in *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*, eds. Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 350.

identity.<sup>73</sup> This was, according to Goldberg, the formation of what became part of his cultural legacy: the search for different ways of being Jewish in a changing world.<sup>74</sup>

#### Heeding the Call of the Messenger: An-sky's Critique of Neo-Romanticism

Scholars have pointed out that many of the literary heroes of early twentieth-century literature express a desire to return to youth, to regain faith and honesty, and to avoid having to struggle with multiple identities in the modern world. Through a recreation of this romanticized past, oftentimes a past that was invented and later imagined, they would be able to confront and withstand temptations and meet challenges.<sup>75</sup> Petrovsky-Shtern states, however, that it was Marcel Proust who demonstrated that this desire was impossible, that a return to a “paradise lost” was possible only through memory and imagination.<sup>76</sup> Was return in ways beyond individual mental construction possible? Petrovsky-Shtern argues that the movement of neo-Romanticism was based on a contradiction between the longings of its characters and the realities of life, and in this way, An-sky fit the mold but also offered a vision of a new paradigm.

An-sky drew inspiration from the Yiddish-language writer and poet I. L. Peretz, who presented a version of Hasidism full of neo-Romantic imagery. Through An-sky's portrayal and imagination, however, this Hasidism embodied the epitome of folklore, ethics, and distinctively Jewish modes of thinking. It also was a new way of being Jewish in a changing world, even perhaps of a desired return to tradition (albeit with a recognition that it is always changing). Yet, An-sky's depiction of Hasidism confronts the fact that its lived reality foretells return's impossibility. The time is too late; Hasidism, especially as depicted in An-sky's play “The Dybbuk,” has been corrupted both from without and within.

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<sup>73</sup> Goldberg “Paradigmatic Times,” 46.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Petrovsky-Shtern “We Are Too Late,” 84.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 85.

Regarding the former, Petrovsky-Shtern comments that the Russian political imagination portrayed Hasidim as engaged in ritual murder of Christian children, thus spurring denigration of the movement by journalists of the time. Regarding the latter, An-sky depicted Hasidism, the supposed bulwark of tradition, as being incapable of dealing successfully with either the material or spiritual demands of its community members. “The Dybbuk” takes place in a *shtetl* and tells the story of Leah, the daughter of a wealthy community member, and Khonon, a yeshivah student who has been drawn to kabbalistic (i.e., “mystical” and magical excursions, for our purposes) texts.

Leah has been unsuccessful in finding a match for marriage because her father, Sender, believes no boy comes from a suitable enough family for his daughter. On a chance meeting in the synagogue, Leah and Khonon encounter each other, but nothing comes of the meeting beyond prolonged gazes. It soon becomes known that Sender found a match for Leah, and after learning of this news, Khonon reacts with dismay. He becomes socially detached and eventually dies while holding a book of incantations. Later we find out that he had been trying to forestall Leah’s engagement. Some time later, while on a walk with her childhood nurse, Leah discusses with her the fate of souls of people who died prematurely, such as her mother. Leah mentions that a soul has visited her in her dreams, and she expresses a desire to invite her departed mother’s soul to her wedding. Leah also starts to act in an unusual manner, and people fear that she has become possessed.

Leah is taken to a learned leader, Reb Azriel. People tell him that they recognized in Leah the voice of the yeshivah student who died, Khonon. Reb Azriel questions Leah/Khonon and discovers the past history between Leah’s father and Khonon’s father. Many years ago they had made a pact that their children would be promised to each other, but over the years the promise was unfulfilled for various reasons. Sender even recognized Khonon when the student

visited the family for dinner, but Sender proceeded to look for a match among wealthier families. Reb Azriel begrudgingly accepts to help Leah. Yet, he questions his own abilities, saying:

For forty years I have occupied the position of rebbe, yet to this very day I am still not sure that I can speak for God...there are times when I lose my confidence, when I am as small and weak as an infant...What do they want from me?...My soul thirsts for solitude. Yet, they come to me with all their pains and sorrows, they appeal to me for help...I am no longer able to...<sup>77</sup>

Even though Sender and Reb Azriel come to an agreement that Sender would apologize to Khonon's soul, and even resolve to give money to the poor as a sort of penance for his wrongdoing regarding the unfulfilled promise, the deceased (i.e., Khonon) does not consent. Furthermore, Leah wishes to remain with Khonon. Reb Azriel's attempts to counteract Khonon's incantations failed. His role as rebbe, and his attempts at recourse in his role as such, were inadequate to the task.

The following dialogue in An-sky's conclusion to the play is telling of his insight into Jewish life of the early twentieth century:

Leah: Who is here sighing so sadly?

Khonon: It is I...I have forgotten. It is only through your thoughts that I can remember who I am.

Leah: It is coming back to me now. My heart was drawn to a bright star. In the deep of the night I have shed sweet tears, and someone always appeared in my dreams. Was it you?

Khonon: Yes.

Leah: Return to me, my bridegroom, my husband. I will carry you in my heart, and in the still of the night you will come to me in my dreams and together we will rock our unborn babies to sleep. I am enveloped in a blaze of light. My bridegroom, my destined one, I am united with you for all eternity. Together we will soar higher and higher, even higher.

Reb Azriel: We are too late.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> S. An-sky, "The Dybbuk, or Between Two Worlds: A Dramatic Legend in Four Acts," in *The Dybbuk and Other Writings*, ed. David G. Roskies, trans. Golda Werman (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002), 33-34.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

An-sky's imagined Hasidism (perhaps Judaism or European culture writ large?) no longer offered a redeeming haven, and it was too late to reenact it.

Petrovsky-Shtern uses the term “dybbuk” metaphorically in the sense of obsessions or false impressions that take over a given situation; in a literal sense a dybbuk is “a possession of one’s mind and body by a transmigrating soul.”<sup>79</sup> An-sky dealt with the theme of return in both his literary works, but also, as some scholars maintain, in his personal life. He attempted life in cosmopolitan France, but was unsatisfied with the socialist prevalence of random, superficial sexual encounters that produced no binding relations. He returned to Russia, met and married a “nice, Jewish girl,” who requested that he provide her with a “calm life, full of reason and peace.” In order to do this, he took up lecturing, and he soon discovered that his wife had been carrying on a relationship with another man, was unable to end it, and thus An-sky and his wife divorced – the dybbuk of unfulfilled marital life.<sup>80</sup>

In this example, An-sky demonstrates that return is sought, but even once it is “achieved,” for whatever reason, it remains elusive and contingent, very similar to the experience of Isaac Kumer. This stands as a corrective to Ezrahi who maintained that Isaac’s death in the Land was redemptive and effected unification. The effected return for Isaac, much like An-sky’s ill-fated return to “normality,” was only nascent, still unformed, and thus was imaginary. Isaac, who is representative of so much more than solely an individual, and as epitomized by An-sky, is paradigmatic not of closure and achievement, but rather of potential and as-yet unrealized achievement; he is a warning to future seekers of return about the sort of life that is possible and how to approach life anew in the Land. Seeking and returning are a never-ending dialectic with

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

little substantiated resolution, at least if a traditional understanding of such categories and one-to-one correlation persists.

Creating the “Oral Torah”: Autonomy, Choice, and Commitment

David Roskies asserts that An-sky’s “youthful rebellion” produced no happy ending; the generational divide between parents and children left only “corpses, no victor.”<sup>81</sup> An-sky carried with him a sense of forbidding doom regarding Jewish culture, a cultural crisis that was heightened by the state of the Jews at the time; in a more general sense, however, An-sky represents the notion of generation as understood by both Mead and Nora, and which we can see as operative of the threshold, the *limen*. As a way to confront his own anticipation of catastrophe regarding Judaism, An-sky crossed borders and mixed “otherwise incompatible identities.” Steven Zipperstein quotes Roskies as saying that An-sky, who was the “hero of the modern age, was a born-again Jew in a Judaism of his own making.”<sup>82</sup> He (re-) approached Hasidism, which to others, ironically, was the epitome of unchanging Jewish life, but did so as a messenger. He used its entrenched status to highlight that Jewish life has changed, but is continuous with its past and still has much to offer in terms of identity construction, if only its messages could be conveyed and utilized along with those of other worlds.

We have seen how An-sky conceived of the Oral Torah, and Goldberg adds to this by saying that An-sky saw himself as a sort of rabbi in the sense of being someone who acted as an intercessor between two worlds, much like Reb Azriel, though competent and effective. In order to connect the world in which people live with the supernatural world, he had to transcend the

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<sup>81</sup> David G. Roskies, “An-sky, Sholem Aleichem, and the Master Narrative of Russian Jewry,” in *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*, eds. Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 34.

<sup>82</sup> Zipperstein “Introduction,” 12.



boundaries of knowledge.<sup>83</sup> He was a true messenger, and this act of performing the Oral Torah created dialogue not only between the objects of his ethnography and himself, but also between generations, the biblical figures, rabbinical figures, and the lives of everyday Jews. Through his literary creations, as well as his socio-political organizations, he transcended time and generations and opened up possibilities to what people could commit in the here-and-now.

Upon his completion of his ethnographic expedition, An-sky helped to create an organization that would house the artifacts that he collected: musical, literary, oral, etc. This organization, located in Vilna, was, according to An-sky's insistence, headed by a nonpartisan board, which included Zionists, those coming from the Yiddishist Left, Bundist leaders, and traditional segments of Vilna Jewry. Accordingly, the Vila organization collected Jewish history, folklore, music, art, literature, housed a library, archive, museum, and included manuscripts of I. L. Peretz, the Vilna Goan (the representative of rabbinic culture, much opposed to the more mystical Hasidim, but still open somewhat to secular learning), and Shneur Zalman of Liadi (a representative of Hasidism).<sup>84</sup> As head of this organization, An-sky maintained openness to all manifestations of Judaism, a stance that was unprecedented for his time, and even today. He strove for inclusiveness, which highlights just how marginal his viewpoint was, and continues to be.

The rootedness of the organization in Vilna in part allowed for An-sky's inclusiveness to be realized. The city had for many years been recognized as a center of Jewish intellectual activity, its history demonstrated that openness to rabbinic culture and Haskalah was possible, it was a multiethnic border region that precluded the adoption of an overarching, dominant non-

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<sup>83</sup> Goldberg "Paradigmatic Times," 47.

<sup>84</sup> Cecile E. Kuznitz, "An-sky's Legacy: the Vilna Historic-Ethnographic Society and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Culture," in *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*, eds. Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 325.

Jewish culture, and Yiddish was preserved among all social classes.<sup>85</sup> This situatedness, then, is a living testament to the idea of “re-diasporization” for which Benjamin, Tweed, and Heschel advocated, as cultivated through the various chronotopes presented in Vilna of the early twentieth century. It is through being situated, and conscientiously so, that An-sky was able to appreciate the complexity of Jewish life in all of its manifestations, and to present it to the wider environment, both Jewish and non-Jewish, through time.

Jack Kugelmass connects An-sky’s program and methods to a more contemporary example of ethnography, Barbara Myerhoff’s *Number Our Days*. Both utilize the idea of return, the concern for salvage, and the transmission of culture through dramaturgical techniques that thus blur the lines between social science and fiction.<sup>86</sup> While An-sky was more explicit in his motivation to preserve Jewish culture before it was destroyed, a crisis that he believed was imminent even in the 1910s, and Myerhoff tried to couch her desire for studying Jews in the universal language of anthropology, both turned to ethnography, Kugelmass argues, not so much to save their Jewish subjects, but rather to save themselves. In the process, Kugelmass continues, they found a creative outlet for their own understandings of identity.<sup>87</sup> Even though separated by many decades and milieus, the sense of crisis/catastrophe persists, and this speaks not only to the necessity and (im) possibility of situating oneself in both cultures, but also of the perpetual states of being diasporic. The effort may be to fit comfortably into both, but as seen, that situation exists only in the creation and imagination of the artist/anthropologist and those who create works, and thus identities, which transcend time and space. This never-realized,

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 343-45.

<sup>86</sup> Kugelmass “The Father of Jewish Ethnography,” 356.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 358-59.

although constantly struggled for, position of “messenger” is the perennial condition of diaspora.

### **Reflections from the Land: Case Study, Israel**

Through exploring what constitutes categories such as generation and commitment (i.e., publicly enacted identity as a group), we have seen that this raises questions about the legitimacy, and effectiveness, of previous allegiances. If what has become taken-for-granted (especially the presumably apparent concept of group membership) in fact is so variable and transitory, we must ask ourselves, as did Mead, what continues to ground and orient action. This is especially important for us once a group has (re-) established emplacement. This emplacement, it must be remembered, could be physical (i.e., travel to and settlement in a new location), or temporal (i.e., Mead’s prefigurational pioneer model configured for unsettling feelings of tranquility within a location, among different groups), or both. It is this question that scholars and voices of social critique in Israel have been asking since the state’s founding, if not earlier, and these concerns are reflected in Agnon’s writings, which we used to frame these discussions in the preceding chapter. Agnon, as well as more contemporary authors in Israel, articulate these concerns for Jews, and Israeli society more particularly, but do not quite provide recourse, except to say that the answers entail open-ended potential for inclusivity (à la An-sky). Mere physical return is only a partial response, and our current situation is still too enmeshed in the relatively recent upheavals to offer adequate feedback.

To gain a better appreciation for how the questions of home, return, generation, and commitment operate once one has returned “home,” we will place into dialogue with one another five contemporary Israeli authors and selections from their works. Articulating the generational divide, and highlighting its very real implications regarding existential threats, both in perception and matter of fact, are Eliezer Schweid in *The Land of Israel: National Home or Land*

*of Destiny* and Amos Elon in *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*. Bringing in the interplay between the idea of generations, commitment, and snapshots into religious life in the Land, as well as questioning whether or not it is possible to compare various narratives about these issues, is Amos Oz in *In the Land of Israel*. Extending the discussion to include more voices of those who identify as Palestinians, and demonstrating many of the similarities between the Palestinians and Israelis regarding ways of identifying, and bringing to bear on the conversation the costs of acting, or not acting, is David Grossman in *The Yellow Wind*. Rounding out this quick snapshot of life in the Land is the most contemporary text. In *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*, Ari Shavit makes the case that Zionism, and the creation of the State, is an orphan's movement and ends his assessment of life there with a cautionary tale that we have spent two chapters detailing: Yet again we (Jews and the world) are perched on a precipice, and this is a call for ethical action.

#### Reality, Idealism, Impasse: Understanding Post- and Co-figurative Cultures in the Land

In his writings on Jewish thought regarding the Land of Israel, Schweid traces two distinct lines of reasoning about the particular location: holy land and earthly homeland (national heritage). These two conceptions are found in the Hebrew texts themselves. He states that the Land of Israel is presented as a promised land, and Israeli settlement there necessitates moral behavior. The people will achieve worthiness only there, and as a result of eventual attainment of that goal, along with concomitant settlement, God will dwell in its midst. Yet, the location is also promised as a national homeland, the physical site in which the people will establish economic and state power. The Land symbolizes both Israelite emplacement with corresponding socio-political activities as well as a promise of universal morality.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Eliezer Schweid, "The Land of Israel," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought: Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements, and Beliefs*, eds. Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (New York: Scribner, 1987), 536.

Throughout his writings on this topic, he spends time detailing the explicitly theological conception of why this particular land is special and the implications that uniqueness poses for its would-be suitors, especially for the Israelites. The texts understand the land as being unlike its surrounding environs. While the neighboring lands “drink river water,” which presupposes control of territory and mastery of land, “Israel drinks rainwater,” a designation entailing divine providence (rainfall) and therefore dependence on God, which is demonstrated through enactment of justice and morality. Also, the Land is a middle land, between great powers (Egypt and Babylonia). The temptation to partake in warfare and self-aggrandizement is great in this location, but “the only way to live in the land peacefully and to bring a vision of peace to the world is by refraining from...pagan power struggles and by living a life of justice...in accordance with the Torah.”<sup>89</sup> He proceeds to explain the reasons given for why Jews became exiled (e.g., punishment for sins, for failure to live up to the divine dictates), and explains that some Jews even voluntarily remained outside the Land.

The later sages, therefore, needed to create the possibility for Judaism and Jews to exist elsewhere (thus the rituals devoted to maintaining the Land in their collective imaginings/longings). Yet, this idealization of the Land “culminated in its absolute spiritualization,” he argues. Overtime, divergent attitudes developed toward memories and mythologization of the Land. One, exemplified by Judah Halevi, understood the Land as the point of contact between heaven and earth, the spiritual and material. It possessed its own sanctity and only in the land can the people achieve its destiny.<sup>90</sup> The other, exemplified by Maimonides, posited that the Land is like other lands but achieves sanctification through

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 537.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 538.

commandments, that is, through the enactment of politico-legal actions.<sup>91</sup> This significance of the land is attested to through time by historical events that occurred there.

In the modern period many Jews continued the spiritualized view of the land and ceased to view exile as temporary, he states. Their current locations, which may have undergone emancipation, were seen as new, permanent, abodes. Yet, this condition proved untenable. Since the formation of the political State of Israel, however, these varying views regarding the land have not abated. In fact, since the actual re-emplacement of Jews in that land, tensions over the conceptions have reached explosive levels; adding to the litany of views are now those of Jews having been born post-emplacement. Schweid explains that since 1967, youth in the country have been unable to articulate their right to live there; the younger generation is unable to identify with the community of their “people” in the Land.

As a result of being raised as individualists, following such a trend worldwide, the Land holds a particular place for them emotionally and with regard to family sentiment, but inwardly they are opposed to the communities who recreated significant Jewish presence in it. They yearn to flee and do not understand the ties that bind them to the Land, and the communities there.

He states:

Insofar as we approach it with a view to the native-born generation’s consciousness of the quality of its attachment, we find that its relationship to its homeland is weak and easily undermined...We must find a more direct expression of this failing...we need look no further than the stormy debates “our right to the Land of Israel” which broke out after the Six-Day War [1967] and have raged ever since...Native-born young people bear the main burden of defending the country...among the most willing to make such sacrifices are quite a few of those who are the most troubled and confused by this issue...The most outstanding feature of this main character is their inability to identify with the community of their people in the land, even though they act in its name and at its command...while they may not rebel openly against the community, they live...in continual opposition to it...they do not understand the tie that binds their community – their people – to the land...we find...internal brooding and

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 539.

dialogue expressing...alienation from their parents' nationalistic aspirations and endeavors on behalf of the Zionist cause.<sup>92</sup>

Schweid highlights the central issue of the chapter: generational divide and intra-communal alienation in a group that has become emplaced. This emplacement, as seen, is itself multivalent. The humanist causes they have been taught to embody and help to realize find a foil in the nationalistic aspirations of those who taught them such ideals.

Schweid contrasts the youths who became the elders of the generation under study, who never saw the Land until much later in life, who did not grow up there, but who internalized its idealized forms, images, and who were able to express a right to live there, with their children. The children, the ones who harbor internal brooding and confusion about their right to be there, were born there, grew up there, and were reared, supposedly, with its ideals and aspirations.<sup>93</sup> They also are at a loss to explain its history and perceived struggles. This divide he attributes to the continuity of generations, ironically. As Schweid explains this paradox:

[...] the young people born in the land became estranged from their parents precisely because they accepted in good faith the educational message which their parents had transmitted to them...the alienation of the youth is a product of an educational success story. The children's fulfillment of their parents' dream removed them from the historical and cultural continuity within which their parents had lived...What had sustained the dream? The children had not experienced these things. They had experienced only their parents' devotion to the visible land...but what was that significance?<sup>94</sup>

Yet, until only recently, most Jews had not been able to share even this "success story;" most Jews continued to be born outside of the Land and formed an identification with the people not by growing up there, but by incorporating into their outlook something handed down to them, as had the older generations that reformed the Land.

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<sup>92</sup> Eliezer Schweid, *The Land of Israel: National Home or Land of Destiny*, trans. Deborah Greniman (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985), 206-07.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

There is a divide in how Jewish identity has been created, Schweid maintains. Different segments take different messages from different aspects of Judaism's varied connection to the Land, from the biblical tradition to the present. He argues that there must be a return, or an attempt to return, which will include in its purview more aspects of the varied tradition than previous generations achieved in their partial returns. Jews, he says, must revive and fulfill the dual ideal of scripture – that the Land is both a national homeland and a land of destiny, both political and supernatural. He asserts:

The proper image of the homeland cannot be formulated through learning alone. It takes its shape from the people's way of life, and from the whole cultural pattern that is gradually worked together in the land...The founders had concealed the positive wellsprings of Zionism that lay within the Jewish heritage because of their rebellion against the exile, which demanded that they transform the image of the land that had crystallized over the centuries...A return to that image that can be gathered from the sources will oblige us to reorient ourselves in this respect. While this does not necessarily mean a total affirmation of the vision that guided the exile, it does require an affirmation of the "religious" motif that stems from the biblical concept of the promised land...Our path has led us from the biblical vision of a homeland which was at the same time the people's land of destiny to the exilic dream of a land of destiny which was not then a homeland, and thence to the Zionist vision of a homeland which is no land of destiny.<sup>95</sup>

Zionism, for Schweid, represents a partial success story. It resuscitated the visible land but lost the significance of it beyond the political mandates of the period, due to the rebelliousness of one concept of generation and vision. The youth/present is alienated and still in exile, from its heritage, because the elders struggled to end (political) exile and to provide their children with a life free of exile. In effect, Schweid's is a contemporary call for continual/continuous diaspora, of re-diasporization, for it is only from a distance, conscientiously created, that one can disallow a sense of settling, falling into blind comfort, and adequately engage the tensions inherent in creating an identity that is inclusive of difference/creative, not predetermined. This entails an incorporation of both visions, not a hybrid of them. Whether this integrated existence is possible

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 212.



remains to be seen. After all, integration for Schweid is intra-religious/communal. Beyond that, it remains to be seen whether or not competing national claims (intergroup identities) can achieve parity.

Lest this be misinterpreted as a call for religious nationalism, we must gain insight into how he has understood Jewish connections to this space over time. Beginning with the biblical view, Schweid states that scripture is a series of covenants, which must be ever renewed between the people and God. There is no simple unity even in this view, for within this scripture are contrasting calls for human existence. The two dominant views are the priestly and the prophetic. The former stresses the motif of Temple life and the site of God's indwelling, while the latter places emphasis on humans' ethics and developed social conscience. The prophets sanctified behavior and morality, not ritual. The Land itself, in this view, becomes an enlarged sanctuary through the actions of the people living there. The holiness of the Land comes from the divine, but in conjunction with the will of the people who live there, in obedience to Torah.<sup>96</sup> In this way, Schweid introduces the notion of contingency. It would be a mistake to view only physical emplacement in the Land as constituting "redemption" and completion. The covenant, in that limited way, is still left unfulfilled. Action, and correct action, is a necessary correlate to emplacement; the latter is not completed without the former.

Because the Land's character becomes symbolic in this sense, as a place of destiny and that is the place that cultivates behavior allowing continued presence in it, this notion shapes the image of the Land as it is passed on throughout history and in memory. He states that historical memory is more than just a recollection of past events. Rather, it is a "continual tension" of anticipation toward an imagined future, and each generation contributes to it; it never is finalized. This image, then, reflects more a vision of the future than of the past, except as the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 16, 25, 27.

past that allows for its continuation into the future.<sup>97</sup> Later scholars, then, would interpret verses in scripture dealing with the Land not by looking at the Land as it existed, then, but by looking solely at scripture; the text “remind[ed] people of what they were liable to forget.”<sup>98</sup> People saw not ruin and religio-political destruction, but anticipated completion, albeit always in the future. This imagined locale was their homeland.

The fact that both Christianity and Islam viewed the (same) Land as significant served to reinforce Jewish conceptions as such, he argues. The Land’s symbols, as Schweid points out, transcended mere geography, and any conflicts focused around places there only emphasized their “objective, universal validity.”<sup>99</sup> In this way, the image of the Land that was inculcated to youth was buttressed by both religious imagination and socio-political circumstance; both served as constant reminders of some past and in the present of a projected future.

Once Jews began settling in large numbers in the Land, they confronted a land that was unknown to them, as depicted in Agnon’s religious pilgrims as well as Isaac Kumer; what was imagined as familiar in fact was foreign to them, and for years afterwards many still felt lost, homeless while being home.<sup>100</sup> Exacerbating this feeling was the fact that the Jews many of these nationalistic pioneers encountered reminded them of the “exilic existence” of religious Jews outside the Land; the earlier religious pilgrims had transplanted *shtetl* life to the imagined homeland, producing the paradox for other Jews of feeling increasingly separated and distanced from the “holy of holies” the closer they approached it physically.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 134.

What this produced was a group of people who needed to break away from physical diaspora and familiarize themselves with life anew in the Land, not being content with the spiritual, economic, and political circumstance as they encountered it. They needed to break away from that form of diaspora while being physically emplaced.<sup>102</sup> In other words, they needed, to paraphrase the condition that Shlomo Avineri used to describe the current state of Zionism, a constant, “permanent revolution” as the means to break from the status quo. It is in this way that Schweid’s analysis allows us to reconsider the biblical narrative of conquest. While the portrayal of Israelites and their supposed actions does not accord with historical and archaeological records, it fits our contemporary vision of created, produced, and performed identity. The biblical narrative prefigures later theorists’ calls for approaching anew that which is before you, in emplacement. One must reconfigure one’s own identity in order to highlight the decision for proper action, and this reconfiguration (as is clearly depicted with the image of “conquering”) is presented in terms reflecting what is morally acceptable at the time, however valid the underlying notion is for all times.

In his book devoted specifically to the theme of generation (his book is aptly subtitled “Fathers and Sons”), Elon, a former correspondent for the Israeli newspaper *Ha’aretz*, later fellow at the Center for Law and Security at the New York University School of Law, and author, explored the development and transformation of Israeli society from the founding groups of early religious Jews and later Zionist settlers to a more unified, actual state with societal cleavages and gaps. This exploration, however, was not just an exercise in abstract, constructed concepts of societal change, interspersed with narratological perceptions. Rather, it was a serious study into what a previously well-known public intellectual and member of the pre-state founding generation considered to be the sources of his disillusionment with his beloved

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 148.

country; in a way, this book served as the pretext to his eventual settlement outside of Israel, to a family residence in Italy. The move signaled Elon's sense of his own alienation from a society in which he used to figure prominently as social critic and cultural icon, but to which he felt he no longer belonged.

In an interview by Ari Shavit in the relatively new, and unabashedly "left-wing," magazine *CounterPunch*, Elon notes that his decision to leave Israel derived from despair, from a growing sense that he had said his piece, repeatedly, but to no avail. As Shavit characterizes it, "Amos Elon expresses the deep aversion to the new Israel. The nationalistic, religious, un-European Israel. This is apparently the reason why Amos Elon is leaving us. He is turning back the clock, going back to being a European Jew."<sup>103</sup> Yet, Elon states that he is not alienated, rather disappointed. He relates:

I have no common language with the people who are at the top in politics...And maybe there is alienation because I don't know them anymore. I'm not involved with them...And maybe there is alienation because of the sharp rightward shift in Israel. Toward the right and toward religion...In Israel there's the "Gush Dan" state and the political state. The "Gush Dan" state is a state of live-and-let-live. Of tolerance. Of the desire for peace and a good life. But the political state, well, you know what it looks like...Quasi-fascist in the sense that abstract principles of religion are dictating our fate without any democratic process.<sup>104</sup>

This critique of his former home is decidedly one-sided; in the interview he focuses his attention on only (Jewish) Israel and its actions, ignoring the context of emplacement, which he acknowledged elsewhere.

In previous writings Elon wielded his critical insight not just at the Israeli government and society but also at the state of affairs in which response and counter-response occurred. In his 1968 review of two books that dealt with the Six-Day War, for example, Elon explicitly states that "the origins of the third Arab-Israeli War are likely to be again obscured by events...the

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<sup>103</sup> Ari Shavit, "An Interview with Amos Elon," *CounterPunch*, December 27, 2004, 3.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

rapidity and seeming ease of Israel's victory overshadowed the pre-history of the war, its origins in the tactics of power, and the disastrous interplay between mass psychology and leadership. Now, a year later, the picture is further blurred by current preoccupations..."<sup>105</sup> Elon wrote only months after the seminal war ended in 1967, in which Israel responded to and fought against the threats, political and military maneuverings (based off of faulty reports concerning Israel), and manipulation of four neighboring Arab countries (buttressed by the Soviet Union). As a result, Israel's territory expanded, as did Arab anti-Israel hostilities. In such a fresh environment, Elon could still recount the "origins" of the war to the public, and proffer hopeful warnings regarding the future and desired courses of action all could take.

Elon recounts how Egypt's Nasser was forced to respond to faulty Soviet reports of Israeli troops amassing at the Syrian border. Nasser closed the Straits of Tiran to Israel, thus blockading any movement in the southern Israeli port of Eilat. While in 1957 Israel warned that any re-closing of the Straits would constitute a cause for war, in 1967 Israel's immediate response to this mobilization was to seek help elsewhere; Israel's Foreign Minister sought help in Paris, London, and Washington, but to no avail. As a result, Israel did not yet actually mobilize its own troops, and to Egypt, this appeared as an Israeli bluff, that it was ill prepared to act on previous warnings. Accordingly, Egypt amassed its troops in the Sinai, and now Israel was isolated in the south and had to confront a growing existential danger in the southwest – the border with Egypt. Compounding this military pressure was Arab media prodding. Nasser remarked that "Israel's existence is itself an aggression," and the head of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Jordanian Jerusalem stated that those Israelis who survive an Arab onslaught

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<sup>105</sup> Amos Elon, "The Israel-Arab Deadlock," *The New York Review of Books*, August 1, 1968, 14.

can remain in Palestine, but he did not believe any Israelis would survive.<sup>106</sup> Israel felt that no international aid would arrive, and unless Israel took action, no one would.

From this point on, in his review, Elon delves into a deeper contextualization of the situation, going back to much earlier Arab-Jewish/Israeli confrontations, in order to posit a way forward after the end of the Six-Day War. He states:

Had they [the Arabs] agreed in 1919, not to turn Palestine into “the” Jewish homeland, but to incorporate “a” national home for the Jews, as stipulated in the Balfour Declaration, a Jewish minority would in time have been absorbed into an Arab-Palestinian state. Had the Arabs not rejected British proposals for a Palestine Legislative Council a few years later, the Jews would have at best emerged a minority within the general Arab framework...If, in 1937, they had agreed to the Peel Commission report which proposed partition...they would probably have swallowed the autonomous Jewish area within a generation. If they had accepted the Woodhead Commission proposal of 1938 for an even smaller Jewish autonomy; or the White Paper of 1939; or the plans of 1946 to admit no more than a final 100,000 Jewish immigrants; or the United Nations partition plan of 1947; or the armistice lines of 1949; or even the status quo of 1966...If, if, if. On the other hand, had Israel after 1949 been more sensitive to the fate of the Palestinian refugees – had it permitted more to come back or compensated the rest...rather than allow the neighboring states to exploit the problem for political ends – perhaps some of the intense hatred of Israel...would slowly have abated. Instead, hatred and fear fed upon each other.<sup>107</sup>

Since 1968 many archives have opened and documents become declassified, which allows for even more context to be included in reflections on and histories to be written about any number of conflicts, but the “ifs” also continue to grow.

In the final paragraphs of his review, Elon reflects on both Israeli and Arab societies and notes some lessons of the war. He is insistent that weapons alone are not enough for victory. He argues that, “they do not function independent of the conditions of society.” Groups, in order to be successful as societies, need “alertness, efficiency, individual dedication, and courage to grow out of a shared sense of social purpose. This seemed missing in Nasser’s army...What

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 18.

failed was less the army than the societal structure of Egypt.”<sup>108</sup> Even the possibility of guerilla warfare, he states, depends on a shared sense of social purpose. As well, Israeli society, even already by 1968 – twenty years since the founding of the political state – was beset by cleavages.

Elon attests:

Few people in Israel now recall the solemn statements of Eshkol and Dayan in June 1967, that Israel did not seek territorial gain...Most Israelis, according to a public opinion poll, have been...willing to exchange territory for peace. The chances for settlement [for peace] seem to have grown dimmer in recent months as Israel’s minimum terms appear to have grown and as Egypt’s shattered army arsenal has been replenished by the Soviet Union. Threats of annihilation and “liberation” resound again from Radio Cairo, and recently from Nasser’s own lips. Short of a miracle, there is little reason to expect Israel to take the risk and withdraw [from the territory it acquired as a result of the war] without the watertight guarantees which nobody is prepared to give.<sup>109</sup>

How little has changed in almost forty years, except increasing religious control in increasingly right-wing-led coalitions, on all sides. Elon presented the “origins” of the war, as well as the origins for his eventual disillusionment with Israel.

In his book *The Israelis*, Elon takes a closer look at Israeli society and offers reflections in retrospect. While Amos Elon does not speak of a permanent revolution, he articulates, nonetheless, similar sentiments that are included in its call. For those Israelis who have grown up in the Land, he states, many have taken its existence for granted. For those individuals, continued invocations of “Zionist ideals” and “national renaissance” sound like abstract “blather.”<sup>110</sup> Yet, going back just one generation (chronologically speaking) from the “sons” to the lives of the “founders,” what has taken on the guise of common, abstract blather is redefined as existential struggles. While history, he notes, is a “seamless web” of arbitrary starting points, and the foundational texts of Judaism have posited an always remembered and longed-for

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>110</sup> Amos Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* [1971] (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 18.

ancestral homeland in a particular place, it is difficult to pinpoint any exact moment of diaspora's origination. Palestine was never without inhabitants who identified as Israelite, since the "origin" of Israelites, and the continued sense of wishing to remain/return to there (i.e., Zionism) is "as old as diaspora," notes Elon.<sup>111</sup>

Yet, he also notes that Zionism was a product of a new age of (European) nationalism, as was Arab nationalism. The conditions that brought Jews back to the Land were a combination, then, of this continual remembering and longing, in addition to external impetus. The clash between Jews and other inhabitants of the Land, was not one between "natives" and "colonialists," then, but between two nationalist movements.<sup>112</sup> The impetus for modern Zionism, while containing religious ideas, was the failure of European states to enact emancipation and democracy, while a major impetus for Palestinian nationalism was also a dismissal of Jewish existence. It was only later when Nazism forced Zionism to become a "straightforward rescue operation" that clashed with British immigration policies (to Mandate Palestine) that emphases changed from "social to national issues."<sup>113</sup>

As Schweid noted, and as Elon reiterates, the different waves of Jews to the Land had different motivations spurring their action. Some lived with the Arabs, while others protested the Jewish exploitation of Arab labor, thus creating new, independent institutions from those of the earlier Jewish inhabitants. Some, like the man Isaac Kumer encountered on the ship, and those who Schweid states understood locality as "promised land," went to pray. Others, arriving in the 1880s, were, as Elon claims:

[...] Colonists. Yet, by temperament, motivation, circumstance, and choice they differed sharply from other emigrants of this period who colonized Australia,

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 39.



Africa, Canada, or the United States. They were not in search of fertile land, gold, unlimited opportunity, or...a fast-expanding economy. Nor were they sent by chartered companies or governments anxious to rid themselves of surplus populations, expand the territories under their control, or make a flag follow the trade. This was colonizing without a motherland...Properly speaking they were immigrants...echoing the American “pilgrim,” they referred to themselves as *olim*, a near-mystical term supercharged with emotion, primeval faith, and historic associations...Those *olim* who went into agricultural work were called “*chalutzim*,” literally, “vanguard,” but in the current Hebrew usage...pioneer...*service* to an abstract idea.<sup>114</sup>

Others, arriving between 1903 and 1905, were motivated by similarly abstract notions of socialism and revolutionary ideology, who supposedly were prepared to work in agriculture; they resented the relative “luxuriousness” of the earlier settlers.

Elon notes that to be a Zionist meant different things to different people. Many early Zionists in the Land were, like Isaac Kumer, orphaned many times over. Some moved to the Land out of estrangement from parents in Europe, out of disillusionment with movements in their previous homelands, etc. That the rebels in one location became the vanguard in another manifested itself, generally speaking, in a leniency toward their own children. Those children born in the Land, to the founders, could “do no wrong.” It is the third generation, those born to the “sons” who were raised with more toughness. Their parents, the first-generation of Israelis, had less feelings of guilt and were tougher on their children<sup>115</sup> – a typical generational immigrant progression, according to Mead. The rebels of the earlier age became for their children, and especially their grandchildren, the establishment, leaders of the rigid and conservative leadership.

Other waves of immigrants/refugees arrived, the third wave from 1919-1924, the fourth from 1924-1929, the fifth from 1930-1939, and then again in the late 1940s from Arab countries, the Jewish “equivalent” to what became Palestinian refugees. What these generations, the “sons,” dealt with upon arrival and subsequent years of giving birth there, was an indefinite

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 128.

prolongation of war, not just sporadic uprisings against their continued, albeit increasing, presence. As Elon attests:

Let us observe the solitary *kibbutznik* [a member of a kibbutz, an agricultural settlement based on socialist principles] of Yad Mordechai from the vantage point of the narrow sand dune which divides him from the former co-occupants of the territory...It reveals the crushing force of circumstance...The *kibbutznik*...was swept to these shores by the storms and disasters of Europe. The Arab villager was hopelessly, and as tragically, crushed by forces far beyond his control. When Weizmann told the Council of Ten at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 that Palestine should be as Jewish as England is English, he added that the Zionists would not go into Palestine “like Prussian Junkers”; nor would they drive out other people. Weizmann was utterly sincere; and least until 1947 when they were attacked, the Zionists too lived up to Weizmann’s solemn promise. The *kibbutznik*...originally bought land for himself and settled on it...He, too, was moved by circumstance not of his own making. The detached outsider might accuse him today of callousness. Such an accusation would ignore the true sequence of events – the Arab invasion of 1948, their refusal to make peace, the indefinite prolongation of war. In every war, superb idealism touches total selfishness...there is never a totally new page. History is always inscribed on the old, as on a palimpsest. The conflict was political and psychological, not economic.<sup>116</sup>

After 1948, and because then of the memory of the Shoah, Arab threats of annihilation, which seemed plausible in that context, aroused cultural responses in the generations. This combination, Schweid and Elon point out, makes it increasingly difficult to live with the dual ideas that Schweid discussed, which aim for the creation of wholeness.

After 1967, though, the “burden of war” was no longer confined to the borders of the country, but rather struck the interior. This state of affairs, however, caused in the sons further disillusionment with the founding ideals and leaders, who were still in control of the institutions. Elon speaks of “grandfather Israel” and the younger generations. The former is seen as the image of the wandering, persecuted Jew who came “home,” to the imagined, albeit having-to-be built, reality of the Land. This image was steeped in a relatively spiritually stable past, but headed toward an uncertain future. The latter is a continued response to the first. The “sabrah,” the

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 195.

Israeli born in the Land, is often ignorant of the (spiritual and historical) past, often indifferent to it, and necessarily living in every moment of the present.<sup>117</sup> Elon states that this group exists in the gap between the past and the future, and it is challenged by both.

This gap, then, is the interstitial place between “origin(s)” and contemporaneity – the middle path, to use Gilroy’s and Bhabha’s terminology, where identity develops. Even if the “poles” are imagined, they are not imaginary, and in fact they are the most real in terms of both points of reference in self-fashioned identity, but also in externalized effects and repercussions. The pole of the past is both tradition and religio-socio-political reality, while that of the future is uncertain, but inevitable, and as Mead attests, already upon us. This gap is the liminal space of potentiality, and as Elon related to Shavit, that potentiality is slipping further away in his view. Elon notes that each generation treats the other with condescending admiration. The older is forbidding, who offers lessons of the past, which is couched in terms of dogmatic heroism and selective uses of the past, while the young is less touched by historical considerations, acknowledges the daring of the past but cannot see their logic following through to conclusions.<sup>118</sup> In this gap, Elon argues that moral vertigo grows. Yet, this is a growing pain.

Following An-sky’s paradigm, there is a need to live in both, if for the fact that a hybrid is nonexistent, if not impossible. The new generations need to embrace the backgrounds of the founders from all sides, both inter- and intra-national, -religious, etc. One needs to embrace, or at least be able to identify with, the nationalistic movement of the Palestinians, as well as the existential threats propagated by that nationalism. For as Elon warns, “It is true that in their empathy with the Arabs, those afflicted with the malaise occasionally find themselves in a moral cul-de-sac. Bound as they are to moral principles, they are unable because of the ferocity of Arab

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 260.

opposition and the absence of any significant reciprocity – to put those principles into practice.”<sup>119</sup> The result of this moral cul-de-sac is, as Elon postulates, prolonged war and an entrenchment within ideological positions, which tend to ignore the “origins” and even contextualization of identity.

Elon’s vision of home and homeland is now reduced to an identity based solely on individual reflection. He states, “I grew up in Tel Aviv in a middle-class family that lost its assets as a result of emigration to Israel...My father wanted to go to France but my mother said it had to be Eretz Israel. And so we ended up in Eretz Israel. That’s why I am not an ideological Israeli. I did not grow up here out of choice. But I did grow up here. Here is where I kissed a girl for the first time. And what is a homeland if not the place where you kiss a girl for the first time?”<sup>120</sup> Apparently any semblance, or hope, of a common cause/purpose has been lost to Elon, both with other Israelis and with the Arabs.

#### Competing Claims within the Status Quo: Religion, Politics, and the (Im) possibility of Comparison

Both Oz and Grossman are well-known Israeli novelists. What further unites these authors is that both also wrote books about Israeli society and about the relationship between Israelis and the Palestinians, based on interviews with people from all segments of society. One of the central motifs in Oz’s writings is the uncovering of gaps (generational, national, religious, etc.) in Israeli society and in human life more generally. His eldest child, Fania, a professor of history at Haifa University, describes Oz’s best-known novel, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, as portraying “Zionism and the creation of Israel as a historical necessity for a people faced with the threat of extinction. It acknowledges the original sin of Israel – the displacement and the

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>120</sup> Shavit “Interview,” 11.

suffering of the Palestinians – but, at the same time, defends Zionism against some of the European left and among the Israeli New Historians who challenge the state’s claim to legitimacy even now.”<sup>121</sup> Oz himself continues the characterization of his novel as amounting “to the founding story of Israel as told through a child’s eyes...At a time when Zionism is under question, the book provides a dramatic, yet liberal justification for Israel’s existence...while the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians is between right and right...what has been lost over time is the desperate conditions that preceded Israel’s founding.”<sup>122</sup> Oz, Elon, and even Schweid highlight the loss of “origins” and context as undergirding tensions and issues in Israeli society, which as a result is responsible for gaps, alienation, and (unintentional) separation among generations.

For Oz, he could portray that experience only through a story, a myth, an underlying cultural ethos and guiding narrative. He is adamant that this genre is no less “fact” than a journalistic exposé. As he relates, “I don’t like to be described as an author of fiction...Fiction is a lie. James Joyce took the trouble, if I am not mistaken, to measure the precise distance from Bloom’s basement entrance to the street above. In “Ulysses” it is exact, and yet it is called fiction. But when a journalist writes, ‘A cloud of uncertainty hovers...’ – this is called fact!”<sup>123</sup> In his novels, Oz describes and incorporates historical occurrence as the context for the myth, a grounding that positions his characters and the audience.

In his decidedly “journalistic” book *The Land of Israel* Oz is just as honest and upfront about experiences as he is in his novels. He describes the displacement of Palestinians during the war of 1948 and the misery of the refugee camps. Yet, he also argues that, “the Arabs were

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<sup>121</sup> David Remnick, “The Spirit Level: Amos Oz Writes the Story of Israel,” *The New Yorker*, November 8, 2004, 3.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

under no obligation to start a war after the U. N. partition plan.”<sup>124</sup> Oz’s criticisms and honesty are not hindered by national or religious affiliation. After the Yom Kippur War of the 1970s, Oz, along with other liberal Israeli activists, created a grassroots movement called *Shalom Achshav* – Peace Now. The group advocates compromise between Israelis and Palestinians based on mutual acceptance, cooperation, and sharing of land.

In his role as expositor of myth in the guise of novelist, Oz presents his ideas, which often are at odds with the prevailing right-wing segments of Israeli society, but also with many liberals, too. His understanding cuts against the grain of all people entrenched in particular, one-sided ideological stances. This is best depicted in an interview by Shusha Guppy for *The Paris Review*. The interviewer poses a situation to Oz, stating that the “left” accuses him of not taking a strong stand and condemning the treatment of Palestinians by Israeli forces. To this Oz responds:

It is a question of diagnosis. The conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis is not a civil rights issue, but an international dispute. We have not conquered the West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to deprive the Palestinians of their human rights...nor in order to give them their human rights. We conquered the West Bank and the Gaza Strip because Israel was attacked in 1967, and threatened with extinction. Once our security is safeguarded, we ought to go away from the Palestinian areas and let them be. Palestinian human rights is a Palestinian problem.<sup>125</sup>

Guppy presses further and specifies that criticism of Israel’s treatment of Palestinians during the *intifada* is what is at issue. Oz replies:

It is an illusion to think that there can be a rosy military occupation...I have invested every ounce of my energy in finding ways to terminate the occupation, not to improve it...We don’t need to improve the way we rule over them; we need to stop ruling over them. In some ways my attitude has been more radical than that of the human rights people. They have regarded the issue as a clash between two communities, or two social classes, while I have always considered it an international dispute between two nations...I have not wasted any time

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>125</sup> Shusha Guppy, “Amos Oz,” *The Paris Review: The Art of Fiction*, no. 148, 6.

trying to introduce certain American left-wing concepts such as regarding the Palestinians as our black Americans...I don't waste time on these irrelevancies.<sup>126</sup>

In this way, Oz reacts against one set of understandings with those of what he considers to be misunderstandings and impositions by American and other Western left-wing expectations.

Regarding how this Western outlook began, Oz recounts how:

A few years ago in Germany I met some left-wing intellectuals who were enthusiastically pro-Saddam Hussein. I wondered why? They said because he represented a poor third-world nation standing up to American domination. I explained to them that Saddam represented a country far richer than Sweden. How come? they asked. I said that in terms of income-per-capita, Iraq is richer than Sweden. They said, But we see Iraqis living in hovels, in abject poverty. I said that if Sweden decided to have the third biggest army in the world, the Swedes, too, would be living in hovels. I told them that in truth they loved Saddam because he is a friend of Qaddafi, who is a friend of Fidel Castro, who was once married to Che Guevara, and Che was Jesus Christ, and Jesus is love, therefore we have to love Saddam.<sup>127</sup>

The list of other misconceptions Oz points out continues, and underlying his rebuttal to them all is the fact that critics of any stance, policy, action, etc. usually suffer from the same affliction as we see in studies of diaspora: the failure to question what we have come to consider to be taken-for-granted truths. Failure to question and gain context signals just another lapse into ideological quagmire.

In his book *The Land of Israel*, Oz set out to talk with people, all people, about their perceptions, outlooks, passions, worldviews, and how they felt about how the state of affairs began. The thing that religion and politics share in the Land, according to Amos Oz's interviews with people there, is that both demand commitment to absolutes. As he notices, in some neighborhoods within Jerusalem the dominating figures are Adolf Hitler and the Messiah. Everything else, he notes, is transitory. Because of Hitler, one has no right to quarrel with what has taken shape amidst the transitoriness, with this sort of Judaism (i.e., haredi), which Hitler

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 7.

wiped out in Europe. Because of the (awaited) Messiah, the same Judaism “enchains” you and “threatens to reconquer what you have wrested from their hands.”<sup>128</sup> This immovable framework highlights the power play and tension between religion and the religious, and politics and politicians, often times with much overlap in membership.

This tension manifests itself outside of the Jerusalem neighborhoods in what are called the Israeli settlements, some of which began as “suburbs” of Jerusalem proper. For many of the inhabitants of these neighborhoods, what mainstream Israeli society lacks, and by extension so too those Jews who are not religious settlers, is commitment to absolute values. As Oz presents their views, the alternative to persistent battle, which they feel they confront from both Israeli society and external parties, due to their desire to live in these settlements, is creeping retreat. If tomorrow one settlement disappears, the day after will witness the same. In this way, they argue, psychological retreat begets political retreat. The only thing that prevents such retreat is the willingness to do battle out of faith.<sup>129</sup> The settlers maintain that other Israelis, if not the majority of them at the time of Oz’s writing, do not believe in any absolute truth.

When he asked the settlers if the nation-state (i.e., the State of Israel) is simply a tool to further their ends, a return to their imagined Zion, many exclaim that they would be quite content to live in a world “comprised of dozens of civilizations...cross-pollinating each other without emerging nation-states.” Yet, they argue, this was the circumstance Jews faced before the reemergence of Jews in the Land, and nobody else followed the Jews’ model as a civilization without the tools of statehood. The result, in their logic, was the destruction of that civilization by Hitler. Therefore, they reason, they accept the “rules of the game” (i.e., territorial statehood)

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<sup>128</sup> Amos Oz, *In the Land of Israel* [1982], trans. Maurie Goldberg-Bartura (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 8.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.



because existence without it, without the “tools,” is tantamount to mortal danger.<sup>130</sup> In fact, this line of reasoning was Steiner’s response to Ezrahi’s heralding of territorylessness in her analysis of Jewish literature that posited a desired goal of emplacement. Existence, in this understanding, is a luxury others bestow on you, and in that regard the world failed the Jews. For many settlers, they see this threat continuing, despite the existence of the State.

Other Israelis, as Oz demonstrates, feel quite differently, especially since 1967, which saw Israel acquire Judaea and Samaria – the very central hill country of the Israelites from Chapter Two (i.e., the West Bank). Before then it was, after the end of the British Mandate, part of newly created Jordan. Enactments by the Israeli government, such as the existence of settlements in this territory and defensive measures against often wanton violence committed by those who identify as Palestinian, even if motivated by security concerns, resulted in what these Israelis describe as “moral autism.” In this sense, the status quo demanded that Arabs live within conditions that Israelis would not accept for themselves.<sup>131</sup> The price of ignoring the Palestinian movement, both its nationalistic form and as well as its manifestation oftentimes in security threats, creates a situation that cannot last; if one denies the identity of others, however conceived, one is doomed to find oneself not unlike those whose identity is denied.<sup>132</sup> This recognition, however, is two-sided, whose lack of implementation often proves to be an obstacle for follow-through of any plan, however well conceived and intentioned.

The question that Oz was left asking was whether or not comparison is possible. Can one compare the two, or any, national movements? Moreover, can one afford not to compare them? Once one begins to question the history, motives, intentions, and policies behind one

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 144.

enactment, regardless of which “side,” similarities and “equivalences” soon fade. The example that best illustrates this quandary over how to compare is his reflection on interviewing Ziad Abu Ziad, who was at that time editor of the Palestinian newspaper *Al-Fajr Al-Arabi* (The Arab Dawn). Ziad explains that he has detractors both from within his own community, as well as from the Israelis. Ziad states, “The censors...plot unceasingly against Al-Fajr, preventing the staff from printing even items that have appeared in full in the Hebrew press.”

Oz asks if this is the equivalent of “turning the phonograph record over,” that if it is not just the Israelis detaining him and prohibiting his stories from being published then it is the Palestinian leadership issuing the same decrees. Ziad replied:

There is an Israeli people and there is a Palestinian people and both of them must live. In coexistence. As equals...There is justice here, and there is justice there, but here or there, over and beyond justice, there is reality...Just when we wanted to give coverage to Peace Now and the antiwar movement, they censored it.<sup>133</sup>

Oz relates that in this interview Ziad explained his vision of what would happen, which spurred Oz to question the possibility of comparison. Ziad stated, “[...] look, one day the entire world will be united. Such is the direction of history...And it can begin between the Palestinians and the Israelis...But first of all the Palestinians must be a free people...And we must return to our country, we must return to Jerusalem.”

Oz explains that:

In the heart of Jerusalem he says these words to me: “First of all...we must return to Jerusalem.” How very strange...in 1868, in Vienna, Peretz Smolenskin founded a Zionist Hebrew journal that bore the same name as Abu Ziad’s newspaper, The Dawn. On the opening page of the first issue, Smolenskin wrote, “Neither in shame nor in disgrace do we believe...that the day will come and the kingdom will be restored...when like all peoples we shall not be ashamed of the desire to redeem our souls from the hands of strangers”...Aren’t we merely flipping the record over...This comparison is...very fashionable...François Mitterand and Jimmy Carter make it; the New York Times, Der Spiegel, and Le Monde make it, as do men of conscience...Everyone who is enraged because

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 158.

Israel wishes to deny the Palestinians by force what she herself fought for, over three or four generations, makes it...But in spite of this, the comparison demands a very cautious and subtle examination. Behind *The Dawn* of Ziad Abu Ziad stands the fortune of the mysterious Paul Ajluni. Behind Ajluni stands, so they say, the PLO. And behind the PLO, the mighty resources of Libya and Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the power of the Islamic bloc, the resources of the Soviet alliance, the masses of the third world. Behind them stand the phalanxes, the mouthpieces of the simplistic new Left and of the reactionary old right...But behind *The Dawn* of Smolenskin stood nothing more than the madness of the editor and the zeal of his handful of readers...But, on the other hand, no one ever tried to muffle the voice of Smolenskin...Yet, on the third hand, Ziad...arrived at the idea of “halfway between a Greater Land of Israel and a Greater Palestine” only after decades of savage attempts to throw Israel into the sea, in blood and fire. Smolenskin’s *Dawn* did not seek to hurt even a fly. And on the fourth hand, it was not the Arabs who exiled Smolenskin’s forefathers from their land, but it is Smolenskin’s grandchildren who...inherited piece after piece of Ziad’s legacy. And on the fifth hand...The Arab Dawn sought to shine over our dead bodies. It was Israel’s mighty fist, not some sudden moral revolution, that finally caused it...to abandon this ambition. And on the sixth hand. And on the seventh hand. And on the eighth hand...Is it right to compare the two Dawns? Is it possible not to compare?<sup>134</sup>

Oz states that this continued questioning presents many hindrances to the desire to keep asking questions in an attempt at dialogue, but failure to maintain doing so seems the weightier moral peril. In the interim, however, there exists an impasse from all sides regarding how to ask questions, and whether there is time to do so. Disillusionment continues to build.

In 1987, twenty years after Israel acquired the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a result of the Six-Day War, the Israeli newspaper *Koteret Rashit* dispatched David Grossman to the West Bank for seven weeks. Grossman, who is fluent in Arabic, visited refugee camps, cities, schools, Israeli settlers, and Israeli military personnel in the area. He turned his interviews and reflections of that article into his book *The Yellow Wind*. He notes similarities, as did Oz, in his interviews in outlook and tactics between the two “sides.” An example of the similarities between the Israelis and Palestinians is demonstrated by David Grossman in his interview with an Arab woman.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 159-65.

She was from the city of Lod, which in the early 1940s was then an Arab town. She spoke of the town's beauty and relates that since 1948 she has not returned, even to visit. "Aren't you curious to see it now?" he asked, to which she replied, "Only when we return." Grossman states that Palestinians are making use of the ancient Jewish strategy of exile and have removed themselves from history. He states, "They close their eyes against harsh reality...they fabricate their Promised Land...And here, also, again and again, that absolute demand: everything, Nablus and Hebron and Jaffa and Jerusalem. And in the meantime – nothing."<sup>135</sup> Oz warns us that such similarities often fall apart upon closer inspection. How people "re-emerge" into history, how they fabricate, etc. might reveal the differences in relative positions of power between the two groups over their histories, the differences in types of leadership among the two, the refusals to accept or reject proposals, etc. What Grossman points to is that the present is a place of absence, a void. Everything happens and occurs elsewhere, in different places and at different times, save the present.

Regarding the entrenched settlers, Grossman reveals that often they retard their own development in order to demonstrate how ideological concepts are devoid of meaning. If all difficulties and mishaps can be blamed on outside forces, then that precludes self-examination; this situation is reflective of not just the settlers, but of all who maintain unwavering positions, as Oz pointed out. These enclaves, both physical and intellectual, become their own self-created prisons,<sup>136</sup> and given enough time, things appear as if nothing has happened at all. At times people question how it is that what began for many as a realization of utopian (or perhaps quotidian, and normalizing?) endeavors became a prison, both for those who are the "jailers" as well as for those who are "jailed," although given the prescience of self-reflection on the part of

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<sup>135</sup> David Grossman, *The Yellow Wind*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988), 7-8.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46.

the jailed, the reverse would prove just as correct. Grossman concludes by saying that people can continue as they have been, but they must account for the price it takes to do so.

As he reflects:

We have lived for twenty years in a false and artificial situation, based on illusions, on a teetering center of gravity between hate and fear, in a desert void of emotion and consciousness, and the passing time turns slowly into a separate, forbidding entity hanging above us like a suffocating layer of yellow dust. From this point of view, nothing matched the occupation as a great personal challenge. As a personal crossroads demanding action and thought...Albert Camus said that this passage from speech to moral action has a name. "To become human." During the last weeks and seeing what I saw, I wondered more than once how many times during the last twenty years I had been worthy of being called human, and how many people among the millions participating in this drama are worthy of it.<sup>137</sup>

Even as recently as summer 2014, when "Operation Protective Edge" was in full force, in which Israel responded to continued and incessant rocket fire by Hamas from within the Gaza Strip, Grossman called for contextualization and for all included to "become human."

In an editorial in the New York Times he states, "Israelis and Palestinians are imprisoned in what seems increasingly like a hermetically sealed bubble. Over the years, inside this bubble, each side was evolved sophisticated justifications for every act it commits...In this cruel and desperate bubble both sides are right." He recognizes that within Israeli society competing factors begin to see how the other views the world and events occurring in it. He says:

The left is increasingly aware of the potent hatred against Israel – a hatred that arises not just from the occupation – and of the Islamic fundamentalist volcano that threatens the country...more people on the left understand now that the right wing's fears are not mere paranoia, that they address a real and crucial threat. I would hope that on the right, too, there is now greater recognition...of the limits of force...There is no military solution to the real anguish of the Palestinian people...Israelis have known this for decades, and for decades we have refused to truly comprehend it. But perhaps this time we understand a little better...Will a similar comprehension emerge on the other side, in Hamas?<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 215-15.

<sup>138</sup> David Grossman, "An Israel without Illusions: David Grossman: Stop the Grindstone of Israeli-Palestinian Violence, *The New York Times*, July 27, 2014.

Grossman's call for contextualization and becoming human in the face of continued war is all the more remarkable given that one of his sons was killed in 2006 during the war between Israel and Hezbollah. He remains committed to incorporation of all voices and refuses to lapse into one entrenched stance or another. In other words, continuing with the status quo is a non-action, and what is needed, to paraphrase Benjamin and Heschel, is an assessment of responsibility while in the *limen* and threshold regarding decisions to be made.

### **Home Improvement: How to Recognize When “Home” Needs Renovation**

Israeli journalist and public intellectual Ari Shavit begins his treatise on his family's and nation's autobiography by claiming the movement to which they belonged was one of orphans. He states, “Now they are fatherless, motherless, and godless...After all, Zionism was an orphans' movement, a desperate crusade of Europe's orphans. As the unwanted sons and daughters of the Christian Continent fled the hatred of their surrogate mother, they discovered they were all alone in the world.”<sup>139</sup> Much of this account of lost homelands and disillusionment with the recreated one echoes the attempts by the scholars in the latter part of this chapter who represent Israeli authors grappling not only with how their country came to be, but also with what has happened since it became. In this endeavor they add a new voice to the multitude of books dealing with this Land that present a sole perspective. In so doing, as well, they do not simply replace one myth with that of another; nothing is accepted wholly except the continual search for “truth,” in the service of informing ourselves how to emerge ethically, and intact, from this liminal situation. In this way, they represent the vanguard of an An-skyian paradigm in historiography and auto-ethnography/identity formation.

One of Shavit's most poignant moments of explanation occurs when he is detailing the travails of the various *Aliyot* (waves of immigration to the Land). He lays out the physical,

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<sup>139</sup> Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013), 33.

economic, and social struggles that these immigrants faced, and he also explores the various ways in which Jews and Arabs overlooked each other, worked together, and how Jews oftentimes exploited Arab workers, often to the detriment of other Jews. It is when he begins to discuss the various iterations of Arab incitement against those immigrants that the complexities of home, generation, and commitment reach their apogee (or nadir, depending on outlook), from which much else seems a simple variation on a theme. As Shavit explains, Arab revolts against Jewish immigrants before 1936 were short, sporadic outbursts. On April 15, 1936 an Arab gunman shot a Jewish driver and passengers; the next day two Jews killed the gunman and his roommate in retaliation. Also, Jewish gangs attacked an Arab cartman and shoeshine man who were in town working. This led to a mass outburst in neighboring Tel Aviv in which hundreds of Arabs “thronged the streets.”<sup>140</sup> This series of outbursts was not sporadic and short, but rather a “collective uprising” that in three days left sixteen dead and eighty wounded.

On May 16 Arab snipers killed three Jews emerging from a cinema in Jerusalem, and in March of 1920 the first Arab-Jewish confrontation occurred up north in the Galilee. After 1937, however, with the re-emergence of the Arab revolt, more deaths occurred, and more horrifically. In the course of a year more than eighteen hundred people were killed. Shavit states, though, that, “while attacks on Jewish civilians were supported by the Arab national leadership and by much of the Arab public, the attacks on Arab civilians were denounced by mainstream Zionism...On the other hand, some of the Jewish actions were far more lethal than the Arab ones.”<sup>141</sup> There always is “another hand” in conflicts, historical data, and in recollections. It is in this litany of specifics, though, that Shavit approaches the blurring of fiction, autobiography, journalism, history, and memory that Oz discussed.

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 71-72.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 77.

No longer was Zionism a state of utopian bliss, albeit with “usual” social and economic grievances; it was transformed into, and continues to be, dystopian conflict. Yet, Shavit offers a glimpse into Camus’s call to be human. How, in this scenario, where all actions are justified, all voices legitimately needing to be heard and included, and in which the picture is never complete, can one accomplish An-sky’s example of being both here and there? Is not ideological entrenchment itself inevitable? Shavit offers an example, albeit perhaps unsettling. The 1947 U.N. Commission concluded, after its visit to Palestine, that chances of peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs was unlikely and suggested partition. The Arab League and Palestinians rejected Resolution 181, and violence erupted throughout the country. The British left, and the State of Israel was founded in May 1948, only to be engaged in a full-scale war by five neighboring Arab armies. Late that year a Jewish convoy was attacked and thirteen people murdered. Months later a plan was presented to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to take control of an Arab village, Lydda, in order to secure a region during the war of 1948. In the effort to seize the village, Jewish troops massacred its inhabitants.

How can one be human in this scenario? What choice does one have except to be unwavering in support of one side or the other? Shavit states:

[...] one understands that...the conquest of Lydda...[was] no accident. They were an inevitable phase of the Zionist revolution that laid the foundation for the Zionist state...And when I try to be honest about it, I see that the choice is stark: either reject Zionism because of Lydda, or accept it along with Lydda.<sup>142</sup>

As other have articulated in their reflections, too, the same self-acknowledgement and – reflection must be performed by Palestinians, as well. There is neither a one-way street – in the sense of assuming total guilt or innocence (as Benjamin observed and recounted in Chapter One) nor a state of being a total victim or aggressor. One rejects hasidism, Judaism, secularity,

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 131.



etc. because of those other movements, or accepts it along with them. We do not occupy the imagined *shtetl* of Zborowski, rather the complex one of An-sky.

The Arab rejection of the 1937 Peel Commission's recommendation of partition, continued Arab revolts, the Arab (i.e., those who later identified as Palestinian) collaboration with Hitler, rejection of the 1947 U.N. Resolution 181, which would have divided up the Land into nation-states, etc. all of which were supported, if not carried out by, Arab national leadership, must be either rejected or accepted in the same vein as either rejecting or accepting the Jews' 1948 conquering of the city of Lydda, if one is to engage in an An-skyian pursuit of identity formation that simply does not replace one myth with another.

While this is not a study in the conflicts of the region over time, it is helpful to examine what Israeli authors have said about the generation gap in the Land, and the struggles that they see over how people identify with, or often fail to identify with, the overarching narratives to which they will commit. Cleavages exist on many levels in the Land, and Shavit insists on situating each into its larger religio-socio-political context, both intra-Israeli, as well as inter-regional, with an inclusion of Palestinian experience and voices. He does not, however, deal much with the intra-religious cleavages (like Grossman and Oz do) to the same degree in which he handles the others. What Shavit succeeds in highlighting throughout his various excursions is the notion of choice and commitment. One cannot focus on any particular topic without committing to study of its implications and understanding of how it came to be.

To depict this encompassing undertaking he likens any study of a topic to concentric circles. The external one is the Islamic circle, into which the Jewish state arouses animosity. The intermediate circle is the Arab circle; Israel, he asserts, is a Jewish nation-state founded within an Arab world, and the Arab national movement had, and continues to have, as a basic component of its motivation, the prevention of Israel's creation, at which it failed, and its destruction, an

endeavor at which it continues to fail in implementing. The third circle is the Palestinian one, in which Israel is perceived as being a settler state founded on the “ruins” of “indigenous” Palestine. Those three circles are merging, he argues, and any unilateral action, such as Israel’s disengagement from Gaza, leads not to recognition of Israel or ceasing of tensions, but quite the opposite.<sup>143</sup> As well, there are little, if any, reciprocal studies of encompassing self-reflection and –critique emerging from within those three regional circles, thus again dooming these few Israeli voices to the void of dismissal and irrelevancy.

The core of the Zionist “revolution,” Shavit argues, was an identity revolution, and this identity has been consistently disintegrating into a multitude of identities, as is the understanding of generation. It has gotten to the point, he warns, that we no longer recognize ourselves. With that being the case, Israeliness becomes an “iridescent kaleidoscope” of “broken identities,” which forms a phenomenon that bears study. What this situation has to offer, and which fits in perfectly with an An-skyian understanding of identity-formation, is an example of “life on the edge.”<sup>144</sup> In other words, the Land itself has regained its status, which we saw it acquire in Chapter Three, as a *limen* and threshold, in which decisions about commitment and return are made. Those within Israel, then, because of and despite physical emplacement, are beckoned to imagine themselves as being re-diasporized. Only if this becomes the new status quo, and not re-entrenchment within fixed, dogmatic boundaries, regardless of “side,” will ethical action ensue.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 399-401.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 418.

**Chapter Five**  
**Peopling the Diaspora:**  
**Jewish Genetic Disease and the Renewal of Mythopoesis**

For many observers, twentieth-century modernism could be characterized by influences of the West spreading throughout the entire world, in which categories and boundaries (national, social, etc.) were clearly demarcated. This gave way to postmodernism, in which, as Angelika Bammer notes, the “post” defines what we no longer are: we are both here and there, neither here nor there, at one and the same time.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this movement and concomitant weakening of previously reified boundaries, which had provided a sense of security through which one envisioned identity, we are all marginal characters, an Other (i.e., displaced).<sup>2</sup> The problem with this state of affairs, Bammer states, is that differences become universalized and disappear, and the contexts that contributed to their development (i.e., historical experiences of difference based on “socially constructed categories of discrimination as race, class, gender, sexuality, religious, ethnic, and cultural affiliation”) become taken over, appropriated, by everyone else in an effort to create a “new, postmodernistically hip” universal subject.<sup>3</sup> The supposedly unique, identifiable, and discrete entities of modernity have given way to the quotidian, ordinary, and universalized muddle of postmodernity – the grid of identity construction, as discussed in Chapter Two.

Yet, Bammer also reminds us that the past is not entirely forgotten; as she notes, what has been displaced, similar to how Freud understood what has been repressed, is still there. It (i.e., the past) is deferred, displaced, but not replaced. In this way, it “remains a source of

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<sup>1</sup> Angelika Bammer, “Introduction,” in *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*, ed. Angelika Bammer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), xii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xii-xiii.

trouble, the shifting ground of signification that makes meanings tremble.” What is at issue, for Bammer, then, is how to articulate one’s presence, one’s subjectivity and identity, while noting the continuing, and increasing, lack of stable markers of identity in a shifting world. As she states, there is a tension between marking and recording absence and loss, while inscribing presence. One needs to be able to step outside of the system while remaining within it.<sup>4</sup> In her understanding, “home” is inherently about separation and commitment, and identity is “about what we are not but also not free to dispense with.” The politics of identity, for Bammer, constitute a constant process of negotiation.<sup>5</sup>

The notion of the inescapability of the past, in both material and socially constructed remnants, while trying to make sense of the present, likewise can be figured into discussions of genetics research on identity. We cannot ignore biology, and we cannot overlook the many ways in which people have constructed their identities and imposed identities onto others. In this chapter we explore the ways in which Jewish genetic diseases are understood within Jewish communities and what genetics research offers in terms of complements to foundational myths of Judaism. Through the continuing use of Benjamin’s call for contextualization across space and through time, I echo those who advocate for incorporating both the biological and socially constructed aspects of identity. This more comprehensive outlook allows for a better understanding of migration, and acknowledges that genetic markers help place into question notions as kinship (to whom one feels connected), from what one feels displaced, etc., thus offering a multi-perspectival view to constructed identity. As well, these considerations are reflected in the Jewish concept of *brit* (covenant), which includes both biology and social construction; only through the use of both aspects does a more comprehensive appreciation of

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., xiv-xv.

“home,” “origins,” belonging, separation, and community/commitment emerge. I conclude that we already always are displaced, have multiple homes, and struggle to articulate this complexity using only one paradigm.

Bammer’s insight regarding the necessity of both marking loss and inscribing presence, of needing to become cognizant of remaining within the system, for it is the ground from which one was displaced, into which one exists, and in which one imagines a future, while simultaneously being able to step outside it and recognize it for what it is, echoes Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s endeavor to explore both the interior and exterior of things. He states, “The time has come to realise that an interpretation of the universe...remains unsatisfying unless it covers the interior as well as the exterior of things; mind as well as matter. The true physics is that which will, one day, achieve the inclusion of man in his wholeness in a coherent picture of the world.”<sup>6</sup> Both Bammer and Teilhard de Chardin can be seen as belonging to the same intellectual (and existential) tradition as Smith, Benjamin, Taussig, members of the Annales School, Heschel, et al. who desire to establish contextualization. One’s existence remains with that individual. Regardless of one’s outlook and perspective, components of an individual’s life do not disappear. They may be overlooked, or dismissed, or unknown (as in the case of an individual’s biological ancestry), but the pieces remain to be discovered.

Teilhard de Chardin states that, “I am convinced that the two points of view require to be brought into union, and that they soon will unite in a kind of phenomenology or generalised physic in which the internal aspect of things as well as the external aspect of the world will be taken into account.”<sup>7</sup> He explains that humanity and existence as a whole are fractured, in much

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<sup>6</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* [1955], trans. Bernard Wall, 2d ed. (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1965), 35-36.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

the same way that Bammer understands postmodernity. Yet, in Teilhard de Chardin's outlook, humanity remains entrenched within a bifurcated existence, the poles of which remain stable and strong; materialists (scientists) explain external reality, while "spiritual" interpretations focus on introspection. What he sees as the goal of life, however, and the direction in which humanity and the world are progressing in his opinion, is toward wholeness and recognition of how parts, both external and internal, fit together. He outlines his understanding of an integrated reality. As he explains, "I repeat that my only aim, and my only vantage ground in these pages, is to try to see; that is to say, to try to develop a *homogeneous* and *coherent* perspective of our general extended experience of man. A whole which unfolds."<sup>8</sup> What Teilhard de Chardin adds to Bammer's reflections, as well as to those of others, is his incorporation of humanity's enmeshment within the natural world.

As he states, "Another circle on the trunk of the tree means another interval of time in the life of the universe. The discovery of viruses and other similar elements not only adds another and important term to our series of states and forms of matter; it obliges us to interpolate a hitherto forgotten era (an era of sub-life) in the series of ages that measure the past of our planet."<sup>9</sup> In this way, he adds yet another dimension to Bammer's recognition that the past remains with an individual, and within an individual. Humans are part of the universe, are part of the same materials as planets, etc., and thus are part of each other's pasts in ways that most people do not realize in their everyday lives, let alone in studies of "origins," displacement, home, and return more generally. He continues:

There are many forces in nature that we have supposed exhausted only to find, on closer analysis, that they are still flourishing. The earth's crust has not yet stopped heaving and plunging under our feet. Mountain ranges are still being

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 84-85.

thrust up on the horizon...Nor has the organic world ceased to produce new buds at the tips of its countless branches...For the earth is after all something more than a sort of huge breathing body. Admittedly it rises and falls, but more important is the fact that it must have begun at a certain moment...and that in all probability it is tending towards some final state...Thus all around us, deeper than any pulsation that could be expressed in geological eras, we must suppose there to be a total process which is not of a periodic character defining the total evolution of the planet; something more complicated chemically and deeper within matter than the “cooling” of which we used to hear so much; yet something both continuous and irreversible. An ever-ascending curve, the points of transformation of which are never repeated...it is on this essential curve, it is in relation to this advancing level of the waters, that the phenomenon of life, as I see things, must be situated.<sup>10</sup>

In any attempt at contextualization, then, we must include the *longue durée*. After all, as even Durkheim noted, within an individual are both a biological entity and a socially constructed being, who is representative of a collective. History, and memory (psychological, collective, and biological) include unforeseen pasts, and remnants of those associations remain to be uncovered. How we gain access to those pasts, then, depends on the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves.

### **The Myth of *Bios*: Constructing Life in an Age of Deconstruction**

In *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Mircea Eliade states that, “[...] an object or an act becomes real only insofar as it imitates or repeats an archetype. Thus, reality is acquired solely through repetition or participation; everything which lacks an exemplary model is ‘meaningless,’ i.e., it lacks reality.”<sup>11</sup> In this way, that which is “real” is that which engages with a previous action as established by an ancestor or a divinity and in that way becomes and partakes of the sacred. All else is meaningless (i.e., profane). As J. Z. Smith points out in his introduction to that book, “[Eliade] has persuasively documented in a number of ancient civilizations the presence of

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 96-101.

<sup>11</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History* [1949], trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 34.

one sort of ‘archaic ontology’...[which] values human creativity to the degree that it is imitative, rather than freely original.”<sup>12</sup> Profane existence lacks archetypes, thus participation in the sacred and real.

Such an understanding, then, acknowledges Bammmer’s premise that we cannot entirely get rid of the past. In fact, for Eliade, it is precisely through the engagement in that past, which through ritual becomes the persistent present, is the only way to live a meaningful life. One needs community, however conceived, in order to live a sacred life (i.e., real and meaningful). Yet, Eliade, as did so many others (e.g., Heschel, Teilhard de Chardin, et al.), recognized as well that humanity in modernity is increasingly unable to live such a real life. As he states:

The chief difference between the man of the archaic and traditional societies and the man of the modern societies with their strong imprint of Judaeo-Christianity lies in the fact that the former feels himself indissolubly connected with the Cosmos and the cosmic rhythms, whereas the latter insists that he is connected only with History. Of course, for the man of the archaic societies, the Cosmos too has a “history,” if only because it is the creation of the gods and is held to have been organized by supernatural beings or mythical heroes. But this “history” of the Cosmos and of human society is a “sacred history,” preserved and transmitted through myths. More than that, it is a “history” that can be repeated indefinitely, in the sense that the myths serve as models for ceremonies that periodically reactualize the tremendous events that occurred at the beginning of time. The myths preserve and transmit the paradigms, the exemplary models, for all the responsible activities in which men engage. By virtue of these paradigmatic models revealed to men in mythical times, the Cosmos and society are periodically regenerated.<sup>13</sup>

It is through myths, and their use in society, that humanity gains appreciation of its existence, its origins, and its connection to ancestors. Modern humans are losing the ability to connect.

Even Benjamin articulates this view of modern humanity. In his “One-Way Street” Benjamin ends the journey at the Planetarium, a place that brings together the themes of our

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<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, “Introduction to the 2005 Edition,” in *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History* [1949], trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), xiii.

<sup>13</sup> Eliade *Myth of the Eternal Return*, xxvii-xxviii.



chapter. As he states, “If one had to expound the teachings of antiquity with utmost brevity while standing on one leg, as did Hillel that of the Jews, it could only be in this sentence: ‘They alone shall possess the earth who live from the powers of the cosmos.’ Nothing distinguishes the ancient from the modern man so much as the former’s absorption in a cosmic experience scarcely known to later periods.”<sup>14</sup> While he acknowledges the divide in how previous generations understood reality with how contemporary generations undertake reality, he proceeds to offer his own explanation of what is occurring. Later generations (i.e., contemporaneity) focused on mastering technologies that would allow humans to control, view, and physically manipulate, whereas earlier peoples engaged with the cosmos in a wholly different way. He states:

[...] the exclusive emphasis on an optical connection to the universe, to which astronomy very quickly led, contained a portent of what was to come. The ancients’ intercourse with the cosmos had been different: the ecstatic trance [Rausch]. For it is in this experience along that we gain certain knowledge of what is nearest to us and what is remotest from us, and never of one without the other. This means, however, that man can be in ecstatic contact with the cosmos only communally. It is the dangerous error of modern men to regard this experience as unimportant and avoidable, and to consign it to the individual as the poetic rapture of starry nights.<sup>15</sup>

In this way, Benjamin alludes to the fact that to live an integrated (i.e., real, sacred, and meaningful) existence necessitates community and recognition of connection – to others, to that community, and to one’s context as part of the cosmos.

Humanity’s quest for mastery obscures those types of connections. As he relates, “[...] technology is the mastery of not nature but of the relation between nature and man. Men as a species completed their development thousands of years ago; but mankind as a species is just

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Benjamin, “One-Way Street,” in *Selected Writings, vol. 1, 1913-1926*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 486.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin “One-Way Street,” 486.

beginning his. In technology, a *physis* is being organized through which mankind's contact with the cosmos takes a new and different form from that which it had in nations and families."<sup>16</sup> It is up to humans to regain this way of connecting, which is not a solitary endeavor; as well, its success depends on more than simple technological expertise. It requires a deeper appreciation of existence, which is found in myth. Yet, are myths of the interior and exterior, to use Teilhard de Chardin's terminology, simply different ways to the same knowledge?

With regard to a more contextually Jewish approach to connection and the persistence of the past that needs to be resuscitated, it is helpful to turn to Yeshayahu Leibowitz and Daniel Elazar. In his essay where he explains the relationship between religion and science, Leibowitz repeats a common refrain that previous societies understood existence differently than we do now. He states, "The conception of nature and the world in terms of meanings made the ancient researcher look at natural data as indicating and expressing something, and if this meaning was not obvious and clear at first sight, science was expected to reveal it...Since nature itself was understood as expressing something – a purpose, meaning, or value embodied in the phenomena – natural sciences were conceived in the ways we nowadays conceive the humanities and the social sciences."<sup>17</sup> He notes that in the seventeenth century a change occurred, and scientists introduced the concept of "functional relations" into their investigations into phenomena.

Since then science has proceeded to look solely for functional relations between factual data, and these investigations, then, "do not harbor meaning."<sup>18</sup> Our lives are governed by the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 487.

<sup>17</sup> Yeshayahu Leibowitz, "Religion and Science in the Middle Ages and in the Modern Era," in *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State* [1975], trans. Eliezer Goldman, Yoram Navon, Zvi Jacobson, Gershon Levi, and Raphael Levy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 133.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 133.

knowledge gained by science, and it could be no other way. Religion does not provide knowledge, he claims. Rather, it makes demands of an individual in relation to what she considers to be ultimate; for Jews, it is God. Science provides information concerning nature, and this makes no difference to faith and values. For Leibowitz, an integrated existence requires both.

As we will come to see later on when we discuss the idea of covenant and its relationship to the myths we use to structure our lives, Elazar takes issue with Eliade's claim that Judaism (and the Judeo-Christian heritage more generally) helped to do away with the cyclical approach to reality, positing in its stead History – God's involvement in human affairs, which thus prohibits connection with archetypes. For Elazar, humans, and Jews in particular, must participate in archetypes; the archetype par excellence is that of the covenant, which exists for humanity writ large, as well as for Jews. What is more, and as we have seen before in other chapters, is that this connection requires renewal; it necessitates constant engagement with that originary moment. The remnant of the past, which serves to transform the present into reality, remains with us, but we need to be aware of this pressing demand. As he states:

Derekh (way)...precedes brit [covenant]...which complements it. Every creature has his own derekh that either represents his biological heritage or, in the case of humans, the synthesis between their biological and cultural heritage...Way or path denotes movement that, although to some extent fixed, also provides for change or development...God promises to establish his covenant with Noah and his descendants. The term brit is introduced...where it complements derekh. If the latter is built into humans, the former represents man's ability to freely make choices and commitments...Humans are engaged in a constant effort to relate brit and derekh in the building of civilization, its peoples and polities.<sup>19</sup>

Elazar, like Teilhard de Chardin and others, points out that even the Bible acknowledges humans' connection to both natural forces and socially created ones. Part of living a covenanted

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<sup>19</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel: Biblical Foundations & Jewish Expressions, vol. 1 of the Covenant Tradition in Politics* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 109-10.

(i.e., meaningful, real, and sacred) life is integrating these dimensions repeatedly. Nothing is taken-for-granted, let alone overcome. After all, we still are, according to Benjamin, in our infancy as a species regarding collective recognition of this demand.

Myths, narratives that help to define groups, entities, people, and which affirm continuity and give importance to otherwise random collections of stories and anecdotes, continue to help orient individuals in this changing and shifting environment. Through these narratives an individual connects to aspects of her past that she values. Narratives provide order, and the retelling of them in a group gives its members a sense of their collective past.<sup>20</sup> While many believe that mythological thinking, which provided people a way of understanding their lives, existed only in the past and in preliterate groups who relied on stories to guide their behavior, Claude Lévi-Strauss points out that this hodge-podge of traditions and beliefs continues to operate in our lives. As he states, “I am not far from believing that, in our own societies, history has replaced mythology and fulfills the same function.”<sup>21</sup> We are in the same situation in relation to the variety of historical accounts of our past, written by various historians.

According to Lévi-Strauss, both history and mythology attempt to explain; in this way, both share an underlying structure, but differ in content. The issue remains one of translation, of expressing in one language or code the phenomenon under investigation to another. Even history, and the entire enterprise of structuralism, mirrors what the “hard sciences” have been doing as well. He relates, “Science has only two ways of proceeding: it is either reductionist or structuralist...very complex phenomena on one level can be reduced to simple phenomena on other levels...phenomena too complex to be reduced to phenomena of a lower order...[can be

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<sup>20</sup> Ninian Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 131-33.

<sup>21</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture* [1978] (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), 41-43.

approached] by looking to their relationships...what kind of original system they make up.”<sup>22</sup> In short, both history and science, broadly speaking, offer myths by which to live, through which to understand our past, in which we operate in the present, and from which to prepare for the future.

For many people, though, science is perceived as offering more authoritative information regarding our reality; biological relatedness (read as “natural” kinship) seems more real to many people, and DNA is understood as the “real substance” of kinship, thus essentializing our genealogical ties.<sup>23</sup> Tensions often emerge between biological realities and the ways in which this reality is socially marked. Eviatar Zerubavel emphasizes that we must understand that (biological, genetic) genealogies are “narratives of social descent rather than accurate chronicles or maps of genetic relatedness.”<sup>24</sup> Relatedness is both a biological and social construct, and when confronting a narrative of genealogy, for instance, one must be cognizant of the fact that issues of translation are at play; we all operate simultaneously within multiple mythologies, and we must be wary of how our translations of each manifest themselves in respective behaviors and outlooks. Zerubavel is quick to point out that the actual amount of genetic material that we share (with “relatives”) is not always in direct proportion to our presumed genealogical proximity to those ancestors,<sup>25</sup> and the further we are in time from ancestors, the less genetic material we share with them. Our concept of relatedness to them, however, may not reflect that historical distance.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>23</sup> Eviatar Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity, and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 54-55.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 59.

In the ambiguous quality of our competing myths, around which we orient and understand our lives and identities, we vacillate between content that is taken on faith and that which is “factual” (i.e., historical and/or biological). Furthermore, even this factual content has gradations. Ninian Smart says that we are “moving out of the age of what may be called ‘fanciful’ myth into that of ‘factual’ myth...on the one hand myth becomes history; on the other hand myth is being slit between history and doctrine.”<sup>26</sup> The content that is mythical (i.e., authoritative) seems to be increasing, and much of this mythical content combines material accessed through faith, history, and biology. What emerges, while perhaps less discrete than previous modernist conceptions of origins and identities, is nonetheless rooted in a desire for connection and closeness. We conceive of ourselves in relation to an Other, and much of the content of the various myths operating in our lives are ways in which we connect with others, usually conceived of dichotomously: as either kin or not. As Smart attests, “[...] space enters into our symbolism of friendship – being close...Distance is implied in the symbolism of the Other, and dualism...between God and humanity is an important theme in all theistic religions.”<sup>27</sup> In fact, attempts at overcoming those distances through various means (meditation, “outreach,” genetic testing, comparative mythology, space probes and accelerators to approximate the “Big Bang,” etc.) proliferate in postmodernity as a means to temper any unease with distance and demonstrate our interconnections. How these connections are symbolically and socially expressed, however, relies on metaphors to which many critics deny any credence: biological connection.

Two important qualities to notice about our translation of the various myths constituting our lives are that, as Smart states, they are retrospective, and given the tested methods through

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<sup>26</sup> Smart *Dimensions*, 138.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

which they are achieved (the scientific and historical methods), they are believed and thus accepted. We accept the “backward” conceptuality, and we look upon history, and biology, as real, thus as authoritatively true.<sup>28</sup> Yet, because these narratives necessitate corresponding behavior and outlook, they are implicitly a call to ethical action. As Laurie Zoloth observes, kinship implies duty, and due to the fact that these narratives (authoritatively) outline who is related to whom, the stories present opportunities for people to ask what is their responsibility to their kin. As she relates, kinship narratives, however constructed, depict a shared family history, shared ancestors, and a shared set of values. Jewish communities, then, are linked as kin across all lines (ethnic, linguistic, geographical, etc.).<sup>29</sup> Myth, then, defines one’s “community of concern.”

As we will see, however, people tend to privilege one myth over the other; they accept as true either the socially constructed nature of reality or the biological underpinning of existence. For many people the notion that kinship, genealogy, and even race are socially constructed precludes its material or somatic reality. To claim that race is social rather than biological is interpreted as a statement that race is somehow not real or that it is just a (temporary) social fiction that needs to be overcome.<sup>30</sup> While genetic findings have disproven race as “discrete kinds,” and thus indicate that social life is simply a social creation, there do exist “real” biological determinants to and indicators in life, which cannot be deconstructed. To argue otherwise is to

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 160-61.

<sup>29</sup> Laurie Zoloth, “Yearning for the Long-Lost Home: The Lemba and the Jewish Narrative of Genetic Return,” in *Jews and Genes: The Genetic Future of Contemporary Jewish Thought*, eds. Elliot N. Dorff and Laurie Zoloth (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2015), 176.

<sup>30</sup> Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson, “Introduction,” in *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age*, eds. Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 6-7.

deny difference (and risk physical detriment), or at least to mistranslate one expression of a phenomenon into another language.

What this discussion helps to highlight are the multiple ways in which people self-identify, a process that is pure social construction. Are Jews a race, or a nation, or a people? We will see that these groups of people are too physically heterogeneous to be considered a biological race. The term nation “is too non-discriminating when referring to genetic diseases” and thus lacking in sufficient inclusivity, and thus if one wishes to speak of “Jews,” the term “people” is most appropriate. A “people” is comprised of various groups, but groups that, in this case, share common religion, culture, historic experience, and language.<sup>31</sup> Part of that shared historic experience, however, is the biological myth of genes and certain diseases.

Marianne Hirsch explains that in her experience, displacement and bilingualism, for instance, preceded her physical emigration; they were conditions into which she was born. Therefore, if displacement is equated to exile from “older certitudes of meaning,” then she was always already born into the wilderness.<sup>32</sup> In other words, one always is already in a state of diaspora. In fact, one’s history is a narrative of multiple displacements: linguistic, religious, relational, and genetic. Her strategy for dealing with these displacements, which as indicated are always in a potential state of recurring and returning to an individual, was to make displacement (and relocation) a strategy of survival.<sup>33</sup> She identified groups that encompassed different ways of belonging, often transcending limitations of space (e.g., feminist conscious-raising groups), and

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<sup>31</sup> Richard M. Goodman, “A Perspective on Genetic Diseases among the Jewish People,” in *Genetic Diseases among Ashkenazi Jews*, eds. Richard M. Goodman and Arno G. Motulsky (New York: Raven Press, 1979), 2.

<sup>32</sup> Marianna Hirsch, “Pictures of a Displaced Girlhood,” in *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*, ed. Angelika Bammer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 77.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.



these groups helped her to deal with the fact that identity is fractured, self-contradictory, and “inflected by nationality, ethnicity, class, race, and history.”

Displacement was removal from a “mythic place of origin and plenitude” to a space of exile. She embraced these multiple displacements as both “assimilation and resistance,” because her identities did not shift at the same time or in the same ways. As she states, rather than struggling to reconcile her outer, physical emplacements with her internal groundings, she “invest[ed] psychic energies in a series of (dis) and (re) locations that allow one to live in permanent sojourn in wilderness.”<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, even Hirsch’s permanent migration presupposes a ground from which to gain perspective and stability, however fleeting. Hirsch, though, did not shy away from integrating an acknowledgment of the various ways in which displacement operated in her life; she welcomed them, which helped ground her. Each myth and group to which she became attached allowed her to answer questions about origins, belonging, and return in new ways.

### **Genetics as the New Myth of Jewish Diaspora**

We have seen that, broadly speaking, there are two genres of myth that prove as authoritative for our lives: the social and the biological. Each attempts explanation, striving to provide answers regarding questions around origins and what coheres various groups into a people. Yet, we also have seen that people tend to give higher priority to one myth over the other. Generally speaking, the humanities and social sciences understand race, for example, as reflective of social hierarchies rather than of biological or genetic difference. For researchers investigating human genetic variation, the starting premise is different.<sup>35</sup> The ways in which people articulate their narratives, however, particularly of descent and kinship, are largely

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

<sup>35</sup> Koenig, Lee, and Richardson “Introduction,” 15.

biological. Jonathan Marks states that procreation is biological, while descent is not. What may begin with facts of nature is quickly overtaken by facts of culture. Kinship is “a symbolic system of classification that adopts some aspects of natural relationships and suffuses them with arbitrary cultural distinctions.”<sup>36</sup> Yet, when we think about our kinship, we mentally construct this lineage with an implicit understanding that our progenitors are prenatal pre-configurations of ourselves (i.e., biological forerunners).<sup>37</sup>

Yet, many examples of historical connectedness exist that are not described in biological terms. Rabbinic understandings of succession and descent did not privilege hereditary lines, and occupancy of an office, for example, proceeds by means other than heredity. Nevertheless, images of “spiritual pedigree” and “chains” of succession often carry and are modeled after bloodlines.<sup>38</sup> In highlighting the extremes of social constructivism, Zerubavel states that, “with the possible exception of the Big Bang...it is not self-evident at what point any other given stretch of history actually begins.”<sup>39</sup>

Zerubavel notes that, “we regard as closer to us relatives whose distance from a shared ancestor is shorter than others.”<sup>40</sup> Origins, often commencing at arbitrary points, are presented in narratives and myths of both social and biological provenance. From these sources we gain a mental construction of social communities that can range from “families to humanity at large.” Membership by this way of connection includes one in a family, compresses the time through

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<sup>36</sup> Jonathan Marks, “Race: Past, Present, and Future,” in *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age*, eds. Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 26.

<sup>37</sup> Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 56.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>39</sup> Zerubavel *Time Maps*, 97.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

which one envisions distance to be measured, and in fact may implicate a descendant to family genetic disease. Implicit in any construction of family, given our genetic identities, is the possibility of both social and biological connection, of various degrees. Ignoring these various means of connection risks denying one meaning to what one considers family, but also access to potentially life-saving treatments and inclusion.

### Biological Premises

The discovery of chromosomes led to a recognition of two types of cell division: mitosis and meiosis. Each time a cell divides, the DNA is faithfully copied, and billions of base pairs organize into chromosomes that are divided equally between child cells in the process of mitosis. This process results in two cells with the same number of chromosomes as the original parent. When passing on genes to offspring, the DNA in specialized cells (gametes) is faithfully copied again, but the cells divide twice during meiosis. Each gamete contains only one copy of each chromosome. In the process of making a new individual, one copy of the chromosomes from the mother and one copy of the chromosomes from the father are joined to form chromosome pairs in the new individual.<sup>41</sup> Genes reside on chromosomes, and the genome is the sum total of all genes present in an organism.

The appearance of a trait in an organism, such as eye color, is called a phenotype; if there is at least one dominant gene, it predominates and determines the organism's phenotype for that trait. If both copies of the gene are recessive, then that trait is determined by the recessive gene. A recessive phenotype is observed only if both copies of the gene are recessive. For example, if an individual carries two identical genes, such that both are dominant as in HH or recessive as in hh, that individual is considered to be homozygous. Those individuals carrying a dominant and a

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<sup>41</sup> Charlotte K. Omoto and Paul F. Lurquin, *Genes and DNA: A Beginner's Guide to Genetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 24, 93.

recessive gene, such as Hh, are heterozygous.<sup>42</sup> To gain a sense of the miniscule portion of the genetic sequence that varies from person to person, and which is associated with ancestry, it is worth noting that human genetic sequences are 99.9% identical. Of the .1% of the genome that is different, only 3-10% of it is associated with geographic ancestry.<sup>43</sup>

With regard to the sex chromosomes (the X and Y chromosomes), the X chromosome is always transmitted from mothers to sons, and the Y chromosome is transmitted from fathers to sons. A daughter receives an X chromosome from both parents. The X and Y chromosomes do not carry the same genes, so if a gene on the X chromosome is dominant or recessive it cannot be masked by another copy of a gene on the Y chromosome; in males, any gene that is present on the X chromosome, therefore, is always expressed.<sup>44</sup> If the mother is a carrier for a disease that is transmitted on the sex chromosomes, then the son automatically will be a carrier, whereas that is not necessarily true for a daughter.

Unlike the Y chromosome, the X chromosome is not sex specific. Females have two X chromosomes and transmit one to both sons and daughters. The father passes on his only X chromosome to a daughter and his only Y chromosome to a son. Unlike most of the Y chromosomes, the X chromosomes undergo genetic reshuffling after every conception, and thus they are more dynamic and difficult to trace backwards. Y chromosomes are less prone to mutations, so scientists can trace unchanged Y chromosomes back to founders thousands of years ago. To assess female history, in much the same way that the Y chromosome can be traced backwards, scientists turn to mitochondria. These are discrete packages, organelles, which are found outside the nucleus of the cell. The mitochondria retain a small segment of the DNA, and

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>43</sup> Koenig, Lee, and Richardson "Introduction," 1.

<sup>44</sup> Omoto and Lurquin *Genes and DNA*, 31.

it is inherited strictly through the female line. Sons cannot pass on their mitochondrial DNA; it is passed from mother to daughter, and like the Y chromosome, it shares “a single evolutionary history.”<sup>45</sup>

Both the Y chromosome and mitochondrial DNA are less prone to random mutations after each conception than other cells, but mitochondrial DNA does have a higher mutation rate than the Y chromosome DNA sequence. Those portions of chromosomes that do not code for protein are freer to evolve and acquire changes (mutations), which lead to polymorphisms during the replication process. These changes are passed on to succeeding generations. A group of polymorphisms is known as a haplotype, and scientists can make assumptions from that data regarding rates at which different types of mutations occur. Examining the number of recombinations and changes is how scientists measure the number of generations from the founder until the mutation.<sup>46</sup> Thus it is possible to estimate the date for the most recent common ancestor of any number of Y chromosomes.<sup>47</sup>

For example, if many people who have the same mutation share a large block of DNA on that gene, then it is clear that the mutation arose in a recent founder. If the block of shared DNA is short, on the other hand, the founder lived many years ago; each succeeding generation would have lost part of the block through genetic recombination and mutation. As Harry Ostrer states, “By incorporating coalescence analysis along with the population range of a disease,” for example, “genetic conditions can be identified that were present in the ancient Mediterranean basin, including Palestine, in pre-Jewish times,”<sup>48</sup> and out of which Jews emerged carrying these

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<sup>45</sup> David B. Goldstein, *Jacob's Legacy: A Genetic View of Jewish History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 78-80.

<sup>46</sup> Harry Ostrer, *Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 70.

<sup>47</sup> Goldstein *Jacob's Legacy*, 26.

<sup>48</sup> Ostrer *Legacy*, 72.

particular genes. This allows for a glimpse into their subsequent movements, admixtures (i.e., rates of new mutations and recombinations), etc. What is useful about examining the Y chromosome and mitochondrial DNA is that variations are known to occur at fixed rates, thus providing a biological clock for timing events. Ostrer states that for people whose Y chromosome is identical at thirty-seven different sites, the time to a common ancestor is five generations. If there is a mismatch at one of those sites, the time to a common ancestor is twelve generations, and if there are two mismatches, the time to a common ancestor is nineteen generations. According to this clock, then, “molecular Adam” lived in Africa around 125,000 years ago and transmitted his Y chromosome, which has continued to this day.<sup>49</sup>

#### Biology’s Historical Web of Social Significations

Before the advent of genetic testing, the history of humans’ understanding of speciation, the process of genealogical divergence into new species, proceeded along the basis of morphological evidence. In the early 1800s Jean-Baptiste Lamarck noted humans’ affinity to other animals, and he recognized that species were mutable and postulated that they could transmute into other species.<sup>50</sup> This speculation gained further support when in the 1960s scientists discovered that human blood closely resembles that of chimpanzees and gorillas. The study of protein structures, which reflects genetic structures, allowed scientists to confirm Thomas Huxley’s claim in 1863 that African apes are closer biologically to humans than they are to the Asian orangutan and gibbon, and that chimpanzees are “closer” genetically to humans than to gorillas.<sup>51</sup> In fact, humans share 98.4 percent of their DNA with chimpanzees. This close

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>50</sup> Zerubavel *Time Maps*, 75.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 76.

biological affinity, now buttressed by genetic testing as opposed to simple morphology, is the result of humans splitting off from the common ancestor of the two (humans and chimpanzees) relatively recently; thus the genetic differentiation is not significant. The more similar molecular makeup animals have with one another, the more recently they split off from each other.<sup>52</sup>

Charles Darwin claimed that all forms of life share a common ancestor; life is monophyletic. In this scheme, all life represents various degrees of siblinghood and is thus genealogical. Since his time, biologists cease to measure biological affinity through structural, homoplastic resemblance (morphology) and instead focus on homologous resemblance. The former involves superficial features that are observable (phenotypes), which evolve independently of each other. The latter involves studying analogous, parallel patterns of adaptation to similar environmental conditions. Homologous features resemble each other due to inheritance from a common ancestor (i.e., genetics), not simply the presumption of such based off of appearance.<sup>53</sup>

The fact that genetic testing can reveal something about descent places into question other ways through which people have gauged kinship. Yet, genetic testing measures only lineal descent; it is clinal (i.e., based on a continuum with gradations in characteristics from one extreme to another, especially between populations). Human behavior, by contrast, is a product of historically and socially produced differences. Both, though, figure in to the myths we tell ourselves about ourselves. In this way, we can study social units as well as health differences between groups based on biological ancestry. Each myth, however, ought not to be reified. The appropriate model is not racial, but biosocial,<sup>54</sup> and we cannot jettison one for the other, lest we

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>53</sup> Zerubavel *Ancestors and Relatives*, 41.

<sup>54</sup> Marks "Race," 34.

risk prolonging our stagnation of having humanists and scientists talk past one another in trying to understand humanity and existence.

While genetic testing may be able to speak to human origins and migrations dating back thousands of years, in this way providing scientific “proof” that may corroborate a socially instructive, historical myth of group activity, it still does not establish certainty. Genetic testing is available for only a small proportion of an individual’s genome (the sum of an individual’s genes), and it tests only one part of one person’s genome, from either the male or female sex chromosomes. This results in a rather imprecise pedigree, but people continue to utilize this testing for ancestry purposes. In fact, as Alondra Nelson demonstrates, people use terms like “DNA cousins” and “genetic kin” to denote the information they gain from ancestral genetic testing, however scant the results may be. They use these terms to “rhetorically set apart” those newly discovered ancestors from those of “natural kinship.”<sup>55</sup> Genetic testing speaks to people’s desire to close the distance between themselves and whatever progenitors they may have, which science can help find, and the created kinship it creates testifies to the culture of relatedness that this connection provides. It creates an expanded community of concern. In other words, science can aid in expanding both an individual’s conceptualized community (i.e., those for whom one feels concern).

The resulting behavior afforded to these “root seekers” is an opportunity to accept or reject their genetic genealogy results, thus making more explicit the ways through which they can choose to identify with any diasporic connection. Nelson dubs this “affiliative self-fashioning,” speaking to the ways in which subjectivity can be (re) fashioned based off of given genetic

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<sup>55</sup> Alondra Nelson, “The Factness of Diaspora: The Social Sources of Genetic Genealogy,” in *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age*, eds. Barbara A Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 260.



facts.<sup>56</sup> Race is only one aspect of complex identity formation, and as Marks states, identity is a negotiation among many statuses rooted in genetics, biology, behavior, and sociopolitical categories. These statuses provide myths through which one orients oneself, gives meaning to one's life, and regulates behavior regarding who one is, what one is, and to whom one is related.<sup>57</sup>

It is possible to measure genealogical distances between individuals and between populations based off of the amount of genetic change undergone since the point of divergence from each other. One can reconstruct human history by pinpointing the historical junctures at which genetically recognizable ancestral populations (haplogroups) shared clusters of genetic markers (haplotypes) and then split from one another.<sup>58</sup> Yet as stated, focusing on only one line of descent, “celebrates some ancestors while forgetting others.” Affiliative self-fashioning is also an exercise in genealogical memory. Zerubavel states that genetic testing, which usually tests the Y chromosome and mitochondrial DNA, provides information for only one ancestor per generation; the others are “relegated to oblivion.”<sup>59</sup> Yet, a tension remains. Categories such as race, family, kinship, ancestry, etc. “come from the human capacity to create and assign meanings.”<sup>60</sup> But behind many of these social constructions are real, and often fatal, realities.

#### Jews and Disease: the Beginning of Biomedical Difference

During the early 1700s writings emerged in Europe in which people spoke of Jewish communities (in this case Ashkenazi communities – Jews in Central Europe) exhibiting certain

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>57</sup> Marks “Race,” 26.

<sup>58</sup> Zerubavel *Ancestors and Relatives*, 44.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 69-70.

<sup>60</sup> Lawrence D. Bobo, “Forward,” in *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age*, eds. Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), x.

illnesses more frequently than the surrounding non-Jewish populations. By the end of the 1800s two diseases in particular, Tay-Sachs and Gaucher disease, were recognized as occurring more frequently in Ashkenazi Jewish communities, and by the 1900s medical literature demonstrated that this group of Jews was afflicted with those and other illnesses more commonly than were others.<sup>61</sup>

Sander Gilman notes that by the late 1800s Western European Jews (mostly Ashkenazi) had become, for all intents and purposes, assimilated to their surroundings in terms of dress, occupation, location of dwelling, and hairstyle. Yet, their compatriots assumed them to be a distinct racial category, which manifested itself in both ascribed external and internal differentiations.<sup>62</sup> Some considered Jews a “mongrel” race that interbred with Africans during periods of earlier Israelite exile from the land of Israel; this occurrence, as Gilman demonstrates, was what accounted for Jews’ “muzzle-shaped mouth and face,” among other physical characteristics associated with racial hybridity.<sup>63</sup> Jews were considered to have melancholic temperaments and to have a complexion darker than other Western Europeans. Yet for others, especially scientists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this “blackness” of Jews marked not only their racial inferiority, but also signaled their diseased nature. In this understanding, external conditions such as *plica polonica* (sometimes dubbed *plica judaica* or just “plica”), in which the hair becomes matted, often infested with lice due to the impoverished conditions in which an individual lives for extended periods, was interpreted as an external manifestation of Jews’ unhygienic nature and even as illness leaving the body.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Richard M. Goodman, *Genetic Disorders among the Jewish People* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), xv.

<sup>62</sup> Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 177.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

By the late 1880s, however, more nuanced understandings of medical conditions had emerged, and both a British ophthalmologist, Warren Tay, and an American physician, Bernard Sachs, noticed that similar symptoms affected predominantly Jewish children. A newborn, apparently normal at birth and in the first few months, quickly deteriorated into retardation, early blindness, developed epileptic seizures, paralysis, and then died from pneumonia by the age of three or four years.<sup>65</sup> It was not until the 1930s-1950s, however, that scientists were able to provide a more complex picture of what was occurring. By mid-century doctors understood that these cases involved an accumulation of specific types of lipids (fats) in particular brain cells. This development allowed scientists to reclassify the disease from a case of supposed “idiocy” to a generalized brain disorder, opening up new ways of thinking about medical interventions. Tay-Sachs disease (TSD) no longer was viewed as a (Jewish) pathological illness, dubbed “Jewish amaurotic [blindness] idiocy,” but rather as a class of lipid storage disorders, which then could be distributed across any number of populations.<sup>66</sup>

In the 1970s scientists had developed methods to test individuals who were understood to be at particular risk for carrying the genes responsible for producing a child with TSD, and scientists also started inquiring into the social and historical mechanisms that could account for Ashkenazi Jews’ higher frequency of possessing the TSD-causing gene. Due to limited knowledge of the complexity of the human genome at the time, theories emerged that claimed TSD was caused by a “bad gene,” which spread through intermarriage, migration, and patterns of reproduction common to isolated Eastern European Jewish communities.<sup>67</sup> TSD became

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<sup>65</sup> Keith Wailoo and Stephen Pemberton, *The Troubled Dream of Genetic Medicine: Ethnicity and Innovation in Tay-Sachs, Cystic Fibrosis, and Sickle Cell Disease* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 21.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.

synonymous with Ashkenazi Jewish communities and part of the “mythos” of American Judaism, many of whom had families originating from those regions.

TSD, along with other genetic diseases found in other populations, are related in that they are hereditary and thus are propagated in similar ways. But they differ from one another in that they manifest themselves in dramatically different ways and are linked to social and cultural contexts that differ for each group and “its” respective disease (e.g., Jews and TSD, African Americans and sickle-cell disease, northern Europeans and cystic fibrosis, etc.).<sup>68</sup> As genetic medicine was developing apace during the latter part of the twentieth century, so too were Jewish communities in the United States. They were assimilating, moving to the suburbs, but still trying to maintain a semblance of religious and cultural distinction. As they tried to negotiate this Jewish American identity, they likewise had to confront lingering notions of Jewish genetic difference, a “symbolic ethnicity,”<sup>69</sup> which carried with it vestiges of racial hierarchies and social inferiorities. In calls for genetic testing, once it became available, Jewish communities also strove to distance themselves from the memories and experiences of the more recent Nazi eugenicist past.<sup>70</sup>

The characteristics of TSD, such as elements of physical deterioration and early childhood death and later calls for testing to “eradicate” it, “became linked to the story of Jewish life and culture.” In this light, medical knowledge and practice, as well as Jewish communal responses, became even more intimately interconnected to cultural, religious, and ethical concerns. Keith Wailoo and Stephen Pemberton state that the “politics of identity collide with

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 7.

biological theory, and the promise of genetic innovation is entangled with problems of justice, marketing, and hype.”<sup>71</sup> Other populations with diseases associated with them dealt with similar issues. Genetic diseases became signifiers of troubled ethnic pasts and took on the status of defining characteristics of that particular group. One could mention TSD, for instance, and the “(Ashkenazi) Jewish experience” was implied. Jewish communities rallied around the prospect of confronting this disease, especially within the ultra-Orthodox communities of Ashkenazi Jews within which it was most prevalent. The organization Dor Yeshorim (Generation of the Righteous, or Upright Generation) allowed rabbis, families, and doctors to work together to find the best way to engage community members in helping to lessen potential stigmatization of carriers of the gene, the social standing of families of carriers, etc., and to do so in accordance with Jewish law.

The organization was successful in educating and testing individuals before marriage, working with both families and religious leaders, and significantly reduced the percentage of carriers who procreated with one another. Once Dor Yeshorim sought to test for other diseases that were not as severe as TSD, however, questions emerged about the role of genetic testing, the limits of “acceptable” diseases for which to test, and the limits on genetic matchmaking in an effort to curtail the proportion of carriers in the population.<sup>72</sup> While it was one thing to prevent the birth of babies with TSD, it was another, as critics argued, to prevent (thus stigmatize and discriminate against) diseases that were not fatal and were more manageable.<sup>73</sup> Advances in genetic testing and knowledge, which once paved the way for communities to attempt to take control of their “destinies” by controlling the extent of lethal diseases, were now being curtailed

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 44.

for fear of genetic manipulation and possible coercion of “at-risk” individuals to follow a prescribed way of life. The completion of sequencing the entire human genome in 2001 shifted research from searching for those few “bad genes” to whole-genome analysis.

Researchers were able to identify particular genetic markers for disease, many of which were associated with certain populations. This is useful for diagnosing and understanding the origins and possible migration of these genes over time, but many feared that if this technology were used uncritically that it could lead to reification of genetic differences, in much the same way that assumed “racial” differences were once seen as inherent and immutable. Critics were cautious of the emerging pharmaceutical competition to create the next best drug to deal with an identified malady. Now that genes could be attached to ancestral origin, and diseases carried by certain genes could be located in individuals, many people warned that “genetic research on race would take place in a medical context.”<sup>74</sup> Drug companies, it was feared, would emphasize testing in particular “racial” (i.e., ancestral?) subgroups, but this may overlook individuals who may not identify as part of the targeted population, thus missing out on potential life-saving medications.

#### Genetic Relationships: Where Do They End?

Overtime the identification of certain populations with specific qualities becomes, as Gilman states, “part of the mythopoesis [myth making] of Western culture.”<sup>75</sup> He cites as his example the “reality” of the (male) Jewish body and circumcision, which has become part of the construction of the “Jew’s” body within Western culture. In much the same way, the characteristics of TSD were for many centuries also part of the construction of the Jew’s body, even after its predominance in Jewish communities declined due to the implementation of

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<sup>74</sup> Koenig, Lee, and Richardson “Introduction,” 3-5.

<sup>75</sup> Gilman *The Jew’s Body*, 4.

testing and appropriate action. The reason why such constructions become constitutive of societal myths is that, as Zerubavel points out, “being social presupposes an ability to experience things that happened to groups to which we belong before we joined them, as if they were part of own personal past.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, acquiring a group’s memories and ways of identifying are part of the process of gaining a social identity.

It is also in this way that genetic testing opens up the possibility of exposing new ways in which difference can be marked, thus creating divisions within an otherwise homogenous group memory of belonging. Inhabiting these myths of cohesion are those currently remembering together, but also, as Zerubavel notes, the group’s predecessors. The ability to claim someone as a grandparent allows one to transcend the strictly dyadic form of ancestry (parent-child) and thus lengthen the span of time between ancestors. Through the concept of a “grand” relative an individual envisions a seemingly direct ancestral tie “among members of non-successive generations.”<sup>77</sup>

With the advent of genetic testing, however, this connectivity through time gains the dimension of familial connectivity across space. The aspect of deepening one’s ancestral connection back in time, for example through the use of the “grand” mechanism, is paralleled by the use of genetics in deepening one’s connection spatially. There exist both vertical and horizontal, diachronic and synchronic, relationships. Regarding the aspect of time, Zerubavel notes that we need a paradigm shift to realize that we are genealogically connected to thousands of earlier generations of humans, but also to millions of generations of earlier nonhuman organisms.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, we need a paradigm shift to realize that we are connected (genetically) to

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<sup>76</sup> Zerubavel *Time Maps*, 3.

<sup>77</sup> Zerubavel *Ancestors and Relatives*, 18.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

many others, in what are thought to be different ancestral families, depending on the genetic marker under investigation, across space. The metaphor of the tree, with its multilinear genealogical narratives of connection based on descent in time, needs to explicitly address spatial kinship as well.<sup>79</sup>

#### Race: Socially Constructed Quagmire regarding (Genetic) Difference

The fact that scientists can identify genetic markers indicative of ancestry, region of likely origin, even possible migration routes of population groups with those markers, and also the likelihood of certain diseases to occur in a given population, leads some people to question the premise of social constructions of race. Historically, race was conceived as being based on typological traits, an essentialist notion that they are visible, can be hierarchically arranged, are static, and thus are natural groupings of individuals.<sup>80</sup> Such a concept arose at the time when scientists privileged the study of nature and its classification and when nation-states began establishing exploitative economic relations with “unfamiliar” political and social entities (i.e., engaged in colonialism and imperialism). As Marks states, while individuals had always engaged in practices of distinguishing one from the other, one group from another, and even operated as if geographically separated groups were distinct from each other, rarely were these divisions considered natural, immutable, and global. This changed during the confluence of classifying nature during the period of imperialism.<sup>81</sup>

Typological classification of individuals was popular until the 1800s and early 1900s. Humans were divided into natural, discrete groups, and those divisions were based on

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>80</sup> Pamela Sankar, “Moving beyond the Two-Race Mantra,” in *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age*, eds. Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 272.

<sup>81</sup> Marks “Race,” 21.



manifestations of intrinsic properties. It was thought that these features, constituting race, were packaged as bundles and transmitted to offspring, which faithfully reproduced the features of the previous generations.<sup>82</sup> With Gregor Mendel's research into the genetics of pea plants in the late 1800s and early 1900s, scientists now operated under the assumption that, as with the features of a plant, so too would human genes recombine not in neatly packaged bundles, but rather randomly. This helped to support Charles Darwin's theories about how change occurs and in so doing explain how static traits were not passed on as evenly and regularly as imagined.<sup>83</sup> Scientists were beginning to understand how to scientifically explain change and transformation over time.

According to Ostrer, the concept of race during the nineteenth century was a technical term used by biologists to describe groups of organisms, what we would now call species. When this term was applied to humans, however, it denoted characteristics of physical appearance, for example skin color, hair and eye color, facial form, limb length, etc. (i.e., the typological forms, phenotypes, mentioned earlier).<sup>84</sup> At the extreme end of the definition, a race in this understanding was an organism, a species, a human group that did not reproduce with others, due to choice or geographic isolation.<sup>85</sup>

In today's understanding of genetics, non-Africans are a subset of Africans, with the exception of small pockets in regions where other humanoids developed. Yet, all are able to procreate with one another; thus, they are not separate races/species. There are no discrete boundaries within humans that separate them into genetically distinct groups, and members of

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<sup>82</sup> Sankar "Moving beyond," 275.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>84</sup> Ostrer *Legacy*, xvi-xvii.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi-xvii.

each group are highly variable.<sup>86</sup> Scientists today, argues David Goldstein, agree that “most variation is due to differences between individuals, but this still leaves room for genetic differences that inform us about the histories of groups of people.”<sup>87</sup> In other words, the category of race may be genetically meaningless when applied to humans (i.e., it is socially constructed), but humans still cannot escape their biological underpinnings, which are not social constructions. What is more, these biological underpinnings reveal much about a population’s past and ways in which difference operates genetically.

Natural selection and mutations occurred, and as a result, human populations began to differ from one another. Groups that traveled far from others, which meant that members had less contact with each other, were less likely to share the mutations present in other groups.<sup>88</sup> Given thousands of years, these genetic differences took the form of geographic patterns. Hence, today’s peoples whose ancestors came from a particular location (continent, region, etc.) often share a set of distinctive differences (alleles). At the aggregate level, not necessarily the individual, these manifest themselves as discernible population-level frequencies, which can be identified.<sup>89</sup>

Yet, there is a fine degree of tension between the idea that race is a social construction and the need to maintain that genetic differences are important. While there are millions of sites on the human genome that show differences among individuals, Goldstein notes, if only a small portion of those sites were indicative of ancestry (i.e., region of origin), then that still would

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<sup>86</sup> Deborah A. Bolnick, “Individual Ancestry Inference and the Reification of Race as a Biological Phenomenon,” in *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age*, eds. Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 73.

<sup>87</sup> Goldstein *Jacob’s Legacy*, 10.

<sup>88</sup> Sankar “Moving beyond”, 277.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

include thousands of genetic differences among populations.<sup>90</sup> The 3-10% of that .1% variation in the human genome offers the possibility of much difference, disease, and paths of origin/migration. Gilman summarizes this tension when he says, “There are ‘real’ shared genetic distinctions within and between groups...but the rhetoric of what this shared distinction comes to mean for general culture and for groups so defined becomes central to any understanding of the implications of race.”<sup>91</sup> There continue to be many meanings and understandings of race in biology, the social sciences, the humanities, and in popular discourse. Yet, any concept must take into account that terms and categories identify groups and individuals. In this way, race is both “real” and social. It is “somatic phenotype reflecting non-discrete, broad-stroke continental ancestries,” and its meaning continues to be constituted by social and linguistic contexts.<sup>92</sup> While Dor Yeshorim, for example, understood that there were genetic maladies affecting groups of individuals and knew that technology existed to test for genes that cause such maladies, the context in which the proscribed testing occurred was such that overtones of hierarchy, discrimination, and racism seeped in to otherwise mundane medical procedures.

The line dividing ethics and social considerations from medical research and genetic attestations of difference exists, but also it must be maintained that at times there is overreach in the opposite direction. It is true that medical genetics has moved toward a concern with “predisposing genes,” alleles that increase the likelihood of an individual developing a particular pathology.<sup>93</sup> It also is true that population groups exist. Yet these groups do not have limits and

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<sup>90</sup> Goldstein *Jacob's Legacy*, 10.

<sup>91</sup> Gilman *The Jew's Body*, 171.

<sup>92</sup> Koenig, Lee, and Richardson “Introduction,” 7.

<sup>93</sup> John Dupré, “What Genes Are and Why There Are No Genes for Race,” in *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age*, eds. Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson (New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 42.

are not immutable. All that can be said is that there are quantitative differences in gene frequencies.

Nevertheless, we still are operating under a restrictive binary of race being either socially constructed or typologically real, and both are not entirely accurate. As Pamela Sankar states, “It is ‘statistical race’ because of the reliance on numerical data to represent population differences. The differences it identifies and represents as racial derive from the fact that people of common ancestry are more likely to share certain genes or alleles than those who do not share ancestry. To some extent ancestry and genetic variation are geographically distributed.”<sup>94</sup> In this understanding, (statistical) race, according to Marks, is a theory of kinship that tells us who and what we are, and it takes into account both vectors, the vertical (temporal) and horizontal (spatial). As he states, “Kinship is a system of classification, in which complex relationships to biology (procreation) and law (marriage) are organized into a coherent framework.”<sup>95</sup>

The importance of statistical race (i.e., ancestry and kinship) is that it helps researchers gauge the incidence of genetic disease, thus tracking migrations, and thus helping individuals have the option of expanding their conceptualizations of connectedness. For example, sickle cell disease is not a marker of skin color or race, historically understood, even though it predominates in African American communities. Rather, it more properly is a marker of ancestry, locating an individual as a member of a group whose geographic location in the past originated in an area where malaria was prevalent. A carrier of the sickle cell gene is protected against malaria, but an individual with two carrier parents, thus increasing the likelihood of both passing on the gene, could develop sickle cell anemia. Not all Africans, or Sardinians, carry that gene. Classical race is not diagnostic of ancestry, and disease is not diagnostic of race, but

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<sup>94</sup> Sankar “Moving beyond,” 276.

<sup>95</sup> Marks “Race,” 25.

knowing ancestry and genetic difference can help save lives, and expand the concepts of family, distance, and home.<sup>96</sup>

### **The Genetics of Coming Home**

Gilman emphatically states that all locations in which Jews have found themselves, including the State of Israel, “are places of contention and complexity for Jews.”<sup>97</sup> It was while being emplaced in these locations, he notes, that “diasporic” Jews shaped the intellectual and cultural facets of Judaism; these centers of Jewish life operated as such because socio-political circumstances prohibited Jews’ movement otherwise, but also because these locations had become the Jews’ developed homes. This places into question the overarching narrative within Jewish life, however, which understands Jewish history as operating between center/core and periphery. These dynamic Jewish locations conceived of themselves as existing on the periphery.<sup>98</sup>

Gilman advocates for a new model: the frontier. This space is imagined, but it exists alongside of and in tension with the core-periphery model.<sup>99</sup> Within an understanding of core-periphery, there exists an unequal power dynamic between the two; the center possesses a “hegemonic orientation” to the periphery/margin, and in this paradigm, Gilman argues, it is easy to posit as the center of Jewish history, certain paradigmatic experiences. The Shoah, for example, prefigures all other experiences, and therefore, the center of Jewish life is the “ingathering” of the community to the Land of Israel. In this way, the marginal areas are

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<sup>96</sup> Marcus C. Feldman and Richard C. Lewontin, “Race, Ancestry, and Medicine,” in *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age*, eds. Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 98.

<sup>97</sup> Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Frontiers: Essays on Bodies, Histories, and Identities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), v.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

understood as being alienated from the center of Jewish life, the places where Jewish “radicals” operate, and at worst the places where the center of catastrophe occurs.<sup>100</sup> In Gilman’s frontier model, there is no privileging of the center or devaluation of areas that are not the center; rather, one focuses only on the frontier, and all locations are the frontier. Now that which was the center is placed on par with what was considered marginal.

Included in Gilman’s formulation of the frontier are elements that dovetail nicely with how Benjamin, Heschel, and Tweed understood emplacement. As Gilman articulates the frontier, it is a place defined not by rigid boundaries demarcating center and not center (i.e., periphery), but by a “constant sense of confrontation.” This particular space provides opportunity for confrontation with, but also accommodation to, ways in which to imagine oneself in the world.<sup>101</sup> This is a space of rupture; it is liminal space where all individuals and groups understand and define themselves in light of the experience of others, confronted there.<sup>102</sup> Gilman even suggests that Israel ought to be re-conceptualized as a frontier state.

Bammer understood diaspora as an experience of mobility, plurality, and inherent alterity; one is always in movement from an origin, a place of plenitude and being “at home,” whether imagined or “real,” both individual and communal, both spatially and temporally. Yet, eventually one needs a place in which to settle upon certain symbols and understandings,<sup>103</sup> to become emplaced. What the model of the frontier helps to frame is the question of kinship, relationship, and even notions of home/return. Even the unsettled qualities associated with the

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 24.

frontier suggest something beyond, in any direction, from which, or to which, or within which an eventuality will occur or has occurred.

Jews, Gilman states, are to be understood as multiple entities within a singularity. They are multiple because of the many cultures manifested under such a label. They are unitary because of a common archaeology and/or culture “they believe they share – even those never self-consciously part” of the group.<sup>104</sup> Inherent in the concept of frontier, according to Gilman, is the action of violation. However, this is conceived as “a narrative tradition that is superimposed on the landscape.”<sup>105</sup> In this way, then, the frontier is always already an encapsulation of the past, present, and future, but with a decidedly motion-orientated impulse. The new frontier in medicine, he states, is that of genetic knowledge.<sup>106</sup> These narratives, religious, historical, and biological, contain multiplicity but are unified in their attempt at explanation. They all are predicated on origins, occurrence, and ways of conceiving of connection.

The space of the frontier includes acknowledgement of differences, those of both the individual and the group. As a point of comparison, Gilman juxtaposes hybridity to multiculturalism. The former, he asserts, is a result of mixture, which may contain a plethora of sources rich in diversity, but ends up with an unstable, malleable product. The latter is the antithesis to hybridity. Yet a tension still exists. Multiculturalism may result in a reification of ethnic identities, but it also allows for the possibility of celebrating a merging of cultures, in which all can be explored in their details. Hybridity, he argues, leads to assimilation and a loss of individual identity, paradoxically at the creation of a “new” one, while multiculturalism, being

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 150.

wary of reifying locations and cultures from which one comes, allows for belonging, engagement, and recognition of difference on many levels.<sup>107</sup> Diaspora, then, the process of origination, separation, and attempted return, is always multiple and is always a part of an individual's (and group's) identity. These processes contain myths' multivalence, operating simultaneously.

You Can Take the Human out of the Middle East, but not the Middle East out of the Human

We have seen that when considered as a race, Jews are physically quite heterogeneous and possess no distinguishing features. If considered a nation, it must be acknowledged that this designation refers to the early origin of Jews but is insufficient to account for the proliferation of developed genetic diseases within various Jewish populations through time. Richard Goodman states, therefore, that it is more acceptable to speak of Jews as a people. This understanding takes adequate account of its composition by various groups, but groups that share common religion, culture, and historical experiences;<sup>108</sup> the constituent groups share certain myths, which happen to include a biological substrate for many individuals. He continues further by stating that genetically Jews constitute a heterogeneous population, but there are markers suggesting an early Middle Eastern origin, and these groups carried their genes with them. To understand genetic disorders, therefore, physicians must understand one's distant past.<sup>109</sup> In this way, genes are a chronotope par excellence, as well as the prime example of a *longue durée* investigation into a population's history. They always remain with an individual and provide a constant supplement to one's constructed identity.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>108</sup> Goodman *Genetic Disorders among the Jewish People*, 3.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 4.



If we pick up where Chapter Two left off historically, the Jews are a Middle Eastern people, comprised of various groups and united by a shared outlook and consequent historical experiences. Component groups that coalesced into what became known as the Hebrews were nomadic, while others were breakoff segments of what became known as the Canaanites (i.e., developed “indigenous” populations). Historical speculation based on probability, as well as textual evidence, recognizes intermarriage among these peoples. Over time this people would become the Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi Jewish communities worldwide.<sup>110</sup> With the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE, the Israelite population that was moved eastward founded Babylonian Jewry. Some later left that community and traveled to other parts of Asia and the Middle East and mixed with populations there, forming the Mizrahi (Eastern) Jewish populations.<sup>111</sup> With the rise of the Greco-Roman empires, some Jews who remained in Palestine migrated westward, going as far as Spain. These groups developed into what became known as Sephardic Jewry, eventually covering the Mediterranean basin.<sup>112</sup> Ashkenazi Jewry developed out of the Jews from Palestine who made their way to Europe mostly during the Middle Ages and established themselves in France and the German lands. Over time they settled in Eastern Europe and made their way to the United States.

Speaking in broad terms, Gregory Livshits says that by the time of the beginning of the Jewish diaspora (i.e., migration out of Palestine) in the sixth century BCE, the Jewish people had spent a few hundred years developing into a people, which later were subdivided into numerous populations that dispersed to various parts of the world. In the subsequent locations into which Jews found themselves, they tended to remain a non-intermarrying subpopulation. As a result,

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<sup>110</sup> Goldstein *Jacob's Legacy*, 2-3.

<sup>111</sup> Goodman *Genetic Disorders among the Jewish People*, 5.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

random genetic mutations, as well as a not insignificant amount of interbreeding, were expected. Numerous dispersions and physical catastrophes, such as rapid and severe decreases in population due to assaults and further subsequent migrations elsewhere, led to the effectively small population size of each Jewish subpopulation. This in turn led to a rapid increase in genetic distances between them and whichever surrounding populations they encountered.<sup>113</sup>

He notes that during processes of formation and settlement in any given territory, human populations are subjected to various influences, such as migration, admixture with people from other populations, random differentiation, and even selective processes. These effects may be demonstrated genetically, and thus geneticists are able to pinpoint areas in which members of populations are more similar to each other than to others. Jews, then, spread over all of Europe, the Middle East, North Africa (and pockets in other locations), parts of Asia, and eventually to North and South America. They did so relatively rapidly, given the time span of human development, but until relatively recently had remained rather isolated and small in overall population size.

When viewing Jewish history in the light of renewed migrations, it is easy to see how Laurie Zoloth can characterize a significant component of Jewish life as always being estranged and in exile, of not being at home; it is this sense, she argues, that is intrinsic to a particularly Jewish notion of otherness and a yearning to go home.<sup>114</sup> Yet, when viewed in terms of human migratory patterns and development writ large, the concept of Jewish dispersion might have been overdramatized, as James Neel argues. Rather, he states, it is helpful to “visualize the roots of Ashkenazim in a more or less continuous flow of people to Europe over a period of some

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<sup>113</sup> Gregory Livshits, Robert R. Sokal, and Eugene Kobyliansky, “Genetic Affinities of Jewish Populations,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 49 (1991): 144.

<sup>114</sup> Zoloth “Yearning,” 166.

800 years, beginning more than 2,000 years ago.”<sup>115</sup> Jewish history, even from its scriptural beginnings, then, with Abraham traveling from Ur to the Land of Israel and continuing with Jewish travel in and out of the land, is always already in a state of physical movement, even if the “originary” movement was imagined (i.e., without an historically identifiable “Abraham,” as such). With regard to archaeological attestations to such, Jewish history, then, began with a coalescence of various migratory groups with indigenous populations. Thus, Jewish history always already was located, but imagined itself as migratory.

What geneticists can say regarding Jewish travel is that Jewish populations from major diaspora groups (e.g., Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi) form population clusters that share genetic relationships with both Semitic and European populations. Within the larger Jewish cluster, then, each Jewish subpopulation, variously conceived and interspersed throughout different regions, formed their own subclusters. Each subcluster demonstrated Semitic ancestry and had variable degrees of admixture with the respective surrounding populations.<sup>116</sup> In this way, contemporary Jews betray a decidedly Middle Eastern and Mediterranean identity,<sup>117</sup> albeit in the same way that a majority of the world’s humans betray an African ancestry simply by being human. With the advent of genetic testing, we are entering, quite literally, a revolutionary era; we have returned once again to this concept of locating Judaism’s origins, now located through genetic glimpses into the past, to a Levantine culture.

While it has been argued that no single event or connection unites the Jews, there do exist, as Goodman points out, different strands connecting different groups at different times,

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<sup>115</sup> James V. Neel, “History and the Tay-Sachs Allele,” in *Genetic Diseases among Ashkenazi Jews*, eds. Richard M. Goodman and Arno G. Motulsky (New York: Raven Press, 1979), 289.

<sup>116</sup> Ostrer *Legacy*, 148; Goodman *Genetic Disorders among the Jewish People*, 29.

<sup>117</sup> Zvi Ankori, “Origins and History of Ashkenazi Jewry (8<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> Century),” in *Genetic Diseases among Ashkenazi Jews* eds. Richard M. Goodman and Arno G. Motulsky (New York: Raven Press, 1979), 22.

which places into question what it is that makes a people a people.<sup>118</sup> For example, there are some genes that have a higher frequency among populations or continents. The presence of a particular hemoglobin gene that causes sickle cell disease and Glucose-6-Phosphate Dehydrogenase deficiency (G6PD deficiency, also known as “favism”) increases the likelihood that those people had ancestors from geographic regions where malaria was present. In much the same way, those individuals with the TSD allele most likely have Ashkenazi Jewish or French Canadian ancestry.<sup>119</sup>

There are several ways that geneticists can study human genetic variation. They analyze single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs), short tandem repeats (STRs, also known as microsatellites), and Alu sequences. Recent analyses of hundreds of microsatellite DNA markers and thousands of SNPs from different populations have demonstrated that it is possible to assign individuals, with a high degree of accuracy, to major geographical regions of origin by using a combination of polymorphic genes.<sup>120</sup> The human genome contains patterns of SNPs that are inherited in particular ethnic communities (populations) with origins in historically continuous geographic regions. This suggests that those individuals possessing such SNPs share a common ancestry.<sup>121</sup> When many people in a population share these genetic loci, geneticists can differentiate between geographical populations, and those markers can be used to form affinity clusters based on the number of shared similarities. People possess ancestry from more than one cluster, thus demonstrating migratory origins from multiple regions.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Goodman *Genetic Disorders among the Jewish People*, 4.

<sup>119</sup> Feldman and Lewontin “Race,” 92-93.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>121</sup> Zoloth “Yearning,” 160.

<sup>122</sup> Feldman and Lewontin “Race,” 91.

This clustering of SNPs, for instance, sheds light on the history of human migrations that began around 100,000 years ago. With regard to specifically Jewish migration history, a common example focuses on tracing the biblical priestly line (*cobanim*). Goldstein states that with genetics it is possible “to evaluate whether groups showing Jewish cultural characteristics or claiming Jewish ancestry show genetic affiliation with other Jewish groups”<sup>123</sup> based on those SNPs. Analyzing genetic variation among Y chromosomes of individuals who do and do not claim priestly descent can test the oral tradition of patrilineal inheritance of *cohanim*. If the oral tradition of patrilineal inheritance is accurate, in which case this status was passed on from father to son, then it must be recorded in the Y chromosomes.<sup>124</sup>

Based off of the biblical prescriptions of Numbers 3, the priests were male descendants of Aaron, and the priestly status, in particular that of high priest, *Coben*, was hereditary. The *cobanim* were a subset of the tribe of Levi, and this status, while diminished due to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and the end to the functioning of the priests, was never abandoned. Priestly status, unlike Jewishness itself, was conferred on males from *cobanim* fathers to their sons.<sup>125</sup> As stated, the Y chromosome is a chromosome that a father passes on only to sons, and it does not undergo evolutionary shuffling in the same way that paired chromosomes do. Therefore, sons inherit from fathers a relatively unchanged chromosome.<sup>126</sup>

To determine whether or not this oral tradition continued, scientists had to determine who was a *coben* or not. Through the use of symbols on tombstones indicating that the buried was a *coben*, among other methods, it has been estimated that four to five percent of worldwide

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<sup>123</sup> Goldstein *Jacob's Legacy*, 39.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

male Jewry consists of those with the *cohen* priestly status. Roughly estimated, this amounts to around 500,000 *cobanim* in existence today, and that would mean that those individuals are derived from a single ancestral chromosome (of Aaron, to be exact), who must have lived, according to tradition, some time within the past three thousand years.<sup>127</sup> Groups of scientists investigated a set of six unique event polymorphisms (specific genetic markers/mutations). If multiple Y chromosomes carried those markers it would indicate the likelihood that they shared a common ancestor. Scientists were able to identify a set of related chromosomes, called a modal cluster, which among those who claimed descent from a *cohen*, accounted for sixty four percent of those observed chromosomes.<sup>128</sup> This became known as the Cohen Modal Haplotype, and not surprisingly it was shared with both Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities of *cobanim*. In other words, this particular lineage predates the historical separation of those communities.

Ostrer states that the rate of admixture is estimated to be around 0.5% per generation. When multiplied over the more than eighty generations since the founding of Ashkenazi Jewry, it indicates that those groups remained endogamous for much of their history. Around sixty one to sixty nine percent of Ashkenazi and Sephardi *cobanim* share the Cohen Modal Haplotype, and when viewed in terms of the rate of decay of those genetic markers, the haplotype is estimated to have originated around two to three thousand years ago. This suggests that at least that particular subset of Jewish populations remained faithful to the oral tradition over the millennia.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>129</sup> Harry Ostrer, "A Genetic Profile of Contemporary Jewish Populations," *Nature* 2 (November 2001): 891; Ostrer *Legacy*, 96.

## You Are Where Your Genes Have Been?

The genetic split between what became European Jews from Middle Eastern Jews is timed to have taken place about 2,500 years ago.<sup>130</sup> When studying Y chromosomal markers geneticists are able to better understand the gene flow of Jewish populations from non-Jewish males. Ostrer notes that contemporary Jews and Middle Eastern Arabs have thirteen common Y chromosomal haplotypes, which indicates that the original Jews (i.e., Jews who later dispersed into regions after the Temple destructions, which indicates many years of having been indigenous to the region) might have arisen from local peoples and were not the “offspring” of a single patriarch.<sup>131</sup> The significance of this, and other similar discoveries, is to highlight the fact that migration and relatedness are relative. We all identify as belonging to many families, contrary, even, to historical myths.

Other examples of “Jewish tracking” based on genetic markers exist, for example the Lemba, a group from southern Africa who claim Jewishness through genetics, not practice. Their group narrative includes traditions of migration from Israel to Yemen and then to southern Africa, and based off of genomic tests, they are “authentically” Jewish because many male members carry the Cohen Modal Haplotype on the Y chromosome.<sup>132</sup> This demonstrates that “Jewish people in population studies represent a series of geographical isolates or clusters woven together by common genetic threads.”<sup>133</sup> What helps in strengthening their identification with the decidedly Jewish component of their identifications is that they share more and longer

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<sup>130</sup> Ostrer *Legacy*, 148.

<sup>131</sup> Ostrer “Genetic Profile,” 891.

<sup>132</sup> Zoloth “Yearning,” 163-65.

<sup>133</sup> Ostrer *Legacy*, 152.

strands with one another than with non-Jewish populations, thus highlighting their commonality of Jewish origin, regardless of temporal distance.<sup>134</sup>

While the general picture that emerges from a map of routes taken by modern humans during their geographical expansion is that Jews had a Middle Eastern origin, there nonetheless are varying degrees of admixture that those Jewish populations had with others. Based off of those interactions, which likewise spanned thousands of years, Jewish populations genetically mirror local populations of the regions in which subsequent generations arose, but it is difficult to explain the prevalence of “Jewish” genetic diseases in these populations.<sup>135</sup> Involved in these occurrences are elements of chance occurrence (i.e., random mutation) and natural selection.

As Melvin Konner attests, almost all of the world’s Jews have a common, substantial genetic resemblance to local non-Jews of the Middle East; in this way, Jewish peoplehood is a reality, and it traces Jews to roughly the time and place in which Jews had always told themselves about their origins. Of course subsequent conversion and admixing occurred, but there is a non-negligible component of “Jewish” genetic markers still uniting many Jews in Jewish populations. He states that Jews, as many liberal Jews attest, are not a racial category, nor is Judaism a biological characteristic. Yet, historically the practice of Judaism by individuals has overlapped with populations that can, to a significant degree, be genetically defined.<sup>136</sup>

### **Genetics’ Limitations**

Given the statistically significant fact of admixture and inbreeding with other populations, what mechanisms can account for the high prevalence of genes that have come to

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>135</sup> Elliott N. Dorff and Laurie Zoloth, “Summary of the Science of Genetic Testing,” in *Jews and Genes: The Genetic Future of Contemporary Jewish Thought*, eds. Elliott N. Dorff and Laurie Zoloth (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2015), 195.

<sup>136</sup> Melvin Konner, *The Jewish Body* (New York: Schocken, 2009), 237-38.



be identified as and as causing “Jewish” genetic diseases? Over the years many scientists have attempted to answer this question. The answers are less clear-cut, but the inroads that have been made have done much to help explain the migrations of populations identifying as Jewish. Some suggestions as to how certain diseases predominated in Jewish populations were advanced that focused on selective forces operative on Jews and non-Jews in Europe over the last 1,900 years, such as susceptibility to tuberculosis (i.e., natural selection). The argument was that heterozygous carriers of the TSD gene were more resistant to tuberculosis and that a homozygous individual would develop TSD itself. Yet, this line of argument is speculative. In addition, while life in the Jewish enclaves in Europe (i.e., the developed ghettos), was miserable, it was no less miserable for non-Jews who were city-dwellers. Yet, there is no corresponding prevalence of TSD in surrounding non-Jewish populations.<sup>137</sup>

Another hypothesis for the high frequency of TSD is that of genetic drift with a founder effect. Some scientists posit that genetic changes occurred in Jewish populations after various dispersions, due to random genetic drift, natural selection, and admixture with local populations. Defective genes predispose people to many types of diseases. Genetic drift means that a small population settled in a new area, which caused the incoming population to genetically differ from the surrounding population. Jews from different ethnic communities (i.e., geographic regions), it must be noted, suffer from different genetic diseases than Jewish populations from other regions. Genetic diseases, in this regard, differ from the sex-linked Y chromosome haplotype in that they vary between populations, but this, too, like disease genes, can help to track “origins” and migration.

Most of the genetic disorders afflicting Jews are autosomal recessive traits, which means that the mutant gene may be located on an autosome (a non-sex chromosome) or on either of

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<sup>137</sup> Neel “History,” 287.

the sex chromosomes. A helpful way to think about human dispersion when related to disease frequency is, as Ostrer points out, to view gene frequencies in a population as a line or a vector in space. Populations with the greatest distances are the most disparate. The distance between branching points was the measure of time when one population broke off from another.<sup>138</sup> As noted, disease mutation can be traced back to a single founder, if a genealogy for the group exists. If genealogies are absent or spotty, then founder effects can be inferred when carriers of particular genetic disorders seem to cluster or emanate from particular communities.<sup>139</sup>

For Jewish communities, in particular the Ashkenazi populations in Europe, there are seven different Y chromosomal lineages in common. Of those seven, five belong to an ancestral pool transmitted by individuals migrating from the Middle East, and two are part of populations that entered the Ashkenazi communities after dispersal to Europe.<sup>140</sup> Of the diseases frequently occurring in these populations, some are lysosomal storage diseases, other are glycogen storage diseases, some involve clotting factor diseases, and other are disorders of adrenal steroid biosynthesis. TSD is an autosomal recessive disease, which means that each parent of an affected child carries a single defective copy of the Hexosaminidase A (Hex A) gene. What makes it a “Jewish” disease? It was found a hundred times more frequently in individuals of Ashkenazi ancestry.<sup>141</sup>

This disease is categorized as a lysosomal storage disorder. In effect, lysosome cells contain specific enzymes that digest accumulated cellular waste into molecules that can be reutilized. A deficiency in these enzymes leads to an accumulation of those “garbage molecules”

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<sup>138</sup> Ostrer *Legacy*, 129.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>141</sup> Goldstein *Jacob's Legacy*, 106.

and they cannot be broken down. Ordinarily Hex A breaks down the fatty substance, a toxin known as GM2 ganglioside. Without this break down, the substance accumulates on nerve cells, causing them to increase in diameter. Over time the nerve cells die, which results in neurological deterioration.<sup>142</sup>

As stated, some scientists posit genetic drift as the mechanism for Ashkenazi Jewish populations' high frequency of TSD. Drift implies random fluctuations in the gene frequency from one generation to the next based on a finite size of an effective breeding population. The founder effect, a special feature of drift, occurs when some genes are carried by founders of a new community, whose genes tend to differ in frequency and occurrence from those in the original, parent population.<sup>143</sup> What this means regarding Jewish migration is that segments of the Middle Eastern Jewish population who later would emerge as founders of Ashkenazi Jewry possessed genes that differed from the parent population from which they emerged, and they likewise differed from the populations into which they settled. Repeated bottlenecks in the population (sudden and rapid decreases in population size followed by dramatic increases in population size) continued the mutated gene in succeeding generations at a much higher rate than in the surrounding populations. The issue that scientists continue to grapple with is that given the unusual predominance that TSD had in Ashkenazi populations suggests that the groups comprising those populations carried the gene with them from the Middle East hundreds of years ago. The chances of a subset of a Middle East population having this gene, then going to Europe over many years, continuing to carry it in such high frequencies despite admixing is extremely unlikely.

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<sup>142</sup> Ostrer *Legacy*, 58; Konner *The Jewish Body*, 233-34.

<sup>143</sup> Goodman *Genetic Disorders among the Jewish People*, 459.

Another explanation is natural selection, as stated. This occurs when individual traits that are better adapted to an environment (i.e., involve a greater chance of survival) continue to be propagated throughout a population. This proposition requires that the affected individuals (i.e., those who are carriers of the altered gene) would have a reproductive fitness and thus have offspring more suitable to live successfully within a certain environment. In this reasoning, the Hex A deficiency in TSD disease supposedly increased resistance to tuberculosis, but there is no strong evidence to support this claim,<sup>144</sup> especially given the historically similar environments of Jewish and non-Jewish life in Europe of the preceding centuries and the lack of prevalence of TSD in those other populations.

We have seen that Jewish populations tended toward endogamy and thus were likely to pass on disease-causing genes. They also underwent many bottlenecks, for example in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe, when their effective population sizes became as small as a few thousand individuals.<sup>145</sup> As the groups eventually grew in size, they supposedly maintained the presence of those altered genes while still undergoing admixture (i.e., influxes of new genes due to incorporating those of other populations), but apparently Jewish populations were never as diluted to such an extent to approach gene frequencies of certain disease-causing genes as were those of surrounding non-Jewish populations. In other words, Jewish populations maintained a high prevalence of the TSD gene.

Scientists also note, however, that some disease mutations are unique to specific Jewish groups and thus likely arose while in diasporic conditions. They have determined, based on particular genetic markers, that the coalescence time of these mutations is dated to around fifty

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<sup>144</sup> Ostrer *Legacy*, 61; Goldstein *Jacob's Legacy*, 106.

<sup>145</sup> L. L. Cavalli-Sforza and Dorit Carmelli, "The Ashkenazi Gene Pool: Interpretations," in *Genetic Diseases among Ashkenazi Jews*, eds. Richard M. Goodman and Arno G. Motulsky (New York: Raven Press, 1979), 99.

generations ago, which places the influx (migration) of these populations at the time when Jews were said to have arrived to the Rhineland; other diseases correspond to periods when Jews were granted charters to reside in Poland and Lithuania.<sup>146</sup> In other words, genetics allows us to gauge not only how disease operates, but also to link onsets of such disease-causing genes to flows of people into particular regions where such diseases are reported to occur. Much of this genetic evidence corresponds to previous accounts of Jewish residential history in Europe.

Given that Jews “began” genetically as a conglomeration of various peoples in the Middle East, slowly but steadily fanned outward from there, admixed with every population they encountered, and carried some altered genes with them but also developed some along the way in various locations, it is easy to see how Ostrer could describe Jewishness at the genetic level as a tapestry with threads representing shared segments of DNA, no one single thread being required for its composition, and no thread replacing the religious definitions of what is a Jew.<sup>147</sup> The main area of dispute, among geneticists, is how to incorporate those portions of genetic variability within Jewish populations that do correlate with geography and to assess how important those portions are to medical treatment and testing.<sup>148</sup> Scientists note that there is no consensus as to who should be counted as belonging to the Jewish community for purposes of screening, and in fact genetic testing is aimed not at Jews as members of a religious group, per

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<sup>146</sup> Ostrer “Genetic Profile,” 895.

<sup>147</sup> Ostrer *Legacy*, 218.

<sup>148</sup> Sarah K. Tate and David B. Goldstein, “Will Tomorrow’s Medicines Work for Everyone?” in *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age*, eds. Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 119.

se, but rather at people of Ashkenazi or Mizrahi ancestry, a large proportion of whom are Jews.<sup>149</sup>

### **Genetics as a Multicolored (and Necessary) Thread in Identity**

Even in the Jewish scriptural imagination the Jewish people never claims to be a race, a distinct, discrete, somehow “pure” genetic group. We read in Ezekiel 16:3, for instance, that in recounting Judaism’s origins the male and female progenitors were Amorite and Hittite, respectively; both were from the lands of Canaan, however. Also, the Bible is replete with examples of mixed groups producing offspring that were considered fully part of the Jewish faith community. For example, at the beginning of the book of Ruth we read how the later King David had ancestors who included the Moabite Ruth. Many years later Jesus, who is claimed to be included in David’s lineage, issues from this mixed ancestral heritage. At times women converted to Judaism, as in the case of Ruth, but that is not always the case – see Moses’s wife, the Midianite Zipporah. In this way, Judaism is presented as a population bound together by common historical experience and an awareness of belonging, which often was “derived from personal participation.”<sup>150</sup> Yet, there still existed the explicitly hereditary priestly line. It was only in the post-Second Temple period that rabbis made a Jewish mother the *sine qua non* of Jewishness.<sup>151</sup>

Jewish scriptures speak of people being named after male founders and being included in the father’s ethnic group, but it was after the Babylonian exile that Jewish identity placed a stronger emphasis on the mother’s status. Shaye Cohen explains that the introduction of

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<sup>149</sup> Paul Root Wolpe, “Genetic Testing in the Jewish Community,” in *Jews and Genes: The Genetic Future of Contemporary Jewish Thought*, eds. Elliot N. Dorff and Laurie Zoloth (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2015), 207.

<sup>150</sup> Ankori “Origins,” 22.

<sup>151</sup> Goldstein *Jacob’s Legacy*, 76.

matrilineal descent occurred during the time when similar Roman laws governing intermarriage were prevalent, and the Jewish community needed to maintain its population. As well, he states that matrilineal descent might have taken priority over that of patrilineality when rabbis ruled that it was more effective to gauge what happens to offspring as the result of reproductive mixtures of different types; the female gains primacy in determining the status of the child.<sup>152</sup>

With regard to genetic histories of human migration, however, we gain a somewhat different picture. In most patrilocal societies, which it could be argued the early Israelites were, the man remains in one location while the woman travels from her birth place to that of the man's to start a family. Over time this relocation transfers the mitochondrial DNA over long distances. For the bulk of Jewish history, though, it was men, not women, who were mobile. Geneticists have identified four founder events occurring two to three thousand years ago, which accounts for forty percent of the mitochondrial DNA lineages in Ashkenazi communities today. We can infer from this that, "Jewish women had different paths than men."<sup>153</sup> It seems as though Jewish men would settle in new locations, if unmarried they would take local women for wives, and then once a community had been established would erect barriers against further admixing. This is consistent, Goldstein argues, with the idea of Jewish isolation and endogamy.<sup>154</sup>

According to what has become standard *halakhab* (rabbinic Jewish law), a Jew is someone who has a Jewish mother or who is a convert according to *halakhab*. For Conservative Jews, the conversion does not need to be performed under Orthodox auspices, and for Reform Jews, an individual having a non-Jewish mother but a Jewish father is considered legally Jewish.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 95-97.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>155</sup> Konner *The Jewish Body*, 230.

Throughout time there have been varied definitions about what is a Jew, and the decisions about this question have implications for questions about genes. Judaism has many cultural definitions of Jewishness, but the *halakhic* one is largely genetic. For our purposes we can follow Konner's logic of treating Judaism according to his understanding of peoplehood.

Konner states that regardless of their name (Israelites, Hebrews, etc.), the groups of people who comprised this designation existed well before the Temple was erected and before the laws of the Temple were enumerated. These peoples continuously occupied places that are now considered to be part of the land during the periods their foundational scriptures said they were sojourning in Egypt (which many of them might have been, as well). He notes that archaeologists have found elements of continuity between Israelite culture in the land and the later development of an Israelite kingdom, as depicted in those scriptures. The culture that developed into Jewish culture was formed and nurtured while in that land, and "Jews" existed as a people before there would be considered a Jewish religion; this, then, is what Konner understands as peoplehood, which has priority to all other forms of identification.<sup>156</sup> It is fitting, then, to consider this land of meeting, point of departure, and area of development as a frontier. It is where people encountered each other, determined symbols and narratives, and considered "home," of both their imaginations and historically – as part of their narratives. The land was directed to motion and encounter, and it was hardly achieved. Even the myths detailing its location – in memory and in archaeology, are unreconciled with one another. The frontier of genetics bespeaks this array of complex mythology and adds another dimension of movement and relatedness.

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 231-32.



A more thorough investigation into the scriptures, however, reveals elements that also speak to the component parts of peoplehood that Konner raises. The notion of “election” contains many of the elements of the *halakbic* definition: biological transmission and religious transmission.<sup>157</sup> One can trace a fictive biology to Abraham, which maintains a semblance to genetic ties, although as noted there were a few genetic founders as opposed to a lone male and female pair, but through time scholars have added conflicting opinions on what other sorts of election constitute Jewish identity. Some have rejected election based on lineage, such as Spinoza, and others suggested that election was rather a notion of national morality.<sup>158</sup> What no scholar can do away with, however, is that there necessarily has to be a combination of biology, culture, and religion in any understanding of inclusion to the Jewish community.

The traditional model of covenant is that between God and Abraham, Jews’ common ancestor, as found in Genesis 15 and 17. We find promises of land and continuity of descendants. Later, however, in Exodus 3, when at the burning bush God announces the lineage which brought Moses to this time and place, God is more than just the god of ancestors; God is one of belief and faith in what God will do and to which people will assent and follow.<sup>159</sup> Elazar situates the covenant between God and the Israelites within the context of covenants between God and humanity more broadly. He explains that while the Bible recognizes humankind’s common ancestry, it also acknowledges intermixtures of nations and peoples as a concomitant part of human existence. What results, though, is that while all humans “are descended from

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<sup>157</sup> Rebecca Alpert, “What is a Jew?: The Meaning of Genetic Disease for Jewish Identity,” in *Jews and Genes: The Genetic Future of Contemporary Jewish Thought*, eds. Elliot N. Dorff and Laurie Zoloth (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2015), 138.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

Noah and human history continues to flow in a generational rhythm, after the Flood that history will be one of separate nations on a divided earth.”<sup>160</sup>

In his analysis of the Bible’s covenants, he notes four major attempts. As he relates:

God’s first effort, with Adam, was to create a creature with sufficient intelligence to manage His garden but naturally innocent and thus uninterested in challenging Heaven...Humans lose their innocence by gaining knowledge of good and evil, thereby arousing God’s fear that they will indeed challenge Him. God tries to remedy this by requiring humans to work hard and make their way in the world only with pain; this is His second effort. But humans show their mettle, are inventive...So God wipes them out by flood...God makes a third try with Noah and his sons...Not only does Noah disappoint Him, but worse, humanity as a whole challenges Heaven at Babel...God tells Abraham to go forth from his land, his kith and kinship network, and his father’s household...to a new Divinely indicated land...Founding a new society requires detachment from all of these factors, which are the principal sources of cultural ties and transmission...they must be replaced in the new society by new attachments of equal weight...Every new society or nation must have a purpose that motivates its founding and informs its existence...Such transformations only come when migration is part of the process...it makes possible the reintegration of those elements around a new set of beliefs and principles and a new way of life...there is an existential connection between migration and the founding of new societies by covenant.<sup>161</sup>

In this way, Elazar incorporates into the presentation of covenant the major themes of our chapter, and even of this dissertation: myths of origin/beginnings, ancestry (both biological and consensual), the co-implication of biology and culture (thus laying the foundations for a biosocial framework through which to study humanity), migration/movement, generation, continuity, and commitment. What allows the developed groups to claim descent and inclusion to these covenants, as Elazar reminds us, is the act of remembering.<sup>162</sup>

This twofold aspect of biology and culture continues further when in Exodus 32-34, after the incident of the Golden Calf, the assembly under the direction of Moses, was issued a

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<sup>160</sup> Elazar *Covenant & Polity*, 118.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 124-25.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

new covenant – likewise based on lineage, to a degree, but mostly on assent. This serves to demonstrate that covenants are revocable, and it also places into question when “Judaism” begins: before birth (in genes, tracing back to Abraham), at birth with circumcision, at Sinai, upon entering the Promised Land, at the moment of converting to the community (in which case one gains a fictive biology, assuming the name “Son/Daughter of Abraham/Sarah”), etc.

What also is important to note is that the Jewish idea of election, of identifying with its history as if it were one’s own, never connoted “racial” superiority or even purity, as demonstrated. Rather, the notion carried with it self-impositions and a supposed on going self-policing and drive to live out those injunctions to which they assented.<sup>163</sup> What, then, is the meaning of the TSD gene on Jewish identity, for instance? There is none, apart from the cultural and religious significance attached to genetic testing and any community reactions to that process.<sup>164</sup> As Zoloth explains, the new “frontier” of genetic medicine presents to us another opportunity to find a coherent balance between freedom and responsibility, between “the American [and postmodern] idea that we can be anything we want if we try and the constraints of biology.”<sup>165</sup> Slowly the medical establishment must shy away from depersonalized medicine, which, paradoxically suffers from the same predicament of postmodernism, in which all differences blend away. Research about physical (including genetic) difference is different, Zoloth states, in that it exists in tension with the universalizability of the body. She notes that we still lack a vocabulary to discuss difference.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ankori “Origins,” 22.

<sup>164</sup> Alpert “What is a Jew?” 149.

<sup>165</sup> Zoloth “Yearning,” 185.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

Regardless of attempts to do away with boundaries, differences exist, and humans are meaning-making creatures. In this way we reapproach the concept of diaspora. Nelson reminds us that efforts to refine the concept persist, and scholars seem to agree that its “hallmarks” include dispersal away from a long held geographical home, the constitution of a collective identity/consciousness in response to the experience of dispersal, connection to that place of origin through cultural practices, and the circulation of collective memories about the homeland. How does imagining the homeland include genetic information? She joins Gilroy in being wary of attempts to essentialize and homogenize origins by trying to find a DNA link to a “there,” which would situate an individual into an imagined, glorified past.<sup>167</sup>

The more that genetics offers us in terms of actually finding those links, as well as informing us of how genes can inform us about ancestral movement and rates of disease occurrence, etc., we find that there really is no unified past, let alone a glorified one. Our developed myths posited these homelands and associated ways of belonging with those of our kin. Yet, Nelson points out that kinship has many bases, and genetic testing offers possibilities to “scale up diaspora without scaling it down to human biological essences.”<sup>168</sup> As Elazar states, “The biblical accounts of the origins of the Jewish people reflects a blend of kinship and consent that generates a special political culture and a variety of institutions at home in it. A family of tribes becomes a nation by consenting to a common covenant with God and with each other, out of which flow the principles and practices of religious life and political organization that have animated the Jews as a corporate entity ever since.”<sup>169</sup> One is not reducible to the other, and one cannot supersede the other. Both biology and culture are needed for some semblance of

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<sup>167</sup> Nelson “Factness of Diaspora,” 262.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>169</sup> Elazar *Covenant & Polity*, 12.

an integrated existence. If one myth remains dismissed, then that corresponding aspect of being in diaspora remains unrecognized.

We have seen that Teilhard de Chardin, Bammer, Benjamin, and others have presented numerous ways in which we are always already born into states of displacement; we also have seen that the proliferation of narratives/myths that attempt to explain origins continues to obfuscate matters for many reasons. Some myths lack historical depth, others encompassing breadth, and some focus on only the cultural or biological component to the neglect of others. Bammer insists that in order to navigate this array of ways of being displaced she uses the knowledge of life as itself comprised of displacement as a tool to survive. If we all are displaced many times over, then what is left to do is to understand ways in which we connect and provide meaning to our lives. We have seen many people proclaim humanity's inability to overcome these multiple displacement; others have claimed the opposite as true. Yet, we know all too well that we are unable to take into account all ways in which we are displaced/diasporized. Therefore, we are still incomplete. As Benjamin states, "The chronicler who narrates events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accord with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost to history. Of course only a redeemed mankind is granted the fullness of its past – which is to say, only for a redeemed mankind has its past become citable in all its moments."<sup>170</sup> Nevertheless, gaining contextualization allows for more recovering of the past and necessitates less of inventing it.

In other words, we may integrate this new genetic information into our existing conceptions of identity and ancestry, but even this occurs in environments loaded with symbolic significations, histories, and languages that often disallow its expression in certain ways. As well,

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<sup>170</sup> Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, vol. 4, 1938-1940*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, et al., eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 390.

the genetic information often fails to provide the certainty that many individuals desire.<sup>171</sup> We can trace our common evolutionary history, our genetic relatedness, and the many ways that different groups conceive of kinship and ancestry. In following Bammer's discussion about displacement, where are any of our points of origin? But more importantly, how we conceive of our pasts helps in determining how we live presently, what connections and relationships we form, and ultimately helps determine how and to what, if anything, we wish to return.

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<sup>171</sup> Koenig, Lee, and Richardson "Introduction," 12.

## Chapter Six Conclusion

Studies of diaspora have ranged from exploring various socio-historical causes of “exile,” to subjective literary analyses locating “home” in an imagined, extraterritorial text. Many of these earlier studies also proposed definitions, each with various configurations of sets of characteristics, which constituted the diaspora phenomenon. Over time tensions emerged among many foci in these characteristics of diaspora, such as between locality and mobility; between radical particularisms (i.e., more subjective, individualized, and free-floating signifiers expressing alienation) and the need for definitional anchoring; and between individual memory and history. The resulting breakdown of these imposed definitions opened up the phenomenon to include more groups as being in diaspora and also placed into question other narratives that previously seemed stable and fixed, such as the concept of boundaries, the nation-state, group identity, irredentism, issues of power, as well as the scope of investigation itself – what are the parameters in studying any phenomenon? How much of the past needs to be included in any study of diaspora, or of any particular groups that self-identify as diasporic?

### Self-Appraisal and Remedy

Even the enterprise of History of Religions underwent a similar period of self-assessment due to proliferating calls regarding “identity politics.” Early studies, such as those by Eliade, presented an impressive array of archetypes in a morphological system. Yet, they offered no explanation, just description of seemingly static and unchanging phenomena. Gradually these gave way to studies, such as those by J. Z. Smith, which were attuned to changes within a given system, explored causes and implications of such transformations, and thoroughly investigated and contextualized the exemplum. Smith even recognized that the exemplum is not an ontological status in itself, but rather is the creation of the scholar; he acknowledged the fact that

any starting point is somewhat arbitrary and provided ways to address that critical insight.

In this regard, Religious Studies demonstrated that it could respond to, but also contribute to understanding, current events and even to enduring issues of politics. Yet, it still lacked a prolonged engagement with diaspora. Some scholars within the field, such as Smart, had written about religion's explicit treatment of group formation, location/space, travel/migration, and enactment of identity in changing contexts. But it was not until Tweed's study of diasporic religion, however, that Religious Studies became firmly entrenched within the postmodern debates regarding identity, relation to space and time, and adequately addressed the tensions created in earlier definitional studies, especially regarding boundaries, power, and movement.

Tweed noted that diaspora is a condition of movement from a center, real or imagined, and the dispersed members share a common culture, language, and symbols that help to bridge the homeland and the new land. This new land, he insists, is a symbolic place that targets practices and beliefs that overcome oppositions. In this way, diaspora religion, and religion more generally, can be considered a *tirtha*, a crossing place; it highlights difference (among beliefs, practices, ways of belonging within a community – even providing ways in which the community defines itself), but also unites. People rally around the religion proper, despite, or perhaps because of, the aforementioned differences. This new place, this diasporic religion, is a space of dispersal and is a site of confrontation/negotiation over symbols, images, and relations to them through which groups make sense of themselves and of being dispersed. Religion is a spatialized and spatializing cultural form, and it incorporates symbols that speak to its qualities of being both transtemporal and translocative.

Tweed's presentation of religion accommodated the aspect of movement while acknowledging the importance of location. He allowed for tensions to erupt between the individual and the group, between the group and the surrounding environment, between



tensions inherent in travel and settlement elsewhere, and between continuity and inevitable newness. Unlike Gilroy, Bhabha, and Clifford, who were attuned to movement and the development of new creations, of hybridity, Tweed, though permitted continuity and attachment by focusing on religion and the ways in which people construct meaning in relation to those pasts (which they access through religion). As a result of these limited, often historically superficial approaches, with notable exceptions (including Tweed), many other ways in which diaspora exists have been overlooked, particularly the work that memory performs in opening up diaspora's multivalence.

Memory, both individual and collective, helps to provide context. Subjective reflections provide access to voices otherwise absent in other accounts of life lived away from "home." In this way, the individual inserts her own understanding of what caused diaspora, how she and the group to which she belongs relate to the lost home, etc. Yet without the inclusion of institutional memory and any other assessment of other pasts, accounts of and by diaspora groups remain de-contextualized. Significant elements remain forgotten or otherwise omitted. A recognition of the many levels on which experience exists, both temporally and spatially, necessitates memory and enactment and thus fosters contextualization and understanding.

Toward this goal of contextualization, I examine four case-studies in order to better understand how diaspora functions through time and across space. Underlying each subset is a concern with the mutually reinforcing realms of collective memory and commemoration. The result is to view diaspora as an experience in which diaspora itself is a commemoration that needs to be remembered and enacted. The focus on memory and its relation to place (i.e., commemoration) emerges out of the work by Benjamin and Taussig. They saw in their respective studies on the act of being reminded (i.e., remembering and recollecting, both activities that are intimately connected to re-presenting, making present again) that individuals

and groups have lost the ability to adequately present narratives to others (without imposing and interjecting biases), have lost the ability to listen to those attempts at stories, and have lost the ability to engage with context. Everything is presented in its mediated immediacy as a taken-for-granted state of affairs. As a result, people do not know how things came to be as they are, or seem, and thus they are distanced from their own pasts, from themselves, their origins, and communities. Inherent in the phenomenon of diaspora are these very themes: myths, rituals (commemorations, enactments), distance, (lack of) context, and issues of community (relatedness), and return (i.e., regaining context for ethical decision-making).

### Genealogical Precursors

To gain a better sense of how studies of memory and commemoration contribute to studies on communal life and institutions (i.e., what bonds individuals together and thus from what people feel alienated and distanced), I examine Durkheim's recognition that within an individual is both a biological entity and a social being; thus, an individual is a representative of a collective already on many levels. Mauss extended further this socially constitutive aspect of humanity by focusing on ways in which structures are socially constructed, deeply entrenched in society, and also determinative, to a large degree, of an individual's psyche (mentality). Halbwachs took Durkheim's focus on social gatherings to mean that memory and history are socially constructed as well. History is not an abstract continuum interrupted by ruptures, but rather tied to perceptions that various groups have of themselves and of their relation to society, variously conceived. Connerton, also influenced by the Durkheimian tradition, understood rituals as being not just inscribed (written, taught, learned), but also as being incorporated (performed, encoded in gesture, posture, movement). Nora, similar to Mauss, focused on Fernand Braudel's *longue durée* (i.e., fragments, "building blocks," which combine over time to form a symbolic whole). Such a study takes otherwise stable constructs, like the nation and

concepts like the generation, disassembles them into their own constituent parts, and sees how they come together in “sites of memory” to form the constructs that we know and within which we operate. Through such an engagement with phenomena, those in the Durkheimian tradition note that times change, as well as how people approach, relate, and respond to symbols over time.

Assmann, writing out of a Halbwachian, and thus Durkheimian, understanding of memory as being socially formed, differentiates between communicative memory and cultural memory. The former is what we perceive of as regular communication. The latter entails culturally instituted forms of enactment and content. Quotidian time, in which communicative memory occurs, is interrupted by events, rites, and other social activities that serve to introduce different temporal dimensions into the present. Assmann, like Nora, recognized that times and contexts change, but he pointed out that some elements of cultural life, like religion, maintain memories despite changes in the surrounding environment. These aspects of life bring to contemporaneity components that are out of time and place. Rituals, for Assmann, become bonding memories; they unite meanings from disparate times and places with people enacting them now. In a similar vein, Confino showcases how people become national, or part of a group, through identifying with the local. Through identification with the local environment in which they were raised, for instance, an individual becomes part of the whole but seemingly independent of it. Through this way of identifying, one sees how, despite changes and variations within the local itself, one becomes subsumed within the whole while retaining identification with what he perceives as simply the local. In this way, locals become nationals, despite never having been to the capital city, not speaking the same dialect, etc. Space, while in abstract is repetitive, for specific individuals at particular times, is a world unto itself; thus, it is irreducible, different, but unified with the whole.

With regard to Judaism proper, Eisen demonstrates how located within Jewish biblical texts, paradigms are present that speak to both humanity's and Judaism's relation to space, time, and notions of displacement. As a whole, humanity is displaced and longs to return to its Eden, a Paradise. Israel is displaced from and longs to return to the Promised Land; in the process Israel sojourns away from and toward that place. Also, Israel sojourns theologically and politically, and understands that what God gives to it is dependent on its behavior. In Israel's developed self-understanding, it is itself the midpoint between origin and destination. Israel is a threshold, a limen, a *tirtha*, and a frontier. To do its appointed work, it needs space. Israel also is a people that is itself a meeting point between bonding memory (uniting disparate times and places in its ritual), and thus is a chronotope. Due to the recognition that the people must be cognizant of its past, know its future, and act accordingly to reach it in that place, it embodies the multivocality of diaspora – displacement politically, socially and culturally, geographically, temporally, and metaphysically, thus imaginatively.

#### Archaeology and Cultural Memory

Historians, political scientists, and even some literary theorists gravitate toward a broad understanding that something external causes a group to precipitate into a diaspora. This is not always the case. Incorporating memory into an analysis of diaspora uncovers further ways in which a group may enter a state of diaspora. Within each case-study, I incorporate key theorists who provide insight into the overarching theme of the respective chapters. In the first subset I use biblical archaeology alongside cultural memory studies, notably literary criticism, to get a better appreciation of what constitutes diaspora. I juxtapose cultural/literary theorist Jan Assmann's examination of early Israel's formation of cultural memory through his analysis of the book of Deuteronomy and biblical archaeologist William Dever's acknowledgment of early Israel's fragmentary nature, partial indigeneity, and use of biblical texts as a way to target

“convergence” with the material record. The period under consideration is the Deuteronomistic History; its authorship and redaction are dated to the period of the Babylonian exile (sixth century BCE), but parts of it reflect, if are not dated to, earlier periods. This material was incorporated into biblical texts so as to fit the later theological interpretation of its authors and imposed teleology, but it still hints at earlier Israelite history.

We get a sense from these textual glimpses into the past, as well as from archaeological evidence that overlap with events described in those texts, of a past that calls into question any understanding of early Israel based solely on scripture. After detailing and explaining away three previously held models used to make sense of Israelite origins (conquest, peaceful infiltration, and peasant revolt), Dever explains how the symbiosis model is most appropriate. According to physical remains, early Israel lived alongside Canaanites and set up new settlements in the central hills after leaving the lowland coastal centers. This process of resedentarization was part of a trend that had been occurring for centuries, in which the entire Levant was undergoing socio-political upheaval. Israel, then, contained partly displaced Canaanites, displaced both geographically and ideologically.

Some factions of this people may have also been part of earlier migrations in and out of Egypt, while others were breakoff groups from different nomadic peoples, and still others were the products of admixture among the Canaanites (including the displaced Israelite sections) and these various other groups. Over time they developed overarching narratives and later attributed theological understanding of these variegated pasts and subsumed different accounts into a single myth of origins for this people. Assmann explained that the biographical memory of the eyewitnesses (of the Exodus, of the wandering, etc.) gave way to the bonding memory spelled out in Deuteronomy. The prescribed rites tell the story and instruct these peoples in how to remember the narrative appropriately.

Yet, Deuteronomy is a counter memory; it introduces something alien into this community. It articulates a myth of who the community believes itself to be, presents enactments to perform in order to inculcate correct ritual behavior, admonishes people to forget their polytheistic pasts, and in effect, instructs the community to adopt behaviors that will entail their becoming strangers even in their renewed home. In other words, Israel is instructed to alienate itself from local traditions, even from its own indigenous past, in order to belong. This text, written hundreds of years after the events it describes occurred, is a cultural production of a projection into that past.

Deuteronomy describes a community re-entering a land from which it had been exiled and into which it will now establish a covenanted life, after becoming a people. It also was redacted by members of that community who had again become exiled from that same land. Diaspora already exists on many levels. The developed Judaic tradition, though, lost Israelite presence in the land; Judaism had forsaken Israel's partial indigeneity for a theological understanding of itself as a stranger coming from elsewhere. Diaspora, when seen in this light, is not necessarily precipitated by physical departure, as uncovered by archaeological evidence. It originates in part as an ever-present condition that begins as an act of remembrance.

In order to press further, I include Lewis's tripartite division of history as remembered, recovered, or invented. Through inclusion of personal recollections, history can be remembered. By uncovering instances of the past that had been forgotten or rejected, history can be recovered. And by interpreting history for particular purposes from material that has been remembered, recovered, or fabricated to fit those purposes, history can be invented. Yet, the present constructions of the past (as in the case of Deuteronomy) often find their foil, especially when confronting actual presence of groups that in the reconstructed history had been erased. Jewish traditions invented a particular version of the past as presented in scriptures. The

remembering of this past recovered actual Israelite presence, and this complicates that to which people feel distanced and alienated.

To make better sense of this development, I turn to Masuzawa's studies of Benjamin, especially his study of art. She noted that the study of origins, in religion for instance, is similar to the invention of photography for art; both shorten the distance between the original and subsequent viewers and practitioners. Technology diminished "aura," the distance around an object; it diminished the object's autonomy and independence. Now all reproductions, such as photographs, contain aura, but in less substantial form than in the original. Behind all reproductions, though, there was thought to be a primordium; this changed with the idea of the grid. No longer did artists see their work in light of prior creations. Each moment was its own creation, in the here and now. Thus, the grid had no precedent, no tradition, and nothing from the past was brought to bear on it. In this way, what was created never existed before, but then it always had existed. Each immediate creation, not being tied to anything prior, is a perpetual self-created repetition.

When applied to religion, Masuzawa was struck by Eliade's notion of the eternal return. Ritual, which through repeated enactment continually hearkens back to a supposed time of origination, refers to beginnings, to a primordial event. Through enactment of this time, people are interpreted as suffering from "cosmic nostalgia." Yet, she argued, if it is just archaic individuals who engage in this behavior (seeing as how "modern" individuals have overcome the need to do this), then they are the double of the modern scholars. Archaic individuals, in this scheme, are said to be obsessed with the time of ancestry, with origins, and we are obsessed, then, with archetypes and cosmogony (the beginning of the cosmos). Modern scholarship, she claims, is marked as dealing with displacement and repression, but on a different order. In using Masuzawa's insights in trying to understand scholars who denounce Israel's origins in a specific

location but ignore physical presence, we are left asking what these scholars mean by origins. Why should origins be limited to a literary tradition that denies physical presence and difference? Ancient Israel exists in many locations: literary, physical, ideological, etc.

Space is important. Diaspora is an ever-present, never realized/actualized, let alone overcome, phenomenon, and its ground of origination is constantly shifting. If we take Masuzawa's analysis to be true, that our obsession with those who are obsessed with origins is the other of us, and we have overcome our own obsession with origins, but still are obsessed with creation itself, then to what do we hope to return? If origin never existed as such, how could we overcome it in the first place? Arrival, then, is impossible. We are left with a view of Israel existing within multiple diaspora narratives, each a constant negotiation with memories and developed representations of such. In the traditions around these origins, especially literary traditions, the community in question was not given all the facts regarding physical migration, but were given all the facts regarding spiritual/metaphysical movement. They were told that they were strangers in the land, but were themselves of that land. Being a stranger, then, is an imagined condition as well.

#### Fiction, Ethnography, and Reflection

In subsets two and three I examine how diaspora operates in literature, ethnography, and personal reflections in order to better answer a simple question: Once one has physically returned, how does one write about travel, home, and homeland? To help answer this question I look at representative examples of Hebrew literature by S.Y. Agnon, in particular his novels *In the Heart of the Seas*, *To This Day*, and *Only Yesterday*. As well, I examine two ethnographic works: Mark Zborowski's and Elizabeth Herzog's *Life is with People* and S. An-sky's work and questionnaire from his Jewish Ethnographic Expedition, alongside Israeli texts about intergenerational identity and forms of belonging, including Eliezer Schweid's *The Land of Israel*,



Amos Oz's *In the Land of Israel*, David Grossman's *The Yellow Wind*, and Ari Shavit's *My Promised Land*.

Ezrahi examines authors who present an image of the land as pristine and those who present it as in ruins. The idealized place of yore serves as a foil, for these authors, to the current unredeemed lives out of which they wrote. They posited a home of the past in contradistinction to their homelessness of the present. In this scheme, Ezrahi argues, a *telos* is given; the goal is rigid (to travel from here to home – the land – and in this way redeem their lives and fulfill Judaism's destiny), but the journey is open-ended and creative. The ensuing deferment of achieving this goal, which would bring their wandering and openness to a close, in fact maintains creativity. Closure (i.e., redemption found through emplacement in the land), the end of the journey, and rootedness in the land prohibit creativity. Here the land is understood as signaling exclusivity and a rejection of openness (to Others, to living a purely spiritualized existence, etc.). Therefore, Ezrahi issues a challenge to writers after political re-territorialization of the twentieth century: to become re-diasporized.

The texts in these chapters deal with the themes of group formation, travel, separation, (physical) return, and struggle with how to include different and conflicting voices and incorporate self-reflective change. Many scholars studying the Jewish diaspora continue to understand physical homecoming to the Land as a *fait accompli*, which, according to some interpretations, prohibits creativity and presupposes an already achieved redemption, as Ezrahi warned. Scholarship following this analysis, however, misunderstands the calls for continued alienation and separation, regardless of location, and leaves unexamined many components of diaspora.

The aforementioned texts provide examples through which I consider the theoretical frameworks of Walter Benjamin's explanation of the threshold, Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the

“chronotope,” Thomas Tweed’s theory of religion as necessitating acknowledgement of both its transtemporal and translocative elements, and Abraham Joshua Heschel’s claim that the Land itself is a chronotope, a threshold, and thus requiring emplacement for ethical decision making. Heschel’s pronouncement regarding space, however, is a prolonged caveat to his argument that Judaism is a religion of time, not of space; in this caveat, however, he states that in order for time to be sanctified, it first needs ground from which to enact this sanctification. Through his inclusion of space as a necessary component to the fulfillment of time he allows for one to pause and consider what ethical imperatives and possibilities exist for one while in this place of potential sanctification. When speaking of how memory operates in relation to space and what one encounters in a journey, Benjamin invokes the metaphor of an unfolding fan. Its segments never finish unfolding, and this action occurs and is related to a particular place. Bakhtin’s chronotope is described as knots of narrative that are tied and untied, also at a particular place. Tweed continues his focus on movement, both through time and across space, but he adds that for this wandering to be meaningful, it must be purposeful (i.e., self-conscious and –reflective).

Each theorist here pays attention to what occurs in the space necessary for narrative to emerge. Heschel’s echo, sound, and blast represents the rupture of the status quo, much like how others understood ritual punctuating communicative memory; these encounters, echoes, blasts, rites, etc. interject elements from elsewhere (both temporally and spatially) into the present (i.e., into moments of regular communicative time) and awaken and bond people to those other moments, times, and places. While undergoing quotidian life, people gain a consciousness of and identification with an elsewhere. Yet, Heschel issues another caveat to the proposition that humanity, and Judaism for instance, simply needs to heed to these warnings and live appropriately: humans have lost their guideposts. While the land of Israel may be a gate (to the past and future, from which one encounters the echo of the past alerting one to the

potentially ethical future), the key is lost. In this way, humanity has forsaken myth, the authoritative narratives that alert, inspire, teach, and guide. Given the state of humanity within modernity, especially within postmodernity, Heschel claims that these moments of rupture are becoming increasingly less frequent, and even when they occur, people are unable to hear the echo in its fullness. He speaks of “spiritual amnesia” and the importance of regaining a community of concern through which people act in concert to regain access to context (i.e., both collective and personal memories and pasts).

Agnon complicates Ezrahi’s posited *telos* that she claims authors demonstrate in their writings regarding arrival to the land. His protagonist, Isaac Kumer for example, is always focused on the goal of the land, even while there. Despite his dying in the land, which for Ezrahi signaled redemption and unification with the goal, his goal was always something still to be achieved/reached. In fact, the goal in Agnon’s works is always imagined, projected, and never explicitly defined. Once emplaced, the characters still attempt to realize their imaginations in various ways. Isaac is the sojourner par excellence, and he is a portable chronotope himself who happens to become situated in the place/location that is itself a chronotope and threshold. What Agnon’s stories reveal is that the condition of diaspora cannot be overcome, for diaspora’s inherent aspect of longing can never be overcome. Even the content of that longing is never specified, let alone recounted. It is always in flux, and both object and subject are never stable long enough for any meaningful reconciliation to be reached, except to say that acknowledgement of diaspora’s ever-present, never-fulfilled, but continually striven for aspects help to guide action in one’s life and provide meaning. Perhaps the end of diaspora is the lack of challenge, the onset of resignation, and the settling for mediocre, uncritical action. Yet, this would be a delusion, for whatever place at which one stops, both physical and mental, is only an arbitrary destination. It is only part of the totality.

In turning my attention to ethnographies and Israeli reflections, I examine accounts of what being physically situated entails. The examples that I use highlight themes of location and identity construction therein. These processes of identity construction necessitate inclusion of voices and perspectives that often are troubling. Being emplaced allows for issues of generation and connection to be addressed. Attachment to what others before you were attached brings to the fore powers of coherence. We see that developed identity is always unfulfilled. Spaces of emplacement are locations of liminality from which one enacts a diasporic identity. Detailing the importance of place, and particular places at that, places into question calls for dismissing that particular place. Such calls overlook the ground for identity construction and its involvement in *realpolitik*.

The first ethnography I examine is heavily mediated and was influenced by Zborowski's imagination and biases. The latter delved into minutiae of everyday life in an attempt to capture as much as possible without imposing any external biases. Both types of studies may or may not have overlap with scholarly, historical accounts of *shtetl* life, however. What these studies help to highlight, though, is what results from crossing boundaries and developing an identity in a situated context. I juxtapose the two ethnographies with Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*. He emphasizes the forged compound culture that results from the amalgamation of disparate sources into a new identity. His analysis of intermixture is not reduced to national or even ethnic terms; the culture that develops transcends both the nation-state and the constraints of ethnicity, and he explains how the developed black identity releases itself from reliance on the linearity of "grand" Africa of the past, slavery, and projected return to that glorious past.

What Gilroy argued against is what Zborowski presented in his ethnography of Jewish life in the *shtetl*. This image is of a culture frozen in time and place, operating within a linear idealization of existence. Yet, even An-sky's program was not what Gilroy envisioned. Gilroy

understood that something new emerged out of travel, while An-sky reveled in the messy complexity of being in the world. An-sky was comfortable with being in multiple positions and locations and did not transcend the constraints of the imagined poles of an imposed *telos*. Rather, he immersed himself within the contradictions of the factness of displacement, to use Bammer's and Nelson's terminology, knowing that a displaced life is itself a survival strategy. He utilized memory as a way to navigate the shifting realities in which he found himself. Emplaced identities, in all their engagements with the past and projected futures, customs, traditions, and newness, highlight continuity, reciprocity, and attachment without reifying such concepts. The Oral Torah is not to be transcended, but rather incorporated, lived. One can be both Jewish and fully embedded in the surrounding environment. In other words, commitment constitutes a generation, and this is an ethical concern that necessitates space, but conscientious living within it.

Margaret Mead spoke of this new way of being as the life of a pioneer. People learn from youth and each other, but they still maintain collective reflections on the past while addressing different locations and contexts. In this way, many scholars have understood An-sky as serving in the role of a *meshulach*, a messenger, who comes from another world and beckons us to a different world, both of which may be in the same location. He is a go-between, an intermediary, transmitting both worlds into each other; he does not transcend either, so he is not quite a hybrid. Rather, he is a liminal figure, neither of here nor there, but is of and in both. While aspects of the journey can be accomplished, such as physical return, too much has happened since one's "origins," and thus unification and fulfillment of "home" remain impossible. Yet, this journey and goal are full of potential. Heschel and others have argued that one reason why return is frustrated is because modern humanity has lost the keys and myths to home, and even have confused one myth as being the only myth. An-sky and his organization of cultural life, in

Vilna, was conscientiously situated. His creativity as a way to live in worlds apart needed grounding, however. Nobody lives as herself a free-floating signifier.

In their calls for contextualization, Israeli authors lamented the current state of affairs regarding intergenerational gaps in Israel. Schweid situated his concern in both theological and practical terms. There must be a return, he stressed, or an attempt to return, which will include in its purview more aspects of Jewish traditions than previous generations had. Israel is not just the land of destiny and not just the political entity. It is necessarily both. He understood the biblical view that established this paradigm as a series of covenants that must be ever renewed. The covenants are ritual (priestly) and moral (prophetic) life; emphasizing one at the expense of the other is a sure way to live an unfulfilled existence. Elon also pursued Schweid's call for renewing covenants but focused on the political and personal. He lamented the fact that he saw in Israel no shared social purpose. To paraphrase Heschel, Israeli society lacks meaningful communities of concern. People are entrenched within the poles of a *telos*: tradition, origin, and future. Yet, their conceptions of these poles and what constitutes living life guided by such are poorly understood. The result is a middle, liminal period, which is full of potential, but which in his view is slipping away at a frightening speed. People are forgetting and/or dismissing myth, are ignorant of events and context, and there is little to sustain the few communities of concern that he believes share his concern.

Elon warned that people are developing moral vertigo; in this scheme, hybridity is impossible. He advocated the need to live in the past, present, and future. If one develops something new, at the expense of being in this messy complexity, then one leads a superficial and inadequate life. Grossman and Oz likewise spoke of a moral autism. They believed that a concomitant part of contextualization is comparison, but this implies reciprocity among comparing partners, and this does not exist either. In short, the most difficult process is to enact

Camus's "becoming human." Shavit summed up Israeli society, and many other diasporic identities, as being an iridescent kaleidoscope of broken identities. Life there is on the edge, full of potential for it is the threshold and limen, and individuals need to realize that their lives are not yet realized. The goal remains.

The data used in these two chapters emphasize moments of encounter and the possibilities these have for uncovering recollections and making present unforeseen and unanticipated memories. Such confrontation destabilizes that which has become taken-for-granted and thus renews creativity, even, and especially, while being physically emplaced. The resulting intentional separation produced by confrontation, which we see operating in the representative Hebrew literature, ethnographies, and journalistic reflections, makes the quotidian extraordinary and the already achieved something to be anticipated. This counters previous understandings of the Jewish diaspora and "homecoming." The Land remains contingent, never accomplished, and always in a state of "permanent revolution." Even while being emplaced, possibilities exist for re-diasporization. One needs to feel distanced from the Land considered "home" in order to return to the condition prior to homecoming. This threshold that represents unforeseen memories is a call for ethical action now, and in the future, of the yet unredeemed, of being in imagined diaspora.

#### Genetic Testing, Relatedness, and Connection

In the fourth subset we learn from Bammer that the past is still with us; it is never entirely forgotten. She states that when life is viewed as already always in a state of being displaced, then home is about separation and commitment; identity is about what we are not, but still not able to dispense with; and the politics of identity is an ongoing process of negotiation. In other words, diaspora is an ever-present condition that cannot be overcome because one cannot overcome longing. Yet, so often people privilege one account of what it is for which they long

to the exclusion of other ways in which they are displaced. In other words, individuals remain fragmented, incomplete, and alienated even from their own pasts. Teilhard de Chardin stated that humanity exists in a bifurcated condition; materialists tend to emphasize external conditions as encompassing reality, while “spiritualists” focus on individual, subjective interior sentiments and motivations to the expense of material considerations. Humanity lacks unity, and until one recognizes humanity’s wholeness with all of creation, it will continue along this fragmented path.

Benjamin and Yeshayahu echoed this call to wholeness (i.e., redemption, the messianic period) and offered their own versions as to how humanity has become displaced from previous wholeness and understanding. Individuals lack contextualization. In their attempt to gain what they believe to be a semblance to unity and fuller knowledge, they rely on authoritative narratives to explain how things came to be, but unbeknownst to them these explanations are themselves solely partial truths. Science offers knowledge that is of no use to religion, and vice versa. A reliance on one over the other ignores, forgets, dismisses, etc. significant aspects of one’s past, one’s connection to ancestry, to genealogy, and even to one’s well-being. To help us navigate this “process of negotiation,” and that which helps to gain contextualization, are myths. They help to define and orient people. As Lévi-Strauss, among many others, pointed out, myths have continued into postmodernity. History has replaced mythology as the way we gain access to the stories and accounts of the pasts. What is needed, however, in his view is explanation and translation.

As he understands it, mythology, history, and even science, share an underlying structure: they explain, they demonstrate how constituent parts relate. In fact relatedness is the myth that underlies this entire project. It is both a biological and social construct, and in this way it is the framework for context and diaspora. Regardless of what myth we utilize (history, theology, science, etc.), the uniting factor is one of connection and a related closing of the gap between



us/here and them/then. Relatedness urges people to be aware of different registers through which one narrates that connection.

Often when expressing connection, many people downplay the biological aspect, but there is a counter tendency. Many people also understand biology as offering a more authoritative way to connect, thus they couch social constructions in biological terminology. In constructing the past, for example, people conceive of ancestors as biologically prefiguring the present generations. Yet examples exist of connectedness that is not biological. Darwin understood humanity and evolution as genealogy, and in fact biological connection is another way to gauge kinship, which helps to provide a more holistic appreciation of context. Human behavior, however, is a product of history and socially produced differences. Genetic testing helps to open up varieties of difference and connection. Thus, the appropriate model through which to approach human existence is biosocial; you cannot privilege one at the expense of the other without risking creating severe gaps in knowledge and analysis.

Identity is negotiation among many statuses rooted in genetics, biology, behavior, and sociopolitical categories. Durkheim even recognized as much. This chapter returns again to “origins” of sorts, but focuses on the developed myths that people use to understand what they are and how they connect to those origins. This study of mythology, then, is similar to what the Annales School and the Durkheimian tradition envisioned. Genetic testing expands the breadth and depth of familial connectivity. People construct backwards through time (e.g., using the construct of the “grand” relative – grandparent, etc.) and now genetically across space. Genetics allows us to understand the meaninglessness of stating that groups of people are races, for there exist no discrete groups. Yet, genetics also helps us to locate places in ourselves where biological difference does exist and cannot be ignored/dismissed. Thus while the redactors of Deuteronomy may have dismissed early Israel’s presence in the land, genetics necessarily cannot,

because elements gained there persist in people who migrated out of there; these elements often impinge on their well-being. In this way there operates a “statistical race,” which uses numerical data to represent population differences, histories, and health – all traceable within the human body, the embodiment of difference and unity.

We construct narratives about ourselves that take the form of kinship; through its system of classification we know who and what we are. Biological, legal, social, religious, etc. relationships are organized into a coherent framework. With the addition of statistical race, which alerts us to underlying realities within us about our distant pasts, we have the opportunity to gain new dimensions in our self-perceptions, even if disease is not a physical manifestation of such difference. Classical race is not diagnostic of ancestry, and diseases are not diagnostic of race. But knowing our ancestry and genetic difference saves lives and expands our myths of kinship, distance, connection, and understandings of home. In this way, each life is lived on the frontier. There exist increasingly fewer rigid boundaries, and as a result we are bombarded by constant confrontation and accommodation. The fan of memory in fact never ceases to unfold. These spaces of rupture, liminality, violation, and thresholds are motion-oriented. In addressing them, the myths are multiple but unitary in their attempt at explanation.

We can speak of Jews, for instance, not as a race or nation, but as a people who share myths, culture, historical experience, and for some individuals, biological substrate – real or imagined. Depending on when and how one views migration, different pictures emerge. If one sees renewed migrations, then it is easy to characterize Jews as always being estranged, in exile, and “homeless.” Yet, when viewed as part of human migratory patterns, then one sees continual processes of movement over many millennia. Jews, then, are always migratory, even if the originary movement (as depicted in scripture) was imaginary. The people included elements from settled populations, but built an identity as one of migration. In light of archaeology, one

sees settlements in Canaan and then migration. The people Israel was located but imagined itself as migratory. Genetics offers another myth. Jews share elements with both Semitic and European populations. Belonging, then, is a relative term. It is psychological, historical, and biological. We all belong to multiple families, and it behooves us to question just who comprises “we,” when “we” began, from what and where we feel displaced and separated, and what feeling “at home” entails.

And what might be next in the study of diasporas? Studies in Zionism and the relationship between American Jewish communities and Israel, for instance, have historically separated into two streams of thought: one focusing on the historical and sociological aspects of lived reality, the other on theoretical engagement. While there are moments of confluence between the two streams (e.g., Zionist congresses proceeding from ideological debate to physical and political enactments), most studies have continued to privilege one stream to the exclusion of the other.

“Post-Zionism” is perhaps the most notable example of this trend. What began with questioning accepted, dominant societal narratives and the state of Israeli historiography quickly turned to questioning the state of Israel’s very existence. As a result of the turn to a preoccupation with the ideational, such studies have produced a skewed, divisive outlook lacking in historical depth and tangency to daily life. Eran Kaplan postulated that post-Zionism has proven unable to respond to persistent modernist tendencies, such as continued calls by nationalist groups for territorial states. He relates that the postmodern quest for unbounded openness rejecting any “grand” narratives or imposed (societal) order manifests itself, when applied to Jews, Judaism, and Zionism, as a resuscitation of the idea of the wandering, diasporic Jew. This “new” universalism denies Israel and Jews (political) borders and territorialism due to their supposed concomitant marginalization of others. Yet, the “modern” insistence on

“possessing” a territorial state is unabating among other groups worldwide.

Theodore Sasson proffers that many scholars have misunderstood the historical and sociological trends of American Jewish relations with Israel. While some see a distancing by American Jews from Israel, attributed to political alienation toward Israeli policies, Sasson suggests that evidence instead points to increased engagement with Israel but in different forms than in the past. American Jews no longer rely on hegemonic institutions for information and guidance regarding Israel and Israeli policies. Rather, Sasson argues, American Jews have entered a period of “direct engagement” with Israel: seeking out information about Israel directly and donating to independent advocacy groups. Yet, even Sasson’s nuanced understanding of American Jewish groups’ relationships to Israel relies exclusively on survey and interview data, much to the exclusion of their intersection with theoretical issues that others have critiqued.

Future work might attempt to bridge the divide between these two oftentimes competing streams by bringing to bear on American Jewish-Israel relations an overlooked aspect of Israeli and Jewish identity: its situation into the interconnected Mediterranean *milieu*, as opposed to emphasis as refuge. One way to approach this change in perspective is to utilize the work of collective memory studies, especially as it relates to investigating the idea of “diaspora.” As I explored in this dissertation, it is not always the case that something external precipitates a group into a diaspora. As a result of the limited, often historically superficial approaches, many other ways in which diaspora exists have been overlooked, particularly the work that memory performs in opening up diaspora’s multivalence. Therefore, as I argued, it is necessary to view diaspora as an experience that is itself a commemoration needing to be remembered and enacted. Incorporating memory into an analysis of diaspora uncovers further ways in which a group may enter a state of diaspora.

By continuing to utilize Benjamin’s insight into the relationship between place and

memory, Bakhtin's chronotope, and Heschel's understanding of the land itself being a threshold that is never accomplished, this places into question post-Zionist sentiments, according to which, the State of Israel is the realization of Zionist ideology, signaling diaspora's end. The conclusion I reach, that processes of re-diasporization need physical emplacement (in the Land considered "home") as the means to achieve unanticipated separation and distance, which entails an ethical decision on how to respond accordingly, echoes Eran Kaplan's concept of being "beyond post-Zionism." Yet, this entrenchment within the ideational needs grounding in the historical and experiential. As David Ohana reminds us, however, alternative perspectives on Jewish history and identity have precedents in lived reality. Options of remaining within the system of territorial states, but with constructed identities encompassing more inclusive horizons, exist in those visionaries who understood Israeli and Jewish identity as Mediterranean, not solely the refuge of persecuted Ashkenazim. This system maintained discrete boundaries, but opened up paths to more inclusive identities and interconnections.

This Levantine memory, however, is overlooked, or ignored, or simply unknown in Jewish sources about Judaism and Israel. I propose to examine how American Jewish schools (day schools and supplemental Hebrew and Sunday schools) discuss Israel in educational materials, how Israel is portrayed in American Jewish communal organizations (e.g., AIPAC and J Street), and how journalists understand Israel in magazines and newspapers (e.g., *The Forward*, *Commentary Magazine*, and *Tablet*). Such an understanding of Israel and Jewish identity, which opens up Israeli and Jewish history to their rich situation in the Near East, expands Sephardic and Mizrahi perspectives (religious, social, political, cultural) that are not necessarily *haredi*. This inclusivity and openness, while maintaining the integrity of the state, may be more appealing to American Jews and broaden their appreciation of the necessity of a state and of the development of their socio-religio-political traditions in relation to Israel.

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