A Politics of the Unspeakable: The Differend of Israel

by

Netta van Vliet

Department of Cultural Anthropology
Duke University

Date: __________________________

Approved:

___________________________
Ranjana Khanna, Co-Supervisor

___________________________
Diane Nelson, Co-Supervisor

___________________________
Srinivas Aravamudan

___________________________
John L. Jackson

___________________________
Rebecca Stein

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Cultural Anthropology in the Graduate School of Duke University

2012
ABSTRACT

A Politics of the Unspeakable: The Differend of Israel

by

Netta van Vliet

Department of Cultural Anthropology
Duke University

Date:

Approved:

___________________________
Ranjana Khanna, Co-Supervisor

___________________________
Diane Nelson, Co-Supervisor

___________________________
Srinivas Aravamudan

___________________________
John. L. Jackson

___________________________
Rebecca Stein

An abstract of a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Cultural Anthropology in the Graduate School of Duke University

2012
Abstract

Israel’s establishment in 1948 in former British-Mandate Palestine as a Jewish country and as a liberal democracy is commonly understood as a form of response to the Holocaust of WWII. Zionist narratives frame Israel’s establishment not only as a response to the Holocaust, but also as a return to the Jewish people’s original homeland after centuries of wandering in exile. Debates over Israel’s policies, particularly with regard to Palestinians and to the country’s non-Jewish population, often center on whether Israel’s claims to Jewish singularity are at the expense of principles of liberal democracy, international law and universal human rights. In this dissertation, I argue that Israel’s emphasis on Jewish singularity can be understood not as a violation of humanism’s universalist frameworks, but as a symptom of the violence inherent to these frameworks and to the modern liberal rights-bearing subject on which they are based. Through an analysis of my fieldwork in Israel (2005-2008), I trace the relation between the figures of “Jew” and “Israeli” in terms of their historical genealogies and in contemporary Israeli contexts. Doing so makes legible how European modernity and its concepts of sovereignty, liberalism, the human, and subjectivity are based on a metaphysics of presence that defines the human through a displacement of difference. This displaced difference, I suggest, is manifest in affective expression that can be understood through a notion of sexual difference. This dissertation shows how the figure of the Jew in relation to Israel reveals sexual difference as under erasure by the
suppression of alterity in humanism’s configuration of man, woman, and animal, and
suggests a political subject unable to be sovereign or fully represented in language.
To My Parents

Dahlia and Willem van Vliet

and to my sister Tamar
## Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. iv  
Acknowledgments.............................................................................................................. ix  
Preface.............................................................................................................................. xvi  

Introduction  
On the Question of Origin: Israeli-Jew Jew-Israeli OR A Genealogical Disturbance ........ 1  
  From the Man on the Corner to the State................................................................. 12  
  Israeli-Jew .............................................................................................................. 20  
  The Differend of Israel......................................................................................... 43  
  The Jew as Shibboleth: Israeli-Jew Jew-Israeli and The Proliferation of Difference ... 64  
  Seawork Methods.................................................................................................. 81  

Chapter One  
The Scene of the Dream: Zionism, Psychoanalysis,  
Liberalism and the Question of the Jew................................................................. 94  

Chapter Two  
The Territorialization of the Zionist Dream.......................................................... 118  
  Jerusalem.............................................................................................................. 119  
  Mas’ha and the West Bank ............................................................................... 128  
  Tel Aviv, Yafo and Bat Yam ............................................................................ 138  
  From Europe to Palestine: Zionism’s European Beginnings............................ 140  

Chapter Three  
On the Edge of the Abyss: Zionism and Language................................................. 154  
  Hebrew Revival as a Nationalist Project ............................................................. 159  
  The Internal Differences of Hebrew .................................................................. 163  
  Hebrew and the Abyss ....................................................................................... 169
Chapter Four
Zionism and Character: The Old New Jew................................................................. 178

Chapter Five
Archive, Israeli-Jew, and the Time of Sexual Difference
(Or Autobiography Without Confession) ................................................................. 213

History and Memory: The Time of Fieldwork ...................................................... 218

Israeli Remembers Jew: Naming, Archive, and the Specter of the Stones.......... 228

Like a Dog: Psychoanalysis, Israeli-Jew, and the Question of Sexual Difference... 265

Chapter Six
Archive, Israeli-Jew, and the Passage Between................................................... 371

Circumcision: The Mas’ha Campsite and the Wall .............................................. 387

Between Dream and Reality: Affective Labor, Israeli-Jew and the Passage Between ............................................................................................................. 436

Chapter Seven
Responsibility Without Foundation ...................................................................... 461

 Modi’in Illit............................................................................................................. 471
 Bil’in and the Struggle on the Ground................................................................. 474
 Between the Courtroom and the Olive Groves .................................................. 478
 Between Justice and the Law ............................................................................. 484
 Political, Figural, Literal: The Jew as Shibboleth.............................................. 487

Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 495

 Not Knowing........................................................................................................ 502

Works Cited .......................................................................................................... 510

Biography............................................................................................................... 530

viii
Acknowledgments

If the project of writing a dissertation has at times felt daunting, attempting to thank and acknowledge those who made it possible is no less so.

The field research on which this dissertation is based would have been impossible without the generosity, argument, assistance, hostility and hospitality of many people in Israel. In the neighborhood of Ramat Yosef, thanks to Marco, Chen, and their families for introducing me to neighborhood residents and for exposing me to the grittiness of a part of Israel with which I wasn’t much familiar. Thanks especially also to David and Levana for their hospitality, questions, patience, and generosity with introducing me to neighborhood residents, sharing their knowledge with me, for letting me sit for untold hours outside their store, and for conversation that I continue to find interesting years later. Thanks to the neighborhood’s residents, especially to Shuli and Uzi, for their humour, conversation and for answering so many questions.

In the West Bank, most especially in Mas’ha and in Bil’in, thank you to Nazeeh, Tayseer, Rizik, Ra’ad, Wajee and his family, and to all the ones who opened their doors and offered shelter, tea, delicious food and when necessary onions, in between and during attacks of tear gas and bullets. In Tel Aviv, thank you to the anarchists who let me join them and who quietly taught me how to make my way between the demos, villages and going back and forth; thanks to Liat in the early days of the Mas’ha camp, and to Noa ha’ktana, to Yonatan and Kobi, Nadav, Lymor, Liad, Cheska, Adi, Amnon, and Tia. For
friendship and a change of scenery at different times during the three years of fieldwork, thanks to Li, and to the women in the Women’s Coalition for Peace, including Adi, Khulood, Yana, Debby and Dalit.

I want to thank my relatives in Israel for challenging me to try to explain what I was doing there, even when I often didn’t feel capable of such explanation, and for their different kinds of support, interest and exchange. I especially want to thank those who I am sorry I cannot thank directly anymore; my grandmother Ruti Bar Haim (1921-2002), her sisters Esther, Leah, and Becky, and my great uncle Itzhak, they fed me, loaned me furniture, took me in and taught me about the past. Thank you to Tsipora, for eye to eye conversation, visiting Savta and always bringing food, and more. Thanks also to Noa, Na’ama, and Maya for their hospitality. I owe special thanks to my aunt and uncle Anat and Ilan Bleich for taking me in while I was looking for a place to live, for helping me navigate Israeli bureaucracy in numerous ways, and for countless meals. I want to also thank them for their interest in this work, despite my frequent reluctance to talk about it during the time of fieldwork, and for honest and sometimes difficult discussions. Thanks to my cousins, Efrat, Dafna, and Shauli, for playing and for making me think.

There are other individuals who I don’t know how to group in terms of cities or occupied territories who allowed me to interview them formally and to chat with them informally, some many times over, often in transit, whom I would like to thank here. Michael Sfard, for sharing his background and explaining the legal ins and outs of the legal proceedings of the Bil’in trials and sometimes others, and to Gabi Lasky for taking
the time to explain her defense work in Ofer and elsewhere. Thanks to Tali Fahima for responding to my questions. Gerardo Leibner generously gave of his time and advice in meetings in the first stages of fieldwork, and suggested the neighborhood of Ramat Yosef as a research site. I also want to thank Juliano Mer-Khamis, for his example, for conversation, and for his work. Thank you also to Elisha and to Rela Mazali, for friendship and for making me think about interviewing.

        I owe special thanks to Tanya Reinhart for first introducing me to the Mas’ha campsite, for long e-mail exchanges over the minutia of meeting minutes and the changing political scenes of joint Palestinian-Israeli political action, and for company, song and spirit in the ups and downs of it all. I thank Aharon Shabtai for friendship, humour, irony, for saying it like it is (about so many different its), and for his poetry.

        I cannot imagine how I would have moved back and forth between these people and places, or carried out my fieldwork, without the friendship and challenge of Ivy Sichel. Thanks for giving me such a tough time so many times, for relentless engagement, for listening to me try to explain what I was trying to understand, for numerous tips, for teaching me to see and listen better in Israel, and for understanding. Thanks also for knowing how to ease the transition back to the U.S. when it was time to leave.

        My research in Israel was generously funded by a Wenner Gren Dissertation fieldwork grant (2006), as well as by research and writing up grants and fellowships from
Duke University’s graduate school, the Cultural Anthropology Department, and the Women’s Studies program. I gratefully acknowledge this support.

At Duke and in Durham, I want to thank the friends, colleagues and teachers who have provided assistance, company, and education in various ways. Thanks to the members of my cohort, Bianca Robinson, Attiya Ahmad, Wang Yu, Aaron Thornburg, and Mara Kaufman. While I was in coursework I benefitted from the advice and humour of Gonzalo Lamano and Gabby Lukacs. Thank you to Ellen Gray for sustaining company, friendship, for teaching me about affect, song, and more. Yektan Turkyilmaz provided me with uncounted cups of tea, beer, meals, commiseration and hospitality over the years. Thanks to Azeen Khan for friendship during the writing process and for being an ongoing interlocutor.

I am grateful to have had more than one institutional home at Duke and want to thank both the Cultural Anthropology Department and the Women’s Studies Program for their different kinds of support which allowed me to take the time necessary for this work. I especially want to thank Srinivas Aravamudan and Charles Piot for their Reparations seminar, Robyn Wiegman for the “Foundations in Feminist Theory” seminar, Kathy Rudy and Ranjana Khanna for the “Animal, Gender and Woman” seminar, and Ranjana Khanna for her seminars “Asylum,” “Gayatri Spivak and Luce Irigaray,” and “Affect and Feminism.” Many thanks also to everyone who made the Women’s Studies Program such a welcoming place to be, thanks especially to Lillian P. Spillers, Cassandra Harris, Marialana Weitzel, Melanie Mitchell, Gwen Rogers for good
cheer and lively conversation. I also want to thank the Women’s Studies Program as a whole for generous financial support for different stages of this work, but no less for consistently creating an intellectually stimulating environment in the field of feminist studies with hospitality to interdisciplinarity and the transnational. In the anthropology department, I must thank Charlie Piot and Louise Meintjes for their advocacy and dedication as Directors of Graduate Studies. Charlie Piot has also offered timely and helpful feedback with numerous queries from the beginning of my time at Duke. I also want to thank Louise Meintjes for her time and support for taking the time necessary for writing and field research. For helpful suggestions at various points during my time at Duke and for being a squeaky wheel, thanks to Naomi Quinn. Thanks Deborah A. Thomas for being serious and strict with me while I was finishing coursework, and for making me think about the man on the corner. The members of my committee have all challenged and supported me in different ways. Thank you to my co-chairs, Ranjana Khanna and Diane Nelson, and to John L. Jackson, Charles Piot, Rebecca Stein, and Srinivas Aravamudan. I am particularly thankful for the fact that they in different ways allowed me the space to figure out how to write this as I saw fit. Thanks to John Jackson for teaching me how to use final cut pro and for encouraging me start thinking about what it might mean to write ethnographically before I knew it would become a question for how I would write this dissertation, and for continued enthusiasm about the work. Heartfelt thanks to Srinivas Aravamudan who has been extraordinarily generous in making time in his busy schedule for reading and giving detailed and critical feedback
and suggestions about chapter drafts, for responding to questions and ramblings from the field, and for sharing his sense of humour, academic wisdom, and calm over the years.

I owe my co-chairs Ranjana Khanna and Diane M. Nelson special thanks. As many imperfections exist in this preliminary work, not only would there have been many more without their dedicated advising, but it is doubtful any of this would have come to any fruition at all. Diane Nelson informed my intellectual trajectory before I ever came to Duke; I am thankful for the opportunity she gave me to conduct research in Guatemala as her undergraduate student in 1998, and owe her many thanks for her dedication to and creativity with teaching, and for her enthusiasm, encouragement and investment over many years since. I owe Ranjana Khanna more thanks than I can say for Asylum and much more. Her generosity, guidance, intellectual rigor, and relentlessly critical eye made it possible for me to do this work. Without her example of ethical teaching, an extraordinary work ethic, her commitment to, in Simone de Beauvoir’s words, the idea that “defending the truth is not something one does out of a sense of duty or to allay guilt complexes, but is a reward in itself,” and her willingness and ability to be tough and to take the risks that interdisciplinarity involves, I would have been lost at sea. Without fail, I have been able to take her at her word.

This work also would not have been possible without the love and support of my parents, Dahlia and Willem van Vliet. They gave me many different kinds of education, untold numbers of books, a foundation on which to stand, and the freedom, respect, and space to move. Without exception, they have supported me while allowing me to do as I
thought best, even when this often may have seemed more worrying than best. I thank them more than I can say. I am also infinitely thankful for the presence of my sister Tamar, who has been supportive, kind and generous despite the fact that she has had to put up with a bossy big sister. I also want to thank N for teaching me not to be so bossy, for playing with such imagination, and for making my time back in Durham so joyful.
Preface

What is Alterity? Looking backwards and Forwards Toward a Melancholic Anthropology

When I started writing this dissertation, I began by trying to explain what I meant when I said that I wanted to understand the concept of the political in Israel. I started and stopped with stories about specific conversations and descriptions of events and places. After trying to describe anything about contemporary Israel, it always seemed that anything I wrote was likely to be interpreted through the lens of specific political positions. It felt as though I continually failed to get at what it was that I was trying to understand in terms of the concept of the political itself, and to find a language for the question I was trying to ask. So in an earlier version of what became this preface, I began by writing about the following example, purposefully making it devoid of almost any detail and without almost any particulars in terms of its specificity:

The place: Tel Aviv
The time: November 2008
The event: A friend gets on a public bus in the city center. It is an accordion bus, it is morning, and the bus is crowded with passengers. As she pays her fare, the driver says to her, “quickly, call 101 (like 911), there is a ‘cousin’ behind me with . . .” She glances back and sees a young man with a large package. The driver is clearly agitated and scared. In that moment, between the suspected bomber, the driver, the other passengers
and herself, she must make a decision. The question is not only if the passenger sitting behind the driver is a bomber or not, but whether or not he is (and it is impossible to know for sure then) should she call? It does not matter who she is in this moment or what her political views might be; neither work as an alibi. She is forced to make a decision between those with whom she shares the bus. Specifically and explicitly, it is the demand of the driver for her to call to which she must respond, and she and everyone else on the bus are implicated.

I then suggested that what to do in such a situation can seem straightforward – if someone is suspected of posing a threat, why not call the authorities to check and address the threat? But immediately, I went on to explain, questions about the particular come up. Who are the authorities? How will they treat the suspect? On what basis is the passenger suspect? Who is deciding who has to make what kind of decision?

When I presented the earlier version of this piece, I found that some people had a problem with the fact that I would open with an example about a potential suicide bomber, without going into the details and historical context which shaped such a possibility, and the specifics of Palestinian suffering at the hands of Israelis. Some people were also quite adamant that they would not call the authorities. This response highlighted the reasons why I had wanted to begin with such an example in the first place; I was trying to show how this example highlighted a question about the constitution of the space of the political itself, before this question might go unheard because the specificity of the political material would only be read in terms of a discourse
of victimhood about who suffered or suffers more at the hands of whom.\footnote{In this sense, my focus on this example of a potential suicide bombing is different from discussions in the media or among activists which are framed in moralizing terms or in terms of the question of the efficacy of suicide bombing as a political strategy. My focus here also is different from scholarship about the act of suicide bombing itself. For example, Gayatri Spivak (2004) has considered how the act of suicide bombing might be interpreted in terms of the message one might be able to find in the act of killing oneself along with killing others in the name of a political cause. See also Mark Sander’s (2006) discussion of Spivak’s work on this subject, especially Chapter Five, “Thoughts of War and Suicide” (pgs. 95-102). There Sanders situates Spivak’s recent considerations of suicide bombing in terms of her earlier work on suicide as she frames it through the question of whether the subaltern can speak. For a different perspective, see Talal Asad’s (2007) On Suicide Bombing. Although Asad asks a question similar to the questions Spivak and Sanders consider about how one might interpret the act of suicide bombing, unlike Spivak and Sanders, he situates his discussion in terms of a moralizing framework between Arab and non-Arab and between Arab and the West. He suggests that the ways in which suicide bombing has been represented in the “war on terror” and in the discourse of a “clash of civilizations” should be understood through a reconsideration of Western notions of suicide and assumptions about moral and immorral ways of killing. While these other accounts differently address the question of how one might understand and interpret suicide bombing itself, I am asking what one might be able to understand about how the space of the political is constituted when faced with an unknown other who might or might not be a suicide bomber in the context of a demand to respond to this uncertainty, and with one’s decision having implications also for unknown multiple others on the bus.} I wanted to highlight a question about how the singular is constituted through the relation between the particular and the general, and what this relation means for an understanding of concepts of sovereignty and decision in the face of the unknown other, and for the constitution of political space.

If the opening example is about the demand on the individual to decide whether or not to call the authorities, then it is also about the relation of that authority to both the group and the individuals who constitute it, and about their relation to one another and to the group. The example points to how state sovereignty shifts on to the individual in a
specific moment. The example directs attention to how the individual must make a decision based on the relation between the particular and the general, and in the face of the singular other. One of the central concerns of this dissertation is the question of what it might mean to make decisions between the particular and the general in the face of the singular other, and to respond to the other, if the other is what cannot be fully known, and about how specific forms of sovereignty affect what this means.

I want to pause for a moment to spell out explicitly what I mean when I say that I do not want the particulars of the above example to be read only in terms of the general and the particular, rather than in terms of how the singular is constituted through the relation between the particular and the general. I will try to explain what I mean by telling you about a dream.

In the dream the bus in the above example was one of many buses moving through a city in which Netiva Ben-Yehuda’s talk show, “Netiva listens, Netiva talks,” played every Wednesday from midnight to 3am, during which she plays “only songs from pre-1948 Palestine,” and “talks only about happy things . . .” 2 A little more than

---

2 When I first heard her on the radio and then later met with her, Netiva was in her late seventies. She was born in 1928, and died in February 2011. In the words of Yael Feldman (2000), Ben Yehuda was known “as a living emblem of the myth of the Palmach [the pre-state Zionist armed forces], those legendary units that spearheaded the struggle for Israel’s independence in 1947-48. Indeed, Ben Yehuda had for many years embodied precisely that heroic voluntarism and utter loyalty to the Jewish national rebirth in the Jewish homeland that had been the hallmark of the Palmach since the 1940s” (138-139). But, as Feldman emphasizes, Ben Yehuda was also known for her sharp tongue, her writing about Hebrew, and her account of her experiences during the War of Independence. See Ben Yehuda 1972; 1981; 1985; 1991. Feldman (2009) analyzes Ben
halfway through the main fieldwork stint on which this writing is based, I happened to hear Netiva on her radio talk show in the middle of the night. Curious about what she might have to say, I made an appointment to go talk with her at a café in Jerusalem. I took several buses from where I lived in Tel Aviv to the café on Palmach Street, where we met and talked over coffee and pastries. I didn’t know then about her story of the bus; only later did I find out, when a friend told me that in 1948 Netiva attempted to bomb a Palestinian bus, killing several Palestinians and wounding others.

In 1948 – *Between the Calendars*, Ben Yehuda (1981) writes about 1948 from her perspective as a soldier in the Palmach. A little less than halfway into the book, she tells “the bus story.” She begins:

---

Yehuda and her work in terms of how she might be considered an ambivalent and unruly feminist figure. I return briefly in chapters three and five to the subject of Ben-Yehuda and her work. 

3 The title of this book in Hebrew is *1948 Bein Hasfirot*, which means roughly “between counting” or “between eras”, and as Yael Feldman points out, the English translation “Between the Calendars” does not capture the significance of the Hebrew. Feldman writes:

Ben Yehuda's title signaled that she still experienced 1948 as a momentous breach in history, a transition of tremendous magnitude… *[sfirot* is used to denote the distinction in the Gregorian calendar between B.C. (lifnei hasfirot, "before the counting") and A.D. (aharei hasfirot, “after the counting”). The title then invests 1948, or, more exactly, ‘the months between 29 November 1947 to March 1948,’ as stated in the preface, with a potential to transform contemporary Jewish history, which is analogous to the Christian transformation of Western (and Jewish) history two thousand years ago. Unwittingly, it also resonates with the Hebrew title of Virginia Woolf's last novel, written under the threat of Nazi invasion, *Between the Acts* (1940). The analogy between Bein hasfirot and the Hebrew title of Woolf's last will and testament, Bein hama`arak hot (1981), may shed light on Ben Yehuda's intention. At least one commentator characterized *Between the Acts* as implying "the time between history as we have known it and the future," a future that will be ‘a violent break from history.’ (5). (Feldman 2000, 141).
It was in February. All the time, from the 30th of November, the Arabs attacked settlements, individuals alone, buses, and at all, our transportation. And we only defended ourselves. What does this mean we defended ourselves?...We started to put protective screens in the windows of the automobiles, and after this – a little bit also to armour the cars with steel sheets, the buses and delivery trucks, and in every car like this a few of the group would ride with weapons, hidden well, so that the British wouldn’t catch us. Nu, so how is it possible to defend yourself with hidden weapons? And taken apart into all kinds of pieces? (143)

Netiva then goes on to tell about how after more than two months of being under fire that the leadership told them so what if a few Jews are killed here and there, that it’s better not to pour oil on the fire. She tells how they started to get exasperated, and that then the leadership above them in Tel Aviv also lost patience, and eventually sent her unit the order:

carry out a terror attack on them on their transportation. That they too will know what it’s like. So someone came to us to let us know, they came to Ramot Naftali…. Ramot Naftali was already under almost complete siege. So something like this encouraged us; there is justice in the world! And they told us: do rounds, prepare a plan, don’t worry, you will receive explosive powder. The goal: the bus of the “Nagida” – the “defense” of the Arabs, that goes out every morning from their base in the blue valley, and goes up to the top, passing from the way Nabi-Yosa, cutting through the Kerem Valley, and arriving to their bases in Kerem village…And it always, every day, fills up with Nagida people. Only. We won’t attack civilians. And on the day for which the action will be set the main saboteur of the Galilee will be on the bus. And they even gave us a photo of him. His name was Hamad. Halil Hamad. A big man. He learned sabotage in Germany. (Ibid. 143-144)

---

4 The following excerpts are translated from the Hebrew; translation mine.
Netiva and the others made up a plan based on what they had learned in their training courses, and sent the plan to the leadership. The plan came back with comments, which included a request that they revise the plan so that the bus would be thrown off the road from the force of the explosion in the direction of the drop on one side of the road rather than towards the inside of the road. This, the leadership suggested, would cause the bus to roll more times and to fall off the road down the cliff on the side, in addition to the damage that the explosion itself would cause. Netiva explains that because of the incline and curve in the road, this would be more complicated and difficult to undertake and would put them at greater risk than the plan that they had come up with. The person with the detonator would have to lie right below the road where he could be seen by those on the road below, where all the British and Arabs passing would be able to see him, and he would have to lie on the same side of the road as the mine. But, she says, they agreed to do as requested because they were afraid that otherwise the job would be given to another unit and they didn’t want to lose the opportunity.

Netiva then goes on to detail how they went about preparing for the job; the explosive power came without any name or instructions, so they conducted experiments with small amounts of it to try to determine how to make use of it. In order to attach the explosives to the detonator, they collected the electrical cords from all the appliances on a nearby kibbutz, detaching the plugs and then connecting all the cords together. Netiva describes in detail the moments when she was to press the button on the detonator, after they had waited for four hours, barely moving, watching people go by on the road.
Although those hours of waiting were very difficult, she writes, the hardest moments were the moments from when I put my finger on the button to when I pressed the button….I just couldn’t press it. The finger was stone. I didn’t want to press. I thought that I would never press it. Probably this was mainly because from close, from a distance of two meters, we saw the people sitting inside, we saw their faces, their eyes, and we heard them talking, and laughing, and there were civilians there, and there were also women, I am sure of this, and we had been told that only “Nagida” would be on the bus. And what if there were also children on the bus? I didn’t see children, but I also didn’t see that there were not children. So what will be? Maybe there are children on the bus?! Maybe because of this I am not pressing on the button. Maybe I am going to ruin the whole operation. Stop driving yourself crazy, and press the button, because there are not children. There are not children. There, look, only an enemy. There is that man. Enemy. Bad enemy. Frightening. Murderer. What does that mean, “enemy”? It is after all, a human being, alive. So it is possible to do something to him? He is mine? That I will touch him? Who am I, that I am deserving to touch another human being? It’s forbidden. One human being does not touch another human being. It’s forbidden even to touch. A foreigner. And a foreign people. But they are not foreign. They are – our enemies. It is the enemy. Here – here is the enemy. How can it be that he doesn’t see me? In another moment I will be the most important thing that happened to him in the world. But he is an enemy. So it’s different. It doesn’t matter that they are human beings with faces, with eyes, with conversations, with lives, all of this isn’t important. They are the enemy. At all, they are “them.” And “them” are “enemy.” They kill us. This moment. This moment they are on their way to kill us. No way! It’s not like that. But they killed ours. Here – they killed ours. They killed mine. They killed Gad. Those bastards. We told them let’s live in peace, together, ça va - ça va, - no. Bastards. Murderers. They killed Gad. And Boaz. And the friend from the Negev, the head of the class, and the young girl who they abused, bastards, and, all thirty-five from the Negev, and at all, they are continuing to kill us and we are quiet. “They” kill “us,” so it doesn’t matter if I know one of our dead or not. So it also doesn’t matter if I see the face of the enemy or not. It doesn’t matter who he is, the “enemy” who sits in the bus and who I hear in this moment. “They” killed “us,” “they” kill “us,” so it is necessary to kill them. Not to wait. And at all – justice is with us, because they started. They were the first to begin. And they started because they were sure that they could start with us, That they could do what they want. That we the Jews are pathetic. Who is scared of Jews. What is there to be scared of with Jews. And that we didn’t answer them until now, this was for them just proof: Jews only are attacked, and whimper. And the world is quiet. So we have to show them. This
time we will show them, one time and for always, so that there will be an end to
this thing, not like with the events of ’36, and not like in the Holocaust, Gad, and
Boaz, and all the revolutionaries from the Negev, with the young girl who they
abused, they are all here, with me, and they are not little Jews from the Shoah.
This time we will show them. This time they will be attacked like that. That they
will know. All what they are doing to us, we will do to them. We will show them
that we can do it. We will show them with whom they are doing business. We can
do it. We can. And my finger pressed on the button - - - and - - - nothing. Quiet.
Maybe I didn’t press it. Maybe I only think that I pressed it. Maybe I don’t want
to press it. Weak. Maybe that man, who sits now in the bus, and who is facing
straight in my direction, straight towards my eyes, and doesn’t see me, maybe he
actually hasn’t done anything to us, ever, nothing, and maybe to him – we will
see. But they also kill us without reason, women, and children, and there is an
order to do to them the same thing. So, are you going to do it, or not? So I did
press, and press, and press, again and again. (Ibid. 149)

But the explosives didn’t work. So Netiva and the others resorted to the back up plan,
which was to throw a grenade at the bus and to shoot at it. The bus came to a stop after
the grenade hit it. Some of the people on the bus were armed, and an exchange of fire
followed the explosion of the grenade. Some of the people on the bus ran away in the
direction of where Netiva and the others were hiding. Others almost escaped;

there were some who ran straight, without bending over, without looking behind
them, they ran and ran and ran, and emerged from the bullets without a scratch,
and reached the bottom, the bottom where the dirt road was. Among them there
was a woman. I shot at her, I really shot at her, what, I am the enemy – and she
isn’t? And if she was on the bus of the Nagida, then what was she doing there?
But I didn’t hit her. It was very hard to get good aim at her. She was moving so
much from side to side, that it just wasn’t possible to take good aim. Probably
because of the high heeled shoes she was wearing. In the end, there was an end.
No one came anymore, so I jumped and ran to the explosive device to retrieve
it….All of a sudden I see that big man, the one that was most important who we
were supposed to kill, Hamad, the one we were supposed to be sure would be on
the bus, and that he would be killed, I see him with an automatic weapon in his
hand, a big black coat, waving, he runs to the guard rail of the curve in the road,
that was made out of black stone…why was he running to the guard rail? God
knows. The most likely thing seemed that he was scared of “booby-traps,” those
kinds of mines, after all, he was a saboteur, and it was true that it would have been good to put explosives on the side of the road, on both sides. We just didn’t have any. So I quickly let go of the electric cords, I cocked the rifle, aimed it very well, not to take chances. I shot, and that Hamad spread out his arms to the sides, and fell down the cliff, with a terrible scream. (Ibid. 151)

After she finishes narrating the story of the attack, Netiva tells about an interaction with a senior member of the Palmach who was a good friend of her parents. He took her aside to congratulate her after congratulating everyone, praising them and telling them they should be proud. He asked her why she had such a sour face.⁵ She writes:

I didn’t answer him. And then he said, I know, it’s the face of “after the first fire” eh? The heart pounds, and there is confusion, and everything happened quickly, and it’s a pity I didn’t do this, instead of that, or do this – and not that, eh? And I said to him, it could be that it’s because of this, but what is disturbing me is, that it bothers me that we are supposed to be proud of it, it was as if it became clear to me that I didn’t feel at all like being proud of the whole thing. And I wasn’t. It doesn’t matter what happened. Human beings died – so I don’t want to be proud of this. It’s different, the whole story. It’s different when people are really killed. If they are killed, then it doesn’t anymore matter how it happened. And he grabbed both my shoulders, stepped away as far as possible, took his time, and said Id – io – ot! I – di- ot! Idiot, like everyone. What will be with you? And I really wanted to explain to him what was going on in my head, and I said, no – you don’t understand, it doesn’t sit right in my head, I didn’t think correctly until today, there is a problem here, Herzl sat there on the balcony, and here Arab is

⁵ Feldman (1999) situates Ben-Yehuda’s narration of this moment within the wider context of Ben-Yehuda’s trilogy about 1948. She points out that it took Ben Yehuda more than 30 years to tell this story publicly, suggests that Ben-Yehuda was traumatized by the situation of being a woman in this context, in part because of a military ethos that discouraged such talk particularly from women. Feldman also suggests that this event in the story precedes a more traumatic event for Ben-Yehuda; the time when she protested to another Palmach member that the site she was ordered to take her fighters to was indefensible but did not insist on her position, and then one of the fighters for whom she was responsible was killed in an ambush on that site. Feldman reads this story in gendered terms as well. See my chapter five for further discussion of Ben-Yehuda and Feldman in terms of the question of sexual difference in the contexts of contemporary Israel.
killed. Jew is killed…There is a problem here. And Shaul really shouted at me: You must not speak like this, you hear? Erase from your head all this idiocy, you hear? This is idiotic thinking from weak people, pathetic people. Do we want here to be normal? We want to stop being exile little Jews? Weak? Then among other things we have to create the heroic Jew. You hear? “Hashomer” already started with this, if they would have been allowed to continue, but no. And after a terrible event happened to the Jewish people, after the Holocaust, and after these past months, until today. Jews are murdered. In every hole Jews are murdered. So the Jews here have to stop being on the defensive, asking for forgiveness, whining, to stop bringing up the “conscience of the world”. It is necessary that here there will be people who will know what to do and how to do it in times like this. Here it is necessary to be a heroic person! A person on the offensive! A person who can kill in quiet. That they will be scared of us! You hear? That he will be looked at in fear: oy, what is he going to do! You hear? Listen well. Listen to every word I say: the whole world will treat us differently, you hear? A strong person, free, liberated, healthy, can take a rifle in his hand and kill those who want to kill him, before they are able to, you hear? If you can’t be like that, then either you are a woman, or you are an exile-Jew! (Ibid. 162)

Both these buses were in the Zionist dream. There are of course significant differences between the situations in which the two buses were involved and between the individuals to whom I refer.⁶ The first example is in 2008 and the second is in 1948. The first

---

⁶ Although one of the differences is that in the first example the question is one of a possible suicide bombing while in the other it is of an attempted bombing which is not a suicide, the difference between attacking with the decision to die in the attack and attacking with the decision to risk one’s life in the attack is not the focus of my analysis here. In her discussion of suicide bombing, Spivak (2004) suggests that suicide bombing “undoes the difference between the bomber and his or her enemy” (96). I would venture that my difference from Spivak in her suggestion that a suicide bombing eliminates the difference between bomber and bombed is related to her understanding of sexual difference, as much of a leap as this may appear to be here. I address my difference with Spivak’s work in this regard in terms of an analysis of Israel briefly in the end of Chapter Four and more elaborately in Chapter Five. While I disagree with Spivak on this point, I agree that the political logic on which the bomber and his or her enemy base their politics can often be the same, but I do not read this as the point Spivak intends to make. I do not understand the act of a suicide bombing to undo the difference between bomber and bombed, in part because there is an afterlife to such acts but also because the sides are differently constituted
example highlights the demand on the passenger to decide in the face of the unknown others on the bus, whether to act as if the passenger under suspicion is a bomber or whether to act as if he isn’t a bomber. The second example highlights a decision already taken, by Netiva and others, to bomb a bus with unknown others on it who are assumed to be Palestinian fighters against Zionists. Although they are different, both these examples point to the impossibility of fully knowing or identifying in the face of the other who it is that they are, even as discourses which produce such contexts of decision are based on the assumptions of a metaphysics of presence that demand we act as if it is possible to do so. I will also suggest that these examples can be understood one in terms of the other, although not in terms of a cause and effect relation that the phrase “cycle of violence” through which Israelis and Palestinians are so often defined connotates.

historically. But I identify with Spivak’s attempt to understand the situations posed by such violence from understanding “the ethical, and this is a derivative position, to be an interruption of the epistemological, which is the attempt to construct the other as object of knowledge. Epistemological constructions belong to the domain of law, which seeks to know the other…in order to punish or acquit…reason being defined by the limits set by the law itself. The ethical interrupts this imperfectly, to listen to the other as if it were a self, neither to punish nor to acquit” (ibid. 83). It is partly in this sense that I understand anthropology’s potential, as a study to know the other in terms of the ethical and the literary rather than in terms of the moral or the law. But I understand such “listening to the other as if it were a self” in terms of a difference that is also about what does not belong to the self even as it is internal to its constitution and undoing. I will go on to suggest that the phenomenological allows for a form of translation between the epistemological and the ethical, through how it allows one to avail oneself to the singular in the relation between the particular and the general. Again, my focus here is not the suicide bomber or potential suicide bomber, but on the position of the passenger on the bus faced with the demand to act in response to the possibility that there may be a suicide bomber on the bus and the driver’s demand to call. As I will go on to argue, any attempt to understand this passenger’s position must necessarily also involve an attempt to understand the positions and specificity of everyone else on the bus.
In the first example, the bus is in downtown Tel Aviv, full of people who are likely to be Jewish Israelis although by no means necessarily only Jewish Israelis. The passenger suspected of being a bomber looks Palestinian and as if he may be carrying a bomb. To try to understand the specificity of the decision with which the passenger boarding the bus is faced is to try to understand the relation between all the individuals on the bus, and the group categories into which they have been placed, in this case, Israeli, Jew, Arab, Palestinian, and non-Israeli Jew. My effort to understand the position of the passenger getting on the bus is connected to my effort to understand the configuration suggested by Netiva’s story, of the relation between diasporic Jew, New Israeli Jew, woman and Palestinian. Netiva draws attention to these relations from her position as the one preparing to bomb a Palestinian bus in 1948 and the interaction that followed with a senior Palmach member. In the second example, the bus is in the north of British-Mandate Palestine, full of Palestinians and the bomber is a Jewish Zionist. In order to understand the question posed by the situation on the first bus, it is thus necessary to also understand the situation posed in Netiva’s story, in which a fellow Palmach commander angrily reprimands her for questioning the discourse through which Jew and non-Jew, enemy and friend are defined, and accuses her of either being an exile Jew or a woman if she asks such questions. To return with Netiva’s questions to the first bus example, is to try to understand the positions of all the people on the bus and their relation to one another in terms of the discourses of the groups in which they exist. In other words, in
order to understand the Zionist dream and its effects, it is necessary to attend to how the singular is constituted in the relation between the particular and the general.

In the chapters to follow, I will show how, as in Sigmund Freud’s (1988) theory of “dream-work,” the possibility of understanding and interpreting the signification of a single life, involves a consideration of the relation between the individual and the representation of the group that addresses the ways in which the subject is produced in the relation between linguistic representation and affective relation with others and oneself. Why is it that to question the concept of enemy as defined in terms of group categories as Netiva does in this context is to be “an exilic Jew” or “a woman,” from the perspective of the “new Israeli Jew”? How is the new Israeli Jew a Jew in distinction from the diasporic Jew, woman, Arab, and the universal human? These are some of the questions to which I arrived when I tried to understand the concept of the political in Israel through asking what the category Israeli-Jew signifies. Through an analysis of these questions, I found that they offer insight into the ways in which European modernity’s concept of the human is founded on a displacement of sexual difference that is inseparable from a racialization understood through the postcolonial.

By moving from making reference to the Zionist dream to making reference to Freud’s theory of dream work, I in no way mean to suggest an analogy between the interpretation of an individual’s dream and the interpretation of a collective political movement and its effects. Rather, I am suggesting that Freud’s understanding of a dream as the product of an individual’s psyche that can be understood through associative and
affective relations of displacement, condensation and transference, offers insights into how one can understand the singularity of a single life in its relation to others and the discourses within which these lives exist. What makes the singularity of the other significant for the question of ethics and politics is not only that the individual is different from and not interchangeable with the group, but also that what is singular about the individual only emerges and is knowable, to the extent that it is knowable, in its relation between the particular and the general, which is also to say, in a relation of difference to itself.

In the chapters that follow, I will analyze the implications of the ways in which the effects of the category Israeli-Jew disrupt claims to group identity and belonging, while at the same time doing so within contexts of nationalist discourse based on defense

---

7 By displacement Freud (1998) refers to the process by which the content attached to one object is detached and moved into an attachment to another object or person, rendering its meaning unrecognizable to consciousness. The literal meaning of the characteristics attached to the object or person often then seem absurd and unintelligible, while the symbolic meaning is distorted (Ibid. 209-210). The process of displacement involves a process of signification in which a part comes to stand in for the whole and is thus based on a metonymic relation. By condensation, Freud refers to the process through which one person, or place, is actually multiple different people and places at the same time through a process of substitution (Ibid. 327-328). The material which is repressed does not change, but its manifestation does; it is in this sense also that Freud suggests the meaning of the dream can come into existence only through the process of dream-work, and is not already there pre-existing the process of interpretation. With the above bus examples, I am suggesting that the singularity of the individual only exists through an affective relation with the self, and that this relation is constituted through a relation with the ideal of the group, and thus also with the singularity of others who are also constituted in relation with the group ideal. Freud’s thinking here provides much of the basis of his later analysis of the concept of the fetish in his theory of sexuality and of the process of individuation. In chapter five I consider this understanding of singularity in terms of an understanding of sexual difference through an analysis of the figure of the Jew and woman in Israel.
of Israeli-Jew as a group. The decision the passenger is demanded to make in the first example highlights the impossible nature of the decision because the decision is based on, and emerges out of, discourses based on community, belonging and group identity, but must be made in the face of the singularity of individuals who are both less and more than any group category. This is, indeed, part of the dilemma with which Netiva grapples in her reflection on her participation in the attack on the bus in the second example. Her narrative also points to how the category Jew-Israeli is configured in relation to Arab, in relation to the diasporic Jew in gendered terms, and thus, as I will show, also in relation to European modernity and in relation to woman and the question of how to understand sexual difference.

My effort to try to understand how it is that narratives attached to the conjunction Israeli-Jew disrupt claims to group identity and belonging at the same time that they coexist with the nationalist defense of Israeli-Jew as a group led me to analyze the figure of the Jew in relation to Israel, which in turn led me to analyze the figure of woman and the concept of sexual difference in terms of the conjunction Israeli-Jew. Through this analysis, I will consider an understanding of the political in terms of a recognition of singularity as that which reveals the ethical and genocidal violence of discourses based on identity politics, belonging, and community, whether these discourses are under the sign of revolutionary struggle, suicide bombings, liberalism or various forms of nationalism.
What highlights what is at stake in the decision demanded of the passenger in the first bus example is the possibility that the suspect might be a bomber, making it a decision about life and death. The passenger does not have the option of not making a decision, or of not being there. In other words, the question is not if you support suicide bombings or not, but rather how are you to try to understand the situation of the passenger who knows the suspect might be a bomber, but has to make a decision about how to respond to this possibility without knowing if he is or not. The decision thus highlights the difference to which Netiva draws attention, between a discourse based on group categories, us and them, and the singularity of individuals which is both more and less than any particular group category. I suggest then that to recognize, value and allow for the possibility of trying to understand the singularity of all the individuals on the bus, not in terms of good or bad, but as singular lives, is therefore to decide to call in the face of the uncertainty of whether the suspected passenger is a bomber or not. To try to understand how it is that such a situation comes to be, is to try to understand the specificity of the given context, and of singular lives in relation to the various groups and discourses through which they emerge, in this case the category and discourses of Israeli-Jew.

It is anthropology’s signature method of participant-observation that demands that the anthropologist trying to understand the position of the passenger in the first example take seriously the decision with which the passenger is faced. This position is itself about trying to understand the place of all the passengers on the bus who make up the
impossible nature of the decision with which the passenger is faced. I venture here that anthropology’s disciplinary relation to and concept of politics encourages a reading of this example in moralizing terms that attempts to weigh the decision according to political views that base any analysis on an assumption of the suspect either being a bomber, or not being one. Anthropology’s disciplinary framework for understanding politics has not allowed much room for an analysis that remains with the uncertainty of not knowing, and nonetheless having to make a decision. Such an analysis cannot rest on concepts of community and identity and the alliances that come with these concepts, through which the discipline has defined its relation to and definition of the political. But it is also anthropology’s method of participant-observation, and the discipline’s historical focus on the question of difference, I would argue, which invites a disruption to anthropology’s own disciplinary framework for understanding the political.

The examples above stand out because the stakes of the decisions they involve are about life and death. But I argue that such an example can bring into view a concept of the political that puts into question concepts of community and identity not only in terms of such moments of decision about life and death, but also in terms of what Ranjana Khanna (2006) has analyzed as the “afterlife of sovereign decision.” By pointing to the significance of relation to the alterity of the singular other for the concept of the political, the above examples put into question concepts of community and identity as foundational ground on which anthropology’s analyses of politics rests, and in so doing also puts them into question for any understanding of the reproduction of social life in the relation
between specific singular subjects and the collectives of which they are a part, and of the futures they imagine.\(^8\)

I use the above examples as an entry point through which to think about anthropology’s disciplinary relation to the concept of the political, and about what this relation might mean for the study of the other, politics, difference, and questions about the ethical subject. In the rest of this preface, I attempt to explain what I mean by a “melancholic anthropology,” why such an understanding of anthropology and of the centrality of the concept of alterity for anthropology structures the ethnography that follows, and why I have felt it necessary to engage in a direct discussion of anthropology’s disciplinary relation to the political before entering into a discussion about Israel. More broadly, I also suggest that the concept of alterity is significant for understanding both the limits and the possibilities of anthropology as the study of the human and of difference, and the relation of such study to questions of politics and ethics.

While this writing emerges out of three years of fieldwork in Israel (2005-2008), this dissertation addresses the ethnographic not only through attempting to convey the sounds, sights, flavors and textures of particular places and times through what is often

\(^8\) I am informed here by work which suggests that the concept of the example, as that which is both particular and general, but singular in its presentation of the relation between the particular and the general, itself puts into question a politics based on concepts of community and identity. My understanding here is informed in part by Derrida and his engagement with Kant on the concept of the parergon. See Derrida 1987 especially the chapter “The Parergon.” See also Derrida 1998. For a discussion of Derrida’s concept of the parergon in terms of the figure of woman, see Khanna 2005.
referred to as empirical description. It is also about how we might think about the ethnographic itself, including its pregraphic phase of fieldwork and the process of translation of experience that is corporeal, sensational, and other into language, including the language of ethnography. In this preface, I address these questions in part through a consideration of anthropology’s relation to the political in terms of the concept of alterity. Ultimately, I suggest that the kind of writing and ethnographic analysis that might best explore questions about politics, justice, ethics, and their manifestation in the specificity of world events and processes which anthropology seeks to understand, is literary writing.

By literary writing I mean writing that does not privilege the literal as the most accurate or true representation, and writing that is acknowledged as both fabrication and as historically and socially situated. I do not attempt such a writing here (and have not been trained to write in this vein), nor is such writing (at least not yet) the mode in which the ethnographic is anthropologically defined. I am not suggesting that anthropology should merge into literature, nor do I mean to suggest that it isn’t often important to distinguish between the representation of actual people, conversations and events on the one hand, and the invented narratives, characters and events of fiction. I am not suggesting that ethnography become fiction, but rather that we can think through how the metaphorical informs both research and ethnographic representation, and about what is left out when individuals are made to represent groups to which they are identified to belong. I find recent examples of innovative ethnography such as Joao Biehl’s Vita
(2005) and James Siegal’s Objects and Objections of Ethnography (2010) to present compelling and quite different examples of the kind of work ethnography can do in this regard.

I acknowledge that anthropology has already engaged for quite some time with the literary, at least since “the writing culture” turn. In part, I am suggesting here that ethnography, and specifically ethnography with an investment in understanding questions about the political, might benefit from rethinking the directions anthropology could take, along the lines suggested by Michael Taussig (1993) now quite some time ago in his commentary about how anthropologists might respond to the argument that much of what was assumed to be “natural” is a social construction:

For in construction’s place – what? No more invention, or more invention? And if the latter, as is assuredly the case, why don’t we start inventing? Is it because at this point the critic fumbles the pass and the ‘literary turn’ in the social sciences and historical studies yields naught else but more meta-commentary in place of poesis, little by way of making anew? But just as we might garner courage to reinvent a new world and live new fictions – what a sociology that would be! – so a devouring force comes at us from another direction, seducing us by playing on our yearning for the true real. Would that it would, would that it could, come clear, this true real. I so badly want that wink of recognition, that complicity with the nature of nature. But the more I want it, the more I realize it’s not for me. Nor for you either . . . which leaves us is [sic] this silly and often desperate place wanting the impossible so badly that while we believe it’s our rightful destiny and so act as accomplices of the real, we also know in our heart of hearts that the way we picture and talk is bound to a dense set of representational gimmicks which, to coin a phrase, have but an arbitrary relation to the slippery referent easing its way out of graspable sight. (xvii)

In the writing that follows, I attempt to make explicit how an ethnographic analysis of contemporary Israel itself suggests an understanding of Israel, and of the political, in
terms of a notion of justice based on the literary. As hopefully will become apparent, much of the dissertation is concerned with the slipperiness of the referent “Jew” in Israel, and its relation to other referents. It is because the ethnographic has so often been understood as evidence of reality, as what is already present which is then represented and analyzed, that I was reluctant to write ethnographically until I could explicitly articulate Israel in terms of the ethnographic, rather than only as the ethnographic. Because of how quickly and intensely many people also react to representations of Israel, I initially resisted representations of Israel that seemed likely to be read in terms of the reader’s already existing political investments and frameworks. Much of this reluctance came from my sense that one of the central characteristics that needs to be conveyed about Israel is the degree to which claims to community and identity are disrupted by differences internal to these claims. While this might seem minor and not something that should present an obstacle to ethnographic writing, I found it to come up against anthropology’s disciplinary goals in a way that was fundamental for the central questions of the dissertation.

Although the reification of culture came under critique several decades ago in anthropology, the discipline has, by and large, continue to operate on the basis of a logic of identity politics through which individuals are made to stand in for groups, and are often positioned as allies whom the anthropologist should “help.” In this sense, “anthropological rapport” also becomes interchangeable with such political identification. As John L. Jackson (2010) has asked in his distinction between claims to authenticity and
what he calls ethnographic sincerity that acknowledges the affective specificity of exchanges between informant and anthropologist;

What ‘dismal science’ does anthropology become when it fails to truly interrogate the political coefficients of its first-order interaction/s with ‘the other’ in the field, when the knowledge culled (or the political structure reified or railed against) distracts ethnographers from much of what constitutes human specificity? (S284)

We need, Jackson argues, an anthropology that “will not finesse its manipulations and machinations with antiquatedly nonreflexive rhetoric about rapport as some kind of mystical mind-melding, anthropological angels communicating without the noises and distractions…caused by physical embodiment (Peters 1999)” (Ibid. S284). Or, one could add, as in the example above, by political situations in which it is possible that one is asked to decide whether or not to call the police on a fellow passenger on the bus because it is suspected he might be a suicide bomber.

My frustration with finding moral values and political aims confused with epistemological goals in the discipline’s assumptions about its relation to its objects of study is perhaps not a frustration frequently expressed in anthropological literature, but it is nonetheless a topic that has provoked some discussion. Wiktor Stoczkowski (2008) for example, recounts how such confusion posed a problem for him in his research. Stoczkowski tells about how, as he was about to begin fieldwork twenty-five years earlier, in a distant place in accordance with disciplinary expectation, the government of the totalitarian regime where he was then a citizen imposed martial law. A member of the democratic opposition, he decided to forgo his original research plans in order study his
political adversaries. The criticism of his political companions convinced him to not publish the results of his research, not because, as he says they explained to him, the results of his research were not sound, but because “it was inadmissible, at a time when political conflict was raging, to publish research results so ill-suited to bonding and uniting us around a clearly negative vision of our enemies” (Ibid. 347). For Stoczkowski, the objects of anthropological research are always about values, which for him raises the question of whether “... anthropological inquiry can serve – at once – the Good and the True ...” (Ibid. 346). While individual anthropologists have engaged in lively debate about whether or not these two aims are in fact unproblematically complementary (D’Andres 1994; Hale 2005; Scheper-Hughes 1994), these debates have not put into question the concept of the political itself. Instead, they have been framed by the dominance of what Stoczkowski has argued all the classic research programmes in anthropology have suggested is “the joint ambition of studying culture and transforming culture on a moral basis, taking as granted that the two are always compatible” (Ibid. 347). Stowczkowski suggests that they are not, and concludes by supporting Didier Fassin’s call for a “moral anthropology.”

Didier Fassin (2008; 2009) has argued that morality should be treated as a legitimate object of study for anthropologists in the context of what he calls a “critical moral anthropology.” He argues that trauma studies have been imbedded in specific moral investments shaped by identification with the victims of suffering. As a result, he suggests, the political contexts in which trauma occurs are obscured, and the specificity
of different traumatic experiences is left unaddressed. More broadly, in calling for a
“moral anthropology,” Fassin argues that the intellectual discomfort which the subject of
morals provokes in the discipline should be understood as heuristically valuable. He
explains that by calling for a moral anthropology, he is not calling for anthropologists to
be moralists. He writes:

A moral anthropology does not propose a code of conduct or a guide towards a
better society. It helps understand the evaluative principles and practices
operating in the social world, the debates they arouse, the processes through
which they become implemented, the justifications that are given to account for
discrepancies observed between what should be and what is actually. (2008, 334-
335)

Stoczkowski’s article, and the discussion with Didier Fassin of which it is a part, helped
situate my own response to this frustration. While I share with both Fassin and
Stoczkowski a frustration with anthropology’s troubled relation to concepts of ethics and
morals, I frame my own critique in terms of anthropology’s relation to the concept of the
political, as different from though related to the moral and the ethical. I suggest that a
consideration of anthropology’s relation to the political brings into view the significance
of ethical relation to the other as significant for the study of difference and politics, in
part by challenging the moralizing discourse through which anthropology’s relation to the
political has been shaped.

The distinction between “ethics” and “morals” is significant for this discussion;
drawing on philosophy without getting too mired in the nuances, and in line with those
with whom I engage here, I use “morals” to refer to collective understandings of shared
common standards and codes of behavior in relation to oneself and others, and “ethics” to refer to the question of how to address the singularity of an individual life in its relation to the particular and the general. It is ethics more than morals that is of interest to me here, because of its significance for the question of the concept of the political. Morals tend to get conflated with specific politics by referring to understandings of how people in general should be treated, while ethics, in being about a relation to singularity, raises questions about the political itself by bringing into focus the tension between the relation to the particular and the relation to the general of the group. I suggest that a rethinking of anthropology’s relation to and concept of the political suggests an approach to questions about ethics, morals, politics and the study of difference in terms of the concept of alterity in terms of the singular as it emerges in the relation between the particular and the general.

My thinking here is informed by feminist theory that considers difference in terms of alterity, and specifically by Ranjana Khanna’s (2003) concept of critical melancholia and its implications for understandings of sovereignty and subjectivity. My analysis of Israeli-Jew, its implications for an understanding of the relation between individuated subjects and collectives in terms of melancholic subjectivity, and in terms of what Khanna (2009) has termed the desubjectivation that can ensue in the encounter with alterity, leads me to suggest a notion of what might be understood as a melancholic anthropology. A melancholic anthropology, as I will try to show, presents an understanding of the subject in the relation between the particular and the general in
terms of an affective relation that undoes claims to sovereignty and subjectivity and their foundations on linguistic representation. In so doing, a melancholic anthropology puts into question political frameworks based on belonging, community, and identity.

My research in Israel has focused on the different forms of inclusion and exclusion Jewish Israelis produce, resist, and experience in the name of national security, and through what practices, investments, and figures of belonging and threat these exclusions and inclusions are articulated. In other words, I am interested in what the concept of national security itself signifies and demarcates, and its relationship to concepts of sovereignty and to the production of subjectivity. National security and demography are often connected to questions about the relation between the individual and the group, reproduction, sovereignty, the singular, boundaries, violence, the law, war and other forms of threat. As others have noted in different contexts, (Collier and Yanagisako 1990; Delaney 1991; Delaney and Yanagisako 1994; Rubin 1975; Strathern 2005; Haraway 2008) such questions are in turn are tied to concepts of the other, difference, the political, community, citizenship, ethics and responsibility. I focus on these connections in order to try to understand the concept of responsibility and terms and practices it carries with it, such as ethical relation to others, politics, the law, sovereignty, violence, justice, decision, the singular and the general.

In recent scholarship in anthropology and beyond, the concept of sovereignty, and relatedly, contemporary examples of and challenges to sovereignty through which questions of national and global security might be understood, have been framed largely
in terms of biopolitics (Agamben 1998; Mbembe 2003; Nelson 2009). Attention to the mechanisms through which subjects are constituted through a focus on the workings of biopower has moved thinking about questions of sovereignty in terms of frameworks of nationalism in important directions, most notably to a rethinking of subjects as autonomous and sovereign, and of the implications of a shift from forms of state sovereignty that exercise sovereignty not only through decisions of who dies but also on who to try to make live. But biopolitical frameworks which do not account for questions of responsibility to the singularity of the other are insufficient for an understanding of the political that takes into account questions of the ethical subject, violence and force, the limits of the political, and the relation between the general and the particular in terms of the singular.

For example, as the work of a number of anthropologists demonstrates (Abu El-Haj 2001; Mitchell 1991, 2002; Nelson 2009), a biopolitical analysis can help explain the complexity of the manner in which power works subversively and the unexpected consequences of directed political projects. The processes through which subjects are constituted and the ways in which the limits and possibilities of individual influence are shaped through statecraft and collective movements working with and against the state for the interests of specific populations are made legible through analyses that address what Foucault (2003; 2007) called biopower. But there is nothing about the conceptual framework of biopower itself that directs attention to the tension between individuated subjects and the groups with which they are in relation, and thus to the question of a
responsibility to singularity, and to a consideration of the implications of singularity for an understanding of the political and the ethical.

The question of how anthropology defines the political and its relation to it is relevant to anthropological research in any context, whether in war or peace. I am suggesting here that anthropology’s relation to politics has remained largely unchanged through the discipline’s history. This is despite other drastic transformations that have occurred in the discipline which are often understood as “political” changes. I suggest that anthropology’s framework for discussing the discipline’s relation to politics has limited its ability to theorize what it might mean to study the human and difference, and the implications of such work for an understanding of the political. Analysing what constitutes the politics and ethics of anthropology in terms of an understanding of difference as alterity has brought me to a reading of Levinas and to some who draw on him. Ultimately, I suggest that anthropology in general could benefit from drawing on a literary concept of justice and “reading,” and I explain here how a literary concept of justice informs the specific ethnography that follows.

Anthropology began as a scientific study of difference. Much has been written about the fact that what studying “the other” has meant for anthropology has shifted in the course of its disciplinary history. But what goes largely unmarked is how, as anthropology’s understanding of its relation to the study of difference changed, its relation to and concept of politics did not significantly change. This is despite two significant (and widely acknowledged) shifts related to politics and to the study of
difference in the discipline. First, anthropology moved from being defined as an “objective science” to being understood as subjective. Second, the content of anthropology’s dominant politics shifted as it moved from being used as a tool of colonialism to focusing its critique and analysis on questions of colonialism, oppression, and power. I argue that these shifts, combined with anthropology’s largely unchanged definition of and relation to the political, have entailed an increasingly uncritical treatment of the concept of difference and what it might mean to study it and to theorize “the other” and the political through the disciplinary lens and method of anthropology.

This dissertation is about sovereignty and subjectivity in the context of Israeli national security discourse. It is based on three years (2005-2008) of fieldwork in Israel, where I focused on three “sites:” 1) the struggle over the separation barrier in the area between the Palestinian village of Bil’in and the Israeli settlement of Modi’in Illit; 2) the everyday in a working-class neighborhood, Ramat Yosef, south of Tel Aviv; and 3) official state policy regarding demography and militarism (entry and exit, marriage, reproduction, housing, mandatory military service). I wanted to try to understand the different forms of inclusion and exclusion Jewish Israelis produce, resist, and experience in the name of national security, and through what practices, investments, and figures of belonging and threat these exclusions and inclusions are articulated. In other words, I wanted also to try to understand what the concept of national security itself signifies and demarcates, and its relationship to concepts of sovereignty and to the production of subjectivity. National security and demography are often connected to questions about national security and demography are often connected to questions about
the relation between the individual and the group, reproduction, sovereignty, the singular, boundaries, violence, the law, war and other forms of threat – questions which in turn are tied to concepts of the other, difference, the political, community, citizenship, ethics and responsibility. I am interested in trying to understand the concept of responsibility and terms and practices it carries with it, such as ethical relation to others, politics, the law, violence, justice, decision, the singular and the general. To remain attentive to the question of singularity is to ask to whom and to what is one responsible and responding? Who or what decides? What might it mean to be responsible, even and maybe especially, when one is not a sovereign autonomous subject? To think of responsibility without foundation? How do different notions of sovereignty and the political frameworks based on these notions affect what it means to respond and to be responsible?

DECISION

The first bus example raises different sets of questions. I want to put aside for the moment the questions about the likelihood of whether the Palestinian was a bomber, and also the different degree of the stakes depending on the decision taken. I want to emphasize the demand to make a decision between the different people on the bus, including the passenger making the decision, and what questions such moments of decision can provoke. What does it mean to not have a choice to not make a choice? To be able to decide, to exercise a decision, is to be sovereign. But in the first example, the person making the decision is held hostage by the demands of others, and by her relation
to the others on the bus. How might such a moment of decision be thought in political terms? What kind of subjectivity does it involve? What kind of sovereignty is this?

In the second example, Netiva reflects on the assumptions of the discourse on which her position as a bomber of the Palestinian bus is based. She questions her relation to those on the bus and the concept of “enemy.” When she voices her unhappiness to a fellow Palmach member after the attack, he reprimands her for such thoughts and shouts at her that if she cannot erase such thoughts from her head and be a strong Jew on the offensive, she is either a woman or a diasporic Jew. To try to understand the position of all the people on the bus in the first example, which is to try to understand the category Israeli-Jew, is thus also to try to understand the relation between the New Jew, the diasporic Jew, and woman. As I will show, to pursue such an understanding then also involves a consideration of the figure of the Jew in relation to Arab and in relation to European modernity and the political genealogies that subtend these relations.

Carl Schmitt (1996) defined sovereignty as the power to decide on a state of exception – to decide when the rule of law can be suspended in order to defend against an enemy, whether from within the state or from outside it. For Schmitt, it is the distinction between enemy and friend that makes the space of the political possible. Although clearly controversial because of his Nazi affiliations, his complex theorization of the political includes a critique of liberalism which many have turned to as the assumptions

Central to Schmitt’s work is his argument that liberalism is depoliticizing through its attempt to include all forms of opposition, which he suggests erases the friend/enemy distinction and thus the figure of the enemy that makes the political possible.

While for Schmitt the figure of the enemy is central to the concept of the political, Jacques Derrida (2005) reminds us that the history of western political philosophy has been shaped by Greek and Roman philosophy centered around the figure of the friend – from Aristotle to Plato to Cicero. In his consideration of the figure of the friend, Derrida points to a weak spot in Schmitt’s concept of the political. He considers the implications of the fact that Schmitt’s marking of political difference is specifically defined as opposition; it “cannot be reduced to a mere difference. It is determined opposition, opposition itself” (2005, 85). It is for this reason that for Schmitt an enemy can only be a public enemy. It is also why in Schmitt’s formulation, the political is located in the possibility of the enemy being killed. As Derrida goes on to point out, for Schmitt, this

---

9 See Ottolenghi 2001 for a discussion of the tension between the judicial authority of Israel’s Supreme Court and what he calls the parliamentary sovereignty of the Knesset. Ottolenghi argues that Israel’s lack of a constitution as well as arguments against the authority of Israel’s Supreme Court in favor of greater parliamentary sovereignty are based in a Schmittian concept of sovereignty and “bear the seeds of authoritarianism” (102). As I will explain in the introduction and in chapter seven, I do not see this tension in these terms; rather, I understand such tension as a product of Israel’s self-definition as both Jewish and as a liberal democracy.
possibility (whether it empirically occurs or not) institutes human community as a combating collectivity;

As soon as war is possible-eventual, the enemy is present; he is there, his possibility is presently, effectively, supposed and structuring. His being-there is effective, he institutes the community as a human community of combat, as a combating collectivity (kampfende Gesamtheit von Menschen). The concept of the enemy is thereby deduced or constructed a priori, both analytically and synthetically – in synthetic a priori fashion, if you like, as a political concept or, better yet, as the very concept of the political. (2005, 86)

As Derrida explains, for Schmitt it is the potential existence of the enemy that comes with the possibility of war that structures human community and produces it through divisions based on potential enmity. In contrast, for Derrida the moment of decision is significant not as a moment of sovereign decision about who decides who suspends the law in defense of an enemy from within or from outside the polity, and in so doing marks lines of enmity through which politics is able to emerge. Rather, the moment of decision is a moment of having to make a decision in the face of alterity, a decision which calls sovereignty into question.

Derrida makes explicit the significance of the relation to alterity for the concept of the political by framing moments of decision in terms of the figure of the friend and the concept of friendship. He makes two points about the juncture between the figure of the friend and the space of politics. The first is not being able to know – the perhaps and the leap of faith which one must take in friendship and in moments of decision. The second is the question of number, which makes friendship different than but connected to politics. Both these points together highlight the significance of the figure of the friend for a
consideration of the concept of the political.

In what Derrida calls “primary friendship,” stability – the stability of friendship – is created only through decision and reflection that necessitate the passage of time. He describes this passage of time as an “ordeal of what remains to be decided,” making the decision itself, and its stability, always also constituted through the time of the undecidable (2005, 67). He terms this ordeal of what remains to be decided “the aporia of the perhaps.” He writes: “if no decision (ethical, juridical, political) is possible without interrupting determination by engaging oneself in the perhaps, on the other hand, the same decision must interrupt the very thing that is its condition of possibility: the perhaps itself” (Ibid.). This movement between the decision and the uncertainty through which the decision is made possible, or between what Derrida calls a break with knowledge and a passage between two heterogenous orders, one of calculable reliability and the other the reliability of the oath, “is ordained by the very structure of confidence or of credence as faith” (2005, 16). Derrida’s understanding of such a relation of faith towards the unknown in the other is informed by Levinas, who suggests an understanding of ethics and responsibility based on the encounter with the alterity of the other.

Although for Levinas (1969) the structure of confidence is about a relation of faith to an other who is divine, to God, he bases this thinking on an understanding of a relation to alterity through language. Alterity for Levinas signifies the presence of the other which cannot be represented in language, but through whom language and thus also a relation to oneself is made possible. The notion of a relation of faith or confidence thus
does not seem to have to signify a belief in God or a relation to the divine, and Derrida takes up the concept in terms of placing confidence in the sense of making oneself open to the singularity of the other, exposed to alterity, to difference that cannot be fully known. This is confidence not necessarily in the sense of believing in but rather in opening oneself to uncertainty, confidence exactly in what might seem to be its opposite – risk – and taking a “leap of faith” without knowing for sure where or how you will land or come through in this crossing over. For both Levinas and Derrida, this encounter with alterity in the form of the unknown singularity of the other is understood in terms of a relation to the other before and through language.

In *Totality and Infinity* (1969), Levinas begins the section “Discourse and Ethics” by asking about the relation between thinking, language, objectivity and universalism. He asks, “Can objectivity and the universality of thought be founded on discourse? Is not universal thought of itself prior to discourse? Does not a mind in speaking evoke what the other mind already thinks, both of them participating in common ideas?” (72). He answers by suggesting that the community of thought would seem to make language as a relation between separate beings impossible; “coherent discourse is one. A universal thought dispenses with communication” (Ibid.). However, Levinas goes on to point out that such an understanding of language thinks of it only in terms of its coherence, when in fact language does and is more than simply conveying a coherent set of concepts;

In this coherence the unique I of the thinker volatizes. The function of language would amount to suppressing ‘the other,’ who breaks this coherence and is hence essentially irrational. A curious result: language would consist in suppressing the other, in making the other agree with the same!
In its expressive function language precisely maintains the other-to whom it is addressed, whom it calls upon or invokes. To be sure, language does not consist in invoking him as a being represented and thought. But this is why language institutes a relation irreducible to the subject-object relation: the revelation of the other. . . . The other called upon is not something represented, is not a given, is not a particular, through one side already open to generalization. Language, far from presupposing universality and generality, first makes them possible. (Ibid. 72-73)

For Levinas, language thus presumes a plurality of interlocuters and “[t]heir commerce is not a representation of the one by the other, nor a participation in universality, on the common plane of language. Their commerce, as we shall show shortly, is ethical” (Ibid. 73). The ethical here is understood in terms of “the relationship of man to man-signification, teaching, and justice—a primacy of an irreducible structure upon which all other structures rest” (Ibid. 79). For Levinas, language, in its impossibility of representing the other’s alterity, is what reveals it.10 Through his discussion of the figure of the friend, Derrida (2005) makes explicit why what Levinas calls the “commerce” of this relation is not only ethical, but also political.

This ethical relation to singularity, thought through the figure of the friend, is what in Derrida’s formulation allows for the political by making explicit the tension between relation to singularity and relation to the general— to the plurality of infinite others. The figure of the friend thus centers the question of the concept of the political

---

10 I will go on to suggest that this impossibility of representing the other’s alterity can be understood in terms of affective relation, and thus also not in terms of the legibility associated with the face. See Irigaray 1993; Derrida 2008; and Khanna 2012.
between the question of ethical relation to the singular other and the question of relation to the plural, the general, and the polity. The aporia of the perhaps that is necessary for both event and decision is also one of the reasons why friends cannot be limitless in number. Friendship never works without time; “one must not have too many friends, for there is not enough time to put them to the test by living with each one” (2005, 20). The aporia of the perhaps through which one makes and remakes decisions in relation to the singular other thus necessitates both the passage of time and a limit to the number of others with whom such relation is actually possible. These two elements together highlight the significance of the relation to singularity for the concept of the political.

The quantification of singularities will always have been one of the political dimensions of friendship . . . With this becoming-political . . . the question of democracy thus opens, the question of the citizen or the subject as a countable singularity. And that of a ‘universal fraternity’. There is no democracy without respect for irreducible singularity or alterity, but there is no democracy without the ‘community of friends’ (koina ta philon), without the calculation of majorities, without identifiable, stabilizable, representable subjects, all equal. . . . The wound itself opens with the necessity of having to count one’s friends, to count the others, in the economy of one’s own, there where every other is altogether other. (Derrida 2005, 22)

For Derrida, the possibility for politics thus emerges and is constantly renewed through this wounding. It is the foreigner, the unknown other, who is the “friend,” without this figure of the friend being just anyone. The political is thought through an engagement with “a particular him or her rather than with anybody or with all hims and all hers, . . . with a singular ‘who’, be it a certain number of them, a number that is always small . . . with regard to ‘all the others…”’ (2005, 298). It is the figure of the friend, understood in
terms of a relation to alterity, who opens the question of the political by making explicit
the impossibility of treating every represented subject in terms of their singularity, or in
other words, as a representative of an identifiable community, without the act of doing so
inflicting a violence on the singular unknown other.

By suggesting a relation to the quantification of singularities in terms of an
always deferred encounter, and by understanding the relation to oneself as made possible
only through a relation to specific singular others who can also never be substitutable as
oneself, but through whom one is able to think, Derrida suggests an understanding of the
concept of the political that is based on a notion of a subject who is not autonomous or
sovereign. The figure of the friend exists as the relation to alterity that makes the subject
heteronomous, split and related to itself through its relation to the unknown other.
Derrida insists, however, on keeping attention on what it might mean to be responsible
and to make a decision in relation to unknown others. Here Derrida marks a departure
from Kantian frameworks that presume an autonomous liberal subject, and from
biopolitical frameworks which, while challenging Kantian notions of an autonomous
sovereign subject, often neglect to pursue questions about ethics and politics in terms of a
responsibility of the relation to singularity of the other in the context of the plural, and
what such a consideration might suggest for concepts of sovereignty and the political.
Understanding the subject as constituted through a relation to alterity has implications for
the question of how the individuated subject is understood in relation to the group. In
what follows, I suggest that this is also a question that is crucial for anthropology, and
one to which anthropology is particularly well-suited to respond.

The suspected bomber on the bus in the opening example is a “friend” in Derrida’s sense – an unknown other who is also a potential enemy. The passenger on the bus who has to decide whether or not to call the authorities has to make a decision about who, and whether there is an enemy present in the group. The decision is between life and death. The passenger must decide without knowing who is on the bus with her, and regardless of what her relation to them might be in terms of political alliances or divisions. In the presence of these others, both passenger on the bus and Netiva as she gets ready to bomb the bus are faced with the presence of others, with presences of individual lives which are not legible in the group identity categories through which their situations are legible. The singularity of the other is illegible in the terms of the group. This is an example of an opening of the political not through the establishment of the enemy, which Schmitt suggests makes possible the political, but through the question of whether an enemy is present, and how to respond to the uncertainty of this question. The political emerges in the question of how to relate to the unknown singular in the context of the infinite plurality of others. An understanding of this moment in these terms directs attention to an understanding of the political as what emerges in the uncertainty and tension between the particular and the general through the singular.

The decision that the passenger on the bus in the first example is demanded to make, and Netiva’s reflections on her action and the conversation that followed in the second example, help bring into view questions that the aftermath of WWII raised about
the concept of the political. The establishment of the state of Israel as both a self-defined Jewish state and as a liberal democracy has been understood as a response to the question of how to guarantee protection of all humans, with a special emphasis on protection of Jewish people. As such, it has been framed as a place intended to provide unconditional hospitality and welcome to all and any Jews. At the same time, it has also been established as a liberal democracy, with the values of citizenship, freedom, equality and universal human rights that liberal democracy carries with it. It is defined therefore both as explicitly singular – as a Jewish state that was officially established in the aftermath of WWII - and as generalizable in its particularity as one of many liberal democracies. In so doing, the figure of the Jew then also becomes generalizable, highlighting the contradictions of liberal democracy’s inability to guarantee universal and unconditional hospitality, but at the same time reproducing those contradictions within the framework of a Jewish state, and bringing into question the definition of the Jew in its relation to Israel. An analysis of the definition of the Jew in relation to Israel, I will suggest, in turn offers insights into the liberal frameworks of European modernity on which Israel was modeled, and the concepts of the human and of sovereignty on which these frameworks have been based.
Introduction
On the Question of Origin: IsraeliJew JewIsraeli OR A Genealogical Disturbance

Holocaust day has always been a difficult day for me, and now it’s twice as difficult since the journey [to Poland]. In my mind there is an ongoing battle between emotion and reason, between what my eyes saw and what the mind comprehends. You stand in front of a pile of shoes in Auschwitz. Every shoe holds a story of a man or a child who wore it seconds before he was murdered. Suitcases, piles and piles of orphaned suitcases, and hair, human hair which was shaved from their head before their death. The same hair which was caressed by a loving husband or supportive mother before they were murdered. And then you understand that it is all about belief, time and place. And that it could have been you there. How difficult to stand on the ground from within which blood is shouting. And then I thought if only it were possible to turn back time, if only it were possible to prevent the most terrible catastrophe that happened to our people, if only it were possible to bring the dead back to life, but all this is not possible. What is possible is to fill our hearts with pride and to fully comprehend the meaning of our marching with our head held high as members of the Jewish nation, citizens of the state of Israel, on the land saturated with our peoples’ blood. It is our duty to find in our hearts the moments, feelings and thoughts which accompanied us throughout the journey [to Poland] and to tell the one clear message common to all of us, that we have no other country.¹

Israeli high school teacher and coordinator of Poland/Auschwitz school trip
Holocaust Memorial Ceremony, Ramat Yosef High School, Bat Yam, Israel 2008

The differend attached to Nazi names, to Hitler, to Auschwitz, to Eichmann, could not be transformed into a litigation and regulated by a verdict. The shades of those to whom had been refused not only life but also the expression of the wrong done to them by the Final Solution continue to wander in their indeterminacy. By forming the State of Israel, the survivors transformed the wrong into damages and the differend into a litigation.

Jean-Francois Lyotard

¹ Spoken in Hebrew in Ramat Yosef Secondary School’s auditorium.
Every poem has its own language; it is one time alone in its own language, even
and especially if several languages cross there. From this point of view, which
may become a watchtower, the vigilance of a sentinel, one sees well: the value of
the shibboleth may always, and tragically, be inverted. Tragically because the
inversion sometimes overtakes the initiative of subjects, the goodwill of men,
their mastery of language and politics. Watchword or password in a struggle
against oppression, exclusion, fascism, and racism, it may also corrupt its
differential value, which is the condition of alliance and of the poem, making of it
a discriminatory limit, the grillwork of policing, of normalization, and of
methodological subjugation.

Jacques Derrida

Israel’s establishment in 1948 in former British-Mandate Palestine as a Jewish
country and as a liberal democracy is commonly understood as a form of response to the
Holocaust of WWII. Zionist and messianic narratives frame Israel’s establishment not
only as a response to the Holocaust, but also as a return to the Jewish people’s original
homeland after centuries of wandering and persecution in exile. In this dissertation, I
examine claims to sovereignty and subjectivity in contemporary Israel by placing
messianic and Zionist narratives of Jewish exile and return in the context of WWII and its
aftermath, and in the context of European nation-state formation and modern
nationalisms. In so doing, I suggest that contemporary Israel can be understood through
an analysis of the Israeli-Jew as a postcolonial figure who brings together a Jewish

2 I take my cue here from the suggestion that

Freud’s exile was not simply the exile of a Jew, but specifically a modern exile: Nazi
aggression in the context of Europe in the world. The messianic story of Jewish exile is
thus understood in terms of modern nation-statehood. The particular moment of exile of
interest here necessitates putting the idea of the wandering Jew into the context of
European nation-state formation through the imperial enterprise. (Khanna 2002, 148-149)
Abrahamic narrative of origin with a Greek narrative of a metaphysics of presence on which the political frameworks of European modernity are founded.

In the chapters to follow, I present an analysis of the concept of the political in contemporary Israel by examining what happens when the figure of the Jew as guest becomes simultaneously also that of host through the nation-state model, a position I suggest is represented in the conjunction Israeli-Jew. In my analysis, based on three years of fieldwork that I conducted in Israel between 2005 and 2008, I argue that a proliferation of difference around the conjunction Israeli-Jew in Israel challenges concepts of the political based on notions of community, identity and a metaphysics of presence by highlighting questions of origin, hospitality, hostility, subjectivity, and relation to difference in terms of the spatiality and temporality of the modern nation-state and its genealogies. Israel’s conflicts with Palestinians and its Arab neighbors, as well as the various debates over Israel’s self-definition as both a liberal democracy and as Jewish can be understood, I will argue, as a symptom of the violence in European modernity’s concept of the human and its frameworks of liberalism rather than as a violation of these frameworks. Ultimately, I suggest that this challenge raises questions about the relation of sexual difference to other forms of difference within frameworks and genealogies of the modern nation-state, which in turn puts into question the nation-state model itself, along with different forms of liberalism and humanism and assumptions of the ethical subject, of sovereignty, of the human, and of the political that are carried with them.

So I begin here by addressing Israel’s relation to the Holocaust. The opening quote of this chapter is taken from the annual Holocaust Day ceremony in the high school...
of the Ramat Yosef neighborhood in Bat Yam, Israel in May 2008. I arrived to the ceremony a few minutes late, and found a place to stand against a wall, in between teachers and staff, on the staircase next to the rows of seats in the darkened auditorium. The seats were filled with young Jewish-Israeli adolescents between the ages of roughly fifteen and eighteen. Most of them, like the adults, were wearing white shirts, as is customary in Jewish-Israeli memorial ceremonies. The principal who spoke in the first few minutes of the ceremony talked about the young in the Holocaust. Standing in the middle of the stage, she took the microphone off of its stand and spoke directly into it:

Approximately a million and a half children perished in the Holocaust. Children who didn’t reach maturity. Who couldn’t realize their right to live. To dream dreams. To love, to play and to laugh. The fate of the Jewish child in the Holocaust, whether in the ghettos or in the forests or in the camps, was especially cruel and hard. Many of the transports which were sent to the death camps were children trains. Despite the relentless annihilation machine around them, thousands of children survived. Children who found cover in the homes of people with morals and conscience, chasida umot haolam. Children who were hidden in convents, who survived alone in the forests and villages, preyed upon and quiet like wild animals, children who had to sit in long silence without being able to make a sound, not a laugh, not a cry for long months. This is not a history lesson, this is not an imaginary story; this was the daily reality of thousands of children.

Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi (2009) details how such school ceremonies usually follow a specific structure, and points out that “Every child (and future teacher) graduating from an Israeli high school has attended – before Rabin Memorial Day was legislated – twenty-four memorial ceremonies (not including special ad hoc ones following a tragic event and dozens of other holiday celebrations)” (118-119). On practices of memorialization and mourning in Israel more generally see Azaryahu (1996); Ben-Yehuda (1995), and Zertal (2005). These accounts highlight the central place of memorialization in Israeli national formation, and the different ways in which narratives of memorialization situate Israel as a moment and place of redemption; “Even when the narrative begins at the lowest depths of suffering, as in the case of the Holocaust, it is constructed so as to culminate in a high point of redemption, namely, the establishment of the State of Israel. Thus, even when memorial days bear sadness, pupils can return home with a positive message and a sense of pride in their country” (Vinitzky-Seroussi 2009, 119). The ceremonies which I attended such as the one above followed this narrative structure.
This was the daily reality of my mother, who was born in 1940. A year old infant, who learned that it’s forbidden to cry if you want to survive. And today on the day of Memory of the Holocaust and Bravery we will stand with the memory,

Her voice started to break, and she stopped before continuing, her voice trembling:

of those children and their families, and we shall know that we all have the obligation to remember and not to forget.

A student then took the stage to invite the teacher who coordinated the high school class’s trip to Poland to come speak. She came to the microphone and told about her experience during the trip when she visited Auschwitz, from which the opening quote of this chapter is taken. She suggested that Israel is what allows Jews today to be responsible to the Jews killed in the Holocaust. If only it were possible to bring the dead back to life, but it isn’t, she said. What is possible, she went on to say, is to fully comprehend the meaning of our marching with our head held high as members of the Jewish nation, citizens of the state of Israel, on the land saturated with our peoples’ blood. It is our duty to find in our hearts the moments, feelings and thoughts which accompanied us throughout the journey [to Poland] and to tell the one clear message common to all of us, that we have no other country.

The teacher’s statement here ties Jew and Israel together, but it also holds them apart. It is speaking as a Jew and not only as an Israeli that she says “we have no other country.” It is Jews, rather than Israelis, who “have no other country,” and therefore “Jewish” and “Israeli” are not interchangeable at the same time that the former is making a demand on the latter for its existence. The Israeli Jew defines itself through reference to the diasporic Jew from which it came and which the Israeli Jew vows to remember and to defend. In the logic the high school teacher presents, it is thus Israel that protects the Jewish people
from existential threat of annihilation, and the Jews must protect Israel from annihilation because doing so is to protect that which protects their existence as a people. Israel is thus charged with protecting that which exceeds and precedes it. Israel must be defended, and by the Jews first and foremost, not because of a set of values or definition inherent to Israel as Israel, but because it is Israel that is understood to preserve the existence of the Jewish people through offering them a site of refuge. In other words, it is in the name of the country Israel that the Jews are remembered as a people without a country. In turn, it is thus in the name of a people who have been without a country that Israel is defined.

After the teacher finished she walked off the stage, the rhythmic sound of her heels touching the floor with each of her steps the only sound in the auditorium before the music began. The first song in the ceremony was “Le Orech Ha’Yam,” (Along the Length of the Sea), by Jewish-Israeli Yemenite singer Ofra Haza. A student sang the

---

4 The song became well known in Israel after Haza sang it in the national memorial ceremony for Yitzhak Rabin after he was assassinated. But Ofra Haza herself was already well known before this performance; she was one of Israel’s first musical stars and became famous for her song Shir Ha' Frecha (The Bimbo Song). The song was written for the film Shlager (1979) which plays on stereotypes of and differences between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim in 1970s Israel. Haza straddled multiple differences in Israeli society; her musical repertoire included singing in Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic. She sang in venues celebrating Israel, was vocal about government neglect of the economically impoverished neighborhood in south Tel Aviv where she grew up, performed and traveled widely outside Israel while maintaining a presence within the country, and made an album of Yemenite songs which was one of her best selling albums. The album includes the song Im Nin Alu, a poem by the 16th century Yemenite Rabbi Shalom ben Yosef Shabazi (also Salim Elshibzi). I remark here on Ofra Haza’s background and work because given the marginalization of Yemenite Jews in Israel’s history, as well as the perception that Israeli represents Jew in terms of the Holocaust, it is noteworthy that one of the songs for which Haza is known was part of the school’s Holocaust ceremony. For work on Yemen Jewry see Bar-Yitshak (2005). For work about Yemenite Jews in Israel with a focus on the alleged kidnapping of hundreds of Yemenite babies in the 1950s (who were given to Ashkenazi parents to raise) see
song, with a student choir backing her up and with piano accompaniment. The instrumentals before the vocals sound the mix of East and West for which Ofra Haza is well known, combining Arabic and European ornamentation in one song. The lyrics begins with the refrain:

Tell me how to stop the tears
Tell me where there is a different world in which to live
Tell me why there isn’t reality, only illusions
So why to try, or to continue now to cry
Along the length of the sea, there are no waves
There is a world broken into slivers on the pier

The voices of the high school youth don’t sound big enough to fill the sound of the music. I have a sense of a karaoke performance, but one that is performed with utter seriousness. The kids are singing in Hebrew, a song by a Yemenite Jewish woman who sings in Hebrew, Arabic and Aramahic, about a world broken into slivers, with lyrics asking how to stop the tears. They are singing this song on Israel’s national day of remembrance of the Jews who were killed in the Holocaust in Europe. As soon as the song is over, two students begin to read fragments of narratives narrated in the first person from children during the Holocaust.

I don’t understand why. The people in green shout all the time. It scares my little brother. They, the green people, put my father on the other side. Me and my mother stayed alone. Father blows us a kiss, and is hit hard by a rifle from the people in green. Come back quickly daddy, don’t leave us alone. What luck that I brought with me Mishka, the doll that I got from daddy last year, when I was five.

Madmoni-Gerber (2009). For an analysis of the significance of Jewish immigrants from Yemen for how class, labour and ethnic differences came to matter in Jewish and non-Jewish relations in pre-state Zionist settlement in Palestine, see Lockman (1996).
Another student continues:

It was hot when we entered the corridor. They helped us to take off our clothes. The blue dress that I was wearing mother put on the side. Where are we going mother, I asked. To a hot shower. Maybe after the shower I can get a new dress I thought. New and white, like Mishka’s. It is suffocating here and the darkness is scary. I don’t want to be here. I want daddy. I want daddy.\(^5\)

The teenager’s voice is high-pitched and magnified through the microphone, clearly resonant and cutting through the darkness of the auditorium. I have a confused impression of a child imitating an adult mixed with an impression of a young adult imitating a child.

Another student begins reading from a poem which is a well known song in Israel:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Guard over the world boy} \\
\text{There are things that are forbidden to see} \\
\text{Guard over the world boy} \\
\text{If you will see you will stop to be} \\
\text{Hero of the world boy} \\
\text{With the smile of Kings} \\
\text{Guard over the world boy} \\
\text{Because we don’t anymore succeed.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\text{Guard over the world boy}
\]

\(^5\) The students in the ceremony are reading these narratives in Hebrew. The Hebrew word for daddy, \textit{aba}, is used here. This would not have been the language or the word used by the Jewish child in the concentration camp, and we do not know from what is read which language the child was speaking, or which word she used for “daddy.” See chapter three of this dissertation for a consideration of the significance of Hebrew and language more generally for an understanding of the concept of the political in terms of Israeli state formation.
The reading shifts into singing, as another student begins to sing the song, and gradually is accompanied by the students standing behind her. After they are finished, there is a brief moment of silence and then the sound of a train rushing over tracks comes through the audio system in the darkened auditorium. This was followed by a brief performance by another group of students. The ceremony continued in this vein, with students taking turns reading and singing. The ceremony was conducted mostly by the students themselves, but towards the end, the principal came to the stage to speak.

Most of the ethnic groups in Israel have their special days which specify what's unique about each group. For example the Moroccans have the Mimuna, the have Persians have their day, the Russians have the Day of Revolution, the Yemenites have the Teymanyada, etc. On these days all the families get together, the extended families and the nuclear families and through special rituals each group specifies its uniqueness. We too the group of the Holocaust survivors from the family of Gazet, have our special day, the Holocaust Day. On this day my family takes note of the survival of the family and the rising new generations, despite the attempts of the Nazis to destroy them. The gathering takes place at the cemetery at Holon, where the family of Lodz made a memorial for the people who perished. This is the only place in which a grandmother and a grandfather, aunts and uncles exist for me. My name is Shuli and I am the daughter of Irena and Maximilian Gazette Zal, may they rest in peace, who died in the land of Israel after creating a home for their new family after the Holocaust. The granddaughter of Avraham and Gazette Zal and the niece of Irahmiel, Sarah, Esther, and Rahes Zal, who were killed in the Treblinka camp in 1943 by the Nazis. This tradition of the gathering of the family since it arrived from Poland and on to the youngest great grandchildren was initiated by my mother Irena Zal, survivor of the Lodz ghetto, who in her will asked us to continue with this tradition.

---

6 The word which the teacher uses here is edot. The English translation is usually “ethnic groups,” but in Hebrew the word does not actually signify ethnicity but a sense of group that can be understood in terms of ethnicity, but also in terms of sharing something else in common. But I do want to draw attention here to the ways in which the teacher references not only different kinds of groups here within the group “Jews,” but also a very different set of commemorative days through which these groups are marked.
Before everyone stands to sing the national anthem, two students read the last lines of a poem in unison: “We are here, as a last respect, and promise that they won’t lose anymore, and that we will remember. We vow to remember, a thing not to forget, and not to forget a thing.” One of the students then asked everyone to stand, and everyone in the auditorium sings Israel’s national anthem, “Ha Tikvah” (The Hope).

During such ceremonies, Israeli Jews across their differences are defined through the commemoration of the Jews who were killed in the Holocaust. The Israeli-Jew defines itself in relation to the diasporic Jew, who is referenced as a victim, as exiled, weak, and as an animal. Israeli-Jew, even in such a context dominated by the history of the Holocaust, is also defined through reference to the diversity of cultures and places of origin of Jews, including Jews from Arab countries. This diversity is referenced both implicitly, for example in the singing of Ofra Haza, and explicitly, as when the teacher names different Jewish groups in terms of the cultural and national origins and cultural

---

7 Israel’s national anthem comes from a verse in the poem Tikvateinu (Our Hope) written by Naphtali Herz Imber in 1887, which Samuel Cohen turned into a song based on the melody of an old Moldavian-Romanian folk song on which Bedrich Smetana’s “The Modau” is also based (Eisenberg 2006). Benny Morris (1999) has drawn attention to how the song was a point of political tension between the British and the Zionists in the Yishuv; the former temporarily banned public performances of the song in 1919. In her account of the role of music in Nazi concentration and interment camps, Shirli Gilbert (2005) reports that some concentration camp inmates sang the song in the entrance to the gas chambers in Auschwitz while being beaten by their Nazi guards. Hatikvah was also sung at the Zionist Congresses in Basle and at Israel’s Declaration of Establishment in Tel Aviv in 1948. It was officially declared to be Israel’s national anthem in 2004.
days of importance. Differences among Jews are thus acknowledged, including the difference between Jews from Europe and from the Middle East in their different relations to WWII. But these differences do not in the time of the memorial ceremony translate into a question about what defines Jew. At the same time, this commemoration and these acknowledgements happen in Israel, as Israeli, and in Hebrew. In other words, they do not happen in a language or place defined only as Jewish, but rather in a language and a place defined as Israeli. Israeli speaks in the name of the Jew, but not as the Jew.

What then, does the category Israeli-Jew signify, and on what kind of political framework is it based?

In my investigation of this question during the three years of field research in Israel which formed the main fieldwork on which this writing is based, I focused on three different “sites”: 1) a working class neighborhood in Bat Yam, south of Tel Aviv; 2) the sites of struggle in the courts and on the ground over the construction of the separation barrier between the Israeli settlement Modi’in Illit and the Palestinian village Bil’in in the West Bank, and; 3) official state policy regarding demography and security, including legislation about reproduction, exit and entry, citizenship, military service, marriage and housing. Put in general terms, I wanted to understand what it was that constituted the

---

8 The Israeli-Jew in such ceremonies is also situated generationally, in relation to the Jewish child in the Holocaust, as a child whose presumed innocence is lost, who must figure out how to manage as an adult, with the knowledge that the adults, the presumed sovereigns, cannot be counted on to know any better than the child how to manage. I address this generational relation in chapter five through a focus on temporality in the relation between Israeli and Jew in terms of a concept of the archive.
space of the political through the category Jew-Israeli. I was confounded by the combination of difference that seemed attached to this category, in which much of what both Israel and Jew were defined in opposition to appeared to be a part of this category, while at the same time still also defined in opposition to it: European versus Middle Eastern or Arab, diasporic versus ingathering, religious versus secular, masculine versus effeminate, Yiddish versus Hebrew, Hebrew versus Arabic. Nothing seemed capable of making a claim to represent anything beyond itself, or to adequately represent itself without a difference from within interrupting such representation through reference to another internal difference that was simultaneously external to itself, whether a neighborhood in terms of a city, a city in terms of the country, or an individual in terms of the various categories into which he or she might be placed. And yet, there was also something distinctly “Israeli” about the specificity of how these interruptions of self-representation were marked. So part of what I sought to understand was how boundaries between inside and outside – the state, the citizenry, the Jewish citizens, the Jews, those to be defended and those understood as a threat or as a potential threat – were defined through the category Israeli-Jew.

**From the Man on the Corner to the State**

The diversity of ways in which Israeli defines Jew that I pointed to above in the Holocaust memorial ceremony in Ramat Yosef’s high school was in a different way also a visible and an audible part of life in the neighborhood of Ramat Yosef itself. I spent many days going to talk with people sitting outside the neighborhood stores there, and
sometimes going to their homes. For about a year and a half I went consistently to one store and then for another year and a half or so I began visiting the people at another store in a quieter, less visible place tucked in between some of the neighborhood’s oldest buildings. On some days the proverbial “man on the corner” with whom I would sit and chat would be from Iran, on other days from Egypt, Syria, Russia, Iraq or elsewhere. David, for example, the man who, with his wife Levana, owns the store in the quieter spot hidden between the apartment buildings, is from Libya. Levana is from Turkey. Their regular customers, residents of the apartments just meters away, are from all over. Some are Holocaust survivors from Poland, Hungary, and Germany. A few are guestworkers from the Philippines and from sub-Saharan Africa, a handful are Palestinians, called collaborators. Many are from the Middle East and North Africa. Some are from Russia. The younger residents were mostly born in Israel, but many have parents from these different places or from elsewhere. These differences can be heard in their accents, seen in the gestures of their hands, felt in the rhythm of their speech, tasted in the foods of which they tell and invite me to partake. But they are all also Israeli, living and speaking in Hebrew in a small neighborhood built in the 1950s along a stretch of coastline south of Jaffa, one of the world’s oldest ports, and south of Tel Aviv, “the first modern Jewish city” (LeVine 2005).

The different kinds of diversity through which “Jew” is defined on a street corner in the neighborhood of Ramat Yosef can be understood in part through the wider history of Jewish immigration from the 1890s until the present, first to Ottoman Palestine, then to British Mandate Palestine and then to the state of Israel. This immigration was diverse
both in terms of who immigrated and from where, and in terms of the reasons motivating the immigration. Both Israel’s national narrative of state formation and historians of Israel classify Jewish immigration to Israel into six waves or aliyot\(^9\) pre-1948, and then into several post-1948 waves (McCarthy 1990). The reasons for the different immigration waves are reference points within a political context broader than that of Jews; Jewish immigration to British mandate Palestine and then to Israel was part of a global geopolitical landscape of European Enlightenment, imperial history and anticolonial struggle.

The first wave of Jewish Zionist immigration to Palestine took place between the early 1880s and 1903 and was made up mostly of Eastern European Jews and a small group of Jews from Yemen, many of whom came to what the early Zionists called “the New Yishuv” (the New Settlement).\(^{10}\) While a central component of the Zionist movement was to establish agricultural settlements in Palestine, most of the immigrants coming in this first wave of Jewish immigration went to urban centers due to economic hardship (McCarthy 1990) and because religious motives and fleeing religious persecution brought them to Palestine more than did Zionist aspirations (Smith 2007). In contrast, the second wave of Jewish immigration, from 1904 until 1914, included many

\(^9\) The word *aliyah* in Hebrew means a “going up,” from the verb *la’alot* or “to go up.” Shlomo Swirski (1999) points out that “*aliyot* – the plural for *aliyah*, [is also] the term for going up to the podium to read from the torah. The term evokes a biblical sense of the act of return to the ancient land of Israel” (6).

\(^{10}\) I will use this term in the rest of the dissertation when referring to Zionist references to nation-building work in British Mandate Palestine.
young Zionists propelled by socialist and Zionist ideals of creating a new society, and included many of those who would become famous as Zionism’s founders, including David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister.

The immigrants in the second wave came predominantly from Russia and had been shaped in socialist and intellectual circles there but also by a commitment to Zionist ideals of creating a new Jewish society with a socialist agricultural basis. As Zachary Lockman (1997) has analyzed in the context of Yemenite immigration to Palestine, these ideals were based on Jewish labour to the exclusion of non-Jewish Palestinian agricultural labour, a factor which thwarted attempts among Jewish and non-Jewish agricultural labourers to organize for better working conditions. These Jewish socialists established two groups: Poale Zion (Workers of Zion) and Hapoel Hatzair (The Young Worker) which worked to establish Jewish agricultural settlements based on socialist principles of communal life. These efforts were supported in part by the Jewish National Fund and by the World Zionist Organization; by 1914 fourteen of the 45 Jewish agricultural settlements in Palestine were sponsored by the WZO, and Jews owned about 100,000 acres of land (Smith 40). The Jewish immigrants from Europe at this time comprised about 31 percent of the Jewish population in Palestine, and differed from the native Jewish population in culture, language and in their relation to the native non-Jewish inhabitants.

The subsequent immigration waves were fueled in part by growing political turmoil in Europe, the former Soviet Union, and the Middle East. The third wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine, like the one before it, came mainly from Russia between
1919 and 1923, amid the turmoil following WWI, the British conquest of Ottoman Palestine, and the Balfour Declaration. Similar to the immigrants in the second wave, many of those who came were trained in agriculture and were known as halutzim, or pioneers. Between 1923 and 1924 the fourth wave of immigration brought another approximately 82,000 Jews to Palestine, many of whom came fleeing increasing anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe. Many of these immigrants went to the growing urban centers and small towns. The fifth wave of immigration refers to the immigrants from Germany and other parts of Europe who arrived in Palestine in the 1930s who together totaled approximately 250,000; more than half of these came between 1933 and 1936. In 1936, the British began to refuse entry to Jewish immigrants to Palestine, including Jewish refugees from the Holocaust. The Jews who continued to arrive in Palestine after 1936 until Israel’s establishment in 1948 are referred to as immigrants of Aliyah Bet, which was a clandestine and illegal immigration wave. These underground immigrants included many European professionals, artists, and intellectuals. By 1948, when Israel was established and war broke out between the Jewish inhabitants of the new state and the Palestinians, it was clear to the founders that along with military security concerns, demographic concerns continued to be significant for the goal of establishing a secure Jewish state.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{11}The language of “war broke out” avoids the contentious debates about the specificities of this year long armed conflict between Palestinians and the Israeli armed forces following the UN vote which officially established the new Israeli state. The conflict is called the “War of Independence” by most Israelis, and the “Naqba” (Arabic for “catastrophe”) by most Palestinians.
Demographic concerns about producing and then maintaining a Jewish majority within Israel’s borders propelled Zionist efforts to bring Jews from neighboring Middle Eastern and North African countries to Israel. Between roughly 1948 and the early 1970s, approximately 900,000 Jews came to Israel from the Middle East and North Africa, many of whom came together in large groups in the early 1950s. This “coming to Israel” was often orchestrated by Zionist leaders, and included arrivals of hundreds of people in a matter of hours or days, many of whom left most of their belongings behind in their home countries, and were settled in makeshift tent cities in the peripheries of Israel’s cities. Following Israel’s establishment, the Jewish Agency for Israel was officially responsible for organizing Jewish immigration to Israel. The immigration waves were no longer identified in terms of number, but still fell into identifiable categories by place of origin.

In the 1980s another major immigration wave came, this time from Ethiopia; the Israeli airlift called “Operation Moses” brought between 6,500 to 8,000 Ethiopian Jews from Sudan to Israel between November 1985 and January 1986. As Dina Siegel (1998) explains, after Israel’s victories in the 1967 Six Day War, the former Soviet Union ended its diplomatic relations with Israel and anti-Semitism against Soviet Jews heightened. It became increasingly difficult for Soviet Jews to be openly Jewish, and many assimilated.

Between 700,000 to 800,000 Palestinians were displaced during the conflict; Rashid Khalidi estimates the number displaced constituted at least fifty percent of the Palestinian population living in villages and towns inside Israel’s 1948 borders (Khalidi 1998; Pappe 2006). See also Azoulay 2007; 2008; and 2011 for photographic essays on 1948 and its afterlives in terms of destruction and state formation.  

12 See Karmi, Nocke, Kaniuk and Schlor 2004 for a photographic essay which includes photographs of these arrivals and the tent cities. See Chetrit 2010; Shenhav 2006; Smooha 1992; and Tfadia and Yiftachel 2004 for accounts of Mizrahi immigration to and settlement in Israel.
into non-Jewish Soviet culture. But at the same time, the Israeli military victory and increased discrimination against Jews within the Soviet Union led to greater Zionist organizing than before, which along with international pressure led the Soviet Union to raise the number of Jews it allowed to emigrate. Over the 1970s more than 200,000 Jews emigrated from the formed Soviet Union to Israel. This number rose dramatically after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991; close to one million Soviet Jews have come to Israel since the Soviet Union’s dissolution, and Russian Jews now make up roughly 1/6 of Israel’s Jewish population and 1/7 of the total population of Israeli citizens (Siegel 1998).

The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 thus happened in the context of international tensions that were part of the political disorder of Europe and its colonies in the aftermath of WWII. When the war ended on May 8th, 1945, Europe was faced with multiple challenges; how to deal with war refugees and displaced populations, how to address the questions of responsibility for the war’s atrocities, how to respond to Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe and interests in the Middle East (particularly in Turkey and in Iran), and for France and Great Britain in particular, what to do about increasing demands for independence and anti-colonial struggle in Europe’s colonies. Great Britain was also facing a severe economic crisis. As Charles D. Smith (2007) has noted, it was in this context that by 1948, Britain withdrew from giving financial support to Turkey and Greece and moved towards reducing its imperial expansion while becoming economically dependent on the United States. It was in this context also that tension
developed between Great Britain and the United States about how to respond to competing Palestinian and Zionist claims for statehood.

As the British in Palestine sought to limit Jewish immigration, tension between the British colonial powers and the Jews in Palestine that had begun in 1945 intensified, and at the same time U.S. President Truman became increasingly vocal in support of Zionism and Jewish immigration to Palestine. What came to constitute “Israeli” was thus specific not only to the situations of Jews in different national contexts but was also specific to transnational contexts shaped by Europe’s relations to its colonies and to its internal others, by the Cold War, and by Europe’s shifting colonial and postcolonial relations in North Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Jews thus arrived to Palestine and then Israel for very different reasons, and with different cultural and political backgrounds and investments. In this context, Israel was also explicitly marked as a Jewish country and refuge for Jews, and as a liberal democracy and member of the world’s “family of nations.”

Although Israel was defined predominantly in terms of WWII as a refuge for Jews, the establishment of Israel also, I argue, produced a new category, “Jew-Israeli,” which is defined through the category Jew but is not the same as Jew, and which is

---

13 Smith (2007) suggests that Truman’s support for Zionism, and U.S. support for Zionism more generally, was due to sympathy for the underdog and the plight of the Jewish refugees from the war, but that it was also due to domestic interests in limiting Jewish immigration to the United States in order not to weaken the Zionist argument that a Jewish state was necessary, and because there was not widespread support among Americans for changing immigration laws to allow for the absorption of hundreds of thousands of refugees.
defined through the category of Israeli (as a category of citizenship and nationality within the framework of a modern nation-state) but is not the same as Israeli. Moments in which “Jew” and “Israeli” seem interchangeable, at the same time that their distinction is maintained and explicitly marked, are heightened during memorial ceremonies such as the Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony in Ramat Yosef’s high school which I describe above, but moments in which Jew and Israeli appear interchangeable also exist in the commonplace and everyday. But unlike in such memorial ceremonies, in everyday interactions between people on the street, and in official state policy-making and government debates in the Knesset and elsewhere, alongside such apparent interchangeability between “Jew” and “Israeli” there are continual explicit and implicit questions about what defines “Jew” that call attention to how it is not interchangeable with “Israeli.” I suggest that it is not only “Jew” which comes into question because “Jew” and “Israeli” are not interchangeable, but also “Israeli.”

**Israeli-Jew**

The ways in which these two categories, “Jew” and “Israeli,” put each other into question are particularly visible in three different, but related debates. First, because “Jew” is considered to be a religious category but not only a religious category, and because Israel was established as a secular but Jewish state, the question of how “Jew” is defined comes up in considerations of the relation between religion and secularism in

---

14 It is in this sense also that I suggest that an analysis of Israel-Jew brings into question not only the figure of the Jew and other particular groups (woman, other postcolonial figures, and so on), but also the figure of the purportedly unmarked universal human of European modernity.
terms of state policy. Second, the question of how Jew is defined in relation to the
category of Israeli leads to a question of how woman, and thus also sexual difference, is
to be defined in relation to the categories of Jewish and Israeli. Third, the question about
what defines Jew has been central in debates about whether there is a tension or
contradiction between Israel’s definition as Jewish and Israel’s definition as a liberal
democracy, in part because it highlights the question of how secularism is defined in
relation to religiousity in terms of the universalist ideals of liberalism, but also because it
highlights the question of the relation between claims of an unmarked universalism to the
claims of marked particularity. Israeli state policy is divided between Orthodox and other
religious groups and secularists, and decisions about who is Jewish, whether in terms of
immigration, marriage, and assisted reproduction, and about how, to what degree, and
when to conduct a practice according to Judaism, such as in the blessings said at military
funerals, where and how Jews can be buried, closing streets on the Sabbath, or making
restaurants kosher, are matters of contentious and on-going debates. Asher Cohen and
Bernard Susser (2000), for example, have identified some of the main topics where
secular and religious tensions where have been heightened, including perhaps most
significantly, in the struggle between the state’s judicial and constitutional legislation and
halachic law (Jewish law), decisions about school curriculum, and rules about whether
business and places of entertainment, public streets and bus transportation can be open on
the Jewish Sabbath and on religious holidays.\footnote{Cohen and Susser (2000) draw on what Arend Lijphart (1977) has discussed as...}
religious and secular Jews in Israel’s early years was characterized by efforts “to mediate their differences and moderate potential conflicts through an elaborate system of concessions, mutual deference, and demarcated spheres of autonomy,” but that by the 1980s and 1990s this tension had turned into conflicts in which both are “playing to win” (Ibid. xiv). Cohen and Susser situate their discussion of the secular-religious division in terms of a division between tradition and modernity, and how various forms of Jewish Orthodoxy and Zionism responded to European modernity. They explain this tension through an arrangement known as the status quo, and through what they term “consociational elements,” which they suggest was intended to mediate this relation rather than to achieve consensus (Ibid. 18-19). I am suggesting here that what Cohen and Susser worry is an increasing failure to mediate this relation is due in significant part to the pressures of liberalism to achieve consensus and commonality in terms of group representation, specifically in terms of the conjunction Israeli-Jew.

Calls to identify as a Jew saturate Israeli social and political landscapes in the mundane everyday and in the extraordinary. But these calls to identify as Jewish are not

“consociational” democracy, but distinguish Lijphart’s notion of a consensual consociational democracy from what they discuss as Israel’s manner of “judicializing political issues” in its consociational style of politics.” “Consensual democracies, such as Switzerland and Belgium,” they write, “differ from the consociational model in that they incorporate intercommunal agreements and their structural arrangements in formal constitutional documents. These arrangements are, therefore, governed by rigorous and principled legal standards. Cosociational models like Israel, by contrast, are neither notably virtuous in character nor in line with the high standards of good governance” (73-74). Instead, Israel “judicializes political issues” by “bringing intractable public issues to the arbitration of the court.” I address this topic further in chapter seven, where I suggest that such “judicializing of political issues” in Israel reveals the violence at the foundation of the law.
articulated in terms of religious practice but rather in terms of cultural and traditional customs. Jewish tradition, culture, are marked through reference to religious practice and tradition through public life through state institutions including government itself, in school, holidays, and the marking of the date according to the Hebrew calendar in the newspaper. The Ultra-Orthodox attempt to shape such institutional and daily discourse according to religious precepts, and the tensions between the orthodox and the rest of the population in terms of such efforts are a part of everyday discussion, jokes, and argument, and can inform decisions about which route to take to work, which bus to ride, and which neighborhood you live in. The Ultra-Orthodox are often referred to disparagingly by Jewish Israelis who don’t identify as religious; the Ultra-Orthodox are criticized for not “doing their part for the country” because they are often exempted from doing military service, receive significant government subsidies to support the large families they have, and because the men spend their time studying the torah rather than going to work (and thus are understood as being a financial drain on society rather than as contributing to the economy). The tensions between the ultra-orthodox and non-religious Israeli Jews also frequently arise in terms of arguments about women.

Every so often, including at the time of this writing, debates rage in Israel about what the rules should be governing the comportment and place of women in terms of the demands of some ultra-orthodox that women abide by certain interpretations of ultra-orthodox Judaism regarding women. Although the specificity of these debates takes form through different examples, in general the debates are about whether or not women should be governed by rules different than those for men, whether and to what degree
they should be required to be “modest” in the public sphere, and what the relation of the non-orthodox should be to whatever rules govern predominantly orthodox spaces in Israel. Segments of the ultra-orthodox (only one segment of those categorized as “religious Jews” in Israel) call for the separation of men and women in public spaces, often at the cost of women’s freedom to choose where and how they present themselves in public.

In 2011 and 2012, calls for legislation requiring women to ride on the back of buses whose routes pass through ultra-orthodox neighborhoods, the boycott by Israeli orthodox soldiers of military ceremonies in which female soldiers sing (it is forbidden for ultra-orthodox men to hear the sound of a woman singing), the removal of park benches by residents in a religious neighborhood where orthodox women would sit with their children, spitting on religious girls not sufficiently covered in the eyes of orthodox men, and the insistence of the Israeli Health Ministry in its award ceremony that Israeli pediatrics professor Channa Maayan, to whom they were awarding a prize for a book she wrote on hereditary diseases common to Jews, must have a male colleague accept the award on her behalf, all generated outcry from multiple quarters in Israel, both within and beyond the religious population, and became front page news in the New York Times and elsewhere. New York Times reporters Ethan Bronner and Isabel Kershner noted that “All of this seems anomalous to most people in a country where five young women just graduated from the air force’s prestigious pilots course and a woman presides over the
Supreme Court” (Jan. 14, 2012). It may seem anomalous to many in the sense that there is, indeed, a strong sense in Israel, and in the history of Zionism, that women should be allowed to do and be as men. But as Nira Yuval-Davis (2005) has pointed out, it is also nothing new that some ultra-Orthodox in Israel attempt to institute their ideas regarding religious precepts, regarding women and otherwise, in the public sphere.

Response to these attempts to position women in the backseat and out of the public eye comes from many different corners, within the orthodox communities, from rabbis, in the media, and in the government. Zionism has historically included women in efforts to produce “the New Jew.” One of Israel’s most famous prime ministers, Golda Meir, was the fourth woman in the world to hold such a position, and was known, like Margaret Thatcher, as the “Iron Lady.”

David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, referred to her as the best man in government. She was famous for hosting world leaders

---

16 Thanks to Diane Nelson for bringing the January 2012 NYT headlines to my attention.

17 Yuval-Davis (2005) addresses the relation between the orthodox and the nonreligious in terms of women in the public sphere through focusing specifically on questions about control of women and religious legislation regarding matters such as marriage, divorce, and biological reproduction. For a discussion of Orthodox women in Israel specifically in terms of the Haredi education system in Israel see El-Or (2005). For a discussion of the Jewish religious practice of the mikveh, or ritual purificatory bath for women in Israel, see Sered (2005).

18 See Blema S. Steinberg 2008 for a discussion of Meir in comparison to Thatcher as well as with Ghandi. For Meir’s own autobiographical account of her life, see Meir 1975. There are also numerous biographical accounts of Meir as Prime Minister and in terms of her life more generally, from her son’s biography (Meir 1983), to Elinor Burkett’s Golda (2008) and Elijahu Agres’s Golda Meir: portrait of a Prime Minister (1969). Meir is also portrayed in the film A Woman Called Golda, directed by Alan Gibson, in which Ingrid Bergman plays the part of Meir (Gibson 1982).
in her kitchen, serving them coffee and sweets in between driving hard bargains. Women worked in the fields alongside the men, and fought alongside men in the Palmach, the armed Jewish group that fought against both the British and Palestinians and which was the predecessor to the Israel Defense Forces. Military service is mandatory for both women and men, although it is almost one year shorter for women than for men and women rarely serve in direct combat positions.¹⁹ As Yuval-Davis (2005) has pointed out, the Israeli army was the first army to recruit women by national law, but as she explores in the context of Israel, “the incorporation of women into the military may change the nature of, rather than eliminate, the subordination of women” (649). In her earlier work, Yuval-Davis (1985) also draws attention to such subordination of women in terms of the ways in which female Israeli soldiers are frequently placed in positions subordinate to men in the military. But, as feminist theory has detailed in its various iterations in

¹⁹ Military service is not mandatory for Orthodox Jews, including men, but is mandatory for women. This difference has not been, to my knowledge, addressed in terms of gender or sexual difference, but rather in terms of arguments about loyalty to the country and whether or not the Ultra-orthodox should be exempt from military service on the grounds that such service is at the expense of their obligations and loyalty to Judaism. I would argue that it is significant that this difference has been framed in these terms; while gender has been addressed in terms of women’s service in the military, and religion has been addressed in terms of Orthodox exemption from military service, the relation between gender and religion in the context of Israeli military service is not addressed, despite the growing attention to gender in terms of anti-Semitic stereotypes of the diasporic Jew and in terms of the construction of the ideal of the “New Jew.” For accounts of encounters between women and the Israeli military from both within and outside the military and Israeli-Jewish society, see Abdo-Zubi and Lenjitin’s (2002) edited collection Women and the Politics of Military Confrontation: Palestinian and Israeli Gendered Narratives of Dislocation. See in particular Mazali’s chapter, which offers a thoughtful discussion of the relation between Jewish women, and specifically between mother and daughter, in the context of militarization and Israeli nationalism, and of the author’s experience as a soldier. For earlier work on women in the Israeli army see Izraeli (1997).
Europe and the United States, to be granted rights to be like a man does not necessarily translate into an acknowledgement or recognition of the difference of woman, even when these rights do lead to women and men being placed in the same positions within hierarchical structures. Nor does the granting of rights to be like a man answer the question of what defines sexual difference. Although one of the central questions of this dissertation is how to understand the concept of sexual difference through the lens of contemporary Israeli contexts, the dissertation does not focus on “real Israeli women,” which is to say, on women as we think we know and name them. Women in this sense are included, referenced and addressed, but the focus is not on them more than on anyone else. Instead, I arrive at an understanding of sexual difference, and of the figure of woman, through an analysis of the ways in which Israeli-Jew signifies in Israel.

I began this work with a question about how to understand what “Israeli” means, given Israel’s definition as both Jewish and as a liberal democracy. The differences that characterize Israel, including the differences expressed in the form of conflicts and disagreements over what it means that Israel defines itself as both Jewish and as a liberal democracy, are often parsed into positions that make claims about what Israel is or isn’t, and should or shouldn’t be. Israel’s Declaration of Establishment explicitly declares Israel as both a Jewish state and as a state that “will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants;… it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religious, race or sex; it will guarantee
freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture….”. Almost all analysis and reference to Israel is situated either within a framework which criticizes these claims to being simultaneously a liberal democracy and a Jewish state, or within a framework which defends these claims.

Critics of Israel, both in scholarship about Israel and in the popular press and elsewhere, point to what they call “the Judaization” of the land and society as evidence of what they see as the impossibility of Israel being both democratic and Jewish. Oren Yiftachel (2006), for example, presents the concept of ethnocracy as “a most appropriate account for the development of Zionist society and regime in Israel/Palestine” (3). He writes that “ethnocratic regimes promote the expansion of the dominant group in contested territory and its domination of power structures while maintaining a democratic façade” (Ibid.). Others have focused on Judaization in terms of “Hebraization” and language, while others place their attention on ethnic differences within the Jewish population, most commonly on what Ella Shohat (1988) has called the “oxymoronic entity” of the Arab Jew (Mizrahim) and the ways in which the category of Jews from

---


21 Many critiques of Israel’s “Judaization” focus on questions of land, space, and territory. Benvenisti (2002) has detailed some of the projects of the Israel Exploration Society (IES), who he compares to the British Royal Geographical Society in the Victorian era and whose objective it was, he reports, “to develop and to advance the study of the Land, its history, and pre-history, accentuating the settlement aspect and the sociohistorical connection between the People of Israel and Eretz Israel” (11-12). See also Weizman (2007; 2007a) for a critique of Israeli geopolitics through a focus on architecture and the use of space in which he argues that the control and use of space is a form of weaponry used in Israeli occupation of Palestinian people and land.
North Africa and the Middle East challenges Zionist accounts of a collective Jewish “we” based on Ashkenazi European narratives.22

Such criticism of Israeli claims to being both a liberal democracy and Jewish has helped with identifying the pervasive and diverse ways in which Israeli state power shapes Jewish and Palestinian lives. Herzog (2004) for example, has drawn attention to the mostly absent voices of Palestinian women with Israeli citizenship, and to how despite the extension of universal citizenship to both Palestinians and Jews inside Israel, the principle of republican participation was largely limited to the Jewish population in part through a discourse across the political spectrum which recognizes citizenship in terms of participation in the public sphere, thereby excluding Palestinian women who define themselves in terms of the private sphere of the home. From a different angle, Stein (2008) has turned attention to the sometimes unexpected ways through which Israeli state power is wielded; arguing that tourist practices provided Jewish-Israelis tools with which to shape a new Israeli-Jewish imaginary, she shows how these practices make visible Jewish desires for that which is Arab, and in so doing make visible the fictions of claims that Israel is not part of the Middle East or not already permeated with people and things Arab. In a similar vein, she has drawn attention to how Zionism’s emphasis on a return to the land reveals the political nature and Palestinian traces of Israeli travel itineraries

22 See also Shohat’s “Reflections by an Arab Jew” in Bint Jbeil: http://www.bintjbeil.com/E/occupation/arab_jew.html Last accessed on April 20th, 2012. For other accounts of Mizrahim in Israel see also Chetrit 2000, 2010; Shenhav 2006; Tzfdia and Yiftachel 2004. For criticisms of Israeli anthropology for not adequately taking account of Mizrahim and especially of Mizrahi women, see Lavie 2002.
within what is considered Israeli-Jewish space (Stein 2010). I will suggest in what follows that claims that Israel is not already part of the Middle East or is not Arab are only one element among Israeli narratives and self-representations which in and of themselves already bear contradictory claims and challenges to any concept of Israel or “Israeli-Jewishness” as being defined in terms of one place of origin. In this sense, I read analyses such as those of Shohat (2003), Shenhav (2006) and others as echoing, albeit often in a different political framework, the voices and presence of Mizrahim and others in Israeli-Jewish society, who make it all but impossible not to hear the Arab in the Israeli-Jew.23 But I am also arguing that the relations of Israeli-Jew to the figure of the diasporic Jew and to the figure of the universal human of European modernity, along with the multiple origin narratives of Jew, are no less significant for an understanding of Israeli-Jew and its accompanying political frameworks.

On the other side of these debates, Israel is defended as both a Jewish state and as a liberal democracy; for example Alexander Yakobson and Amnon Rubinstein (2010) argue that there is no contradiction in Israel’s claims to being both a Jewish state and a liberal democracy, and that “it is the denial of the legitimacy of the concept of a Jewish state that undermines the principles of universal equality, since it denies the right of the Jewish people to self-determination and national independence” (3). They point out that what they call the public character of other countries is determined predominantly by the

---

23 See also chapter three for how Arab is made audible in Jewish-Israeli Israel in terms of language.
majority, who shape the culture and identity of this character, while giving consideration to minorities. Other countries which are widely considered to be exemplary liberal democracies, such as Norway, Sweden, Denmark, as well as the UK, Switzerland, and Hungary, among others, all have the sign of the cross on their flags, Yakobson and Rubinstein point out. The cross, they also point out, is not a “neutral” symbol, and not all the citizens of these countries can identify with it (Ibid. 3). In making these observations, Yakobson and Rubinstein argue that criticism of Israel for being Jewish holds Israel to standards based on an abstract and utopian model of liberal democracy which other liberal democracies also do not reflect.

What perhaps makes Israel a particularly complex case, they suggest, is the “peculiar situation of the Arab minority in Israel, which results from the prolonged Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian conflict, [which] creates distinct and difficult problems” (Ibid. 5). They go on to cite legal cases in which Israeli laws against discrimination among the country’s citizens were employed to try to protect against violations of non-Jewish citizens and to rectify past discrimination against them. In so doing, they also point out that every country has minority populations and that the majority defines a non-neutral national identity, sometimes one that is identified as the same as the civic category of belonging through citizenship, of which the most clear example, they suggest, is France, whereas in Israel the civic identity and the various national identities within the citizenry are different, including both the category of the majority (Jew) and the category of the nation in terms of civic belonging (Israeli). While thus far their argument is fairly compelling, it is here where the question of demography
and the practical problems posed by Israel’s population and that of the Palestinians without Israeli citizenship becomes particularly visible.

While it is true, as Yakobson and Rubinstein point out, that Israeli legislation has in place extensive and specific laws against the discrimination of minorities within Israel’s citizenry, including Arab-Israelis, it is also true that this legislation is not always effective, both within the courts and outside them, at preventing such discrimination. Also, as Yakobson and Rubinstein themselves make explicit, they are distinguishing between discrimination within Israel’s citizenry and discrimination outside of Israel’s citizenry in terms of access to this citizenry. This distinction is especially prominent in terms of the Law of Return. They situate their own view about the Law of Return in relation to the view of Baruch Kimmerling, former Professor of Sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. As Yakobson and Rubinstein note, Kimmerling (1989) viewed the Law of Return as a significant obstacle to Israel’s ability to democratize and grant civil liberties to all. Yakobson and Rubinstein argue that because the Law of Return does not discriminate between different categories of citizens within Israel, it doesn’t place non-Jewish Israeli citizens in a position inferior to that of Jewish citizens. Furthermore, they suggest, there is no basis in international law, nor in the practices of other liberal democracies, for claims that Israel doesn’t have the right to treat non-Israeli Jews preferentially (Ibid. 125-126).

What Yakobson and Rubinstein fail to address, however, is the question of what happens if the majority of the citizenry is no longer Jewish, and the implications of the fact that state policy, and investments in Israel being a Jewish state, are inclined to try to
prevent such a possibility. Relatedly, they do not address how investments in Israel being a Jewish state demographically might relate to the “prolonged… Israeli-Palestinian conflict [which] creates distinct and difficult problems” (Ibid. 5). Not coincidentally perhaps, they also do not address the many examples in which the law is employed to discriminate, or to allow for discrimination, against Israel’s non-Jewish citizens. It is the tension that arises from this question which so often provokes different variations of the above arguments about whether or not there is a contradiction between Israel’s claims to be a liberal democracy and to be Jewish. But it is precisely this combination of oppositional, varied and seemingly incompatible and contradictory positions in Israeli society, but also within Israel’s juridical legislation, which make it impossible, as I argue in what follows, to explain Israeli political space either as fitting the claims of liberal democracy or as fitting the claims of accusations against Israel for not abiding by the principles of liberal democracy.

Efraim Karsh and Dan Urian (1999) have suggested that Zionism’s success can be understood in part in terms of the fact that most Jewish Israelis take the Jewish identity of the state for granted. Zionism, they write, subordinated a religious Judaism to an idea of a state which was “to be Jewish in its national ethos – historically, culturally, religiously – just as France was French and England was English” (2). But Zionism, precisely because it retained both the figure of Jew and produced the figure of Israeli, is not based on the same kinds of claims attached to how “France was French and England was English.” Israel retains a distinction between the categories “Israeli” and “Jewish,” while joining them together. In so doing, Israeli contexts mark the figure of the Jew as singular in
relation to the universal human citizen subject of liberalism and in relation to other particular groups.

The Jew in Israel, or in other words, the category “Jew-Israeli,” moves back and forth between multiple binaries, including Arab and Jew, European and non-European, modern and traditional, masculine and feminine, victim and perpetrator, weak and strong, West and East, returned and in exile, present and absent. The ways in which the arguments about Israel’s claims to being both Jewish and a liberal democracy are usually framed do not account for how Israeli-Jew is not one or the other of these binaries, and so such accounts also do not adequately explain how one might understand the challenges of Jew-Israeli to these binaries. Both individuals and social and geopolitical space in Israel pose these challenges within single subjects, moments, and spaces signified in one proper name, through the disruption of self-representation by differences internal to any given entity.

These differences include the different accents and words from other languages within Hebrew and the many other languages heard and seen in Israeli streets and homes, they include the different sounds and sights on the street of premodern and modern times and of religious and secular traditions, and the differences over how Jew itself is to be defined. The sounds of horses’ hooves on the pavement mingle with car traffic, mosques’ calls to prayer provide a haunting audio in the echoing acoustics of Yafo that is heard on South Tel Aviv’s beaches, church steeples, mosque domes and synagogues mark the skyline, orthodox Jews wearing tall fur hats and long black coats over suits in the middle of summer’s sizzling heat share the streets with middle aged shirtless men riding bikes in
shorts and flip flops in the street in Tel Aviv’s city center. The differences are there in so many ways that difference does not stand out as difference because it is not difference from a norm but difference as the norm. The difference is there between the young Israeli man who opened a tea store on the corner of Rehov ha’Aliyah Street and Street who introduced himself as “I am gay,” and the nuts and dried fruits store run by Persians directly across the street. Delicate china tea pots, cups and saucers and finely ground tea leaves stand opposite the kilos of multiple varieties of raisins (green, purple, and black of different sizes), prunes, figs, mango, pistachios, sunflower seeds, pumpkins seeds, peanuts, walnuts, pecans and more that fill bins and bags which line the sidewalk outside the store and the open window of the storefront across the street. Inside there are more rows of seeds, nuts, candied ginger and other fruit. In between dealing with the steady stream of customers the men spanning several generations who run the store speak to each other in Persian. The store next door, a little bit smaller but not less crowded, has a similar set up but with bins of spices which perfume the air, dominated by the heady scent of cardamom. Signs in different colors, yellow and red and orange with black lettering in Hebrew, made from a variety of different materials, plastic, metal, cardboard, and not uniform in size, hang above the doorways to these and other stores. Telephone and electricity wires cross each other and hang on and in between the buildings across the street, looking as if they will get tangled in the trees and serving as visible reminders of the city’s effort to modernize. Bauhaus buildings grace the street corners, some crumbling and others partially renovated, painted subtle shades of pink, yellow and blue that seem to change color as the Mediterranean sun rises and sets overhead. These
differences are European and Arab, modern and premodern, urban and rural, religious and secular, between but also internal to Europe and to Arab. These are all differences present on a few blocks in southern Tel Aviv, but as one widens the scale the differences only multiply, within the neighborhood and then between the neighborhoods and then between the cities, villages, and towns that mark Israel’s landscape.  

The Israeli street is a place full of arguments, complaints, demands, blaring horns, and people poking their noses into each other’s business. People frequently challenge each other or enter into curious and sometimes nosy conversation with strangers. These arguments and intrusions into others business range from questions of war, to what kind of socks you are wearing, to what the government is doing with your money, to why you are not smiling (even though most people don’t walk around smiling). The Israeli Knesset is known for ferocious arguments that sometimes threaten to break out into wrestling matches, and the street is full of bumper stickers, commercials and signs making political claims and arguments in opposition with one another. In the introduction to her essay about political bumper stickers in Israel, Hagar Salamon (2001) describes her commute to work at Jerusalem’s Mt. Scopus campus, describing it as “more than an everyday act of commuting.” She goes on to write:

I usually follow a route that crosses the borderline, officially obliterated but socially still very much in existence, between West Jerusalem (which was under Jordanian sovereignty prior to the 1967 war) and East Jerusalem (under Jordanian sovereignty until the war). Sometimes this route is blocked because of political

---

24 See Barbara Mann (2010) for an account of historiography about the city of Tel Aviv through a focus on questions of space in fiction and memoir about the city.
tension, demonstrations, or visits by foreign dignitaries. If this is the case, I take an alternative route, crossing a second dividing line within Jerusalem between neighborhoods inhabited by secular or moderately religious Jews and those inhabited by ultra-orthodox and often anti-Zionist Jews. In this case, I must avoid being delayed by an ultra-orthodox demonstration, wedding celebration, or funeral of one of the ultra-orthodox rabbis.

Even if my journey passes without incident, however, it offers an opportunity to consider the complex and multifaceted nature of Israeli political reality as embodied by these dividing lines. The cars on the road are themselves emblems of the profound emotions of owners and audience alike. The cars that pass me are plastered with political stickers, creating a rich mosaic of terse slogans engaged in a dynamic and profound discourse. (2001, 2)

In what might be thought of as a street song version of Walter Benjamin’s idea to write a book composed entirely of quotes, a well known Israeli song written by Israeli author David Grossman and sung by the Israeli hip hop group Dag Nachash, references this diversity in lyrics composed solely of the lines of bumper stickers familiar on Israel’s streets. These are the lyrics of the song (each line from a popular bumper sticker in Israel):

An entire generation demands peace. Let the IDF win. A strong people makes peace. Let the IDF bring them down. No peace with Arabs. Don’t give them guns. Draft for everyone. Exemption for everyone. There is no despair in the world. YESHA [Judea, Samaria and Gaza] are here [part of Israel]. Na, Nah, Nahman, the faithful. No fear, the Messiah is in the city. No Arabs; no terror attacks. The Supreme Court endangers Jews. The people are with the Golan. The people favor transfer. Friend [reference to Rabin] you are missed. The Holy One, blessed is he, we vote for you. Direct elections are bad. The Holy One, blessed is he, we are your zealots. Death to zealots.

Refrain

How much evil is it possible to swallow?
Father have mercy, father have mercy
They call me Nachman and I stammer
How much evil is it possible to swallow?
Father have mercy, father have mercy
Thank God I am breathing, anyway
A state of halacha, the state is gone [the word for Jewish law, halacha, and the word for went or left, conjugated for the feminine in the third person past tense, halcha, is almost the same word in Hebrew] He who is born wins. Long live the Messiah. I have security with the peace of Sharon. Hebron, from time immemorial and forever. He who is not born loses. Hebron, city of the Fathers. Peace through transfer. Kahane was right. CNN lies. We need a strong leader. Peace please. Thanks for security. We don’t have children for unnecessary wars. The left helps the Arabs. Bibi is good for the Jews. Justice for Oslo criminals. We here, they there. Do not abandon brothers. Uprooting settlements divides the people. Death to traitors. Let the animals to live. Death to values.

Refrain


(Dag Nahash 2003)

What I am marking as a diversity of social, linguistic, cultural, and political identifications and positions in Israel both within and beyond the category “Jewish-Israeli” returns again and again, implicitly and explicitly, to the question not only of what is a Jew, but also to the question of what is an Israeli-Jew, and how connecting Jew to Israeli might help with understanding both the category Jew and the category Israeli.

---

25 Vinitzky-Seroussi (2009) offers an analysis of Rabin’s assassination in terms of the struggles over how Rabin and his assassination have been commemorated in Israel. She argues that a conflicted political culture such as Israel’s is likely to produce what she calls a fragmented commemoration while a consensual political culture is more likely to produce what she calls a multivocal commemoration. A fragmented commemoration, she suggests, “has the ability to generate some social flexibility and thus enable the survival of informal and un-institutionalized discourses that probably would not have found a place in a more unitary and formal commemorative context” (4). In Israel, an analysis of commemoration, she argues, reveals the extent to which Israeli society is not only politicized and fragmented through revealing how sites of memorialization are sites in which different narratives and their accompanying political agendas, values and cultural priorities clash. They also reveal the extent to which Israel is focused on the commemoration of death and memorialization; “Israel rarely, if ever, publicly established any day that failed to bear a connection to death and sacrifice” (Ibid. 156).
The signifier “Jew” is not stable and has no single or fixed definition. What the Jew does consistently signify in Israel is that it is remembered in terms of exile and return. The Jew in Israel is referenced in terms of exile and return in official state documents, including the Declaration of Israel’s Establishment, in terms of the state’s legislation and relation to religious law as I discuss briefly above, in terms of how holidays such as Passover are referenced in relation to Israel, and in myriad everyday ways in conversations in the street, in the media, and among friends and neighbors. The Jew is defined as having come from elsewhere, as having been expelled from Europe, and as now returning to the place from which it came. In relation to Israel, the Jew is defined in a relation of difference to itself in terms of the recent past and Europe, and in terms of antiquity and God. These references thus bring together narratives of the persecution of the Jews in European modernity with narratives of the persecution and exile of the Jews for over 2,000 millenia.

Because Israeli-Jew retains the figure of the Jew as existing in a relation of internal difference to itself in terms of both time and place in both these narratives, Israeli contexts suggest that what is particular to Jew is incommensurable with other particulars; the Jew is marked as singular in its relation to the universal and the particular, a universal but singular human subject. The difference of Jew is marked as something other than a sexual difference, while the difference of woman is marked as the difference of sexual difference between man and woman. In what follows, I suggest that an analysis of the specificity of how “Jew” has been defined in relation to Israel, Zionism, European modernity, and Judaism’s Biblical origin narrative, reveals an understanding of sexual
difference which challenges European modernity’s concept of the human and the ways in which humanism’s political frameworks of liberalism have addressed the inclusion and exclusion of difference within and outside of the category of the human.

My work departs from these other accounts, while also making use of and being dependent on them, in my suggestion that Israel’s controversial insistence on being a Jewish state – controversial at least when it comes to questions of demographic policy – and nationalist defense of the state’s violence towards Palestinians, can be understood not as violations of the universalist principles of the political frameworks of European modernity, but as symptoms of the violence inherent to these political frameworks. The work that follows is thus not focused on tracing the different ways in which Israeli military occupation is reproduced or on the different places in which it can be found in Israeli cultural practices, nor is it a study of “Israeli culture” as a site that can be separated from politics. Rather, I have sought to understand what makes possible the simultaneous intense nationalism in defense of Israel as a Jewish state, and the proliferation of difference that characterizes Israel, particularly when the specificity of this proliferation of difference puts the definition of Jew into question. Ultimately, I argue that an analysis of Israel, through an analysis of Israeli-Jew, challenges the assumptions of European modernity’s humanism, including its discourse of human rights, and suggests an understanding of the political based on the impossibility of achieving sovereignty, and based on affiliation through the affective which reveals the attainment of sovereignty to be impossible.
This diversity within “Jewish-Israeli” which I have briefly referenced here, and the specificity of this diversity, raised questions for me about what defines boundaries of belonging and exclusion from a polity defined as both Jewish and as a liberal democracy. At the very least, it seemed to me, these differences make it difficult to define what would bring these differences together powerfully enough to make people willing to sacrifice their lives and to make decisions to kill others in the name of defending the collective signified under the name “Jew.” I thus did not begin this dissertation as an investigation of what “Jew” signifies. I was interested in what “Israeli” signifies, if it both is and is not Jewish, especially when “Jewish” has no clear definition. Pursuing that question led me to then think about what the conjunction “Jew-Israeli” means. Doing so involved tracing “Jew” and “Israel” both historically and ethnographically.

In this dissertation, I suggest that the conjunction Israeli-Jew raises three specific questions: 1) the figure of the Jew suggests an absence of pure or accessible origin and thus puts into question concepts of community and identity and any politics based on these concepts; 2) the figure of the Jew in terms of Israel puts into question central tenets of specific forms of liberalism and humanist principles on which they are based, and; 3) the conjunction “Israeli-Jew” raises a question about the relation of sexual difference to species difference – or in other words, about the relation of sexual difference to the limits of humanism’s concept of the human - through the relation it establishes between “universal humanity” and “universal Jew” in the framework of the nation-state and its foundations. In this chapter I introduce these questions by explaining how the establishment of the state of Israel as both a Jewish country and as a liberal democracy
has situated the figure of the Jew as both guest and host.\(^{26}\) In the next section, I explain what I mean by this, and how this position as both guest and host can usefully be understood in terms of Lyotard’s concept of the differend.

\[^{26}\text{I will analyze this position of the Jew as both guest and host in terms of the Jew as internally different from itself. I am informed here by Derrida thinking about subjectivity in terms of an archival relation. Derrida (1996) writes:}

As soon as there is the One, there is murder, wounding, traumatism. L’Un se garde de l’autre. The One guards against/keeps some of the other. It protects itself from the other, but, in the movement of this jealous violence, it comprises in itself, thus guarding it, the self-otherwise or self-difference (the difference from within oneself) which makes it One. The ‘One differing, deferring from itself.’ The One as the Other. As once, at the same time, but in a same time that is out of joint, the One forgets to remember itself to itself, it keeps and erases the archive of this injustice that it is. Of this violence that it does. L’Un se fait violence. The One makes itself violence. It violates and does violence to itself but it also institutes itself as violence. It becomes what it is, the very violence – that it does to itself. Self-determination as violence. L’Un se garde de l’autre pour se faire violence (because it makes itself violence and so as to make itself violence). Only in French can this be said and thus archived in such an economical fashion. (78)

Derrida footnotes this with a comment about a remark that Geoffrey Bennington made to him in response to this statement, questioning his claim to a French singularity. I would suggest that perhaps the translation to Hebrew that is most economical would be simply “Israel,” but not for the obvious violences through which such a translation might be misread. See my chapter five for an analysis of the political implications of Israeli-Jew in terms of temporality, sexual difference, and a concept of the archive. I argue that that this difference of “the one” can be understood in terms of a relation between two archival narratives present in the conjunction Israeli-Jew, one the narrative of Greek metaphysics as it is presented in the narrative of European modernity’s universal liberal subject, and the other the postcolonial man, marked as a racialized other. I suggest that this is one reason why it is necessary to analyse the political and representational implications of the postcolonial for an understanding of sexual difference in terms of both contemporary Israeli political frameworks and in terms of European modernity’s concept of the human.
The Differend of Israel

In the second opening quote to this chapter, taken from The Differend, Jean-Francois Lyotard (1988) presents a very different perspective from that suggested by the Israeli teacher on what a responsible response to the Holocaust might be. He suggests that there is something attached to the names Auschwitz, Eichmann, and Hitler that is suffocated when the wrong done in their names is translated into damages and the differend attached to these names is translated into a litigation. Lyotard defines a wrong as a damage that is accompanied by the impossibility of proving the damage. A damage is a wrong exactly when one cannot prove the damage, but when damage was done; “This is the case if the victim is deprived of life, or of all his or her liberties, or of the freedom to make his or her ideas public, or simply of the right to testify to the damage, or even more simply if the testifying phrase is itself deprived of authority (Nos. 24-27)” (Ibid. 5).

A differend is what can be spoken out of the wrong but which has not yet been given an idiom, a new formation of words, addresseees, addresses, and phrases through which it can be articulated, an idiom which once found, by coming into being, also transforms the situation which gave rise to the need to find an idiom for it. For Lyotard, the establishment of Israel means translating the wrong into a damage and the differend into a litigation. Thus, in direct contrast to the teacher’s emphatic claim that it is the duty of Jewish Israelis to remember those killed through the declaration that the Jews have no country other than Israel, Lyotard suggests that there is a problem with responding to the event of the Holocaust through the establishment of a state.
On November 29th, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted on Resolution 181, which outlined a plan for partition of then British Mandate Palestine into two territories, one for Jews and one for Arabs. After many discussions, meetings and disagreements that focused primarily on the question of whether to agree to the UN’s borders and on the question of the place of religion in the Jewish state, “the founding fathers,” mostly Jewish immigrant men from Europe, decided on the exact wording for Israel’s Declaration of Establishment and on a name for the new State.27 On May 14th, 1948, the Declaration was read out loud and signed in a small building, today known as Independence Hall, on Rothschild Blvd. in central Tel Aviv.

Although the Zionist project to establish a Jewish homeland began several decades before WWII, the war shaped a convergence of interests which produced international support for the establishment of a Jewish state in British Mandate Palestine, and dramatically shaped understandings of Israel in terms of a relation to the Holocaust. Idith Zertal (2005) writes:

The Holocaust and its millions of dead have been ever-present in Israel from the day of its establishment and the link between the two events remains indissoluble. The Holocaust has always been present in Israel’s speech and silences; in the lives and nightmares of hundreds of thousands of survivors who have settled in Israel, and in the crying absence of the victims, in legislation, orations, ceremonies, courtrooms, schools, in the press, poetry, gravestone inscriptions, monuments, memorial books. Through a dialectical process of appropriation and exclusion, remembering and forgetting, Israeli society has defined itself in relation to the

---

27 See also Tessler 1994 and Smith 2004 for what are widely considered to be balanced and detailed historical accounts of the context of Israel’s establishment and of the history of the country’s relation with its Palestinian and Arab neighbors.
Holocaust; it regarded itself as both the heir to the victims and their accuser, atoning for their sins and redeeming their death. (3)

While Zertal details the pervasive influence Holocaust commemoration has in present-day Israel, Israeli historian Tom Segev (2000) has drawn attention to Israel’s relation to the Holocaust not only in terms of how it has shaped contemporary Israel, but also in terms of its relation to Zionism prior to Israel’s establishment in 1948. Referencing the Jewish population in the pre-state Yishuv as “the seventh million,” Segev provocatively argues that some Zionist leaders and different political parties instrumentalized the Holocaust for political gains of different political groups in Israeli state formation.

The establishment of Israel as a Jewish state formed partly in response to the Holocaust suggests that the survivors can testify to the wrong done to those who were killed in part by naming Israel as a memorial to them. Such an understanding suggests that the contestation or protestation of what was done in Auschwitz and of those who did it can be made in the language of the state,28 which is the language of the law in its most

28 Lyotard’s argument here resonates with Derrida’s (2002) discussion of “hostipitality.” But whereas Lyotard seems to suggest that it is possible to find a new idiom (in poetry, literature, or philosophy) through which to express the differend and the wrong, Derrida seems to suggest that this idiom (if he would call it an idiom, which isn’t certain), must always be the impossible - the possibility of the impossible, the impossibility of a proper name that is only your own, of an “I” that is my own, the impossibility thus of forgiveness, “an exchange of place between two inexchangeable absolutes” (Derrida 2002, 388) which, Derrida suggests is perhaps also the first intrusion of the third in the face-to-face, this intrusion of which we have underscored that it was at once ineluctable and a priori, archi- or preoriginary, an intrusion not occurring to the dual but connaissant with it, knowing it and being-born-together with it, insinuating itself in it from the first instant – and immediately poses, without waiting, the question of justice linked to the third. (Ibid.)
literal sense of the judiciary, but also in the sense of liberalism’s language of representation in terms of the autonomous and self-legislating liberal subject. As such, to suggest that the judiciary and/or a self-representing subject can represent the injustice done to those killed in the Holocaust suggests that the damage can be represented, proven, and testified to in their name. Such a claim erases that which cannot be represented, the injustice which cannot be fully accounted for, that which was lost and which cannot be made present, reclaimed or recuperated through a litigation. That which was lost can perhaps only be responded to as no longer or not yet present through bearing witness to what Lyotard calls the differend; a bearing witness that is perhaps about

Derrida connects this understanding of what he calls the betrayal by the demand of justice of the other’s singularity because of the need to always take account of “the other other, of another other, of a third” which is also what always calls one to responsibility and to justice, to the question of hospitality, which he explains in terms of hospitability. He writes;

Hospitality is the deconstruction of the at-home; deconstruction is hospitality to the other, to the other than oneself, the other than ‘its other,’ to an other who is beyond any its other.’ We have undergone such a test or ordeal a thousand times when, for example (to remain close to Levinas for a little longer), we saw that the border between the ethical and the political is no longer insured, that the third [le tiers], who is the birth of justice and finally of the state, already announces himself in the duel of the face-to-face and the face, and therefore disjoints it, dis-orients it, ‘destin-errs’ it; that the beyond the state (the condition of ethics) had to produce itself in the state…” (Ibid. 364).

It is for this reason also, Derrida suggests, that hospitality is a name of deconstruction, the hospitality to the haunting of the concept, the haunting “by an other than itself that is no longer even its other” (Ibid.). Part of the difference from Lyotard here perhaps being that for Derrida it is precisely the intrusion of the third from which the state emerges, “the state”/language as communication that cannot do justice (but only law) but which is always haunted by the trace of its position in relation to the two – the two in this sense are always more than two and so always involve what for Lyotard is a litigation and damage smothering differend and wrong but which perhaps for Derrida is the lack of foundation and the violence at the heart of any framework of litigation and damage, such as the state, the law, and language as communication.
acknowledging the differend through a translation that makes an already existing language say something different than it has, but within its own terms.

A differend, Lyotard writes, is the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be. This state includes silence, which is a negative phrase, but it also calls upon phrases which are in principle possible. This state is signalled by what one ordinarily calls a feeling: ‘One cannot find the words,’ etc. A lot of searching must be done to find new rules for forming and linking phrases that are able to express the differend disclosed by the feeling, unless one wants this differend to be smothered right away in a litigation and for the alarm sounded by the feeling to have been useless. What is at stake in a literature, in a philosophy, in a politics perhaps, is to bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them. (13)

While the effort of this dissertation is in part to find an idiom for the differend smothered in this litigation, it is also to find an idiom for the differend that the establishment of Israel in turn has produced. Indeed, it may be impossible to do one without the other. In order to do so, it is necessary to rephrase part of Lyotard’s above statement. Despite pointing to the differend of the Holocaust of WWII smothered by the suggestion that the establishment of the State of Israel can be understood as a responsible response to the Holocaust, Lyotard himself suppresses this differend by also suppressing the differend of Israel by repeating the same erasure made by the Israeli nationalist narrative that he critiques.

Lyotard (1988) writes that: “By forming the State of Israel, the survivors transformed the wrong into damages and the differend into a litigation” (56). In so saying, he reproduces the move that he critiques the survivors for making, exactly because he identifies the survivors as those who formed the State of Israel. It was not,
strictly speaking, the survivors who transformed the wrong into damages and the differend into a litigation, even if the dominant Israeli national narrative makes this claim. Israel was, in fact, already a formulated idea almost half a century before the Holocaust, and was well on its way to being formed in practice in the years preceding it. Many, if not most, of those who formed the state were, in multiple ways, not survivors, at least not in the literal and direct sense, of the Nazi attempt to exterminate Jews. This is an important distinction to make, because it is precisely through such representation that the wrong and the differend are suffocated and suppressed. In other words, it is not simply the translation of the wrong and the differend into the terms of the nation-state that suppresses them, but that this translation involves erasing and displacing specific relations through a narrative of national origin. By positioning the survivors as those who translated the wrong and the differend into damages and litigation through the establishment of Israel, Lyotard thus conceals exactly that which can allow one to make room for the suppressed differend.

29 I would assume that Lyotard was well aware of this. But the fact that he reproduces the dominant Israeli nationalist narrative in this regard even if in order to critique it suggests that, unlike Derrida, he didn’t recognize the significance of the creation of Israel as a Jewish state not only because of its national narrative in relation to the Holocaust of WWII, but because of the question of what the joining of “Jew” with “Israel” might produce, and how this very same move might simultaneously suppress the differend it produces not only in relation to the past but also in relation to the future and its own production. And that recognizing this question is not only a step towards recognizing the suppression of those who “continue to wander in their indeterminacy,” but also a step towards rethinking the principles and ideals that form the foundation of different forms of liberalism, the nation-state model, and humanism. Which is a very different project than to criticize liberal politics as not being “progressive enough.”
But it is not only the question of to whom Lyotard assigns the responsibility of forming the state of Israel which leads me to suggest that in making such a statement Lyotard conceals that which can allow room for the suppressed differend of both the Holocaust victims and of Israel. It is also the assumption that the State of Israel replaces the category Jew, or at least that the definition of Israel is based on such a claim of interchangeability, precisely because Lyotard’s statement implies that Israel was defined in the name of the Jews killed in the Holocaust. I want therefore to pause for a moment here to consider more carefully this claim I am making that Lyotard reproduces the move that he critiques the survivors for making, because he identifies the survivors as those who formed the State of Israel. One could suggest that even if Israel was already a well formulated idea decades before the Holocaust, this doesn’t mean that the survivors of the Holocaust don’t, or didn’t, “transform the wrong into damages and the differend into a litigation.” After all, many survivors did end up in Israel and some of them may, like the principal in Ramat Yosef’s high school, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, suggest that the survivors can testify to and represent the wrong done to the victims by naming Israel as a memorial to them.

Segev (2000) has pointed out that

there is no way of knowing which, or how many, of the Holocaust’s victims considered themselves ‘potential citizens’ of Israel. Many of them died precisely because they had preferred not to move to Palestine when that option was open to them. And most of the world’s Jews, Holocaust survivors among them, chose not to come to Israel even after the state was founded. (432)
Segev presents this information in the context of a wider discussion about the suggestion by a Russian Israeli Zionist, Mordecai Shenhabi, in 1950, to create a special law that, Segev writes, “would state that every Holocaust victim became, at his death, an Israeli citizen” (Ibid.). The title of this proposal was “the Act to Reinstate the Civil Rights of the Victims of the Nazi Extermination Program.” As Segev notes, this title suggests that the victims “had sometime in the past been citizens of a future Israel” (Ibid. 432). Although, as Segev points out, Holocaust victims could not have been citizens of a state that had not yet been established, and that it is impossible to know whether they would have wanted to become or envisioned themselves as future Israeli citizens, the suggestion commands attention because, as Segev goes on to detail, the question of whether or not Israel should grant Holocaust victims retroactive Israeli citizenship drew significant attention and examination from the Israeli government. The move to try to make not only all Jews, including Holocaust survivors, Israeli citizens but also to try to retroactively grant citizenship to those Jews killed in the Holocaust, might indeed seem to be an attempt to represent those killed in a way that suggests that the wrong done to them can be represented through the language of the judiciary. This is not to suggest that the granting of citizenship necessarily be understood as a reparation that corrects the injustice of what was done, but that the wrong that was done can be framed, and thus in this sense also repaired and represented, in terms of the state. But the actual process that this suggestion to retroactively grant Jews killed in the Holocaust Israeli citizenship involved reveals the ways in which Israel, and the category formed in the attachment of “Jew” to “Israeli,” is not suggestive of the idea that Israel can represent those killed in the language of
Segev explains that when Shenhabi’s bill finally came up it revealed the discord about how Israel, and Zionism specifically, should remember the Holocaust and those who were killed. Professor Ben-Zion Dinur of Jewish history at the Hebrew University, who was Education Minister at the time, introduced the bill by beginning with a definition of the Hebrew word for Holocaust: Shoah. Segev writes that Dinur explained that this term means

the destruction of European Jewry and the slaughter of more than six million Jews.’ Actually, six and a half million,’ he [Dinur] noted, giving the breakdown. Later Dinur would say that the term Shoah contains a historiographical problem, since it connotes suddenness and surprise. Yet according to Zionism, the Holocaust was not sudden. It came as a logical development and could have been predicted from the simple fact that Jews were living among other peoples as nationless strangers. The goal of the Nazis, Dinur said, was ‘to obliterate the name of Israel.’ Dinur’s use of the term Israel to indicate the Jewish people was intentional; it not only reflected the common tendency to fall into a traditional, literary style whenever the Holocaust was the subject but reinforced the thesis that the murder of the Jews was a crime against the State of Israel. Dinur also praised the heroism of European Jewry and linked it to the heroism of the yishuv. (Ibid. 434)

Segev goes on to explain that the law which Dinur proposed to the Knesset ordered the new memorial authority to ‘impart ‘the lesson’ of the Holocaust and heroism, as if ‘Holocaust’ and ‘heroism’ were a single entity with a single lesson” (Ibid.). Indeed, on the Knesset floor there was no consensus about what this lesson might be; the left-wing socialist party tried to claim the Warsaw ghetto fighters with its own youth wing, with one of its leaders, Yaakov Hazan suggesting that it was the combination of Zionism with
socialism that led to the heroism of the ghetto resistance. Others refuted these and other claims on how the memory of the Holocaust would be shaped;

Esther Raziel-Naor (Herut) protested – Hazan was making distinctions among the dead, she said, as if they had shown their party cards on the way to the furnaces. In her opinion, the Knesset was not competent to pass the proposed law, since it was the same Knesset that had decided to ratify the reparations agreements with Germany. The Yad Vashem building would undoubtedly be constructed out of German cement and iron; therefore, she announced, her party would not participate in the vote. Beba Idelson (Mapai), a women’s activist, demanded that special emphasis be given to the women and children ‘whose soft flesh was used to make soap.’ Rabbi Yithak Meir Levin (Agudat Yisrael) objected to the secular character of the memorial authority, proposing instead the construction of a ‘holy place’ for the study of Jewish religious texts – in memory of the fallen. (Ibid. 435)

The diversity and controversy that characterized Zionist attempts to remember the Holocaust and the Jews who were killed by the Nazis shows how Israel, and the category Israeli-Jew, does not represent the wrong done to the Jews of the Holocaust in the language of the state and the judiciary, even if some, Holocaust survivors and others, have attempted to make it do so. It is not simply that the formation of the Israeli state preceded the Holocaust, but that even when claims of remembering were made by survivors and others in the name of those who died and in the name of the State of Israel, these claims were simultaneously countered and resisted by conflicting claims from others. It is partly in this sense, then, that I am suggesting that Israeli-Jew makes felt the differend of the Holocaust, and more broadly of the figure of the Jew in relation to European modernity and in relation to Israel specifically, rather than suffocates this differend.
Lyotard defines the differend as that which emerges in a situation in which the victim cannot prove the damage done to them; in which the damage which makes the victim a victim is the deprivation of the means to argue their case as a victim. He uses the provocative example of the concentration camps of WWII to explain what he means. Because anyone who was in the gas chambers when people were gassed inside cannot testify to what happened inside the gas chambers, this wrong cannot be proven. In suggesting this, Lyotard is not suggesting that therefore the gas chambers did not exist or that the murders for which they were used did not happen, but rather that it is a mistake to ask an already existing language, and thus the language of the law which demands proof of guilt, or in some cases of innocence,\(^{30}\) to bear witness to reality. Rather, an experience forces new idioms into being, which establish reality as such. The differend that calls new idioms into being exists in the relation between what Lyotard calls different phrase universes. There is no universal phrase regimen, or set of rules, which govern the production of phrases, thus the linkage between different phrases through which new phrases emerge always does a wrong to the regimen of phrases not yet actualized, but this wrong, through its differend, always then itself calls forth new phrase regimens.\(^{31}\)

\(^{30}\) Lyotard marks a distinction between these two demands, but with both, he suggests that it is impossible to establish what is not without criticizing what is, as the inversion of establishing guilt through criticizing claims of innocence (establishing innocence through criticizing claims of guilt) “may suffice to transform the accused into a victim, if he or she does not have the right to criticize the prosecution, as we see in political trials. Kafka warned us about this” (9). In both instances then, there is a differend that cannot be expressed in the already existing idioms.

\(^{31}\) Lyotard suggests that Auschwitz, in the attempt to exterminate the name of what would be the addressee through the phrase “that s/he die,” would seem to have exterminated the we of a third
In this ethnography, I suggest that bearing witness to the differend of Israel poses the question of what happens between “Israeli” and “Jew.” I argue that an analysis of this question suggests that what “asks to be put into phrases” is the violence of a politics based solely on phrasing, and on the name and naming itself as that which decides boundaries of inside and outside, and between past, present and future. In other words, I suggest that the differend of Israel leads to an idiom that highlights signification in non-party that witnesses the passage between the two different phrase universes of the Nazis and the Jews in Auschwitz. The construction of a homogenous “we” through which authorization is produced legitimates prescriptive phrases through this construction of a we that suggests that the addressee and the addressee of the obligation are the same, hence it is possible to declare in the name “French citizens,” that “We decree as a norm that it is an obligation for us to carry out act a.” this, Lyotard argues, is the principle of autonomy, which in the construction of a homogeneous we conceals what he calls a double heterogeneity that is tied to the pronouns “The normative phrase is We, the French people, decree as a norm that, etc.; the prescriptive phrase is We, the French people, out to carry out act a” (98). Lyotard points out that the “we” in these two phrases does not occupy the same position; “in the normative, the we is the addressor of the norm; in the prescriptive, it is the addressee of the obligation….One may make the law and submit to it, but not ‘in the same place,’ that is, not in the same phrase” (98). The “we” thus acts to conceal this difference and to legitmate the prescriptive phrase through the normative one.

A proper name, both of a collective and of an individual, “designates entity astride two heterogeneous situations (Nos.80,81). But it is not legitimate, it is even illusory, in the Kantian sense of a transcendental illusion, to suppose a subject-substance that would be both a ‘subject of the uttering’…and the permanence of a self…(99). The we that makes the claim to uniting the subject uttering and a permanence of self is thus threatened with being split. This threat is most prominent, Lyotard suggests, when the obligation made to the addressee is that he or she die, what he discusses as “beautiful death” in the Athenian sense of exchanging the finite for the infinite, “the die in order not to die” through the perpetuation of the proper name by making the proper name proper to both the individual and the collective.

Because there is no addressee, there is also no witness. But, Lyotard points out, there is a “we” marking this absence of a “we” in the place of the two phrase universes through which Auschwitz can be defined. Thus Auschwitz can be understood as a name that signifies the impossibility of a totalization of the “I,” the “you” and the “s/he” in the name Auschwitz. According to Lyotard, there is therefore no differend between the Jews and the SS in Auschwitz. It is in the relation of silence between these three pronouns that there is a differend, one which Lyotard suggests demands a new idiom for concepts of “we”, the “self,” and “ethical community” (Ibid. 97-99).
linguistic terms. Such an idiom demands acknowledgement not only in order to produce new phrases, but also in order to undo already existing phrases. This undoing of already existing phrases allows a space for a politics based on a relation not only of linguistic phrasing but also on affective relation that includes the labour and genealogies of care and affective investment and not only of linguistic production and affiliation according to inheritance of a name. I will attempt to show how tracing the specificity of the “name” Israeli-Jew ethnographically and historically reveals this differend.

Lyotard’s statement in the opening quote that heads this chapter, in which he writes that “by forming the State of Israel, the survivors transformed the wrong into damages and the differend into a litigation,” implies that the name “Israel” replaced the name “Jew,” rather than changed the name “Jew” by joining to it the name “Israel.” In other words, that one identity and autonomous entity represented and replaced another. I argue that these terms were not made interchangeable, but rather became co-joined. What happens when these terms are joined to form “Israeli-Jew” is the question behind my tracing of the placement of the messianic and Zionist narratives of Israeli and Jewish origin within the framework of European nation-state formation and the context of WWII. This is also why the uncovering of the differend produced by Israeli-Jew is also to uncover the different differend of “those who continue to wander in their indeterminacy,” whose wrong, I am suggesting, is suffocated not by the establishment of Israel so much as by the discourse of a metaphysics of presence on which modern nationalisms are
founded.  

Lyotard’s assumption that the establishment of Israel as a Jewish state signifies the attempt of survivors to transform the wrong into damages and the differend into a litigation is to assume that Israel is defined only in the terms of the metalanguage claimed by the juridical in the language of the state.

In what follows, I argue that by simultaneously declaring itself to be Jewish, and not only a liberal democracy, Israel continually poses challenges to the assumptions of the possibility of the metalanguage presumed by the law and grounded in European modernity’s political frameworks of a liberal humanism. To ask how the proper name “Israel” is haunted by the proper name “Jew” requires placing the narratives of Jewish

---

32 Israel, I am suggesting, is one modern (postcolonial) nationalism among others but also, in its specificity and through the conjunction Israeli-Jew on which the country’s political framework is based, is a symptom of the violence of the modern nationalisms of European modernity which allows for an analysis of the political frameworks of humanism and the concepts of the human and the liberal subject on which these frameworks are based. In other words, Israel makes felt the differend of “those who wander in their indeterminacy,” rather than suffocates this differend, and demands an analysis of that which has given rise to this differend, as well as an understanding of what it would mean to give an “idiom” to this differend in terms of an understanding of the political and for an understanding of the political subject.

33 I will go on to suggest that “Jew” is not in fact a proper name, and suggests that a proper name can never be autonomous or owned by only one (in the sense of being singular plural, see Nancy 2006) which then presents the question of what kind of “ownership” this would be. About the proper name, Derrida writes:

To lose one’s name by transforming it into a common name or pieces of a common name is also to celebrate it. One takes the risk of losing one’s name by winning it, and vice versa. This always happens as soon as there is some proper name: the scene is in place where one loses what one wins and wins what one loses. It is one of the scenes of the double bind in Glas, and what I there tried to organize around the proper name – not only mine, of course, because I was also concerned with other proper names which are subjected to the same operation, which is naturally different and singular every time. (1985, 77)
exile and return in the context of WWII and its aftermath, and in the context of European nation-state formation. The first step I take here to do so is to inquire into the origin of the co-joining of Jew and Israeli, in other words, to ask how Israel’s establishment changed the term Jew by joining it with “Israeli” in the context of placing the messianic narrative of exile and return in the framework of European nation-state formation (and its attendant political contexts of imperialism, colonialism, anti-Semitism, socialist and feminist movements, both national and international).

As the above accounts of the relation between Jew and Israel suggest, in relation to Israel the Jew is positioned both as host (to those others, including non-Jews who arrive to the state of Israel) and as guest (Israeli welcomes Jew as guest in the present and remembers the Jew of the past as unwelcomed guest). The figure of the Jew has been understood as that of guest both in terms of histories of modern nationalism and in terms of Biblical narratives. In terms of the former, the figure of the Jew is situated as guest by definition, as thinkers as different as Jean-Paul Sartre, Theodore Herzl, Sigmund Freud, Hannah Arendt, Max Nordau, and Jacques Derrida have all suggested, albeit in significantly different ways and with different implications. What makes a Jew a Jew in relation to European nationalisms, they all differently suggest, is tied to a genealogical narrative that defines the figure of the Jew as always in excess of and before and beyond

In his rereading of the story of Babel, Derrida suggests that the text of the story can be understood as conveying a double injunction from God: “translate me, translate my name,” and “don’t translate me, don’t translate my name, you won’t be able to” (Ibid.). Derrida suggests that such a double command, or in his word, “desire,” is at work in every proper name.
the nation-state, originating from elsewhere and destined for elsewhere. Thus even the
most assimilated Jew, if there is any remainder of Jew left, remains defined as guest in
relation to the nation-state. In terms of the Biblical narrative, as Emmanuel Levinas and
Jacques Derrida have both differently emphasized, the Old Testament introduces the Jew
as a guest of God, both in relation to language and land; the Jewish people are guests of
the Hebrew language, and guests in the land promised to them by God. The narrative of
more than 2000 years of exile thus situates the Jew as guest both in terms of the Biblical
narrative of exile from an original homeland where they were guests of God, and in terms
of the Jew’s relation to the modern nation-state form.

As Miriam Leonard (2012) has pointed out, this concept of the Jew as outside of
the framework of the modern nation-state was prominent not only in existentialist and
postwar thought, but was an explicit element of European Enlightenment thinking and
particularly of German philosophy. Hegel, she writes,

reveals how the Jews do not actually own their land, they have it merely as a loan
from their God. As such, they have no concept of family property. ‘The Greek
process founds rights and politics, constitutes family subjects as citizens. The
Jewish process, on the contrary, scoffs at rights and politics.’ The Jews are stuck
in the same double bind that has marred their existence since Noah. They are
incapable of being citizens because they are incapable of being a family,
incapable of being a family because they lack the political rights of the citizen. In
the end, for Hegel, the Jews cannot be citizens because they are not Greeks. (91)

By tracing what she calls “the persistent figural ‘work’ done by the Greek/Jew couplet in
giving form to a range of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophical, social,
and political concerns,” Leonard offers an account of how the figure of the Jew has
shaped the history of ideas through which European modernity and post-Enlightenment
political frameworks have come into being. In so doing, she provides an analysis of the historical philosophical foundations through which an opposition between Athens and Jerusalem has been a powerful signifier in European thought, and shows how “the Greek/Jew opposition is an exemplary case, if ever one was needed, of how symbolic structures come to have consequences in the ‘real’ world” (Ibid. 12). While Leonard’s focus is on how an analysis of the symbolic structure of the Greek/Jew opposition in European philosophical thought can reveal what is foreclosed by this binary in terms of the hold Christianity has on Enlightenment thought and its claims to universalism, I focus here on what an analysis of Israel, as a political framework that has emerged out of this opposition, might reveal about the violence imbedded in European modernity’s concept of the human. It is precisely because Israel simultaneously is based on the model of European liberal democracy and explicitly defines itself as Jewish that the conjunction Israeli-Jew can be understood as making explicit the Greek/Jew opposition, in which the Jew is simultaneously in the position of host and of guest vis-à-vis the nation-state.

Of course, the figure of the Jew has been able to be situated as guest in relation to the modern nation-state also because the nation-state is already positioned as host to those who come into its territory. In The Origins of Totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt (2009) drew attention to the nation-state’s position as host by tracing the relations between the assumptions of sovereignty outlined in the Rights of Man, the construction of a new political subject in terms of an assumption of inalienable human rights, and the connection of these rights to the category of citizenship. Importantly, she pointed out how these connections constructed the human in terms of the right to have rights, which was
connected to belonging to the nation-state via citizenship. This formula enabled nation-states, by sovereign decision that stripped or denied people of citizenship, to deny people the status of human and, in Arendt’s view, thus also of access to the space of the political.

Arendt articulated her thinking about the political also specifically through her analysis of Adolf Eichmann’s trial, held in Jerusalem in 1961, an analysis for which she came under significant criticism. As with her views on Zionism, her views on the limits and possibilities of accounting for what happened in WWII in the form of a legal trial changed over time. As Shoshana Felman (2002) points out, Arendt’s views about the possibility of the injustices of the magnitude of those which occurred in WWII being addressed in the form of a trial and in the language of the judiciary changed over time. In a letter to her friend and philosopher Karl Jaspers in 1946, Arendt wrote

> Your definition of Nazi policy as a crime (‘criminal guilt’) strikes me as questionable. The Nazicrimes, it seems to me, explode the limits of the law; and that is precisely what constitutes their monstrousness.”… We are simply not equipped to deal, on a human, political level, with a guilt that is beyond crime and an innocence that is beyond goodness or virtue. This is the abyss that opened up before us as early as 1933… and into which we have finally stumbled. (Arendt in Felman 2002, 138)

Jaspers disagrees, and writes back to Arendt that her attitude is “too poetical” and misses “the banality” and “prosaic triviality” that characterizes the Nazi crimes. By the time of the Eichmann trial fifteen years later, as Felman points out, Arendt and Jaspers had reversed their positions. Jaspers argued that Israel should not try Eichmann because his guilt is “larger than law,” while Arendt argue that it was only the legal system that could properly deal with Eichmann (Felman 2002, 139-140). It was Arendt’s changed view of
the law in relation to the question of addressing Nazi responsibility that also shaped Arendt’s strong criticism of the way in which the Eichmann trial was held.

Arendt suggested that Eichmann’s trial should have focused only on his specific role and on his responsibility for his acts, rather than situating him within the wider history of the entire Holocaust. The state of Israel, through Eichmann’s trial, did not claim to speak for all of humanity, but rather specifically for the Jewish people, and in this sense, resisted categorizing the Holocaust as a universal crime or as a crime against humanity. Arendt disagreed with this position; she argued that Eichmann’s trial should have focused on the question of his crimes as crimes against humanity. More famously, she also argued that the trial revealed Eichmann not as a monster, but as a normal human being whose responsibility for Holocaust crimes revealed the nature of Nazi evil in its ability to corrupt humanity. It was in this sense that she also suggested that the cooperation of some Jews with the organization of Jews into ghettos and transports made the goals of the Nazis more attainable; this was not to say that the Jews were guilty of going “like lambs to the slaughter” as Arendt has been misunderstood to have suggested. Rather, she suggested that the Jews not doing anything would have made things more difficult for the Nazis. In making such an argument, Arendt grouped together both the Zionists and the Judenrats; the former were mistaken in placing the Jewish people as outside of or separate from the rest of humanity by accusing Eichmann for crimes against the Jewish people rather than against humanity, and the latter for making the work of the Nazis easier. Arendt’s writing about the Eichmann trial provoked intense response and criticism in Israel.
As Segev (2000) details, some of Arendt’s most audible critics in Israel included well known Jewish intellectuals such as Gershom Scholem, Martin Buber, and their contemporaries. Arendt’s book itself was not translated into Hebrew until…. The debate over the Eichmann trial which Arendt’s book so dramatically informed was not limited only to direct discussion over her views. While Scholem, Buber and other vociferously criticized Arendt for her views on Eichmann’s trial, they also signed a petition by Shmuel Hugo Bergmann, then seventy-eight years old and a Israeli professor of Philosophy, in which he requested that the court not sentence Eichmann to death.

I understand these debates around Arendt’s analysis of the trial, as well as the shift within her own thinking over time, to reflect the tension between the particular and the universal that is signified by the singular through the figure of the Jew. The Jew is defined as singular in terms of its messianic narrative as the chosen people, a part of universal humanity but marked, circumcised, also as apart from them. The difference of the Jew is thus neither fully inside nor fully outside the rest of humanity, neither wholly private nor wholly public, not clearly visible but nevertheless marked on the body. The political frameworks of European modernity, including but not only Arendt’s two preferred forms liberalism (British and American), as well as Schmitt’s Nazism and critiques of liberalism, are founded, albeit differently from one another, on an understanding of a political subject defined in terms of differences that are either included or excluded from the polity. But the Jew, defined through internal difference, is
by definition both inside and outside the framework of a universal humanity or of a national particularity.\footnote{It is in this sense that I understand Derrida (2005) to refer to the Jew as a “shibboleth.” I discuss the Jew as shibboleth further in chapter five.}

It is through this understanding of the Jew as both inside and outside the political frameworks of European modernity that I will analyze the conjunction Israeli-Jew in terms of the Jew as being in the position of both guest and host. I find useful here Khanna’s (2006) work on asylum, in which she draws on but also departs from Arendt’s analysis. Khanna points out that the right to be hosted by the nation-state, or in other words, to receive asylum, is reserved for the sovereignty of the nation-state as a right to be granted, and is only a right of the individual to seek, rather than a right to receive, thereby positioning the nation-state as host and those who arrive at its borders as potential guests. In so doing, Khanna critiques Arendt’s formulation of the problem of the stateless as a problem of how to extend rights to all humanity. Asylum, Khanna suggests, “conceptually and sometimes literally, becomes the condition of a possible link between concepts of belonging and not belonging, like home and abroad, precisely because it stages the moment of not belonging, and the arbitrariness of potential expulsion on the one hand or inclusion on the other that cuts through such concepts” (2006, 175). The conjunction Israeli-Jew, I argue, makes explicit this link between belonging and not belonging, home and abroad, as well as between stasis and movement, between marked and unmarked, and between the particular and the universal which are carried in the term.
asylum. The Jew, attached to Israel, remains both inside and outside the political framework of European modernity’s nation-state model, but unlike in Europe, in Israel the Jew is positioned as an asylum seeker who is guaranteed unconditional refuge by Israel. At the same time, however, the Jew is remembered and referred to as distinct from Israeli, and both Jew and Israeli remain in a state of emergency. An analysis of the specificity of the Jew in relation to Israel, I will suggest here, reveals the implications and pitfalls of the persistence of European modernity’s investment in a concept of the political based on belonging, community and its notions of the human on which its political frameworks have been based.

The simultaneous position of the Jew as both host and guest in terms of Israel is represented in the conjunction “Israeli-Jew,” and is produced by the establishment of Israel as both a Jewish state and as a liberal democracy. The effort to find the differend of Israel is therefore an effort which involves understanding the relation of Jew to Israeli in terms of how the borders of inside and outside, difference and sameness, past, present and future, are defined. In the next section, I will explain how this understanding of Israeli-Jew as both inside and outside the political framework of European modernity’s nation-state model leads to a question about sexual difference, a question which in turn has implications for an understanding of Israel’s political framework of liberal democracy, and for an understanding of the political frameworks of European modernity and its concept of the human out of which Israel emerge.

The Jew as Shibboleth: IsraeliJew JewIsraeli and The Proliferation of Difference
It was what appeared to me as a proliferation of difference around the term “Israeli-Jew” in the contexts of Israel/Palestine that led me to understanding this difference as attached to the combination of two different narratives of origin of Israeli-Jew, one Abrahamic and one based in European modernity and its political and philosophical history based on assumptions of a metaphysics of presence. This proliferation of difference and its relation to the question of origin also led me to the languages of deconstruction and psychoanalysis as I formulated the research project on which this writing is based. To discuss difference in terms of proliferation is different than to discuss difference in terms of its existence. By proliferation of difference I refer to the production and spread of difference in excess of the framework to which it is purported to belong, by which I mean the production of difference that continually appears as part of and as both more and less than that which claims difference as only apart from or in opposition to itself, as a difference that is already interrupting its own origin at the place from which it is understood to originate. In other words, by proliferation of difference I mean a production of difference that puts existence itself, as essential and a priori being, place, or matter with meaning that can be fully present to itself, as present before its representation that marks a difference from itself, into question.

The proliferation of difference in Israel shows up difference there as active at any supposed source of itself, as already there in a movement of production of itself through itself, in excess of itself. Nothing, no one and no place, fully belongs to itself. This is in contrast to difference that appears to be what already exists in a relation with something
else different from it. Seeing difference in terms of its proliferation means seeing
difference as internal to its own origin, and thus as making origin as such an
impossibility. The proliferation of difference is generative of itself from the difference
that is a movement within itself – within any entity identified as different from any other
entity. The proliferation of difference thus signifies a set of relations through which
difference is emphasized as exceeding its own source already at any possible source. I
consider whether Israeli state mechanisms, by attempting to reposition the figure of the
Jew in terms of a nationalist narrative of shared origin, while retaining its difference from
this narrative through retaining the Jew as a figure of exile and wandering, accentuate the
very differences this narrative attempts to contain, and generates their production at the
same time that this narrative consumes these differences for its own nationalist
production.

Before getting into the nitty-gritty of the chapters that follow, I explain here what
I mean by these two narratives, one Abrahamic and the other Greek, in terms of how the
figure of the Jew in Israel challenges the assumptions of metaphysics. In this explanation,
I turn to both deconstruction and psychoanalysis, two fields which emerged out of
political and historical contexts which overlapped with the historical and political context
in which Zionism emerged, and whose “founding fathers” were both thinkers who did not
openly identify as Jewish but who were forced by their political circumstances to contend
with the question of what it might mean to “be a Jew.” Not coincidentally, I would
suggest, both psychoanalysis and deconstruction are also preoccupied with the question
of origin and the relation of origin to the production of subjectivity.
I thus begin here by considering here whether the genealogy of the Jew in its relation to Israel is revealed in terms like those Derrida (1997) uses to describe the genealogy of a text. He writes:

We know that the metaphor that would describe the genealogy of a text correctly is still forbidden. In its syntax and its lexicon, in its spacing, by its punctuation, its lacunae, its margins, the historical appurtenance of a text is never a straight line. It is neither causality by contagion, nor the simple accumulation of layers. Nor even the pure juxtaposition of borrowed pieces. And if a text always gives itself a certain representation of its own roots, those roots live on only by that representation, by never touching the soil, so to speak. Which undoubtedly destroys their radical essence, but not the necessity of their racinating function. To say that one always interweaves roots endlessly, bending them to send down roots among the roots, to pass through the same points again, to redouble old adherences, to circulate among their differences, to coil around themselves or to be enveloped one in the other, to say that a text is never anything but a system of roots, is undoubtedly to contradict at once the concept of system and the pattern of the root. But in order not to be pure appearance, this contradiction takes on the meaning of a contradiction, and receives its ‘illogicality,’ only through being thought within a finite configuration – the history of metaphysics – and caught within a root system which does not end there and which as yet has no name. …A text always has several epochs and reading must resign itself to that fact. And this genealogical self-representation is itself already the representation of a self-representation; what, for example, ‘the French eighteenth century,’ as if such a thing existed, already constructed as its own source and its own presence.

Is the play of these appurtenances, so manifest in the texts of anthropology and the ‘sciences of man’ produced totally within a ‘history of metaphysics?’ Does it somewhere force the closure? (101-102).

Derrida goes on to suggest that writing is felt with a faith in the system of differences between physis and its others (art, technology, law, institution, arbitrariness, etc.). Here and elsewhere, Derrida defines writing as the mark, the inscription of interiority on an exteriority that is the trace of the difference of origin that prevents origin from being located because it does not in fact exist as a stable location or as a presence. Origin in this sense is not origin as such, but an originary movement that Derrida calls differance,
because the origin is always both deferred and differing, located on the line in between
oppositions through which presence and absence, or origin (understood as a presence
before it is represented) and representation/reproduction, are claimed to exist within a
logic of metaphysics. Derrida thus challenges this faith in the system of differences that
suggests writing is supplement to presence, whether presence as voice and verbal speech
or as that signified by it.

Writing does not betray a pure representation of speech or unmediated presence,
because presence is already corrupted—“nature” as what is thought to exist in a pure state
before the convention of language, of the signifier. “Pure conventionality,” a language in
which the phone completely breaks with the presence of what is represented, is no longer
a language; the interiority which writing (including speech), seeks to represent, is in the
heart of its exteriority, but exteriority, language and writing as mark and trace, is also in
the heart of the interiority it ceaselessly seeks to attain as presence to itself. Derrida
writes:

The sickness of the outside (which comes from the outside but also draws outside,
thus equally, or inversely, the sickness of the homeland, a homesickness so to
speak) is in the heart of the living word, as its principle of effacement and its
relationship to its own death. In other words, it does not suffice to show, it is in
fact not a question of showing, the interiority of what Rousseau would have
believed exterior; rather to speculate upon the power of exteriority as constitutive
of interiority: of speech, of signified meaning, of the present as such; in the sense
in which I said, a moment ago, that the representative mortal doubling-halving
constituted the living present, without adding itself to presence; or rather
constituted it, paradoxically, by being added to it. The question is of an originary
supplement, if this absurd expression may be risked, totally unacceptable as it is
within classical logic. (Ibid. 313)
Thus Derrida suggests that the passion at the origin of language, the affect of which language is understood to be an expression, is not a presence anterior to language which then receives expression through representation, but rather is an absence of a presence that can be present to itself that is constitutive of and within language, language as that which itself “opens desire and contemplates and binds [re-garde] enjoyment” (Ibid. 312). Derrida is making a dramatic observation here by pointing out that a politics based on the Greek (and then in German, French, British and American iterations) logic of presence, sets difference as outside of itself – outside of originary presence. The human thus becomes defined as man, and any variation from man as an existence fully present to itself becomes something less than human, on the border between nature and culture, between material and technology, between matter and human action, between what is beyond or before signification, whether as divine, mad, irrational, differentiated man (marked as colored or Jew in some genealogies), woman, or animal, and what is explained, accounted for, present and represented, as man. 45 This political logic then has

45 See Terada 2001; Khanna 2007, 2008; and Holland (1997) for a range of perspectives on the relation between feminism and deconstruction through readings of Jacques Derrida’s work. In Holland (1997) see especially Grosz’s “Ontology and Equivocation: Derrida’s Politics of Sexual Difference,” and Peggy Kamuf’s “Deconstruction and Feminism: A Repetition.” Grosz insists that both deconstruction and feminism acknowledge an ontological indeterminancy, highlighting that “none of the binary oppositions structuring logocentric and phallocentric thought can simply be avoided, and no compromise between them is possible” (97). I would elaborate to also suggest that Derrida provides tools, and a genealogy, through which it becomes possible to identify how the history of western metaphysics and its binary oppositions involves a concept of the human which is founded on an understanding of sexual difference that displaces sexual difference on to a difference between the categories man and woman rather than as an internal originary difference through which subjectivity is produced and never fully complete, based on these binary oppositions. I attempt to explain what I mean by this in the chapters to follow.
implications not only for how the human is defined, but for how difference within the human, in relation to what is defined as beyond or before the human, is defined. In other words, this logic of a metaphysics of presence has implications for how the figures of difference among men, for how the figure of woman in relation to men, and for how the nonhuman and the not fully human (child, insane, autistic, etc.) are defined in relation to one another.

What I consider here is what might be understood about this logic, and about disruptions to it, from the example of Israel, which is defined both in terms of a liberal democracy and in terms of a Jewish country and which thus combines two inter-related logics into one figure through creating the term Israeli-Jew. By two inter-related logics I refer to what Derrida has described in terms of a Greek logic based on a metaphysics of presence, and a Jewish and Abrahamic logic based in a tradition of relation to the text. In the latter, the figure of the Jew is situated as a guest to its own existence, a guest to its language and its land through its relation to God via the text, who is both host and who

In a significantly different vein, feminist work on the “posthuman” has also brought questions of reproduction into view in terms of a consideration between the figures of the human, woman, and animal. Haraway (1997, 2008), along with others (Martin 1998; Rapp 1995; Strathern 2005), has examined the practices through which knowledge is produced, harnessed and productive of how boundaries of difference are defined and made between populations and species in ways that rethink concepts of agency, race, gender, reproduction, and the human and nature based on long-standing binary formulations of these categories. This work has led to important reconsiderations of the subject and of concepts of agency, with attention to questions of species and sexual difference, but the emphasis has been on understanding the mechanisms through which these subjects have been produced, rather than on the implications for the relation to the singular other. In my reading, this move to “posthumanism” folds alterity as difference that can be subsumed into an ontological framework of the self-same, rather than placing alterity as what puts the subject, and specifically the human, into question by undoing any possibility of it as an autonomous sovereign self.
demands of the Jews that they host “him.” This is the distinction that Derrida points out when he critiques Levinas for reinstating a metaphysics of presence by placing a relation to alterity in terms of a dimension of height through a relation to the presence of God or the Divine. To do so, Derrida suggests, is to place difference in the plane of the ontological where it can be anticipated, rather than opening the ontological to an other through which existence as presence cannot be fully present to itself.

Derrida is thus critiquing Levinas for an empiricism disguised in the name of metaphysics because of this empiricism’s presupposition of an essence of being that is contained within its challenge to ontology. But I read Derrida here not as suggesting that Levinas reproduces the Greek logic in the terms of a Jewish or Abrahamic one, but rather as suggesting that Levinas does not recognize that the challenge to the Greek logos, and thus to both ontology and to a metaphysics of presence, comes precisely in the difference forced into question in the relation between the two logics - the Greek and the Abrahamic, and here specifically Jewish. And so Derrida asks: “Are we Greeks? Are we Jews? But who, we? Are we (not a chronological, but a pre-logical question) first Jews or first Greeks?”(1978, 153). I read this as another version of the question he asks years later in Archive Fever:

I have attempted to struggle with this elsewhere, and I shall say only a word about it, from the point of view of the archive: does one base one’s thinking of the future on an archived event – with or without substrate, with or without actuality – for example on a divine injunction or on a messianic covenant? Or else, on the contrary, can an experience, an existence, in general, only receive and record, only archive such an event to the extent that the structure of this existence and of its temporalization make this archivization possible? In other words, does one need a first archive in order to conceive of originary archivability? Or vice versa? This is the whole question of the revelation between the event of the religious
revelation (Offenbarung) and a revealability (Offenbarkeit), a possibility of manifestation, the prior thought of what opens toward the arrival or toward the coming of such an event. Is it not true that the logic of the after-the-fact (Nachtraglichkeit), which is not only at the heart of psychoanalysis...turns out to disrupt, disturb, entangle forever the reassuring distinction between the two terms of this alternative, as between the past and the future, that is to say, between the three actual presents, which would be the past present, the present present, and the future present? (1996, 80)

The question Derrida asks here then is whether the Greek logic in which writing (and thus archive) is understood as a supplement to its own origin as pure presence, somewhere forces the closure of its logic because of its circularity, and reveals that its self-representation as presence is already a representation.\(^46\) In his response to Heidegger,

---

\(^46\) As Derrida (1997) lays out through Rousseau and Levi-Strauss, this is also the question of the proper name, which is rooted in a form of prohibition - here names as the incest prohibition - that sets sexual difference as outside presence in order to allow for the proper name to be understood as such – as autonomous rather than as heteronomous, which carries a whole host of other implications and oppositions with it – the oppositions of nature/culture, physis/technology, human/animal which repress sexual difference through a phallocentric logic that is also a logic based in a metaphysics of presence... I will return to the question of the incest prohibition in relation to disturbances of genealogy and the archive later on.

For the moment I just want to note that Derrida takes us here to the heart of Levi-Strauss, and so also in some ways to anthropology, by going to the question of the incest prohibition as the example of where this primary difference institutes itself, as the origin of the difference between nature and culture. This prohibition credits difference around as a suture. Derrida points out that Levi-Strauss suggests this suture confronts us as a “fact,” and that he presents this rule as a scandal in the sense that it is relative and particular by definition, but which at the same time possesses a universal character. Derrida suggests that the “scandal” of this rule can only appear at the moment in which the analysis gives up a “real analysis” and passes to an “ideal analysis.” By “real analysis,” Derrida refers to an analysis that won’t reveal a difference between nature and culture. An “ideal analysis,” Derrida points out, referring to Levi-Strauss, signifies an analysis that allows for both the double criteria of the norm and for universality (1997, 104). The “scandal” thus comes into being only through the belief that the difference on which these two different analyses rests preexists the analysys themselves, at the same time that it is only through the construction of these analyses that this distinction is produced. Derrida draws attention to the circularity of this distinction, which is also the circularity of metaphysics, by pointing to what he calls the “ellipsis of the originary writing within language as the irreducibility of the metaphor,” or “the irremediable absence of the proper name” (106-107). Levi-Strauss, via Rousseau, sets up,
with and against Levinas, Derrida (1998; 1999; 2002; 2005b) then considers this question again with something of an answer. Derrida seems to suggest that the Jewish Abrahamic logic, in which presence (in the figure of the Jewish man) is understood as a supplement to the text as origin, nonetheless positions the alterity of the other in a presence, because the text itself is understood to originate with God thus making the text an alterity with presence. I read Derrida’s critique of Levinas then as one which dislodges the text as a representation of God as presence that can not be otherwise presented, situating instead the text as the movement between presence and absence, between being and nonbeing, and thus between GreekJew and JewGreek.

In Jewish tradition, circumcision has been the mark, the writing, by which Jews differentiated themselves as God’s chosen people, and as the people “of the Book.” One can surmise that Jewish women were not marked as Jewish through circumcision because or rather reinforces, an opposition between figurative language and literal, or proper meaning that can be fully present to itself. It is this latter possibility that Derrida puts into question, suggesting that any narrative of origin always involves a genealogical disturbance. In this sense then, even one’s relation to oneself would constitute a form of “incestuous” relation through a relation to difference that is absent a proper name, unless perhaps this difference is understood as radical alterity, in which case incest itself might in these terms be impossible – in the sense that every proper name is already heteronomous and plural in its singularity.

It in this sense also that Derridean deconstruction is in part about the haunting of the concept by the concept, and about how every word is always a substitution not only for another, but for another which is also itself already a substitute. In other words, every origin is itself already composed of a difference, and a difference of substitution, an internal difference that is nonetheless exterior to itself. When such substitution is made explicit and addressed rather than only suppressed, the proliferation of difference through such substitution becomes apparent. Psychoanalysis, as a form of analysis that focuses on substitution and difference in terms of origin and reproduction, is thus helpful together with deconstruction for thinking about the significance of difference when it exists as an interruption rather than only as an affirmation of presence.
woman was understood to come after and out of man. In order for the Jewish people to be reproduced, it was the womb which needed to be Jewish, not the woman’s eggs nor the man’s sperm. It didn’t matter that paternity rather than maternity was what could be doubted, because what mattered was whether people could be identified as Jewish or not. In other words, lineage was traced in terms of Jewishness, not in terms of paternity, at the same time of course that Jewishness, as a form of humanness narrated in terms of Biblical genealogy, was already always first a patriarchal lineage. But the point here is that sexual difference is here differentiated in terms of a coupling in which the difference that must not be crossed is marked by circumcision, a prohibition of exogamy for men rather than of endogamy.

This prohibition places the figures of women and men in a tricky bind in relation with one another. The loss of men from the group would not necessarily mean that the group could not continue to reproduce, as it is through the mother’s womb that Jewishness is reproduced. But mother, as woman, is always the supplement to man, and thus cannot be the origin for the Jew, and thus for the man, or for his group. Sexual difference in this logic then, is defined as always coming after the difference of man from God and the difference of man from animal. Necessary for the reproduction of man, but also reducible to man, who is the origin of woman. Man’s origin as Jew, in turn, is the text, which in turn, has its origin in the presence of God or the Divine. An Abrahamic logic then, as Levinas points to, disrupts a metaphysics of presence through introducing an alterity into the relation of man to himself, an alterity that he locates via the text, in a relation to God or the Divine. But as Derrida points out, such a relation to alterity
reinserts a metaphysics of presence by situating the alterity of the text in terms of the alterity of a presence of God. In other words, Derrida points out that the position of the Jew as differential value, or as shibboleth, disrupts an oppositional logic of a metaphysics of presence within the human, but that this differential value then reinserts a metaphysics of presence by situating alterity in terms of a relation with the Divine. This logic also retains a logic of the one, by retaining sexual difference as the supplement of man in the form of the heterosexual couple. Sexual difference is thus suppressed through the placement of the Jewish man as the differential value in a genealogy of origin in which Jew as differential value is both man and woman, reproduced through God by way of the text which originated with God. Such an understanding would also explain why women are kept from intimate relation with the text, and are not only allowed, but demanded to be those who not only head the family but also operate in the public sphere to bring in the money in the realm of human affairs.

In contrast, the Greek logic, both Aristotelian and Platonic, suggest that man is the origin of the text, rather than that the text is the origin of a specific kind of man (Jew) through its origin in the word of God. In this Greek logic, the difference that is necessary for reproduction of man thus cannot, by definition, be understood as human, if to be human is to have essence and full presence, which is why to be man requires that the difference that makes woman different from man be the difference that is not human. It is here that Derrida draws attention to both the prohibition of incest and to the production of the proper name as that which institutes a division between presence and nonpresence, while erasing its own production as that which enables the perception of this division. As
a result, the difference through which man is able to reproduce himself as man is
displaced to that which is not man, but which must simultaneously be represented as
human in order to retain what makes man man. In other words, woman becomes
constituted as that which is not man but through which man is reproduced as man. Thus
in order for woman to be defined as woman, the human must also be defined in
opposition to the animal, with woman placed in a liminal position between the two.
Difference among men, and animality and sexuality in figures of both woman and
differential men (often marked in racialized categories of color) is differently policed in
order to reinstitute man as pure origin and essence, that which precedes any
representation. In this logic, differential value is itself suppressed, and understood only in
terms of an oppositional relation.

Israel, as a state that is both modeled on European liberal democracy that is itself
modeled on the Greek Platonic tradition, and that defines itself as Jewish, thus combines
the two logics, GreekJew and JewGreek. But Derrida’s combining of the terms in both
orders, followed by his question of which comes first, does not suggest that in coming up
against each other they become the same. Rather, I read Derrida as asking what happens
when one thinks about what might be forced by thinking each in relation to one another
and in terms of contexts of their direct encounter. I read Derrida’s response, through
deconstruction, as suggesting that neither the Greek nor the Abrahamic Jewish logic
situates origin as only possible in the sense of an originary supplement, or in other words,
as in the alterity present in writing as language, as the trace of what it cannot fully
present. But I read Derrida as also pointing to what emerges from the difference between
these two logics when they are forced up against each other, and particularly through focusing on the question presented by the figure of the Jew as differential value within and between these two logics. Derrida also recognizes that in both the Greek and the Jewish logic, sexual difference is repressed and displaced, because sexual difference is precisely that originary supplement, the difference that makes the mark unable to be fully present to itself, since the mark of difference is what always institutes itself a relation to what it is not. With deconstruction, Derrida thus moves us far in rethinking a political logic that might be ethical to difference as sexual difference, as alterity, and thus to an understanding of the ethico-political. But Derrida left us with a question about what this might mean, this entry of the third, of the figure of the sister, of difference as alterity that disrupts the logic of both the Greek and the Jew. I will argue here that an analysis of the concept of the political in terms of the conjunction Israeli-Jew and its effects, lead to an understanding of sexual difference as displaced on to a difference between individuated subjects rather than as a difference internal to the subject which makes attaining full subjectivity or sovereignty impossible. It is through an understanding of the Jew as both guest and host, both inside and outside the framework of European modernity, that I arrive at such an understanding.

My analysis of the conjunction Israeli-Jew as situated both guest and host is informed by Khanna’s (2005; 2006) work on the concept and practice of asylum, in which she suggest that asylum, rather than necessarily being a reinscription of state or sovereign power, can be understood in terms of different instances through which particular characteristics and elements of the constitution of sovereign power are
revealed, along with the various forms of subjectivity, belonging and exclusion it produces. Central to this understanding is the relation between hospitality and hostility. The term asylum, she writes,

designates a space into which one may be received with hospitality following a sovereign decision. The decision, which one could think of as the announcement of the nature of the political, also comes to define what counts as part of the human family, and therefore provokes questions concerning how the human is conceptualized. (2006, 477)

Drawing on Derrida’s notion of “hostipitality” and the insight that to be in the place of host assumes a relation to a place in the ability to be the one who welcomes the other, Khanna thus foregrounds that the concept of asylum involves a relation not only between host and guest, but also a relation of host and guest to place and temporality. In a complex set of moves in which she moves from thinking about critical melancholia in terms of colonial and postcolonial contexts, to thinking about it in terms of the concept and practice of asylum in the contemporary moment more broadly, Khanna (2008) replaces the concept of “dignity” with that of “disposability,” to reformulate a notion of the relation of the subject (and thus of the proper name and relations of subsitution) to alterity. Elaborating on the implications of such an understanding of the proper name in relation to alterity, Khanna (2010) situates the inscription of presence, and of the singularity of the heteronomous signature, now defined as an originary supplement rather than as a supplement of origin, in motion by metaphorically placing the archive on a ship, positioning a relation to alterity in terms of unbelonging and motion rather than in terms of a Heideggarian investment in dwelling. In so doing, she sets up a counterexample of GreekJew JewGreek to the example of Israel, an inverse framework in which the
movement of representation is framed not by a logic of a metaphysics of presence but by the movement of the originary supplement.

In contrast, the establishment of Israel as liberal democracy and as Jewish sets up the Greek and Jewish logics against each other within the framework of the nation-state, and thus within the framework of an Aristotelian and Platonic logic. The differential value of Jew as shibboleth is thus continually attacked by the logic of a metaphysics of presence, putting difference as alterity under intense pressure at the same time that this metaphysics of presence sustains itself as such through an emphasis on the existence of a difference that is other than itself. Through an examination of Israeli contexts, I ask how, where and when difference as alterity is expressed and made manifest or suppressed, in what relation to figures of not-Jew or not man, and what happens to relations with alterity in relation to the liberal logic of the state. In other words, I ask about what political logic is at work in Israeli contexts in terms of how difference as alterity is made or not made manifest. I consider how the pressure of a Greek metaphysics of presence on a Jewish logic in which the Jew is figured as a differential value differently puts pressure on sexual difference and on the figure of the Jew, as differential values and in terms of a relation to alterity, to mark a border of normalization, policing and repression of difference, rather than allowing difference as originary supplement to proliferate difference. I suggest that Khanna’s move to place the archive itself in motion by metaphorically placing it on a ship moving through water and between land (which can be understood also as building on Irigaray’s work by putting the chain of representation between the image of the Platonic cave, the tunnel and the world itself in motion) can be understood as a kind of
inverse to Israel as a Jewish country and as a liberal democracy. As with Israel, archive and
differential value are imbricated within one another’s logics in the archive on the
ship, but with the archive on the ship, rather than the frame being a Greek logic of a
metaphysics of presence in the form of the nation-state, the frame is the logic of the
differential value, of an originary supplement, which means that the frame must itself be
in motion, here the frame of the ship, and the mark, the trace, what is put in motion.

It is not enough, however, to state such a political logic in abstract conceptual
terms, as much as it is necessary to do so. Such a logic suggests a hospitality to that
which is not present in the trace, to the illegible, to the passion of life, which means also
to the traces and remainders of the dead and of those and that to come, to the animal, to
emotion, to art, to that which does not come before language but which is not present to
itself in it. To say this is not to say that language or the singularity of the heteronomous
proper name then lose their importance. It is to say the opposite. At the same time as
language and what we call the human is demanded to be hospitable to the difference that
it cannot represent, that is always other to itself but without being separate from itself,
precisely in order to be hospitable in this way, one must be as careful and attentive to
language itself as possible, attentive to its genealogies and traces, exactly because it is
through these genealogies through which hostility and hospitality and the production of
presence and relations of substitution and their excesses are articulated. A hospitality to
what cannot be present to itself in language, be represented in and through language, thus
demands the greatest possible precision and care with language itself, with how we
address others, how we respond, how we sign and countersign, how we respond to the
proper name, precisely because the proper name is always both singular and
heteronomous, not fully belonging to itself, plural in its singularity, making oneself not
fully belong to oneself, but moving toward and from the other, carrying and responding
to the other(s) in oneself.

**Seawork Methods**

When I began the research on which this dissertation is based, I did not have the
language with which to say what exactly it was that I wanted to try to understand. In a
grant proposal, I wrote that “the internal diversity of secular Israeli Jews has confronted
Israel with the challenge of producing a cohesive national Jewish identity… and at the
same time producing a national identity that is inclusive of non-Jews. My research asks
what forms of citizenship emerge from national security practices that try to straddle
these two goals.” A little later on in the proposal, I stated that “accounts of Israel’s
history of state formation fall into two main categories, those that position the state as the
latest stage of Jewish presence in the region since the time of Abraham (Koestler 1983),
and those that trace its history to the emergence of conflicting Jewish and Arab
nationalisms at the end of the 1800s (Beinin 2001; Rabinowitz 2007; Said 1979; Levine
2005; Lustick 1988).” I identified national security discourse and practice as a focus
because it was in the interests of protecting a Jewish collective in the form of a liberal
democracy that the questions about forms of citizenship and processes of state formation
arose. I explained that by “examining the explicit narratives and practices of national
security (militarism and demography), and the varied engagements with them,
I…[would] identify how Israeli identifications of self and other veer between social and biological definitions of belonging and exclusion.” This would, I explained, allow me to “find out how individuals reproduce, contest, and experience security practices that aim to secure a collective social body, and how these practices in turn shape the identity of this body, both figuratively as a social entity and literally through practices that translate into the sacrifice, killing, protection and reproduction of the lives of individuals.” The language which I was using – that of identity, community, individual – was part of what made it difficult for me to say what it was that I was trying to understand. But the difficulty of finding the language to name my question was also partly about the fact that my question was itself about finding a language with which to think about these terms through Israel, and the figure of the Jew in the contexts of Israel. Finding such a language was also about finding a way to try to say something about moments and kinds of subjectivity in the contexts of Israel for which the terms of identity and community seemed unable to account.

I tried again to get at what this might be about in the methods section of my proposal, where I wrote that I would “spend 12 months conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Israel on how secular Jewish Israelis understand and experience Israeli national security practices that are both demographic and militarized.” I explained that I would spend this time focused on three different sites: “1) a heterogenous neighborhood in south Tel Aviv; 2) state ministries and programs responsible for immigration, settlement, health and reproduction policies, and; 3) settlers, Mizrahi, Ashkenazi, religious and left-wing groups who oppose national security practices.” As if trying to
preempt likely criticism or questions, I added a short paragraph in which I tried to offer some assurance that “while I will certainly take account of the perspectives of religious Jewish Israelis, I choose a diverse but predominantly secular neighborhood as one of my sites because the category of secular Jewish identity is central to the definition of Israeli citizenship.” Although I didn’t yet know how to say it – I was trying to explain that I was interested in how Israeli contexts, and the forms and processes of subjectivity they include, and specifically how one might understanding the signifier “Israeli-Jew” when “Jew” here was not defined in any stable way, might help with understanding concepts of community, sovereignty and politics, what their limits might be, and how such an understanding might in turn help with understanding the place called Israel, the kinds of politics it includes, and the figure of the Jew.

Although I hadn’t yet found a language with which to explain or properly think about the question that I was trying to identify, I had a sense of what kind of research method in terms of ethnographic research I thought might make the most sense. I chose three different “sites:” a fertility clinic, the border police, and a working class neighborhood in Tel Aviv. Alongside research in and about these three sites, I planned to also research official Israeli state exit and entry, demographic and national security policy. Soon after beginning my research, I dropped the fertility clinic and border police sites, and shifted instead to focusing on the struggle over the construction over the separation barrier in the West Bank (which meant research both in the West Bank itself, in olive groves, peoples’ homes, and the street, but also in courtrooms, meetings and offices in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem), in addition to the research in the neighborhood and on
official Israeli state policy. Questions about the law, violence, policing and lines of 
emnity and amity and demography were all condensed in the struggle over the barrier’s 
construction. I was anyway attending demonstrations and meetings in the West Bank, and 
this activity was in some ways also a continuation of both research and political activity 
that I had been doing during preliminary research during the summers of 2003 and 2004. 
I had initially been reluctant to think about this work in terms of making it an explicit part 
of my research, as I did not want to focus on “leftist Israelis.” But I eventually realized 
that I was learning about much more than “the left” in this “site,” and that it made sense 
to address this place and the struggle over it more explicitly. Apart from my political 
interests, I was spending some of my time in such political work in part exactly in order 
to be better able to go further in opposite directions, in an exercise of what Diane Nelson 
has termed a practice of “fluidarity” rather than “solidarity” (1999). I thus moved 
between Israelis with very different political views and positioned very differently from 
one another, and in very different contexts, such as the working class neighborhood in 
Bat Yam, that were entirely different from the meetings and movements of Israeli 
anarchists and Israeli Palestinian solidarity struggle in the West Bank.

So for more or less the first year of my research, I went back and forth between 
these very different places and people, sometimes literally from one day to the next – one 
day passing through checkpoints or cutting through olive groves to get around them, 
going to a demonstration, listening to stories about imprisonment and beatings, and the 
next day taking the bus south of Tel Aviv to talk with neighborhood residents about their 
lives and the mundane every day that sometimes would unexpectedly reveal not so
mundane stories. This movement back and forth between very different people and places and ways of living in the place called Israel/Palestine eroded any ground on which to stand. But I didn’t begin with a sense that I knew on what to stand anyway, only that I wanted to try to understand and put into words what that meant. And so I tried to find out what it meant to live in a context in which the ground continually eroded, and to find a language with which to think about what this might mean. How to address and respond to the other, how to understand a “community” that seemed defined by continual disruptions to itself as such, from individuals to places to narratives of collective histories, origins and futures.

It was thus the fields of psychoanalysis and deconstruction that allowed me to begin to find a language with which to formulate the questions structuring this project, and then for the differend of Israel. In this sense, it was these fields that also helped me to understand how to rearticulate one of the central aims of anthropology - what it might mean to study “experience” and “the real world out there” when I arrived to such work with a skepticism that there was any essential “real world out there” that could be understood as existing before or outside of the representations through which it attained presence. And particularly when at every turn, I was confronted with how even in the most intense nationalist of spaces in Israeli contexts, any narrative of belonging was continually disrupted by difference and narratives of unbelonging. One of my entry points into these fields was Khanna’s work on the concept and practice of asylum, which resonated with the contexts of Israel and led me to Levinas, Derrida and Freud as other interlocuters for this work.
Khanna suggests that the moment of sovereign decisionism in which the state decides whether or not to grant asylum, and thus belonging to the polity and to what is defined as the human, has an afterlife, and that this afterlife can be thought about in terms of the concept of critical melancholia as an affect that threatens the assumption of the self-representing, liberal subject, that is about disidentification and that is inhospitable to what she calls “the self-consolidating nature of community identification” (2004, 77).

What Khanna terms colonial melancholy is the product of unassimilable remainders, the result of the impossibility of assimilation to the colonizing group and the response to the loss suffered in exclusion of former affiliation to the group.

By situating psychoanalysis in terms of its historical and political contexts in terms of colonialism and postcolonialism, Khanna draws attention to Freud’s theorization of the subject both in terms of his own historical context in terms of Europe and World War and in terms of his questions about the relation between individual and group in terms of “civilization and its discontents.” Noting that Freud never finished his theorization of melancholia, she suggests that perhaps this was because “he began to see this affect as part of modern life more generally rather than as the ‘diseased critical agency’ he named it in 1915/1917. By 1923,” Khanna tells us, “in his second topology, the idea of a critical agency would be transferred from its initial theorization in the concept of melancholia to that of the critical moralizing, sovereign and conservative, function of the superego” (2012, 4). She then asks how this idea of critical agency could move from being thought of as diseased to being understood as
normative of the controlling apparatus of the modern subject and its imperial
dominion? Why would it move from an unhealthy, wretched, and impoverished
status to a healthy controlling one? How did this change relate to the distinctive
moment of world war in which melancholia was most fully theorized to its
transferred status to health in a time of peace? And how do we understand the
departure from the idea of perpetual melancholia in a time of war to health in a
moment of apparent perpetual peace? (Ibid.)

Israeli-Jew, I will argue in the chapters to follow, brings together the figure of the
diasporic Jew as not fully sovereign, characterized as prone to melancholia, hysteria and
other nervous disorders, with the figure of the “New Jew,” based on European
modernity’s ideal of a sovereign, autonomous, citizen-subject. By bringing them together,
rather than replacing one with the other, Israeli-Jew brings together the specificity of the
different genealogies that these terms carry. These different genealogies bring together an
Abrahamic origin narrative with an origin narrative based in Western metaphysics. In so
doing, each narrative challenges the other; this challenge, I argue, accounts for the
proliferation of difference and simultaneous strong nationalism which characterize Israel.
More significantly perhaps, an analysis of the claims to subjectivity, to sovereignty, and
of disruptions to these claims in terms of the conjunction Israeli-Jew, suggests a concept
of the political, and of a political subject, that is not based on European modernity’s
concept of the human and political frameworks based on belonging, community, and self-
representation.

Part II is divided into four parts which each address an element of the Zionist
dream through which, I argue, the figure of the Jew can be understood in terms of a
relation of difference to itself: 1) European modernity; 2) territorialization; 3) language,
and; 4) character. I draw on interviews, fieldwork, popular press documents and scholarship in postcolonial and feminist theory to demonstrate how Israeli contexts reveal the incompatibility between the figure of the Jew and the liberal framework of inclusion in which Zionism places it. I suggest that the conjunction “Israeli-Jew,” and the ways in which difference is marked and signified in Israeli contexts through this conjunction, raise a question about the relation between sexual difference and human/nonhuman species difference in terms of genealogies of liberalism and humanism.

Part II begins with an excerpt from fieldwork of a tour of Independence Hall in Tel Aviv, which exemplifies the manner in which Israeli Zionist narratives of Israel’s origin draw on both messianic and modern nationalist histories and imaginings of the future, with reference to both the Holocaust and to centuries of wandering in exile. In chapter one, I analyze examples from fieldwork in terms of postcolonial and Israel studies, and show how Jew-Israeli can be understood as a postcolonial figure. In chapter two, I show how the figure of the Jew in Israel has been expressed in terms of a difference internal to itself in terms of the territorialization of the material and social landscape in contemporary Israel. Such territorialization, I go on to suggest in chapter three, is in part produced by but also challenged through the use of Hebrew. Hebrew in modern day Israel, I argue, is full of reminders of its internal differences and heterogeneity within itself which challenge assumptions of sovereignty and autonomy. In chapter four I move into a discussion of how Zionism’s nation-building project involved not only territorialization and revitalization of Hebrew, but also efforts to create what Max Nordau called “the New Jew.” I focus on Herzl’s development of the Zionist
movement in relation to the ideals of the Rights of Man and French Republicanism, and on Max Nordau’s work on “degeneration” as a diagnosis of what he called the malady of modernism. I situate his concept of “the New Jew” in relation to German enlightenment ideals and German nationalism and in terms of the wider political context in which Theodor Herzl and Sigmund Freud developed Zionism and psychoanalysis in close proximity with one another. I suggest that Freud’s work, understood through the concept of critical melancholia, suggests a different understanding of the figure of the Jew than that which Nordau and Zionism more broadly suggest, and a different reaction to the political and social turmoil in Europe (and its colonies) out of which Zionism emerged. I argue that an analysis of Israeli contexts, by revealing the Jew to be defined in a relation of difference to itself, shows that Western metaphysics has defined the human through a displacement of sexual difference that has also necessitated a simultaneous racialization of difference which is reinforced rather than challenged by discourses that define the human in terms of an unmarked inherent and equal value. The figure of the Jew is in this sense, I argue, incompatible with the liberal frameworks of European modernity based on a liberal, autonomous subject. The different forms of violence that have emerged out of Israel’s emergence and on-going political conflict can thus be understood not as violations of European humanism’s political frameworks, but as a symptom, and perhaps as a warning, of the violence imbedded in and inherent to these frameworks.

Part III focuses on this incompatibility of the Jew with the political framework liberalism on which Israel is based in terms of the relation between Israeli contexts and the concept of the archive as inscription that marks both time and place. I return in this
section to the central question of this dissertation which I have presented in this introduction: how to understand the question of sexual difference and of subjectivity in terms of a concept of the political through an analysis of how the Jewish Abrahamic narrative of origin is brought together with a Greek origin narrative of metaphysics in Israel. Through an analysis of how Israeli-Jew is made to signify in terms of temporality, I show how a relation to inscription has constituted the Jew in a self-differential relation to origin. It highlights the figure of the Jew in the intersections of European anti-Semitism and Zionism’s “New Jew.” In the first chapter of Part III, I analyze the way in which Israeli remembers Jew by showing how the conjunction Israeli-Jew can be understood as a relation between the purportedly unmarked universal European man and the postcolonial man, here specifically the Jew. I situate the two different narratives of Israeli-Jewish origin in terms of two overlapping exchanges, one between Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and Freud, and the other between Derrida and Yerushalmi and Freud. I then move to a discussion of psychoanalysis in terms of the debates over both Freud and psychoanalysis itself in terms of its relation to Jewishness and anti-Semitism. By placing my analysis of Israeli-Jew as a self-differential figure in the contexts of these discussions about the concept of archive and psychoanalysis, I show how the simultaneous existence of the messianic and the modern narratives of Jewish-Israeli origin differently displace sexual difference through a politics based on a metaphysics of presence. I end this chapter by asking what it means to recognize this displaced difference when presence is not reinserted via God or the fraternal figures of the state, and with the story of a woman in the neighborhood of Ramat Yosef who is described to be like a dog. Through an
analysis of this story, I examine the position of woman and of sexual difference in terms of the European and postcolonial relations to the archive. I do so by moving back and forth between psychoanalysis and examples from contemporary Israel. Ultimately I suggest that because Israel both explicitly holds out the European and the postcolonial patriarchal archival relations while at the same time must reproduce the category Israeli-Jew defined by these two relations, the question of reproduction of the polity forces an analysis of how sexual difference is displaced in these archival relations and their basis on a metaphysics of presence. The question of woman and of sexual difference thus leads to an understanding of the political, and of the subject, based on affective relation through which attaining full subjectivity and the possibility for complete representation is revealed to be impossible.

The second chapter of Part III examines how the question of Israeli-Jewish origin in contemporary Israel can be understood in terms of place. Drawing on examples from fieldwork, and building on the previous chapters emphasis on the different ways in which the Jew is marked as self-differential, I highlight the porosity of borders in contemporary Israel that mark Jew and non-Jew, and diasporic Jew and “New Jew.” I analyze this porosity in terms of the Abrahamic and Greek narratives which encounter one another in the conjunction Israeli-Jew and the realities it has produced. This chapter builds on the previous chapter on the question of origin in terms of the archive, by considering the significance of the fact that an archival inscription marks not only time but also a boundary between inside and outside. It is with this in mind that I return to the question of sovereignty, subjectivity, and the relation to the difference of alterity for an
understanding of the concept of the political with which the dissertation opens. Returning to the different ways in which the Jew is defined in self-differential relation, I show here how these differences challenge clear distinctions and separations between inside and outside, Europe and Arab or Middle Eastern, private and public, Jew and Arab. I argue that the porosity of these borders challenges claims to sovereignty, property and ownership, both of the nation-state and of the individual. I suggest that it is the encounter between the Abrahamic and the Greek narratives which produce and make explicit how these borders move and are moved across by different forms of difference by forcing the fraternal figures of the state into an encounter with the fraternal figure of God. Drawing on French feminist theory and the discussion between Levinas and Derrida about the concept of hospitality and ethical relation to the other in terms of the Jewish Abrahamic narrative, I conclude by considering the notion of a political subject based on an understanding of sexual difference as that which undoes the possibility of full subjectivity, and which acknowledges affiliation through the movement of affective relation to multiple others rather than attempting to fix the inheritance of the name through claims to origin between two, who are really reducible to the one of the name of the father. The impossibility of accessible origin and of a foundation on which hospitality can be extended suggests a politics based not on foundation but on the continual movement of the narrative through which hospitality and hostility are expressed, and the bodies which encounter one another in and through these narratives. In this vein, I also consider whether fieldwork might not be thought of as “seawork,” to acknowledge the
importance of such motion and the violence of a politics based on attempts to reinforce foundation.

In Part IV, I move towards a conclusion with a chapter that summarizes the larger arguments of the dissertation through an analysis of three recent events in Israel/Palestine: 1) the recent attempts of flotilla organizers to break Israel’s blockade of the Gaza Strip; 2) an action by Israeli and Palestinian activists in the West Bank in conjunction with legal struggles in the Supreme Court, and which revealed illegal activity on the part of Israeli construction companies in the contested territory between the Palestinian village of Bil’in and the Israeli settlement of Modi’in Illit, and; 3) the recent murder of Israeli-Palestinian actor Juliano Mer-Khamis. I also experiment here with a demonstration of the relation between the literal and the metaphorical in terms of ethnographic analysis; I move back and forth between the literality of the examples I present, the argument I am making about the relation between the literary and a concept of the political and of justice for ethnography, and the theoretical analysis of the examples in terms both literal and metaphorical. In the final chapter, I conclude with a short story about a conference in Jerusalem in 2008 about Jonathan Littell’s controversial book *The Kindly Ones* and my conversation with the Israeli translator of the book from French to Hebrew, and then consider how my analysis of Israel might be suggestive for an understanding of a concept of the political, ethnography, and justice.
Chapter One
The Scene of the Dream: Zionism, Psychoanalysis, Liberalism and the Question of the Jew

Don’t even start to think what will happen to us in fifty years time, when an average Arab family has six kids, and an average Jewish family, modern family, is two and a half kids maybe, two kids and a dog. What will happen to us in fifty years time? Are we going to be a majority in our own country? It is a good question, what will happen to the Jewish country, what will happen to the Zionist dream?

Israeli Independence Hall Tour Guide
2007

On account of certain events which had occurred in the city of Rome, it had become necessary to remove the children to safety, and this was done. The scene was then in front of a gateway, double doors in the ancient style (the ‘Porta Romana’ at Siena, as I was aware during the dream itself). I was sitting on the edge of a fountain and was greatly depressed and almost in tears. A female figure – an attendant or nun – brought two boys out and handed them over to their father, who was not myself. The elder of the two was clearly my eldest son;…This dream was constructed on a tangle of thoughts provoked by a play which I had seen, called Das neue Ghetto [The New Ghetto]. The Jewish problem, concern about the future of one’s children, to whom one cannot give a country of their own, concern about educating them in such a way that they can move freely across frontiers – all of this was easily recognizable among the relevant dream-thoughts.

Sigmund Freud
Interpretation of Dreams
1900

Now, dear Book, after three years of labor, we must part. And your sufferings will begin. You will have to make your way through enmity and misrepresentation as through a dark forest.

When, however, you come among friendly folk, give them greetings from your father. Tell them that he believes Dreams also are a fulfillment of the days of our sojourn on Earth. Dreams are not so different from Deeds as some may think. All the Deeds of men are only Dreams at first. And in the end, their Deeds dissolve into Dreams.
Theodor Herzl
Old New Land
1902

The opposition of dream to wakefulness, is not that a representation of metaphysics as well? And what should dream or writing be if, as we know now, one may dream while writing? And if the scene of dream is always a scene of writing?

Jacques Derrida

Theodor Herzl, known as the “father of Zionism,” famously referred to Zionism as a dream about the creation of a Jewish homeland. The establishment of the State of Israel is commonly understood as the realization of that dream. This dream of another place for the Jew also carried with it a dream of another kind of Jew. This Jew would be a new Jew, with a place of its own rather than wandering from place to place, with a new language taken from the old, a language of its own, and it would be a Jew with a new character; the New Jew would shed the characteristics of the diasporic Jew and be a strong Jew, in touch with the land and physical labour, tanned by the sun rather than pale from staying indoors studying the Torah, carefree and independent rather than anxious and melancholic.¹ In the following three sections, I will address each of these elements of the Zionist dream in turn; I will move from the territorialization of the Zionist Dream, to the question of language, and then to character. But before doing so, in this chapter, I will suggest that the dream of Zionism, through this dream of a Jew with a new place,

¹ See Almog (2000) for a vivid account of the ideal of the Sabra.
language, and character, needs to be understood within the framework of European modernity and postcoloniality.

In the Introduction, I suggested that the relation of the figure of the Jew to its own origin in terms of a relation to alterity made it impossible for the figure of the Jew to be assimilated into European national frameworks and into liberal logics of the nation-state. I explained that the establishment of Israel as both a Jewish state and as a liberal democracy thus raises a question about what emerges out of the conjunction Jew-Israeli. Given that the Zionist dream was not only a dream of the establishment of a Jewish homeland, but also carried with it a dream of another kind of Jew, to understand what emerges from the conjunction Jew-Israeli it is therefore necessary to understand the significance of the figure of the Jew in terms of the Zionist dream. It is also necessary to understand the Zionist project and the figure of the Jew in terms of a dream.

In order to understand the significance of the figure of the Jew in terms of the Zionist dream, it is necessary to understand both the figure of the Jew and the Zionist dream in terms of a relation to territory, language, and character. Part I, “The Zionist Dream” is thus divided into four chapters: 1) The Scene of the Dream: Zionism, Psychoanalysis, Liberalism and the Question of the Jew; 2) Zionism and Territory; 3) On the Edge of the Abyss, and 4) Zionism and Character. Together, these chapters situate the Zionist dream in relation to fin de siecle Europe and in relation to Israeli contexts. The common thread throughout these chapters is the argument that the Zionist dream is defined through a relation of difference to itself because it is based on an idea of the Jew as a figure who is defined through a relation of difference to itself – in terms of place, language, and origin. In this chapter, I set the course for the next three chapters by
showing how the Zionist dream centers around the question of what the “Jew” signifies, both in relation to turn of the century Europe and in relation to contemporary Israeli contexts.

By focusing on Zionist dream in relation to questions of territorialization, language, and the figure of the Jew, I show how the Zionist dream attempted to resignify the figure of the Jew against the backdrop of turn of the century Europe and in terms of what was understood as the promise of an end to exile that would be marked by the establishment of a Jewish state. I argue that in so doing, the Zionist dream has emphasized and reproduced rather than erased the figure of the Jew as existing in a relation of difference to itself, but at the same time has harnessed the production of this figure to a logic of liberalism. This relation of the figure of the Jew in terms of a relation of difference to itself, revealing origin as possible only as originary supplement, manifests in contemporary Israeli contexts in disruptions to narratives of belonging. I suggest that such disruptions, and what emerges out of the conjunction Israeli-Jew, can be understood in terms of a psychoanalytic understanding of subjectivity which Freud developed on the basis of his theory of dreams, in close geopolitical proximity to and at almost exactly the same time as Theodor Herzl was formulating the Zionist dream. I argue that the Zionist dream is a dream of a metaphysics of presence, but one which contains a figure of the Jew that continually poses a challenge to this dream and to any politics based on a metaphysics of presence. The figure of the Jew within the Zionist dream and in Israeli contexts thus poses a challenge to the opposition between dream and wakefulness, and challenges the framework and logic of the nation-state, and the assumptions of liberalism, humanism and a metaphysics of presence on which it is based.
Both psychoanalysis and Zionism were informed by different diagnoses of what were understood in turn of the century Europe as disorders of the nervous system, such as hysteria and melancholia. Max Nordau, often named as the second most significant figure after Herzl in shaping Zionism, interpreted such disorders as signs of degeneration, which he called the malady of modernism. His notions of a “muscular Judaism” and of the “New Jew” in many ways suggested a counter to this malady. At the same time that Nordau, Herzl, and others were trying to make the Zionist dream a reality, Sigmund Freud was writing The Interpretation of Dreams, and developing his theory of psychoanalysis based on his work on dreams and on his earlier work on neurons. His work was largely based on analysis of the same kinds of disorders, such as melancholia and hysteria, which Nordau understood as symptoms of “degeneration.”

By bringing Zionism and psychoanalysis together to think about Israeli contexts I am not simply suggesting that Freudian psychoanalysis and Herzl’s and Nordau’s Zionism emerged out of the same geopolitical contexts with two different understandings of these phenomena. Rather, I also argue that psychoanalysis, together with deconstruction, offers a way to understand the effects of Zionism, and thus also a way to understand contemporary Israeli contexts, the conjunction Jew-Israeli, and the questions posed by JewGreek GreekJew. I suggest that the fact that one response (psychoanalysis), in conjunction with deconstruction and its genealogy in postwar French theory, emerges as a coherent framework to explain the effects of another response (Zionism), is also far from arbitrary or coincidental. Ultimately, I argue that reading the Zionist dream (and more specifically, the conjunction Jew-Israeli and the political contexts which it has produced) through a psychoanalytic understanding of subjectivity informed by Freud’s
theory of dreams, reveals how Israeli contexts and what emerges out of the conjunction
Jew-Israeli challenge the framework and assumptions of the nation-state model on which
Zionism is based. In other words, I show how the figure of the Jew within Zionism and
Israeli contexts exceeds their logics, revealing, in Derrida’s words, “the impossibility of
fixing differance in its contour” and the violence of a logic of a metaphysics of presence
which attempts to do so. Ultimately, I argue that what emerges from the relation between
Jew and Israel helps explain how humanism’s concept of the human has produced both
racialized categories of difference and the figure of woman as not fully human by putting
sexual difference under erasure. The Zionist dream, I suggest, points towards this through
putting into question metaphysical concepts of truth, rationality, secularism, and a politics
based only on linguistic representation.

In the opening quote above, the guide giving a tour in Israel’s Independence Hall
poses the question of what will become of the Zionist dream. His question is framed in
terms of demography; “an average Arab family has six kids, and an average Jewish
family, modern family, is two and a half kids maybe, two kids and a dog. What will
happen to us in fifty years time? Are we going to be a majority in our own country?”
From the beginning of the Zionist movement, the Zionist hope to establish a Jewish
homeland in what was then Palestine led to a focus on producing a Jewish majority there.
Once Israel was officially established and self-defined as both a Jewish state and as a
liberal democracy, the matter of producing and maintaining a Jewish majority became
explicitly articulated in terms of state policy. Achieving a Jewish majority led to a focus
on two main methods of population administration: a focus on biological reproduction
and on immigration. The latter translated into massive Zionist and state-orchestrated
immigration waves of Jews from all over the world (primarily from Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East) to Palestine/Israel in both the pre-state period and post-1948. The fact that Israel’s Jewish population was made up of approximately half European and half north African and Middle Eastern Jews, and that each of these groups was itself divided into different numerous languages, countries and cultural backgrounds, raised the question of what defined “the Jew,” and specifically, the “Israeli-Jew” in the context of the project of establishing an Israeli Jewish state.

Aharon, a taxi driver in Jerusalem who I met when taking a ride from Jerusalem’s YMCA to Jerusalem’s International Convention Center one evening in the spring of 2007, exemplifies the kind of puzzle that I was trying to name and put into the form of a question while doing research in Israel. The way this “puzzle” is visible in the conversation with Aharon is not the same as how it is made apparent in Israeli contexts more broadly, but the puzzle itself is similar, and naming it in terms of the conversation with Aharon helps articulate one of the central questions structuring this dissertation. As should become apparent by the end of our conversation, Aharon simultaneously holds very oppositional positions regarding Israeli state politics towards Palestinians and the country’s Arab neighbors and Zionism. He challenges Zionism’s territorial and nationalist claims more broadly, critiques the State in terms of economic policy, government narratives, he acknowledges Palestinian grievances with which he expresses identification, and he insists he would nonetheless go to fight if called up by the military were he still of age for military duty. He refers to Jews and Israel sometimes in terms of a “we” of which he is a part, sometimes in terms of a “they” of which he is not, and he identifies alternately as Mughrabi, Jewish, Israeli, and as a worker. In other words, he
undermines himself any time he appears to place himself as belonging to any of these groups; in the next breath he interrupts this belonging with a critique that emphasizes how he doesn’t belong to them. How is it possible to make sense of such seemingly contradictory positions coexisting as if they are not contradictory?

While we were sitting in a traffic jam, I asked Aharon what he thought about “ha’matsav.” Ha’matsav in Hebrew means “the situation,” and is commonly used to refer to the current political context, whatever it might be; it is both open enough that the respondent can interpret it in terms of whatever seems to be the most significant political issue at the moment, and specific enough that it is clear that it refers to the political context, the country, the government, the street, the social context that “we” are living in. Sometimes the respondent asks for clarification; “you mean the security situation?” or “you mean the upcoming elections?” or “you mean the economic situation?” but usually when they do this they barely pause for you to answer and continue on to answer their own question, elaborating on whatever “ha’matsav” is about for them, often beginning with a version of “look, you have to understand that…” followed by a strong declaration and analysis of a problem. Aharon said something like, “you mean in terms of a new government?” and then, “look, there isn’t anyone for whom to vote. The country is a mess. The whole idea of establishing a Jewish country here was an absurd idea anyway.” This last sentence caught me by surprise. With a handful of exceptions, it is rare to find Israelis critical not just of Israeli state policy, but of Zionism itself. It was even more unusual to find a taxi driver be among such exceptions. By the end of the ride, I had explained that I was a graduate student doing research, and asked him if he might be willing to meet me for an interview sometime, so that we could keep talking. He agreed.
It was several months later by the time I managed to call him to ask if we could talk again. We met for lunch in Jerusalem’s Central Bus Station. Over the course of the next more or less two hours, I found out more about his background, and tried to make sense of his political analysis. He was from Morocco, and had come to Israel when he was twelve years old. He said that life there had been good, and when I said I had heard this was the often the case more generally for Jews in Arab countries, he said yes, it often was, and that Israel was interested in Jews having problems in Arab countries because Israel wanted them to come here [to Israel]. I began our conversation reminding us both that before we had been talking about the political situation, and that the “government has to go home; “Peretz, Olmert, go home.” Aharon then began by making a reference to demography in terms of what he called his diagnosis of Israel’s political situation.

Aharon: “My diagnosis of the state of Israel, is that Israel won’t be able to exist in the next 100 years. Why? The reason is simple. In Gaza, before 40 years, there were there 450,000 residents, today, there are in Gaza 2 million 200,000 if I am not wrong, it could be that I am wrong, 100,000 here,”

I said: “Yes, it’s a lot of people, very crowded,”

Aharon responded, “And this means that doubled themselves almost. In the old city, in the time that we conquered the old city in Jerusalem, we were 250,000, 300,000 Jews, about 90,000 to 110,000 Arabs became part of our population.”

I reply, “in 1967 you say,”

Aharon goes on, “in ’67, and today they think about waves of 50,000 300,000, they don’t want to frighten us and tell us the real numbers, the state of Israel never tells us the real numbers. I don’t get frightened from numbers. I do get frightened from a
sentence that Arafat said one time, ‘who are they the Jews that they are all in all, the Jews in the world, 20 million, We the arabs are a billion and a half, almost, the Muslims.’

Now, the mentality of the arabs, didn’t understand, the Ashkenazi politicians, not Olmert not Netanyahu, he who comes from the west, does not understand the Arabs, who did succeed in understanding them, more or less, was Hillel from the East, in his time, Hillel, the minister of the police, from the marach, David Levy, Chetrit . . .”

I ask, “Which Chetrit?”

“Meir Chetrit,” he said.

I say, “Ah, Meir Chetrit”

Aharon answered, “this means that the state of Israel has a problem, she doesn’t read the map correctly. To which map am I referring? To the political map. The arabs will not be satisfied to make peace like this, this is throwing sand in our eyes. It’s not real, all these things are not real. Or if we play the game, if it’s about playing the game, then this is acceptable to me.”

I ask, “And what does it mean to play the game?”

He answers, “Playing the game, we know that the situation isn’t good, and we say we want peace (peace in English), we want peace, we want peace . . . we convince ourselves,”

I say, “But also when we play the game it’s not,”

Aharon responds “it doesn’t catch, it’s all temporary, it doesn’t catch. Now, sooner or later, we will have to return these territories,”

I ask, “And you are referring to the green line?”
He explains, “The green line, and I am a likudnik, but one thing I’ve understood, it will not be allowed to occupy a people. It’s like if you and I had a shared garden, and I take from you all the garden, and I tell you good morning Hedva, about what will you have to say to me good morning? Who is this to tell me good morning, he stole from me the garden, why should I say good morning?”

Aharon here has combined what are two seemingly incompatible positions; he is a Likudnik, but he is vehemently criticizing Israeli occupation beyond the green line. He insists that it will be necessary to return land to Palestinians, for both practical political reasons, and because it is socially unsustainable to live with or next to a people without doing so. I was curious about how he holds this position, and also if he thinks of his views as being realistic in terms of the possibility of the implementation of a return of land to Palestinians, given past and current Israeli policy.

So I ask him; “But in terms of the reality that exists now on the ground, that building is continuing in the territories, and the path of the separation wall isn’t on the green line, do you think that it is really realistic to return the territories?”

Aharon says: “Look, we are going towards separation, but what, we’ll make them a ghetto? What is this wall? This is Sharon’s big bluff. He didn’t believe in this, but he said maybe if we make a wall they will want to make peace with us. They tried from all kinds of directions. We won’t let you work, we have tried this more towards the Palestinians than to us. We tell them stories like to retarded children. The government gives us all kinds of slogans, as if we are retarded. What is this separation; a Jew can pass through, an Arab can’t pass through.”
We keep talking, and after he makes some differentiations between the Labor party and the Likud historically, suggesting that it has been the right wing that has actually had the courage and known how to return territory rather than Labour and the left, who he suggests just talk about it but don’t dare to actually do it, and who don’t “speak the language of the Arabs,” I ask him what he thinks of the “matsav.”

He answers; “Our matsav is not good. Not the Zionist and not for the wise man. It is necessary to understand the ideology, not territories and not that, stopped believing in, throwing sand in the eyes. The economy is falling apart, and they tell us that the shekel is strong. And the student goes to the university and doesn’t have money to buy his sandwich. My son went to the united states and is also working without help from me, he works so he earns a salary with kavod. Here they don’t let people work with respect. I am a pensioner and I am thinking about how I can leave this country, and I am a big idealist. And I believe in the state of Israel, but to do like what they did to me recently in Egged, they took away my pension after fourteen years. Only in a place like egged they can do this, in Israel, it doesn’t make sense that they would . . . [explanation about how Egged took away his pension, in Egged which is “a cooperative that I built”] . . . So I am not angry but . . . I worked hard for many years, . . . why shouldn’t I get my pension, . . .”

“How can they do that in terms of the law?” I ask him.

“There aren’t laws.” He goes on, “In the state of Israel there are many illegal) things. Like how we occupied the territories there are many illegal things, lady. …if it is in the territories, if it is with salaries, It is a sick society…There are absurd things that happen only in Israel.”
I then say that I want to ask him about something he had said before on the taxi ride that had surprised me - that building a Jewish state in the Middle East had been a retarded idea.

Aharon responded by returning again to the subject of demography; “They came to bother people, I don’t understand, I am from Morocco, why to come to Israel, and take from them the territories, and tell them let’s make peace,“

“Yes,” I say, “the way that you describe it makes it sound absurd, that people from Europe and the United States,“

“And yes,” he adds, “the biggest absurdity is, when did the intifada start? No one looks at this, but if you pay attention, when did the intifiada start? When the State of Israel decided to bring a million Russians here, even not Jews, it got to the press, even if they aren’t Jews, the important thing is that they get here as heads to be counted, so that they can be here to level out the demography of the Palestinians in Israel. How many times can they bring a million Russians here, one time, two times, three times, what next? Who can they bring? Ethiopians we’ve brought. Russians we brought. Who else will we bring later? We already brought all the Morrocans. Who else is left?“

I say, “Yes, so in your opinion, the whole idea from the beginning,“

Aharon cuts in, “The idea to create the state of Israel in a Middle Eastern place was retarded., Not retarded., it’s true that we made the desert bloom, but we also destroyed, we stepped on kviot, we murdered families, we made,, how it is called, we made transfer, understand it as transfer or not, we made transfer to the people of Shachnunus, you know where they are, in Barlade,“

I don’t know where Barlade is, and ask “Where is Barlade?”
“In Kfar Barlade, next to Bet Shean, which is a village near the moshav, in Emek Bet Shean, B’Beka, five kilometers before you get to Bet Shean, there is there a place called Barlade, you know who they are, these are people who once lived in Ramat Aviv Gimel and Herzelia Pituach” Aharon explains.

I then ask him, “So in your opinion it is understandable why there is a conflict with Palestinians and why they are angry, when history is looked at like this, that is to say, both on the side of the Jews and on the side of the Palestinians,”

“Look,” Aharon says pointedly, “I understand the side of the Jews, they created Herzelia pituach very beautifully. But they murdered whole families and moved them to this village, these were people who were also used to the sea, they too know what is the sea, they also knew what is Herzelia Pituach close to Tel Aviv and the mall, but they threw them there in the valley with the mosquitos, and’

I interrupt, “And now they’re not allowed to enter Israel,”

Aharon continues, “Yes, now they are called Palestinians for everything, they didn’t even give them an expulsion id,”

“Yes,” I say.

Aharon continues, “So I ask you, someone who has an id like this, and his son grows up there, and his son goes with him to visit with him to Herzelia where they once lived, and says, ebni, bni, all this used to be your father’s, this was your grandfather’s who lived here, but look here at this big building they’ve built, if we would have created this we would have been rich, so for an hour he tells his son about this,”

“Yes,” I nod,

“I am asking you,” Aharon says,
“No, I agree,” I say.

“So,” Aharon says

I then try to explain what I am trying to understand about his views, and say, “what interests me is how you, who sees things like this, and I agree with you, how do you combine or connect these views with what you said about how you believe in the state of Israel and vote for Likud? . . .”

“I’ll tell you. I am a realist, in my personality. Arabs understand the language of force. Labor doesn’t understand this like the Likud does, at least that’s how it was, today there is no difference between them anymore. . . .It’s not even a difference between Ashkenazi/Mizrahi. Period. The Marach (west/Ashkenazi/labor) started with all kinds of ways, they’re not direct, they educated them to not good things, their children suffer from this, and my grandchildren will suffer from this,” Aharon answers.

“Is it an Ashkenazi,” I pause,

Aharon says, “It’s not even Ashkenazi thing. You know, once I said joking, let the Ashkenazim establish the state, they’ll establish it crooked like their houses. I didn’t come to be angry at them, you understand. You know, what did they do, they established a block of a state here, brought resources and money from all over in the world, and then what happened, the Holocaust the Holocaust the Holocaust. The money from the Holocaust gets finished and everyone starts shouting to the sky, what about the people in Dimona, who only get the radiation from the nuclear reactor there, the old people don’t have money, they don’t have enough to eat, and the son of Rabin lives in Chicago, they say he is doing business there . . . and all the kids of the ministers are living in the United States, studying in universities abroad, and working. This is a sign they don’t believe in
the education in Israel, you send your kids to study where you think they can get a good education . . .”

“Right,” I say.

Aharon continues, “a sign that you don’t think it is the best in Israel, you send your kids to Oxford, in London, or to Paris, or to the United States or Canada.”

Then I ask, “And in terms of relationships, do you feel like you can build a relation, I don’t know exactly how to say it, understand, better with,”

Aharon asks, “Palestinians?”

I go on, nodding, “Palestinians, better than with Jews who came from, I don’t know, Poland or from”

“For sure. For sure,” Aharon answers. “This is clear. I’ll give you a simple example. When I retired from Egged [the Israeli Jerusalem bus company] I bought a Mercedes, a taxi, and went to Yafo Gate [at the old city in Jerusalem] and an Arab came to me and looked at me like this, and said hey, you’re not allowed to be here, this is a place for Arabs. He was twice as tall as me, a mountain. I said listen, and I pointed with my hand to my pant leg by my ankle, as if I had a knife hidden there. I said listen, I’m not Israeli, I’m not going to the police to complain about you. I am Mughrabi, Moroccan. One more word that you say and I’ll cut you open. Why did I tell him this?”

“You said it in Arabic?” I ask.

“Yes. I told him to put fear in him, so he would get scared. I gestured to my leg as if I had a knife there, so he’d think I had a knife there - be careful, my knife is on my way to you. Since that day he always greets me and says shalom Aharon, how are you,”

Aharon explains.
I ask, “And you, you return the greeting?”

“Yes!” Aharon answers emphatically. “Of course, I didn’t fight with him or something. They don’t understand a different language; don’t ever show an Arab that you are afraid. I simply put him in his place, I said, sorry, this country is mine, it is yours, it is both of ours, and stop with this my country your country, as far as I’m concerned it can be Palestine, what does it matter? What, is it not allowed for me to work here? He said this is our salary, our work. I said what salary, where is it written that you are allowed to work here and I am not? He saw that I was new; he wanted to scare me.”

I ask him, “So you are saying that it can be a Palestinian country, you don’t think it matters?”

Aharon says, “I think we have to get closer . . .”

Then I say, “So on Memorial day, when they read off all the names,”

Aharon responds, “To my sorrow more than half of my friends are under the ground…”

I go on to ask Aharon if a war broke out tomorrow and the army called him, would he serve, and he answered without any hesitation that yes, he would. I asked him how he reconciled such a position with the other things he had said in terms of his criticisms of Israeli policy and of Zionism, and he said that this is what it means to live in Israel, and that to his sorry this is what he has to say to his children. Aharon draws attention to the question of what it means to connect “Jew” to “Israeli.” His seemingly contradictory claims both emphasize how the “Jew” is called upon to defend “Israel” and how the signifier “Jew” comes into question; what is it that Israeli is supposed to be when it is to defend “Jew,” what does “Jew” then mean? This question came up in other ways –
for example in the neighborhood Ramat Yosef there was a small handful of Palestinians living there among a population dominated by Mizrahim and by Russian immigrants. More than once, the Palestinians were described by a Mizrahi Jew as more Jewish than some of the Jews, while Jews who expressed solidarity with Palestinians were labeled traitors who should be killed. Israel’s establishment as a self-declared Jewish state and liberal democracy has produced investements in making and maintaining and protecting a Jewish majority both in terms of state policy and in terms of the Jewish population, without it being at all clear what “Jew” signifies.

The question of who and what is a Jew is not, however, a new question nor one particular only to the Zionist project of establishing a Jewish homeland. Hannah Arendt, Jean-Paul Sartre, Walter Benjamin, Albert Camus, Franz Kafka, Bernard Lazare, Leo Motzkin, and Sigmund Freud were among those who in very different ways grappled not just with questions about Zionism and about how to understand anti-Semitism in Europe, but also with how to understand what it is that defines a Jew as a Jew. As Frantz Fanon (1967), drawing on Sartre, noted shortly after the end of WWII;

The Jew, be he authentic or inauthentic, is labeled a salaud. Such is the situation that anything he does is bound to turn against him. For naturally the Jew can decide who he wants to be, and he can even forget his Jewishness, hide it or hide it from himself. He thus recognizes the validity of the Aryan system. There is good and there is evil. The evil is Jewish. Everything that is Jewish is ugly. Let us no longer be Jews. I am no longer a Jew. Down with the Jews. (159)
Just prior to this passage, Fanon refers to Sartre’s (1948) *Anti-Semite and Jew*, which he quotes from extensively in a footnote. Fanon’s point here is to further emphasize and explain the problem of the representation of the black man in relation to whiteness - the possibility and difficulty for a black self-consciousness to emerge when the history and language of racism, here of whiteness, reflects back an image that is distorted through the representation of the black by the white. Fanon presents a compelling critique of Sartre’s ontology through a discussion of Negritude, and references the figure of the Jew to point out both similarities and differences between what he compares as anti-Semitism and Negrophobia in terms of such individuation (which he situates in terms of a psychoanalytic understanding of the mirror stage, inflected differently for different subjects in terms of colonial and postcolonial contexts), while suggesting differences in terms of how the black man is sexualized and biologized in ways that the Jew is not. Fanon’s problematic gender and sexuality analyses notwithstanding, his discussion about the black man, racism and his references to the Jew and anti-Semitism importantly point out the significance of representation of difference in relation to an other who is not marked as other but simply as universal, and the implications of such representation for

---

2 The passage Fanon selects is worth quoting here as well:
Such then is this haunted man, condemned to make his choice of himself on the basis of false problems and in a false situation, deprived of the metaphysical sense by the hostility of the society that surrounds him, driven to a rationalism of despair. His life is nothing but a long flight from others and from himself. He has been alienated even from his own body; his emotional life has been cut in two; he has been reduced to pursuing the impossible dream of universal brotherhood in a world that rejects him. Whose is the fault? It is our eyes that reflect to him the unacceptable image that he wishes to dissimulate…. It is we who contrain him to choose to be a Jew whether through flight from himself or through self-assertion; it is we who force him into the dilemma of Jewish authenticity or inauthenticity…. (1948, 58-59)
individuation. Whatever questions Fanon’s and Sartre’s discussion of the Jew in relation to anti-Semitism may pose, it is worth noting here that while Fanon’s discussion is more complex and nuanced than Sartre’s in this regard, both Sartre and Fanon miss the point that the figure of the Jew exists in a relation of difference to itself that is not limited to or bound by anti-Semitic representations; in other words, the Jew does not come into being as Jew simply through a relation to the anti-Semite or in relation to the representations of Jew in anti-Semitism. But suggesting that the Jew preexists and exists beyond anti-Semitic representations of the Jew is not to suggest that the Jew has some essential apriori being prior to any relation to difference.

By suggesting that the figure of the Jew preexists anti-Semitic representations of it I also do not mean to suggest that there is a single, homogenous and static narrative or representation of the figure of the Jew. I draw here on the work of Daniel Boyarin (2004), who makes a compelling argument for the ways in which “the borders between Judaism and Christianity have been historically constructed out of acts of discursive (and too often actual) violence, especially acts of violence against heretics who embody the instability

---

3 Fanon’s problematic gender and sexual analyses are of course not unrelated to the questions of racism, difference and representation on which he does focus. See Khanna (2003) for a considation of Fanon’s work in the framework of a wider discussion that brings together Simone de Beauvoir’s work on the figure of woman in relation to man and Irigaray’s work on sexual difference to offer a compelling analysis of how psychoanalysis reveals the possibilities and limits for representation of difference, the construction of the human, and of the implications for how different figures of difference – among men and women in relation to men –are figured within frameworks of representation based on a logic of the self-same. The question of sexual difference, though at the heart of this whole dissertation, is not the focus of this chapter; see chapter five.
of our constructed essences, of our terrifying bleedings into each other” (xiv). Boyarin focuses his work on the second through fifth centuries, and points to ways in which the boundaries of what constituted Judaism were porous, paying attention to border areas and interstices. I depart from Boyarin’s framework of identity in terms of how he conceptualizes the relation between the formation of individuated subjectivities and group formation and from what appears to be an investment in a form of identity politics. But I find very useful his analysis and historiography of Judaism in relation to Christianity precisely because of how it situates Judaism specifically, and group categories more generally, in terms of a relation to difference that is constitutive at the site of presumed origin.

One of the ways in which Boyarin defines Judaism in thinking about its relation to Christianity is in terms of a difference that is not so much a difference between two religions as a difference between a religion and an entity that refuses to be one.

In Western languages one habitually speaks – in both the scholarly and the quotidian registers – of ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’ (and, for that matter, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Hinduism) as members of a single category: (names of) religions, or even – faiths. This scholarly and popular practice, as the last term particularly reveals, involves the reproduction of a Christian worldview. Indeed, speaking for Judaism, it seems highly significant that there is no word in pre-modern Jewish parlance that means ‘Judaism.’ When the term Ioudaismos appears in non-Christian Jewish writing – to my knowledge only in two Maccabees – it doesn’t mean Judaism the religion but the entire complex of loyalties and practices that mark off the people of Israel; after that, it is used as the name of the Jewish religion only by writers who do not identify themselves with and by that name at all, until well into the nineteenth century. It might seem, then, that Judaism has not, until some time in modernity, existed at all, and that whatever moderns might be tempted to abstract out or to disembed from

---

4 Thanks to Srinivas Aravamudan for bringing this book to my attention.
the culture of Jews and call their religion was not so disembedded nor ascribed particular status by Jews until very recently. (Ibid. 8)

I understand Boyarin here not as suggesting that some of that which the term Judaism connotes does not or did not exist, but rather that the term Judaism in terms of its signification as a religion, and the effects of such signification as well as the concept of religion itself, is a Christian invention. In this regard, his discussion here also resonates with the arguments of Talal Asad (2003) and others who suggest that religion is a post-Enlightenment concept.

Boyarin goes on to suggest that the Jewish response to this “invention” of Judaism can be understood as “an exercise of agency in a ‘colonial’ situation by non-Christian Jews” rather than as an appropriation that is the influence of Christianity on Judaism (a term which I understand in this context to be used anachronistically). Drawing on Homi Bhabha (1994), Boyarin suggests that Judaism in this sense can be understood as a kind of mimicry in the technical postcolonial sense and thus as an act of resistance. As Homi Bhabha writes: ‘Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the ‘content’ of another culture, as a difference once perceived. It is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power – hierarchy, normalization, marginalization, and so forth’ (2004, 12).

Boyarin thus argues that Judaism and Christianity are not two different religions, but “are two different kinds of things altogether” (Ibid. 13). His excavation of Judaism’s genealogy in relation to Christianity importantly emphasizes the ambivalence and slippage of any solid signified presented by the signifiers Jew and Judaism. Although I
think he doesn’t take this argument far enough, his work contributes toward an understanding of why the question of whether “Jew” and “Judaism” signify a religious group, a culture, an ethnicity, or something else continues to be debated. These multiple and moving definitions of “Jew” and “Judaism” were one element of what shaped the figure of the Jew in relation to different forms of anti-Semitism, and more specifically, in relation to fin de siecle European nationalism.

In what follows, I identify the ways in which Zionism attempted to resignify the figure of the Jew against anti-Semitic representations in a manner that resonates with both Bhabha’s notion of mimicry and Fanon’s discussion of what he refers to as a psycho-existential complex, but which also differs from the these notions. I highlight the ways in which Zionism drew on both “the old,” looking back to the past, and looked towards the future and “the new” in an attempt to resignify the figure of the Jew against anti-Semitism. Ultimately, what I try to show here is how Zionism responded to

5 I find the concept of critical melancholia here to be useful because of how it allows for a reading of systematic and structural violence based on group categories in a way that retains historical particularity in order to address the singularity of every event, trauma, and relation of difference:

If the most consistent deployment of Lacan in the postcolonial context is by Homi Bhaba, it is in Bhaba’s use of the notion of affect that Lacanian psychoanalysis is most persuasive….Foregrounding the concept of Nachtraglichkeit, Bhaba reminds us that affects frequently associated with the postmodern today – such as the instability of master discourses, unstable identities, and coexistent temporal multiplicities – can be seen not only now at the moment of decolonization or postcoloniality but also at earlier moments of the North-South colonial encounters manifested as what he calls a time-lag….Bhaba differentiates himself from Derrida and de Man through opposing the ‘foreign interstitial’ with the ‘metonymic fragmentation of the ‘original.’…But we could bring the two concepts together very usefully as a notion of affect as a concept that acknowledges the catachresis of the origin of a trauma and that leaves its trace on the individual. (Khanna 2003, 220)
modernism’s pressures to produce a particular kind of national and self-representing liberal subject by trying to forge a “New Jew,” but also how the very fact that it attempted to do so while retaining this figure as a Jew rather than as a universal human subject, and retaining the history of the Jew as a figure that has been historically excluded from national belonging (while simultaneously placing this figure in the framework of its own nation-state), has produced a figure – Jew-Israeli – and political contexts in Israel which reveal the fiction of claims of national belonging and of different forms of liberalism. The figure of Jew-Israeli and political contexts in Israel point to the violences these claims and humanism’s assumptions produce – violences which are internal to humanism itself. I argue that the Zionist dream as a dream of territorialization and its accompanying vision of a new figure of the Jew involved a relation of difference to itself in relation to elsewheres of both time and place. This relation is made visible in Zionism’s relation to the figure of the Jew and to Hebrew. In the next chapter, I trace the formation of the Zionist dream in terms of its relation to place and territorialization.
The Zionist dream was a dream of a Jewish homeland. Israel represents the territorialization of that dream. Zionism as a dream of territorialization in the form of a nation-state drew both on messianic narratives of a return to an original Biblical homeland, and on European models of liberalism in response to anti-Semitism. The Zionist project brought together investments in language, character, temporality, and place in an effort to “make a home” for the Jews, and in so doing has produced Israel as a site of difference at the same time that it has continually tied the production of such a place of difference to the mechanisms of liberalism in the framework of the nation-state. The Zionist dream’s territorialization in the form of Israel has thus had an afterlife that bears reminders of itself as a dream through references that define Israel in relation to its elsewheres. These elsewheres are about both time and place. In this chapter, I focus on Zionism’s elsewheres in terms of place and in terms of territorialization.

I was far from articulating Israel in terms of a dream that bears reminders of itself through references to its elsewheres when I went back to visit as a kid or when living there when I was seventeen and eighteen, or even at the early stages of the research on which this writing is based. But it was the proximity of hospitality and hostility, the contrasts of heres and theres, olds and news, the multiple forms of difference, the confusions of inside and outside, public and private that were a part of life there that was part of what drew me back and that eventually I tried to make sense of in terms of this research project. When I arrived in Israel in the fall of 2005 for the beginning of the main fieldwork stint on which this dissertation draws, I knew I didn’t want to live in Jerusalem
and did want to live in Tel Aviv. That hadn’t always been the case. But in the previous summers of preliminary research I realized that I had no doubt about this. I was surprised initially, because once I had loved Jerusalem and wouldn’t have imagined choosing to live in Tel Aviv instead. By the summer of 2004 it was the other way around. Jerusalem and Tel Aviv couldn’t be more different, but somehow they are very clearly still part of the same country.

**Jerusalem**

Jerusalem is old. The city is made out of white stone. Cool, hard, thick, heavy, old white stone. Except for the “new” buildings that were built before the Storrs Jerusalem Stone Bylaw, which the first British military governor of Jerusalem, Sir Ronald Storrs, enacted in 1918. The Storrs Jerusalem Stone Bylaw required that the external surfaces of all buildings in Jerusalem be built of Jerusalem stone, in order to try to preserve the ancient character and aesthetic of the city. So some of the older new buildings (not the really old ones), are made out of a bumpy looking kind of concrete, including some of the buildings in Beit Ha’Kerem, the neighborhood where my grandmother lived, and where my aunt, uncle and cousins still do. But most of the buildings are made from cool, hard, smooth white stone. I used to love taking the bus from Herzl Blvd., in front of my grandmother’s building, through downtown along Jaffa road, past the Ben Yehuda market, past King David square, to the intersection that marked one of the unofficial borders between East and West Jerusalem, right next to the Jaffa Gate side of the Old City. The Old City is what Jerusalem used to be before people began to build and expand Jerusalem beyond the Old City’s walls. It was only in the 1860s that people began to
build and live outside the Old City because of overcrowding and poor conditions inside. Often I would get off near the Old City’s Jaffa gate and from there walk into the Old City. I would always follow more or less the same path, walking through down the narrow cobblestone road lined with little stores frequented by tourists between the Armenian Quarter and the Christian Quarter, into the Muslim quarter where, at the end of the “road,” almost all the tourists turned around and the narrow pathways became part of what seemed the lives of its Muslim residents, the stores no longer for tourists and the people walking by mostly Palestinians. I loved the walkways, they were dark and narrow with a stone that really was old, different than the stone outside the old city, and filled with smells of spices and sweet things. But I would venture further into the Muslim quarter only sometimes and with a little trepidation, aware of standing out and trying to ignore the calls and stares of the men sitting in their stores or just outside them.

Sometimes I would go to the Jewish quarter. I would almost always get lost in the narrow little sidestreets that connected the wider streets together. When I got back to my grandmother’s apartment and she asked me what I was doing in the old city I would tease her saying that I was looking for a husband there. It was partly a way of deflecting her nagging about when would I find a husband and get married. But I think, without thinking much about it, that I was also curious about what reaction this might provoke. The first time she didn’t realize right away that I was joking, and worried that I was serious. It was possible, but oh it could make things difficult, why was I making things more difficult. But the joke remained and it was never certain how much was serious and how much was a joke.
Jerusalem is where I learned to ride my bike, in Kikar Denya (Danish Square) in front of the supermarket a few minutes walk down the road on which my grandmother lived. When I would go back to visit in the summers, and when I went back to live there after high school before and during my first year of undergraduate studies, I would linger by the smells in certain places, smells I had missed. I was attached to the smell that sometimes came from the big garbage bin which stood inside its compartment in the stone wall outside the apartment building’s terrace at the bottom of the stairs that led down to the street, and where matchstick thin street cats and kittens scampered around looking for scraps that people left for them near the bin. It wasn’t any garbage smell that I liked, but a particular smell that often could be found there, a particular garbage smell. I would stand a little longer than it took to throw away the garbage, or would slow down when I walked past, and inhale as deeply as I could, feeling like I couldn’t get enough of the smell, sometimes feeling a little bit disgusted, not sure if the smell would be the one I wanted or a garbage smell that I didn’t like. My other favorite smell was the scent of jasmine that sometimes was so strong it made me feel giddy and like I could almost touch it and as if I should be able to see it, the air was so fragrant and sweet. The smell of jasmine reached me with the coolness of the stone next to where it grew, offering respite from the summer heat and sun so hot it seemed almost white. If I was walking into my grandmother’s building, the smell of jasmine would soon be followed by the coolness of stone tiles, and the fragrant scents of cooking and baking. Because my grandmother’s apartment was on the ground floor, it had a side door that slid open onto a little patio. The patio was made from stone tiles, with rectangular areas of dirt lined with low walls where fruit trees, flowers and cacti grew. After they were watered, I could smell the soil and
plants, an earthy, dry, warm smell, along with the smell of geraniums. People say geraniums don’t have a smell, but I think they do. A rough, green, leafy fresh, earthy sort of smell. Sometimes the scent of clean laundry hanging out to dry from the windows of the apartments above would waft down and mix with the garden smells. If I would be walking out, these smells would be followed by the noise of the street, the smells of concrete and exhaust, and if it was the middle of the day in summer, by heat and sun glaring off surfaces and blue skies.

I loved going with my grandmother to the Ben Yehuda market. The market consists of two short streets parallel to one another, between Jaffa St. and Agrippas St., connected by a few short side streets. One of the main streets is completely outside, and the other has a canopy that in recent years was replaced by a real roof which covers the stalls. On Fridays the market is so crowded you can barely move, and after some bombings in the city, I tried to avoid going on Fridays. My grandmother would stop to exchange a few words with other old-timers there, and had her favorite places for buying certain items. My grandmother was beautiful, short and rounded, with short hair as black as black can be, hazel green eyes, skin browned from the sun, a little overweight. She took pride in her appearance, and rings adorned her fingers, complemented by necklaces and different shades of red lipstick. By the end of a shopping trip she would be weighted down on both sides by at least a dozen colorful plastic bags heavy with fruits and vegetables. After such shopping trips we’d often go to Abu Mussa’s falafel stand near her apartment to buy lunch. She would sometimes exchange a few words with him in Arabic. (He was Palestinian and came to work everyday from his village somewhere on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Once in a long while he wasn’t there, and when he was back again
after one such absence I asked him where he had been, and he said there had been a closure. After attacks or during Jewish holidays there were clamp downs on the West Bank. We didn’t say more about it as he made me my falafel, asking which salads and pickled things I wanted in it). Her father had come to Palestine from Iraq when he was small, and her mother had been born in Jerusalem’s old city. And her mother’s mother, and grandmother, and so on, until one of them had come from Spain. So my grandmother had spoken ladino mixed with Hebrew at home, and also knew some Arabic. My grandmother had something like eight brothers and sisters. Something like because there were two or three more who had died when they were babies, at least one from starvation, and whom I almost never heard mentioned. One sister and one brother had died as adults before I was born. The daughter of the sister, one of my mother’s cousins, had lived near my grandmother in Jerusalem before moving to “the village” where she lived near Becky.

Among the rest, I knew the sisters, Leah, Esther and Becky, better than the brothers, Moshe, Schmulik and Shlomo. The sisters were all opinionated, talkative, frequently in touch, and very different from one another. Schmulik married Tsipora, who came to Israel from Turkey when she was sixteen. She and my grandmother were good friends – it was my grandmother who introduced her, in her usual matchmaking efforts, to Schmulik. Moshe married a distant cousin, Vatia. They lived downtown. I remember Moshe standing in my grandmother’s doorway one time when he came to visit, a polished dark mustache perfectly curled up on either side, smartly dressed, with a polished wooden cane. When anyone came to visit at my grandmother’s they were subjected to her insistent demands to sit and have some coffee or tea, homemade pastries, or a proper meal. Similar variations of the food was to be found at her sisters’ homes, and
the smells and tastes of coffee and the sounds of the cups clinking in the saucers, home baked poppyseed cakes, strudels, cinnamon rolls, and pies still reminds me of them, and of the milk that then came in plastic bags that were put into plastic pitchers, of the marble countertops and the electric kettles used to boil the water for tea and coffee. Leah lived in a big kibbutz by the sea, and made delicious cheesecake. Esther lived in Ashdod, and one of her sons was a sailor who left Israel for many years before coming back. Becky was married to Itzhak and they lived in the “village” – in a moshav – near Gedera, in a house a few meters across from the house where her only daughter lived with her three daughters and husband. Aside from Shlomo, they all had kids and grandkids and husbands and wives, which made for an enormous family. Becky’s three granddaughters were near to me in age, the oldest a little more than a year younger than me, and her two younger sisters each about a year apart from one another. For a few years, when I was in Israel after high school I would come visit and we would go for walks in the citrus groves that Itzhak cultivated, eating fruit from the trees and talking. Our grandmothers were sisters, and they, their siblings and some of their husbands and wives were of a particular generation which was born and grew up in British-Mandate Palestine…

My grandmother met my grandfather in the army. She was in the Palmach, what became the Israeli army after 1948. My grandfather was from Hungary. His mother died in one of the camps. He escaped to Palestine, and first fought with the British, and then against them. They lived with my grandmother’s mother in a small apartment in Geula, near what is now downtown Jerusalem, along with some of her sisters and brothers, their wives, and her father. When I went back to Israel in 1994/95/96, I moved between different places, doing volunteer work before beginning my first year of undergraduate
studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I lived in the dorms, but spent most weekends at my grandmother’s apartment in Beit HaKerem, which is about a 20 to 40 minute bus ride from the Mt. Scopus campus, depending on the bus route and the traffic. That year was marked by explosions.

I was on a bus one morning on the way to class from my grandmother’s apartment, when I heard a loud boom. A bus in front of the one that I was on had exploded. A woman on my bus started making strange sounds, like crying but without tears. Someone gave her a piece of bread, telling her to take bites. Eventually our bus crunched over the broken glass and continued to the university. I arrived to my class in a quiet rage. Our Hebrew teacher, a young Israeli woman, told us that some of the students in our class had been on the bus and were in the hospital down the road. She asked us if we wanted to say anything, to talk about our reactions before we began class. I remember I said something that I wondered if I really believed, that I wished the bomber wasn’t dead so that I could kill him myself. The teacher listened, and then asked us if we asked ourselves what might bring someone to carry out such a bombing. In November, I went to a “peace rally” in what is now called Rabin square in central Tel Aviv, and began to leave as the speakers, including then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, sang “The Song of Peace.” Rabin was shot and killed as he left the stage. I was impressed by the collective mourning practices of the next week, but as if from a distance. The bus stops all seemed to have large mourning posters with images of Rabin’s face. Public squares were filled with memorial candles and somber visitors. Teenagers sat in groups on the sidewalk, talking quietly and crying. The television was filled with memorializations of Rabin’s life and death, and the radio played the genre of sad songs the stations play after bomb
attacks. New songs were written, including “Shalom Chaver” (Goodbye Friend) the title of which turned also into a bumper sticker that was seen on the backs of cars all over the city for months. Old songs were inflected with new meaning, like “Oof Gozal.” Along with other things, such as the enthusiastic support for mandatory military service, this was a time that exemplified the flip side of what I would later try to identify in my research project – the relation between such intensive collective expression and practice with the intensity of multiple kinds of difference and argument that refused any assumption of collective identity or community which seemed to be what constituted the matter that official Israeli state narratives defined as the object of their protection.

One weekend in December, a few weeks after Rabin’s assassination, I was doing my homework in the small room which my mother and her sister had shared growing up, when my grandmother had a stroke while lying on the sofa in the living room. She would return home from the hospital only several months later, in a wheelchair, her left side paralyzed. In the hospital, the wider political context was present in its own hospital ways; a question from an Arab women in the hospital kitchen about why there were two microwaves, and me trying to explain the rules of Kashrut, shared conversation about new born babies coming out of the maternity ward with awkward and curious questions about names and how to say congratulations in Arabic and in Hebrew. That time was also the introduction for me to the stories of Filipinos (after the first, and unsuccessful, Russian caretaker), conveyed to me in bits and pieces in Hebrew with the distinctive singsong Filipino accent, sometimes patient, sometimes not, by women who come to Israel to make some more money and send it back home. Their presence, accents, and the affective labor they do taking care of the elderly and the very young becoming another
part of what is both Israel and outside it, another accent, reason for coming, and trajectory in the country. In Israel often the word “Filipina” is used instead of “caretaker;” someone may for example ask if so and so is going to get “a Filipina,” now that they are using a walker. Now it was the Filipina who went out shopping, and more often to the supermarket than the market. It wasn’t easy to take my grandmother’s wheelchair even outside the apartment, up and down the stairs to the building, let alone somehow getting downtown. No more trips to the market, no more weekly taking up all the Persian carpets and sponging the tiles, moving all the furniture to get every corner clean, no more hours of cooking and baking. But she was as spirited and stubborn as ever, although in less of a good mood. One day, she called me from the living room and said she wanted the phone number of the toilet paper company. Annoyed, she pointed to the roll of paper from which she had been trying to rip a piece with her right arm, limited to using one hand now. They are not properly making the perforations in these rolls. It’s not the first time. I want to call them to tell them to shape up. And she did. Partly stubborn old woman, partly the insistence of her generation in Palestine/Israel that things must be done properly and everyone must do their part and a sense of relation and proximity with others that produced such demands and an expectation that people should respond.

My first two summer of preliminary research for this dissertation project I lived in Jerusalem. I used research money to sublet an apartment, and my time was divided between Hebrew language classes at the university, and preliminary research. The latter involved multiple trips to the West Bank. My first real introduction to the West Bank was through the Mas’ha campsite, in the summer of 2003, during the first summer of research on which this writing is based. In between taking Hebrew classes at the Hebrew
University of Jerusalem, I made trips to the Mas’ha campsite in the Salfit District of the West Bank. In July of 2003, I went there for the first time. The campsite turned out to be both personally significant and politically significant in the formation of a new form of Israeli-Palestinian solidarity struggle against the construction of the wall and against the occupation more broadly.

Mas’ha and the West Bank

I took a bus from the university to the central bus station in Jerusalem, which takes about half an hour, and from there it was about an hour bus ride to Petach Tikva which is a sort of city suburb of Tel Aviv. There I waited for about two hours for a settler bus that goes from Petach Tikva into the West Bank. The "green line" is the name of the 1967 border that marks Israel’s 1948 borders. Unless you are a settler or go to visit settlements, or are one of the very few people working with Palestinian groups on peace/political projects, or are a soldier serving there, you don't ever cross the green line (except of course in Jerusalem and when driving on the road to the dead sea.). Of course lots of settlers go there or live there everyday. But my point is that it is "scary-land" for most Israelis. A place that is understood as where crazy settlers live in tense relation with Palestinians, a place with settlements heavily guarded by soldiers and their bases, and Palestinian villages where cars with Israeli license plates may be greeted with rocks and/or bullets. The possibility of "real danger" together with the psychological fear of going into an unknown place where I become legible as belonging to the “enemy side” and not knowing almost any Arabic made me a little nervous. I waited for the settler bus in Petach Tikva to take me to the settlement “El Kana” which is the Israeli settlement closest to the Palestinian village of Mas’ha. There aren’t Israeli buses to Palestinian
villages, obviously. While street signs in Israel proper are almost always in Arabic, English, and Hebrew, in the West Bank there is less Arabic, and often only the major Palestinian cities are on the road signs; the Palestinian villages are not on the map.

Buses stop running on Friday evenings in Israel, and don’t start again until Saturday night, which meant that once on my way I couldn’t come back until then, because I was taking the last Friday evening bus. While I’m waiting for the bus, I call Itai, the Israeli activists in charge for the week, to find out why he had told me to get off on the second to last stop, instead of at the last stop, which is what Nazeeh, the Palestinian coordinator had told me to do. Itai tells me that maybe Nazeeh told me that because maybe something has changed at the roadblock into the village (the roadblock is like a checkpoint without soldiers, big boulders that block the road twice so that cars can’t continue on the road and you can only go in and out of the village on foot. Itai said to get off where Nazeeh told me to. Realizing it didn’t sound like he was, I asked Itai if he was there at the campsite. He said no. But there is an Israeli or an international there, right? Actually no, he says, it’s only Palestinians there now. A few days earlier, when I had talked to him about coming to the campsite, Itai had explained that the idea behind the campsite was to always have at least two Palestinians, two Israelis, and two internationals there at all times. Mainly for the safety of the activists vis-à-vis the Israeli army should the army come – Israelis and Internationals being present made it less likely the army would use force, or at least not as quickly, as if only Palestinians were present. But also for the comfort and safety of the Israeli and Palestinian activists. Now I found myself with the prospect of heading to the West Bank by myself, to meet Palestinians I had never met before, and to sleep outside with them out in the open near their village, in
the West Bank, and being both the only Israeli and the only woman there, as Palestinian women were not going to be at the campsite as it wasn’t seen as proper by Palestinians in the village. My fear immediately increased, outweighing the irritation that I felt towards Itai who hadn’t even told me this would be the situation, after explicitly describing it otherwise. And it would be a different matter, I thought, if at least there would be another bus which I could take to return on later that evening, if I felt too uncomfortable with the situation. But I’d have to wait till tomorrow night for the first bus back. It would also be a different matter if Palestinian women would be there with Palestinian men. The settler bus arrived, and I got on, wondering if I was doing the right thing, but not wanting to turn back now. But I got so scared about what might be ahead that I sat part of the bus ride holding back tears, having a conversation with myself about being brave and racism and its effects and all the things I needed to remember, and arguing with myself: “you are being racist, no you are reacting to the reality of the situation here, no you are over-reacting…etc” and thinking about what I might be able to do if I started to feel like the men there were starting to think about hurting me or something, and trying to memorize peoples’ phone numbers. I kept trying to figure out if I was being ridiculous or if I was being careful. I called Tanya Reinhart, an Israeli professor outspoken in her criticism of Israel, thinking she could give me some perspective. She was the one from whom I had first heard about the campsite anyway. And she had been to the campsite before. So trying not to let her hear the shakiness in my voice I asked her what she thought about the situation. She had this really deep smoker’s voice and managed to somehow sound tough, reassuring, thoughtful and impatient all at once. She said she thought it would be fine, and in typical Israeli fashion said, well, you’re not a pachdanit, are you? Pachdanit might
be translated as “scaredy-cat” but it is a noun from the verb to fear, and to call someone a fearful one is usually meant in a derogatory way, either teasingly or seriously, in a way that sounds different from the primary school sound it has in English. I said no, not wanting to pause to long before answering, not sure it was true at all but realizing it might not matter as I seemed to have decided I was going whether or not I continued to feel scared, and the whole time the bus was rolling along, taking me closer to my destination.

And combined with other reasons, maybe exactly because I was so scared. In the rational part of my thought process I thought that I had taken precautions and listened to people with good judgment and that I wasn’t being stupid – that I had good reason to trust my curiosity and the words of others against my fear. So I felt a little better after that phone call. And in the end, it turned out that there was an Israeli guy on the bus who was also going to the camp after all, I just didn’t know it then. And when I got to the camp, it turned out that there was also an Israeli woman there almost the same age as me. She’s 26 and had also just started grad school, she came from a right wing family and friends, but two years before had totally turned around her perspective and thoughts, and had been involved with the Mas'ha campsite from the beginning.

So I got off with the Israeli guy at the last stop, after busing through three settlements which are like very large neighborhoods or teeny towns surrounded by wire fences, with the signature red roofs of Israeli settlements, and accessible only through a heavily guarded entrance. I was surprised to see most of them weren’t religious. The people who live there are apparently for the most part recent immigrants who get heavily subsidized housing there, paid by the state thanks mostly to taxpayers and U.S. donations.

I had to listen to a young irritating Israeli girl on the bus telling the driver for a full hour
about how all the Arabs want to kill us, and how an Arab came up to her on the beach
telling her that all the Jews should be killed and that the bombs are good etc etc. She
seemed obsessed. When we had come out of the last settlement and gone for a bit down a
road that dead-ended in front of big boulders I got off, before the bus turned around to go
back to Petach Tikva. The bus driver gave me a dirty look as I got off and said in what
practically sounded like a snarl, what did I have to look for there. The Israeli guy also
coming to the campsite who had also been on the bus also got off there, and that was the
moment we realized the other one was also going to the campsite. We walked on the dirt
road between the stone barriers, and on the other side were greeted by a crowd of
Palestinian men who all wanted to take us in their cars to whereever we wanted to go. At
exactly that moment, my cell phone rang and it was Nazeeh, asking if we arrived, and
saying he has sent someone to come get us, (his uncle Yasser), and under no
circumstances to take a ride w/anyone else.

Yasser arrived within seconds, and Nazeeh it turned out was with him. We got in
their pick-up truck and drove on bumpy gravel and dirt roads through part of the village
out to the campsite, or to as near to it as we could get in the truck. We then walked the
rest of the way to the camp - walking across what was sort of like a wide dirt road with
huge ditches on either side; this is where construction of the wall had begun-continued
from where it's already been built. I felt relieved that there was another Israeli with me,
and someone who had been to the campsite before – this was completely unknown
territory for me at the time. He was a young guy, just out of the army about a year ago,
but he had refused about halfway through his service and spent a few months in jail. I
was also relieved to meet Nazeeh, who I immediately felt reassured by. My relief felt
almost as intense as the fear which it had almost entirely replaced. So we all walked up to
the camp together, which was just on the other side of where the wall was going to be
built. The Israeli government had started construction of the wall about a year earlier. I
had heard about it then in the news, but many people didn't think it would really happen,
it had such a price tag, and also is so intense and crazy of a thing to do, it seemed unlikely
it would go through. But it did, and construction started even before all the official stages
of permission in government were passed. Different parts of the wall are different-some
are barbed wire, some are cement. It was originally publicly presented as a wall that
would "simply" be a border on the green line, which some people even on "the left"
thought was a good idea, because it would make Israel’s 1948 borders more material and
maybe more permanent and maybe would speed up the making of a Palestinian state and
would be the border between Israel and Palestine. But whether or not that itself was at all
plausible, the wall anyway hasn’t been built on the green line at all, but deeper in the
occupied territories, east of the green line.

The fact that it is being constructed past the green line made it especially ominous
already then in 2003. During this and other visits to the campsite, and then in the
demonstrations, meetings and visits which I attended the following summer in the West
Bank, the wall appeared most clearly as a form of literal imprisonment of Palestinians in
their villages and towns. The wall around the city of Kalqilya for instance completely
encircles the city, with a narrow bottleneck entrance and exit. The city is thus separated
not only from Israel, but also from easy access to many parts of the West Bank. And the
villages which are being cut off from their agricultural lands like Mas’ha have access to
this land only through a gate in the “fence,” which is opened inconsistently if at all by
Israelí soldados. Esto vendría a ser el caso en Mas’ha y en muchos otros pueblos a lo largo de la "seamline" donde se está construyendo el muro. Cuando la construcción del muro comenzó a lo largo del camino marcado en el territorio de Mas’ha, el campamento se había movido para estar más cerca del sitio de construcción, de modo que desobstruyera a los bulldozers y trabajadores cuando llegaran allí. Cuando llegué al campamento por primera vez, durante la primera hora o dos, ayudé a los demás a quitar grandes piedras del campamento y hablé un poco con una anciana estadounidense-israelí que había estado allí para una reunión y estaba a punto de irse.

No me ofrecieron a mí o al joven israelí nada de comer o beber al principio, y no hubo presentaciones y muy poca conversación entre mí y los palestinos allí durante una hora, de modo que empezó a pensarse si tal vez no compartiríamos mucho allí, y si no les gustaba que estábamos allí pero pensaban que era importante en caso de que llegara el ejército. Pero más tarde me di cuenta de que solo estaba cansada y era informal allí, y no todos allí habían estado consistentemente, por lo que tampoco no tenían idea de quién había estado antes. Más tarde en la noche, todos estábamos sentados bajo la tienda improvisada—era muy caliente—es un desierto montañoso allí, con cactus y olivos como la principal vegetación, ofreciendo poca sombra. Era un grupo de hombres palestinos, desde jóvenes hasta hombres que parecían estar en su veintes, treintas y cuarentas, el joven israelí que había estado conmigo en el autobús, y la joven israelí que había estado allí cuando llegamos. Lenta y gradualmente, comencé a tener conversaciones con ellos y a aprender nombres. Lanit, la anciana israelí estadounidense, se metió en una discusión con dos de los muchachos sobre Oslo y el presente, un buen tipo de discusión. Y más tarde ese día, varias horas más tarde, me sentí como si casi todos allí hubieran conocido a todos desde hace al menos una semana, a pesar de lo imposible que podría haber sido.
seem. All you can really do there is sit and talk, or sit and stare out at the wall and the settlements and the village, and every so often share some water and food. We were all excited and unsettled by the strangeness of our encounter. I had asked if I could bring a video camera and they had said of course, they would like that. And about 8 or 9 of us, (the whole time it was the two Israelis, myself, and about 15 Palestinian men-they came and went but there were about seven who were there almost all the time and entrusted by Nazeeh to help out there, and two or three who he let be there when he has to go. Nazeeh himself almost never left the campsite - that night and the next morning he explained to me about trouble with the men trying to get Israeli prostitutes to come to the village, and with Hamas in the village, which he said were also reasons why he didn't want us to go with someone at the entrance but rather to wait for his uncle. So I felt a little justified in my previous fears-he said that someone from Hamas wouldn't try to take someone by force there at the roadblock at the entrance into the village, with other people around, but that if I went with someone from Hamas it could be big trouble. Later I learned more about the power struggles between Fatah, Hamas and the smaller parties – which may have led some of these explanations to exaggerate, but things are always changing and it’s hard from beforehand, and it was especially hard then, for internal Palestinian politics to be legible in any immediate way. We walked up the "road" which is the beginning of the wall, and saw further back where it's already been built, I filmed it and Nazeeh explained what it is doing to the village.

That first night I spent at the campsite was intense, as I was to find out would continue to be the case on all my visits there. It was so rare at that point for Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank to interact directly without it being in terms of soldiers at
checkpoints or settlers with workers. Sitting there around the campfire among the olive trees and in the rocky hills under the open sky, it felt especially absurd to realize the situation, and the exceptionality of our context against the background of millions of people, literally, living so close to each other, terrified of and/or hating each other at least in an abstract sense, and never almost ever interacting in a normal space. Not that ours was a normal space either. Palestinians are either literally invisible, or they are not seen as human because it is soldier seeing them as terrorists, or employers seeing them as shit, as workers doing the shit work. They are locked in. The wall is creating prisons out of towns, and no one almost is even talking about it. And there we were, two Israelis, me (read by Palestinians as Israeli) and a bunch of a Palestinian men, spending the night together on a hilltop in the west bank, on the outskirts of their village, next to the wall, and in eye’s view of the surrounding Israeli settlements. We sat around the campfire until four in the morning talking, and then some of us started to fall asleep there, outside, listening to the rise and fall of the voices of the people still awake, the crackling of the fire, the call of the muezzins to prayers, and the booms of military practice. We talked for hours about what peace means, about suicide bombings, about the torture of Palestinians by the Israeli military, arguing, sharing stories, asking questions of one another. We slept from about 4am to 8am, and then spent the whole day just sitting under the canopy. It was too hot too move much. We spent the time playing shesh besh, talking, smoking, eating pita and hummus, cucumbers and tomatoes. Familiar food.

That summer I went back and forth between the campsite and Jerusalem, where I kept going to my Hebrew classes to try to improve my reading and writing, and visited my cousins. In August, the army destroyed the campsite and the protestors carried out a
direction action, sitting on and in front of the bulldozer that was being used to construct a cement wall in front of Hani Amer’s house, dividing it from the rest of the village, annexing it to the “Israeli side.” Worried about being arrested and what that might mean for the possibilities of future research, I filmed the event from a window inside Hani Amer’s house. At the time, the soldiers’ use of force dragging away the Israelis seemed dramatic and extreme. By a few months later it seemed gentle in comparison to their escalation in response to joint Israeli-Palestinian demonstrations against the wall.

December 26th of that year marked the first time that an Israeli-Jewish demonstrator in such anti-wall demonstrations was shot with live fire. He was shot by an Israeli sniper while demonstrating at the by then finished gate in the fence between the village and its land. The next summer I spent my time again between Jerusalem and the West Bank, but this time going to demonstrations and meetings in other villages; the demonstrations and organizing had moved south along the path of the wall’s construction as the construction itself moved south. When I returned in the fall of 2005 to begin the main research on which this writing draws, I spent the first year moving between such demonstrations and related activities, the neighborhood in Bat Yam which was one of my main fieldwork sites, and multiple other places through which I learned about official state policy regarding demography and security, and the different ways this policy played out among people in very different positions and places in Israeli contexts. During the previous summer of preliminary research, I had realized that I wanted to live in Tel Aviv when I returned, and not in Jerusalem. The latter had become heavy, gray, and suffocating with the weight of the presence of soldiers, settlers, and what felt like a form of neglect or indifference to the wider context in the presence of the religious Orthodox.
Tel Aviv, Yafo and Bat Yam

Tel Aviv is young. The northern part of the city is relatively shiny and tidy by Israeli standards, full of surfaces that belie whatever depths might be behind them; the southern part of the city in contrast is ramshackle, colorful, with innards exposed and gritty with detritus. The architecture is an eclectic mix of Arab arches and stone balconies with falling bougainvillea, Bauhaus buildings rounding the corners, modern white two and three story apartment buildings, similar structures but made from older sandy brown concrete sometimes painted shades of yellow, green or blue, with small balconies crowded with cactus gardens, drying laundry, an old bicycle or odds and ends, and streets lined with stores on the bottom and apartments on top. Overweight men stand with their belly buttons exposed, scratching themselves and shouting to one another or drinking beer. Scantily clad women walk carrying bags or talking on cell phones. Bicycles and mopeds weave precariously in and out of traffic, the streets are jammed with cars and small trucks, and people sit outside at cafes or stand talking on corners. It is beautiful, especially in the late afternoons and early evenings when the light becomes softer. Then everything takes on a golden hue and the sky becomes streaked with outrageous shades of pink, purple and orange against a background of deep blue. The sea borders the city on its western side, and Tel Aviv, longer than it is wide, comes right up to its shoreline from North to South. The air is salty and the sea is visible from the rooftops. Once on an evening walk along the water I came across an enormous sea turtle on the sand. When I came close I saw that it wasn’t alive and that it had a big gash in its side. On such walks and bike rides I also saw colonies of feral cats who live by the rocks that border the sandy...
beaches. Often I would also see the cat people who come with great big bags filled with
dried cat food which they distribute in little piles one after the other in regular spots
where the cats gather. Seeing them I would relax a little bit, feeling reassured. South Tel
Aviv merges into Yafo at its southwestern most edge, and I lived on the border between
the two during the three years of research on which this dissertation draws. Yafo is old,
(one of the oldest port cities in the world), and Arab, although it is rapidly being
gentrified, and aside from the seafront and parts of the Ajame neighborhood and its
surroundings which are being quickly sold and remodeled, it is poor. Yafo in turn merges
at its southern edge into Bat Yam, which is where the neighborhood that was one of my
three “research sites” is located.

When I was deciding which neighborhood to focus on as one of my research sites,
I realized more explicitly than I had before both that no neighborhood could possibly
stand in as representative of Israel more broadly. I also didn’t want to choose a
neighborhood that had a strong “neighborhood character” in terms of a single specific
group which it might seem to represent. I visited an Israeli professor of history at Tel
Aviv University to talk about my research. He suggested I consider choosing a
neighborhood in Bat Yam, and suggested a couple neighborhoods in particular with
which he wasn’t very familiar but about which he had been curious when growing up in
Bat Yam himself. Soon after this conversation, I took a bus from where I lived on the
edge of South Tel Aviv and Yafo to Bat Yam. I rode the bus to the end of the line before
getting off and taking another bus back home. The next time I went, I got off the bus in
the neighborhood of Ramat Yosef.
I walked away from the neighborhood’s center where a supermarket, bank, and smaller specialty stores are lined up in a small square surrounded by grassy lawns and walked down a cement path running in between some of the neighborhood’s apartment buildings. An older woman walked by me, coming from the other direction, and I stopped to ask her if she could tell me more or less what the boundaries of the neighborhood were, where it stopped and ended. She looked at me uncomprehendingly, and as I started to try to explain, she said something to me in Russian, with the word Hebrew in Hebrew, and waved her hand in the air as she turned to keep going. I gathered she was probably telling me that she didn’t speak Hebrew. I smiled and tried to thank her anyway, not sure if her parting gesture was apologetic or impatient. Feeling shy, idiotic and ambivalent about the whole endeavor, I decided that this was good enough for a first visit to the neighborhood, and that I could go back home now. Perhaps encountering someone who didn’t speak Hebrew who lived there made me feel a little reassured, a little more at home in a place in which I felt intimidated and reluctant to engage with. That as strange as I felt trying to make conversation with strangers there, some of the people living there were at least as strange to the place as I was, or at least this was the logic I might have vaguely and half-heartedly entertained. But I still was eager to turn around and go back home. And of course I didn’t want most of the neighborhoods’ residents to not be conversant in Hebrew; how would I ever do research there if everyone spoke only Russian? But I doubted this would be the case. And of course, it wasn’t.

**From Europe to Palestine: Zionism’s European Beginnings**

It was only upon returning to the U.S. and the university after research in Israel that I began to explicitly focus on trying to make sense of contemporary Israeli contexts
in terms of the historical processes through which the Zionist dream was produced. The
Zionist dream’s formation in a form recognizable in terms of the framework of the
nation-state took place in Europe at the turn of the century, where the first Zionist
Congress was held in Basel in 1897. Herzl, who was the major figure behind its
organization, called the congress a symbolic parliament for the Jewish people. There
were approximately 200 people present there from 17 different countries\(^1\). Herzl was the
president of the Congress, and Max Nordau was elected first vice-president. The main
objectives of the first congress were for Herzl to present his ideas, the establishment of
the World Zionist Organization, and to agree on a formal declaration of Zionism’s goals.
The latter was named the Basel Program, and it was summarized in a statement submitted
on the second day of the Congress by a committee chaired by Max Nordau. The
statement read: “The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Eretz
Israel secured by law” (Pierpaoli 2008, 199). Many delegates responded to this statement
with a request to change the wording to say “by international law.” As a result, Herzl
proposed a compromise which was accepted, leading the final statement to read:
“Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Eretz Israel secured under
public law” (Ibid.). This goal of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine in this sense
of being secured by law was inspired by and modeled on European Enlightenment values
and models of nationalism.

---

\(^1\) Sixty-nine of these attendees were representatives from different Zionist societies. There were
seventeen women present, and women did not obtain voting rights until the second Congress
(Pierpaoli 2008).
After the first congress in 1897, five more Jewish congresses were held between 1897 and 1902. These congresses produced three of the entities that helped enable Zionist settlement in Palestine: The Jewish Colonial Trust, the Jewish National Fund (JNF), and the Zionist movement’s newspaper, “Die Welt.” Together, these entities were used to procure funding from philanthropists, Jewish and not, who were sympathetic to the Zionist cause, and to draw in more Jews to the Zionist project. The JNF money was defined as belonging collectively to the Jewish people, and was used to purchase land in Palestine for Jewish settlement there, to fund the work of scientists, agricultural projects, and forestation work in particular. The JNF continues today to play an active role in Israeli environmental and land policy. Their policy also formed the basis for the law that Israel adopted in 1960, which bars the state from selling land owned by the JNF, allowing it only to be leased. The JNF has also been a significant actor in Israeli water projects. As a result, the JNF, by being involved in Zionist education enterprises, science, agricultural projects, and land ownership itself, has been a major instrument of the Zionist project, both before and after Israel’s establishment in 1948. The JNF’s work also reflects a combination of nationalist, and the specificity of Zionist nationalism, socialist, and Enlightenment influences.

Historical accounts, as well as Herzl’s own writing, suggest that Herzl’s Zionism emerged out of his disillusionment with European Enlightenment because of its rejection of Jews and because of what appeared to him to be growing evidence of the impossibility of Jewish assimilation into European societies. It was not Enlightenment itself with which Herzl expressed disillusionment; Herzl was invested in European Enlightenment principles, and it was the exclusion of Jews from being allowed to belong to Europe’s
Enlightenment projects which disappointed him. Herzl’s dream of Zionism establishing a homeland for the Jews was thus based on the wish for Jews to be included in European Enlightenment. By simultaneously retaining the figure of the Jew in terms of Biblical narratives of exile, and framing this figure in terms of the European nation-state model and in terms of the exclusion of Jews from this framework, the Zionist dream combined old and new together in the vision of establishing a homeland for the Jewish people.

The title of one of the foundational texts for Israel’s establishment, Theodor Herzl’s Altneuland (Old New Land), like the narrative of the Independence Hall tour guide, references a vision of bringing together a modern Jewish nation in the form of a country with an ancient people in their original homeland. Several years before writing Altneuland, which was first published in 1902, Herzl wrote a less well known play, “The New Ghetto.” Herzl wrote the play after Karl Lueger, a vocal anti-Semitic leader in the Social Christian party in Vienna, was elected mayor in 1895. Interpretations of the play have suggested that it expressed Herzl’s disillusionment with the possibility of full assimilation or liberation of even the most “emancipated” Jews in Vienna at the time. A

---

2 Freud makes reference to having seen this play and to its significance as a day stimulation for a dream in which he is in Rome about which he writes in The Interpretation of Dreams:

This dream is built upon a tangle of thoughts induced by a play I saw at the theatre, called Das neue Ghetto (The New Ghetto). The Jewish question, anxiety as to the future of my children, who cannot be given a fatherland, anxiety as to educating them so that they may enjoy the privileges of citizens-all these features may easily be recognized in the accompanying dream-thoughts. (274)

Although I do not agree with Boyarin’s (1997) analysis of Freud and his work here, Boyarin offers a reading of Freud’s reference to Herzl in terms of this dream. For a slightly different and earlier analysis of Freud in relation to Zionism in terms of this dream, see also Loewenburg 1970; and Avner 1996.
short time later, in 1897, Herzl’s book The Jewish State was published, in which he proposed, in his own words, a “modern solution for the Jewish question” in the form of establishing a Jewish homeland for the Jewish people. Altneuland can be read as a utopian novel (although Herzl himself explicitly tried to distance his vision from being characterized as utopian), which in some ways became a work of prophetic historical fiction. The novel was devoted to his vision of Zionism which he laid out previously in The Jewish State (1946).

In The Jewish State, Herzl develops what he calls a very old idea, “the restoration of the Jewish State” (Ibid. 69). In the introduction, he explains why he thinks that Jewish assimilation is impossible. He writes that while he may worship personality, both individual and of collective groups, he does not regret its disappearance;

Whoever can, will, and must perish, let him perish. But the distinctive nationality of Jews neither can, will, nor must be destroyed. It cannot be destroyed, because external enemies consolidate it. It will not be destroyed; this is shown during two thousand years of appalling suffering. It must not be destroyed, and that, as a descendant of numberless Jews who refused to despair, I am trying once more to prove in this pamphlet. (Ibid. 79-80)

Herzl suggests that the only route to assimilation is through intermarriage, but that it is not sufficient for this to be only legal, it must also be felt by the majority. He goes on to point out that making it legal reinforces a distinction between Jew and non-Jew. He then suggests that Jews must acquire economic power to overcome the prejudices against them, but then he suggests that doing so would then cause rage and indignation against them rather than allow them to be absorbed into the rest of the population. He goes on to introduce the idea of an organized, quiet and dignified process of emigration of the Jews from Europe, with the cooperation of European governments. Herzl divides the rest of the
book into three main sections which describe how this mass exodus is to take place, and how a Jewish state in Palestine is to be established. He is specific about the creation of what he calls The Jewish Company, Local Groups, and the Society of Jews. Together, his discussion about these groups covers fundraising, purchase of land, construction of dwellings, the question of language, an army, a flag, a constitution, and the establishment of scientific, educational, and political bodies. In his novel Old New Land (1997), Herzl provides a fictional account of what this process might be like. In all these works, as in his political activities, Herzl called for a Jewish state that would combine a modernized Jewish culture with what he understood as the best of European enlightenment values that he saw as crystallized in the French revolution and as violated through anti-Semitism, including famously in the Dreyfus Affair.

In 1894, a French military Captain, Alfred Dreyfus, was accused of having shared French military secrets with the Germans. He was convicted of treason and imprisoned in solitary confinement in France’s penal colony in French Guiana. In 1896, on the basis of new evidence, someone else, Ferdinand Esterhazy, a French Army major, was accused of being the one guilty of the charges against Dreyfus. The French military kept the new evidence from the courts and Esterhazy was unanimously acquitted. Dreyfus was then accused of further charges on the basis of what later proved to be false documents produced by French military intelligence. As word of a cover-up and military framing of Dreyfus spread, people, including most famously Emile Zola, began to protest Dreyfus’ conviction. In 1899, after Zola’s letter open letter “J’accuse” was published, Dreyfus’ case was brought back to trial. Dreyfus was Jewish, and the division between those who supported Dreyfus and those who were against him were made along lines of anti-
Semitism, with many of those against him openly expressing anti-Semitic views. While Herzl scholars disagree about the extent to which the Dreyfus trial and affair shaped Herzl’s Zionism (Bein 1962; Cohen 1959; Kornberg 1993; Schorske 1981; Vital 2001), what is clear is that Herzl understood the Dreyfus Affair as yet one more betrayal of the principles of the French Revolution and of European liberalism more broadly. These were principles that were foundational in his vision of Zionism as a political project that would extend European humanism to include the Jews, rather than make them the exception to its Enlightenment project.

As Walter Laqueur (1972) has discussed in depth, the French Revolution was a moment that marked a period of hope for Europe’s Jews, a time when it seemed that the Enlightenment would mean substantial changes in the status of Jews in Europe, including full legal emancipation. When this did not prove to be the case, many Jews seemed to believe that their setbacks were only temporary, and strove towards assimilation into the national populations in the countries in which they lived. By the 1880s, the optimism of the Enlightenment among Jews had thus diminished, but it was still widely held that assimilation of some kind or another was the best and perhaps only path for Jews, not an effort to forge a Jewish state in Palestine or elsewhere. Moses Mendelssohn was a major figure in European Jewry in the 1800s who became a symbol of such hopes for Jewish emancipation. Laqueur describes him as a product of the Enlightenment; “a typical son of the Enlightenment, Mendelsson taught that Judaism was a Vernunftskreligion, that there was no contradiction between religious belief and critical reason. This was sweet music to the ears of all the educated Jews who were open or secret admirers of the French Enlightenment” (Ibid. 7). Many of these Jews tried or did convert to Christianity. But by
a few decades later, in Germany the rational ideals of Enlightenment had been replaced by Romanticist values of sentiment and tradition, with an emphasis on faith and on the Volkgeist, making the position of the Jewish avant-garde more difficult (Ibid. 11). The effects of this shift reached beyond Germany’s borders with the rise of anti-Semitism in the early 1900s.

Laqueur (Ibid.) argues that despite growing disinterest in Judaism from within, the growing hostility from non-Jews kept Jewish communities intact as such through this hostility;

to the outside world men like Marx and Lassalle remained Jews, however ostentatiously they dissociated themselves from Judaism, however much they felt themselves Germans or citizens of the world. Well-wishers saw in Marx a descendant of the Jewish prophets and commented on the messianic element in Marxism; enemies dwelt upon the Talmudic craftiness of the Red Rabbi…. It was above all this hostility on the part of the outside world, and in particular Christian opposition to emancipation and later on the anti-Semitic movement, that prevented the total disintegration of the Jews as a group. (Ibid. 19)

While Laqueur’s argument, like Herzl’s in this regard, resonates with Sartre’s suggestion that the Jew has been defined through and by the anti-Semite and anti-Semitic representations of the Jew, this is not what I read Laqueur, Herzl and other narratives to suggest. Rather, I read Laqueur’s account here as pointing towards the question of why the figure of the Jew remained unassimilable for European humanist frameworks. I argue that both Jewish narratives of Judaism, and the relation between the figure of the Jew and European anti-Semitism, suggest that it was precisely because the figure of the Jew was that of an unterritorialized (in the present) people, who looked backwards to an elsewhere of origin and forwards to a return from exile elsewhere, that made the figure of the Jew incompatible with the logic of liberalism and European nationalisms. The process of
mobilizing Jews to support the Zionist project, and to immigrate to Palestine drew not only on arguments of anti-Semitism, but also on messianic narratives of an end to thousands of years of exile.

The Zionist goal of establishing a Jewish nation-state in Palestine was preceded by different visions in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries of Jewish people returning to their Biblical place of origin. Such ideas of return made reference to the Biblical narrative of Jewish exile and return, reflected in the Jewish New Year toast “Next Year in Jerusalem.” Reference to Palestine, or to Zion, is found with reference to messiahs, such as David Alroy in the 12 century, Shabtai Zvi in the 17th century, and in poems and prayers of Jews throughout the centuries in different places of “dispersion.” Laqueur suggests that “physical contact between the Jews and their former homeland was never completely broken; throughout the Middle Ages sizable Jewish communities existed in Jerusalem and Safed, and smaller ones in Nablus and Hebron” (1972, 40-42). Some Zionists drew on accounts of such connections to argue for Palestine as the best choice for a place in which to establish a country for the Jews. The choice of Palestine was therefore based both on such messianic narratives, and on practical political considerations of the time.

European Jews who actively supported or who were at least sympathetic to Zionism thus took two main directions: the Hassidim who were “anti-rationalist, based on religious emotion and with strong elements of Messianism,” and the Jews of the Jewish Haskala (Enlightenment), “who tried to combine some elements of Jewish tradition with
modern secular thought” (Ibid. 62-63). The latter included a focus on a revival of Hebrew literature, through which Hebrew began to be taught and used outside of religious study. Among those Jews who did argue for, or at least consider, the idea of a Jewish homeland, some were called “territorialists,” while others were named “Lovers of Zion.” They roughly corresponded with the messy division between Herzl’s political Zionism, and Aha’d Ha’Am’s spiritual Zionism, respectively. The former considered the attainment of a territory for Jews to be important, while the latter were attached to Palestine in particular as a place for Jews to have their own place.

In the 1880s the reality of Palestine did not make it a place amenable to messianic visions of a return to “the promised land” or for Herzl’s project of a political Zionism. Palestine was widely understood as a forsaken place, and from the perspective of Zionists, as under the control of a hostile Turkish Empire. Thus several anonymous proposals were put forth in the mid-1880s for creating a Jewish homeland in places other than Palestine; one such project had been published several decades earlier in Berlin in 1840, suggesting “the American middle west, Arkansas or Oregon; ten million dollars would be sufficient to induce the American government to put at the disposal of the Jews an area the size of France” (Ibid. 44). But it was in part the realities of European

---

3 In 1862, Moses Hess’ *Rome and Jerusalem*, which was to have been titled *The Revival of Israel*, was published. Hess viewed the Jews as a separate race, was suspicious of Enlightenment and liberal claims of humanism, and saw the creation of a Jewish homeland as a spiritual center of the Jews and as a means to achieve a socialist order in which people would participate in voluntary cooperative societies and land would be owned not by individuals but by the nation.

4 Hess for a time collaborated with Marx and Engels, and was active in the group known as the “Young Hegelians.” The strong influence of European and Russian socialisms thus came from both the political and the spiritual Zionists.
colonialism that informed the choice of Palestine; the British were in a difficult situation there, and combined with the Jewish narrative of return from exile, it was agreed upon in the Zionists congresses as the most sensible option out of Europe’s colonies. Thus, despite the difficult material, social and political conditions of Palestine at the turn of the century, Palestine had elements that appealed both to the “political Zionists” who were motivated by European Enlightenment but who were not invested in Palestine in particular, and to those who were associated with “spiritual Zionism” who saw Zionism as a project of spiritual rebirth and as the beginning of an end of exile for the Jewish people.

The growing immigration to and settlement of Palestine by Jews was thus based on a combination of ideals informed by European liberalisms and Enlightenment principles, Socialist movements and utopian ideals, German romanticism, and Jewish messianism. Jewish settlement in Palestine within the framework of Zionism emphasized the figure of the Jew both in Biblical terms as a figure returning from dispersion and exile, and in modern terms as a liberal subject modeled on French Enlightenment principles but rejected from European Enlightenment frameworks, and simultaneously also as a liberal subject informed by German romanticism. These were not so much competing visions or ideals as they were co-existing ones, as a result leading the Jew as a parergonal figure to be the basis for efforts to establish a framework that could never adequately contain this figure. The Zionist dream, in other words, was a dream of territorialization for a figure that Zionism retained in terms of a definition of a wanderer, always coming from elsewhere, and moving towards elsewhere. As a result, the Zionist dream also involved explicit attention to the means through which a wandering people,
from multiple elsewheres, could establish a home in common. One of the most significant
means in the effort to do so was to establish a national language in common for the Jews
who were to come together in a single geographic space.

As Stone (1997) points out, although German Zionists were few in number
compared to other European countries, they were significant in their influence; along
with Herzl, Max Bodenheimer, Gershom Scholem, Nathan Birnbaum, who is credited
with coining the term “Zionism” (Bein 1959), and Arthur Rupin all came from Germany,
while others such as Max Nordau and David Wolffshon went at a young age to Germany
from other countries in the Austrian Empire and/or articulated their Zionism through an
identification with German culture (Berkowitz 1993). Numerically, the majority of
Zionist leaders in Palestine before the 1930s had come from Eastern Europe; much of
which was at the time part of the Russian Empire. Among some of the most noted Zionist
leaders from there are Nahum Sokolow, secretary general of the Zionist Congress and
translator of Herzl’s Old New Land, Leo Motzkin, Ze’ev Jabotinsky, Pinhas Rutenberg,
and of course David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister (Penslar 1991). There are
streets in Israel named after these figures and others, but their influence in terms of the
places from which they come also shaped the cultural, political, economic and material
landscape and textures of Zionism in Israel. They did not have a single spoken language
in common; Zionism’s early founders and those who arrived as part of its settlement
project or who were already in Palestine predominantly spoke Yiddish, Russian, and
German, but also French and Polish, and the Jewish populations native to Palestine, or
coming from the Maghreb or the Middle East often spoke Arabic and Ladino. The
question of what kind of place Zionism would shape was tied to what language or
languages the New Jews would speak, and Hebrew was eventually agreed upon by
Zionist leaders as the language the Jews had in common, and as the language most
identified with the Jews as a people because of the relation of the language and the people
to the Bible and to Biblical narratives of origin and to messianic narratives of exile and
return.

The problem of choosing Hebrew for the project of nation-building, of course,
was that what Jews from very different countries and linguistic backgrounds had in
common in relation to Hebrew was that they didn’t speak it, with the exception of those
who spoke and read it for religious purposes and some of those involved in the Haskala.
But even those who did so were using Biblical Hebrew or a newly made literary Hebrew;
no modern spoken version of Hebrew vernacular existed, which meant that many things
which had come into existence, whether objects or concepts, since Biblical Hebrew, did
not have names in Hebrew. This was true despite the fact that the Jewish Haskala
(Enlightenment) had involved the teaching of Hebrew and the initiation of some Hebrew
language periodicals and literary writing.

It was those Zionists who identified more with a spiritual Zionism, such as Ahad
Ha’am and his followers, than the “political Zionists,” such as Herzl, who initially were
supportive of trying to make Hebrew the national language for a Jewish homeland (Biale
1979; Zipperstein 1993). But some Orthodox Jews, as well as some spiritual Zionists,
most famously perhaps Gershom Scholem, expressed concern about making what they
understood to be a sacred language into a secular language of everyday use and
instrumentalizing it for Zionism’s nation-building project. The reasons for the ambivalence about the choice of Hebrew as the national language for a Jewish homeland, and contemporary Israeli contexts, draw attention to how Hebrew exists in a relation of difference to itself. In the next chapter, I identify how Hebrew’s relation to other languages combined with its relation to Jews in terms of a Biblical narrative made Hebrew a language with a relation to both old and new, to past and future, and to multiple elsewheres.

---

5 See Scholem 2002 for context on his thoughts about Hebrew and language more generally.
Chapter Three
On the Edge of the Abyss: Zionism and Language

Despite the fact that Hebrew was employed in an explicit nationalist project of renaming the landscape and the ways in which it was tied to a social engineering project, I will argue here that Israeli and Zionist contexts highlight Hebrew’s relation of difference to itself that goes against the goals of such nationalist projects. In this chapter, I suggest that Hebrew in contemporary Israeli-Palestinian contexts highlights the ways in which a metaphysics of presence and a nationalist ideal of representation of the subject as same to itself cannot be achieved. In this analysis, I will show how the violence of attempts at such representation rests on a false foundation that puts origin as originary supplement, and thus difference as constitutive at any source, under erasure. I focus on the concern expressed by Gershom Scholem and others that to make Hebrew, a sacred language, into a secular language of everyday use through its instrumentalization in Zionism’s project of nation-building, would lead to apocalyptic disaster. Derrida (2002), in a reading of a letter from Scholem to one of his contemporaries, suggests that there is no such thing as a secular language, and he points to how a perceived relation between a sacred and a secular language in this context poses a challenge to the assumptions of metaphysics by highlighting language as sacred. He suggests that Scholem’s letter points to a question about what it might mean to attach an understanding of language as sacred to the liberal logic of the nation-state, and to the metaphysics of presence on which it is founded. The question that Derrida poses about Scholem’s letter thus also suggests a related question that structures this dissertation – a question about what might emerge
from tying the Jew as a figure defined through a self-differential relation to a logic of liberalism.

Hebrew’s relation to both old and new is commonly associated with the figure of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, who is credited with almost single handedly reviving Hebrew as a modern and spoken language (Whitmarsh 2009). But a handful of scholars of different disciplinary and political stripes have challenged Ben Yehuda’s mythological status by drawing attention to the multiple ways in which Hebrew was revitalized both before and during Ben Yehuda’s influence (Bar-Adon 1975; Kuzar 2001; Segal 2004, 2010; Seidman 1997).1 Others who focus on the Haskala (Jewish Enlightenment) have addressed how the use and teaching of Hebrew was an important component in the making of modern Hebrew Literature in relation to changes in Jewish formations in Europe in the 19th century.2 These other historiographies of Hebrew revival, and the representations of Ben Yehuda’s influence in this work and the myths surrounding him, including those which exaggerate his influence, emphasize Hebrew’s relation to the messianic and the modern, to the old and to the new, both in terms of modern Hebrew’s actual formation and in terms of the ways in which this formation was understood and represented.

---

1 See especially Kuzar 2001, for both a review and a critique of the ways in which Ben Yehuda has been represented in terms of his significance in Hebrew revival.

2 A book called *The Revealer of Secrets* is thought to be the first modern novel in Hebrew, which was written as a satire of the Hasidic movement by Isaac Baer Levinsohn, known as the “Russian Mendelssohn.” The book was published in Vienna in 1819 under a pseudonym.
A song, sung by Israeli stars such as Chava Alberstein and a part of most Jewish Israeli childrens’ education, tells the story of Ben Yehuda. The song, and many performances of it, simultaneously acknowledge and poke fun at Ben Yehuda’s mythological status. The song also draws attention to the fact that Hebrew was both being “revitalized,” brought back from an ancient past, and being invented, literally involving the creation of new words for modern times:

Eliezer Ben Yehuda
He was zealous about the verb, the adjective, and the noun
And at midnight, oil-lamp in his window,
He would write in his dictionary stacks and stacks of pretty words, words which fly, which roll from the tongue

Eliezer, when will you lie down to sleep
You’re practically bent over
And Hebrew, which has waited 2,000 years
Will still be waiting for you at dawn

Eliezer Ben Yehuda
An amusing Jew
Words, words, words
He invented with his feverish brain

If Hebrew has slept for 2,000 years, nu, so what?
Come, let’s wake it up, and invent
“Initiative” (yozma), clothes-iron (mag-hetz), bomb (p’tzatza), furniture (rihut)
With feather tip, in fluid writing,
He wrote k’ruvit (cauliflower), he wrote g’lida (ice-cream);
He wrote all of the Ben Yehuda dictionary
And he went on creating words,
And his fast quill didn’t rest
And the language grew
And didn’t recognize itself in the morning

Eliezer Ben Yehuda…

And when a son was born to him, he said:
This firstborn I will call Ben Yehuda, Itamar
Who from infancy to withering
From the day of his entering the covenant (brit-milah) until his death
Will have a covenant, with Hebrew
And will fight to wipe out foreign language
Itamar – truly become a man
Tall, handsome and well-spoken
And the language he spoke was Hebrew
Itamar Ben-Avi
Whose father was a prophet
A man after my own heart

Eliezer Ben Yehuda…³

In 1890, Eliezer Ben Yehuda founded “The Hebrew Language Committee.” The Committee’s aim was to revive the Hebrew language and make it a spoken and modern language for Jews. In 1908, HaTzvi, the first Hebrew daily in Palestine, was published, and by 1920, Hebrew was adopted as the official language for the Zionist project to build a Jewish state. Hebrew became spoken vernacular during and after the second wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine, between about 1910 and 1920 (Safran 2005; Segal 2004).

Seidman (1997) argues that the mythology of Ben Yehuda has the cultural power it does because it reflects and reinforces conflicts about Hebrew and Jewish-Israeli society present in Israel/Palestine at the time that these myths began to circulate. These conflicts, she suggests, were to a significant degree about how gender and territory were connected to language. Yiddish was coded as feminine, and as belonging to the old, diasporic Jew, and Hebrew as masculine, and as born single handedly back to life by Eliezer Ben Yehuda, who “sacrificed” his son as an experiment in the goal of bringing

³ Translation by Malka Tischler. The reader is invited to view and listen to Chava Alberstein and Matti Caspi singing this song: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGPvdv8gCsk
Hebrew back to life. Ben Yehuda, the story goes, refused to let his son hear any language except Hebrew, with the hope of making him the first native modern Hebrew speaker. Given that few people spoke Hebrew fluently, if at all, including his own parents, this made learning language difficult for his son. Supposedly, the boy did not utter his first word until he was three years old. But Siedman and others (Alter 1988; Harshav 1993; Pelli 1979; Safran 2005) point to how Hebrew was revived, both as a vernacular and in writing before, during, and after Ben Yehuda’s work.

Hebrew began to be put into everyday use during the “Jewish Enlightenment,” or Haskala, in the late 1700s and in the 1800s in Europe. The Haskala began in Germany but spread to other parts of Europe, especially to the East. Participants in the Haskala, known as Maskilim, focused on what they defined as a secularization of Judaism, with figures such as Moses Mendelssohn, who supervised a grammatical commentary of the Torah in counter to traditional rabbinic exegesis. Mendelssohn also translated the Torah into German, a language which was necessary to master in order for Jews to be accepted into German high culture circles. Eventually the push for assimilation and integration which Maskilim advocated was countered by a push for a Yiddish Renaissance among

---

4 For an account of the history of modern Hebrew, see Fellman 1994. See also Segal 2004, who points out that “despite scholarly exaggerations both about the extent to which Hebrew had been a dead language and the suddenness with which a few leaders revived it, there is much to indicate a steady increase in Hebrew’s domain” in the period of national building during late 1800s and early 1900s. She hypothesizes that this exaggeration is likely due to the mythological status according to Eliezer Ben-Yehuda’s role in language revival. Nonetheless, as Segal also suggests, the Hebrew language and literature did undergo a major process of revival and renewal, even if not in the stark terms presented by some exaggerated accounts (for examples of such exaggeration see Chomsky 1978; Spiegel 1930; and Whitmarsh 2009).

5 See Leonard (2012) for a thoughtful consideration of the significance of Mendelssohn for the history of the categories “Jew” and “Greek” in European thought.
other Maskilim also working for a form of secularization of Judaism in Eastern Europe. These movements, through newspapers, books and pamphlets, and Hebrew language study, prepared what would become the ground for the Zionist movement’s effort to make Hebrew the spoken and common national language for the Jews (and then others) in Israel.

**Hebrew Revival as a Nationalist Project**

The process through which Hebrew became the national language of Israeli-Jews was not without conflict and debate. Early Zionists did not at first view the subject of language as particularly important for the Zionist project (Herzl 1896; Kuzar 2001). It was due in large part to the confluence of two factors, one Zionist and the other not, which led language to become an important focus in Zionism; first, the Jewish population in Palestine was joined by small numbers of Jews coming from traditional Jewish communities for economic or other reasons predating and other than Zionist aspirations, and this group increasingly needed a common language with which to organize economically as well as vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire, and second; the haskala movement in Western and then Eastern Europe rejected Yiddish as a corrupt German jargon and embraced Biblical Hebrew, which led to a revival of Hebrew literary writing (Kuzar 2001). During the second major wave of Zionist immigration to Palestine, in the first decade of the 20th century, the efforts of the new Zionist immigrants to establish Hebrew as the language to be used in formal schooling resulted in what became called the “language wars” of 1913-1914. The decision by the philanthropic organization Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden to make German the language of use in the Technion
(what would become Israel’s Insitute of Technology), and similar decisions by other organizations, including the Alliance Israelite Universalle which worked for the spread of French (Safran 2005). By 1911, the first generation of native Hebrew speakers in Palestine is estimated to have been over 20,000 (Bachi 1957; Kuzar 2001), and from then on the number of speakers continually increased.

Hebrew revival, as it came to be known, involved not only bringing Hebrew back as a spoken language, but also what has been called “the Hebraicization of the map” and the landscape (Azaryahu and Golan 2001; Benvenisti 2000; Weizman 2003, 2007). As Azaryahu and Golan (2001) have noted, the use of Hebrew in such nationalization of territory drew heavily on Hebrew’s Biblical history in relation to the land. Azaryahu and Golan detail how the process of attaching a sense of group relation to the landscape through its Hebraization was powerfully institutionalized in Zionism:

Embedded into the discourse of national restoration and renewal, names of Jewish settlements founded in the framework of Zionist settlement activities were symbolic statements of substantial resonance. Centrally regulated by a special committee established in July of 1925, names of newly founded Jewish settlements either restored Biblical and Talmudic place names or served as a means for the commemoration of Zionist figures and political leaders. In both cases, the new names inscribed the process of national revival and restoration unto the map and conflated Jewish history and Zionist memory with the geography of Zionist revival….

While Hebrew was proclaimed as an official language of British mandatory

---

6 Studies of the emergence of modern Hebrew have been dominated by the revivalist perspective, which emphasizes this emergence as a unique event without comparison in human history, while non-revivalist perspectives have explained this emergence with an emphasis on how Hebrew’s emergence can be understood in terms of pidgin-creole formation, second language acquisition, and nativization (Kuzar 2001). The latter perspectives do not suggest that Hebrew was not “revived,” but focus less on the notion of an unparalleled uniqueness and more on the linguistic and sociolinguistic technicalities of how the emergence of modern Hebrew can be understood historically.
Palestine in 1922, together with Arabic and English, the status of Hebrew place names in official publications of the mandate government proved a delicate political issue. The Zionist demand to acknowledge Hebrew place names by including them in the official index was fundamental in that it sought to obtain an official recognition of Jewish historical and cultural links with the ancient homeland of the Jews. The Zionist demand, it should be noted, was not about Hebrew-Jewish place names being exclusive but rather on their equal status with Arabic and English designations. (Ibid. 183)

Azaryahu and Golan go on to point out that the maps that the British Mandatory Survey of Palestine prepared in the 1940s revealed that “the geographical language of British Mandatory Palestine was overwhelmingly Arabic, with some 3700 Arabic names designating local topography. A little more than 200 Hebrew names designated Jewish settlements, while some Biblical place names were reproduced in their English form, e.g. Jerusalem and Hebron, whose Arabic names (Al-Quds and Al-Halil) and Hebrew versions (Yerushalaim and Hevron) were not mentioned” (Ibid.). They suggest that for most of the Jewish immigrants, regardless of their level of commitment to Zionist national revival, “Arabic place names were a feature of the local landscape and thus instrumental in the mental construction of the Hebrew (home)land. Moreover, the use of Arabic references often emphasized an intimate knowledge of and relationship with the local landscape. As cultural signifiers of the condition of being native to the land, they exuded authenticity” (Ibid.). But for the approach of Zionist revival that viewed a commitment to Hebrew as a nationalist obligation, Arabic place names were defined as foreign. Azaryahu and Golan quote from a letter addressed to Ben Gurion in 1948:

‘Because of this (the lack of Hebrew place names) the land is also foreign to its sons who were born and raised there. They walk its length and width, travel its roads, climb the summits of its beautiful mountains and go down to its valleys which are shrouded with green, step alongside ravines and cross rivers without knowing the names of these geographical features, without which a person can not form a spiritual bond with what his eyes see.’ (Ibid. 183-184)
The project to Hebraicize Israel’s landscape became official in July 1949, with the establishment of a commission charged with the task “‘To determine Hebrew names to all the places, mountains, valleys, springs, roads and the like in the area of the Negev’” (Ibid. 184). In 1950 this project was extended to include the rest of the country, and in 1951 the government established a “Governmental Names Commission.” The “Hebraization” of Palestine’s landscape was thus a massive national project, and one which was to a significant degree effective. But I suggest that the project of Zionist Hebrew revival has been effective in producing a particular relation of subjectivity in terms of Hebrew more than in terms of the nationalizing goals of the nation-state.

Hebrew drew on old and messianic narratives, and was the product of modernization and invention, and is haunted not only by Arabic, especially in the territorialization of the land, but also by multiple other languages. Thus, although Hebrew was deployed in an intensive nationalization project that included literally renaming the landscape, I suggest the language itself, particularly because of the circumstances through which it was revitalized, acts against the Zionist state project of nationalization. It is not the revitalization of Hebrew that posed a risk of apocalyptic disaster, I suggest, but rather tying such language to the framework and logic of liberalism that risks disaster.

---

7 Benvenisti (2000) also writes in evocative detail of what he calls his “own troubled internal landscape” and of the “tortured landscape” of his homeland and the process and costs of its “Hebraization.” Although Benvenisti partakes in some orientalism in his representation of place in terms of Arab and Jew, his account is evocative and attentive to the specificities of the politics of naming and place in Israel.
The Internal Differences of Hebrew

The street I lived on between 2005 and 2008 is called Rehov Ha’Tkuma, which translates as Resurrection Street, or Uprising Street. The term “resurrection” in English carries Christian connotations that it doesn’t in Hebrew; in Hebrew the term refers to a sense of Jewish uprising, coming back, the resurrection of Israel. The main street that leads from there east on which I’d often ride my bike to a friend’s house is called Kibbutz Galuyot, which translates as Ingathering of the Exiles. But despite these names and the Zionist history out of which they emerged, I heard as much Arabic and Russian as Hebrew on my street. My street was right on the border of South Tel Aviv and Yafo, about a 15-minute walk from south Tel Aviv’s Salame beach. Salame is also the name of the main street that runs East-West from the shoreline to the East, intersecting with some of the main North-South roads that run through Tel Aviv and which go through the city’s downtown center, including Rehov Ha’Aliyah, which turns into Allenby Street as it nears the city’s center. In my walks up Salame toward the city center, I also heard Chinese, Amahric, Filipino, along with Hebrew, Arabic and Russian. At night, Salame was often busy with a diversity of appearances that gave it an cosmopolitan air, men, women and children from Ethiopia and Sudan, the guys sometimes sporting outfits that looked like they might have walked straight out of Brooklyn, the women in clothes that reminded me of exports from Ghana. Chinese men, probably guest workers in construction work, rode by on bicycles in small groups. Filipinos were especially prominent on Sundays, which is often their day off from the caretaking work many of them are employed in, for the elderly, disabled, and children. The small stores that lined several blocks of Salame, some with small plastic tables and chairs outside on the sidewalk, are mostly run by rough men
from Groznia and Russia, selling beer and other alcohol to passersby, some of whom sit out at the tables, talking and watching the small televisions fixed from the walls of the stores.

My street, despite what its name might suggest, was a small, dirty, side street in between bigger, busier main roads. But my building was across the street from one of the city’s main futbol stadiums, and next to a small health clinic, so especially when there was a futbol match there was significant activity in the street. I lived on the 3rd floor of a three story apartment building, with 14 apartments total. On the ground level there were two apartments. When I moved in to the building the first apartment downstairs was occupied by a young couple and their 5 year old daughter. The mother was Filipina and the father was from Sudan. Towards the end of my research, the father was deported back to Sudan. Eventually the mother couldn’t anymore pay her rent, and had to leave with her daughter. Next door to them lived Sofia and Abu Amer. They are older, probably in their sixties. Their grown sons, in their late twenties and early thirties, would often come to visit, and grill fresh fish outside, to which they always invited me to come share and eat with them when I happened to come in or out while they were cooking. Sofia was the Va’ad Bayit for the building, and she was excellent at it. On the other floors, two of the apartments were occupied by Russian women, two by young Israeli university students, one by myself, and the rest by Palestinians. One of these was an older Palestinian man who lived by himself, who Abu Amer one time told me had been a collaborator, and because of this was mostly shunned by other Palestinians. But he had frequent visits from young Palestinian men. The apartment below me, which was the same size as mine (a small two room apartment - one bedroom and one other room combined as living room
and kitchen) was occupied by a Palestinian family with three young kids. At one point the shouts and bangs and crying from below led me to ask Sofia about it. Next door to them was a young Palestinian couple who had two young children over the time I lived there, although for a significant part of this time the father was in prison, but once he returned he was under house arrest and so was often around then. As a result, a camera was put at the entrance to the building, supposedly to track his coming and going, although they had the screen showing the camera images in their own apartment, so there was some confusion about this. Abu Amer was the one who fed the cats outside the building. They were street cats, but they were regular ones who hung out in the yard of the building, who he knew by name. Sometimes he would tell me details about them, who gave birth to whom, who got along with whom. You can always know whether someone is a good person by how they treat animals, he said. He worked as a night security guard for an office attached to the stadium across the street. He also volunteered with the Israeli police and did rounds with other volunteers in the area around the old (former) bus station, not far from our building. It is an area populated mainly by guest workers, and is also where there is some drug and prostitution traffic.

Hebrew thus comes up against and intermingles with many other languages on the street and in peoples’ homes. It is also spoken by people with very different relationships with Zionism and its nation building project. It’s not only Jewish-Israelis who speak Hebrew, but also Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, and some without, as well as Israel’s other non-Jewish inhabitants including guestworkers from Sub-Saharan Africa.
and from South Asia, drawing attention to the question of Hebrew’s relation to Jewishness and Judaism. In this vein, William Safran (2005) has suggested that by stressing the importance of Hebrew rather than religion as what unified the different groups of Jews coming to Israel, “Zionist nation-builders hoped to avoid the temptations toward theocracy and reduce the conflict between the religious and secular Jews. In separating the Hebrew language from Judaism, however, policy-makers transformed that language into a transreligious medium” (52-53). I will argue here, however, that policy-makers did not so much separate Hebrew from Judaism in focusing on Hebrew as a unifying force, as helped draw attention to, even if unintentionally, the internal difference of the Jew and of Hebrew. In this sense, I will suggest, an analysis of Hebrew in Israel also challenges the binary relation and definitions of religious and secular themselves, and the assumptions of a metaphysics of presence which undergirds such a binary relation.

Hebrew carries the influence of many languages, and is particularly inflected with both Yiddish and Arabic. The words for home, mother, father, and food, for example, are

---

8 A less common and less contemporary example of another kind of relation to Hebrew is that of the Canaanites, a small group of men in Israel in the 1940s and 1950s who defined themselves as anti-Zionist, as new Hebrews, and as Israelis but not Jews, but who were Hebrew revivalists and who thus aligned themselves with conservative Zionist linguists in terms of Hebrew language policies (Kuzar 2001). For considerations of the Caananites in terms beyond Hebrew revival, see Shavit 1987.

9 Safran points to the example here of Anton Shammas, a Palestinian with Israeli citizenship, or Arab-Israeli, who is known for his mastery of Hebrew, and who wrote the novel Arabesques (1988) in Hebrew. Lawrence Silberstein (1999) wrote about Shammas: “Demonstrating a mastery of a rich and complex Hebrew style, Shammas...transforms the language of the majority into a weapon of the colonialised minority in its struggle against hegemonic culture. By problematising the classical Zionist view of Hebrew literature as Jewish national literature, Arabesques...forces a fundamental revision of some of the political assumptions underlying Israeli public discourse’ (Silberstein 1999, 130-1)” quoted in Safran 2005, 53).
almost the same in Hebrew and Arabic. Of course, there are many other similarities, including the ways in which both languages follow a root structure. But Hebrew is haunted by Arabic in other ways as well. Israeli-Jews who are native Arabic speakers have often been called upon in the army to make use of that Arabic for torture and interrogation procedures. Other times it is used to extend or accept hospitality, whether in contexts of military occupation and uniform or civilian interactions in supermarkets and other public spaces. But it is not only the uses of Hebrew and the multiplicity of languages which coexist with Hebrew through which the nationalist goals of Hebraization can be understood to have failed. It is also within Hebrew itself that the echoes and resonances of other languages are heard. Segal’s (2004) detailed mapping of the genealogy of the “new accent” in Hebrew poetry in Palestine helps to make sense of the layered diversity of accents and sounds in contemporary Hebrew. She points out that it was not only the question of which language Zionism should adopt as the national Jewish language which provoked disagreement and debate in Zionism’s early years, but also the question of which accent should be chosen for Hebrew speech (Segal 2004). She traces the processes by which the early promoters of Hebrew rejected their own Ashkenazic accent (of Eastern European Jews) in favor of an accent which they represented as a pure Hebrew pronunciation of Sephardic Jews. Segal shows how this accent, which was the precursor of the dominant modern Hebrew Israeli accent, was actually a mélange of sounds from a variety of accents and languages.\footnote{One of the main reasons why accent was such a question, and a topic of discussion in terms of a “choice,” was because Hebrew poetry, rather than Hebrew literary prose in the form of the novel, had become the focus of 19th century Hebrew literature (Alter 1988; Segal 2004). Segal elucidates...}
different vein, but revealing a similar relation of internal difference, the practice and concept of “dugri” speech also points to the ways in which both diasporic Jew and New Jew are manifest in Hebrew itself. As Katriel (1986) explains, dugri speech signifies honesty “in the sense of being true to oneself and sincere,” even and often especially when being direct and to the point may involve offending the other person (11).

Thus despite how tightly language and the goals of nationalism have been woven together, it is exactly in the language that Hebrew presents a challenge to the nationalist and liberal logic of the Israel and the framework of the nation-state. The possibility of such a challenge is implicitly suggested in a letter Gershom Scholem wrote to Franz Rosenzweig in 1926 about the revitalization of Hebrew, and it is more explicitly suggested in Derrida’s reading of this letter.

the complexity of the relation between the development of a Hebrew vernacular and Hebrew poetry, pointing to the influence of the different stress patterns in the poetry of medieval Jews (using the Arabic distinction between long and short vowels), the use of Italian and Andalusian poets of what would be called the “Sephardic pronunciation” placing stress on a word’s final syllable, and in contrast, the Ashkenazic stress on the penultimate syllable. Segal suggests that because of the nationalist goals of finding a “pure Hebrew,” the revivalists instituted what they viewed as the pure “Sephardic” accent while the Ashkenazic accent in the Hebrew poetry of the same generation was institutionalized at the same time. Between the 1890s and the 1920s this difference between spoken and poetic Hebrew was the subject of controversy, until the “new accent” began to dominate poetry as well. Now, Segal suggests, the Ashkenazic accent that at the time of its publication in Hebrew poetry at the turn of the century sounded the longing of European Jews for Palestine, instead sounds “the difference of the Diaspora, offering a vision of the exilic Jew from the new perspective of the nation…”, hiding the irony of the fact that the New Accent, considered “Sephardic” and “pure,” was itself shaped by a diverse array of accents and other languages (Segal 2004, vii).
Hebrew and the Abyss

In December 1926, Scholem wrote a letter about Hebrew to Franz Rosenzweig, one of his contemporaries— a Jewish-German philosopher, who unlike Scholem, was not a Zionist but rather a defender of German-Jewish connection, suggesting that the gathering of Jews in Palestine would spell trouble. The letter was found in Scholem’s papers only in 1985, three years after his death. Scholem writes from Jerusalem to Rosenzweig in Germany, and the letter bears the title “Confession on the Subject of Our Language.”11 Soon after the discovery of the letter, Derrida (2002) presented a reading of it in an essay titled “The Eyes of Language: The Abyss and the Volcano.” I read Derrida there as asking what attaching such an understanding of language as sacred to a nationalist project may produce. This is a version of the larger question of this dissertation, in the sense that it asks what emerges out of connecting a figure produced through a relation to alterity to a liberal framework of the nation-state. Ultimately, I argue that Israeli contexts highlight what is at stake in Derrida’s question, and make it possible to present a kind of response to it. By way of Scholem, his correspondence with Franz Rosenzweig, and Derrida’s reading of their correspondence, I suggest the attachment between Israel and Hebrew, and relatedly, the figure of the Jew, is permeated by phantoms of language, a contamination which allows for “an experience of language that enables a deconstruction of the philosophical oppositions that govern a semiotism inherited from both Platonism and the Enlightenment” (Derrida 2002, 224), but which, as

11 See Grab 1996 for the full letter in German from Scholem to Rosenzweig. See Derrida 2002 for an English translation.
it threatens such oppositions, has also been put to use in attempts to reinforce these oppositions in the name of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.

Derrida draws attention to Scholem’s worry and understanding of what constitutes the “evil” or “sin” of making Hebrew an everyday language for communication and instrumentalizing it to make it a national modern language. I read Derrida as going on to suggest that the sacred that Scholem suggests characterizes the Hebrew language in fact may be understood to characterize all language, any language. Or in other words, that the apparent secularization of language which is made possible by the “sleepwalking on the edge of the abyss” which will one day be interrupted when we are awoken by the return and revenge of the sacred language, is an apparent secularization that can be understood as present in other languages, all languages, in a different kind of sleepwalking – a sleepwalking of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Enlightenment logics.

Gershom Scholem was a scholar of Jewish mysticism and is known as the founder of modern academic study of the Kabbalah. Born in Berlin in 1897, in part influenced by Martin Buber, he joined the Zionist movement while he was a doctoral student, and went to Palestine in 1923, where he eventually became the first professor of Jewish mysticism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He was lifelong friends with Walter Benjamin whom he met in Germany in 1915; the two remained friends until Benjamin’s suicide in 1940.\footnote{Much has been written about the friendship between Scholem and Benjamin and their influence on each other. See Momigliano 1994. See also Scholem’s (1981) book of memoirs, \textit{Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship}. Hamburger (1982) reviews some of the varied responses to and analyses of the exchanges between Scholem and Benjamin. For the letters between Benjamin and Scholem, see Benjamin, Scholem and Adorno 1994.} Scholem suggested that Judaism should be studied as a living entity, and that
what made it alive were foundations that were not rational but rather mysterious and mythical. For Scholem, the Hebrew language itself contained a power that made it able to invoke mystical phenomena.

In December 1926, Scholem writes from Palestine to Rosenzweig who is in Germany:

This country is a volcano. It houses language. One speaks here of many things that could make us fail. One speaks more than ever today about the Arabs. But more uncanny than the Arab people another threat confronts us that is a necessary consequence of the Zionist undertaking: What about the ‘actualization’ of Hebrew? Must not this abyss of a sacred language handed down to our children break out again? Truly, no one knows what is being done here…. And on the day this eruption occurs, which generation will suffer its effects? We do live inside this language, above an abyss, almost all of us with the certainty of the blind. But when our sight is restored, we or those who come after us, must we not fall to the bottom of this abyss? And no one knows whether the sacrifice of individuals who will be annihilated in this abyss will suffice to close it.

The creators of this new linguistic movement believed blindly, and stubbornly, in the miraculous power of the language, and this was their good fortune. For no one clear-sighted would have mustered the demonic courage to revive a language there where only an Esperanto could emerge…. Our children no longer have another language, and it is only too true to say that they, and they alone, will pay for the encounter which we have initiated without asking, without even asking ourselves. If and when the language turns against its speakers – it already does so for certain moments in our lifetime, and these are difficult to forget, stigmatizing moments in which the daring lack of measure of our undertaking reveals itself to us – will we then have a youth capable of withstanding the uprising of a sacred language? (Scholem in Derrida 2002, 226-227).

---

13 Scholem’s mysticism may have been part of what shaped his criticism and differences with Hannah Arendt, who he publicly criticized in 1964 for the arguments she makes in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, (see Encounter 22, January 1964; 51-56, republished in Arendt 1978), and over her interpretations of Walter Benjamin’s work (see Arendt’s introduction in Benjamin’s [1968] *Illuminations*).
It is not irrelevant that both “the Arabs” and Hebrew here are identified as uncanny. Both Arabs and Hebrew are simultaneously familiar and foreign. But for Scholem, even though there is armed conflict and perhaps demographic and cultural similarity and difference with the Arabs, the Arabs are less uncanny and less threatening than Hebrew itself, which is a “necessary consequence [mit Aktualisierung] of the Zionist undertaking” (Ibid. 226), a threat that is inherent to the Zionist project from within. Scholem wonders whether the future generations, who he thinks will have to pay for the encounter between language and its speakers, will be able to withstand “the uprising of a sacred language” (Ibid. 227). The generation of those who had other languages, the generation of the creators of “this new linguistic movement,” are now almost all dead. Their children are in their fifties and sixties. They are the in between generation. Their own children are now young adults. I will suggest here that to withstand this uprising of the sacred language entails the recognition of the revenant of language, and the recognition that the name, and oneself, cannot fully belong to oneself.

In his reading of Scholem’s letter, Derrida (2002) begins by suggesting that Scholem’s letter speaks with a voice that resonates like the voice of a ghost:

This letter has no testamentary character, though it was found after Scholem’s death, in his papers, in 1985. Here it is, nonetheless, arriving and returning to us, speaking to us after the death of its signatory, and something in it henceforth resonates like the voice of a ghost [fantome].

What gives this resonance a kind of depth is yet something else: Here is this ghostly voice that cautions, warns, predicts the worst, announces the return or the reversal, the revenge and the catastrophe, the resentment, the retaliation, the punishment – and it resurges at a moment in the history of Israel that makes one sensitive more than ever to this imminence of the apocalypse. The letter was written in December 1926, long before the birth of the state of Israel, but what constitutes its theme, namely, the secularization of the language, had already been systematically undertaken in Palestine from the beginning of the century.
One has at times the impression that a revenant proclaims to us the terrifying return of a ghost. (191)

Derrida then proceeds to read a lengthy excerpt from Scholem’s book of memoirs, From Berlin to Jerusalem (1980). In the excerpt, Scholem tells of a visit he made to Frankfurt in the 1920s, where he saw Rosenzweig several times. He also tells about some of the background to their friendship. Scholem writes:

Our decisions took us in entirely different directions. He sought to reform (or perhaps I should say revolutionize) German Jewry from within. I, on the other hand, no longer had any hopes for the amalgam known as “Deutschjudentum,” i.e., a Jewish community that considered itself German, and expected a renewal of Jewry only from its rebirth in Eretz Israel. Certainly we found each other of interest…. (Scholem in Derrida 2002,192)

Scholem then goes on to tell of his second visit to Rosenzweig, when they got into a long conversation about the German Jewishness which Scholem rejected. He describes this moment as the occasion for a complete break between them, and adds that he would never have brought up the subject if he had known that Rosenzweig was already in the first stages of a fatal disease. He knew that Rosenzweig had been ill, but there had not yet been a complete diagnosis. Scholem thought that he was getting better, with the only remainder of his illness a difficulty in speaking. It is some time later, when Rosenzweig’s health is worse, he is partially paralyzed, and as Derrida puts it, aphasic, that Scholem sends him this letter of “confession” on the subject of the Hebrew language. Derrida emphasizes both these elements; Scholem writes his letter as a kind of confession to Rosenzweig, and the specificity of the relation and positioning of Scholem and Rosenzweig in relation to one another, to Zionism, and to German Jewry. In doing so, Derrida asks what specifically it is that Scholem’s confession is about. Derrida asks:
What does Scholem confess? What does he avow and in what sense is this an avowal or a confession – that is to say, at the same time, a recognition in the sense of an avowal and an avowal in the sense of a profession of faith? It is a confession before Rosenzweig the anti-Zionist, because Scholem is a Zionist – that is what he wants to be, that is what he remains and confirms being. Yet, he cannot but recognize in Zionism an evil, and inner evil, an evil that is anything but accidental [un mal qui n’a rien d’accidentel]. More precisely, one cannot but recognize that the accident that befalls Zionism or that lies in wait for it threatens it essentially, in its closest proximity: in its language [au plus proche de lui-même: dans sa langue], and as soon as a Zionist opens his mouth…. It is a matter of what used to be called then, in Palestine, the ‘actualization (Aktualisierung)’ of the Hebrew language, its modernization, the transformation undertaken since the beginning of the century (Ben Yehuda) and pursued systematically toward adapting biblical Hebrew to the needs of everyday communication, be it technical and national, but also, for a modern nation, international and interstate communication. This linguistic evil does not let itself be localized or circumscribed. It does not only affect one means of communication precisely because it degrades into a means of communication a language originally or essentially destined for something entirely distinct from information. One transforms a language, and first of all, names, into an informative medium (as we will see, all this is supported by a very Benjaminian interpretation of the essence of language as nomination)….

It is indeed a matter of ‘catastrophe’ – the word is Scholem’s – a turn and a return, a reversal: the evil will not only consist in the loss of the sacred language, thus of Hebrew, and thus of what is essential to Zionism, but in an avenging return of the sacred language that will violent turn against those who speak it (gegen ihre Sprecher ausbrechen), against those who have desecrated it. Then, terrible things will not fail to happen. Events will be produced by this linguistic sin…. This catastrophe of language will not only be linguistic. From the beginning of the letter, the political and national dimension is staged. (Derrida 2002, 194-195)

For Scholem, the secularization of Hebrew means making it into a kind of Esperanto, or Volapuk, a nonlanguage in which words are empty of their fullness. The secularization of language is thus a sacrifice of the language. For Scholem, this is what constitutes the violation of the sacred.

But as Derrida points out, Scholem acknowledges that this secular language, this emptying out of the sacred language, is impossible. The secularization of the sacred language thus leads to a language that speaks of its secularization, what Derrida describes
as “a language that has henceforth become a nonlanguage, but this negativity remains haunted, is not an absolutely negative negativity. The ‘ghostly Volapuk’ remains inhabited by the revenant, wrought by the haunting that permeates [ qui traverse ], as we have seen, the entire text” (Ibid. 221). Derrida then returns to Scholem’s question: “But when our sight is restored, we or those who come after us, must we not fall to the bottom of this abyss? And no one knows whether the sacrifice ( das Opfer ) of individuals who will be annihilated in this abyss ( in diesem Abgrund vernichtet werden ) will suffice to close it ( genugen wird, um ihn zu schliessen )” (222). Derrida suggests that here Scholem poses a question about responsibility in the form of a question about revolution, force and meaning, coming from the question of the revenant, and coming from the undecidable.

For Scholem and others, this abyss, and the sacredness of Hebrew, is understood through a relation to God and hence Hebrew is the only sacred language. For Derrida, no language is truly secular, and what constitutes the sacred is not a relation to God, but the alterity of the other, and that the name, the subject of the name, the sign, is located in the deferral and slippage between signifier and signified. This is not to suggest that Derrida is not also recognizing something specific to the question of making Hebrew “secular” here; it would seem that it is precisely because of his understanding of language through deconstruction that he is so well able to identify the questions posed by what Scholem calls the secularization of Hebrew as a sacred language. Before ending his piece with a passage from Stephan Moses, Derrida asks:

How would a kind of explanation that, to be quick, we would describe as psychoanalytic, psychoanalyticohistorical, a scientific explanation, therefore, depending on a ( relevant d’un ) modern rationalism, on a new determination of historical subjectivity articulated around a theory of the sign – how would such an explanation, precisely because it is in
principle inadmissible by the axiomatic of this confession, enable a sharpening of the paradox that, I would be tempted to say, too quickly, we inhabit today? And what would this paradox be? A thinking of language, an experience of language that enables a deconstruction of the philosophical oppositions that govern a semiotism inherited from both Platonism and the Enlightenment can, while furthering a critique of critique and enabling progress beyond the given limits of a certain scientificity, run the risk – a scientific, philosophical, and political risk – of a rejection of science, of philosophy, to say nothing of the nationalist risk. (Ibid. 224-225).

I suggest here that it did not turn out to be exactly a nationalist risk that took hold of the experience of language in the “secularization” of Hebrew, nor did this experience of language reject science or philosophy. Rather, I suggest that the risk has been that of a metaphysics of presence and of a logic of liberalism. In other words, I suggest that Israeli contexts highlight not only the problem of nationalism and its racism and exclusionary violence, but the problem of the foundation of the nation-state in liberalism and humanism’s assumptions of a metaphysics of presence. I also venture that it is precisely because Israeli political logics include a challenge to a metaphysics of presence (at the same time that these logics are increasingly dominated by the desire for a metaphysics of presence) that the violence of the latter is misrecognized and condemned as unacceptable exclusionary nationalism, rather than as a symptom of the problem of different forms of liberalism out of which Israel itself emerged. It is in this sense, also, that I suggest that Israel is attacking not only Palestinians, but also itself, and the former through the latter.

While the Zionist effort to both claim the land and to bring the language to life involved intense territorialization through Hebrew, this effort and its effects is haunted by the Jew’s relation to itself through difference. This is not to say that the Hebraization of the land, or Zionism more broadly, has not effectively suppressed and erased much. Rather, it is to say that contained within the effort itself are relations to difference that
make the goals of this effort – the state-building effort to make the place and the history through a narration of a single people – a Jewish people - impossible to attain. This is evident in the permeation of difference in what might seem to be mundane, everyday events and interactions, as well as in more momentous or exceptional seeming events. Scholem writes that “each word which is not newly created… but taken from the ‘good old’ treasure (aus dem ‘guten alten’ Schatz ) is full to bursting ( ist zum Bersten voll )” (Scholem in Derrida 2002, 206). Derrida comments in a parenthetical that Scholem does not here concern himself with these new words, “nor with the question of knowing to what language they belong; everything occurs as if these were either non-words or absolutely foreign words” (Derrida 2002, 222). What is clear in Hebrew in Israel today is how both the new words and those “taken from the ‘good old’ treasure” are haunted and haunt language, drawing attention to the impossibility of total separation of content from form, making the experience of this language one which presents a demand in the form of a call to respond to the name, while always reminding that the name is never fully belonging to itself, is never fully present to itself, and that it hides an abyss.
Chapter Four
Zionism and Character: The Old New Jew

The Zionist project to establish a homeland for Jews in Palestine was not only a project of establishing a place and a language in common for Jews. Zionism’s leaders also sought to articulate a vision of a new Jewish people that they suggested was commensurate with the vision of the establishment of a new home for them. This vision of a new people was condensed in the figure of the “New Jew,” which was eventually translated into the figure of the Sabra, the name given to the first generation of “Hebrews” born in Palestine who worked to establish Israel. At the same time that Zionism was informed by different kinds of European liberalisms, it also positioned the Zionist vision of a Jewish homeland as a response to a perceived failure of liberalism to produce an adequate humanism and a successful liberal subject. In this regard similar to other humanist movements taking hold in Europe at the turn of the century, including international feminisms proclaiming the creation of a “New Woman,” and Socialisms calling for the creation of the “New Man,” Zionism called for the creation of the “New Jew.” The New Jew condensed attachments to and rejections of different narratives of Jewish history and of anti-Semitic representations of the Jew in a vision of a new future for the Jewish people through the production of a Jewish character that rejected traits of the diasporic Jew in favor of traits of the New Jew.

In this chapter, I argue that Israeli-Jew, rather than replacing the “old” diasporic Jew with the New Jew, has kept both these characterizations as central to what “Israeli-Jew” signifies. I draw attention to how some characterizations of the diasporic Jew are also attributed to Palestinians. An analysis of the figure of the Jew in Israel suggests, I
argue, that rather than aspiring to resolve what might seem to be a contradiction or the displacement of the effects of partially repressed trauma through the establishment and reinforcement of a dignified, autonomous citizen subject, the Israeli-Jew can be understood as a political subject that cannot fully belong to itself or achieve sovereignty, even as situations may demand the exercise of sovereign decision. Such an understanding of the could shift pressure on the subject to be sovereign to a pressure on political frameworks that operate based on assumptions of such a subject and which attempt to make some positions sovereign and safe for prosperity through the disposability and impoverishment of others, in the name of human rights and a universal humanity. An analysis of the Jew in terms of Israel, I argue, makes visible how all life is disposable and the impossibility of attaining full sovereignty or subjectivity.

In this chapter I use the word “character” rather than “identity” purposefully. Identity, as the term has been used in social and political theory in the United States at least, frequently connotes a sense of self that is understood to be representable in terms of categories that are used interchangeably for individuals and groups. It is also often understood as something to be represented, rather than as a representation itself. Thus one’s identity is understood as defined in terms of belonging to particular groups – woman, North American, Jew, Black, and so on. The term identity also carries with it a sense of essence and of authenticity, however differently this sense may be defined, from notions of biological determinism to notions of performativity and the effects of social and ideological structures. An identity is understood to be that which defines who one is, in and of oneself. The term character, in contrast, is attached to different genealogies which suggest a concept of self in terms of a set of particular traits which mark how one
is likely to respond to different situations, which are legible to an audience outside the
self in the form of particular dispositions and manners of behavior.

The term character can be traced etymologically to the Greek *kharassein* which
was the term for the mark made on a coin and for traits that mark one thing as different
from another (Skeat 2005). Philosophically, the term has been important from
Aristotelian ethics to Sartrean existentialism. For Aristotle, the term was significant in his
thinking about ethics; character signified the dispositions, in part cultivated through habit,
through which moral virtue could be determined based on the degree to which one is
disposed to react to events and decisions in proportion to what the situation demands
(Aristotle 1996; Kraut 2012). In a similar vein, for Sartre, character signifies not so much
the manner in which people define themselves as it signifies how people define others
from the outside; Patrick Gardiner (1977) suggested that central to Sartre’s concept of
character is an understanding of it in terms of “our tendency to regard other people as if
they could be envisaged as analogous to ‘objects’ or ‘things’ with definite dispositions
and propensities, behaving in predictable ways and subject over the whole range of their
conduct to regularities which can be noted, charted, and classified” (72). In this sense an
understanding of character was central for Sartre’s attempt to understand the notion of
responsibility; an awareness of “freedom” can lead people to assume the role they
understand themselves to play as a response to the anxiety of how to respond to one’s
freedom, but such an assumption does not then actually take responsibility for and
acknowledge that people have a choice whether to assume the role they play or whether
they choose to break with this role in favor of something else. How one should be and
should act is thus ultimately not a question that leads to research about one’s self in order
to identify who one is, but a question which culminates in the need to make a decision about how one will act based on an assessment of how one has acted in the past and in relation to specific situations. The response to this question, for Sartre, can be confused if an individual adopts external perceptions of who he is in terms of his character, rather than recognizing himself as an agent who can make decisions about what he will do.

I use the term character here as it is inflected philosophically in terms of this genealogy, as well as in terms of how it has been put to use in social, literary and psychoanalytic theory. In social theory, Erving Goffman (1959) brought the notion of character into sociological analysis of human behavior in terms of the concept of dramaturgy. Goffman suggested that human behavior and interactions can be understood in terms of people playing particular roles, which they do differently in what he thought of as “back stage” and “front stage” behaviour in an effort to control the impression they make on others. In literature, the use of the term character has been used to refer to particular types and figures as opposed to notions of an identity of “real people” in a narrative. Such a notion of character would also seem to invite analysis and interpretation of the meaning of a text as overdetermined and open beyond any intentionality of the author. In psychoanalysis, Freud suggests an understanding of character in terms of the series of object-choices a person makes through which they become individuated subjects. Freud makes reference to character both in terms of the constitution of the ego, and in terms of a distinction between symptoms and resistances. In “Some Character-Types Met With in Psychoanalytic Work,” Freud (1957 XIV) explains that in psychoanalytic treatment of a neurotic, the psychoanalyst is interested in understanding what a patient’s symptoms mean, but that this aim can be threatened by the patient’s
resistances, “and these resistances he may justly count as part of the latter’s character” (311). These traits of character are not, Freud writes, always traits that the patient may recognize as part of himself or which others attribute to him. Rather, in the process of psychoanalytic treatment, they are traits that may emerge with increased intensity or be revealed while having been hidden in the patient’s other relations in life. Freud writes of character as the product of sedimented traces of both the individual and the larger history of which they are a part; the processes through which the ego comes into formation in relation to others and the ideals of the group with which the ego is in relation. While I do not enter here into any in-depth engagement of the concept of character, and these are only broad brushstrokes that gesture at some of the ways character has been understood across a range of disciplinary fields and historical contexts, I want to mark the sense in which I understand character to be marking an understanding of self in terms different than those suggested by the notion of identity because it is in these terms, rather than in terms of a notion of identity, that I understand Zionism’s call for the formation of the “New Jew.”

***

It is the end of a long day and I’m tired, but the lecturer standing in the front of the room keeps my attention riveted on him; he is talking about methods that anthropologists use in the field, and as I am in the midst of doing fieldwork in Israel what he says resonates with me. He has a deep, captivating, gravelly voice, and he sounds intelligent and passionate about his subject. “Out of 100 candidates, we narrow it down to 30, then to 10. Those we choose, they get two years of training, by the end they learn to speak Arabic fluently, and they have special areas of focus. It is important to be aware of
differences, Palestinians who live in a house in Gaza City are not the same as Palestinians who live two hours away in a cramped refugee camp. So we train people to be very familiar with a specific area and with the culture of the people who live there. . . . I worked for three years in a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. . . .” As he speaks, I think, wow, he sounds like he could be an anthropologist. But he is not. He is the former head of Israel’s interrogation unit. He has trained interrogators and carried out interrogations himself for approximately thirty years.

We are sitting in a dimly lit windowless room in the center of the Israeli Defense Ministry’s Quarters in Tel Aviv. In his talk, the interrogator, who I will call here Wulf, makes reference to his artificial eye and to his prosthetic leg, and to the fact that he lost his leg in a terrorist attack. His wife and son were also injured in attacks. His hair is a little bushy and untidy. I feel like an imposter in the room; everyone around me, mostly Americans who have come as paying members of a week long “tour” of Israel and its military strengths, seems happy and enthusiastic about what they are hearing, as if watching a thriller, and sometimes cut-in to add their own commentary or jokes. I am afraid of being found out and feel very self-conscious of the expressions on my face. I had contacted the tour organizer a few weeks earlier and asked if as a graduate student conducting research in Israel I might be able to join parts of the tour as a guest, and had been told yes. So I had met the group early that morning at Israel’s top air force base. This lecture by Wulf at the Defense Ministry was the last stop on the day’s itinerary.

As Wulf comes to the main focus of his lecture, he jokes to his audience, “can you imagine yourself for a time under my authority, with me deciding when you are allowed to sleep and when not? Would you consider this torture?” He goes on to then ask more
seriously, “What is the meaning of torture? Is it physical pain? Is it the perception of physical pain, or mental anguish? Is sleep deprivation acceptable? Some say it isn’t torture. But ten days of sleep deprivation is torture. Is water-boarding torture? Do you know what water-boarding is?” One of the men in the audience eagerly responds, introducing himself as an ex-marine, and explaining in detail what water-boarding is, and how well it produces a sensation of drowning. The conclusion among everyone speaking seems to be that it definitely can be understood as a form of torture. I see people around me nodding in agreement. Wulf then moves on to another example. “Let me tell you a story,” he begins. “One time, we went to Sinai, and brought back the bodies of Egyptian soldiers. We put them in graves, and then left some of the bodies out of the holes, and put numbers on the bodies, suggesting that this could be the fate of the people being interrogated. Is this torture?” Wulf went on to answer his own question; “It is a matter of torture, because psychological suffering is sometimes more difficult to suffer than physical pain, because the mental is for the person interrogated to control, and the physical is for me as the interrogator to control. So it can be torture even if there is no physical torture. To be in the room is very inconvenient, and you increase the pressure. It is torture, and yes, there is the whole question of human rights, but what about the people in the twin towers, it means nothing? What about my son who was in the bar? My wife who was in the street?” Wulf then goes on to detail some of the history of Israel’s legislation on torture, including the 1999 ruling of Israel’s highest court on petitions requesting that the Court prohibit interrogation methods that constituted torture.

As the Israeli human rights group B’Tselem has reported, in 1999 Israel’s High Court ruled that the Israel Securities Authority (ISA) does “not have the legal authority to
use physical means of interrogation that are not ‘reasonable and fair’ and that cause the
detainee to suffer. ‘Human dignity,’ then-Supreme Court President Aharon Barak stated
for the court, ‘also includes the dignity of the suspect being interrogated.’ However, a
reasonable interrogation is likely to cause discomfort and put pressure on the detainee.
Such discomfort, or unpleasantness, will be deemed lawful only if ‘it is a ‘side effect’
inherent to the interrogation,’ and not an end in itself, aimed at tiring out or ‘breaking’ the
detainee” (B’Tselem 2011, 1). The B’Tselem report points out that in this regard, Israel is
in line with the standards set by international law. But, they go on to point out, the High
Court also held that ISA interrogators who acted beyond their authority and used
“forbidden ‘physical pressure’ can avoid criminal responsibility if it is subsequently
found that they acted ‘in the proper circumstances’” (Ibid.). Here the Court used what is
called “the necessity defense” presented in the Penal Law which allows for exceptions in
cases self-defense, which in this case refers to taking action in the face of what are called
“ticking time bombs,” situations in which suspected terrorists may be about to take lives
if intelligence information isn’t gathered in time to stop them.

The court ruled against the position that the necessity defense allows ISA
authorities automatic and prior permission to use physical pressure on detainees, stating
that the necessity defense “deals with deciding those cases involving an individual
reacting to a given set of facts,’ so it cannot serve as the source of a general
administrative power. It is ‘only a defense to criminal responsibility, claimed after the
fact’” (Ibid.). But, as the B’Tselem report points out, the court’s declaration prohibiting
the use of specific interrogation methods, without explicitly naming them as torture and
establishing a ruling against them, allowed them to keep from contradicting international
law, which prohibits the citation of “exceptional circumstances” as a defense for those carrying out such interrogation practices. In the language of the state’s law itself, it is thus possible to see an attempt to straddle both the principles of international law based on claims to universal human rights that forbid the use of torture, and the violence of the law itself which can be turned against those made exempt from its framework, as WWII revealed a stunning manner.

In this chapter, I suggest that Israeli-Jew retains both the traits associated with the diasporic Jew and those with what Max Nordau called “the New Jew” (Presner 2003). Central to this combination is a distrust of the universalist claims of the law, and an investment in defending principles of self-determination and individual sovereignty which are associated with such universalist claims. This combination can be seen in very different forms and in very different politics; it is legible in the explanations that the interrogator Wulf presented regarding torture of Palestinian detainees, but it is also legible in the arguments and actions of some of the Israel anarchists protesting with Palestinians in the West Bank against Israeli occupation and construction of the separation barrier. It is heard in the stories of Israeli soldiers about extending and receiving hospitality from Palestinians in situations of armed conflict. It is there in the narrative of Aharon the taxi driver with whom I began Part I. It is there in the different versions of the reality behind the accusation imbedded in the Israeli cliché “the soldier who shoots and cries.” It is there in the law itself, which attempts to fall into line with international universalist standards while leaving open a space for its own exception to such rule. And it is there, I am suggesting, in the texture of the everyday in Israel’s streets, where a relaxed informality full of the messiness of multiple languages, scents
and sounds, and the possibility of walking down most streets in all the major cities in the middle of the night without fear, combines with the frequent sight of young men and women carrying automatic weapons and security checks at most public venues, the explosions of restaurants and buses not far away in the memories of many of the country’s residents, and the hidden in plain sight proximity of more than three million Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation, and hundreds held in administrative detention inside Israel’s military prisons. Israeli-Jews make reference both to the need to fight back, to be self-reliant, and to an awareness that they are vulnerable, and that they could be in the position of those whom they detain and fight against. All these characteristics can be traced both to the messianic narrative of exile and return, and to the recent history of European modernity.

Yael Zerubavel (1995) has suggested that the negative characterizations of Jews and Judaism in the diaspora and during the time of Exile were countered in Zionism with positive characterizations of Jews drawn from narratives about the Jewish people during the time of Antiquity, including traits of strength, heroism, fighting back, being self-reliant, proud, and directly in touch with the soil. Such characterizations were epitomized in the figure of the “New Jew,” which was translated into the figure of the Sabra, the term for the first generation of “new Jews” born in Palestine. Her work draws attention to how Zionism’s ideal figure of the “New Jew” was informed not only by modern European, and specifically French liberalism and German nationalist ideals, but also by Biblical narratives of the Jews during the time of antiquity. To acknowledge this influence is not to suggest that the impulse for doing so was not driven by 19th and 20th century European nationalisms, liberalisms, and anti-semitism, but rather is to attend to the heterogenous
sources through which Zionism as a modern nationalist vision was constructed vis-à-vis its others, including a turn toward reclaiming what was identified as a lost character from the ancient past.

In this vein, Zionism adopted the use of the term “Hebrew” (ivri) which was associated with the Biblical past, and which was used as both noun and adjective; “thus, the Hebrew culture celebrated the emergence of ‘Hebrew youth,’ ‘Hebrew work,’ ‘Hebrew guards,’ ‘Hebrew labor union,’ ‘Hebrew literature,’ ‘Hebrew schools,’ ‘Hebrew language,’ and other such manifestations of its growing distance from traditional Jewish culture” (26). All of these characteristics, imbued with the idea of the “new Hebrew” that was also carrying with it the ancient past in counter to the more recent past of exile, were condensed into the figure of the Sabra.

The Sabra became a mythological – and necessarily also archetypal – figure that forms a solid mold by which the Israeli-born would be shaped. The superior Sabra is characterized not only by what he possesses, but also by that which he does not have: he has no fear, weakness, or timidity; he has none of the exilic spirit [galutiyut]/ He is the product of the Land of Israel, the outcome of generations’ hopes, and he stands in contrast to the Jew of Exile. He is Hebrew and not Jew, and he is to put an end to the humiliation of his fathers. Anything that the Jew has lacked he has: strength, health, labor, return to nature, deep-rootedness, and a little of the peasant’s slowness and heaviness. (Rubinstein in Zerubavel, 26-27)

The figure of the Sabra thus signified, as Zerubavel and others have pointed out, a remaking of the Jew in opposition to the stereotype of the diasporic Jew. What Zerubavel points out, however, is that this ideal was not only informed by modern nationalisms, but also drew on Biblical narratives. This is important because it draws attention to the fact that the messianic narrative of return was not articulated only in terms of a spiritual Zionism, but rather was also integrated into Herzl’s political Zionism, and relatedly, into the “muscular Zionism” of Max Nordau. Relatedly, the ideal of the New Jew was defined
not only in opposition to the diasporic Jew, as much Hebrew literature and early Israeli textbooks in the first half of the 1900s suggested, in the voices of Zionist leaders and writers such as Ben-Gurion, Ya’acov Zerubavel, and Hayim Bialik among others (Zerubavel 1995). Rather, the new Jew both defined itself in opposition to the diasporic Jew and Jewish tradition, and, as Zerubavel also points out, relied on Jewish tradition as a legitimizing framework for the New Jew (1995, 21).

The figure of the “new Jew” was also informed by Europe’s political and social context in the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, specifically by German nationalism and by Nordau’s vision of the “New Jew” in the context of the “degeneration” that he called the malady of modernism. While Herzl’s writing and speeches placed Zionism in terms of a Kantian political framework and in terms of the

---

1 Zerubavel quotes here from Bialik, widely considered “Israel’s national poet” (see Segal 2004 for an analysis of the significance of Israel having a “national poet” but not a “national novelist.” See my chapter three for a consideration of how the differences within and between poetry, literature and Hebrew vernacular can be understood within the project of Hebrew revitalization and within the wider project of Zionist state making). Zerubavel quotes from Bialik’s famous poem “be-Ir ha-Harega” (In the city of slaughter), written after the pogrom in Kishinev in 1903, pointing to the poem and its reception as an example of the condemnation of the passivity and weakness of Jews in the diaspora:

Come, now, I will bring thee to their lairs  
The privies, jakes and pigpens where the heirs  
Of Hasmoneans lay, with trembling knees,  
Concealed and cowering – the sons of the Maccabees!  
The seed of saints, the scions of the lions . . .  
Who crammed by scores in all the sanctuaries of their shame,  
So sanctified My name!  
It was the flight of mice they fled  
The scurrying of roaches was their flight;  
They died like dogs, and they were dead!  (Bialik in Zerubavel 2005, 20)

Later in this chapter I will address the significance of the comparisons of Jews and others to animals in terms of the figure of Jew-Israeli.
ideals of French republicanism, Nordau’s Zionist vision emphasized the figure of the Jew as a modern liberal subject, informed by German nationalist ideals. For Nordau, the “New Jew” was a revitalized Jew set in contrast to the diasporic Jew but also set against what he saw as the degenerative effects of modernization more broadly.

Max Nordau was born in Budapest in 1849, to Orthodox Jewish parents. He later moved to Berlin and then to Paris, and identified as a German. He married a Protestant woman, and believed in assimilation and European Enlightenment. He became a physician and in Paris, like Freud, studied with Charcot, who informed Nordau’s critique of what he viewed as the ills of Europeran modernism. In his early work Nordau identified forms of art, literature, and what were understood as disorders of the nervous system such as hysteria and melancholia as symptomatic of what he called the degeneration of society.

In Degeneration (1968), Nordau presents a lengthy critique of what he considered to be the ills of modernization and European industrialization. After 535 pages, in a section entitled “Prognosis,” he writes:

Our long and sorrowful wandering through the hospital – for as such we have recognized, if not all civilized humanity, at all events the upper stratum of the population of large towns to be – is ended. We have observed the various embodiments which degeneration and hysteria have assumed in art, poetry, and philosophy of our times. We have seen the mental disorder affecting modern society manifesting itself chiefly in the following forms: Mysticism, which is the expression of the inaptitude for attention, for clear thought and control of the emotions, and has for its cause the weakness of the higher cerebral centres; Ego-mania, which is an effect of faulty transmission by the sensory nerves, of obtuseness in the centres of perception, of aberration of instincts from a craving for sufficiently strong impressions, and of the great predominance of organic sensations over representative consciousness; and false Realism, which proceeds from confused aesthetic theories, and characterizes itself by pessimism and the irresistible tendency to licentious ideas, and the most vulgar and unclean modes of expression. In all three tendencies we detect the same ultimate elements, viz., a brain incapable of normal working, thence feebleness of will, inattention,
predominance of emotion, lack of knowledge, absence of sympathy or interest in the world and humanity, atrophy of the notion of duty and morality. From a clinical point of view somewhat unlike each other, these pathological pictures are nevertheless only different manifestations of a single and unique fundamental condition, to wit, exhaustion, and they must be ranked by the alienist in the genus melancholia, which is the psychiatric symptom of an exhausted central nervous system. (536)

Todd Samuel Presner (2003) has suggested that Nordau’s suggested solution to degeneracy, “while definitely motivated by a desire for the preservation of traditional, classical values and forms, does not look backward to reclaim a lost character but rather prognosticates an evolutionary break, imbued with the ideology of social Darwinism, in which the ‘degenerates’ will perish and those who are strong, disciplined, and well-adapted will come forward to preside over a new world” (276).² Although I share Presner’s view that Nordau advocated for an evolutionary break, informed by an ideology of social Darwinism, I read Nordau in his Zionist writings as not only motivated by a desire for classical values and forms, but also by a desire to reclaim a lost character, even if at the same time he wants to also shed something from the past.

The figure of the New Jew drew on both old and the not yet in an attempt to reclaim a Jewish character from the past, before the European nation-state, and in response to anti-semitism and its representations of the Jew in Europe. Zionism places this figure, however, in the present and in the time of the nation-state. But I suggest that those identifying with this figure – the “New Jews,” Sabras, and then Israelis more generally, are placed in a relation of identification with the past and the future through

² See also Presner 2007a for a more elaborate consideration of Nordau’s muscle Jew. See Presner 2007b for an interesting analysis of the relation between the categories of Jew and German through a focus on the technology of trains in the context of German modernity.
this figure. The symptoms that Nordau analyzed as a sign of denegeration, Freud
analyzed as symptoms of the pressures of civilization and its discontents. The “New Jew”
was also placed in relation to an elsewhere of exile, so its representation of belonging,
being at home, of a “return” from exile, has been defined through its relation to itself as a
figure coming from elsewhere in a way that is essential to its constitution as being “at
home.”

The figure of the New Jew, as a figure of physical strength, rooted in the soil,
youthful, willing to sacrifice for revolutionary ideals, and as fighting back, as many have
noted, echoed anti-Semitic stereotypes in this figure’s rejection of the Jew as weak,
wandering, uprooted, timid, and as not fully human. I suggest in what follows that in
terms of understanding Israeli contexts, the fact that the figure of the “New Jew” was set
in opposition to the Jew figured as animal and as not fully human in 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th}
century European anti-Semitism is significant for understanding the relations between the
constitution of the human, sexual difference, and economic relations in terms of
humanism’s afterlives.

**********

On Holocaust Remembrance Day in the spring of 2008, I sit for a few hours on
plastic crates outside David and Levana’s store, talking with Shuli. Levana offers me
coffee, as she and her husband David usually do when there is a pause in the stream of
customers coming in and out to shop, to settle debts, or just to say hello. Shuli asks if I
want a cigarette. The birds keep up a constant chatter in the background, accompanied by
the occasional cooing of pigeons. Sometimes Levana joins Shuli and I, inserting adamant
declarations and interruptions into our conversation. For a while the man in charge of the
neighborhood committee stops by and joins in too, not getting off his motorcycle, but
turning off the engine. Before he comes by, after Shuli started telling me about what
someone he was in the army with told him about surviving the Holocaust, and after he
and Levana share stories about Holocaust survivors and their stories in the neighborhood,
Shuli starts talking to me about when he was in Lebanon. When an Israeli says “when
they were in Lebanon” it means when they were in the army there. Shuli starts telling me
about a conversation he had with another soldier on Holocaust Remembrance Day when
he was doing his mandatory military service.

Shuli narrates, “So we started talking, it was Holocaust Remembrance Day, and
he started telling me about how in the concentration camp he was on Mengele’s table,
you know who Mengele was? And that he was going to be experimented on, that they
were going to cut pieces from his head and bring the skin of a dog to replace it with,”

“The skin of a dog?” I ask.

“the skin, skin of a dog.” Shuli says. “ ‘The things we experienced, the things
they did to people,’ he told me. ‘I was on the experimenting table but the camp was
liberated and I ran away.’ Shuli adds, “At one point I said to him, ‘tell me, why didn’t
you, why didn’t people fight back?’ He said ‘what fight back, everyone had weapons,
you did something and they could easily kill 100 people, just like that.’ He said ‘we
didn’t mind to die, but…I had a neighbor here, she and her sister lived there, they are
twins, one died, she said that for one slice of bread, that she finished and gave to her
sister half, bread, dry bread, they put her and her sister outside all night in the snow,
without clothes. He said, ‘Shuli, I got up in the morning, all white, they couldn’t move, in
the end friends came and washed them and put blankets on them, it was a miracle,’ he said, he didn’t know how it was possible. ‘The things they went through,’ he said.

I don’t know what to say, but say “It’s hard to comprehend,”

“It’s impossible to register something like that.” Shuli says. He continues, “And what a people, the Germans, a cultured people, how did they do such a thing? They behaved like humans are dogs…There was one guy, when I was doing military service, Gershon, he was the cook, also on Holocaust Remembrance Day, I asked him, tell me Gershon, how is it possible they did such things? And he said, I’ll tell you, also us, the Jews, deserve such a thing. Why? He told me, I had a store, for suits and things like that. He said, someone would come to try on a suit, a small thin man, say, he tried on a suit for a huge man, now what would Gershon do, puts a five mark note in the pocket of the suit, and the man looks in the mirror, pulls on the jacket a little bit, now the man puts his hand in and sees a five mark note, so he says I’ll take this suit, to himself he says, I’ve scored. He would pay for the suit, in the meantime Gershon before he gives him the suit takes the mark note back out, then the man goes home. He later has a wedding or such event, he takes out the suit to wear, and sees that the five marks aren’t there, someone asks him where did you buy the suit, he answers at the Jews, and the person says how they tricked you, they cheated you, where is the store. And they went out with their people, and what didn’t they do. You understand, it wasn’t just stam, without reasons.”

I ask, “You mean you’re suggesting that he said that there were reasons for why, that they would trick them,”

“Yes yes, they cheated them, all the Jewish business owners would cheat them,” Shuli answers.
“Why?” I ask.

“What why?” Shuli says.

“What did they do, the Jews?” I say.

Shuli explains, “Because the Jews thought they were smart… look I remember when I was in Iraq, when I was six, seven, seven, I came to Israel when I was young, my father, God bless his name, would go to the market, buy potatoes, onions, all kinds of fruit, fish, put it all in a basket and give it to an Arab who would carry it kilometers home, and he would give him a few grushim (cents). They were the slaves of the Jews. The Jews didn’t work in physical labor there. My father was the head of a print press there, with sixty Arab workers and he was the only Jew there. You understand?”

“So they lived well there,” I say.

“They lived well there, until Israel was established, a mess started, because of that we ran away,” Shuli explains.

“It wouldn’t have been better then if Israel hadn’t been established?” I ask.

“No,” Shuli says.

I go on, “For the Jews there, in Iraq, they lived well there,”

Shuli says, “They lived well there, but there isn’t trust with the Arabs, there’s isn’t trust in them, it would be enough one would turn against, and then neither Jews nor Arabs would live well… you understand? There is, there was the president of Egypt, Abdel Nasser, you know him, he was a dog of the dogs. Before ’67, a few months before, took the UN out of Sinai, closed the crossings, that no Israeli ship could go through, started a war, he said what we take by force, we take by force, no peace, no talks with the Jews, he wanted to eliminate us, they even got carts ready, that after the war they could
take us there, believe me, and I hear on the Arab radio, our forces have reached Beer Sheva, and I think, how is this possible, we are here in Sinai, and all of them you see, in underwear and undershirts, from where did they come, they brainwashed them. Then, Moshe Dayan was the Security Minister, so there was on Arab Radio a broadcast that the forces of Moshe Dayan are falling like flies,”

“Where did you hear this?,” I ask.

Shuli answers, “On the radio. We’re in the middle of the war, so we hear on the radio, you understand. So one of them asked, from where did they enter? What can I tell you, for kilometers, kilometers, kilometers, on the road, on both sides, all their trucks, and tanks are going up in fire, the soldiers thrown like this, thrown all over the road, they were killed, they were all over the road,”

“What kind of influence did this, it’s something very intense to see,” I fumble for words.

Shuli responds, “Until then, I had never seen a dead person in my life, in my life I never had seen a dead person,”

“Until then?” I ask.

“Until then,” he answers. “In the war,” he went on, “the minute we crossed the border, all of a sudden I saw two, I did like this [he puts his arm over his eyes], I couldn’t see it, my friend said to me what are you doing like that, if you continue like that you’ll be the first killed. He told me, there isn’t fooling around here, if they shoot you what are you going to do? I told him, really, you are right.”

“But how did this influence you?” I ask him.
Shuli says, “influence me? For months after the war, you know, I was like a crazy person. I would all the time meshachzer from planes and tanks and the smell of burned meat.”

Levana came and sat down with us, hearing this part of the conversation and joining in, finishes Shuli’s sentence with him.

She says, “burned, that’s right. You know, that sometimes, there are people who suffer from stress, stress is anxiety, and smell, stam an example, when he goes in to a place, and smells something that returns him, and then he suffers it again,”

Shuli says, “Yes, yes, yes, yes,”

Levana says, “It’s horrible, just horrible. I remember one time, I saw someone, right that sometimes there are people who burn the chicken on the,”

Shuli joins in, saying “Yes, yes,”

Levana goes on, “he got into a state, we understood that something wasn’t okay there. Poor thing. It’s not easy for the Jews.”

There is a pause, and then we hear some kind of music come on.

Levana shakes her head, saying, “On a day like this they put that on, disgusting,”

“What is it?” I ask.

Levana explains, “the call to come for the class there. It’s coming from there.”

She gets up to go in to the store.

I turn back to Shuli, “So, for months after it stayed with you,”

He says, “Of course. You see, in the day the Arabs would run away, to the mountains, in the night they would come to where they had a car, with a knife or a comb, and they would stick it in the radiator to drink water. I swear to you, this is how we, there
was a camp of prisoners. So, I and two other soldiers were there, I don’t know, to watch over them. I took out an orange that I had. I peeled it. And everyone is there, their eyes blindfolded, their hands tied,”

“And they could smell it,” I say.

“Did I tell you this already?” Shuli asks.

“No, no, I was just saying, the smell of an orange is so strong.”

“Until now I remember the names. One said, ‘Shaaaama’, the other says, ‘mmmm,’ he says ‘you smell, the smell of an orange?’ ” Shuli changes his voice and tone as he repeats what he remembers them saying, as if he really still can hear them talking. He goes on, “I couldn’t eat. I gave one of them half, and the other one half. I had more oranges. I said, what, this is a soul, what, they are prisoners, what more.”

Levana has joined us again and cuts in fervently; “in a second you turn into a humane human, (benadam enoshi) you understand?”

“Yes,” I say.

Levana adds, “You don’t have a choice,”

Shuli contines, “I gave him his half like this, why, because his hands were tied, he said to me Allah Haliq, Allah Haliq, May God protect you, he said, and I,”

Levana interrupts, saying, “They can do that, and then in a second they can turn on you, take out a knife and attack him,”

“Sure,” Shuli says.

“Okay,” I say.

Levana says emphatically, “It happens, it happens and a half! Let me explain something to you,”
Shuli interrupts, “Levana, excuse me, let me tell you something, I was in the first Lebanon War, in 1982. They fired an RPG on our tank, we were in a curfew, we’re closing an intersection, it was a hot day, hamsin, maybe it was also Shabbat, even a dog isn’t out. We, me and another one, Felix. All of a sudden, we see an old woman,”

“Pay attention,” Levana says to me, with a tone of anticipation.

Shuli continues, “she wants to fall, now I have a chair, my friend has a chair, she is walking across the crossing, I got up, caught her and took her to sit on the chair, took out some water, we had two bottles of water, she is looking at the sky, she started to say blessings, I know Arabic, but I made myself out as if I didn’t understand. I accompanied her a little, she went on into their villa, 20 minutes didn’t pass Levana before she came out with a tray,

“with coffee,” Levana says.

Shuli corrects her, “Not coffee, lemonade. My friend said, Shuli, be careful. I said, with this kind of thing, there is no such “be careful.” I am drinking! And she, from this she had understood something, and she took a glass and drank some herself, and left a glass for him. And I started to smile, ya’ani, I understand you, we drank, shukran and we ate, she then brought coffee, baklawa, and all kinds of cookies. Really. God protect you.”

“You know,” Levana cuts in again to say emphatically to me (in Hebrew there are two ways of saying “you know.” Here Levana said it as an imperative, a command, more like, “know it you!” and not a rhetorical or casual offhand question, “you know?”), “they suffered a lot there! They would die for us to be there!”
Shuli says, “You know what the Christians did there to them, to the Palestinians? They would rape them, the girls, come, and take a girl,“

Levana interrupts, saying, “Like what you see that they did in Rwanda, they did there in Lebanon the same thing.”

Shuli says, “Levana, in Sidon, now a father watches over his daughter and all that, only say to him a word, and he rapes the girl next to her mother, one said to me, I am ashamed to tell you what happened here, the screams of the girls, poor things. Now when we entered, the Christians started, took revenge, and the Palestinians would come to us and ask us to protect them,”

Levana explains, “It’s very complex, these things, it’s very difficult, on one side you want to be humane, on the other side if you are humane in a second you can lose your life, so it’s very confusing,”

“It seems very difficult,” I say.

Levana nods, “It’s very difficult, it’s very difficult,”

I ask, “But there aren’t incidents of rape also from Israeli soldiers?”

“There is no way. In such a situation, there is no way,” Levana answers.

I ask, “But how is that possible, if there is rape inside the country?”

Levana says, “In such a situation, there is no way. Pay good attention, there is no way.”

I say, “How do you know, it seems like in every army there would be,“

“There isn’t. Sweetheart, listen, let me explain something to you,” Levana says. “I can tell you, maybe they take a guy, and give him a beating that maybe he didn’t deserve, this happens.”
Shuli asks Levana, “What is she asking about? Rape?”

Levana explains, “If our soldiers rape Arab women. In such a,”

Shuli says, “No, let me explain. Before you cross the border, you get guiderules. Not to loot, you know what that is? Not to go into the houses and take things, televisions, money. I’ll tell you a story about myself. And not to rape. Someone who rapes, like this and like this, you get a military trial, not a civilian trial. It’s even more strict. I’ll tell you a story. We, Levana, we entered a house in Sidon, doing a search, looking for weapons, and I opened a cupboard, and see bracelets, bracelets from gold. Now my commander is with me, I know him for 15 years, he tells me, close the cupboard, and the drawer, and go outside. Now, he knows Zehava (Shuli’s wife), every year, millium, we meet in a bar, you know, almost like family. He tells me, “Close the drawer!” He takes out his weapon and points it at me and says “Close the door!” I went outside. He said to me you want to argue, I will put the rifle into your throat.”

Levana says, “Yes, yes,”

Shuli continues, “We sat outside and smoked a cigarette, and he said to me, tell me, do you want to be a soldier, or a terrorist?”

Levana cuts in saying, again emphatic, “We’re not like them.”

Shuli continues with his story, “Tell me! He said to me, Listen, we’ll go on vacation, we’ll go to Haifa, I will take you to a jewelry store, whatever you will want from there I will buy for you, from my money….So you know, I calmed down. There was an Arab woman, Palestinian, one time, also at a checkpoint, I asked her if she had a lemon, and she brought lemons, every lemon was like this (he makes a shape with his hands to show how big they were), I’d never seen lemons like that. Every day in the morning, she would
bring plates of figs, Levana, figs like this. She asked, just do me a favor, do a security round at night, come by my house, we are afraid of the Phalangot…”

Levana then starts telling a story, before she goes back in the store. Later Shuli and I keep talking, and the head of the neighborhood committee stops by and joins in the conversation for a little bit.

In Israel one repeatedly hears characterizations of Israeli-Jews as both tough and violent, and as fragile and sorrowful over how they sometimes have to be tough and violent. The phrase “soldiers who shoot and cry” (which in Hebrew rhymes) is based in one form of this dual characterization, which is used in a derogatory way by some leftists to characterize Israeli soldiers. A slightly altered version of this chant is also frequently used in anti-war and anti-occupation protests, where protestors chant lo yoreem ve lo bochim, mesarveem leheeyot oyveem (we don’t cry, and we don’t shoot, we refuse to be enemies). Slightly differently, Jewish-Israelis also move from self characterization as having been treated like animals, to the characterization of Palestinians and Arabs as animal. The Israeli-Jew is presented as a character whose traits shift depending on historical circumstance, place and time.

The way in which Zionism retains notions of a diasporic Jew with the characterization of Israeli-Jew in terms of the new Jew reveals not a repressed trauma of the Holocaust in any simple way, but rather suggests a notion of the Jew that is self-differential not only in terms of narratives of origin, territorialization, and language, but also in character. Such an understanding of the Jew suggests a different response to the history and language of dehumanization, including that which is part of anti-Semitism, than the response that situates dehumanization, and the ideal of humanity, simply in
moralizing terms in which animalization is bad and humanization is good. Hopefully
needless to say, I do not mean by this that the violence that often comes with
dehumanization, or animalization, is justified or acceptable, let alone that it should be an
ideal. What I do want to suggest is that considering how the notion of the human is
constituted in relation to those who have been historically placed in liminal positions with
the human, positions in which they are treated and characterized as not fully human, is
necessary for efforts to understand Israeli contexts in terms of a concept of the political.
Here I suggest that the Israeli-Jew’s treatment of Palestinians in this regard, and
characterization of Israeli-Jews of their own history in which they reference having been
treated like animals, reveals how the figure of the Jew is defined in terms of internal
difference that suggests that the characterization of the Jew as animal, or as not fully
human, leads to a demand to analyze the figure of the Jew as a self-differential figure in
terms of a concept of the archive in terms of both temporality and place.

Temporality becomes visible as important because an analysis of Israeli contexts
in terms of the Jew poses a question about how to understand expressions of the Jew as
both diasporic (with all the characterizations it carries – weak, bookish, pale, excluded
from European modernity, effeminate masculinity, victimized, humiliated, backwards,
wandering) and as the “New Jew” (with all the characterizations it carries, including
strong, rooted in the soil, healthy through physical labour, modern, dignified, included in
European modernity, settled), in expressions of “Israeli-Jew.” The expression of Jew in
terms of the ways in which diasporic Jew and New Jew are defined coexist in Israel;
tough Israeli soldiers cry about what they are forced to do, women are both subjects
defined as equal to men and as objects, Israeli soldiers are accused of being Nazis by both
right and left, and the Jew is both European and Arab, speaker of Yiddish and of Arabic, of dehumanized and like and animal, defender of dehumanized, and dehumanizer of others.

In “Jews, Lice, and History,” Hugh Raffles (2007) suggests that the Jews continue to be haunted in the present by the ways in which they were hunted in the past, and he emphasizes this past in terms of the ways in which Jews were identified as insects and animal. Raffles centers his discussion around the figure of Alfred Nossig, in part in order to highlight the ways in which Zionism was a dynamic and “polyvalent ideology,” and to ask how both Nossig and Zionism could nonetheless have come to, as Raffles puts it, “meet such a pitiable fate” (566). Alfred Nossig was a Galician Jew who became a Zionist, who was active politically and who also was a writer, sculptor, spokesman for Polish nationalism, and vocal in the attempt to make a “Jewish social science.” He was arrested at the age of 79 in the Warsaw Ghetto by the Jewish Fighting Organization who executed him for treason. Raffles focuses on Nossig as a pivotal figure in a wider discussion about ideologies of scientific social improvement, regeneration, racism and the nation.

Through a focus on how the Jews continue to struggle with the anti-Semitic identifications of the Nazis that Raffles suggests haunt them in the present, Raffles tries to understand the question of how it is possible that Zionism and Nossig ended up as they did. Quoting a speech by an SS commander to his officers in 1943 in the Ukraine, Raffles writes:

Jews are still struggling with the identifications bequeathed by the Nazis, damned to judge and be judged in terms of loss, guilt, trauma, and redemption. Hunted in the past, haunted in the present. ‘Antisemitism is exactly the same as delousing,’ says the Schutzstaffel (SS) Reichsfuhrer. And though at times he could strain for
the apposite euphemism, Himmler was famous for choosing his words with precision. Antsemitism is not like delousing; nor is it merely a form of delousing. It is exactly the same as delousing. Does he mean that the Jews actually are lice? Or only that the same measures should be taken to eradicate both evils? (Ibid. 522)

Raffles goes on to offer an account of how Jews were figured as not fully human in specific European contexts. Referencing both rightist and leftist political projects, including Marxist and capitalist ideologies, Raffles presents multiple examples of analogies to parasites and to animals, and argues that an understanding of the shift from comparing Jews to animals and parasites by analogy to treating them as such, making them become animal and parasite, is what can allow for an understanding of the fate of the Jews. He writes:

Parasites drain the lifeblood from the body politic – blood figured as money form a body figured as a nation. But in order for this commonplace to sustain political violence a decisive metamorphosis has to take place: a people must become vermin in fact as well as analogy, the naturalistic metaphor must be literalized in ‘the real objects of science.’ Explaining this shift is at the heart of an understanding of the fate of the Jews, who, after all, will be killed like lice – literally – with the same routinized indifference and, in vast numbers, with the same technology (Ibid. 528).

Raffles suggests that “there is more here than dehumanization by association. The parasite takes us closer to the making of difference, not simply to the patrolling of the borders, but to the situated emergence of the human that takes place in conjunction with the making of the animal” (Ibid. 526). Raffles suggests that three different ideologies converged in the figure of the Jewish parasite: modern anti-Semitism, populist anticapitalism, and biologistic social science (Ibid. 527). He draws attention to how the term “parasite” has been traced to Greek comedy prior to its use in both racialized discourse and in biology; in Greek comedy it was used as a term for “a stock character…
who sparred Wittily with host and guests intent on extracting humiliation in return for a meal,” and then it entered into European venacular via the use of classical Greek texts. “Parasite” then lost its comedic quality while its moralizing significations were emphasized, and it was at this point, Raffles tells us, that the term entered into 18th century sciences such as botany, zoology, and biology. Raffles draws here on Alex Bein’s historical tracing of the term parasite as it enters into political-philosophical discourse with an association with what Marx called the classe sterile, composed of merchants and manufacturers. Bein writes

‘The Jew, decried since the Middle Ages as a blood sucker and exploiter of his ‘host nation,’ [now] made to bear the added burden of the odium of capitalism, always and everywhere regarded as an alien and belonging according to the race theory of the antisemites, to an inferior unproductive race – who else would fit the descriptive term ‘parasite’ better?’ (Ibid. Bein in Raffles, 528).

Raffles emphasize that it is not only the Jews were treat as if they were animals, but that they actually came to occupy the place of animal and were treated as animals. He points out that this was the case prior to the Nazis, and situates such dehumanization in historical and colonial context. While he makes reference to sexuality in relation to these histories in which human is made into animal, it is not clear what, if any, significance he understands it, as well as the specificity of historical, colonial and racialized contexts, to have. He writes:

Although the Nazis imposed the borders with unprecedented ferocity, they did not initiate the expulsion of the Jews from the kingdom of humanity. Just as the practices of modern German anti-Semitism were directly connected to colonial technologies developed in Africa and Asia, the ontologies proposed by Judeophobia, a religio-cultural racism that reaches back beyond medieval Europe, were deeply tied to the logics and practices of an emergent imperial politics of race and difference. In early modern France, for example, ‘since coition with a Jewess is precisely the same as if a man should copulate with a dog,’ Christians who had heterosexual sex with Jews could be prosecuted for the capital crime of
sodomy (the peccatum gravissimum that encompassed both homosexual sex and intercourse with animals) and burned alive with their partners – ‘such persons in the eye of the law and our holy faith differ[ing] in no wise from beasts’ (who were also subject to judicial execution). (Ibid. 526)

Raffles goes on to reference Agamben, suggesting that Agamben usefully describes how two impure beings are made, both of them part animal and part human. Both are historical products Raffles suggests, of the practices that he discusses in terms of Jews, lice, and 19th and 20th century Europe. The first of these beings is “formed by the incorporation of the animal that lies beyond the human, brings the slave, barbarian, and foreigner to the doorstep of humanity, ‘figures of the animal in human form.’ The other emerges as an exclusion from humanity of the animal that is always already within,’ the non-man produced within the man,’ the parasite, the corrosive trace of the animal inside” (Ibid. 527). Raffles offers an analysis of the figure of the Jew which relies on, rather than puts into question, the biopolitical framework of which it became a part. As a result, the concept of race itself, and unsurprisingly, also of gender and the human, do not come into question.

Although Raffles doesn’t explicitly say so, he appears to hold the way in which what he calls a “race hierarchy” became cojoined with eugenics and “objectivist social engineering” responsible for the eventual horrors of the war, and perhaps, differently, for what he suggests are the horrors of Israeli Zionist politics. In other words, Raffles does not appear to be critical of the nation state model or different forms of liberalism on which it based. Ultimately, Raffles argues for the importance of trying to think about what he describes as a nation beyond race, in part by “recovering a moment when the joining of science and nation still generated excitement, a moment when – despite their
profound enmeshment in the logics of racial politics – intellectuals like Ahad Ha’am, Martin Buber, Judah Magnes, and Alfred Nossig were attempting to imagine a nation beyond race, thinking, as Levinas puts it, ‘after politics’” (Ibid. 565). Raffles emphasizes the importance of the fact that what “Jew” signifies has not been determined; “Who is to say what it means to act as a Jew when neither Jews nor antisemites can truly say what a Jew is? Who has the right to assume the burden of these awful histories?” (Ibid.). But Raffles also suggests a response to these questions and to these histories that is framed in terms of an attempt to restore humanity to the Jews, and to what has become of Zionism, rather than a response that pursue an understanding of how humanism’s human has been defined through the definition of the inhuman. I argue here that is only possible to suggest that racialization can be surpassed and overcome while restoring humanity to the dehumanized through overlooking the question of sexual difference, and that overlooking this question inevitably also makes it impossible to “move beyond race” because it retains a notion of the human which necessitates racialization through the suppression of sexual difference.

In Part IV, I explain why this is the case, through an analysis of Israeli-Jew in terms of a concept of the archive. Israeli-Jew, by bringing together two different origin narratives, forces into view a question about the definition of sexual difference. Israeli-Jew situates the Jew as both inside and outside the liberal sovereign subject, as a prototype both of European enlightenment and as a figure excluded from and humiliated by European enlightenment frameworks, as both abject and as sovereign who can declare a state of exception to sovereign rule, and as the beacon and example of sovereign rule, with “the most moral army in the world.” In this sense, Israel illustrates what Khanna
(2009) has described as “the differentiated ways in which life becomes disposable in the state of exception even as it becomes the rule” (190). Such an understanding of Israeli-Jew suggests a departure from the desire to achieve the status of the human in the terms of European modernity’s human. Israeli-Jew is revealed as a subject whose claims to sovereignty are undone by its own relations of difference internal to itself. Israeli-Jew can thus be understood as a subject in excess of itself, who reveals the impossibility of full subjectivity and sovereignty and the manner in which claims to autonomous sovereignty are dependent on the abjection and exclusion of others. It is here that I find useful Khanna’s (2007; 2009) suggestion to replace the concept of dignity with that of disposability.³

³ Khanna (2009) points out that in Agamben’s concept of naked life as the threshold of human and animal there is an annihilation of difference and that he fails to adequately address an analysis of other forms of “naked life” such as those in contexts of colonialism and slavery, and to address differentiation within his example of choice, the European concentration camp. One of the implications of such a failure is the alignment of naked or bare life with a space that is situated as outside of the political. In situating bare life as existing in the threshold between man and animal, Agamben places the animal as outside the space of the political human. Khanna points out that the breakdown of any private realm is also present in contexts of slavery and colonialism, and she shows how the latter raise different spatial and temporal insights in relation to the effects of modernity. Thinking about those figures who are “outside” the political even though they are technically “inside” the spatial limits of the polis draws attention to “the differentiated ways in which life becomes disposable in the state of exception even as it becomes the rule” (190). And, she adds, “to focus only on the abjected is to fail to understand the many mechanisms through which the threat of the suspension of the rule of law leaves one in a state of what Foucault describes as permanent war. ‘Disposability,’ in all its ramifications, offers a way to access this state of permanent war” (Ibid.). By suggesting to replace the concept of dignity with that of disposability, Khanna highlights how not only capitalism, liberalism, and human rights discourse, but also classic Marxism, all differently share a humanist concept of the subject as self-same, in which difference is not recognized as internally differential. I read Khanna here as thus building on, but also marking a departure from Spivak’s (1985) analysis of Marx in terms of the question of affective labor and in relation to postcolonial contexts.
By suggesting to replace the concept of dignity with that of disposability, Khanna highlights how not only capitalism, liberalism, and human rights discourse, but also classic Marxism, all differently share a humanist concept of the subject as self-same, in which difference is not recognized as internally differential. An analysis of Israeli-Jew challenges the assumptions of such humanism by revealing how the processes of racialization that are part of European modernity are tied both to colonial and imperial economic systems and the suppression of sexual difference. As a subject in excess of itself, Israeli-Jew challenges capitalism’s concealment of its reliance on the subject, most significantly the worker, as being what Gayatri Spivak (1985) has called “super-adequate to itself.” An analysis of Israeli-Jew as superadequate to itself in the sense that Spivak outlines in her discussion about the concept of value in capitalism, reveals the ways in which sexual difference and racialization are imbricated in one another in humanism’s production of the concept of the human.

In her analysis of the production of value in capitalism, Spivak (Ibid.) points out that labour-power is not work (labour) itself, but is the possibility that the subject is more than adequate to itself. By more than adequate, Spivak means that the worker is not like other commodities, in the sense that the use of the worker creates a greater value than the worker itself costs (1985, 73). She rereads the chain between value, money and capital by adding the category of labor at the beginning. In doing so, she shows how the concept of use-value is a back formation that comes into conceptualization only after and through labour-power. As a result, use-value can no longer function as a concept of origin on which value can be founded; value cannot any longer be misrecognized as a representation of labour, but rather is made visible as a differential. Spivak points out that
one possibility of use-value can be that of the worker “wishing to consume the (affect of the) work itself,” and that this possibility makes the predication of the subject as super-adequate to itself indeterminate. In other words, the material value of the subject which is in excess of itself cannot be understood simply as an excess of surplus labor beyond what is socially necessary labor. Instead, because the subject might wish to consume the affect of the work itself, the element of desire is brought in to an understanding of labour-value which makes it impossible to separate use-value from labour-power in the generation of value that is super-adequate to itself. Spivak thus shows how capitalism simultaneously relies on the worker as a subject who is super-adequate to him or herself, and conceals the subject as such in order that the production of capital can be understood as a contractual relation between autonomous, rational and independent subjects. The fact that the worker is super-adequate to him or herself, and that value is thus a differential that exists only through relations of labour-power, leads Spivak to emphasize the differential ways in which people, including women, are impacted by the logic of capitalism. But Spivak nonetheless seems to retain a humanist understanding of the subject in a Marxist feminism that seems to place the racialized postcolonial subject as interchangeable with the gendered postcolonial subject. As I go on to explain in the next chapter, an analysis of Israeli-Jew brings into view how European modernity’s humanism places sexual difference under erasure through processes of racialization and the displacement of sexual difference as a difference between bodies rather than between the production of subjectivity and the alterity of the other, manifest in the corporeal and sensorial.
Chapter Five
Archive, Israeli-Jew, and the Time of Sexual Difference
(Or Autobiography Without Confession)

Of course, the question of a politics of the archive is our permanent orientation here…This question will never be determined as one political question among others. It runs through the whole of the field and in truth determines politics from top to bottom as res publica.

Jacques Derrida

“Remember Israel,” the high school teacher commands the solemn audience at her school’s annual Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony commemorating the Jews killed in the Holocaust. “Once we were 12 tribes, now it seems like we are more than two thousand,” a taxi driver laments to me. “Ben Gurion always said this should be a state of law and not of Halakah (Jewish law),” former education minister and political veteran Shulamit Aloni insists as she vehemently denounces Israel as discriminatory and ethnocentric. In Israel, the Jew is defined both as diasporic and as a product of modern European enlightenment, both in need of defense and as defender of the weak. Israel refrains from officially establishing its boundaries, a military occupation stretches into its fifth decade, the country is described as Europe in the Middle East, and does not yet have a constitution. In court cases as dramatic as the trial of Yigal Amir, the Israeli Jew who assassinated former Prime Minister Rabin, there is an ambivalent compromise between Jewish Halakah and secular state law. A female Palestinian judge convicts and sentences a Jewish Israeli demonstrator to 100 hours of community service for refusing Israeli
military orders to leave the roof of a Palestinian house slated for annexation in the West Bank. Settlement construction continues unabated, Israeli missiles kill and maim Palestinians on the beach in Gaza, Israeli doctors treat the wounded in hospitals in Beer Sheva and Tel Aviv. The Israeli parliament frequently erupts into shouting matches between religious, secular, Arab, left and right wing parties, a separation barrier is built and Jewish Israeli demonstrators side with Palestinians to face off weekly against the Israeli soldiers defending it. Women are required to serve in the military, and there are major campaigns to keep images of women out of any public advertising in Jerusalem.

---

1 These differences are defined as contradictions across the political spectrum, including by those otherwise critical of liberal politics, including Yitzhak Laor, one of Israel’s most well known literary critics. One case in point is his commentary about Israel’s “Operation Cast Lead” in Gaza in relation to official Israel responses to films about politics in Israel. In an editorial in Ha’Aretz Laor writes:

Had the Palestinians produced a film in which Israeli doctors threw a wounded Palestinian out of the hospital, after which policemen dumped the injured man out of a patrol car to die in the dark, the prime minister would have denounced his subjects for inciting against their masters. Had an Israeli film director made a documentary about such behavior toward a Palestinian prisoner, whose medical care at Sheba Medical Center was unfunded, he would have been subjected to demonstrations by our local censorship organization, Im Tirtzu, while the culture minister would have advised him to make a film about the way Palestinian children are treated in our hospitals.” Laor goes on to say that indeed, the latter film has already been made, and writes with sarcasm that it “beautifully documented the wonderful dedication of the doctors, who treat sick children from Gaza just as they treat sick children from Israel. (Laor 2012)

Laor goes on to detail what the film does not acknowledge; the ways in which Israeli policy has prevented and destroyed Palestinian efforts to develop their own medical infrastructure.

http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/then-came-cast-lead-in-gaza-1.415481 The co-existence of these dual “commandments,” one reflecting the principles of a universalist humanism and the other the idea that Jewish specificity requires certain “national security measures” are one of the objects of analysis of this chapter, and of the dissertation more generally. I am suggesting that these apparent contradictions are not in fact really contradictions, but a symptom of the violence inherent to the framework of liberalism.
Political pundits, talk show hosts, politicians, military experts, comedy shows, professors, taxi drivers, friends and neighbors all have something to say about “the demographic problem,” and there is no consistent definition of how “Jewish” is to be defined. In the street and the home a diversity of religions, ethnicities, political viewpoints and languages brush up against one another and within one another, and Hebrew itself is full of the traces of other languages, including Yiddish and Arabic. Zionism’s “New Jew,” the Sabra, named after the Hebrew word for the prickly cactus with a soft inside, is defined as both tough and vulnerable.

In this chapter, I will argue that the tensions between these contrasts in Israel can be understood through an analysis of Israeli-Jew in terms of the two archival relations out of which Israeli-Jew emerges. The many different ways in which Jew is positioned in relation to Israel, together with the material and social landscape there, led me to think about the relation between Jew and Israeli in terms of temporality. Chronologically, Israel, and thus Israeli, follows Jew, in that the country was officially established in 1948 following roughly half a century of Zionist organizing and the Holocaust of approximately two thirds of Europe’s Jewish population. But, as I have suggested, contemporary Israel is also defined through reference to the land of Israel in a biblical past. Jew in this sense follows Israel, as it is the place in which the Jew emerged and to which the diasporic Jew toasts every Jewish New Year with the words “next year in Jerusalem.” The result of the combination of these two narratives through which Jewish-Israeli origin is referenced – one Biblical and the other modern – is a plurality of voices
that bear echoes of one another. Historical accounts of the past in Israel make reference to these two narratives both in terms of the origin of Israel and its Jewish inhabitants, and in terms of these accounts being instructive for interpreting and judging the present. In this sense, these accounts of the past and their effects in contemporary Israel can be understood in terms of a concept of the archive.

The word archive, Derrida (1996) reminds us, bears within it the root arkhe, which names at once the commencement and the commandment. This name apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to nature or history, there where things commence – physical, historical, or ontological principle – but also the principle according to the law, there where men and gods command, there where authority, social order are exercised, in this place from which order is given – nomological principle. (1)

The place from which order is given is thus also a time of origin, the moment when order is given through naming with language. This order is passed on through language, narrative, and in practices and sentiments passed on through rites and tradition. Israeli contexts situate the Jew as occupying two positions in relation to its own origin in the sense of a place from which order is given. Israel retains an understanding of the diasporic Jew as produced through a relation of difference to itself through language via the Old Testament and God. But by redefining the Jew as the “New Jew,” Israel also situates the Jew in relation to a meta-narrative of the universal human subject based on an Aristotelian metaphysics of presence. The figure of the Jew in Israel thus forces the sovereignty of God and the sovereignty of the universal human as a fraternal figure of the state to put each other into question.
In this chapter I show how the Jew in Israel thus suggests a rethinking of the human in terms of its relation to language and temporality. The origin of the human in the declaration of God or in the division between a universal man and the difference of woman is replaced in Israel by the origin of the Jew in the declaration of God and the division between a universal man and the difference of the Jew. This encounter between two different references to origin raises the question of how to understand the figure of woman in terms of Israeli contexts. In my analysis of this understanding of origin and sexual difference as between man and woman or between God and Jew, I suggest an understanding of language in its relation to affect as the inaccessible site of origin of the human, an understanding which undoes the concept of the human itself as it has been defined through European modernity. This site of origin is wrought by the internal difference of the singular in terms that can be understood through the concept of “the differend,” the difference that has not yet been given signification in words.

Ultimately, I arrive at a concept of a political subject that is not based on claims to sovereignty and full representation in language. Such a subject suggests an understanding of sexual difference in terms of a relation to temporality, affect and the corporeal that threatens to undo the subject rather than as something that exists between differently sexualized and sexed subjects. This understanding of the subject helps to explain the production and coexistence of very different and sometimes oppositional treatments of Palestinian, woman, and homosexual in Israel. By showing the relation between the figures of Jew, woman, and European, I will argue that this analysis also points to the
violence imbedded in political frameworks based on the notion of a sovereign liberal subject; in other words, Israel’s apparent contradictions and violence can be understood not as a violation of liberal frameworks but as a symptom of the violence these frameworks produce.

**History and Memory: The Time of Fieldwork**

One afternoon in the summer of 2008, towards the end of my fieldwork, I was walking on the path between Ramat Yosef’s apartment buildings on the way to David and Levana’s store when, still too far away to properly make out, I saw a younger man helping an older man to slowly stand up from the bench where he had been sitting. As I got closer I realized it looked like Rafi and his caretaker. I had interviewed Rafi several months before. Rafi, whose name used to be Vita, was from Hungary. I had first heard about him as “the tampon man.” David and others in the neighborhood had told me that I should interview him because he had invented the tampon.

Rafi was born in 1909. When I visited him he had shared with me his apple mush – food that he said was good when you didn’t have any teeth left, but which he said also was delicious and so I must have some. He had also insisted on lending me socks to put on with my sandals, as it was too cold, according to him, to be going around with sandals and no socks. He had a sense of humor, telling me about the music he makes at his age, slowly standing up next to me to demonstrate the noise that his creaking joints make when he gets up. He put on a bit of a concert, standing up and sitting down repeatedly.
several times. He also told me about his experiences before, during, and after WWII.

About a very long march as a prisoner of war on a dirt road with mines on which people
and horses exploded in front of him. About the precise way they had to walk in rows so
that each row of men had to step in exactly the space between the footprints of the row in
front in case a mine had been missed. About the sound of the explosion when a mine was
triggered right in front of him. “I do not forget the sound it made,” he said to me
emphatically, in Hebrew still heavily accented by Hungarian, and in the slightly distorted
sounding speech of someone without teeth. He told me about the thirst and how they had
almost nothing to drink or to eat. About his relatives and a kapo and about people being
shot straight into their graves and about a child being bashed against a wall. And about
his invention of a tampon. We sat on a couch in his living room, which was crowded the
way some old peoples’ homes are with the accumulation of a lifetime of personal relics,
portraits and photographs on the walls, and he showed me some yellowed old Hungarian
newspaper clippings with articles and photos.

When I got to where he was at the bench I stopped and said hello, shaking hands
with the caretaker and then with Rafi. Rafi didn’t let go of my hand right away, holding
on to it while I asked them how they were. His caretaker asked him if he remembered me,

2 Kapo was the term used for concentration camp prisoners to whom the SS assigned the role of
supervisor; in return for carrying out tasks for the SS, the kapo were allowed some “privileges”
including avoiding the most arduous labour of the camp and avoidance of the gas chambers.
Kapos were often drawn from the non-Jewish segments of the camps’ prisoners, including
convicts, but there were also Jewish kapos. For an account of trials of kapos in Israel in the 1950s
and 1960s, see Ben-Naftali and Tuval (2006).
and I tried to remind him; “we had ice-cream, and apple, and you told me stories.” Rafi said he didn’t know if he knew me, and his caretaker reminded him saying, “you told her history, remember?” Rafi, standing bent over, peered up at me and asked, “what is history?” I said “that is a good question,” wondering if he was confused from old age. He looked at me and continued, “is it according to the clock or according to the stomach?” I laughed, a little bit taken aback. “According to the stomach” I answered. We then exchanged a few more words, and as we parted he said, “Take care of your stomach. It is important. I don’t know if it really helps.” His caretaker said to him, “yes, you took care of your stomach, I think it has helped.” Then Rafi said be healthy and all the best and I wished him the same. I walked away, wondering, what might it mean to think of history as “according to the stomach” rather than “according to the clock”?

In The Senses Still, C. Nadia Seremetakis (1994) writes about “the breast of Aphrodite.” This was the name by which the rodhakino peach was known. This was the

---

3 Thanks to Ellen Gray for introducing me to this book years ago, and to Louise Meintjes for reminding me of it more recently. See Gray 2005; Feld 1996; and Stewart 1996 for other ethnographies that attend to place, temporality and narrative through the sensory. The title of Seremetakis’ book references what she discusses in the book as a stillness in the material culture of historicity; those things, spaces, gestures, and tales that signify the perceptual capacity for elemental historical creation. Stillness is the moment when the buried, the discarded, and the forgotten escape to the social surface of awareness like life-supporting oxygen. It is the moment of exit from historical dust. (1994, 12)

Although I find Serematakis’ discussion on the sensory and its relation to history and memory compelling, I am interested in the movement and motion that seems to me to be a necessary part of the relation of history and memory with the sensory. It is the relation between stasis and
kind of peach with which she grew up in Greece, but which she never could find again by the time she was an adult; the peach seemed to have disappeared from the market, replaced by newer varieties. The rodhakino, she writes,

had a thin skin touched with fuzz, and a soft matte off-white color alternating with rosy hues… It was well rounded and smooth like a small clay vase, fitting perfectly into your palm. Its interior was firm yet moist, offering a soft resistance to the teeth. A bit sweet and a bit sour, it exuded a distinct fragrance. This peach was known as ‘the breast of Aphrodite’ (o msatos tis Afrodhitis). (Ibid. 1)

Seremetakis suggests that the absence of this peach is a double absence. It is not only the peach itself which disappeared, but that this absence also “reveals the extent to which the senses are entangled with history, memory, forgetfulness, narrative and silence” (2), an entanglement which she suggests has been forgotten. The rodhakino alluded to times when “the relation between food and the erotic was perhaps more explicit, named, and sacrilized” (2).” Seremetakis goes on to suggest that this relation is particular not only to food and the erotic, but also to the relation between the sensory, memory and representation more generally. Drawing on the work of Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch, she argues that modernity has effaced sensory memory, making the senses detached from each other and understood as utilitarian instruments and as objects of commodification, producing the senses as privatized sense organs. She suggests that paying attention to the sedimented sentiments in things, in sensory landscapes, and to the movement that seems to be at the heart both of a concept of the archive and in an understanding of subjectivity through psychoanalysis.
sensory knowledge and feeling embodied and felt in the body can reveal interruptions to
the perception of time as ahistorical, and can generate “other languages against the
blanketing of commonsensical codes that rationalize the skimmed experience of the
everyday as totality” (Ibid.). Memory is kept in shared materiality, in substances touched
and exchanged, the memory of one sense is retained in another, and in deferred
consumption, in the making and saving of things for others, in the externalization of
something of the self and the exchange of this with and through another. In this chapter, I
suggest that an understanding of Israeli-Jew in terms of a concept of the archive presents
a notion of a political subject based not solely on inheritance of the name, but on what is
internal to the name that is also external to it, on the shared materiality of the body, not
belonging to the name, and expressed through affect that reveals the boundaries between
narratives of past, present and future to be porous and haunted by each other, and the
present as a time that is out of joint with itself.

About halfway through my fieldwork, in the spring of 2007, I interviewed veteran
leftist politician and former Education Minister Shulamit Aloni. In the cab on the way to

---

4 Shulamit Aloni is one of Israel’s most well known leftist and veteran politicians and campaigner
for women’s rights. She has written in support of a Jewish humanism in Beyond Tradition: The
Struggle for a New Jewish Identity (2000). Her parents served in the British Army during WWII,
and she fought in the Palmach during Israeli’s 1948 War of Independence. She worked for the
separation of religion and state and for women’s rights in multiple capacities; she studied law,
hosted a radio show, has written as a columnist for Israeli newspapers, founded the Israel
Consumers Council, established the Citizen Rights Movement (Ratz), established the
International Center for Peace in the Middle East, and as Minister of Education she criticized
school trips to Holocaust concentration camps, and then was moved to the position of Minister of
her house in the outskirts of Tel Aviv, the cab driver asked me what I was going to talk to Aloni about. When I explained that I was interested in hearing her views about current debates about the tension between demography and democracy in Israel, he launched into his own analysis of the sociopolitical situation in Israel. “Today,” he said, “in the state of Israel today, a leader who wants to lead this people, and really, before he thinks at all about anything else, he has to think what kind of education he wants to give, if there is no Israeli product, what kind of education does he expect to give to them? You can’t do anything without education, a state that doesn’t produce its children, you can’t educate it, on what kind of values are you going to base its education? If you increase immigration all the time, you constantly going to have to deal with the misery of a mix of cultures, all the time you are trying to give your culture to the mix, and you can’t, because we, Israeli Jews, we don’t have a culture. The government today, here, it’s a fact, they don’t teach Jewish belief and tradition, today, their business is abroad. Today all of a sudden everyone is looking for their roots, if he is Polish and if he is Romanian and if he is French and if he is Tunisian, the Tunisians can all of a sudden be French citizens. What kind of country is this becoming? If once we were twelve tribes, now we are two thousand tribes.” On that note, it was time for my meeting with Shulamit Aloni, so I thanked the driver and got out of the car to go knock on Aloni’s door.

Communications and Science and Science and Culture. Aloni received the Israel Prize in 2000 for her contributions to Israeli society and continues to be an active voice critical of Israel policy on multiple fronts. See Slater and Slater (1994) for a profile of Aloni.
Aloni began by offering me something to drink. In the direct and brusque tone for which she is famous, she asked, “what do you want, do you want coffee or do you want cold Sprite?” I said that actually a glass of water would be great, and after we were settled in chairs in her living room we began to talk. After we chatted a little bit about the debates over demography and democracy, and after Aloni had criticized what she viewed as increasing institutionalized discrimination against non-Jews in Israel, she explained to me how she distinguished between Israel as a state of all its citizens, and Israel as a Jewish state. She said, “So I am talking about the state of Israel as a citizen-state, and this was what we had wanted. Ben Gurion always said this is a state of law and not a state of halaka. Today it is a state of halaka [Jewish law]. Today it is an ethnocracy and very ethnocentric.” I then asked her how she responded to commonly voiced fears in Israel about what might happen if the majority of the country’s citizens would no longer be Jewish. She said, “So, so what? So what would happen? That doesn’t scare me. If it could happen, it would take many years. If we would behave like a democracy, it wouldn’t hurt anyone. If we would be a democracy, that is to say, there would be the same laws, the same norms, the same education for everyone, then what would it hurt. Why would I care whether this minister would be Jewish, or would be Muslim, or would be Arab, or Druze, if the state is the state of her citizens.” I started to ask, “and secular?” She responded, “‘Citizen’ I call this. I can’t say secular, because I give the freedom of religion to everyone. But the state doesn’t have to dominate with religion. The state has to be thoughtful about it, and it is nice if the state gives services regarding religion to everyone
who wants, but not to force it down anyone’s throat. But we have become more and more insular about religion than we were even in Poland’s shtetl.” We talked a bit more, and then I thanked her for her time and we parted ways, agreeing to continue the conversation another time.

The differences between Aloni’s views and the taxi driver’s views illustrate the questions that I am arguing the conjunction Jew-Israeli raises. Aloni argued for a Jewish state based on universal Enlightenment principles, citizenship and human rights. When I asked her if she didn’t find it a problem that human rights were conditioned on citizenship, making reference to Arendt’s point about this in The Origins of Totalitarianism, Aloni answered, “we don’t live in an ideal world. But aren’t I, and my small people [the Jews] who have suffered so much, allowed to want to create the perfect society?” The cab driver and Aloni’s opposing views on whether Israel’s definition as a Jewish liberal democracy should translate into a multicultural liberal universalism or a Jewish nationalism represent not simply a conflict between nationalism and universalism, but also, I argue, the ambiguity of what “Jew” itself signifies in Israel, and which narrative has authority. The internal difference of the Jew is related to through an affective relation; for Aloni this relation was expressed as a hope for the future through an acknowledgement of the loss in the past, for the taxi driver this relation was expressed as a lament over the loss of a specific past itself.

The different viewpoints expressed by Aloni and the taxi driver are part of the wider debates in Israel as well as of scholarly and public policy debates about Israel’s
definition as both a liberal democracy and as Jewish. The taxi driver situates his vision of what a Jewish country should be in terms of the recollection of a Biblical past. In this sense, he suggests an understanding of Israel in terms of what Zerubavel (1995) has argued is a distinction that Zionist collective memory makes between the time of Antiquity (722B.C.) when Jews lived in Palestine, and the time of Exile soon after the Jewish revolt against the Romans in A.D.73. Zerubavel highlights how the Zionist movement’s call for an active shaping of a Jewish future involved an explicit engagement with a Jewish past, and argues that Zionist collective memory “provided the ideological framework for understanding and legitimizing its vision of the future,” and that this collective memory was produced through turning away from traditional Jewish memory to construct a countermemory of the Jewish past.⁵ Aloni rejected such a vision of a Jewish future based on such a countermemory of the Jewish past, but also departed from a traditional Jewish memory, arguing instead for a pluralism in which the country is defined in universalist terms, with “the same education” and “the same laws for everyone.” Aloni’s position resonates here with the perspectives which criticize Israel in the name of a liberal humanism (Lim 2012; Pappe 2006; Sand 2009) or which call for a

---

⁵ While Zerubavel does not question the narrative that Jews longed for a return to Palestine over thousands of years in exile, she points out that “the recovery of the nation’s roots in the ancient past implied playing down its roots in Exile as well as the renunciation of the Palestinians’ roots in the same land” (22). Thus while she does not explicitly comment on the ways in which modern forms of nationalism and Jewish messianic narratives informed one another, Zerubavel draws attention to the ways in which the Zionist narrative was articulated as a reaction against Exile that drew on narratives of Jewish existence prior to its relation to Europe and modern nationalisms.
multiculturalism through setting limits on differential treatment of Jews in relation to other groups while still defining the state as Jewish. For example, Alan Dowty (2001) writes that in terms of non-Jews in Israel, “pluralism may actually mean creating a new distinction between ‘Israeli and Jewish.’ Is it possible to develop an Israeliness that includes, but is not limited to, Jewishness? Can Palestinian citizens be made a part of ‘us’ on at least one level?... The acid test of Israeli democracy will be whether it can take Arab citizens into full partnership” (253). The question of the reproduction of the polity, however, especially when this question is in a context in which population growth does not guarantee the reproduction of a Jewish majority, makes explicit the impossibility of incorporating Jews and non-Jews into the social and political body of the state in the same way, and emphasizes the question of how to define the Jew through which Israel is defined in terms of both remembering from exile and protecting for the future.

While the differences between these positions are important, they share in common an assumption of the subject as defined in terms of a group identity, whether Jewish or not. In so doing, the tensions and violence of Israeli political conflicts, whether internal to Jewish differences or between Jews and non-Jews, are defined as the product of differences between groups. In contrast, I am arguing that an attention to how these tensions and violences are defined and expressed “on the ground” reveals the need for an

---

6 This is, of course, yet another articulation of the question of whether or not it is a contradiction for Israel to be defined both as Jewish and as a liberal democracy. See the introduction for a discussion of some of these debates.
analysis that accounts for how these groups are split apart from the inside by their differences, from the scale of the individual to the scales of neighborhood, city, and state. In this chapter, I analyze these differences in terms of temporality through how these differences make references to, and through their positions within, two different archival narratives of Jewish-Israeli origin. What does it mean for one subject, “Israeli-Jew” to define itself through remembering itself as other to itself? In other words, what does it mean for Israel to define itself as a “New Jew” through remembering itself as an old “diasporic Jew”? What is the Israeli-Jew then on which the political framework of the Israeli state is based? In the relation between these two archival logics brought together in “Israeli-Jew”, who is the authority and from where is this authority and order given? To return to the opening questions of this dissertation, to whom or to what is one responsible and responding? Who or what decides? And what does it mean to be responsible, even and perhaps especially when one is not a sovereign, autonomous subject? How do different concepts of sovereignty affect the possibilities and limits of ethical relation and responsibility to an other?

**Israeli Remembers Jew: Naming, Archive, and the Specter of the Stones**

In this section, I will show how Israeli efforts to remember Jew can be understood in terms of an archival relation between two men, one the European purportedly
unmarked universal man, and the other the Jewish man marked as different through his racialization in terms of the postcolonial.\textsuperscript{7} I will suggest that the question of how to understand the relation in which Israeli remembers Jew from the past and for the future is similar to the question that Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi (1991), historian of Jewish history and of Israel Studies, posed to Freud and to psychoanalysis in Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable.\textsuperscript{8} Drawing on Yerushalmi and on Derrida’s (1998) engagement with Yerushalmi on this question, I will show how the specificity of Jew reveals an understanding of the singular as the simultaneous production and undoing of subjectivity in the relation between the particular and the universal, specifically in terms

\textsuperscript{7} Cf Abu El-Haj (2001). Abu El-Haj draws on science studies to trace how archaeology developed as a discipline in Israel/Palestine, how Israeli archaeology made material Israeli colonial ideology, and the broader state institutions and political relations that enabled and were themselves transformed by archaeology. Using a Foucauldian framework, she argues it is important to emphasize how Zionism was constituted in relation to Palestine and its inhabitants more than by its relation to the Jewish Diaspora. In other words, rather than suggesting that Labor Zionism was fundamentally about differentiating "the new Jew" from the "weak (bookish) Jew of the Diaspora," Abu El-Haj argues that Zionist nationalism was most fundamentally about its relation to the land and establishing a presence on this land, which involved both practices of physical labor, and socio-economic relations between Jewish settlers and between Jews and Palestinians. She suggests that the most important thing that can be known about the process of nation-state building, the problematics and dynamics of 'collective memory,' and the operation of power and hegemony, is not necessarily the ways in which it is continually put at risk and potentially undermined through the processes of its reproduction. Rather, she suggests it is important to track and analyze how cultural, political, geographical, historical, and epistemological truths have formed and Israel/Palestine's colonial history ( 2001). While I agree that Zionism was shaped in relation to Palestine’s inhabitants, I do not agree that it was any less shaped by its relation to the Jewish diaspora.

\textsuperscript{8} See Slavett (2007) for another reading of Freud’s Moses and Monotheism; Salvett reviews some of the response to Freud’s book which she situates in terms of a consideration of why it is that, in her view, notions of racial heredity continue to have sway despite scientific rejections of biological definitions of “race.”
of a relation between two different subjects positioned as men, one the purportedly unmarked universal man of European modernity, and the other the marked postcolonial man, shere marked specifically as the Jew. I will conclude this section by pointing to how this relation raises a question about how to understand sexual difference through the conjunction Israeli-Jew. This question of sexual difference then becomes the focus of the next section.

One of the times in which the question of who it is who is being remembered when Israeli remembers Jew is most obvious but also most impenetrable is on Israel’s Memorial Day for its fallen soldiers. Memorial Day is always exactly one week after Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel, sometime in late April or early May, according to the Hebrew calendar. In 2007 I went to the Memorial Ceremony held at Bat Yam’s main park, a few blocks from the neighborhood of Ramat Yosef. I arrived just as it was getting dark, a few minutes before the ceremony began. The stage and rows of fold-up chairs are lit up by the lights hanging alongside the blue and white banners and flags. People, young and old, are talking and mingling. The memorial siren begins. Everyone stands up and is silent. The siren wails. For two minutes we all stand in collective quiet, the siren taking up space, rising in pitch, holding steady, then winding down. Please sit, the man on stage

---

9 See Zertal (2005) for an account of the history of the relation between Israel’s memorialization of the Holocaust and Israeli nationalism and state formation. Zertal draws attention to how Israel’s Holocaust Remembrance Day was purposefully placed on a date between commemorations of events marking heroism and rebirth in its placement near the celebration of Passover.
says. Someone else speaks into the microphone, as the people sitting further away from the stage get back to talking. Someone tries to shush them. The man speaking into the microphone says:

You know how many memorial days like this a family has in a year? The state’s memorial day, and the memorial day of the military, and of the battalion and of the unit [army], and of the school, and of the town. And my memorial days, what about them? The day he was born, and the day he fell, and the day that I saw him for the last time, and what about the moment of memory of the tree that he fell from when he was six when you walk by it, and the moment when you see someone in the street with whom he learned at school, and the moment of remembering when you see someone blond like him, and the places. . . and it’s not only the grave, it’s also the memorial statue of the town, and the memorial of the school, and of the unit [army], and besides for this, there is the place where he was killed, which in this country is never too far from the home. And his place by the table, and when you set the table, you always think whether to set a place for him, and when people ask you how many children you have, what to answer, two, or three?

People then sing on stage, first a woman, then a group. They are followed by a man who asks for the flag to be lowered. A man plays a haunting melody on a trombone as two youth lower the flag. The man at the microphone invites someone else to speak; he begins by saying, “Every country must defend its inhabitants. . . Memory allows us to connect. It allows us to continue life. . . .” Another man comes on stage and speaks about mourning before beginning to read the names of all the soldiers from Bat Yam who were killed in Israel’s wars:

The sites of memory, the blue skies, the words of joy in letters, the name that was scribbled in a notebook, the eyes looking at us with love through the frame. To the objects left of him, souvenirs (miskeret), to these sites of memory we come, and the soul is storming, and then we slowly walk to the stone, the gravestone. Each man and his grief, each woman and her pain. And we read the name and the date, we read the date and the name, and remember the living breathing man. We
remember the passionate hopes, and we remember the dreams, and all the things he said and wanted to do, and we remember the terrible day in which his name was engraved in the book of blood, and the mound of sand, and the date and the name. Five hundred and twenty-one sons and daughters lost their (shakula) lives of Bat Yam (Ima/mother). This evening we will “go” with their memory. The reading of the names of the fallen will be according to periods in the history of the State. These are the names of the sons of Bat Yam and its daughters who fell before the establishment of the State and during the war of independence.

As each name is said, a photograph of the person named is shown on the screen, two photographs at a time. For the few for whom there is no photograph, a blank square is shown above their name. But they almost all have photographs. Their faces stare out at the crowd from the screen on which they are projected.

Ya’acov Avraham
Yefet Aharoni
Arie Alkali
Mordechai Amiad
Refael Asaf
Yoel Biron
Yosef Blayo
Schmuel Ben-Basat
David Ben-David
Ya’acov Ben-Meir
Albert Baruch
Shabat Baruch
Morris Berko
Avraham Ckedma
Eliyahu Dueck
Moshe Adler
The reading of names goes on and on. From war to war to war. Before the list of names is read out loud for each war a few words are said about one or two soldiers in particular from those who died in that war, and relatives and close friends of the dead are introduced as those who will carry the wreath from the stage to the memorial for the soldiers who died. The ceremony lasts for more than three hours. In every Jewish city and town in the country at this time such memorials are conducted. It is said that every soldier who died in war is named in such a ceremony. Every single soldier, from before 1948 to the present. Each and every soldier is remembered as a particular person, with a name and a face and a family, a year and a day and a war in which he or she died. It is on these Memorial and Remembrance days that Israel’s relation to the Jews in terms of remembering is particularly emphasized.

The singularity of the individuals, including the particularity of their Jewishness, challenges the idea that there can be such a thing as the singularity of a group, including “the Jewish people.” At the same time, the specificity of the various histories of “the Jewish people” challenges the idea that the singularity of an individual can be singular, as in one, rather than plural; in other words, these histories suggest a notion of a single life as being singular in the plural. The specificity of these challenges in Israel places assumptions of the sovereignty of God and of the sovereignty of the human into question, because “Jewish-Israeli” identifications bring both into an encounter in which they challenge each other.
Israel as a nation-state, through how it has been defined by Zionism, produces the category “Israeli” through which, and from which, the category “Jew” is remembered and is to be protected for and in the future. But these two categories are not independent from one another; Rafi, whose name is also Vita, speaks both as diasporic Jew and as returned Jew, as Eastern European refugee and as modern Israeli citizen. In the Memorial ceremony, Israeli Jews are remembered as individual Jews and as the Jewish people. The taxi driver argued against the multiplicity of difference within “the Jewish people” while Shulamit Aloni argued for a universal category within which a multiplicity of difference can exist. What defines Jewish-Israeli are precisely these combinations, together and at the same time, not one or the other of the different arguments about what Israel is or should be. Jew-Israeli is these different combinations because it brings together two different origin narratives of Israel, which each carry specific historical significations of “Jew” in relations of difference both internal and external to the category of “the Jewish people.” But what does the Jew signify when Israel remembers the Jew as diasporic in terms of a Biblical origin narrative, and at the same time remakes the Jew as secular, “godless,” and as the sovereign citizen of a nation-state to which he belongs? The question of the continuity of Jewishness independently of Judaism and through the figure of “the godless Jew” is also the question which historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi poses in Freud’s Moses through an engagement with Freud’s work in Moses and Monotheism. Through a discussion of Yerushalmi’s response to Freud and Derrida’s response to Yerushalmi (and so also to Freud), I will show in what follows how Israeli-Jew can be
understood in terms of an archival relation between the European man and the postcolonial man.

In 1981, psychiatrist and neuroscientist Mortimer Ostow invited Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, Professor of Jewish History, Culture and Society at Columbia University from 1980 to 2008 (where he was also Director of the Center for Israel and Jewish Studies), to join a group called The Research Group on the Psychoanalytic Study of Anti-Semitism. The group included fifteen analysts who met monthly for nine years. Yerushalmi explains in the beginning of his Freud’s Moses that the group had decided they needed a historian of the Jews in order to continue their work effectively. Yerushalmi’s participation with the group led him to reread Freud systematically and for several years, beginning in 1986, he delivered a series of lectures about Freud’s Moses and Monotheism. These lectures form the main content of Freud’s Moses. As a whole, the book is a sustained engagement with and close reading of Freud’s Moses and Monotheism. Before turning to Yerushalmi’s response to Freud, I will briefly summarize the main points of Freud’s argument in Moses and Monotheism.

Freud argues that Moses was an Egyptian named Ikhanateon, not a Jew. He suggests that there were two men by the name of Moses who were condensed into the single figure of Moses, and that the Jews killed the first one and repressed the memory of

---

10 Three years after his first lecture on the books, Yerushalmi delivered the Franz Rosenzweig lectures at Yale which he then repeated at Mount Holyoke and Smith Colleges in 1990 and then soon after at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Socialies in Paris.
doing this. By suggesting that the Jews – the people who came to be called Jews – killed Moses (who was not in fact a Jew but an Egyptian), he suggests that they continued as a people who repressed their guilt over the killing of Moses through a displacement of their identification with the first Moses on to another figure who was also called Moses. The imposition of the Egyptian Moses’s religion on to the second Moses involved a shift from polytheism to monotheism, and from animal deity worship to worship of a single God with the figure of the father, in whose image man is made. In other words, according to Freud, “the Jewish people” killed God through killing the figure of god in the form of the man Moses. In this sense, Freud suggests that the Jewish people are defined through a version of the oedipal complex.

---

11 Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* was originally published in 1939, at the end of Freud’s life and after he narrowly escaped Nazi persecution in Vienna. The book was published the year WWII officially began with the German invasion of Poland, and after six years of Hitler rule and a single party system with the Nazis in power. Freud opens the book with an acknowledgement that he is aware of the sensitivity of his claims in light of the political context in which he is making them, and because the one making these claims is himself a Jew.

12 Anti-Semitism, Freud goes on to suggest, is in part about other groups reactions’ of envy to the status of the Jews as “the chosen people,” a resentment of the origin of monotheism, and about “the reproach from the new religious community – which besides Jews included Egyptians, Greeks, Syrians, Romans, and lastly also Teutons – that they had murdered God. In its full form this reproach would run: ‘They will not admit that they killed god, whereas we do and are cleansed from the guilt of it’” (Ibid. 176). Freud suggests that perhaps part of what has allowed the Jewish people to survive as a people for as long as they have is in their self-confidence as a chosen people with a close relation to God which gives them a “precious gift; it is a kind of optimism.” But it is also this narrative and position, Freud suggests, that has made it impossible for Jews to belong to European community.
Yerushalmi’s response to Freud in Freud’s Moses has two main components. First, in the first four chapters, Yerushalmi argues that Freud’s argument that Moses was not Jewish and that there were two men called Moses, the first of whom the Jews killed, is flawed. He emphasizes that Freud’s notion of tradition as transmitted through a group unconscious over time is impossible to accept because there are differences between individual and group memory that cannot be bridged by an analogy between the memory of an individual and the memory of a people. A group cannot “repress” a memory in the same way that an individual can repress a memory. As a result, while the oedipal complex is compelling to Yerushalmi as a theory of individuals, it is not compelling to him in terms of a theory of group formation, and specifically of the Jewish people. An historical archive, he contends, does not contain that which members of the group do not write down and do not transmit to subsequent generations. He argues that this is not something that would have been left out of the archive of Jewish history. The Jewish historical archive, Yerushalmi emphasizes, was written for most of Jewish history not by historians but by religious authorities and interpreters of religious texts who were less interested in recording what actually happened than in how things happened. The second component of Yerushalmi’s response to Freud is his attempt in his “monologue” in the last chapter to “make Freud acknowledge” whether or not Freud understood psychoanalysis to be a Jewish science. This question, Yerushalmi admits, matters to him much more than the question of whether or not Freud is right about his claims that Moses was not a Jew and that the Jews killed a first Moses.
Yerushalmi is invested in the question of whether or not Freud himself considered psychoanalysis to be Jewish because he is invested in the continuity of Jewishness not in terms of a religious identification, but because of his identification with Jewishness in terms of a historical tradition defined by a relation to the past which is shaped by “the anticipation of a specific hope for the future” (95). For Yerushalmi, this historical tradition is defined by the anticipation of a specific hope for the future based on the “unique” archive of the Jews in which the Jewish prophet Malachi posits an “ultimate resolution of the Oedipal conflict between Israel and God…on the level of the purely human: “Ve-heshiv lev avot ‘al banim ve’lev banim ‘al avotam’ (He shall reconcile the heart of fathers with sons and the heart of sons with their fathers) [95].” (73). In making this argument, Yerushalmi is not only arguing against the content of Freud’s argument about Moses and the Jews. Yerushalmi is also making this argument through an attention to Freud’s biographical archive which Yerushalmi shows is full of traces of Freud’s Jewishness. It is in this sense that Yerushalmi’s question, or perhaps more precisely, his plea, to Freud can be understood in terms of a question about what it means for a “godless Jew” to remember and to continue a Jewish tradition through an archival relation. Yerushalmi thus attempts to make Freud “admit” (after Freud’s death) that he considered psychoanalysis to be a “godless Judaism.” In the chapters which precede Yerushalmi’s monologue with Freud, Yerushalmi repeatedly draws out the ways and places in which Freud defines himself as a Jew and the connections of this self-definition to Freud’s formation of psychoanalysis. One of the most significant places in
Yerushalmi’s argument in this regard is his analysis of Freud’s relation to his father in terms of a question of reconciliation in terms of Freud’s Jewishness.

On Freud’s 35th birthday, his father Jakob Freud gave Freud a copy of the Bible, a copy he had already given to Freud but which he had re-covered for him, and dedicated to him with an inscription in the front, handwritten in Hebrew. Unlike Freud, who considered himself a “godless Jew,” Freud’s father was not only a practicing Jew, but a Rabbi. Yerushalmi offers what he calls a “deliberately literal, and hence abrasively unliterary, translation” of Jakob Freud’s dedication to his son:

Son who is dear to me, Shelomoh. In the seventh in the days of the years of your life the Spirit of the Lord began to move you and spoke within you: Go, read in my Book that I have written and there will burst open for you the wellsprings of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. Behold, it is the Book of Books, from which sages have excavated and lawmakers learned knowledge and judgment. A vision of the Almighty did you see; you heard and strove to do, and you soared on the wings of the Spirit. Since then the book has been stored like the fragments of the tablets in an ark with me. For the day on which your years were filled to five and thirty I have put upon it a cover of new skin and have called it: ‘Spring up, O well, and sing ye unto it!’ And I have presented it to you as a memorial and as a reminder of love from your father, who loves you with everlasting love.

Jakob Son of R. Shelomoh Freid [sic]
In the capital city Vienna 29 Nisan [5]651 6 May [1]891 (Ibid. 71)

Yerushalmi asks why, if Freud knew no Hebrew as he suggested, would his father have written him an elaborate dedication in Hebrew, especially since his father was very
capable of writing in German.\textsuperscript{13} Yerushalmi goes on to reveal the sophistication of the dedication in terms of its multiple layers of meaning and the manner in which it references the multiple associations on which each phrase draws. He suggests that through the references to expressions of love, references to the beloved son Ephraim who is depicted as wandering in exile, the reference to the broken tablets and the gifting of them a second time after the first ones were shattered, and the reference to the prospect of return and reconciliation with the father, Freud’s father was both expressing his desire to reconcile with his son, and asking him to return to the Bible (73-75).

Yerushalmi highlights here an archival relation here between father and son in which Freud reconciled with his father, if Freud would agree with Yerushalmi that psychoanalysis is a Jewish science. In turn, if Yerushalmi can show that psychoanalysis is haunted by Freud’s Jewishness, then Yerushalmi can also show that Freud, in this sense, reconciled with his father. It is in this sense that Yerushalmi defines Jewish tradition in terms of a specific hope for the future rather than in terms of what he understands as the repetitive hopelessness signified by Oedipal repetition; “the Freudian

\textsuperscript{13} Yerushalmi makes a further point emphasizing the layered meanings of Freud’s father’s inscription to Freud;

Jakob Freud’s inscription was written in a form of writing known as \textit{melitzah}. \textit{Melitzah} is a mosaic of fragments and phrases from the Hebrew Bible as well as from rabbinic literature or the liturgy, fitted together to form a new statement of what the author intends to express at the moment. Melitzah, in effect, recalls Walter Benjamin’s desire to someday write a work composed entirely of quotations. At any rate, it was a literary device employed widely in medieval Hebrew poetry and prose, then through the Haskalah, and even among nineteenth-century writers both modern and traditional. (Ibid.71)
integration of the personality demands the return of the repressed for the sake of new insight, as a result of which we do not have to deny our fathers but can at least attempt to reestablish our relationship on a different plane” (Ibid. 79). But in order for psychoanalysis to be Jewish in this sense, Freud himself must be understood as acknowledging it to be Jewish, because it is this acknowledgment which would signify a reconciliation with his father. For Yerushalmi, Freud represents “the godless Jew” who marks what Yerushalmi understands as a rupture in the Jewish tradition of a relation to the past through the reading of an archive based on collective forgetting and anamnesis. European modernity, both because of the effects of European enlightenment on the formation of Jewish historiography, and because of the Holocaust, has marked what to Yerushalmi “seems to be a final and irreparable rupture in the [Jewish] tradition.” Psychoanalysis, however, offers Yerushalmi the hope that this rupture can be repaired. This recognition is what would “lay to rest the false and insidious dichotomy between the ‘parochial’ and the ‘universal,’ that canard of the Enlightenment which became and remains a major neurosis of modern Jewish intellectuals” (Ibid. 98). This recognition would do away with this false dichotomy because it would entail a recognition of Jewishness (rather than Judaism) not as one more religion or ethnic group among many, but as a group marked through their selection and relation to a historical (Biblical) archive through which they are produced by the act of continuing to archive themselves in relation to this archive. Jewishness thus becomes a marker for singularity itself. It is in this understanding of archival continuity with reference to the specificity of a Jewish
archive that for Yerushalmi, Jewishness, even if not Judaism, can be understood as continuing through psychoanalysis, but only if Freud himself can be understood as suggesting that psychoanalysis is Jewish.

This is why, at the end of the book, in his “monologue with Freud,” Yerushalmi explicitly says that it is not whether psychoanalysis actually might be a Jewish science or not which he is asking Freud to tell him, and which is something which he says maybe cannot even be determined, but whether or not Freud himself considered psychoanalysis to be a Jewish science.¹ At the end of the monologue, Yerushalmi “tells Freud” that in 1977 the Sigmund Freud Professorship was created at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and that on the occasion of its establishment Freud’s daughter Anna was invited to attend but could not come in person and so sent a paper to be read on her behalf.¹⁴ The paper ended abruptly, Yerushalmi writes, and he quotes her words:

‘During the era of its existence, psychoanalysis has entered into connexion with various academic institutions, not always with satisfactory results…It has also, repeatedly, experienced rejection by them, been criticized for its methods being imprecise, its finds not open to proof by experiment, for being unscientific, even for being a ‘Jewish science.’ However the other derogatory comments maybe

¹⁴ Yerushalmi also “tells Freud” here that in 1934 his daughter Anna wrote to Ernest Jones that the flight of psychoanalysts from Germany had produced “‘a new form of diaspora.” Yerushalmi goes on to say that he was “fascinated to discover that she found it necessary to add, ‘You surely know what this word means: the dispersion of the Jews throughout the world after the destruction of Jerusalem’” (99). Here too, Yerushalmi tries to “make Freud say” that Freud, through the voice of his daughter, maybe have considered psychoanalysis to be a kind of “home” for the Jews. But in so doing, as Derrida points out, he draws attention to how Freud “proves” Yerushalmi to be wrong exactly through Yerushalmi’s attempt to show Freud to be saying psychoanalysis to be Jewish, even as Yerushalmi is right in his identification of the specter of the Jew haunting Freud’s work.
evaluated, it is, I believe, the last-mentioned connotation which, under present circumstances, can serve as a title of honour.’ (Ibid. 106)

Yerushalmi goes on to ask what Anna meant by this statement, and then ends his monologue writing:

Professor Freud, at this point I find it futile to ask whether psychoanalysis is really a Jewish science; that we shall know, if it is at all knowable, only when much future work has been done. Much will depend, of course, on how the very terms Jewish and science are to be defined. Right now, leaving the semantic and epistemological questions aside, I want only to know whether you ultimately came to believe it to be so.

In fact, I will limit myself even further and be content if you answer only one question: When your daughter conveyed those words to the congress in Jerusalem, was she speaking in your name?

Please tell me, Professor. I promise I won’t reveal your answer to anyone. (Ibid)

Yerushalmi thus argues for an archival relation in which the tension between father and son as Jews can be reconciled into one Jewish voice. In doing, Yerushalmi attempts to establish the Jew as singular in terms of a group, in which the Jew is reproduced through a relation to the text as the mother, and is defined in opposition to the non-Jewish man with whom he disagrees over the text.

Derrida departs from Yerushalmi here, to suggest that while Yerushalmi is right that psychoanalysis can be understood as Jewish in terms of how the specter of Freud’s Jewishness haunts his work (and in terms of the frameworks which both Jewish tradition and psychoanalysis present for an understanding of subjectivity in relation to a concept of the archive), that the very meaning of “Jew” is itself the difference between Jew and non-Jew, and its expression in terms of the tension between a figural father and son in an
archival relation. In making this point, Derrida argues for a recognition of the singularity of any subjectivity and its production through an archival relation. He agrees that what is specific to the category Jew and to the specificity of the Jew’s archive is this understanding of the singular as between the particular and the general, and as defined by a hope for the future and by the injunction to remember.

Derrida points out that this production of subjectivity can be true for any people in a different way, so long as they are willing to recognize themselves in terms of this relation to an archive. But in so doing, Derrida also erases the historical specificity, and thus the difference of the figures through which this production of subjectivity through the father and the son, and the Jew and the non-Jew, emerges. In other words, Derrida overlooks here how the question of the constitution of the human in the terms of Greek metaphysics and its legacy in European philosophy is bound up with the question of the differentiated man, who is marked here specifically as Jew. To say that it would be the

15 Indeed, this is precisely the point which I understand Leonard (2012) also to be making, although in a different way and coming from a different angle. She points out that the coupling of Greek and Jew has been central not only to how European philosophy produced a concept of universalism based on a Hellenized Christianity through its treatment of the Jew, but also how this concept of universalism excluded Europe’s external others as well, which I read as at least a gesture towards the question of the postcolonial in its more familiar terms. I am suggesting here that the Jew reveals the postcolonial as present at the “origin” of European modernity, already there as the “post”colonial from any perceived moment of European modernity’s inception. Leonard’s tracing of the GreekJew coupling in the history of European Enlightenment, in my reading, affirms such an understanding, and provides a much needed analysis and historical background of the philosophical discourses which I am suggesting an analysis of contemporary Israel suggests must have preceded the country’s emergence. I am arguing here that an analysis of this coupling in Israel, reveals that the question of sexual difference is at the heart of the constitution of the human of European humanism, and at the center of the political frameworks of
same for any people willing to recognize themselves in this injunction to remember and in a specific hope for the future, or as “Jews,” is to say that it would be the same for any people willing to recognize themselves as postcolonial. And to say this, would be to destabilize the political logic based on the Greek metaphysics of presence rather than to reproduce it in its oedipal and patriarchal logic, because it would in turn also destabilize the postcolonial. It is for this reason, I will suggest, that while Derrida is insistent about pointing to the question of woman and of sexual difference in this archival logic, he does not go further than pointing out that the position and definition of woman in this archival logic is a question.

In the next section, I will show how an analysis of Israeli-Jew, through an analysis of examples from my fieldwork, demands that this archival relation be recognized as one between the European universal man and the Jewish, or postcolonial marked man, and how this relation in the context of Israel poses the question of sexual difference. But before doing so, I want to briefly explain more explicitly how Derrida defines this archival relation in terms of the singular as a relation between Jew and non-Jew. I do so because this understanding will be important for understanding the argument I will make modern European modernity, and relatedly, of nationalisms of “the” postcolonial. In other words, I am suggesting that it is only through a rethinking of the notion of sexual difference in terms of the postcolonial that it is possible to come to an understanding of the political, and of a political subject, that may avoid the reproduction of the pitfalls of the past century by refusing a politics based on community, belonging and identity and the fetishization of claims to sovereignty.
in the next section. I will summarize by highlighting Derrida’s three main points in his response to Yerushalmi.

First, Derrida argues that Yerushalmi’s engagement with Freud reveals an understanding of the Jew as singular and as constituted through an oedipal archival relation. In this sense, Derrida suggests that both Yerushalmi and Freud are partially right in terms of Yerushalmi’s contestation of Freud and Yerushalmi’s attempt to “make Freud admit” that he thought psychoanalysis to be a Jewish science. Derrida makes this point by drawing attention to how in Yerushalmi’s very performance of his monologue with Freud, Yerushalmi reveals the impossibility of an archival reconciliation between the figural father and son. Derrida writes that Yerushalmi demonstrates a “deferred obedience” to Freud in his monologue, a deferred obedience which, through Yerushalmi’s very performance of his argument, reveals Freud to be right about the oedipal structure of the archive, even as Yerushalmi is right in his argument that Freud was haunted by the specter of his Jewishness;

Let us describe this time of repetition with the words Yerushalmi reserves for Freud:

1. Yerushalmi in turn addresses himself last and ‘belatedly’ to Freud’s phantom with filial respect.
2. He returns in turn to the ‘intensive study of the Bible.’
3. He ‘maintains his independence.’ Mimicking a doubly fictitious parricide, he argues bitterly with a master whose psychoanalytic rules and premises he accepts. He also interiorizes the discourse of the patriarch, at least in respecting the ‘according to you’ of the le-didakh, Talmudic terminus technicus. All these signs remind us that Yerushalmi also ‘belatedly obeys the father,’ whether he wants to or not. He identifies with him while interiorizing him like a phantom who speaks in him before him. He offers him hospitality and goes so far as to confess to him not without fervor: ‘you are real and, for me, curiously present’ (81).
Now let us not forget that, this is also the phantom of an expert in phantoms. The expert had even stressed that what is most interesting in repression is what one does not manage to repress. The phantom thus makes the law – even, and more than ever, when one contests him. Like the father of Hamlet behind his visor, and by virtue of a visor effect, the specter sees without being seen. He thus reestablishes the heteronomy. He finds himself confirmed and repeated in the very protest one claims to oppose to him” (1998, 60-61).

Thus Yerushalmi’s book, Derrida suggests, “belongs to the corpus of Freud (and of Moses, etc.), whose name it also carries. The fact that this corpus and this name also remain spectral is perhaps a general structure of every archive” (Ibid. 68). It is in this sense that Derrida highlights how an archive references both a commencement and a commandment, through a mark of circumcision. Derrida goes on to argue that this mark of circumcision is the mark of the singular, and can be called Jewish because this definition, through circumcision and selection, has been central to the definition of the Jew and the Jewish historical archive. This archival relation defines this singularity of a people in terms of an injunction to remember, and an affirmation of a hope for the future.

16. The cover of Yerushalmi’s book, *Freud’s Moses* bears the image of Michaelangelo’s Moses. Yerushalmi comments early on in his book that if Freud’s interpretation of Michaelangelo’s Moses was correct, and that his Moses, unlike the Moses in the Bible, contained his rage and did not actually throw down the tablets and smash them, that both Michaelangelo and Freud “are, in effect, biblical exegetes who radically violate the plain sense of the text – Michaelangelo by presenting a Moses who contains his anger and does not shatter the tablets, Freud by making him an Egyptian and having him killed by the Jews.” As Derrida (1999) points out in his essay accompanying the photo essay in *Right of Inspection*, there is a photograph of a woman holding up a photograph within a photograph as if she is going to smash it down like Moses is said to have done with the Ten Commandments. It is interesting to think here about the question of the difference and parallel invoked between the image of Moses with the written commandments and the image of the woman with the photograph in terms of the question of origin and sexual difference.
Second, while Derrida agrees with Yerushalmi that the Jew can be defined as singular in the above sense, Derrida also questions whether it is just to “reserve for Israel both the future and the past as such, both hope (‘the anticipation of a specific hope for the future’) and the duty of memory (‘the injunction to remember’), assignation which would be felt by Israel alone, Israel as a people and Israel in its totality (‘only in Israel and nowhere else’ ‘as a religious imperative to an entire people’)” (1998, 77). Derrida concludes that it would be just, this “logic of election,” if

one were to call by the unique name of Israel all the places and all the peoples who would be ready to recognize themselves in this anticipation and in this injunction…Like the question of the proper name, the question of exemplarity…here situates the place of all violences. Because if it is just to remember the future and the injunction to remember, namely the archontic injunction to guard and to gather the archive, it is no less just to remember the others, the other others and the others in oneself, and that other peoples could say the same thing – in another way. (Ibid. 77)

For Derrida then, as he suggests also for Freud, this archontic principle is both Jew and non-Jew, and is both with hope and is hopeless in its oedipal structure, because the production of the singular in the production of subjectivity necessitates the reproduction of an oedipal relation in which something of that which carries the mark must be repressed in the stroke of the mark through which it emerges, its difference from itself which it cannot know by definition of the one who comes into existence as a subject.17

17 This again recalls what Derrida writes about subjectivity in terms of the production of “the one:”:

248
Derrida then goes on to name the question with which I open in the Introduction of this dissertation;

from the point of view of the archive: does one base one’s thinking of the future on an archived event – with or without substrate, with or without actuality – for example on a divine injunction or on a messianic covenant? Or else, on the contrary, can an experience, an existence, in general, only receive and record, only archive such an event to the extent that the structure of this existence and of its temporalization makes this archivization possible? (1998, 80)

This is, I have argued, the question Derrida poses in terms of GreekJew JewGreek, which I am suggesting is echoed in the conjunction Israeli-Jew. Israel, modeled on the political framework of European modernity’s liberalism, but also defining itself in terms of the messianic Jewish narrative, defines Israeli-Jew both in terms of an experience which archives this event (the origin narrative of Greek metaphysics), and in terms of a messianic covenant of an archived event (the Jewish Abrahamic origin narrative).

Third, Derrida then draws attention to the question of sexual difference. Derrida concludes his discussion by pointing out that this archival logic between father and son, or between Jew and non-Jew, is an oedipal and patriarchal logic, one which he says Freud pointed out better than any other, but which Freud himself also repeated, in part by declaring that that “the patriarchal right (Vaterrecht) marked the civilizing progress of

The One guards against/keeps some of the other. It protects itself from the other, but, in the movement of this jealous violence, it comprises in itself, thus guarding it, the self-otherness or self-difference (the difference from within oneself) which make it one).… This is why Freud might not have accepted in this form the alternative between the future and the past of Oedipus, or between ‘hope’ and ‘hopelessness,’ the Jew and the non-Jew, the future and repetition. The one, alas, or happily, is the condition of the other. (1998, 76-77)
reason” (Derrida 1998, 95). Derrida’s difference from Freud here is perhaps most pronounced in how Derrida is critical of the reproduction of a logic of filiation and of law based on patriarchal right. Derrida explicitly poses not only the question of what it would mean for Freud’s “sons,” to speak in their own name, but also whether “his daughter…was ever anything other than a phantasm or a specter…” which is also to ask the question of how to understand the figure of woman in terms of this archontic principle of the archive. \(^{18}\) In what follows, I will argue that an analysis of the conjunction Israeli-Jew (which is also to say an analysis of the concept of the political in contemporary Israel), demands a consideration of this question. I will show how an analysis of this question in terms of Israel reveals the archive in terms of Freud’s psychoanalysis to be about a relation of remembering between the non-European Jew and the postcolonial European Jew, through which the question of the definition of woman and of sexual difference is put under erasure.

Although Derrida says quite explicitly that he doesn’t think that Freud would have accepted Yerushalmi’s choice between the future and the past of Oedipus, between hope and hopelessness, and between Jew and non-Jew, and although Derrida himself echos this view in his argument for an understanding of Jewish singularity as true in a different way for any people willing to recognize themselves in the injunction to remember and in the affirmation of a hope for the future, Derrida suggests that these divisions are the

\(^{18}\) See Joanna Hodge (2000) for her attention to this question through a consideration of what it might mean to affirm a maternal inheritance in philosophical thinking.
condition for the one, in a way that, while different for every one, is the same in its relation to these divisions of future and past, hope and hopelessness, Jew and non-Jew. To suggest this, is to lose all the specificity of GreekJew JewGreek, which is to say, it is to dehistoricize and decontextualize both psychoanalysis and the wider political and historical context in which Freud developed psychoanalysis.

An analysis of Israeli-Jew makes clear that it is impossible to pursue the questions Derrida (and similarly Israel) poses about the aporia of the archive (does one base one’s thinking on an archive event, or does an experience archive itself, thereby making archization possible) and about the question of how to understand the place of woman in the patriarchal logic of the archive without retaining, and analyzing, the significance of the specificity of Jew and non-Jew in the archival relation of psychoanalysis, and relatedly, in the archival relation between Israeli-Jew. My concern here of course is not psychoanalysis but Israel. But as I have suggested, the question of how Israeli remembers Jew is in essence the question of how the unmarked universal man of European modernity is simultaneously also the question of how the non-Jew, or “the godless Jew” “remembers” the Jew in the archival relation I trace above in terms of psychoanalysis. In other words, the relation between Israeli and Jew can be understood in terms of the production of the singular subject through the patriarchal logic of the archive. This production of subjectivity thus emerges through the claim to sovereignty that is haunted by the trace of the other in the archive is the Jew who does not belong to modern
nationalism, the diasporic Jew who bears much in common with the patients through whom Freud developed psychoanalysis.

In the next section of this chapter, I will more explicitly show the relation between Jew-Israeli and the question of the Jew in psychoanalysis through an analysis of how the relation through which Israeli remembers Jew is gendered. Because Israeli-Jew explicitly holds on to both Jew in its specificity, and to Israeli as the unmarked universal citizen, with the political and historical genealogies attached to both these categories, it is impossible to suggest that this conjunction would be the same, in a different way, for any people. In other words, because this conjunction emerges out of European modernity and its imperialist histories, the whole point, or question perhaps, of this conjunction, is precisely about how a specific understanding of the human and of difference has shaped the political frameworks of European modernity and of the various forms of colonial and postcolonial formations attached to this modernity.

While Derrida recognizes the relevance of this question for Israel, he seems to let go of the specificity of the historical context of the conceptual frameworks through which he develops his thinking. Neither the specificity of the Jew in relation to European modernity, nor the specificity of the Jew in relation to the Abrahamic narrative, seem to be retained in his move from Yerushalmi’s investment in the singularity of Jewish tradition to the recognition that the same structure of singularity could be true, in a different way, for any people willing to recognize themselves in terms of such an archival relation. It is precisely the specificity of the Jew in both psychoanalysis and in terms of
Israel which allows for an understanding of how this patricharcal logic repeats itself through a displacement of sexual difference. Because the specificity of the Jew here is inextricably bound up in the formation of European modernity, to ask about the specificity of the Jew in this context is to consider the significance of the colonial and postcolonial contexts through which European modernity emerged.

When Derrida writes of the Jew as the term that names this relation to the archive in terms of the mark of the archive as a mark of circumcision, he explicitly recognizes that this is a question relevant in terms of contemporary Israel. It is in the sense of being marked or circumcised by language that Derrida writes that the Jew can be understood as a poet; writing of Paul Celan’s poetry, Derrida (2005c) suggests that the poem is “the language of the individual that has taken on form.” In this sense the poem, like the Jew, is singular in the relation between the particular and the universal. It is also in this sense that Derrida defines the Jew as shibboleth;

A shibboleth, the word shibboleth, if it is one, names, in the broadest extension of its generality or its usage, every insignificant, arbitrary mark, for example, the phonemic difference between shi and si when that difference becomes discriminative, decisive, and divisive. The difference has no meaning in and of itself, but it becomes what one must know how to recognize and above all to mark if one is to make the step, to step across the border of a place or the threshold of a poem, to see oneself granted the right of asylum or the legitimate habitation of a language. So as to no longer be outside of the law…. It is not enough to know the difference; one must be capable of it, must be able to do it, or know how to do it – and doing here means marking. This differential mark that it is not enough to know like a theorem – that is the secret. A secret without secret. The right to alliance involves no hidden secret, no meaning concealed in a crypt. In the word, the difference between shi and si has no meaning. But it is the ciphered mark that one must be able to partake of with the other, and this differential capability must be inscribed in oneself, that is, in one’s own body as
much as in the body of one’s own language, the one to the same extent as the other. (26)

In other words, one must be the difference through articulating oneself in self-differential relation, marked in one’s very utterance of “I.” But this ontological difference necessitates also an epistemological and phenomenological challenge to ontological assumptions because this articulation of an “I” involves both language and what is beyond the grasp of language, and a relation between speaker and the difference internal linguistic community. Derrida writes that

The Jew, the name Jew, also exchanges places with the shibboleth, against it. Prior even to using the pledge or to being its victim, prior to all separation between communitarian separation or discriminating separation, whether safe or lost, master or exile, Jew is the shibboleth. Witness to the universal, but as absolute, dated, marked, incised, caesuraed singularity – as the other and in the name of the other.

(And I will also add that, in its fearsome political ambiguity, shibboleth could today name the State of Israel, the present state of the State of Israel….) (Ibid. 50).

Derrida does not elaborate here explicitly about what he means with this reference to Israel, beyond to say that this remark deserves more than a parenthesis, but that what he says in parentheses is that “it is a question here of nothing but this, everywhere and beyond the borders of this parenthesis” (Ibid. 50-51). I will show how, because Israel brings the question of the archival relation between the Jewish man and the non-Jewish man into the framework of the nation-state, and does so with a particularly strong investment in the reproduction of the category Israeli-Jew within this framework, an analysis of Israel allows for an understanding of sexual difference in terms of this
archival relation between Jew and non-Jew. I will show how an analysis of Israel reveals that the claim to sovereignty through which the subject emerges is not only haunted not by the narrative of that from which it comes, but is also a claim which refuses to acknowledge how the body and the affective relation between the body and its representation through language, haunt any attempt at such representation. This refusal, I suggest, displaces sexual difference as an inaccessible originary difference on to a difference between bodies, and this displacement is itself therefore simultaneously the production also of a racialized difference in the production of an oedipal relation between “father” and “son,” whether these are figured in terms of God and man, or differently in terms of European man and postcolonial or Jew.

For Freud, psychoanalysis was a means to try to exorcise the specters that haunt the archive, the termination of the work of psychoanalysis signified, as in his dream, at the moment when the archaeologist finds that the stones themselves talk, a moment of jouissance that, Derrida suggests, Freud would like to be interminable, at the same time that he wants to claim the position of scientist who “does not speak with phantoms” (Derrida 1996, 94). Derrida writes,

Each time he wants to teach the topology of archives, that is to say, of what ought to exclude or forbid the return to the origin, this lover of stone figurines proposes archaeological parables. The most remarkable and the most precocious of them is well known, in the study of hysteria of 1896. We must once again underline a few words in this work to mark what is to my eyes the most acute moment. A moment and not a process, this instant does not belong to the laborious deciphering of the archive. It is the nearly ecstatic instant Freud dreams of, when the very success of the dig must sign the effacement of the archivist: the origin then speaks by itself.
The arkhe appears in the nude, without archive. It presents itself and comments on itself by itself. ‘Stones talk!’ In the present. (Ibid. 93).

Derrida thus leads us here to the question of what it would mean to address the figure of woman in terms of this archontic principle of the archive, in which man speaks through the continual search for an inaccessible origin and a particular logic of filiation and domiciliation. The dream of making the stones talk is a dream of origin, of access to a single moment and place of beginning. But the tracing of subjectivity in the archive reveals such access to be impossible; the voice of the one is always running after what and that which preceded it and through which it is able to speak; the moment in which a subject uttered itself into being is always also related to a time and a place that cannot be identified in language because it is what is named through language, internal to it but other to it.

The injunction of memory with the anticipation of the future to come therefore orders repetition that involves the violence of forgetting and the law of “the father” as the law of “the one,” of self-determination as the possibility of emergence as a speaking subject. In this relation there is always a remainder, an echo in which the voice of the one being contested or to whom one responds, remains, and is made to speak with a

---

19 This is also the impossibility of origin of which Derrida (1998) writes of in terms of a prosthesis of origin.

20 Derrida asks a similar question in The Politics of Friendship (2005), and is suggestive of another version of this question almost in the form of an answer preceding the question in Right of Inspection (1998).
difference. For Derrida then, psychoanalysis as “Jewish” would seem to mean an understanding of singularity as that which is always part of but in excess of the particular and the universal, that which shows that there is no meta-archive or meta-language, because

by incorporating the knowledge deployed in reference to it, the archive augments itself, engrosses itself, it gains in auctoritas. But in the same stroke it loses the absolute and meta-textual authority it might claim to have. The archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future. (1996, 68)

Derrida names this impossibility as an impossibility of bringing the voice of father and son into one, and of Jew and non-Jew into one. But for Derrida, this impossibility is interchangeable with other archival relations – with other peoples. In contrast, I am suggesting that an analysis of the specificity of the Jew in relation to Europe, through the Jew’s relation to Israel, reveals that this archival logic has been historically produced through a concept of the human that is based on a displacement of sexual difference, and is specifically the narrative of the emergence of a postcolonial subject. In the next section, I will show how an analysis of Israeli-Jew reveals the question of sexual difference to be at the center of this impossibility of reconciliation between Jew and non-Jew in the patriarchal logic of the archive.  

21 I would argue that this would likely be true, in a different way, for any postcolonial formation, though perhaps more difficult to trace and explicate historically in direct relation to psychoanalysis. In other words, I am not suggesting that a connection between racialization and European modernity’s notion of sexual difference is unique to the formation of Israeli-Jew, but
If we return for a moment to where this chapter started (and for that matter to
where the dissertation started) we return to the question of archive as being about a
question of origin as a place that “coordinates two principles in one;” the root arkhe
contains both the meaning of the place where things commence, and of the place from
which order, authority, and commandment are given. Israeli-Jew, I argued, is defined in
terms of two different dominant narratives through which Israeli-Jew is defined as having
commenced, and through whose authority the present is interpreted and judged.22

The conjunction Israeli-Jew makes explicit that the question of origin in relation to
European modernity’s concept of a sovereign subject, and thus also the question of origin
in terms of Freud’s oscillation between a sovereign and a non-sovereign subject, is “first”
about a relation between two different figures of man; the man of Greek metaphysics and
the man “produced by” metaphysics who cannot be same to himself, who is a figure of

rather that the specificity of Israeli-Jew reveals the postcolonial by definition to be both European
and non-European, both inside and outside. The specificity of Israeli-Jew, I am suggesting, also
makes explicit that the postcolonial, at least in the case of Israel, brings together two different
patriarchal narratives within the narrative of “the” postcolonial.

22 As I suggest elsewhere, (see the introduction and chapter seven) the encounter between these
two different narratives in terms of a site and origin of authority through which the present is
interpreted and judged shapes not only informal and subtle everyday interpretations of the
present, but also explicitly shapes juridical, legislative and religious processes. See Rothenberg
and Schweid (2002), especially the following: Naftali Rothenberg’s “Can State Constitution and
Halakhic Constitution Coexist? Is a Halakhic State Possible”; Shmuel Jakobovits’ “Two
Ideologies – Yet Still One People”; Eva Etzioni Halevy’s “Halakhic State or Split Identity? A
Sociological Study”; Yehoshua Porath’s “The State Does Not Need Halakha”; and Amnon
Shapira’s “Can State Constitution and Halakhic Constitution Coexist?”. See also Bilsky 2004 for
thoughtful analysis of the concept of transitional justice in terms of Israel’s conflicts between
Halakhic law and state law in specific court cases, including that of Rabin’s assassin.
difference in relation to the purported unmarked universal human of European modernity. What these “other men” actually are in terms of the narratives of representation through which they emerge are not insignificant (this is the whole question of postcolonial response), but they are shaped by their position vis-à-vis European modernity which, under the names colonial and postcolonial, brings into being a relation between two different origin narratives, by bringing together, or rather producing, what can be understood as “two different men,” one unmarked (the European) and one marked (the postcolonial).

An Israeli-Jew may come from a man and a woman, but an Israeli-Jew also comes from Israeli and from Jew, which is to say that an Israeli-Jew also comes from two men. To try to understand what this genealogy means for Israeli-Jewish self-representation, and thus for an understanding of origin, sexual difference, and how the lines demarcating the political in Israel are constituted, I want to return to the question of the relation between Jew and non-Jew in Freud’s psychoanalysis.

If Israeli can now be understood in terms of claims to European universalism based on the notion of a sovereign, unmarked subject, then it is possible to now continue with the question of the Jew that Israeli remembers and attempts to protect in relation to the threat of these claims to sovereignty. Israeli-Jew, in this sense, is an example of the postcolonial expression of subjectivity, one which is that of a marked man in relation with the purportedly unmarked universal man of European modernity. In other words, I am suggesting here that the postcolonial subject can be understood as the expression of
the narrative of the marked man as he is haunted by the narrative of the unmarked universal man. The framework of the nation-state, through which the postcolonial is reproduced as a collective entity, raises the question of the difference of woman in relation to the postcolonial, because of this reproduction.

If I have managed to show how Yerushalmi’s and Derrida’s discussion about Freud reveals that the archival relation on which Freud bases psychoanalysis – between father and son – can be understood as being a relation between Jew and non-Jew, then this understanding begs the question of what this understanding means for the implications of a political framework based on an idea of the human as non-Jew and as a universal unmarked subject (European liberalism), for the implications of political frameworks based on an idea of the human as singular but always in the name of a particular idiom (Israeli-Jew, or potentially any other name). This is also to ask the question of “the” postcolonial; what does it mean for the framework of the postcolonial country based on the political framework of European liberalism’s universal subject for the postcolonial subject as “European-postcolonial” to be reproduced as a collective entity? More specifically, of course, here I am asking this question in terms of Israel and the Jew. The figure of woman enters into the production of the postcolonial because the postcolonial as a group must be reproduced, and such reproduction is defined in terms of the difference between man and woman, or between two, through which another is produced.
But the postcolonial man’s subjectivity is already the product of two; he is the product of the European man and the postcolonial man. In other words, the postcolonial man is both the difference of the colonized through which he is marked as non-European, and European through the post which remakes him in the model of European sovereignty and independence from colonial definition. Here sexual difference understood in terms of biological difference and reproduction meets a difference of origin marked as racialized difference. In the context of Israel, it is thus also in this encounter that two different archival relations, and therefore a temporal relation of self to its representation, join. This is precisely where the specificity of the content and history of the name and the idiom matter for understanding what this archival relation in which the subject is defined as not same to itself, as not one, means for a concept of the subject in terms of political representation.

I was reminded of the question of what it means for Israeli to remember Jew in these terms on a recent visit to my parents while writing this dissertation. I was sitting on the bed, and my mother was searching for something on the computer in the same room. We weren’t talking about anything in particular, and I hadn’t decided yet whether to get to work or not. For some reason, probably because I had been thinking about these texts and about Israel, I remembered that my grandfather, her father, had had a different name than Shaul, which was the name I had known him by, although I had called him “Saba,” which is the word for grandfather in Hebrew.
“Ima,” I asked my mother, “what was Saba’s other name, the one he had before Shaul?”

She looked at me, a little surprised, “Saba’s name?”

“His other name, his Hungarian name, before it was changed in Israel, I know you told me one time, but I don’t remember,” I explained.

She said, “Paul, his name was Paul Cesky.” “Paul Cesky,” I repeated. My mother said yes, and she said I could look for it on the internet.

I had my laptop open in front of me, so I did, at the same time saying, “But he won’t be on the internet, internet is too new,” I trailed off. A bunch of Paul Cesky’s came up on my google search, and I said, there’s a whole bunch of other Paul Cesky’s online though.”

“But there was only one who was your Saba” my mother responded, shaking her head a little.

“So he was called “Shaul” because it was as close a Hebrew version of “Paul” as they could find? But how did they choose “Bar-Haim” for his last name?”

“I think it must have been because his father’s name was Hayim,” she answered.


“It’s like “bat,” for girls, something like “son of,” or “from,” she said.

Shaul, son of Hayim. The conversation reminded me that right after my grandmother had died, when I was in Guatemala and too far away to see what I couldn’t see, I had had a momentary urge to search for my grandmother online, to find some trace of her somewhere out there that I could see or read, if nothing else. Of course the search had been fruitless. Her maiden name had been Mizrahi, which in Hebrew means “eastern.” Her father was from Iraq, and many of the Jews from Arab countries had been given the last name “Mizrahi” after they arrived in Israel. I didn’t know more than that. I hadn’t thought to ask. Her mother was born in Palestine, and I don’t know what her last name was, or in what language it was. European Jews and Middle Eastern Jews had their names “Hebraicized” by the state of Israel. Hebraicized and not “Judaized;” for the most part these Jews already had Jewish names, whether in Yiddish, German, Ladino, Arabic, Persian, or some other language. And so the state of Israel became that which gave order through naming, as both “God” and as “man,” because as both “Jewish” and as “liberal democracy.” This is one of many examples through which these two archives and their different temporalities encounter one another in Israel.

It is not that the name of woman does not matter; at Israel’s Ben Gurion airport I am sometimes asked at passport control for my mother’s maiden name, in order to check whether it is a Jewish and/or Israeli name. Woman speaks, but as her body, not in her name, woman as ground for the production of text. Woman is hidden behind the difference of Jew and non-Jew and new Jew and old Jew. The woman’s maiden name
matters, but it matters in how it marks Jew and non-Jew; it is the woman who is the place and the body (of the text and of the womb) through which Jewishness is passed on, and Jewishness is signified and transmitted in the name as that which names the ground of woman.

An archival logic based on the name is itself a patriarchal logic. In this sense, an archive based on naming and language would by definition always be based on a patriarchal structure, regardless of its specificities. But because of the history specific to the figure of the Jew, as Yerushalmi and Derrida point to, the archive, and the Jew, can also be defined as singular; the specificity of the Jew reveals the impossibility of any meta-archive, even if the archive in general can be understood as patriarchal. But Israel reveals that the narrative of the sovereignty of the European unmarked universal man is in fact a narrative based on a displacement of sexual difference through which the postcolonial man is produced as a figure of difference among men.

In what follows, I show how an analysis of psychoanalysis in terms of both Israel and Jewishness helps to understand the figure of woman in terms of contemporary Israeli contexts. What happens to woman, and to sexual difference, when the displacement of sexual difference present in the diasporic Jew is no longer allowed by the New Jew, and when the displacement of sexual difference present in the New Jew still demands that women be defined both as Jewish and as not men? And to return to the opening question of the research on which this dissertation is based, what does this question of sexual difference in turn then mean for an understanding of Israeli-Jew, and thus also of the
human and of the political? To ask these questions is to rethink Freud’s work not simply in terms of the question of the presence of the Jew in psychoanalysis and the presence of woman in psychoanalysis, but to think of the encounter between the narratives of two different men in psychoanalysis, and what it means to reproduce the narrative of this encounter, i.e. the narrative of the postcolonial man, in the terms of the group, i.e. in terms of the nation-state.

**Like a Dog: Psychoanalysis, Israeli-Jew, and the Question of Sexual Difference.**

Thus far in this chapter, I have argued that the conjunction Israeli-Jew can be understood in terms of a temporal relation in which Israeli remembers Jew, through which the production of subjectivity as shibboleth, or as a subject who is singular through a relation of being haunted by the archival narrative through which the subject emerges, can be understood as both Jew and as non-Jew. I have suggested that while Derrida points out this can be the case for any people prepared to recognize themselves in such a relation to archive, it is not true for everyone in the same way in terms of how people have recognized themselves; the very reason why this archival relation becomes legible in these terms is because of the relation between the European sovereign subject defined as same to himself in relation to the marked figure of the postcolonial man. In other words, to say that the production of subjectivity through an archival circumcision is true for anyone in a different way as long as they acknowledge this production of subjectivity as the production of such a circumcision, is true to a certain extent, but only in the abstract;
to say so is to skip or not to return to the material, social and psychic effects of this archival formation in terms of European modernity and its colonial and postcolonial formations. Israeli-Jew forces this question directly in terms of Israel but also in terms of psychoanalysis, precisely because psychoanalysis brings together the specificity of the European and the postcolonial in terms of the question of the Jew and the question of woman, through an analysis of individuation in terms of a question of representation of origin.

Israeli-Jew retains both the postcolonial man and the European man without allowing one to replace the other in terms of the production of an archive, which is to say, in the production of an authorial voice and place. At the same time, as a political framework for a group, it also retains the figure of woman because Israeli-Jew requires the reproduction of the group in biological terms, and such biological reproduction is predominantly defined through a relation between the categories of man and woman. In this section, I will explain how the question of sexual difference or of the figure of woman which Israeli-Jew poses cannot, therefore, be adequately understood without considering the implications of the marking of the postcolonial. But I will not yet focus directly on the figure of woman; this is the subject of the next section. Here, I will arrive to the question of woman by showing how the production of postcolonial subjectivity in terms of Israeli-Jew can be understood in terms of sexuality and gender in the relation between the two narratives of the universal man of European modernity and the Jewish postcolonial diasporic man, represented in the conjunction Israeli-Jew.
The point here will not be to understand sexual difference for its own sake (not that this wouldn’t be worthwhile, but it is the question to which this project arrived rather than the question with which it began), but rather to understand sexual difference because it becomes impossible to understand the conjunction Israeli-Jew and its effects in contemporary Israel without understanding the postcolonial (and its racialization) in relation to an understanding of sexual difference. This is how it comes to be that, as I stated in the introduction, an analysis of Israeli-Jew reveals the question of sexual difference to be at the heart of European modernity’s political frameworks of liberalism and sovereignty, and at the center of the concept of the human on which these frameworks are based.

I will begin with a story from Shuli in Bat Yam. I will briefly situate his story in the context of the internal difference of the Jew which I discussed in Part Two in terms of territory, language, and character. Then, I will draw engage with discussions about the question of the presence of the Jew in Freud’s psychoanalysis to show how contemporary Israel reveals Zionism not to have reproduced a non-Jewish heterosexual normative masculinity. Through an analysis of sexuality in terms of the archival relation between Israeli and Jew, I will arrive at the question of woman and sexual difference. In the next section, I will go on to show how an analysis of the conjunction Israeli-Jew in terms of the question of “the” postcolonial woman leads to an understanding of sexual
difference in terms of an understanding of origin in a relation between linguistic
signification and the body.  

******

It is late morning one day in late spring, 2008, and I am sitting with Shuli outside of
David and Levana’s store. We are sitting on the plastic crates turned upside down into
makeshift stools, watching people come in and out of the store as we chat. He is telling
me about when he was called for his annual military service, called milluim, years ago.

Shuli begins the story, “One time we went, we had 50 days milluim,… I came
from home with a fever, and a friend from Bat Yam, he also came with a cold. We first
went to a training camp for three days where we get the uniforms and weapons, and then
we went inside Lebanon. All of a sudden, the same day, I left the house with a fever, we
put on uniforms, a car comes like this. What is he selling? Ice cream and cold drinks. My
friend goes and gets two ice creams and cold drinks, for him and for me, and gives one to
me. Lux like this, with chocolate inside. Nissim, I have a fever, I tell him. Eat! he says to
me. He starts to eat, I ate. I let the cold cola warm up a bit, then I drank it. By the
evening, we ran, and when we’re doing our training exercises, I have no fever, no
congestion, nothing. How do you explain this?”

---

23 I put “the” in quotation marks here both to reference that there is not a single postcolonial, and
because here it is exactly the relation between differently marked figures of the postcolonial
woman, and her relation to the purportedly unmarked except as woman “European” woman, and
to the postcolonial man and the European man, that allows for an understanding of sexual
difference as displaced in claims of a liberal sovereign subject.
I say, “I don’t know, how do you explain it?”

Shuli goes on, “A whole week I was as if dead at home, and I could have brought a note about being sick, but I went, I didn’t want to bring a note.”

“Why not?” I ask.

“I didn’t want to,” he says. “Because you know, we’re friends, twenty-five years together.”

I say, “It’s with the same people all the time.”

“The same people, the same commanders, we know each other like family,” Shuli explains. “We’d meet two weeks after we’d do milluim somewhere, at a night club or at a coffee shop, my wife would come, she knows everyone. It was fun, believe me. When people go on vacation, they lift the phone to call everyone, what do you want, what do you need? You know, one time, in Lebanon, it was winter, we took the places of the parachuters. I saw a storage room filled with flour, oil, in high piles. Someone brought us a phone to call home, and I called my wife and asked her for the recipe how to make soufganyot24, for a kilo of them. Give me a recipe for a kilo, I said. So, I took a pen and started to write. What was missing, yeast? Someone was leaving for vacation and asked what we wanted, I told him do me a favor, Schmuel, bring yeast. How much? I told him bring a big package, half a kilo. He said, yeast, that’s all you need?! I said that’s all. I wait for him, at night he brings the yeast. I tell the commander the next day that I don’t

24 Soufganyot are similar to donuts and to beignets – something of a cross between the two.
feel well, that I’ll stay and help the others in the kitchen today. He doesn’t know me as a troublemaker, I don’t make trouble. He said as you want, Shuli stay. In the kitchen I said to the cook, today I am making soufganyot. He said how?! there is oil, I told him? There is. There are eggs? There are. There is flour? There is. But there isn’t yeast, he said. I told him, Schmuelik, there will be soufganyot. Now, jam, in Shefa there is in boxes. I took plastic bags and put the jam inside and made a hole. Listen, I made about 150 soufganyot. They left in the morning at 6am, and come back only at 8pm at night.”

I ask, “This was in south Lebanon,“

“In south Lebanon, at the base,” Shuli says. “I brought 6 soufganyot and put them on a plate, and put sugar in a bottle, powered sugar is needed, that I put next to them and put a little on each one, taq taq taq. All of a sudden my friend came, almost everyone is a friend, but my closest friends, I said Nissim look at what my wife sent, a package, soufganyot he said wow, how can they still be warm? What is this? I said wala, special [express] they brought them. He started to eat, they said wala, what soufganyot. Everyone came, give me one, so delicious. They ate. I started to bring them out, everyone came to eat, they started, all the motzagiym sent their drivers to take soufganyot,”

“this was before Hanukkah?” I ask.

“What Hannukah?!” Shuli laughts. “It was 2 months before Hannukah. I would like to do things like this, to surprise them. If not, piles of flour, oil would have stood there for nothing,”

I ask, “In Iraq did they make soufganyot too?”

270
“No, not in Iraq. They would make something else. They’re called shminiyot. It’s also made with flour, and fried, but there is a lot of work in making them. Once I tried to make them at home, I didn’t succeed,” Shuli admits.

I say, “It’s probably very difficult?”

Shuli explains, “The flour and the water, you need maybe ten times before you throw it in the frying pan to stir it so it is airy, I didn’t succeed. I have a book, I like the kitchen, to go in the kitchen, to make all kinds of things.”

“From whom did you learn?” I ask him.

Shuli says, “I like it. I saw my wife, my mother in the kitchen, I would ask her how to do things. Look, sometimes the kids come, and everyone, my wife can’t do it all herself. There were with me, after Passover, on Sunday, we made on the grill, at my son’s house, my brother and my wife, and the kids, my daughter, everyone was there, I made maybe ten different kinds of salad. It’s a lot of work, what do you think.”

I go back to the subject of war, and ask him, “But how do you continue after war, with everything, ”

Shuli says, “you know, for a week, two weeks afterwards I ask, what will be, what happened, this is like this, and this like this, afterwards you get into a routine, with work, wife, kids, and you forget about it.”

I say, “It all the time continues, also now,”
Shuli says, “Yes, I have a son, he was in the border police, he got rocks to his head a few times, he was in Jerusalem, and the younger one was in a tovata, you know what that is, a heavy armoured vehicle, a driver, go here, go there.”

“It seems dramatic,” I say, “the fear that something will happen to you, and that you have to decide,”

We are briefly interrupted by two women, from the looks of it, a mother and daughter, who ask for directions to the nearest bus stop. Shuli motions them in the right direction, and continues,

“Look, one time we were in Lebanon, and there was a curfew. And we were in a nigmash, you know what that is, like a tank, but not a tank, with a necklace. It has two miklaiyeem, And the commander, he is the first. All of a sudden we see an Arab running. Curfew, it’s not allowed. So my commander, with the light projector, shines it on him, and tells me, speak in Arabic, tell him to stop. Stop. He didn’t stop, he went into an alley, threw away his weapon and hid. We got to him, and my commander told me to get out and check him, catch him, he doesn’t have a gun. so I ask him why did you run away, we told you to stop, why didn’t you stop. He starts to moan something, all of a sudden puts his hand on his revolver, I gave him a hit, he moved his hand, I took his revolver, I caught him by his hair, gave him a hit and broke all his teeth. We took him to the prisoners camp, you know what that is,”

“Yes,” I say.
Shuli says, “That’s where all the shabak [Israeli equivalent of CIA] sit, and the interrogators. We brought him there. The commanders said what for did you bring him here? Kill him. He asked me, did he have a weapon? I said he had a Kalshnikov, I don’t know where he threw it. And you know, he asked him where are you from, where are you from, he hit him like this, after five minutes he started to tell about where he is from, where he was born…the commander said don’t bring him here. Sometimes they are terrorists. Kill him. There are ones who if we let them, they would exterminate us, they would slit our throats, really, with a knife, like how people kill chickens.”

I say, “But it’s a state of war, no, like how the Jews in WWII might have wanted to do something against,”

Shuli says, “Yes, but look, you’re not taking a person and burning him, you’re shooting at someone who is coming to kill you with weapons,”

I say, “Yes, but what if they also look at us like this, that they have to kill someone who is coming to kill them?”

“Yes, but they, let’s say, from school, they teach them to hate the Jews. That we took their land…” Shuli says.

I say, “But some really did have their land taken. We’re also taught to hate them,”

Shuli disagress, “No, in school we’re not taught to hate Arabs in school,”

“not to hate them, but to be afraid of them,” I say.

Shuli says, “Look, since the establishment of the state, we will never have quiet…the state of Israel was established, we thought there would be quiet,”
A man who looks to be more or less Shuli’s age walks by, about to go into the store.

He says, “Good morning, good morning, good morning,” and responds to last part of Shuli’s sentence that he apparently overheard. “Quiet, why no quiet? It’s not quiet?” he demands.

Shuli says, “It’s very quiet.”

The man goes on as if he didn’t hear, “I’ll tell you why?”

Shuli obliges: “Why?”

“I grew up in the Middle East (be’medinot ha’rav)” the man informs us, as if this should already indicate to us half the answer.

Shuli says “I grew up in the Middle East too,"

The man continues, unperturbed, “The Arab, was like an ant, the Jews, but the, Shuli apparently already understands what he means and cuts in to finish, “that’s what I’m telling her, they would be on top,”

The man offers a corrective; “They didn’t become on top, they were allowed to be on top,”

Shuli agrees, repeating, “they were allowed to be on top.”

The man gains more momentum and launches into what seems to be a different story, “I came from the war, the six day war, I went down from the tank, in Gaza, and one tells to another, there in the street, in Arabic, he says ‘this one will eat ten like us,’ they ran…”

274
They both seem excited now. Shuli responds, “Listen, my uncle,”

I am curious about the customer and interrupt, asking him, “where did you grow up?”

“I came at the age of four from Iraq, in ’48,” he answers.

“From Iraq?” Shuli says, “I came in ’51 from Iraq, at the age of 7,”

I say, “Maybe your families knew each other?”

Shuli says, “It’s possible,”

The customer says, “I remember, in Iraq, I was a small child, I don’t remember myself, but I remember something, when a soldier would walk in the street, people would salute him, if you would throw a stone at soldier, give him a bullet to the head, but here, oy va voy, if katyushot are thrown at us here in all kinds of places, and children are killed, they don’t care whom, and if four of theirs are killed by accident, I promise you we don’t want it, I was a commander in the army, I don’t remember that we ever with force shot at people on purpose,”

Shuli says, “I told her, before we enter into war, we get a piece of paper that says like this to behave, what to do, what not to do, not to rape, it’s military orders,”

The customer says, “I was a commander and was demoted. Prisoners of war were sitting, 400 prisoners, Egyptian prisoners of war. One asked me for a little bit of water, he was thirsty. I gave him some water. Another soldier saw me do this, he filed a complaint against me. I was brought in front of a judge,”

“Because you gave him water?” I ask.
“Yes. Because I gave him water.” He goes on, explaining, “It hurt my heart. So what if he is a prisoner. It could have been me in his place. He was thirsty. They gave me 35 days in prison, and demoted me. It was good that they demoted me, so that I wouldn’t do milluim.”

“So you didn’t do milluim after that?” I ask.

The customer says, “No no, I did do milluim, until ’81 I did milluim. Then I was released because I had heart surgery. That you will not know. Stories. That you will be healthy. I wanted to get some tomatoes,”

I say, “But it’s complicated, isn’t it, because there were Arabs who lived here, and it’s a Jewish state, and a war, but they also have something for which to fight,”

Shuli says, “Yes. But look, the world decided that this is the country, they have 100 countries, that they will go there,”

I say, “But if they are people who have lived here all their lives,”

Shuli says, “They have Lebanon, they have Syria, they have Jordan, that they will go to live there,”

I ask, “But what about the people who, that there are Arabs in those countries doesn’t mean that it is theirs [Palestinians],”

Shuli says, “This is a Jewish state, sweetheart. It’s enough that we suffered in exile for 2000 years.”

The customer explains, “According to one plan, we were supposed to be sent to Ghana, Israel was going to be Ghana. But they gave us Israel. Why not. Should all the
world be Muslims? It’s not enough that two thirds of the world is Muslims? It’s the same thing, the world is two thirds sea, it’s the same, the same with them, the world is two thirds Muslim. Whatever you give to Arabs, it is not enough. Know this, put it in your head, my mother, God bless her name, she would tell, she was with my brother, God bless his name, she would come home, and you know, there wasn’t air conditioning,”

Shuli adds, “and no light, and no radio,”

The customer says, “radio there was, radio there was. There was a basement, like a shelter, in every house there was one,”

I ask, “This was here or”

The customer answers, “In Iraq, in Iraq. …I would remember when I was little, my mother would put me to eat with my brother, and little crumbs would fall out of my mouth, and …when word went out that we were going to Palestine, that’s how they called it then, six police officers were sent to our house…”

Shuli’s narrative condenses references to many of the differences that I argued in Part II are internal to the Jew and made explicit in terms of binary oppositions in the figure Israeli-Jew. Shuli remembers the experience of being in the army, and specifically in Lebanon in a time of war, as much in terms of getting a recipe from his wife, and surprising surprising his friends with pastries he invested himself in making for them, as in terms of masculine ideals of physical combat and bravery. He also introduces his story by beginning with a contrast between feeling weak and sick, and then almost magically feeling much better and stronger, a change which he suggests is provoked by joining his
friends for their annual military service, leaving his house, and perhaps because of the
drink and ice-cream that his friend insisted he accept from him. When I turn the subject
of the conversation to war itself, commenting that it must be hard and asking what it is
like afterwards, Shuli tells about an encounter with an Arab, also while he was in the
army in Lebanon. Here he speaks in Arabic, but as an Israeli who is being tough and
violent against the Arab enemy. When I suggest that the Arab is perhaps fighting the
Israeli because it is a state of war (not necessarily because of a particular hate for Jews),
making sloppy reference to WWII with the intention of pointing out that if people are
attacked they often will try to defend themselves or to counterattack, Shuli responded by
saying that if we (Israelis) don’t attack them then then some of them would exterminate
us, and “would slit our throats like chickens.” The tough Israeli here must be tough in
order to prevent the violence of being treated like an animal. A few minutes later, after
we are joined by another resident of the neighborhood, there is a similar shift between
positions characteristic of the diasporic Jew and the New Jew.

Soon after Shuli remarks that it is enough that Jews suffered for 2000 years in
exile, and that it is time they also have a state of their own, another resident of the
neighborhood, also from Iraq, joins the conversation. Hearing Shuli comment on how
“the situation” isn’t quiet, he immediately joins in, fervently exclaiming about what he
takes to be Shuli’s pronouncement that it isn’t quiet. He excitedly volunteers his
declaration of why it is that it isn’t quiet, doing so through recalling his past in Iraq where
“the Arabs were like ants,” but were “allowed to be on top.” Once the Jews had their own
state, the implicit suggestion seems to be, the Arabs were no longer on top; the neighborhood resident tells about how when he was doing his military service in Gaza, the Palestinians on the street who saw him get out of his tank said that he would “eat ten like [them].” The man telling the story could understand what they said because he knows Arabic. He is placed here both as diasporic, not sovereign or “on top” in relation to Arabs or in relation to the soldiers in Baghdad, who may well have been British. But then, within minutes, his position as a sovereign, strong, “on top” subject is again put into question, this time through his recognition that “it could be him” in the place of the Egyptian prisoner of war, explaining why he gave water to the prisoner and defending himself against the complaint of another soldier for doing so, which led to his demotion and prison time; “I gave him some water. Another soldier saw me do this, he filed a complaint against me. I was brought in front of a judge,…Because I gave him water. It hurt my heart. So what if he is a prisoner. It could have been me in his place. He was thirsty. They gave me 35 days in prison, and demoted me.” Within minutes, after I ask about the reasons for the conflict between Jews and Arabs, which is also signified as between Israelis and Palestinians or as between Israelis and the citizens of Israel’s neighboring countries such as Lebanon and Egypt, both Shuli and the man who joined in our conversation say that the Jews need a Jewish state, that the Arabs have many

\[^{25}\text{See Jackson (2006) for a history of the British Empire during WWII. The British maintained a military presence in Iraq in the 1940s following the war between Iraqi authorities and Britain and the allied forces, in the wider struggle against Vichy and German forces.}\]
countries, and at the same time begin to reminisce about what life was like when they lived in Iraq. Both implicitly and explicitly, the Israeli-Jew is defined here in terms of multiple languages, as European and Arab, as weak and as strong, as coming from elsewhere and as having returned “home,” as hospitable and as hostile. The Israeli-Jew is in this sense both old and new, both diasporic and “returned from exile,” and, in ways similar to the narrative I recount in chapter four, also both treated like an animal and treating others like an animal.

In these movements back and forth between being animal and not animal, sovereign and not sovereign, weak and strong, the Jew in these narratives resembles the ways in which Sander Gilman (1991; 1993) and others (Boyarin 1997; Pellegrini 1997; Slavet 2009) have suggested the Jew is present in Freud’s psychoanalysis. I will turn now from the relation between the diasporic and the new Jew in Zionism and Israel back to the question of the Jew in psychoanalysis in terms of the archival relation between the European unmarked universal man and the Jew marked as singular. I will first show how the Israeli-Jewish man, in terms of the movement between binaries which I have identified above, is present in terms of the Jew and non-Jew of Freud’s psychoanalysis. I will then show how contemporary Israel suggests an understanding of the relation between sexuality and the postcolonial, specifically marked as Jew, which draws attention to the question of how to understand the structural position of woman in terms of representation, gender and sexuality. An analysis of this question of woman in relation to the postcolonial, I will suggest, suggests a concept of the subject in terms of a
temporality that is out of joint with itself, not fully present to itself, in which subjectivity is partially undone through affective relation to oneself through the other.

Freud himself defined his development of psychoanalysis not as an analysis of racialized or ethnic difference, but rather as an analysis of individuation and of nervous disorders through an understanding of sexuality and sexual identifications. But while Freud himself defined psychoanalysis in universalist terms, a number of scholars besides for Yerushalmi have argued that psychoanalysis can nonetheless be understood as a Jewish science. Of course, these discussions are preceded by the accusations against psychoanalysis and Freud’s work specifically for being Jewish; Freud’s books were burned by the Nazis in 1933, by the early 1930s almost all of Germany’s Jewish psychoanalysts had fled the country (and only 9 out of the 56 members of the German psychoanalytic society were not Jewish at the time), and in 1933, Max Eitington, then chair of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, transferred his authority to non-Jewish colleagues (Brockman 2003). While much of the scholarship which considers psychoanalysis in terms of the question of race is focused on the significance of the racialization of the Jew for Freud’s work, what I find most useful for my analysis of Israel is the ways in which the racialization of the Jew in psychoanalysis is situated both within Freud’s work and within the broader historical context within which he was working in terms of European modernity and in relation to his theorization of sexual difference (Jenson and Keller 2011; Khanna 2003).
In what follows here then, I will bring together the insights and questions some have posed about Freud’s work in these three areas: the racialization of the Jew, the figure of woman and notion of sexual difference, and the political context of European modernity and its imperialist history. An analysis of Israeli-Jew demands bringing all these areas together, and, I will suggest, can be understood through Freud’s work, while at the same time offering insight into some for the questions about racialization and sexual difference posed to psychoanalysis.

Sander Gilman (1985; 1990; 1991; 1993) has made it easy to see the ways in which the relation between psychoanalysis and those treated by psychoanalysis parallel the relation between the stereotypes of the diasporic Jew and Zionism’s ideal of the New Jew. Perhaps more than anyone else, Gilman has catalogued the overlap between the nervous disorders on which psychoanalysis focused and anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jews in turn of the century Europe. Gilman focuses on the implications of the proximity of Freud to the scientists and scientific discourse of the time. The latter was based on biological determinism that pathologized Jews. Gilman argues that Freud made the Jew invisible in psychoanalysis in response to such pathology. A study of the “strategic devices” that Freud developed to deal with the theories of biological determinism that pathologized Jews can, Gilman argues, contribute to understanding psychoanalysis as an explanatory model that could help free Jewish scientists, and perhaps Jews more generally, from the stigma of such pathology. One can see here a resonance with Zionism’s relation to the diasporic Jew; Zionism attempted to redefine the Jew in
universal terms through redefining the Jew through characteristics associated with the non-Jewish male of European modernity. But Zionism of course held on to the signifier “Jew,” and defined this “New Jew” in opposition to the old Jew, unlike psychoanalysis. Zionism thus also retained a racialized difference, while psychoanalysis, as Gilman highlights, did not.

Gilman presents the many ways in which Jews were pathologized, and the presence of these pathologies as the objects of psychoanalytic study. Language, the body, sexuality and character were all the focus both of anti-Semitic stereotypes of the Jew and of Freud’s and his colleagues’ diagnoses of their patients. Gilman argues that “the new science of psychoanalysis provided status for the Jew as scientist while re-forming the idea of medical science to exclude the debate about the implication of race. The question of the constitution of the subject within psychoanalysis is linked to the problem of identification” (9). The Jew, Gilman reveals, was understood to have a particular smell, gaze, sound, skin, and internal essence or soul.

In suggesting that psychoanalysis and Zionism can be understood to have a parallel relation to stereotypes of the diasporic Jew, I am not suggesting that Zionism and psychoanalysis share in common an analytic or political framework for understanding and responding to the pathologies associated with the diasporic Jew.26 Rather, the ways in

---

26 Cf. Boyarin (1997). While I find Boyarin’s work here very useful for his careful tracing of how the Jew has been figured in terms of sexuality in fin-de-siecle Europe and in a long history of Rabbinical texts, as I go on to explain here, I disagree with his argument about the similarity
which psychoanalysis brings together questions about racialization through the Jew with analyses of sexual difference, when thought alongside the ways in which the conjunction Israeli-Jew brings together different genealogies of the Jew and Europe, points to an understanding of sexual difference in relation to European modernity’s concept of the human, that is made legible through an analysis of Israeli-Jew. It is precisely because Israeli-Jew maintains both the diasporic Jew and the new Jew, which one can think of as the melancholic and neurotic patient and the ideal of achieving sovereignty and normalcy, but does so within a political framework of a collective which must be reproduced through a relation between man and woman, that an analysis of Israeli-Jew begs the question of how to understand the two narratives of man, one the man racialized through the postcolonial relation to Europe and the other the purportedly universal unmarked man, in relation to the figure of woman. As Gilman notes, the male Jew was stereotyped in gendered terms to be like a woman.

Daniel Boyarin (1997) has taken up the question of the Jew in terms of gender in Freud’s work. His passionate account of the Jew in terms of sexuality shows how the masculine ideal of traditional European Jewry in the nineteenth century was characterized by traits such as meekness, long suffering, patience, emotional warmth, inwardness, between psychoanalysis and Zionism in terms of the analytical frameworks with which they respond to, and which emerge out of, the pathologies associated with the Jew. I point out this disagreement not in order to offer a corrective for its own sake but because this difference is, in my view, central to what Boyarin’s work helps make possible to understand about the implications of the conjunction Israeli-Jew for an understanding of the political through contemporary Israel.
devotion, reliability, passivity, physical weakness, and studiousness; this ideal was embodied in the figure of the sage, who was positioned in an oppositional relation to the figure of the knight, in which the sage represented the ideal of Jewish masculinity and the knight the negative and wicked ideal. As Boyarin points out, the traits characterizing the ideal of Jewish masculinity are the opposite of those which characterized dominant non-Jewish European ideals of masculinity at the time, ideals which were referred to within Jewish society with the pejorative term goyim naches (1997, 51).

Boyarin reads both gentile society’s interpretation of Jewish male affect and Freud’s response to this interpretation as homophobic, and as participating in the production and shoring up of heterosexuality in turn of the century Europe. At the same time, Boyarin is explicit that he does not mean to suggest that in making such a reading of psychoanalysis he is suggesting that Judaism is itself not homophobic, much less that it is queer. Rather, he explains that he is attempting to show how the specificity of different forms of sexuality in turn of the century Jewish and non-Jewish society reveal that the construction of the ideal of the heterosexual, masculine European man was at the expense of the very differently gendered male Jew, with implications for the production of heterosexual normativity and homosexual possibility among both men and women in European Jewish society. Ultimately, Boyarin makes a compelling argument that the effeminate Jew, feminized from the perspective of European “goyim” was effeminate in
large part because of the Jewish male’s relation to the Torah and to God. It is for this reason, I suggest, that Boyarin’s argument about the sexuality and gender of the Jew in Freud’s psychoanalysis is significant.

Boyarin argues that the absence of an explicit acknowledgement of the association of the nervous disorders diagnosed by psychoanalysis with Jewishness is a sign of Freud having been homophobic, and that psychoanalysis can thus be understood as an attempt to reinforce heterosexual norms. Freud’s disavowal of the Jewishness of the symptoms of his patients was, Boyarin contends, a disavowal of an effeminate male Jewish sexuality that became read in gentile society as homosexual. He thus suggests that psychoanalysis, including the theory of the oedipal complex, becomes part of the construction and reinforcement of heterosexual masculinity in 19th century Europe through Freud’s disavowal of the Jewishness of his own and his patients’ symptoms. The finer point of Boyarin’s argument is that because Freud did not address the symptoms he did in terms of their Jewishness, he contributed to representing them as pathological when in fact they may have only been pathological from the dominant standpoint of non-Jewish European cultural frameworks. One could, however, also understand Freud then as making an argument that critiques these frameworks, without

---

27 See also Boyarin 1993.
28 Boyarin’s argument in this regard resonates with the criticisms that some feminists have made of Freud’s psychoanalysis in terms of questions about the difference between male and female sexual development. But as the work of Melanie Klein (1987) and others has shown, Freud’s work allows for reworkings of his theories from within his general and specific insights about processes of subject formation.
this being in the name of a Jewish identity politics, and rather in the name of psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis, and Freud’s work specifically, was a product of the political and historical contexts out of which it emerged. It is precisely because Freud analysed the symptoms he did without classifying them into the categories of identity politics, be those categories of homosexual, Jewish, or otherwise, that psychoanalysis allows for a critique of the specificity of the political and historical contexts in which Freud was living and what has emerged out of those contexts since, including forms of heterosexuality. It is partly in this regard that I differ from Boyarin’s argument.

Contrary to what Boyarin himself argues, I find what is insightful about his observations about the gender of the Jew in terms of psychoanalysis to be precisely the site of tension between Freud’s theorization of sexual difference, sexuality, and the erasure of markings of Jewishness. To suggest that Freud’s erasure of Jewishness from characteristics he analyzed in terms of feminine sexuality signifies a disavowal of homosexuality or is an expression of homophobia is, I would argue, to ignore both the open nature of Freud’s theorization of sexuality and individuation, and the question of how sexual difference, racialization, and sexuality are related to and contingent on how they have been constituted historically in relation with one another. In other words, to suggest that the acknowledgement of the Jewishness of those traits identified as feminine in Freud’s psychoanalysis leads to an affirmation of a queer sexual identification rather than heterosexual identification, is to ignore the question of woman and of sexual
difference posed by the encounter between two different patriarchal ideals, or between, loosely put, the ideals of the goyim nasche and that of the Jewish sage. It also defines “queer” through a dependency on the heterosexual configuration which it critiques. If the conjunction Israeli-Jew begs the question of how to understand the difference of woman, and thus also of sexual difference, then the question of the Jew in psychoanalysis begs the question of how to understand the difference of woman in terms of how the difference of the Jew was articulated historically in the political contexts of 18th and 19th century Europe.

To suggest that Freud, through psychoanalysis, simply tried to remake the diasporic Jew into the Aryan masculine ideal in a way that was the same as Zionism’s attempt to remake the old Jew in terms of the ideals of the New Jew, or as Boyarin puts it is, I would venture, to misread both psychoanalysis and Zionism. Boyarin suggests that Freud’s experience of political disempowerment as a Jew “produced a sexualized interpretation of him [the Jew] as queer, because political passivity was in Freud’s world equated with homosexuality…. Diaspora is essentially queer, and an end to Diaspora would be the equivalent of becoming straight” (229-231). But to make these analogies is to reproduce the framework of identity politics which Boyarin would seem to otherwise be invested in critiquing; rather than reading psychoanalysis for how it offers an analytical framework with which to understand the relation between individual and group that challenges the assumption that individual is interchangeable with the group, Boyarin critiques psychoanalysis, and Freud, for supporting “the wrong politics,” as it were. The
conjunction Israeli-Jew makes it clear that one must account for both sexual and racialized difference, and that different formations of sexuality and desire are a part of how racialized and sexual difference are defined. By “defined” in this sense I mean both their signification, and the processes of production through which their contours become legible. More significantly perhaps, contemporary Israel suggests that Zionism, if anything, has embraced a certain form of male Jewish homosexuality, rather than rejected it, while at the same time maintaining an investment in the masculine ideal of the New Jew.

I do not mean here to suggest that Israel or Zionism presents any single or simple platform or treatment of homosexuals, but rather that the material and social effects of Zionism in terms of the position of homosexuality is characterized, like with the relations to Arab, woman, and Europe, by marked contrasts. On the one hand, Israel is known for its support for gay rights and openness to queers; Tel Aviv has increasingly become known as “the San Francisco” of the Middle East, the city was called the “New Gay Mecca of the Mediterranean” in the New York Times in 2010, in an international survey in 2011 Tel Aviv was voted the “world’s best gay travel destination,” and in 2009 Israel’s Ministry of Tourism participated in a “Tel Aviv Gay Vibe Campaign” to promote LGBT tourism to Israel. Dana International, am Israeli transsexual, won the Eurovision Song Contest representing Israel in 1998 with the song “Diva,” she was voted the 47th “greatest Israeli of all time” in a poll by one of the main Israeli newspapers Ynet, and continues to perform and speak in Israeli public venues and abroad. There are two major annual gay
pride parades in Israel, one in Tel Aviv and one in Jerusalem, with smaller events in other cities.

On the other hand, these public expressions of homosexuality are dominated by gay men, while lesbian women are much less visible, and both men and women are met with vocal, and sometimes violent opposition. Such opposition is particularly strong in Jerusalem, where significant numbers of orthodox Jews have organized demonstrations against the gay pride parade, making headlines with news about burning garbage and dumpsters in the streets, throwing rocks, and making threats against organizers of and participants in the parade. But this does not overshadow the fact that Israeli legislation for those who identify as gays grants more protections and rights than most and sometimes all other countries in the Middle East and Asia, and often more than or at least equal to most European countries, the United States, and Canada. The combination between the growing legislation supporting homosexual rights with both the exceptions to what this legislation might seem to represent and with discrimination against Palestinians has been defined in terms of what activists and some scholars have termed “pinkwashing.”

In an editorial in Israel’s Ha’aretz newspaper, Israeli law professor Aeyal Gross (2012) criticizes a keynote speech by Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren at the 2012 Equality

29 Thus far, most of these critiques seem to occur in the spheres of activism and the media; see Mozgovaya 2012; Gross 2012; Schulman 2011. There are some exceptions; Puar (2007), and the recent panel at the Columbia Law School Center for Gender and Sexuality Law titled “The Ethics of Pinkwashing: LGBT Rights in Israel/Palestine,” held on April 4th 2012 with Kathrine Franke, Kendall Thomas, and Vani Natarajan. See below for more on Puar (2007).
Forum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,\textsuperscript{30} for such “pinkwashing,” pointing out discrepancies between Oren’s claims and the reality on the ground. Gross refers to what he describes as the co-optation by the Israeli government of advances made by queer activism as a form of “homonationalism.”\textsuperscript{31} While I find it important to point out such discrepancies for both political and intellectual clarity, I also think the presumptions that such clarifications seek to challenge, i.e. that rights for one group means rights more generally, are partly the result of the same framework on which the critiques of “pinkwashing” often are themselves based. In other words, to simply criticize queer activism, and differently, national and state representations of the legislative effects of such activism for not addressing or not being inclusive of the rights of another group, in this case Palestinians, is to overlook the constitutive relations between these categories of queer, homosexual, Palestinian, Jew, Israeli, and also of the concepts through which these categories are discussed, including citizen, nationality, rights, sexuality, gender, and ultimately, I would argue, also the category of the human. While “pinkwashing” may in

\textsuperscript{30} The Equality Forum is a non-profit organization which organizes LGBT month and whose mission it is “to advance national and international lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights through education” (\url{http://www.equalityforum.com/organization}).

\textsuperscript{31} Jasbir Puar (2007) defines “homonationalism” in terms of what she argues is a “growing cohesion of a global gay Islamophobia” (xvi) through which queer organizing aligns with nationalist racism through which racialized terrorist subjects, including queers, are produced through the discourse of fighting homophobic and terrorist Islamic populations or states. Puar’s argument in some ways resembles the critiques of how woman has been used as an alibi for imperialist projects in the name of “saving women” from sexism, but unlike such critiques, Puar seems to reinstate an identity politics of queer and Islamic, among others, rather than considering the specificity of how different national, sexual, and gendered formations have come to be constituted in relation with one another historically, geographically, conceptually and politically.
part explain the extent to which organizing for gay rights has received official Israeli
governmental support, to explain such support only in terms of the motive of covering up
oppression of Palestinians is to overlook the specificity of how Israeli-Jew is constituted
vis-à-vis gendered categories historically and contemporarily in terms of the diasporic
Jew, the universal man of European modernity, and Arab, and in relation with the figure
of woman. Such accounts do not address the constitutive relations between these
categories, nor do they account for the specificity of how such support is articulated; for
example, in the case of Israel, the degree to which it is expressed in terms of men rather
than women, and the ways in which such support is defined in relation to the Jewish
Orthodox, in relation to women, and in relation to Mizrahim, all other significant marked
categories in the constitution of Israeli-Jew.\footnote{See for example Ben-Zvi (1998) for an insightful analysis of the relation between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi categories in terms of queer sexual politics through a focus on Dana International, a Mizrahi transsexual woman diva and Michal Eden, a lesbian Meretz (Zionist left-wing) politician. Gross (2012) makes a similar point in his editorial critiquing Israeli Ambassador Oren’s “pinkwashing,” but rather than focusing on how the relation of Mizrahi to Israeli in different contexts (for example in terms of heteronormative sexuality and in terms of homosexuality) poses questions about the relation between sexuality, racialization, and nationalism, he focuses on the inaccuracies of Oren’s speech. Given that this was an editorial about Oren’s speech and its inaccuracies, Gross’ editorial offers an important corrective. It is not his editorial which I am critiquing, but the way in which political activism, and in some cases academic literature (Puár 2007) point out the inadequacies of campaigns for homosexual rights which don’t take account of their possible collusion with imperialist and racism projects without attending to the specificity of how the categories of gender, sexuality, and “race,” have been constituted historically, socially, and philosophically in different contexts. It is hardly novel (including to many “activists on the ground”) that people can be not normative or “progressive” in one sphere (for example homosexuality) while being conservative or discriminatory (not interchangeable terms of course) in other spheres (for example in terms of nationalism or ethnicity). But perhaps more to the point here, I am suggesting that it is necessary to attend to the historical and other contextual specificity
combination of public and legislative support for “gay rights,” with vocal and cultural opposition to homosexuality in terms of the wider question of how to understand what Israeli-Jew signifies politically, through an analysis of a story from fieldwork in the neighborhood of Ramat Yosef.

******

**Do You Know Who She Is?**

For about the first year and a half of fieldwork, I returned repeatedly to sit outside Marco and Chen’s store in Ramat Yosef’s neighborhood center. Eventually, I ventured away more often to explore other parts of the neighborhood, and in the summer of 2007 came upon David and Levana’s little store, tucked in between the apartment buildings in the oldest part of the neighborhood. From the first visit, I knew I much preferred David and Levana’s store; David seemed gentler and easier to talk to than Marco, and as did the people who hung around the stores. Not that they weren’t tough, but in general, they didn’t have the same kind of rough hardness. For the most part, they didn’t have the hard laugh and jaw lines of Marco or the drunken vulgar joking and comments about women that I had come to expect from him and most of the other men there every time I went there. It wasn’t that Marco and Chen and the others weren’t hospitable, but it was a very different kind of atmosphere. Before I stopped going to their store, I never interviewed
one of the women who was the object of some of such ridicule. Marco introduced me to her one afternoon.

When I got to Marco and Chen’s store, Marco and Avraham were sitting next to each other outside on two beat up chairs, together with Boas, the man who works at the candy store next door. We chatted for a while, and then Chen came out and sat on the stool next to me. The man who works at the candy store came and went. After a little bit, while we were talking, the woman who when I first saw her I thought looked butch, purposefully so in a way that stood out especially in this neighborhood, came by. Marco had on multiple occasions identified her as a “lesbian,” or as a “half man half woman.” As I saw her approaching the stores next to Marco’s and Chen’s store, I thought to myself that I hadn’t see her for awhile, and then Marco asked me if I knew who that was. It seemed like he was referring to what kind of person she is, not to her name. I said that I’d seen her around, and that he’d mentioned her to me before. He said she is lesbian. Marco said that the lesbian sleeps with women, and as they were commenting on her she approached us saying an exuberant hello to Marco in particular, but greeting everyone. Marco had called out to her to come over, telling her and me and that I should interview her because I am doing research about the neighborhood. She didn’t seem to hear the part about me doing research on the neighborhood, and a look of something like guardedness or worry seemed to come across her face for a moment. I explained that I am doing research about the neighborhood, and then she went back to her previous demeanor and laughed and said that she is the gentleman, or man, (gever) of the neighborhood. She showed us a
photograph of herself that she had gotten framed and enlarged, and said “I like myself so much that I got a picture of myself enlarged and framed and I am going to put it up in my living room.” Marco, Chen and Avraham expressed interest in seeing the picture and she showed it to us. We expressed our admiration of it. Chen said that they should hang it up outside the store on the wall. I couldn’t tell quite how she meant that comment, if she was kidding or if she was trying to be complimentary, or if it was partly a mean joke. It didn’t seem to be mean. But something felt hostile, and it wasn’t only because “the lesbian’s” clowning seemed to be at least partly a mode of defense and deflection. She saw a woman walking a stroller across the street and waved and called out to her, and the woman made a motion with her arm that to me looked like she was waving back, and then “the lesbian woman” went over to her. The man who works in the candy store next to Marco and Chen then said, you know, she is a half man half woman. As she was walking away, Chen said something half under her breath; “she is motioning to you to stay away.” But to me it looked like the woman had waved back, and when “the lesbian woman” reached her they started walking and talking together. Later that evening I saw her walking together with a woman who looked like the same woman she had waved to; they were walking towards the parking lot in the grassy area between the stores and the parking lot and seemed to be friendly. It seemed unlikely that the woman had really been motioning to “the lesbian woman” to stay away.

“The lesbian woman’s” name is Sharon. After she left, Chen looked at me and said a little bit quietly, you know, she is a lesbian. I said something like “oh,” and
nodded. Chen asked me if I knew what that was. I wondered if she had been expecting a different kind of a reaction from me. I told her yes, and I wondered if she wanted me to elaborate, so I said, women who like to be with women, right? She nodded, and explained, she is a half lesbian, she goes with men and with women. Then the man from the candy store joined in, saying, she is half man half woman, on one side she has balls, and on the other not, half man, half woman. I expressed some skepticism at their description, or at least at their apparent certainty of her physiology, and I said something about how maybe she could identify as a man and as a woman, and like to be with both men and women, but that this didn’t necessarily mean that physically she had the body of both a man and a woman. The man who works in the candy story near Marco and Chen’s store said emphatically that she did. Hadn’t I noticed that she has a breast only on one side, and then he said, no, that she only has one breast in the middle, and everyone laughed loudly as if this was hilarious. I didn’t feel like laughing with them but wanted to maintain rapport. So I continued to express skepticism and tried to think of what to say. I comment about how they were joking and saying things that weren’t true. They said they were only partly joking and continued to insist that she was really half man and half woman. I asked how they knew, and the guy from the candy store said he knew because she had shown him, because he had photographed her in the back of his store. He said that maybe he could get her to show me too, that he would ask her to show me in the back of the store. I said no thanks, I really don’t want you to do that, and Marco said she wouldn’t agree, that she only is willing to show men. Chen said that it wasn’t a good
idea, that I would go into shock if I saw. I repeated that I really didn’t want him to ask her
to do such a thing, and that I didn’t want to see. They started to tell me more about her.
Chen said that she was a poor thing; “misquena, don’t you see that she goes around
asking people for money and cigarettes, and that they give it to her?” I said that it hadn’t
been clear to me that she had been asking for money and cigarettes, that I had thought
that maybe she was buying things. Chen said no, that she was asking for them. Someone
then started to tell about how when Sharon had been married, she had jumped out of a
fourth floor window. She landed on a donkey or horse that broke her fall, so she survived,
but the donkey died because she landed on its neck. I asked if this really was a true story,
and Chen said that she didn’t know, that it was what people said, and she pointed towards
Marco and Avraham and the man who works in the candy store near her store. Ask them,
she gestured. So I asked them if this story really was true, expressing disbelief that it was,
and Marco insisted that it was. Then they started telling me about how her father had put
her on a leash and chain, and walked her around and that she had crawled on all fours and
that she had bitten people. One of the men joked, don’t you see how she doesn’t have
many teeth? It’s from all her biting people. They laughed again.

Given the remarkable degree of legislation aimed at ensuring homosexuals have
the same legal protections and access to services as heterosexuals, how is one to make
sense of a story such as the one above, about “the lesbian woman” Sharon? More
broadly, how might one make sense of stories such as these existing in a political
framework with unusually supportive legislation for rights of homosexuals? More
specifically, why would Sharon be defined as an animal, specifically as a dog, in terms of her sexuality as a “man-woman”? I ask this question here not simply in order to understand this question itself, but because an understanding of gender and sexuality in terms of the figure of the Israeli-Jew is connected to the question of how to understand the relation between the two archival narratives of the European and the postcolonial man which are brought together in the conjunction Israeli-Jew, and the question this relation poses about the position of woman and the concept of sexual difference. In turn, an understanding of sexual difference and of woman in terms of these archival narratives allows for an understanding of representation, of the political and the political subject in terms of contemporary Israel, and in terms of European modernity and its imperialist histories.

One way of understanding the story about Sharon, I suggest here, can be found by returning to Freud’s theory of the fetish and of sexuality, via the path that I have traced above about the question of the Jew in psychoanalysis in terms of an analysis of Israeli-Jew. I will consider here how the story of Sharon, in the wider context of Israel, allows for an understanding of the significance of the relation between the Jew as the Jew has been figured historically in what might be called “racialized terms,” and sexuality as a component of the formation of subjectivity in what constitutes European modernity’s concept of the human. The concept of the fetish for Freud is a central element of his theorization of sexuality for both heterosexuality and homosexuality, or what Freud refers to as “inversion.”
Freud develops his theory of the fetish through his theorization of sexuality. The first place in which Freud discusses fetishism is in his 1905 “Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality.” More than the first third of Freud’s first essay on the theory of sexuality he devotes to a consideration of “inverts,” or those who are attracted to members of the same sex. Freud ends the section concluding that while it is not yet possible to reach a satisfactory explanation for what produces inverts, it is possible from a consideration of these cases viewed as “abnormalities” to recognize that

the sexual instinct and the sexual object are merely soldered together…We are thus warned to loosen the bond that exists in our thoughts between instinct and object. It seems probable that the sexual instinct is in the first instance independent of its object; nor is its origin likely to be due to its object’s attractions. (2000, 14)

Freud defines “sexual object” as the person from whom sexual attraction proceeds, and “sexual aim” as the act “toward which the instinct tends” (Ibid). \(^{33}\) It is through his analysis of neurotics and others exhibiting disorders in which what are normally not considered erotic zones or sexual objects are treated as such that Freud develops his notion of fetishism, and it is through his consideration of fetishism that Freud then arrives at his theory of the oedipal complex. In what follows, I will reread Freud’s theory of the oedipal complex through both the figure of the Jew and the figure of woman, in order to

\(^{33}\) Freud writes that “by an ‘instinct’ is provisionally to be understood the psychical representative of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation, as contrasted with a ‘stimulus’, which is set up by single excitations coming from without. The concept of instinct is thus one of those lying on the frontier between the mental and the physical (2000, 34).
understand the relationship between the story about Sharon and the wider context in which she is positioned in Israel.

Freud classifies the development of sexuality into three main stages: oral, genital, and phallic. These stages mark the development from what Freud defines as the initial polymorphous state of the infant in which the infant experiences sensory pleasure throughout its body, to the channeling of this pleasure, understood in terms of libidinal energy, to a specific relation to the phallus which is configured through how the child is shaped by the oedipal process. For Freud, this libidinal pleasure moves through these stages in terms of varying emphases on intake and release of bodily materials, foods, objects, and the sensation of touch. In the process of oedipalization, the child’s libidinal energy is directed toward the phallus, Freud explains, because of the child’s identification with its mother and differently with its father. This process of identification emerges through the child’s narcissistic identification with itself through which it attempts to attain (and to “regain”) the sense of wholeness through which the child may have experienced as an infant, and which appears to itself in the mirror phase. In a slightly reductive reading of Freud, the “successful” resolution of the oedipal complex results in boys overcoming their castration anxiety by becoming men through identification with their father and displacing their desire for their mothers on to another woman, and in girls overcoming their penis envy by becoming women through identification with their

34 “Regain” is in quotes here because this state of wholeness may of course never actually be experienced as such, it is the inaccessible of “the Real” in Lacan’s terms.
mothers and displacing their desire for their mother on to a man through repressing their
masculine sexuality. “Inversion,” or homosexuality, Freud hypothesized, is not the result
of “degeneracy,” but rather can be understood as existing among a “considerable number
of people” in varying degrees and due to multiple causes; innateness among only the
most extreme cases, a sexual impression from very early in life, and “in the case of many
others, it is possible to point to external influences in their lives, whether of a favourable
or inhibiting character, which have led sooner or later to a fixation of their inversion”
(2000, 139).35

Desire here is configured through an assumption of an original desire for the
mother figure, in which woman is the object of desire and man is the developed version
of the desiring subject of the boy child. This relation is defined in terms of having and not
having the woman, who is what promises the possibility of satisfying the libidinal desire
for a sense of wholeness and complete self-presence. The original relation with the
mother as the object of desire is repressed, while the affect is retained and displaced on to
another object of desire. This relation’s configuration around having or not having the
woman in turn is founded on a focus on having or not having the penis, as it is the
presence or absence of the penis which is to determine whether the child is to identify
with the man and direct its desire toward the woman, or to identify with the woman and

35 Freud continues to offer some examples: “(Such influences are exclusive relations with persons
of their own sex, comradeship in war, detention in prison, the dangers of heterosexual intercourse,
celibacy, sexual weakness, etc.)” (Ibid. 139)
direct its desire toward reproduction, toward the man and toward becoming the object of
desire of the man. Libidinal energy thus becomes organized according to a logic of
presence and absence in which representation of the self is based on the assumption of a
difference between man and woman and between self and other, in which one subject is
primarily the object of desire of the other in a relation in which libidinal energy becomes
channeled according to a set of binary oppositions which organize the rules of self
representation in terms of the oppositions between mind and body, reason and emotion,
human and animal. As a result, the individuated subject, within the frameworks of
European modernity, is assumed to be in self control, sovereign and autonomous, rather
than in a relation of libidinal energy with itself through its relation to others.

The fetish is an object which replaces a normal sexual object, which bears some
relation to it but which “is entirely unsuited to serve the normal sexual aim” (152). The
phenomenon of fetishism, Freud writes, is dependent on the overvaluation of the sexual
object, “which inevitably extends to everything that is associated with it. A certain degree
of fetishism is thus habitually present in normal love, especially in those stages of it in
which the normal sexual aim seems unattainable or its fulfillment prevented…” (153).36

The influencing factors of which object will be selected as the fetish are often, Freud

36 Freud suggests here that “the situation only becomes pathological when the longing for the
fetish passes beyond the point of being merely a necessary condition attached to the sexual object
and actually takes the place of the normal aim, and, further, when the fetish becomes detached
from a particular individual and becomes the sole sexual object” (Ibid. 153).
suggests, connected to what he calls a “sexual impression” of childhood, even when the influencing factors may also be connected to a “symbolic connection of thought” present in “age-old” mythology, the influence of which we may be unaware (154). By “sexual overevaluation,” Freud means the extension of sexual interests to parts of the body other than the sexual organs (which he also refers to as genitals), or to inanimate objects associated with an individual or a part of the body.

Freud explains the fetish as a substitute for the actual sexual object, in the case of the oedipal complex, the fetish is thus the object which becomes the substitute for the penis, which is symbolized as the phallus through the fetishization of other objects. I read Freud here as suggesting an understanding of subjectivity in terms of a theory of sexuality in which libidinal energy becomes channeled on to that which is made to signify the possibility of attaining a sense of wholeness, or, in other words, a response of

---

37 For Lacan (2008), the phallus is signified through the primacy given to the signifier itself; for Lacan the subject comes into being through what can be understood in terms of the grammatical structure in which a subject controls a verb. But a subject exists as a subject through its existence as a sign based on a metaphorical relation between signified and signifier in which the signifier comes to represent the signified. Lacan points out that the signified doesn’t have any essence independent from its relation to other signifieds through a chain of signifiers. If the signified isn’t actually there, then one is left only with a chain of signifiers, so the subject, as a sign, is always at risk of being destabilized by a change in the sign system, and by the lack of an essential meaning in any signified. For Lacan, the phallus is the symbolic through which this sign system is kept together as a coherent system through which subjectivity is possible. In this sense, everyone, men and women, can be understood as threatened by not having the phallus and in a relation of desire to it, and the structure of normative heterosexuality is then defined in terms of whether one desires to be or to have the phallus. I am suggesting that it is the corporeality of the body which threatens the stability of the sign system because of how the signification of the body makes self-representation through linguistic signification impossible without the disruption of the difference of the other internal to the self. My understanding here has been informed by the Khanna’s 2011 seminar “Affect and Feminism.”
libidinal energy which continually rebalances the movement of libidinal energy in the subject. What Freud calls castration anxiety can thus be understood as an anxiety over being able to name the meaning of the inaccessible difference of origin as it manifests in the corporeal, which is to say, an anxiety over not being able to name or to fully know singularity, which is both oneself and the difference of an other. In other words, Freud’s concept of castration anxiety, through a reading of the Jew as postcolonial, can be understood not as an anxiety over losing or having lost the penis, but rather as an anxiety over not being able to know or to name the similarity and difference between one’s self and the others from whom one came.

Freud emphasizes the significance of sight, and by implication, also of knowing through naming, in this process of fetishization and identification through which libidinal energy is channeled. In his discussion of how libidinal energy is channeled on to a sexual object, Freud highlight in particular the importance of the eye, which is perhaps the zone most remote from the sexual object, but it is the one which, in the situation of wooing an object, is liable to be the most frequently stimulated by the particular quality of excitation whose cause, when it occurs in a sexual object, we describe as beauty…This stimulation is on the one hand already accompanied by pleasure, while on the other hand it leads to an increase of sexual excitement or produces it if it is not yet present. If the excitation now spreads to another erotogenic zone to the hand, for instance [sic]. (2000, 208)
Freud then goes on to address directly the process by which he understands a girl to turn into a woman, and the process of finding a sexual object.  

Sexual excitement, Freud suggests, is revealed through two different kinds of indication: mental and somatic. The mental indications, he says, consist of a feeling of tension, which is experienced as both unpleasure and pleasure. Freud attempts to understand how this simultaneous pleasure and unpleasure can produce pleasurable sexual excitation through examining how “the erotogenic zones fit themselves into the new arrangement” (Ibid.)

The sexual object is determined, Freud explains, by processes in two phases, one between the ages of three and five, and another in the teenage years during puberty. Up until puberty, the sexual instinct has been mostly auto-erotic, the result of different separate instincts and erotogenic zones which were fuelled by a desire for pleasure. In puberty, Freud writes, a new sexual aim appears and all the component instincts combine to attain it, while the erotogenic zones become subordinated to the primacy of the genital zone. Since the new sexual aim assigns very different functions to the two sexes, their sexual development now diverges greatly. That of males is the more straightforward and the more understandable, while that of females actually enters upon a kind of involution. A normal sexual life is only assured by an exact convergence of the two currents directed towards the sexual object and the sexual aim, the affectionate current and the sensual one…. The new sexual aim in men consists in the discharge of the sexual products. The earlier one, the attainment of pleasure, is by no means alien to it; on the contrary, the highest degree of pleasure is attached to this final act of the sexual process. the sexual instinct is now subordinated to the reproductive function; it becomes, so to say, altruistic.

Freud then goes on to suggest that the development of the internal genital in puberty is set in motion by stimuli from three directions: the external world, from the organic interior, and from mental life, which together produce what Freud refers to as “sexual excitement.” When a girl, usually in the time of puberty, has transferred her “erotogenic susceptibility” to stimulation from her clitoris to her vaginal orifice, is suggests, Freud writes, that she has adopted a new leading zone for the purposes of her later sexual activity. A man, on the other hand, retains his leading zone unchanged from childhood. The fact that women change their leading erotogenic zone in this way, together with the wave of repression at puberty, which, as it
If the figure of the father is itself already marked as self-differential through his being marked as different from other men, then his reproduction as a marked figure places him in the position of that which doesn’t have (like but not the same as woman), in relation to that which does have (purportedly unmarked universal man) (see Gilman 1991, 1993; Boyarin 1997). But, figured as a man in biological terms and in relation to woman, he is positioned in a reproductive configuration in relation to woman as a man, not in relation to an unmarked man as woman. In the political framework of European modernity, he is therefore placed into a structure of desire in which he is positioned to desire a relation of sameness to himself through the ideal of the self-same autonomous sovereign subject, as the one who names others through their differences from him, rather than as one who is named through his differences from another who is sovereign over him. Thus if girls

were, puts aside their childish masculinity, are the chief determinants of the greater proneness of women to neurosis and especially to hysteria. These determinants, therefore, are intimately related to the essence of femininity. (Ibid. 220).

Freud argues that it is processes in puberty which establish the primacy of the genital zones, which for a man means the formation of the penis as an organ capable of erection which is excited by the experience of penetration into a cavity that excites his genital zone. At the same time, he completes the psychical process of finding a sexual object. In the first phase, when the beginnings of sexual satisfaction were linked with taking in nourishment, the mother’s breast was the sexual object for the sexual instinct of the infant. When the child is able to form “a total idea” of the person to whom that source of satisfaction belongs, the sexual instinct becomes auto-erotic, and then in puberty, after a period of latency, this original relation is “restored” through the child finding a new sexual object. Libido is turned into anxiety when the child, like an adult, cannot satisfy it. But it is also this absence of satisfaction of the libidinal energy, which propels the subject in its identifications and disidentifications with others and which produces pleasure through this movement.
must repress their identification with their father in order to become women, boys with a marked father must repress their identification with their mothers as being marked in order to become men, which is also to disavow the marked difference of their father from other men, or to identify with being marked in a way in which they then follow a trajectory of sexual desire for what is oppositional to how they identify as being marked, whether it is in terms of the feminine of woman or in terms of the “feminine” of the man marked as different from the unmarked man.

What disrupts the binary between the unmarked man and the woman as marked human is the difference among men, and thus also of woman marked as different other than her difference from man as woman. I consider Freud’s theory of individuation here not only in terms of the relation of an individual with his or her parents, but in terms of the specificity of group ideals in their relation to subject formation. I draw here on Khanna’s (2003) discussion of subject formation through a relation to alterity in terms of historical and contextual particularity, in which she brings the specificity of different material and discursive effects (in this case of the excerpt below, in terms of North African colonial and postcolonial subjects) into a psychoanalytic framework.

Acknowledging historical and political specificity allows for the contingency of specific historical and social contexts to be understood in terms of different forms of affect through which processes of individuation occur in relation to specific collective and political formations. The relation to the other through which subjectivity is formed is
addressed, Khanna (2003) suggests, not only through addressing the content of the subject in the mirror and the one looking at it, but by also addressing the mechanisms that constitute the mirror itself. It is not something transparent, or something through which assurance of existence can be guaranteed in a familiar ‘mirror’ pose. Rather, it is akin to the historical, the economic, and notions of the biological that go into the constitution of image making. It potentially restores, in fact, the shock of the gestalt when we see it for the first time . . . This may leave one with the experience of worrying strangeness (an uncanny ambiguity), which is both recognition of oneself and its lack. (2003, 182)

It is in the context of this configuration of gender and sexuality I have outlined in the relation between the diasporic Jew and the New Jew in the framework of the modern nation-state through which woman and man, and differences among men and woman are positioned in the production of a claim to an unmarked universal human, that it is possible to understand why Sharon in the above story might be presented as an animal by others in the neighborhood, at the same time that the wider social political context in which she exists stands out for its explicit legislative support and discourse aimed at giving homosexuals the same rights as heterosexuals. Sharon is marked as a woman, but as a woman who is also a Jew, and as a woman who expresses desire for other women and who exhibits masculine characteristics. In the context of the ideal New Israeli of Zionism, it may be that for some she cannot be legible as fully human because as a woman who is attracted to women, who also exhibits characteristics of masculinity, she does not fit either into the ideal of the Jewish Israeli woman, who can be both masculine and feminine but must be clearly marked in a sexual relation with men, or into the ideal of the Jewish Israeli man, because she is marked as a woman.
In contrast, the Jewish Israeli man who exhibits both masculine and feminine characteristics, if he is marked as in a sexual relation with men, does not significantly challenge, if at all, the binary between Jew and non-Jew, masculine and feminine, through which Israeli-Jew is defined within the dominant Zionist framework. In this framework, Israeli-Jew is marked as European and not Arab, and as New Jew in relation to the diasporic Jew. Woman, in order to fit into this framework, is primarily defined as woman in terms of her possibility to reproduce the New Jew, and thus in either a reproductive or sexual, or both, relation with a man. The question of sexuality here therefore leads to a question about the definition of woman in relation to the postcolonial man and the universal man of European modernity.

Cf. Mayer (2005). Mayer draws out the parallels between Zionism’s New Jew, or “Muscle Jew” and German and Greek ideals of masculinity and militarism. While I do not disagree with most of what Mayer suggests, I find it crucial to also address the ways in which the New Jew is defined in terms which are both masculine and feminine, precisely because the New Jew is defined through a relation of remembering the diasporic Jew and through a wish to defend the Jew from the kind of persecution suffered by the diasporic Jew.

It would also seem that, Arab, or Mizrahi Jew, in order to fit into this framework, must be defined Arab markings in terms of how these markings defend and produce the New Jew, so if Arab markings become attached to woman or to feminine characteristics without also being attached to men, either through a sexual relation involving the potential for reproduction and “male pleasure,” or through defense, then these markings become something other than Jew and other than human. Ben-Zvi’s (1998) analysis of Eden and Dana International would seem to affirm this in at least some cases. The Israeli-Jew is defined as human through its relation to Israeli, modeled on the ideal of the unmarked universal human. But this means that Israeli-Jew must be same to itself in terms of its own particulars, which is to say, in terms of the binaries of the New Jew and the diasporic Jew, which are defined in terms of two different masculine narratives, one Abrahamic and the other Greek.
In order for Israeli-Jew to represent itself as same to itself, I am suggesting, it simultaneously produces itself in a self-differential relation to itself and is threatened by claims to particularities other than Jew and by claims to universality which do not recognize Jew as singular. Israeli-Jew must then simultaneously produce and attack that which it also defends, albeit under different signifiers, in its attempts to both achieve sovereignty and to protect its definition and self-recognition of itself as unable to be sovereign. An understanding of the political implications of the political subject represented in the conjunction Israeli-Jew is accessible through an analysis of the figure of woman in relation to the reproduction of the group based on the framework of Israeli-Jew.

If Israeli-Jew exists in a framework invested in the reproduction of Israeli-Jew, but Israeli-Jew is figured as masculine but as inclusive of both feminine and masculine characteristics, how is Israeli-Jew reproduced in relation to woman and in relation to figures of difference who are not included in the category Israeli-Jew? The encounter between the Abrahamic narrative and the metaphysics narrative of origin, read through Freud’s theory of sexuality and the fetish, thus leads to a question about how to understand the position of woman in terms of the constitution of man and the reproduction of the group. Another way of stating this question is to say that to understand the apparently contradictory claims of Israeli-Jew to being both vulnerable,

---

victim and victimizers, to being both models of universal norms of humanism and claiming singularity as Jewish, is to try to understand how woman is defined in the reproduction of a narrative that is simultaneously both that of the unmarked man and that of the marked man (the European and the postcolonial man, here specifically in terms of the genealogy of the Jew). As I have tried to explain, the central question which structured my research was how to understand the category Israeli-Jew in Israel, in the context of a proliferation of difference both within the category Jew and within the category Israeli. Following this question led me to a question about the figure of woman.

To ask how the Israeli-Jewish woman is positioned is to also ask how the group Israeli-Jew is reproduced. To ask how Israeli-Jew is reproduced, is to ask about the relation of the European woman as purportedly unmarked (except as woman) in relation to the purportedly unmarked universal man of European modernity with the woman marked in the same group as the marked postcolonial, and here specifically European Jew. The figure of the Palestinian woman is particularly significant in this regard, because of the investments and anxiety over demography and reproduction of a Jewish majority.

**Naming the Difference: Woman, Body, Affect**

In this section, I will argue that a consideration of the relation between the Jewish-Israeli woman and the Palestinian woman reveals the absence of woman and the displacement of sexual difference on to the figure of woman as a difference between men.
and women rather than an acknowledgement of sexual difference as the inaccessible
difference of origin in the relation between the body and how it is represented. This
displacement leads to political and social norms which respond to libidinal energies by
cchanneling them through configurations in which some subjects claim full self-
representation in their own image, through efforts to be able to name and know the
difference of the other by displacing their unknowable internal difference on to others
through naming it through sensory markers that produced gendered, sexed and racialized
categories through which the singular is mistaken for the particular or for the individual.

In order to try to understand the conjunction Israeli-Jew through an understanding
of the reproduction of this category as that of a collective group, it is therefore necessary
to try to understand the figure of woman and of sexual difference in terms of the
conjunction Israeli-Jew. I will turn again back to psychoanalysis here, to consider to what
degree and how the figure of the Jewish woman has been identified in terms of
psychoanalysis, before turning back again to contemporary Israel. I turn to
psychoanalysis to highlight how the question of sexual difference is inseparable from the
question of the postcolonial man, here marked specifically as Jewish. When I turn back to
Israel again, I will show how an analysis of Israel through psychoanalysis helps to make
sense both of Israel, and of how psychoanalysis, turned back on itself, can make sense of
the implications of European modernity’s concept of the human for a concept of the
political.
Perhaps by this point unsurprisingly, as with the figures of Arab and the homosexual, in Israel women too are positioned in oppositional terms, and they occupy a wide spectrum of positions in terms of how they are gendered and positioned in relation to men and to each other. Israel is famous for the image of the liberated, strong woman, but Israeli public discourse is also replete with stories of violence against women and complaints of sexism. Dafna Izraeli (1981) has argued that the notion that women achieved equal status to men in the pre-state period and that women achieved equal status as men in the Zionist movement are two of the founding myths of Israeli society. Izraeli argues that the Women Workers’ Council, established in 1921 as the organizational arm of the women workers’ movement within the Israeli workers umbrella organization of different labor organizations, called the Histradrut, perpetuated the myth of equality for women because of its domination by political parties that demanded loyalty to the interests of the labor movement without consideration for interests specific to women except through meeting their needs as wives, mothers, and occupation training for hairdressers, dressmakers, nursemaids and other such jobs. Lilach Rosenberg-Freidman

[42] Interestingly, the editors of the journal in which Izraeli’s article was published added a note at the beginning of her piece in which they attempt to situate her argument in terms of its potential for helping create positive change for women; they describe her piece as “much more pessimistic than that of Marianne Schmink,” but go on to state that “both essays have a positive results in that both increase our consciousness of possible sources of disunity among women, a necessary step toward awareness of a unity that can transcend differences” (1981). Although Izraeli herself does not argue this, I am suggesting here that a transnational feminism may have its strengths precisely in not attempting to transcend differences, but rather in attempting to understand and base a politics on the incommensurability of various forms of difference.
(2006) has drawn attention to the efforts religious Zionist women made in the Yishuv to transform their position of women and to enter the public arenas dominated by men both in urban and rural contexts. Despite their efforts, the tasks offered to religious women did not differ significantly from their traditional ones, and “most of the religious-Zionist community considered preservation of the traditional identity of women as their important contribution to the new revolutionary society” (Rosenberg-Freidman 101). But despite the myth of women’s equal participation in the public sphere and area of policy making and agricultural development for both religious and non-religious women, women in the New Yishuv were accorded central importance in the role of motherhood and education (Mosse 1985; Nagel 1998). At the same time, the ideal of “the liberated new Israeli woman” was expected to be like the “New Israeli Man,” and not like a woman, as the story of Netiva Ben Yehuda to which I refer in the preface suggests.

There is a parallel, though slightly different, difficulty with identifying the Jewish woman both in psychoanalysis and in turn of the century Europe. Ann Pellegrini has pointed out that if psychoanalysis is read only in terms of the feminization and erasure of the Jewish man then the figure of the Jewish woman is erased; the discussion is only about the Jewish man in relation to the figure of woman, without attention to the figure of the Jewish woman. She argues that Jewishness was situated as a place of intersection of race and gender in much of the popular and scientific writing of nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany and Austria, in which male Jews were represented as both “black” and feminine. She focuses on the question of what this discourse might have
meant for Jewish women by examining the figures of Sarah Bernhardt and Sandra Bernhard.⁴³ Bernhardt was an example of the *belle juive*, a figure of woman as deceptively feminine, excessively sexual and dangerous, but also not feminine enough, perversely masculine through a mix of feminine and masculine qualities, orientalized, of unclear origins and nationality. Bernhard, Pellegrini suggests, draws attention to the question of the location of Jewish female subjects through self-referential performances in which she articulates her own specificity through speaking in the terms of blackness, Jewishness, and queerness.

Although through Bernhardt and Bernhard, Pellegrini is suggestive of what a Jewish female sexuality and gender might signify in terms of both turn of the century Europe and 20⁰ century U.S. contexts, she does not in the end explain how this position might itself be defined. She comes closer with Bernhardt than with Bernhard, suggesting that the former, as an example of the *belle juive*, signifies as a woman who is both deceptively feminized and excessively sexual, and also not feminine enough, in many ways resonating with other orientalized, “black other” figures of women. But it is unclear what differentiates the figure of the Jewish woman here then from other figures of racialized women. With Bernhard, Pellegrini in the end suggests that although Bernhard’s performances call attention to how Jewishness is articulated through other terms of

---

⁴³ Pellegrini also devotes a chapter of *Performance Anxieties* to a discussion about Freud’s relation to the figure of Bernhardt, and suggests that she was a figure behind Freud’s re-naming of Ida Bauer, his patient in his famous case study “Dora.”
difference, including not only religion, race, gender, nationality, sexuality, class but also political affinity, that “to the extent that she articulates the specificity of her body by speaking through another’s terms, Bernhard is yet caught up in the endlessly repeating and repeated logic of identifications found, lost, and found again at someone else’s address” (61). 

Implicitly then, Pellegrini suggests that what it is that is signified as Jewish woman is left unanswered, defined more by what it isn’t than what it might be.

Repeatedly, Pellegrini turns her attention from questions about the figure of the Jewish woman, to implications of these questions for an understanding of Freud and psychoanalysis in relation to gender, sexuality and Jewishness. Following Gilman, she suggests that Freud, in an effort to distance the Jewish man from stereotypes of the Jewish man as effeminate, led him to turn a medical and scientific discourse about race and masculinity into a discourse about sex and gender focused on the figure of woman. She writes,

He resolved the problem of Jewish male difference by pointing to narcissism’s tendencies to inflate and exaggerate the space between. To shore up the indifference of his own body in relation to the Aryan’s or Christian’s, however, Freud clings to and ambivalently promotes the difference man/woman. He thus maximizes one relatively minor difference (‘sex’), so as to minimize another (‘race’). The anxieties provoked by Freud’s own experiences of difference haunt and distort his account of sexual (in)difference. (Ibid. 34)

44 See also Bergman-Carton (1996) for an excellent analysis of how Sarah Bernhardt defied identity categories in her articulation of “Jewishness” through a refusal of being defined in binary categories.
Ultimately, Pellegrini says more about what she thinks about Freud and psychoanalysis in terms of the figure of the Jewish woman, than she says about the figure of the Jewish woman herself. To ask about the figure of the Jewish woman in terms of these readings of psychoanalysis, necessitates asking not only about the specificity of the racialization of the Jew but also about the question of sexual difference in psychoanalysis beyond the specificity of the Jew. 45 In other words, the question remains what that “Jewish difference” actually is, just as the question remains what that sexual difference, or the

45 Alyse Weinbaum distinguishes her work from that of Gilman and Pellegrini by suggesting that Freud’s texts “actually bring the anti-Semitic milieu in which he worked into view” (168). He did so, Weinbaum suggests, by making racially marked metaphors central, and reshaping their meaning. These metaphors, she suggests, were genealogical and reproductive metaphors, through which Freud recast what she calls the wayward reproduction that characterized anti-Semitic discourse against Jews into a theory about a universal process of reproduction in which sexuality and racialization are intertwined in their production of hysteria” (163-164). By “wayward reproduction” in this context, Weinbaum refers to stereotypes of Jews as incestuous and as practicing inbreeding.

Weinbaum here observes that Freud’s psychoanalytic theory represented genealogy in terms that were not only about sexuality but also about group relations that can be understood both in terms of anti-Semitic racism against Jews, and in terms of racial discourse more generally, including what Weinbaum calls “the race/reproduction bind.” But by suggesting that “in Freud’s theory of hysteria, wayward reproductive sexuality produces racial formations, and in turn these wayward desires and selections emerge as norms, not exceptions, as universals rather than particulars” (170), Weinbaum erases the significance of the political specificity of the associations of Jewishness to which Gilman and others draw attention, and thus forecloses exactly the question that her argument would otherwise be conducive to raising. Her argument retains the category of “race” in a manner that leaves it unexamined in terms of its colonial and postcolonial histories by placing it in universalist terms within a psychoanalytic framework that is left uncontextualized in terms of the history of Europe and its internal and external others. In other words, the category of race, by being placed in universalist terms, is defined in its Americanist framework of identity politics without being defined as such. As a result, the category of “race” does not itself come into question, and within the framework of her argument it is not possible to attend to the question of sexual difference in terms of what Kofman has termed the “enigma of woman” in Freud’s work, or to attend to the relation between gender and sexuality in terms of how they shape questions of group belonging and exclusion, and their connections with colonial and postcolonial racial formations.
difference of woman actually is. To ask these questions is then to ask less about the Jewish woman and more about how the specificity of these categories of gender, “race,” and sexuality were interlocked in the constitution of a particular concept of the human and sexual difference. In other words, I am suggesting that it is through the unlocatable Jewish woman that the relation of these other categories can come into view. I am arguing that it is through such an understanding that it is possible to make sense of an otherwise apparently contradictory and incoherent combination of narratives, practices and identifications in Israel that gather around the signifier “Jew” and which shape Israeli political space.

While Freud can be rightly critiqued for displacing Jewish difference, or perhaps more accurately disavowing it, through marking Jewish difference in terms of sexual difference, Zionism cannot be accurately critiqued in the same way. Zionism retained the signifier Jew, even as the content signified by “Jew” changed in terms of its sexual and gendered associations. In so doing, Zionism also retained the trace of the signification of diasporic Jewish difference within the term “Jew,” as the “New Jew” is defined through reference to the old Jew from which it came and to which it responded. But if while in so doing, Zionism then displaces the question of sexual difference in the encounter between the patriarchal origin narrative of the old Jew and the patriarchal origin narrative of the New Jew, psychoanalysis, when read in terms of the political context in which Freud was working, provides the analytical tools with which to understand sexual difference not in terms of identity categories on which claims to sovereignty are based.
The question of how to define the Jewish-Israeli woman thus opens on to the question of how to define the non-Jewish woman who is also not the unmarked European universal woman. Which is also to say that the question of how to defined the marked woman, or the racialized woman, is to ask about the relationship between two differently marked, or differently racialized figures of woman, and about the relation between the racialized woman and the racialized man, and about the relation between the racialized woman and the purportedly unmarked woman. I turn here to the work of Sarah Kofman before returning to contemporary Israel, because I read Kofman as highlighting, without explicitly bringing together, two questions which I am arguing Israeli-Jew brings together.  

Although in the beginning of *The Enigma of Woman*, Kofman (1985) suggests that Freud’s castration anxiety is linked to his Jewishness and with femininity, she does not continue to discuss the relation between Jewishness and femininity, but rather goes on to trace how Freud develops psychoanalysis in terms of a concept of femininity based on a concept of female sexuality that she argues is based on making woman an enigma in order to be capable of helping men to change.  

But I find it difficult not to read

---

46 The one possible exception to this is Kofman’s comment at the beginning of *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat* that maybe all of her other books were what led her to write about “that,” with an apparent reference to her father’s death in Auschwitz and her and her mother’s experience of going into hiding in occupied France.

47 At the beginning of *The Enigma of Woman*, Kofman (1985) suggests that Freud’s delays in publishing his work in general, and in developing his work on female sexuality specifically, are
Kofman’s work on Freud here together with her work in two other texts which might accurately be described as autobiographical: *Smothered Words* and *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, in which she addresses the figure of the Jew, although not in terms of psychoanalysis. Readings these works together makes visible the two questions which the conjunction Israeli Jew brings together through the question of how to locate “the” postcolonial woman, and the question of sexual difference in terms the postcolonial. Sarah Kofman (1985) argued that Freud displaced sexual difference on to woman by placing feminine sexuality as belonging only to woman, and defining it as unknowable. She argues that Freud, through psychoanalysis, drew attention to the phallogocentricity of metaphysics but then reinforced it through his speculation on the definition of female sexuality. She writes:

> Because it is a matter of ruling out the possibility that woman may one day become man’s rival, she whom he basically needs to make his accomplice, Freud fixes and freezes her definitively in a type that corresponds with his ‘ideal of femininity.’

> Obsessed by his fixed idea, he immobilizes woman, imprisons her in her ‘nature’ as in a real yoke of iron. It is on that fixity of woman, on the impossibility of her evolving and changing after a certain age – thirty! – as opposed to the flexibility and plasticity of man, who is forever young, always capable of transforming himself and improving himself, that the lecture ends: *on a death sentence for woman*. Because she has exhausted all her potential in her painful development into femininity, forever fixed in a definitive posture, without hope of undergoing any further development. If psychoanalysis is capable of helping men change, where women are concerned it can only deplore that terrifying state of affairs….

_____________________

symptoms of his castration anxiety, and explicitly suggests that this castration anxiety is connected to his Jewishness.
To make a dead body of woman is to try one last time to overcome her enigmatic and ungraspable character, to fix in a definitive and immovable position instability and mobility themselves. ‘The seductive flash of gold on the belly of the serpent vita’ and ‘Vita femina.’ For woman’s deathlike rigidity serves to keep feminine ‘masculinity’ in a state of repression. It makes it possible to put an end to the perpetual shifting back and forth between masculinity and femininity which constitutes the whole enigma of ‘woman.’ That is to say that a woman who has reached maturity, a woman at thirty, cannot be fully a woman except at the price of death – at the price of the triumph of ‘femininity’ over masculinity within her – the triumph, it would seem, of the death instincts over Eros. (1985, 222-223)

Kofman here reads Freud and psychoanalysis to its limit, but not, it seems, also for what its limit might suggest about how “the enigma of woman” in psychoanalysis might make psychoanalysis say something different by turning it back on itself and rethinking its own terms, including the concept of sexual difference and the categories of man and woman. She suggests that Freud is disavowing his own femininity by his treatment of the difference of women, and thus reinforces the metaphysical categories that his theory of bisexuality and sexual difference would otherwise put into question. As Derrida makes explicit in Archive Fever, it is also through psychoanalysis, however, that Freud makes visible how this logic works as an archontic principle that structures ongoing political frameworks based on particular notions of fraternity, liberty, and democracy, domiciliation and filiation.

48 Kofman explains this in part through the example of Freud’s treatment of his female colleagues; by emphasizing the masculinity of his female colleagues to explain and defend them as no less intelligent than men, without also emphasizing or even addressing his own or his male colleagues’ femininity, he retains an opposition of masculine and feminine that privileges the masculine while freezing the figure of woman in terms of a concept of the feminine that remains inaccessible and mysterious.
Kofman is perhaps most well known for her work on Freud and Nietzsche, but she is also the author of two semi-autobiographical books. The first, *Smothered Words*, was published in 1987, but had been written two years earlier for a volume that was to be devoted to the politics of Maurice Blanchot but which did not come to fruition. In the book, Kofman for the first time in her published writings explicitly references her father’s deportation to and death in Auschwitz. She makes only brief explicit mentions of him, which are interwoven with discussion of Robert Antelme’s book *The Human Race* and with references to the work of Blanchot. She writes of the limits of representation, the relation between theoretical critique and the event, and what she calls the indestructibility of alterity.\(^{49}\)

\(^{49}\) She begins with three quotes from Blanchot, two of which are from *The Writing of the Disaster*:

And how, in fact, can one accept not to know? We read books on Auschwitz. The wish of all, in the camps, the last wish: know what has happened, do not forget, and at the same time never will you know.

- *The Writing of the Disaster*

... the danger... of words in their theoretical insignificance is perhaps that they claim to evoke the annihilation where all sinks always, without hearing the ‘be silent’ addressed to those who have known only partially, or from a distance, the interruption of history. And yet to watch and to wake, to keep the ceaseless vigil over the immeasurable absence is necessary, for what took up again from this end (Israel, all of us) is marked by this end, from which we cannot come to the end of waking again.

- *The Writing of the Disaster*
Kofman begins with reference to the word Auschwitz and Lyotard’s suggestion that it is a name beyond naming, “a name which designates that which has no name in speculative thought.” She states that if this is so, it behooves her, as a Jewish woman survivor of the Holocaust, to pay homage to Maurice Blanchot “for the fragments on Auschwitz scattered throughout his texts: writing of the ashes…which avoids the trap of complicity with speculative knowledge” (7-8). The Jew is the emblematic figure, she writes, of the relation with the infinite that the Nazis could not tolerate, and this relation of distance is something that “no form of power can overcome, because it does not encounter it” (8). The killing of her father in Auschwitz seems to be one example of what she means by this. In the next chapter she writes,

Because he was a Jew, my father died in Auschwitz. How can it not be said? And how can it be said? How can one speak of that before which all possibility of speech ceases? Of this event, my absolute, which communicates with the absolute of history, and which is of interest only for this reason. To speak: it is necessary – without (the) power: without allowing language, too powerful, sovereign, to master the most aporetic situation, absolute powerlessness and very distress, to enclose it in the clarity and happiness of daylight. And how can one not speak of it, when the wish of all those who returned – and he did not return – has been to tell, to tell endlessly, as if only an ‘infinite conversation’ could match the infinite privation?

My father: Berek Kofman,, born on October 10, 1900, in Sobin (Poland), taken to Drancy on July 16, 1942. Was in convoy no.12, dated July 29, 1942, a convoy comprising 1,000 deportees, 270 men and 730 women (aged 36 to 54): 270 men registered 54,153 to 54,422; 514 women selected for work, registered 13,320 to 13,833; 216 other women gassed immediately. It is recorded, there, in the Serge Klarsfeld Memorial: with its endless columns of names, its lack of pathos, its sobriety, the ‘neutrality’ of its information, this sublime memorial takes your breath away. Its ‘neutral’ voice summons you obliquely: in its extreme restraint, it is the very voice of affliction, of this event in which all possibility vanished… This voice leaves you without a voice, makes you doubt your common sense and all sense, makes you suffocate in silence: ’silence like a cry without words; mute, although crying endlessly’ (SNB, p.61). (9-11)
On page 34 she returns to her father after a discussion of work through the story of “The Idyll.” She writes,

My father, a rabbi, was killed because he tried to observe the Sabbath in the death camps; buried alive with a shovel for having – or so the witnesses reported – refused to work on that day, in order to celebrate the Sabbath, to pray to God for them all, victims and executioners, restablishing, in this situation of extreme powerlessness and violence, a relation beyond all power. And they could not bear that a Jew, that vermin, even in the camps, did not lose faith in God. As he did not lose faith in God on that afternoon of July 16, 1942, when a French policeman came to round him up with a pained smile on his lips, almost as if he, too, were excusing himself. Having gone to warn the Jews of the synagogue to go and hide because he knew there would be a raid, he had returned to the house to pray to God that he be taken, so long as his wife and his children were spared. And instead of hiding, he left with the policeman; so that we would not be taken in his place, as hostages, he suffered, like millions of others, the infinite violence: death in Auschwitz.

In this unnameable ‘place,’ he continued to observe Jewish monotheism, if by this, with Blanchot, we understand the revelation of the word as the place in which men maintain a relation to that which excludes all relation: the infinitely Distant, the absolutely Foreign. A relation with the infinite, which no form of power, including that of the executioners of the camps, has been able to master, other than by denying it, burying it in a pit with a shovel, without ever having encountered it. (34-35)

Kofman’s second autobiographical book, Rue Ordener, Rue Labat was published in 1994. The title of the book is a reference to the two streets on which she lived with her mother in Paris during the war. Rue Ordener was the street on which she lived with her parents when her father was rounded up, and then with her mother and five brothers and sisters for a short time until they all went into hiding. Rue Labat was the name of the street on which she lived with her mother and with the Christian woman who took them in, and whose charade as Kofman’s mother as a disguise to prevent them from being
found out, combined with the woman’s explicit anti-Semitism, ended up turning Sarah Kofman partially against her own mother. Kofman and her mother ended up in this hiding place only after Kofman’s mother attempted multiple times to place Sarah Kofman in hiding in other places, only to have Sarah Kofman run away back to her mother each time, refusing to be separated, miserable and desperate to be reunited with her. After the war, when her mother refuses to let Sarah return to “Meme,” Sarah runs away to try to find her, at the same time that she also experiences what she describes as periods of intense joy with her mother. At the end of the book, Kofman is suggestive about her difficult and differently ambivalent relations with both women. She writes that Hitchcock’s film *The Lady Vanishes* is one of her favorites; she describes the moment in the film when the face of the good maternal old lady is replaced with that of the horribly hard, shifty face, and just as one is expecting to see the good lady’s sweet, smiling one, there it is instead – menacing and false. The bad breast in place of the good, the one utterly separate from the other, the one changing into the other. (66)

At the beginning of this book, on the very first page, Kofman seems to suggest that all her other books may have been leading her to write this one:

Of him all I have left is the fountain pen. I took it one day from my mother’s purse, where she kept it along with some other souvenirs of my father. It is a kind of pen no longer made, the kind you have to fill with ink. I used it all through school. It ‘failed’ me before I could bring myself to give it up. I still have it, patched up with Scotch tape; it is right in front of me on my desk and makes me write, write. Maybe all my books have been the detours required to bring me to write about ‘that.’ (3)
It is in the beginning of this book about her relation to her mother, or mothers, in which Kofman recalls the pen which is all she has left of her father. The broken pen that no longer works makes her “write, write.” Maybe all her books, she tells us, have been the detours required to bring her to write about “that.” It is not completely clear to what the “that” in quotations refers, or what the quotations are to signal. I understand her perhaps, to mean that all of her books may have been the detours required to bring her to write about what is left of her father, and about what happened to him, and how what happened to him, and what it means to write of that, is also to write of her relation to her mother, and to her mothers. Kofman remembers her father and her mother in these two books. In the book about her father, she remembers him both in his singularity as her father, and in his particularity and generality as a Jew in the context of the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews. In this sense, Kofman also contrasts the Jewish man and the Jewish woman, but in her explicit analysis, she contrasts the Jewish man in relation to the on-Jewish “Aryan” Nazi, and the purportedly unmarked non-Jewish woman in relation to the purportedly unmarked non-Jewish man of European modernity. The first she does in her writing about the Jew in terms of the Holocaust, with specific reference to her father, and the second she does through her analysis of Freud’s work. The question of what these two relations mean for an understanding of the Jewish woman is left implicit. This implicit question is a version of the question that I am suggesting an analysis of the conjunction Israeli-Jew poses.
Kofman seems to suggest in Smothered Words an understanding of the figure of the Jew as emblematic of a figure in a relation to alterity, an alterity that she seems to transpose from a relation with God in a Levinasian sense to a relation with the absolutely foreign through language. Dominant Israeli nationalist narratives do not remember the diasporic Jew in these terms. The Jew is remembered as not belonging to the rest of humanity, but this place of difference is remembered not in terms of a relation to alterity but rather in terms of an exclusion that can only be amended—which needs to be amended—through a relation to Israel/i; Zionism does not attempt to place the Jew as belonging to a religious community in a relation with God that must be defended, or as belonging to universal humanity. The “new Jew,” the Israeli-Jew, is defined through reference to both the paternal figure of God and the paternal figure of the sovereign man, but through a relation of difference with both—the Israeli-Jew, through Israel, is both “Jewish,” and “universal.” It is in this sense that Israeli-Jew signifies an encounter between the sovereignty of God and the sovereignty of the universal human in which both put each other into question, and in so doing, raise the question of sexual difference.

Zionism’s New Jew, as I have shown, makes its claims to sovereignty through invoking its relation to the old Jew, and specifically the old Jew’s characteristics through

---

50 But Kofman does not seem to inquire, at least not explicitly, into the question of sexual difference in terms of such a relation to “the word.” In other words, she doesn’t seem, at least not explicitly, to bring together her work in The Enigma of Woman with these semi-autobiographical texts. Perhaps this is one reason why she seems to read Freud’s psychoanalysis only to its limit, and not also against the grain in terms of the question of sexual difference and the figure of woman.
which it was marked as not sovereign. The New Jew’s claims to sovereignty are inclusive of, rather than defined in exclusionary opposition to, a figure defined in relation to alterity as a figure that is both inside and outside the sovereign figure of the New Jew. In this sense, the metaphysical foundation of such claims to sovereignty are different in the figure of the New Jew than they are in the claims of the universal human of European modernity. The claims to sovereignty of the universal human of European modernity are inclusive of the figure of woman, but they are not inclusive of the signifier woman and its attached associations. In other words, the New Jew makes its claims to sovereignty in opposition to a signifier that it retains as both external and internal to itself, whereas the human of European modernity makes its claims to sovereignty in opposition to a signifier which it includes within the framework of the human, but as a separate entity; there is man and there is woman, as opposed to there is New Jew and there is old Jew, out of and against which the New Jew emerges. The significance of this difference is in how it forces into view the question of how to understand the presentation of difference at the origin of reproduction, and at the origin of the production of subjectivity. In other words, an analysis of the conjunction Israeli-Jew brings the question of what “the Jewish difference” is in psychoanalysis together with the question of what “the sexual difference” is in psychoanalysis. With this in mind, I turn back again now to contemporary Israel.
I remember a woman from Gaza lying in an Israeli hospital bed in Beer Sheva. She is attached to machines. She cannot breathe without them. Her eyes are closed. Her face is puffy. Her bandaged stomach is exposed; there is a tube going into it attached to a machine. Part of one of her arms is missing. I remember trying to find words in my head to say to her, in my head, even though, or maybe because, I was aware of how inaccessible she seemed. Both that it seemed unlikely she could hear anything going on around her, but also that we didn’t speak the same language; my vocabulary in Arabic was tiny, and it was unlikely hers in English or in Hebrew was any bigger. But that was beside the point, as she couldn’t talk anyway. And I didn’t know what to say. I just stood there and looked at her. And tried to think of what to say to her male relatives, with whom I had entered the intensive care unit where she was.

I had met two Israeli friends, Ronnie and Nadav, at the hospital in Beer Sheva that afternoon. It was early in the summer of 2006. They had invited me to come with them to visit the Palestinians from Gaza who were visiting their niece who had been wounded a few days earlier in an explosion on the beach in Gaza. There was controversy and multiple investigations into whether the explosion had been the result of Israeli navy fire on to the beach, or an unexploded shell under the sand. Doctors said the wounds were consistent with fire from the air, not from an underground explosion. Most of the injuries were to the head and upper torso. The Ghalia family was hit with the brunt of the explosion. Seven members of the family were killed, and many others injured. Some of the most badly wounded were transferred to hospitals in Israel. One was the 23 year old
daughter of the family, Amani, the one who was in the intensive care unit in the Beer Sheva Hospital. Ronnie, Nadav and I waited with the woman’s two uncles for visiting time. They had been given permits to come and visit her, but they were not allowed to leave the hospital grounds. So we asked if there was anything we could bring them from outside the hospital – food, cigarettes, clothing. We talked about Amani’s condition. The men said they were worried because part of one of her arms was missing. I tried to say something acknowledging how awful this was, but that it sounded like something she could recover from, and I remember thinking that her other injuries that they described sounded more worrying. They explained, but without two arms how will she be able to cook, and hold children, and how also will she get married. I don’t remember what I said then, if anything at all. I remember being taken aback, realizing how differently her injuries signified to us. They invited me to come in with them, but said that Nadav and Ronnie had to wait outside because they were men and it was improper that they would see her.

The Palestinian woman and I were both identified as women. This might seem an obvious point, but given our differences and their political implications, it is important to consider on what basis we are understood to have something in common, at least by the woman’s male relatives, but one could presume also by anyone who would agree that we are both identifiable and legible as women. This encounter between two women, one identified as Palestinian and the other identified as Israeli-Jewish allows for the recognition that there is no essential definition of woman here; woman holds the place of
the other of man through which the group is able to be reproduced in the image of man as
the image of the group. That is all she has “in common” with man as woman.\textsuperscript{51} By
pointing out how performances of gender challenge the association of feminine with
woman and masculine with man, Judith Butler (1993) has shown how the seemingly
stable categories of sexual difference of man and woman are constituted through gender.
In Butler’s formulation it is not the matter of the body that matters, but the congealed
associations that are attached to bodies through regulatory discourses that order specific
attributes into particular categories. In this vein, by focusing on performativity and
challenging heteronormative constructions of gender and sex, queer theory, in ways
resonant with but different from deconstruction and feminist theory, has challenged the
concept of autonomous sovereign subjects and of essentialist notions of identity. As
Khanna (2007) has suggested, it is the destabilization of the sex/gender distinction which
has also allowed for an understanding of the dilemma of trying to formulate a
transnational feminism;

\textsuperscript{51} Although in the context of a different argument, in “Homefront and Battlefront: the Status of
Jewish and Palestinian Women in Israel,” Hanna Herzog (2005) emphasizes that both Palestinian
and Jewish women in Israel are subordinate to men in large part because they are both under
intensive pressure due to the focus on national security and Israeli-Palestinian conflict to define
themselves in terms of national interests dominated by support for soldiers or by understandings
of women as those who reproduce and sustain national tradition and identity of the group (223-
224). This of course is not unique to the contexts of Israelis and Palestinians; much has been
written about how women are often those who are understood to represent and maintain group
identity and tradition. See for example the work on Mayan indigenous women and their use of
traje while Mayan men have often changed to wear “ladino” clothing (although it is worthwhile
to note that in the Mayan Cultural Rights movements often Mayan men have begun wearing their
traditional traje as a political and cultural statement of their identification as Maya). See Warren
It is only with categories as abstract as those of justice that feminist transnational politics can take place. This is, of course, an extremely thorny area when we consider the colonial legacies of juridical systems; the institutionalized (and frequently well-meaning) racism and sexism that mark its history; and the violence attendant in so many forms of law that cross national borders today?. Feminist interaction across national borders does not simply exist because of globalization; rather it exists because of the idea that women internationally are materially oppressed because they are women. This oppression usually does not manifest itself in the same ways, nor does it preclude the possibility that women have a complex relation to each other. Following the deconstruction of the sex/gender distinction in 1990s feminism, identifying something called women is itself problematic; the category itself holds no stable meaning, and the material figuring of women varies. It seems that the possibility of being put in the same position because of gender is what calls for some kind of unity; but this possibility of exploitation produces a prostration before the narrative of exploitation, and the attempt to move from that position to one in which the said exploitations may be dealt with justly (2007, 104-106).

But to say that there is no essential definition of woman here is not to say that the body and the corporeal is not a part of what defines sexual difference. Rather, it is to say the significance of the body is defined as a difference between bodies, rather than as a difference internal to the representation of any single life. This understanding is a significant departure from understandings which suggest that there is no difference between sex and gender, and that the body itself only matters in terms of the associations attached to it through social discourse. As Elizabeth A. Wilson (1998) has pointed out, “the challenge Butler has presented to both feminist and queer theorists is to formulate this generalized matrix of gender in a way that discloses the power relations that produce the effect of a prediscursive sex and a natural heterosexuality and that conceal the very operation of this discursive production” (61). Wilson goes on to say: “ Put another way,
gender infantilizes and pathologizes sex, not accidentally, but as its foundationally political presumption; this foundational gesture is an irreducible and naturalized effect of gender theory, even in its sophisticated reformulations” (62). The effect of the operation of this discursive production in producing an apparent prediscursive sex and a natural heterosexuality also reproduces a foundation for the political and the political subject based in an identification with particular identity positions and groups. Such a framework reproduces a politics based on the patriarchal logic of the name, and a notion of the subject as ultimately sovereign and autonomous. An analysis of Israeli-Jew, I am suggesting, forces a return to the question of the significance of the body in its relation to the possibilities and limits of linguistic signification and naming.

In “Signatures of the Impossible” Khanna (2004) responds to Janet Halley’s article “Ian Halley,” in which Halley argues that cultural feminism, by insisting on the value of that which has been subordinated, in this case the feminine, produces a moralism that rejects earlier and more radical feminist positions. By adopting the name and signature “Ian Halley” as the author of her piece, she attempts to perform her theoretical position in which she claims a departure from feminism in favor of what she suggests is a

---

52 For Wilson, this way in which gender theory that pits gender in opposition to sex cannot escape its relation to the biological determinism it both assumes and critiques (and from which it emerges), is one reason why she argues for the possibility of feminist theory, and in her case specifically feminist psychology, that explicitly defers questions about women. Writing of her own work, she says: “Taking the risk of charges of elitism and indifference to the conditions of ‘real women,’ this analysis seeks to open up other kinds of feminist spaces in psychology” (47).
more radical politics of queer theory. Khanna questions Halley’s investment in
maintaining ownership over “Ian Halley,“, and elaborates on the implications of the fact
that the copyright of the article is still held by Janet. She asks;

if Janet Halley owns the words of Ian Halley, what is suggested about the
constitution of the self, responsibility, and agency designated in the signature and
in the name of the copyright holder? Perhaps the ‘true’ copyright ought to belong
to a ‘Halley who is divided, multiplied, conjugated and shared.’ [2004: 40]

Khanna suggests here a concept of the subject understood as undone by the normative, as
heteronomous rather than autonomous, and as not particular to or dependent on
occupying certain identity positions. She challenges the idea of melancholia put forth by
Halley and others as the product of the violence of specific identity formations, and
suggests that “[m]elancholia is inhospitable to forms of identity or community formation
that rest on a structure of mourning and identification with dominant or subordinate
groups” (2004: 75). While acknowledging that feminism, like other fields including
queer theory, has “been involved in supporting major miscarriages of justice,” she
suggests that

feminism is not the problem, moralistic evaluation and its deadly consequences
are. Equally, feminism per se does not have to fall prey to the attribution of
causality to copula logic, which I understand as assuming the relation between

53 Khanna (2003; 2008) departs here from Butler’s concept of melancholia. While Butler suggests
that the constitution and integrity (as in wholeness) of the subject depends on the alterity of the
other calling it into question, Khanna argues that the alterity of the other, unhuman and
unidentifiable, threatens the constitution of the subject. This is a crucial difference, and one which
leads her to a consideration of the implications of the desubjectivation that ensues when one is
open to the demand of alterity.
what happens to one woman and what happens to women generally. The gesture of “speaking for” women that is suggested in the odd configuration of “speaking as woman” is an example of such causal logic, and it assumes that…the connection between the subject and the predicate, can be identical. What is remaindered, of course, is the supplement of difference – what else is one besides a woman when one speaks ‘as a woman?’ What differences are embedded in the concept ‘woman’ that are forgotten as soon as a commonality among women is assumed? [2004: 75]

A recognition of the difference that is always remaindered between the group and the singularity of the individuated subject brings the idea of the constitution of the subject as sovereign and autonomous into question. This is, in effect, the question also posed by Derrida in his reading of the exchange between Yerushalmi and Freud. But what is specific to the genealogy of the Jew highlights how racialization (in this case specifically of the Jew) and gendered and sexual formations have been mutually constitutive through the displacement of sexual difference on to the figure of woman. Such a recognition draws attention to the relation between the mechanisms through which subjects are constituted, and the relation to the singular other. This move leads to an insistence on a refusal of a politics based on foundation, and specifically on identitarian and community based politics, by acknowledging difference as alterity that is always threatening to the constitution of a subject as a sovereign autonomous self. Central to this analysis is an understanding of the relation between affective relation in terms of the corporeal, and linguistic representation, most especially in terms of signification through naming. An understanding of this relation necessitates a reconsideration of feminist, and more
specifically, queer theory, which has emphasized the performative and social elements that go into constituting gender and sexual identifications.

A moralizing discourse that claims such an undoing of the normative as only particular to specific subject positions in their relation to the others (in the case of this discussion, homosexual in relation to heterosexual), maintains an identitarian stance that reduces both feminism and queer theory and activism to a moral economy in which they are defined by the violences with which they have been complicit or which they have struggled against. The same can be said for other moralizing discourses that claim to challenge the normative or the oppressive through recourse to sympathetic identification with victims or perpetrators of violence, be they Jews, Palestinians, or others.

By thinking of the concept of critical melancholia in terms of the relation between the individuated subject and the group, Khanna suggests a focus on the question of the reproduction of the subject and the group through a relation to alterity that always threatens to undo the subject. It is in this sense that I am suggesting it is possible to think of singularity as affect, and more specifically, as the affective relation to oneself through transferential relation to another. Reproduction in this sense is no longer divided between woman figured as ground (body) and man figured as representation (name). Instead, reproduction occurs simultaneously with that which threatens its emergence and its capacity to be sustained; subjectivity is never fully accomplished in this sense, and self-referentiality encounters this incompleteness, and thus the impossibility of access to any originary place or moment. In other words, the body comes to matter through its
illegibility and unknowability, and through various forms of affective relation through which the body is made legible but through which it also exceeds such legibility.

Thus while Butler and others help to show the significance of how the subject is produced through language, or in other words, through representation, when this is done through a reinvestment in the name and its attachment to identity categories, such a focus on representation can produce an anti-biologism which reproduces the binaries which such a focus would seem to critique. Such an anti-biologism has informed some feminist readings of Freud, as well as Derrida’s reading in “Freud and the Scene of Writing” of Freud’s *Project*. It is through a return to Freud’s *Project* that I will show how an analysis of Israeli-Jew reveals an understanding of sexual difference as the difference between the body and its representation in language, as the difference of singularity which emerges in affective relation with the self through a relation with the singularity of an other.

Freud’s study of melancholia, hysteria and other forms of neuroses in the early 1900s was based on his work on the nervous system in the 1890s. In this earlier work,

---

54 This understanding of the subject is significant for anthropology both because of its inclination to use fieldwork material as evidence for its analysis, and because the method of participant-observation is particularly conducive to alignments with subjects in the field in terms of politics that assume we already know what we see, rather than asking how the subjects are constituted in the sequences of events that we observe and in which we often participate. Such an approach attends to frames of representation, how they are constituted, and what disrupts these frames through being outside of what is already representable.

Freud understood the nervous system to function in terms of what he called “the principle of constancy,” by which he suggested the nervous system was inclined to keep constant the amount of excitation in it. In *Studies on Hysteria* Freud compared nervous excitation and the nervous system more generally to electricity; the nervous system forms throughout an interconnected whole; but at many points in it great, though not insurmountable, resistances are interposed, which prevent the general, uniform distribution of excitation….In the interests of the safety and efficiency of the organism, the nervous apparatuses of the complexes of organs which are of vital importance – the circulatory and digestive organs – are separated by strong resistances from the organs of ideation. Their independence is assured. They are not directly affected by ideas.

It is disruptions to this system of constancy that can result in overexcitation or in resistances not being able to contain the distribution of excitation that could produce symptoms such as hysteria and its manifestations in the form of sympathetic pain or inhibitions from carrying out certain activities. Freud’s understanding of the nervous system and of neurons in this regard was also central to his understanding of memory and of representation.

In *The Project* (1895), Freud presents an explanation of neurons in terms of a relation between qualitative and quantitative energy through which memory is made possible. He explains that his quantitative conception of neurons is derived from clinical observation of what he calls excessively intense ideas such as those which can be found in hysteria and obsessions, where the characteristic of quantitative energy is more apparent than normal. He writes that based on this observation,
processes such as stimulus, substitution, conversion and discharge, which had to be described there [in connection with those disorders], directly suggested the conception of neuronal excitation as quantity in a state of flow. …

In the first place, the principle of inertia explains the structural dichotomy [of neurons] into motor and sensor as a contrivance for neutralizing the reception of \( Q_n \) by giving it off. … This discharge represents the primary function of the nervous system. Here is room for the development of a secondary function. For among the paths of discharge those are preferred and retained which involve a cessation of the stimulus: flight from the stimulus. Here in general there is a proportion between the \( Q \), of excitation and the effort necessary for the flight from the stimulus, so that the principle of inertia is not upset by this.

The principle of inertia is, however, broken through from the first owing to another circumstance. With an [increasing] complexity of the interior [of the organism], the nervous system receives stimuli from the somatic element itself – endogenous stimuli- which have equally to be discharged. These have their origin in the cells of the body and give rise to the major needs: hunger, respiration, sexuality. From these the organism cannot withdraw as it does from external stimuli; it cannot employ their \( Q \) for flight from the stimulus. They only cease subject to particular conditions, which must be realized in the external world…In order to accomplish such an action… and effort is required which is independent of endogenous \( Q_n \) and in general greater, since the individual is being subjected to conditions which may be described as the exigencies of life. In consequence, the nervous system is obliged to abandon its original trend to inertia…. It must put up with [maintaining] a store of \( Q_n \) sufficient to meet the demand for a specific action. Nevertheless, the manner in which it does this shows that the same trend persists, modified into an endeavor at least to kept the \( Q_n \) as low as possible and to guard against any increase of it – that is, to keep it constant. All the functions of the nervous system can be comprised under the aspect of the primary function or of the secondary one imposed by the exigencies of life. (294-296, italics added)

In this early formulation which he later develops into what he calls “the pleasure principle,” Freud identifies a relation between the stimulation internal to the body itself which disrupts the nervous system’s preference towards inertia, and the world external to the body. The body cannot withdraw from this internal stimulation, and thus it is
“particular conditions, which must be realized in the external world” through which such stimulus can be stopped, or decreased. Freud goes on to explain that in order to accomplish these conditions, “an effort is required which is independent of endogeneous $Qn$ and in general greater.” As a result, he says, the nervous system needs a reserve of $Qn$ on which it can draw in order to meet such demands by the nervous system. The relationship between the nervous system and this reserve of neuronal energy becomes central for his understanding of memory, time, and representation.

It is important to recall here that when Freud was developing this understanding of the nervous system, he was informed by the work of his teacher Charcot, and was working in the context of an increasing pathologization of Jews in the scientific and medical communities of Vienna and in Europe more generally. Unlike Charcot, however, Freud did not classify his work in terms of Jewish markings. Freud thus left the body in terms of how it was racialized out of his work, as Gilman has gone to great lengths to demonstrate, while Freud retained an interest in the physical body in terms of libidinal energy and its workings. As the body and the signification cathected on to it continues to matter to Freud, the body is marked in terms of originary difference defined in terms of sexual representation and difference.

Thirty years later, Freud has developed his understanding of the nervous system and the activity of neurons in terms of the metaphor of “the mystic writing pad.” In using this metaphor, Freud explains the relations between the nervous system, internal stimulus and a relation to external conditions in terms that offer an explanation of what might be
understood as memory. In using this model of a “mystic writing pad,” Freud also explains his shift from a topographical and economic understanding of the relation between the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious, to a structural understanding of this relation in terms of the ego, superego, and id. In the latter model, the division between unconscious and conscious is no longer only one of depth, but also of surfaces; the ego and the superego both overlap in the division between conscious and unconscious (or in their relation to the id). He writes:

All the forms of auxiliary apparatus which we have invented for the improvement or intensification of our sensory functions are built on the same model as the sense organs themselves or portions of them: for instance, spectacles, photographic cameras, ear-trumpets. Measured by this standard, devices to aid our memory seem particularly imperfect, since our mental apparatus accomplishes precisely what they cannot: it has an unlimited receptive capacity for new perceptions and nevertheless lays down permanent – even though not unalterable – memory-traces of them. As long ago as in 1900 I gave expression in The Interpretation of Dreams to a suspicion that this unusual capacity was to be divided between two different systems (or organs of the mental apparatus). According to this view, we possess a system Pcept.-Cs., which receives perceptions but retains no permanent trace of them, so that it can react like a clean sheet to every new perception; while the permanent traces of the excitations which have been received are preserved in ‘mnemic systems’ lying behind the perceptual system. Later, in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920g), I added a remark to the effect that the inexplicable phenomenon of consciousness arises in the perceptual system instead of the permanent traces.

The “mnemic systems’ thus become an important “site” in the understanding of consciousness which arises elsewhere, in the perceptual system where there is no permanent trace of the excitations produced in the reception of perceptions. After briefly describing the “mystic writing pad” (an item which emerged in England at the time Freud was working) on which one can repeatedly write and erase what one writes without
losing all trace of previous writings, Freud goes on to explain the nervous system, and the relation between the conscious, unconscious and preconscious in terms of this writing pad:

If we lift the entire covering-sheet – both the celluloid and the waxed paper – off the wax slab, the writing vanishes and, as I have already remarked, does not re-appear again. The surface of the Mystic Pad is clear of writing and once more capable of receiving impressions. But it is easy to discover that the permanent trace of what was written is retained upon the wax slab itself and is legible in suitable lights. Thus the Pad provides not only a receptive surface that can be used over and over again, like a slate, but also permanent traces of what has been written, like an ordinary paper pad: it solves the problem of combining the two functions by dividing them between two separate but interrelated component parts or systems. But it is precisely the way in which, according to the hypothesis which I mentioned just now, our mental apparatus performs its perceptual function. The layer which receives the stimuli – the system Pcpt.-Cs. – forms no permanent traces; the foundations of memory come about in other, adjoining, systems.…

On the Mystic Pad the writing vanishes every time the close contact is broken between the paper which receives the stimulus and the wax slab which preserves the impression. This agrees with a notion which I have long had about the method by which the perceptual apparatus of our mind functions, but which I have hitherto kept to myself. My theory was that cathectic innervations are sent out and withdrawn in rapid periodic impulses from within into the completely pervious system Pcpt.Cs. so long as that system is cathected in this manner, it receives perceptions (which are accompanied by consciousness) and passes the excitation on to the unconscious mnemic systems; but as soon as the cathexis is withdrawn, consciousness is extinguished and the functioning of the system comes to a standstill….Thus the interruptions, which in the case of the Mystic Pad have an external origin, were attributed by my hypothesis to the discontinuity in the current of innervation; and the actual breaking of contact which occurs in the Mystic Pad was replaced in my theory by the periodic non-excitability of the perceptual system. I further had a suspicion that this discontinuous method of functioning of the system Pcpt.-Cs. lies at the bottom of the origin of the concept of time. (227-230)

In “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” Derrida (1972) draws attention to the significance of Freud’s use of the Mystic writing pad, and of writing, as a model through which to
understand memory and psychic processes. Derrida sets out to identify in Freud’s work the points where what can be contained in psychoanalysis by logocentric enclosure are revealed. He suggests that these points show that it is only with difficulty that psychoanalytic insights can be bound within a logocentric logic, and that Freud’s breakthrough in psychoanalysis is not complicit with a linguistics based on a metaphysics of presence. In doing so, Derrida points out that Freud does not so much use the model of non-phonetic writing as a metaphor, but rather through using it as a model puts into question the meaning of writing, and thus also of trace and of metaphor itself;

it is not accidental that Freud, in the decisive moments of his itinerary, has recourse to metaphorical models which are borrowed not from spoken language or verbal forms, nor even from phonetic writing, but from a script which is never subject, extrinsic, and posterior to the spoken word. Freud invokes signs which do not transcribe living, whole speech, master of itself and self-present. … From Plato to Aristotle on, scriptural images have regularly been used to illustrate the relationship between reason and experience, perception and memory. But a certain confidence has never stopped being reassured by the meaning of the familiar term: writing. The gesture sketched by Freud interrupts that assurance and opens up a new kind of question about metaphor, writing, and spacing in general. Let us follow in our reading this metaphoric investment. It will eventually invade the entirety of the psyche. Psychical content will be represented by a text whose essence is irreducibly graphic. The structure of the psychical apparatus will be represented by a writing machine. What questions will these representations impose on us? (1972, 75)

Derrida then goes on to point out that what made it difficult for Freud to imagine an apparatus that could work as a model to explain the psychic apparatus of memory was that it would need to simultaneously account for both the permanence of the trace and for the virginity of the surface receiving the imprint of this trace; “for the engraving of the
tracks and the perennially intact bareness of the perceptive surface: in this case, neurons” (Ibid. 77). Derrida explains that Freud rejected the then common distinction between “sense cells” and “memory cells,” and instead proposed the concepts of “contact barriers” and “fraying.” Fraying, as Derrida explains, marks the tracing of a trail which “opens up a conducting path.” In order for this path to be broken, there must be two kinds of neurons; perceptual neurons which are permeable and which don’t offer resistance and thus don’t retain any impression, and memory neurons which put up resistance in the form of contact barriers to the quantity of excitation and which thus retain an impression. It is these latter neurons which bear what Freud calls memory and the trace of psychical events.

Derrida emphasizes that he considers this model remarkable when it is understood as a metaphorical model and not as a neurological description, but it is precisely the fact that Freud uses it both as a metaphorical model and as a neurological description that brings the concept of affect as an interface between representation and the unrepresentable into clarity. Elizabeth Wilson also identifies this place in Freud, and Derrida’s sidestepping of Freud’s emphasis on the neurological, but she returns to the question of the neurological with Derrida rather than without him. Wilson draws attention to Derrida’s interpretation, and translation, of Freud’s concept of *Bahnung* as *breaching*
She explains that for Derrida, the term *breaching* is understood as *differance*; the terms thus signifies spacing through the verb to differ, and temporality through the verb to defer. It is in this sense that breaching, like the notion of *differance*, confounds any claims to presence or absence; it is the difference between multiple breaches through which the psyche and memory are formed. As Wilson (1998) writes,

> The psyche is displaced from present quantities onto the difference between quantities, and these quantities themselves no longer are self-present but rather are constituted through an incessant play of differences. The trace, under Derrida, is thus something other than the empirically fixed entity that the neurologist would hope for. The neuropsychical trace escapes the containment of measurement and visibility pursued in contemporary neurocognitive technologies and methodologies. The trace is material – it is the effect of breaching and somatic excitation – but it resists both intelligibility (it is ungraspable) and sensibility (it is unlocatable). Confounding both a faithful scientism and a reactionary antineurologism, this trace exceeds the logic of empiricism versus antiempiricism by invoking an irreducible, nonpresent materiality. (149)

By resituating the *Project* temporally in the historiography of psychoanalysis, Wilson shows how Freud’s work there can be understood both as origin and as summary of all of Freud’s work.

---

56 Wilson (1998) notes that in the Bass translation of “Freud and the scene of writing,” the translation of *Bahnung* as *facilitation* is used to reference the Freudian projects while *breaching* is used to refer to Derridean projects. She suggests that “Where one translation (*facilitation*) perhaps remains true to Freud’s neurological ambitions, it misses the aspects of spacing and temporization that Derrida exploits with *breaching*” (146). It is this tension between the two projects that Wilson brings into an encounter in her work, as I go on to address in terms of its implications for an analysis of Israeli-Jew.
In returning to Freud’s interest in the neurological through Derrida’s understanding of *breaching*, Wilson suggests an understanding of sexuality that is not exterior or subsequent to neurology and cognition. She writes:

To strip neurocognitive matter of its motility, to place the force of sexuality separate from, or subsequent to, the nature of neurology and cognition, is to generate a reductive, affectless, and sterile ontology. The analytics of breaching pursued here only in their generality hint at a number of more specific hypotheses about how this ontological relation of sexuality and neurocognition could be reconsidered. The first and most fundamental of these hypotheses is this: The facilitating movements and effects of neurocognitive breaching are libidinal. That is, the flow of activation across a neural network is an affective movement that could be described in terms of microintensities, tensions, repetitions, and satisfactions. (Ibid. 204)

In making this argument, Wilson critiques both the biological determinism of much of psychology and neurology, but also the anti-biologism of much of critical theory and some feminist interventions in these fields. In so doing, Wilson suggests a notion of neurocognitive trace that is not locatable, present, or fixed, but that is corporeal (189).

So what does all this have to do with an analysis of Israeli-Jew in contemporary Israel, and even with the discussions of the relation between Jewishness and psychoanalysis? First, it is important to remember that while Freud left out the markings of racialization from his analysis of nervous disorders, the political, cultural and scientific discourses within which he was working were steeped in assumptions and questions about racialized difference. I have attempted above to show how Freud’s theory of individuation through his theory of sexuality involves a process of identification through attempting to name not fully knowable difference of the self in terms of a difference
between bodies. Freud marked this difference in terms of the difference of having or not having the penis and the binary between mother and father, woman and man. But reconsidering Freud’s thinking here in terms of what it is that the child is attempting to do, and the historical context within which Freud was working, highlights the significance of naming in relation to the phenomenological for the articulation of subjectivity. To do so is to return to the relation between GreekJew JewGreek, and IsraeliJew JewIsraeli, in terms of the body and naming.

Derrida (1972) suggests that assuming that in the Project Freud is speaking of neurons only in terms of a simple opposition between quantity and quality, his concept of fraying reveals itself intolerant of this intent. An equality in resistances to the fraying or an equivalence in the forces fraying would eliminate any preference in choice of itinerary. Memory would be paralysed. It is the difference between frayings which is the real origin of memory and thus of the psyche. Only that difference frees a ‘preference of path’ (Wegbevorzugung): ‘Memory is represented (dargestellt) by the differences in frayings between the neurones.’ We must then not say that fraying without difference is insufficient for memory; it must be stipulated that there is no pure fraying without difference. (78)

Derrida goes on to explain this difference as not one between quantities, repetitions, or between quantity and quality, but rather as a difference understood in terms of a deferment. He suggests that it is this deferment to which Freud refers when he writes about cathexis, a “movement [that] is described as the effort of life to protect itself by deferring a dangerous cathexis, that is, by constituting a reserve (Vorrat). The threatening expense or presence are deferred with the help of fraying or repetition” (Ibid. 79). It is in
this sense that Derrida suggests that repetition is never of an original impression, but rather that an imprint or trace is only ever possible if there is already repetition through an initial resistance; “life is already threatened by the origin of the memory which constitutes it and by the fraying which it resists, by the effraction which it can contain only by repeating it.” But Derrida quickly moves to explain that one must be wary of making this formulation in such language, because “there is no life present at first which would then come to protect, postpone, reserve itself in differance. The latter constitutes the essence of life. Or rather: differance not being an essence, it is not life, if being is determined as ousia, presence, essence/existence, substance or subject. Life must be thought of as trace before being may be determined as presence” (Ibid. 80). This is one of Derrida’s earlier formulations of how the concept of differance challenges a metaphysics of presence which presumes that any presence can be fully present to itself, and thus also representative of itself. Here the question of both the human and of sexual difference arises. Derrida recognizes this, but does not seem to recognize it in terms of the relation between affect, the body, and sexual difference.

Derrida (2008) has reminded us that in the second narrative in Bereshit God creates man in his own image, and then gives him the right to name the animals. Derrida emphasizes the point that this right to name, in God’s own name, is in order to enable

57 This is also one of the reasons why, I would argue, Derrida’s work poses a challenge not only to metaphysics and ontology, but also to anthropology. See Morris 2007.
God to see. To see what man will call the animals, to see what will happen out of this encounter between man and animal through language and the power to name. Derrida suggests that this moment in the narrative of Genesis, when God gives man the power to name in his own name in order to see, marks the first stroke of time, in which God sees “something coming without seeing it coming, a God who will say ‘I am that I am’ without knowing what he is going to see when a poet enters the scene to give his name to living things” (Ibid.17).58

Derrida writes,

The sentiment of this deprivation, of this impoverishment, of this lack would thus be the great sorrow of nature (das grosse Leid der Natur). It is in the hope of requiting that, of redemption (Erlosung) from that suffering, that humans live and speak in nature – humans in general and not only poets as Benjamin makes clear. What is already more interesting is that this putative sadness doesn’t just derive from the inability to speak (Sprachlosigkeit) and from muteness, from a stupefied or aphasic privation of words. If this putative sadness also gives rise to a lament, if nature laments, expressing a mute but audible lament through sensuous sighing and even the rustling of plants, it is perhaps because the terms have to be inverted. … According to the hypothesis of this reversing reversal, nature (and animality within it) isn’t sad because it is mute (weil sie stumm ist). On the contrary, it is nature’s sadness or mourning that renders it mute and aphasic, that leaves it without words. (Die Traurigkeit der Natur macht sie verstummen.) What, for so long now, has been making it sad and as a result has deprived the mourner of its words, what forbids words, is not a muteness and the experience of a powerlessness, an inability ever to name; it is, in the first place, the fact of receiving one’s name. (Ibid.19-20)

It is the act of being named, rather than an inability to name, which Derrida suggests gives rise to a lament that is without words.

58 Derrida also discusses this moment elsewhere (1998, 2002, 2005.)
Derrida explains his difference with Heidegger here in terms of the significance of having a relation to the name for the difference between human and animal. For Heidegger, the difference between man, animal, and stone, is that man has a relation to other beings “as such,” while the animal only has a relation to other beings in terms of their subjective and utilitarian relation to them, and the stone cannot feel, isn’t alive, and has no relation in this sense to other beings. Derrida points out that Heidegger acknowledges that the “as such” doesn’t depend on language, but rather founds it. And this is why, for Heidegger, the difference between man and animal is fundamentally an ontological difference, but one which, Derrida points out, relies on a Cartesian distinction between man as possessing reason and consciousness and the animal not. Heidegger asks if the animal has time, and Derrida elaborates on this question to show that Heidegger’s seminar is concerned here with “homesickness and melancholy, philosophy, and metaphysics as forms of nostalgia” (Ibid.146). The animal, for Heidegger, can be with, be at home with, man, but not “exist with us” in the house. Derrida points out that three of the central questions of Heidegger’s work, and specifically of Being and Time - What is world? What is finitude? What is individuation? - are developed based on the question “what is an instant?” For Heidegger, man has finitude, because man has access to the “as such.” Animal is what Heidegger terms “poor in the world,” because unlike the stone, it has world but through an experience of not being able to “have it,” because the world appears to it but not “as such,” that is to say, not in terms of being a particular essence. Here Derrida marks a departure from Heidegger.
Derrida explains that he wants to begin the discussion of the animal and the human from the moment in the tale of Genesis that is before the time of the fall, before there is sin and shame, before there can be confession. It is in this moment, in trying to grasp this moment, that it is possible, he suggests, to come closer to understanding what it means to be seen and to see through the eyes of an other who sees you seeing them see you. This is a moment of a bottomless gaze, of seeing what comes before and after the name of seeing oneself being seen in the eyes of the other. The story of genesis marks such a moment through referencing the moment that God encounters what he does not know and at the same time has the right to inspect; God calls man and gives man the right to name the animals, in order that God may see. Derrida describes this moment as a time before time, as the moment marking the very genesis of time (Ibid.17). The “right of inspection” can thus also be understood as the right to see before there is name, before one knows what one is seeing, the right to gaze on the unknown without the imposition of a narrative and name that tells you in advance what it is you will see, and to be met by the bottomless gaze of the alterity of the other seeing you seeing it see you.

In tracing this genealogy of metaphysics to genesis in terms of the animal and the concept of time, Derrida shows how the notion that what distinguishes the human from the animal is the capacity to relate to others “as such,” conceals the way in which the human itself does not have the “as such.” The notion that the human has the “as such” in any pure way is founded on a metaphysics of presence that situates man only as naming, and not also as named. Derrida points to how as soon as one recognizes that the human,
and specifically man, is also named and deprived of having world, the whole distinction between man and animal, (and stone and world) and then also between woman and man and between figures of difference among men, starts to unravel. But it is precisely this understanding of time that demands an acknowledgement of the body and the corporeal as that which simultaneously makes subjectivity possible and threatens it, making its full attainment impossible, and this understanding of time in relation to the name which challenges a political framework based on the patriarchal logic of the archive.

If the Jew has no fixed essence and is defined in movement in relation to both claims of a universal human and in relation to particular others, and if the Jewish woman has no essence as a Jewish woman other than it is through her body that Jewishness is reproduced, then what does this mean in a political framework that is explicitly invested in maintaining and reproducing a Jewish majority in an environment that is populated also by non-Jews? A woman, by definition in both the genealogies of European modernity and of Abrahamic Judaism (as well as many other particular groups), is defined as woman not just in relation to men in general, but specifically also in relation to the men in “her group.”\(^59\) Which is to say, woman is never only woman, she is also

---

\(^{59}\) Much of course has been written about this. I have found particularly helpful work that addresses the frameworks of the modern nation-state, modern nationalism, and the notion of asylum in terms of the question of the position of woman. See for example the very different following works: Engle (2005), Philippe Bruggisser (1997); Menon and Bhasin (1998). My thinking here has also been shaped by Ranjana Khanna’s 2005 seminar “Asylum,” and as is probably clear from the dissertation, my consideration of the question of woman and sexual
belonging to a group with men, either the unmarked universal man of European modernity, or particular marked others. Her difference from man then, is defined not only in terms of participation in reproduction in general, but in terms of the reproduction of a specific group, whether or not the rules of reproduction mark her as the one who passes on the difference of the group or not; woman is one element in the site of reproduction of the group. But if sexual difference, as I have suggested, is a difference internal to any single subject rather than a difference between two differently sexed bodies, such as those which go under the names man and woman, what does such an understanding of sexual difference mean for an understanding of both the position of woman and for an understanding of the political subject?

Because man (and not only woman) is always named and not only naming, but cannot access or be present to the time and place in which he or she was named, complete self-representation is not possible. The self can only present itself to itself (and to others) through a relation to others through which the self is able to be partially present to itself, but this presence is made possible through a relation to time that is out of joint with itself, through a relation to itself through others which makes self-presence a presence that is present only through a present that is always already the past and the future. But what a consideration of the relation between the narrative of metaphysics (in the figure of the unmarked universal man of European modernity) and the Abrahamic narrative of the Jew difference in these terms is also informed by her work on the concept and practice of asylum more broadly (Khanna 2005; 2006; 2008).
(in the figure of the European Jew) shows, is that the Derridean critique of metaphysics which reveals that “what forbids words, is not a muteness and the experience of a powerlessness, an inability ever to name; it is, in the first place, the fact of receiving one’s name (19-20), has had differential effects not only on men and women but also on men and women marked as different in relation to the concept of a universal unmarked human. To try to understand what this relation between the unmarked and the marked man, or between European and postcolonial men, or between Israeli and Jew means for a concept of the political and for representation of a political subject, is then to ask about the figure of woman in relation to these two figures of men. If in relation to the unmarked universal of man, woman is defined as the difference through which man can reproduce himself as man, what is the woman in relation to the marked man? The answer to the latter question of course depends on the specificity of the history and context of particular genealogies of men marked as different.

I will finish this chapter now by turning back to now one of my fieldnotes I wrote early on in my research in Israel. In the middle of November, 2006, I had lunch with some friends who I hadn’t seen since leaving Israel for about a month at the end of the summer. After I met with them, I took a bus to the neighborhood of Ramat Yosef to spend some time with the people who sit outside Marco and Chen’s store in the neighborhood center. After sitting and chatting for a little while with Marcos, and his friend Victor, an older man sitting in motorized chair with handlebars and room on the bottom by his feet for a box into which he dropped small melons and other fruit and
vegetables that he picked out from the Russian grocer’s stand, came by. He sat only a few inches from me, but enough in front of me that he couldn’t see me and with his back was facing me. He talked with some of the men around. I was curious as he was a new face there for me, and asked him where he was from, if he lived in the neighborhood, how long he had been there. He said that he lived in Abarbanel, and he laughed a little bit. At first I wasn’t sure if he was joking or not, and I asked him if he lived on the street Abarbanel, or in the mental hospital Abarbanel a few blocks away, and if he was joking. Someone else answered that he didn’t live in Abarbanel. Someone said that he was born in Paras (in Iran). Eventually he motorized on, and Marcos said that he was stingy. Someone else said that he was bad. Someone said that he was a rapist. I said really, surprised to hear this. At the same time a part of me felt like I was already registering it as part of what is starting to seem like a collection of stories about crime in, or at least stories about crime that are told in the neighborhood. Marcos and Victor told me that yes, he was a rapist, and that he had been in jail. The man then came back, still sitting in his motorized chair, and Marcos and Victor continued saying that he was a rapist. So I asked the man if it was true; I asked him if he raped a little girl. He said God forbid, and then he said maybe your grandmother though, and I was taken aback. I said something that felt stupid and inadequate, something like rape is unacceptable, whether it’s of a little girl, or a woman, or a grandmother. The words sounded ridiculous. Victor said that my grandmother lives in the United States, and the man said that it didn’t matter, give him her address. I felt disgusted and a little bit scared. Eventually he left as an older woman, also in a motorized
wheelchair with handlebars in the front, came up behind him and signaled that he move out of the way so she could continue on. I asked Victor and Marcos if it really was true that the man was a rapist, and how they knew, and they said that he told them. I said that maybe he was telling stories, and that maybe it wasn’t true, and I asked how they knew. They said that he had been sentenced to 25 years in jail, later Marcos said 24 years, and that he had his sentence reduced to 17 years, and that he had recently been released. Victor said they hadn’t seen him in a long time. He was in jail. That’s why he is crippled, from the police beatings. Marcos and Victor told me that the man had raped a four year old girl, and other people too, a neighbor’s daughter. They told me his name, and they said that it was in the news, so I might try to find news about it in the newspapers.

After visiting Ramat Yosef, I came home and got some warmer clothes and left to go to the demonstration across from the Kiriya [the Ministry of Defense] against the attacks in Gaza. That morning the news headlines said that 17 civilians in Beit Hanoun had been killed by Israeli tank shells in the early hours of the morning. After a week in which about 50 Palestinian were killed in Beit Hanoun. I saw Lymor at the protest. Towards the end of it we decided to go make a quick visit at the hospital, to visit Abu Fatchi and the others who Lymor has made a kind of friends with in the past months, I think since the shelling on the beach in Gaza this past summer. Earlier, at lunchtime, Lymor and I had talked a little bit about the hospital visits, and about what it’s like living here, and he said that he has stopped going as much to visit people in the hospital, that it feels like it doesn’t go anywhere. I think he said that it feels a little bit like it’s stuck. He
also said, when we were talking about how he’s been doing since he was shot, and about
him not being able to go back to work for the moment, that he himself is a little bit stuck.
So after the demonstration, he said he wondered about going to the hospital to visit, that
he wondered if I might want to go. So we decided to go but that we would go only for a
short time. So we went, and I sat in the room where the women sleep, and he sat out in
the hall where the television is, which seems to be a new addition there since I was there
before, and where the men were sitting. Abu Fachmi was there, and we both greeted him.
Sometimes I went out to the hall to ask Lymor or the men in general to translate
something that the women said, or something that I was trying to tell the women, and
sometimes Lymor and Abu Fachmi came in the women’s room to sit for a little bit and to
translate, or to add a bed. I tried to talk a little bit with the women, using hand gestures,
facial expressions, my very little Arabic, some Hebrew that they probably didn’t
understand, and some not very artistic sketches on a piece of paper that I tore out of my
notebook and drew on with a smelly magic marker. I tried to ask them about whether
people in Gaza were going out fishing these days; I used the magic marker to make an
awkward looking fish and some waves on the piece of paper. After talking for awhile
with them, and after Lymor was talking with the men out in the hall, we left, and Abu
Fachmi walked us towards the entrance/exit.

We passed by the emergency room, and three people, a man, a woman, and their
son, had just arrived their looking for the woman’s nephew who had apparently recently
arrived from Beit Hanoun. The man, woman, and their son, who looked to be maybe in
his early twenties, had come from Beer Sheva. They were quiet and didn’t say much. The woman in particular looked distraught. Lymor, since he knows more Arabic than I, was better at saying words of greeting and helping to direct them – Abu Fachmi asked Lymor if he could show them where the intensive care unit in the children’s section was. So we walked them there.

My fieldnote ends there, and I don’t remember more from that night – it is mixed up with multiple nights which, with some exceptions, all seem similar to one another. Hospital rooms with fluorescent lights and instant coffee or tea in styrofom cups, halting conversation in broken Arabic, mixed wit Hebrew and English, the divisions between men and women marked linguistically and in body language. Juxtaposed with visits to the neighborhood of Ramat Yosef and to meetings and outings with women in the Women’s Coalition for Peace, and with interviews with lawyers, state officials, taxi cab drivers, and casual conversation with friends, relatives and neighbors.

Through an analysis of these days and nights, of what is called the material of fieldwork, I have argued that Israeli-Jew is defined through simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of its internal and external others, woman, femininity, Arab, diaspora, and that it is defined through continual movement between binary oppositions. This movement is most prominent in terms of Israeli military and demographic policy, and specifically in terms of Israel’s policies towards Palestinians. I have been arguing that rather than understanding Israel’s policies towards Palestinians, and its simultaneous claims to being both a Jewish state and a liberal democracy, as violations of the principles of humanism
and the liberal frameworks based on these principles, these policies and claims can be understood as a symptom of the violence inherent to and imbedded in the humanism of European modernity, its political frameworks of liberalism and the concept of the human on which these frameworks are based.

I suggest here that Israel’s violence towards Palestinians can be understood as a symptom of liberalism’s political frameworks and their basis on the assumption of a rights-bearing autonomous subject, rather than as a violation of these frameworks. Israel’s violence against Palestinians is accompanied by caring for at least some of those who it injures. Israel does not transfer and get rid of the Palestinians “once and for all;” it does not fully establish a policy of transfer nor does it incorporate Palestinians more fully into its citizenry or firmly establish the country’s borders. Different political interests struggle to implement their views of what Israel should be, and individuals contradict themselves in the same breath in their identifications with and against Arab and Palestinian. Both Palestinians, and human rights activists representing claims to a universal humanity, become threatening to Israel as a Jewish state, the former through a particularity that represents the figure of statelessness and demands for nationality through a particularity that is non-Jewish but in a position that overlaps with that of the diasporic Jewish refugee, and the latter because it fails to recognize the violence of universalist humanist claims and their disavowal of singularity as permeating both the particular and the universal.
I am suggesting that it is through an analysis of two different originary narratives – one rooted in the Bible and the other in Western metaphysics – that it is possible to understand Israel in terms of two incompatible patriarchal logics that continually challenge one another, through the figure of Jew-Israeli. Israeli contexts thus pose a question about what it means for the figure of woman to enter into these contexts. By An analysis of Israeli-Jew highlights the diversity of difference within humanism’s human in terms of the specificity of how different figures of difference have been historically and politically situated, and suggests a concept of the political, and of a political subject, based not on a continual haunting of the name by other names all in search of what eludes the name, but on a haunting of the name that continually undoes the name. This undoing is not a general undoing that produces a single deterritorialized entity, or that doesn’t distinguish and differentiate among different times, places and entities. But neither is it a melancholic holding on to what eludes the name while continually reinstating the inheritance of this name through a filiation based only on the name as such. Rather, it is a melancholia in the terms suggested by Khanna’s concept of critical melancholia, a melancholia accompanied by a critical agency that undoes the name in a process of renaming that carries the trace of what came before based not only on language, but also on a filiation of affect and the sensory, of speaking through the

---

60 It is in this sense that I read Khanna (2008) as asking not only what it means to think of the human as not having the “as such” in any pure way, but also what it means to think of woman as not having the “as such” in relation to the human not having the “as such,” and in relation to all men and women not having the “as such” in the same way.
language of the other with a difference made through transference that eludes containment and full signification in language and the finitude of the proper name. It is critical because it is both melancholic and acting on and through this melancholia, not disabled into directing movement towards stasis but rather undone into movement that opens the past toward the future that is always to come. Rather than the name trying to contain, limit and name affect, affect rewrites the name, acknowledging its heteronomy and the affect that is impossible to contain within the name.\(^6^1\) The ways in which the Abrahamic and Greek narratives bring together a relation to origin based on the reproduction of the name in the conjunction Israeli-Jew and its effects, draws attention to what the name does not name and to the inaccessibility of the place and moment of origin. It is this displacement of what cannot be named on to the figure of woman that I am calling the displacement of sexual difference.

What this might mean in Israel is relaxing from holding on to the name “Jew” in terms of naming, and instead letting the affective and the sensory through which it is signified carry its name from and towards other names through transferential relation, rewriting it in the process. Such a move would have political implications for the relation between motion and stasis, boundaries, the economic, the law and property.

\(^{61}\) While Derrida fuels this movement with deconstruction, Khanna moves to show what its implications are for the specificity of different political contexts, and for an understanding of sexual difference. It seems to me that in this sense a signature of sexual difference can be understood as a kind of “signature of the impossible” (Khanna 2004).
I have tried to show here how the conjunction “Israeli-Jew” produces a subjectivity defined through a self-differential relation in terms of temporality that reveals sexual difference as the difference of singularity, and singularity to be the difference of affective relation through which the particular and the universal meet in a relation with the other as that which is both inside and outside the subject, and thus undoing any possibility of the subject achieving sovereignty or complete self-representation.

The anxiety of sexual difference is thus also an anxiety about not being able to be fully present to oneself, contemporaneously or through signification, because one cannot access an originary place or moment in which one emerged as one, because one is not actually one, and the present is not fully present to itself. It is in this sense then, that the figure of the Jew in an Abrahamic logic, acknowledges this continual effort to access or to represent one’s “self.” It is also in this sense that the logic of the archive is a patriarchal logic in the sense that it is a logic of one; the subject claims subjectivity through reference to the sameness and difference with the language out of which one emerged. But as an analysis of Israeli-Jew reveals, the possibility of speaking, and of remembering another from whom one came, also involves an affective relation to oneself through the relation to one’s own singularity which is possible only through a relation to the difference of another. This affective relation which accompanies linguistic representation and the possibility of the utterance of “I” is a temporal relation in which the present is undone by the past that coexists simultaneously with it, the existence of
what is not there which threatens to undo what is there, and which makes the attainment of complete subjectivity and presence impossible. It is this affective relation to oneself, through the relation of singularity to the other, that I am calling sexual difference.

I have suggested that this displacement can be understood in part through what Freud termed “the principle of constancy” and his understanding of this principle’s function in the nervous system and disorders such as melancholia and hysteria. An analysis of Israeli-Jew, I am arguing, reveals the importance of affect and the corporeal in the constitution of subjectivity and the limits of linguistic representation, and allows for an understanding of subjectivity which acknowledges affect and the corporeal in terms of the principle of constancy, thereby refusing a politics based on achieving such constancy through a displacement of the difference of the body on to a difference between bodies. Instead, such constancy is allowed through the allowance for continual movement between inscription and that which is inscribed, between and within linguistic representation and the corporeal. Affect, as that which makes felt this movement, can be understood as a relation of translation and transference through which this movement can be interpreted and partially directed, in part by shaping linguistic signification and thought itself, as in the process of dream work – through associative thinking and an attention to processes of displacement and condensation.

Freud’s theorization of sexuality in terms of his concept of the fetish can be understand as an explanation of how the child attempts to name its own body, which is to say, how the child attempts to understand the meaning of its bodily sensations and to
translate them into signifiers, which entails also naming the bodies of others. It is through
naming others that the child is able to make claims to its own assumed sovereign
autonomy, to being one who names rather than one, or what, is named. It is also in this
sense that the conjunction Israeli-Jew places sexual difference under erasure in the
Derridean sense of under erasure; sexual difference is necessary to reference so it is
written down, but it is also impossible to write down, so it is crossed out. By examining
these two genealogies in their attachment in Israeli-Jew through an analysis of these
genealogies in psychoanalysis, it becomes possible to see what Elizabeth Wilson (1998)
has described as a “kind of interchange (breach) between the domains of criticism and the
neurocognitive sciences that opens each productively and rigorously to the other” (206).

But what is this “displaced difference”? I am suggesting here that it is the
difference of the relation to the body and the representation of the self through a relation
to another which the child, and then the adolescent, tries to name by responding to its
libidinal desire by naming its object choice in relation to itself. In order to be a subject
that might attain the object its libido seeks, the subject names its object as that which is

---

62 I think here of Elizabeth Wilson’s (1989) discussion of Freud’s Project, and her contention that he puts neurology under erasure there. In Neural Geographies she writes: “Rather than obliterating or repressing the import of neurology to the psychological, Freud accords to neurology the effects appropriate to biological reductionism, but at the same time he displaces these effects in such a way that this reductionism (although not neurology itself) becomes untenable….Because a neurological origin is inaccurate, it is crossed out; because it is necessary, it remains legible” (140). The substance of Wilson’s argument here about Freud’s work in the Project affirms the conclusions to which I come in an analysis of Israeli-Jew; I will return to her work later in this chapter.
external to itself. The permeation of libidinal energy through this object across the boundaries of the subject is disavowed in order to sustain the repression of the previous object through which pleasure was derived, and the affect is displaced and fixed in terms of autonomous and separate categories.

It is through naming that one “knows” what one sees, and even what one does not see. The same can be said in a different way for other phenomenological experience and for ontology; it is through naming that one “knows” what is. But what Freud points out, most significantly perhaps in his *Project*, is that the libidinal energy which drives naming is organized not only by and through the name, but also by its relation to that which is both internal to the subject and external to the subject whose contours take shape through naming but which are also undone through the affective which is the breach which is also a connection through which singularity is produced as that which is internal to but in excess of the present and of the presence of any single life. It is thus through affective relation that singularity exists, simultaneously making subjectivity possible and threatening its attempts at achieving stability and self-presentation, precisely because this singularity is a product of material made – in multiple ways – of the material that is not of the self, not part of its presence but what makes its presence possible through its touch that makes its absence felt.

Israel remembers Jew. Rafi remembers Vita. New Jew remembers old Jew. European man remembers the postcolonial man. In Shulamit Aloni’s invocation of the “suffering of her small people” in defense of being allowed to dream of a utopian “ideal
society” based on universal equality, and in the taxi driver’s comparison between a past of 12 Jewish tribes in comparison to a present of two thousand Jewish tribes, the Jew is invoked in terms of a comparison between a marked and an unmarked subject. For Aloni, it is a comparison between a particular and a universal. For the taxi driver it is a comparison between a claim to group singularity and the loss of such singularity through the inclusion of all particularities in the name of that group.

Shuli remembers himself through a detailed account of his caring for his other soldiers, what he baked for them, how they reacted, through the gift of an ice-cream, its taste, temperature, and exactly the kind. He recalls himself also in terms of such bodily care through stories about the salads he makes for his relatives. In other words, he presents himself through his relation of bodily sustenance of those around him. He makes himself present to himself through this invocation of others through such affective relation. The stories about war are not stories of armed combat itself, but of the movement between others through which he ascertains his own presence. Many of these stories are about relations within “his own group,” affective relations between himself and other soldiers. When the stories are about encounters with those with whom he is placed in opposition, the stories often reveal a movement back and forth between being on both sides, not in terms of an explicit political identification, but in terms of the particularities through which the encounter is articulated; through a simultaneous hospitality and hostility, a simultaneous familiarity and strangeness, a masculinity and a femininity. On multiple levels then, the conjunction Israeli-Jew challenges metaphysical
claims to a subjectivity based on opposition of presence and absence past and future, mind and body, human and animal, man and woman, and thus to the possibility of completely attaining, or fully sustaining, subjectivity at all.

Through an analysis of how Israeli remembers Jew in terms that are both gendered and racialized through the political configuration of GreekJew JewGreek, and thus through the postcolonial, I have suggested that the production of what is called heterosexual desire, along with its accompanying categories of man and woman, is reliant on the production of a racialization, understood in terms of the postcolonial, in the sense that this racialization involves the production of the human as not same to an ideal of the human but within a framework of self-representation, and thus of woman as the difference within the human which allows for the reproduction of man. This understanding of the relation between self-representation and desire leads to the question of woman and sexual difference through a question about the significance of naming and representation for the constitution of the human in terms of the categories man and woman and their relation in terms of sexuality and understandings of social and biological reproduction.

The fluctuation back and forth of definitions of Israeli-Jew in terms of being like an animal and of naming others as being like an animal, of being effeminate, weak, and vulnerable and being strong, sovereign and masculine, of being reproductive in affective terms and of being reproductive in biological terms, both vessel of reproduction and that which inseminates the material and place of reproduction both can be understood in terms
of this analysis, and helps make possible such an analysis because of the historical specificity of the genealogies of Israeli-Jew. As a result, this analysis also then reveals how the constitution of European modernity’s concept of the human is based on a displacement of sexual difference through which species difference is also constituted as such, with implications for concepts of ownership, rights, representation, inheritance, relation to difference, sexuality and justice.

I have tried to show how the conjunction Israeli-Jew, by explicitly maintaining both the unmarked ideal of the European man and the marked difference of the Jewish man, reveals the question of the definition of woman and of sexual difference as a question which puts these two narratives into an encounter with one another. By putting the figure of the Jewish woman in relation with woman as marked in other postcolonial terms and in relation with the unmarked “European” woman, I have suggested that sexual difference is displaced, in the relation between the marked and the unmarked man, on to the figure of woman as reproductive and as object of man’s desire. I did so in part through a consideration of Sarah Kofman’s work, because I read her as presenting these two questions in her work in a way which highlights these questions as two separate questions, one in terms of the old Jew (man) in relation to the European (man) in her discussion of the Jew in the Holocaust, and the other in terms of (European) woman in relation to the European (man) in her engagement with Freud’s theorization of sexual difference. Israeli-Jew, I then went on to show, forces these two questions to encounter one another, by retaining both the European and the postcolonial man in the conjunction
Israeli-Jew, and placing them in a political framework in which the group attached to Israeli-Jew must be reproduced, thereby also bringing the figure of woman into a relation with the two figures of men.

Through this analysis, I have suggested that sexual difference can be understood as an inaccessible originary difference that is unrepresentable in linguistic signification, that is the difference of relation to and through the body to oneself through affective relation with others, and that this is the difference of singularity as alterity. Such an understanding of sexual difference opens up both those called men and those called women to being both objects of desire, named by another, looked upon, and as those who name and look at others, be they men or women or something else. In this sense, the categories “men” and “women” also would be undone, diversified or multiplied into more than two categories of difference. What this might mean in Israel is relaxing from holding on to the name “Jew” in terms of naming, and instead letting the affective and the sensory through which it is signified carry its name from and towards other names through transferential relation, rewriting it in the process. The same could be true in a different way beyond Israel’s borders. Relations to oneself, to others, and to the social and material space that one inhabits with others, would also then not be able to be thought in the same terms of possibilities of ownership, and inheritance would perhaps circulate according to multiple forms of investment, including affective and not only monetary currency, and through the movement of stories more than through the fortification of physical borders.
Chapter Six
Archive, Israeli-Jew, and the Passage Between

You live in Tel Aviv, in your world, you see in the news only the side of Israel, and every attack you see for two hours, and all the pieces of the bodies and everything, and with every attack they remind you about how all the Arab world wants to exterminate you, and they show you the protests in Iran and in Iraq, so that you will see how many there are, how many are burning the Israeli flag, how many millions. And then they tell you, Iranians are like Palestinians, Iraqis are like Palestinians. Everyone wants to exterminate you. Also when you go to the army, and in training, there isn’t a differentiation. They don’t teach about the Nakba. They don’t teach about it, there is no Nakba in Israel’s history. No. There isn’t. It’s all about Zionists, and the Jews who came, and who were murdered in Europe, and Germany, and in all the countries. The United States closed its gates, and everyone closed their borders, and the Jews didn’t have anywhere to go, so they came here. And this was their home and everything, and no one saved them. And the Jew isn’t anymore the Haredi, the Shtremeli, who is afraid of the Polish, instead now he has an army, and he has power, and he is the strongest. And he will eliminate anyone who will want to do a Holocaust to him like once.

Liad
Mas’ha Campsite 2003

There, we said, and in this place. How are we to think of there? And this taking place or this having a place of the arkhe?

Jacques Derrida

In the place of – locution which names the occupied space, the destined location [enplacement], natural or not, even the lodging, the habitat, the lieu (one also says, for substitution, ‘ceci au lieu de cela’), ‘at the place of’ [‘a la place de.’ ‘au lieu de,’ ‘en lieu et place de’], this can also be said ‘for [pour]’: this for that, the one for the other, and so on.

Jacques Derrida

This is a key passage, even when it is neglected, or even especially when it is neglected, for when the passage is forgotten, by the very fact of its being
reenacted in the cave, it will found, subtend, sustain the hardening of all
dichotomies, categorical differences, clear-cut distinctions, absolute
discontinuities, all the confrontations of irreconcilable representations. Between
the ‘world outside’ and the ‘world inside,’ between the light of the sky and the
fire of the earth. Between the gaze of the man who has left the cave and that of the
prisoner….Between reality and dream. Between….Between….Between the
intelligible and the sensible. Between good and evil. The One and the many.
Between anything you like. All oppositions that assume the leap from a worse to a
better. An ascent, a displacement (?) upward, a progression along a line. Vertical.
Phallic even? But what has been forgotten in all these oppositions, and with good
reason, is how to pass through the passage, how to negotiate it – the forgotten
transition. The corridor, the narrow pass, the neck.

Luce Irigaray

All four of the quotations that open this chapter reference the significance of place
in terms of representation. Liad, a young Israeli woman, tells the rest of us (4 or 5
Palestinian men and myself) around the campfire in Mas’ha about how growing up in
Israel shapes one’s perspective of Israel’s relation to Palestinians, of Israel’s relation to
Jews, and of Israel itself. Her words have meaning not only in terms of their content, but
also in terms of where she says them. She is representing Israel in the Mas’ha campsite, a
place that is neither inside nor outside Israel, a border in terms of its material geography
and in terms of who is gathered together there. The two quotes from Derrida (1998) call
attention to the question of place in terms of archival inscription. He asks what it might
mean that an archive marks not only temporality but also a place through marking and
establishing a corpus. He highlights that the language of emplacement references a
question of substitution and of possession; in the place “of” can mean one instead of
another, and it can mean one in a place that is of another or for another. In the last quote,
Luce Irigaray (1987) rereads Plato’s allegory of the cave as a founding myth for Greek
political tradition. She suggests that political frameworks based on a metaphysics of presence present man in the likeness of his own image through the use of metaphor that defines the feminine as the ground for the emergence of man. Thinking about representation in terms of place thus highlights the significance of the question of the border between inside and outside and between the corporeal and the symbolic for the production of representations of difference, sameness, identity and non-identity. In this chapter, I suggest that Israel can be understood in terms of how the Jew in Israel is located on the border and in the movement between oppositions. It is in this sense also that an analysis of the Jew in Israel challenges political frameworks based on notions of sovereignty that are founded on assumptions of a liberal, autonomous subject.

Friday mornings and early afternoons in Israel the streets hum with activity and are packed with people doing their weekly shopping and errands, rushing to get everything done before the buses stop running and to get home in time to cook and to visit relatives and friends. Sundown is when Shabbat officially enters, and the buses come to a complete stop shortly before then. Many, though of course not all, of my memories from fieldwork that stand out most are from Fridays.

It is a Friday afternoon in early spring, 2006. I am waiting for the bus on Jaffa street in downtown Jerusalem across the street from the Mahne Yehuda market. A few feet away from me an old woman is lying down in the middle of the sidewalk. She is thin and curled up in a fetal position. She is lying next to where the people gather to wait for the bus. Her face is gaunt. Her skin is full of wrinkles. I wonder who she is. I wonder if
she is somebody’s grandmother. If there are people who know her who would be alarmed to know she is here like this. Or if they wouldn’t be surprised. Or if there isn’t anyone who knows her anymore. She is spitting up thick yellow mucousy liquid. The trail of saliva is spreading further past her head on the cement as I watch. It trails past a small pile of shekels. There is a ten shekel coin in front of her face. Her eyes open and close. A woman who is watching calls the city authorities. Then she calls an ambulance. An ambulance arrives. The woman doesn’t want to go; she refuses to get up. Eventually she gets up. She shouts, it seems to no one in particular, “what, a person can’t not feel well and lie down without people bothering her?” She stomps away, bent over and unsteady. She leaves the pile of coins by the trail of saliva and yellow mucous. She leaves the ambulance and the medical staff standing outside it. She leaves the crowd of people waiting for the bus. Some of us stare after her.

A few minutes later I’m on the bus. I am on my way to my aunt and uncle’s apartment for the weekend. The 4:00pm news comes on. The news comes on every half hour in Israel. It is preceded by a familiar series of beeps. The beeps are followed by: “This is the Voice of Israel….,” Sometimes someone asks to turn the volume up. People get into arguments and discussions about the news with each other. Or with the bus driver. Or with the newscaster. Or with themselves. Muttering under their breath. The announcer says: “In demonstrations against the separation wall today two border police were hurt by stones and four demonstrators were hurt in an incident in Abud. One of the
policemen was treated on the spot, the other was taken to a hospital in Jerusalem.” It is a Friday afternoon. On Fridays there are always demonstrations. Sometimes I go to them.

On a different Friday afternoon, in the same spot, I bought some rugalach from the bakery next to the entrance to the market on Jaffa Road. While I was waiting in line an older man next to me got irritated with the seller. He asked him something and didn't like the answer. He said something to the seller and walked away, clearly irritated. I hadn’t heard what the exchange had been about – something about the pastries for sale. The seller said to the woman he was putting pastries in a bag for and to everyone else around who cared to listen, “this is why the people of Israel have so many problems. Free hate, you see, this is why the people of Israel have so many problems.” He asked me if I wanted something to eat while I waited, and I said thanks, that would be nice, and he gave me a chocolate rugalach. I bought six rolls with chocolate pieces inside them, and an onion pita bread. Then I went to the bus stop to catch the bus to Beit Hakerem. While I was waiting a woman carrying heavy bags came walking in my direction. A man was standing with his hand leaning again the bus stop, blocking her way. She looked determinedly at him and kept walking. He moved his arm and she passed. She looked at me, our eyes met and she said "it isn't enough that he is fat he also has to stand like that blocking the way?" When I got on the bus a song was playing with the lyrics, "there are borders of hate, there are borders of love, there are borders to reality, there are borders to dreams." But in Israel, although there are many checkpoints and obstacles, there are no clear borders; the borders seem to continually move in time and in place.
The day that I jotted down some notes on a knapkin in my bag about the woman I saw lying on the sidewalk and then about the newscast I heard on the bus, I did not know why those were the two items that stuck in my head or why I bothered to make note of them. Although the woman stood out as a little bit unusual, there were other times I saw similar figures of destitution or abjection on the sidewalks, although perhaps not so prominently as a woman lying in the middle of where people gather to wait for a bus, and not so vocal as she was in her refusal of help. And there certainly were many other Fridays when I heard reports of demonstrations against the separation barrier in the West Bank. There was something about the close succession of watching the woman and then hearing the newscast on the bus about the demonstration that stuck with me. It was only later, when I tried to identify what it was that made an impression on me, that I began to see a connection and to understand why the woman and the newscast seemed inseparable and something that caught my attention.

The woman was lying in the middle of the sidewalk in the center of the city, in the center of the country. The boundaries of her body seemed permeable, her saliva and mucous trailing out of her mouth and marking a visible path along the concrete. Coins were visible on the sidewalk right in front of her face. When help was presented in the form of an ambulance and city authorities, she grumbled and shouted her refusal, limping away. She was a figure both without dignity, the sort that people sometimes want to turn away from, feeling embarrassed at the sight, but also indignant, ignoring the coins left in front of her face and refusing the ambulance and concern expressed by the passersby and
the city authorities. The reports of the demonstrations made reference to demonstrators throwing stones and to injured border police. From my own experiences at those Friday demonstrations, I could assume that it was likely demonstrators had also been injured, and that the border police and soldiers had likely deployed tear gas if not also bullets. It was a report about the border of the country and the repeated violent conflict that made the border and the people on it open and wounded. The tear gas made your mucous membranes and thus your eyes and nose tear uncontrollably, and the batons, canisters, bullets and stones could make you bleed. Ostensibly, Israeli security forces were trying to defend the country’s borders and keep its inside contained from what is outside, but the struggle over the separation barrier seemed to continue as much because of Israel’s own inability to determine its borders as because of external opposition to its attempts to do so. In this chapter, I argue that this inability is because of difference internal to the Jew which continually undoes and challenges the attempts of Israeli to claim sovereignty. In this chapter, I argue that this difference is visible in terms of how it moves across borders, and moves borders themselves, challenging claims to sovereignty both by the state and by individuals.

For at least the past decade, questions about sovereignty have dominated discussions in the humanities and humanities-inclined social sciences about the concept of the political. For at least the past decade, much of the humanities and humanities-inclined social sciences have been dominated by discussions about sovereignty and the nature of the political (Agamben 1998; Appadurai 2006; Butler 2003; Derrida 2005a,
2005b; Fassin 2010; Khanna 2006, 2011; Mbembe 2001; Zizek 2009). Of course, these discussions are themselves attached to much longer genealogies of thinking about sovereignty – from Foucault to 18th century thinkers such as Rousseau, Spinoza and Hume, to Bodin two centuries earlier, to the early Greek and Roman philosophy of Plato and Aristotle which subtends these different strands of thought. Questions about sovereignty also dominate debates about Israel and its frequent characterization as a rogue or pariah state by academics, activists and journalists critical of Israel’s policies, characterizations which often focus on the ways in which Israel is defined as a democracy but openly and explicitly refuses to conform to international law (Beit-Hallahmi 1987; Benvenisti, Gans and Hanafi 2007; Boyle 2003). At the center of these discussions – both about Israel and about sovereignty in other contexts – is a question about what determines who has, in a Hobbesian sense, the sovereign right to decide who lives and who dies in the name of protecting the polity. This question is in turn connected to questions about what Carl Schmitt (1996) called “the state of exception,” in which the sovereign declares itself exempt from its own laws in the name of sovereign right, and which, according to Schmitt, thus constitutes sovereignty itself. In both these senses –sovereign decisionism over life and death, and the sovereign declaration of a state of exception to the rule in the name of such decisionism – sovereignty references the establishment of borders which demarcate inside from outside and inclusion and exclusion from the polity.

Controversy about Israel behaving as a “rogue” state often centers on questions of how and where Israel attempts to determine and to defend its borders in terms of both
demography and military security (Ophir, Givoni and Hanafi 2009). Military security is defined in terms of armed defense of Israel’s borders and citizenry, and in terms of defending Israel specifically as a Jewish country. In this chapter, I show the porosity and instability of Israel’s borders in terms of their demarcation of the Jewish polity to be defended. I show how, on the one hand, “Jew” is not defined in any fixed or consensual manner, and how Israel’s geopolitical borders themselves are porous and unstable. I also show how, on the other hand, the Israeli Jewish population, state policy and nationalist discourse nonetheless gathers around the signifier "Jew" in expressions of identification and defense of Jew that have life and death stakes. The latter, indeed, characterizes Israeli social and political public space, and to the best of my knowledge, also much of private space in myriad ways. It is in part precisely because of the instability and porosity of Israel's borders, I argue, that the latter expressions of identification are articulated in a context characterized by a sense of continual existential danger. In this sense, Israel highlights the relation between the sovereign right to declare a state of exception and the claims of liberal democracy. In this chapter, I suggest that there is something to be learned from the specificity of how Israel’s borders are unstable and porous, and that responses to Israeli violence that simply insist that Israel needs to prioritize its principles as a liberal democracy and abstain from prioritizing its claims to protect Jews miss what Israel’s insistence on its need to protect “the Jewish people” can teach us not only about Israel, but about the genealogies of liberalism and humanism out of which it emerged.
In what follows, I focus on two different times and places during fieldwork which highlight the relation between the sovereign right to declare a state of exception and the production of boundaries of inside and outside and of belonging and exclusion. I begin by examining the formation of the joint Palestinian-Israeli struggle against the construction of the separation barrier in the West Bank. I focus in particular on the Mas'ha campsite, which marked an important development in the formation of such joint struggle. I then turn to focus on the period during the summer of 2006 when Israel garnered international attention and headlines multiple times in quick succession about violence which flared on its borders. First there were headlines about explosions which killed and injured Palestinians on the beach in Gaza, explosions widely thought to have originated from Israeli navel vessels. Then there were headlines about the Palestinian kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in a cross border attack near Gaza in July. And then came the news about Hezbollah’s attack on Israeli troops and towns in the north, and Israel’s immediate wide scale military response, which turned into what became known as “the 2nd Lebanon War.”

While I focus directly on the above events themselves, I also bring in some of the ways in which they were referenced and situated in relation to national security concerns in everyday conversations and interactions with residents of the neighborhood of Ramat Yosef and with strangers, neighbors, friends and relatives after these events unfolded. My intentions in doing so are twofold. First, I want to make clear the degree to which a sense of existential anxiety about Israel as a Jewish state permeates life in Israel and shapes a
preoccupation with Israel’s demographic and geographic borders. Second, I also want to make clear how despite such preoccupation, what it is that defines “Jew” remains an open, and often hotly debated question in multiple realms of Israeli social and political life. Relatedly, there is open acknowledgement and awareness that Israeli state policy, past and present, includes discriminatory and unjust treatment of Palestinians, without such acknowledgement necessarily being framed as a reason to change such policy. Ultimately, I argue that the specificity of the ways that Jew moves back and forth between the binary oppositions through which it is defined, and the specificity of what might seem to be contradictory political knowledges and positions, suggest an understanding of the concept of the political that challenges understandings of sovereignty, and the state of exception through which it is defined, as founded on the demarcation of inside from outside, and between belonging and exclusion. Instead, an analysis of the Jew in Israel suggests a concept of the political based on an understanding of sovereignty as impossible, because subjectivity is produced through a relation to difference that is both internal and external to the subject, making impossible the attainment of complete subjectivity and thus also of any sovereignty that could place difference as fully outside or fully inside its boundaries, be those of a body or of a geographic territory.

As I have shown in previous chapters, the Jew in Israel is defined both as the “New Jew,” and in terms of notions of the diasporic Jew retained in Zionism, and thus moves back and forth between different binary oppositions through which these figures
are defined. But Israel itself also highlights the movement between inside and outside that
the figure of the Jew in Israel emphasizes. Israel itself is positioned as in the state of
existential emergency that the Jew as a refugee without a state has been positioned in. In
the beginning of April 2008, almost two years after the 2nd Lebanon War, such a state of
emergency was dramatized when Israel held a wide-scale national emergency drill, hailed
by media reports as “the largest emergency exercise in Israel’s history.” Five days long,
the nationwide drill, code named “Turning Point,” included a mock air raid siren
throughout the country (except in the Gaza border communities), a mock hazardous spill
in the Haifa Bay, a mock terrorist hijacking of a bus, mock ground to ground missile
attacks, and the rescue of “survivors” from collapsed buildings throughout the country.
The exercise involved the military, twenty-five percent of the country’s operational
police force, local authorities, the Health Department and the Ministry of Education.
Over the course of the five day drill, the media reported the growing list of mock
casualties and the security forces’ actions against the mock terrorists. This drill was
instituted after Israel’s 2006 war with Lebanon, known in Israel as “the 2nd Lebanon
War.” Government spokespeople represented the drill in the news as important for efforts
to try to insure Israel’s preparedness and security in the event of the many different types
of attack under which Israel could come, both on its borders and internally. Such drills
express Israeli political culture’s sense of a constant state of emergency, the sense of the
constant possibility of impending attack and ongoing threat to Israel’s security. But what
is perhaps more remarkable than the drama of such a drill, is the fact that it generated
very little attention, aside from the reporting in the news about the number of mock dead and the fact that the drill was taking place at all. The combination of such a dramatic drill with the lack of attention it generated is one example of how Israel itself simultaneously, and continuously, is maintained in a state of emergency and is characterized by such a state of emergency as ordinary.

Israel has been in an official state of emergency since its establishment in 1948. On the day Israel’s establishment was declared, the Provisional Council of State enacted “the Law of Government and Justice Procedures” which declared a permanent state of emergency. Since then, the law has been renewed every six months or every year. The state of emergency allows laws from the British Mandate which grant the government extensive powers to continue to be upheld. These powers include emergency regulations to prevent infiltration, emergency laws for conducting arrests, searches and land confiscation, a law which enables the army to commandeer private property, and the seafaring vessels law. In 1991, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) petitioned Israel’s Supreme Court to revoke the Knesset’s declaration of a state of emergency, but up until the present the state of emergency is ongoing. The state of emergency also enables the government to alter any already existing law and to introduce other conditions, as stated in Article 39(c): “Emergency regulations may alter any law, temporarily suspend its effect or introduce conditions, and may also impose or increase taxes or other compulsory payments, unless there be another provision by law.” Israel’s official state of emergency highlights what Carl Schmitt (1922) argued is the “state of
exception” through which sovereign power is constituted.

For Schmitt, it is the potential existence of the enemy that structures human community and produces it through divisions based on potential enmity. These divisions are produced in a constitutive act of spatial ordering, what he calls the nomos. The production of the nomos is what for Schmitt constitutes the foundational moment of politics. This spatial ordering places difference on the outside of politics, because difference for Schmitt is necessarily opposition – formal and structural opposition in the form of public opposition – the enemy must always be defined as what is outside (or if not already outside as what must be expelled outside) and a potential threat to the polity and its boundaries. For Schmitt, liberalism is depoliticizing because it attempts to include all forms of opposition; for him, the friend/enemy distinction which makes possible the figure of the enemy, and thus also sovereign decision to decide on the state of exception, is what allows for the possibility of politics. In what follows, I show how an analysis of the Jew in Israel reveals the violence of Schmittian political frameworks based on a concept of sovereignty founded on such a friend/enemy distinction, but also the violence of the liberal frameworks which he so powerfully critiques. Israel, positioned in a state of emergency as a place of refugee for the Jewish people and as a liberal democracy, thus serves as an explicit reminder of the questions about sovereignty, difference, and the ethical subject posed during and in the aftermath of WWII and in the wake of British and French colonial exit strategies.
Israel is an Ingathering of the Exiles, a place of refuge, a safe haven under threat, it is the only home we have. This refrain is repeated in Israel; it is shouted, whispered, laughed about, argued over, explained, questioned, contested and defended by many different voices. I heard it out of the mouth of an angry man shaking his fist at anti-war protestors on King George St. in Tel Aviv’s humid August heat, in songs sung by multiple generations over Passover dinner in a neighborhood in Bat Yam, in the stories people told me as we sat in plastic chairs outside the neighborhood store, in newspapers, television satires, radio songs, in street names, in ceremonies on Holocaust Day, Memorial Day, and Independence Day, it is referenced in arguments between protestors and border police in Friday demonstrations against the separation barrier in the West Bank, expounded on by taxi drivers while sitting in traffic jams, invoked by state lawyers in the supreme court in Jerusalem, loudly proclaimed by politicians in the Knesset, by academics, military men, government ministers and powerful CEOs mingling in the halls of the 7th annual Herzliya conference on “The Balance of Israel’s National Security.”

Israel is both a refuge from existential threat, and is itself under existential threat. It is an Ingathering of the Exiles with reference to Biblical history and with reference to refugees from Europe and immigrants from the Middle East, North Africa and the rest of the world. But what does it mean to define a place as a refuge specifically for Jews, if what Jew itself signifies is defined in the movement between binary oppositions, as both host and guest, inside and outside, with all the specific political and social histories carried in these oppositions?
Through thinking about the concept and practice of asylum, Khanna (2005) suggests that “asylum, conceptually and sometimes literally, becomes the condition of a possible link between concepts of belonging and not belonging, like home and abroad, precisely because it stages the moment of not belonging, and the arbitrariness of potential expulsion on the one hand or inclusion on the other that cuts through such concepts” (475). The concept of asylum, Khanna reminds us, is tied to hospitality, and the multiple meanings of hostility and hosting that it involves. The term asylum, she writes, designates a space into which one may be received with hospitality following a sovereign decision. The decision, which one could think of as the announcement of the nature of the political, also comes to define what counts as part of the human family, and therefore provokes questions concerning how the human is conceptualized. (Ibid. 477)

By foregrounding the foundational violence involved in the establishment of sovereign political community, the hostility present in hospitable inclusion, and the location of the decision about who gets to decide who is included in the figure of the sovereign, Khanna points to the problems inherent in such a formulation, and to the significance of alterity for an understanding of what constitutes the political.

Placed in the framework of Israel, Jew, as Jew-Israeli reveals the violence of liberal frameworks based on humanism’s concept of the human and on a political subject defined in terms of claims to sovereignty and autonomy. Israel, because it is both a Jewish country and a liberal democracy, continually remarks binary oppositions on which liberalism is founded, precisely because as a Jewish country, it cannot sustain such oppositions through the erasure of the passage between them. In other words, Israeli
violence can be understood not as a violation of liberal frameworks, but rather as a symptom of the inherent violence of the “peace” of European modernity’s claims to sovereignty based on assumptions of a liberal sovereign subject. The “lesson of Israel” can thus be understood as a “lesson” about European modernity and humanism’s concept of the human.

**Circumcision: The Mas’ha Campsite and the Wall**

In the spring of 2003 the construction of what many simply call “the wall” reached the Palestinian village of Mas’ha. Mas’ha is located in the Salfit region of the West Bank, very close to “the green line.” The green line is the name for Israel’s pre-1967 borders, and it marks the division between what is considered “Israel proper,” and the occupied Palestinian territories: the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights. Military and police patrol and guard checkpoints and separation barriers both within Israel proper and in the occupied territories. Israeli authorities have changed the route of the separation barrier more than once, and the barrier itself both does and does not signify a border; there are additional border lines on both sides of the barrier itself. The groups of people who these borders are intended to divide and to gather together also move, in the sense that they do not stay as a group on one side or the other of the borders that are defined in terms of their division. Jewish Israelis live in and continue to build Jewish Israeli settlements on what Israel defines as the Palestinian side of the borders.
Palestinians continue to live and work, legally and illegally, on what Israel defines as the Israeli side of the borders.

The path of the barrier winds from the northern West Bank south until it curves around Jerusalem to the border with Jordan. When I first arrived in Mas’ha, the path of the wall was marked by a rocky dirt swath several meters wide just west of the village’s westernmost houses and winding in between the village’s olive trees. Sometimes while I was there the workers used explosives to carve out the path for the wall, cutting into the stony ground. Most of the barrier is actually not technically a wall, but rather a road for Israeli military vehicles only, with at least one fence on either side, equipped with motion detectors, sensors, cameras, and signs that warn people away. From a distance one can see the path of the wall and fence, marking an incision into the land and between houses, villages and towns.

A tattered white sheet tied between the olive trees flutters in the wind and greets those who arrive to the Mas’ha campsite with the words “The Wall Isn’t Security. It’s Occupation and Land Theft” written on it in Hebrew, Arabic, and English in red and black letters. I argue that the campsite is an example of an opening of politics that is open to the alterity of the other. The campsite highlighted the significance of place, hospitality and hostility for the concept of the political. A place on the border, inhabited by people from both sides of the border, in the name of an uncertain and unknowable future, the campsite constituted a state of exception based not on a sovereign right to decide on the state of exception but on the impossibility of such sovereignty.
It is a Saturday, and I’m sitting under the canopy at the campsite with the other five or six people there that day. Nazeeh, his 7 year old son, and a volunteer play hand games, and their peals of laughter are among the few sounds that interrupt the heat of midday. At lunchtime Nazeeh and one of the younger guys place food on colorful, floral plastic plates in the middle of the ground under the canopy, and we all come to sit around it to eat. The food is good. We eat with our hands, using pieces of pita to take pieces of juicy red tomato, slices of fresh white cheese, falafel balls, and sliced cucumber sprinkled with salt from the plates.

In the evening, as the sun is setting, I go for a walk with a couple of the young Palestinian guys and the Israeli who was on the bus with me on the way to the camp. He is 19 or 20, a refusenik who quit his military service. We walk towards the gaping cut in the land between the campsite and the village, the line cut into the land that marks where the separation barrier will be built. It is several meters wide, with ditches on either side. We stop to look out at the view of the rolling hills and semi-desert, our eyes moving past the olive groves to the sight of the red roofs of the settlements in the west and the roofs of the village to the east. One of the Palestinians gestures out towards the west, saying,

“This land was taken, and that land has been taken. And they don’t give permits, not even to enter.”

We look and nod.

“Olives, we used to sell olive oil every year, now we have to buy it, because we are losing our land. And we won’t be able to harvest what we do have left. And in the
village we don’t even have one olive left. We built three new houses in the village. We were thinking to build more over there. But now we are forced to buy land. My brother is forced to buy land in the village. And the price will go up now because of this. Because there is no land left for us.”

The Israeli guy starts to say something, “maybe we can figure something out, with the harvest,”

The Palestinian says, “But after the fence, I won’t be able to talk to you even.”

“We can go to both sides,” the Israeli says.

The Palestinian responds, “But how will we throw the olives?” Now they are both joking, but without much laughter.

The Israeli says, “We’ll do it with catapults, like the Romans once did”

“Yes, the Palestinian answers, “but when you throw them they won’t do anything to you, but when I throw them they will shoot.”

There is an awkward moment of silence, and then one of the Palestinian guys says, “Yala, in the name of God they will stop with this garbage and things will be good.”

That night we sit together around the fire. Liad and one of the guys are sitting in a pair of old car seats that someone had brought to the campsite, the rest of us are on the ground and on cushions or thin mattresses. It is almost pitch black between the orange red flames that dart out between the stones around the fire and the sky lit up by stars. The flames leap out unpredictably, licking our shadows and momentarily lighting up faces before retreating again to the burning wood.

390
Ra’ad begins, “I’ll say something, did you hear that there were meetings, like the ones that we are having now, before, exactly in 1967, why to say before. With Mukhtarim.

Liad: “What do you mean, Muktarim?”

Someone else says something in Arabic. Most of the time we are speaking in Hebrew, because Liad and I don’t know Arabic and the Palestinians know some Hebrew.

Yousef says, “You didn’t understand. What I mean are the kinds of meetings that we are doing now, between the two peoples, between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and they were erased from history, Israel erased them from history. In 1967, did you hear about this? They did meetings like what we are doing now.”

Someone else says, “One of the first who wanted to make peace with Israel, and what did Arafat say about him?”

Yousef says, “Yes yes, mashtab, mashtab (traitor). But why didn’t he agree? Naif Hawatme… Do you want some coffee?” Yousef interrupts himself to ask. I say no thanks, and Liad urges him to continue, “Nu, go on.”

Yousef says, “Never mind,”

Liad says “Nu, nu, go on,”

“It’s not necessary. I’ve finished [what I had to say],” Yousef says.

Liad asks, “Where is the question?”

Yousef says, “I think that for you guys, smoking a cigarette is more important.” Yousef seems mildly annoyed with the fact that Ra’ad and some of the others were
offering each other cigarettes and trying to light them, perhaps not seeming fully focused on what he was saying.

One of the guys responds, “Ahlan Wasahlan,” (welcome) he says lightly.

Liad persists, wanting to know what Yousef is after, “No, but Yousef, what is the question?”

Yousef answers, “To get to the question will take a long time.”

There is some mumbling, humming, and laughing among the guys.

Yousef then says, “In short, we are going to, we are, not we are going to, having meetings and all kinds of interactions, there is the group Dreams and I don’t know what, and there is this campsite. The point is that, it is true we are against the fence, against the wall, against separation, against racism and against, against, against. It’s true that we are against, But it’s also that we are going on a path in which our point is…to understand one another’s culture. To understand one another…We are different peoples. Our culture is completely different from yours, there are things with us that you don’t know at all, and there are things with you that I don’t know at all. And I don’t know what Israelis from far away are, alright, well, I used to - there are all kinds, there are children, and people, Jews from far away, weapons and bullets and blood. There are a big number, I don’t want to say majority, but a big number, who believe in peace, and believe in quiet, this is their hope, that there will be peace. So how will we reach this situation, I think that if one people doesn’t understand the other people that peace that is talked about doesn’t mean much.” Yousef pauses briefly before going on.
He continues, “I am saying that we must go on the return path, not just talking and saying, ‘hi, how are you, everything’s fine,’ and I don’t know what. We walk a few dunams there and a few dunams here, and we say this is racism and this is separation, and this is I don’t know what, and sometimes, we talk about culture and all kinds of things. I speak with many people here, about all kinds of things. I want to understand exactly with whom I am speaking here, not just okay, I met him, he is my friend. He is against the fence, he wants to help me, now we are friends. No no no, that’s not enough. In my opinion, we have to really get to know one another. To know exactly who we are. In the whole world there are bad people and there are good people. This is obvious. You understand? In every person there are two, one white and one black. So the person externalizes the one that is strongest in him, or the black or the white, or the bad or the good. So we can change him, from bad to good. It might be hard at first, but we begin when they are young, and then we can get to this situation, where we can change things. So my question was, if you share these thoughts? I think this is the correct path to peace. Not let’s say that I am Abu Mazzen and I went with Sharon, handshakes, hugs, kisses, we ate hazir together,…Like they did last week. And we drank the blood of the Palestinians and the Jews. And we sign that there will be peace. What is this?! There is peace only between Sharon and Abu Mazzen. It’s on paper. Also between them I think. But the people, what peace? I say that I think that we are going on the real path to peace. Forget them, let them do what they want. We’ll do the real thing, the right thing…. I think you
understand what my point is? You understand what I mean, what my question is about? If you think this or not?”

Liad responds, “Yes”

Ra’ad starts to say something, and Yousef says, “Ra’ad wants to speak, okay,”

Ra’ad says, “Little kids enter into school that it starts with how they are taught, first grade, what do they give them, flowers, all kinds of things, that they will take to the army base, correct or not? all the time they teach them that the army fight, fight, fight, Palestinians are murderers, Palestinians are murderers.”

Liad starts to say, “No, not”

Ra’ad continues, “So what, and the Arabs want to throw us into the sea, and I don’t know what, if this would change, I know it won’t change, the culture is like this, it continues, people don’t want to change, it’s the culture, so a boy reaches the age of 18, goes to the army, okay, it’s fun, he goes to the army. I think has changed in this intifada, They think, I can’t go there, okay, I will serve, but I’m not going to the territories. There are people who think, “alright, I will serve, but I won’t serve in the territories.” Because it is an occupation, I don’t know what. Maybe I agree with them, maybe not. So it has to start with the parents, with how they educate their children.”

Liad then starts to speak, responding to what Yousef had said. “I don’t think that the cultures are that different. Yes, there is poverty,”

Yousef agrees, “there is, there is,”
Liad continues, “Of course there is. But I don’t believe that there will be peace. At all. I began, I grew up on Zionism. At home. And my father, even though he came from Iraq and everything, he was a follower of Jabotinsky, all of the Torah of Jabontinsky. My parents always voted for the Likud. And on this I grew up. And that there was the Holocaust, and that we deserve this country, that there wasn’t anyone here. And afterwards, I went to the army, this was also part of it. And also the people I hung out with, were very, very extreme. Some of them even with divorce, I was really completely on the other side. Not in my beliefs, but with the people with whom I hung out. And, when I was in the army, I didn’t yet have beliefs. I didn’t see, I didn’t serve in Hebron, or in.”

Yousef says, “You were in the air force, so,”

Liad nods and says, “Yes, you don’t see there. The change began, I think about two years ago, with ‘Operation Defensive Shield,’ when was that?”

“A year ago,” Yousef answers.

Ra’ad adds, “a year and a half ago,”

Liad goes on, “On television in Israel, and if you grow up, if you live say in Tel Aviv, always you can say, who wants to know can know very well, but the majority of young ones, younger than me even…people who I taught in the army, they had fire in their eyes, to see a rifle, to see a plane, to hear the sound of its engine, and to know what kind it is by the sound. There aren’t many Refuseniks, and there aren’t many people who take an interest in what is happening on the other side. And you, you live in Tel Aviv, in
your world, you see in the news only the side of Israel, and every attack you see for two
hours, and all the pieces of the bodies and everything, and with every attack they remind
you about how all the Arab world wants to exterminate you, and they show you the
protests in Iran and Iraq, so that you will see how many they are, how many are burning
the Israeli flag, how many millions. And then they tell you, Iranians are like Palestinians,
Iraqis are like Palestinians. Everyone wants to exterminate you. Also when you go to the
army, and training and everything, there isn’t a differentiation. They don’t teach about the
Nakba. They don’t teach about it, there is no Nakba in Israel’s history. No. there isn’t.
It’s all about how Zionists, who came, and who were murdered in Europe, and Germany,
and in all the countries. The United States closed its gates, and everyone closed their
borders, and the Jews didn’t have anywhere to go, so they came here, and this was their
home and everything, and no one saved them, and the Jew isn’t anymore the Haredi, the
Shtremeli, who is afraid of the Polish, instead now he has an army, and he has power, and
he is the strongest. And he will exterminate anyone who will want to do a Holocaust to
him like once. Every time that you try to talk about, every time that someone tries to say
that actually now we are also inflicting a Holocaust on another people, then they say no
way, ma peetom, it can’t be, it’s not true, the Jewish people is a people… it can’t be that
such things are happening, and about the soldiers who are beating, it’s just a few soldiers,
not the whole army. And all of my friends, they are Golanim, Givatim, they are only in
the territories. In Hebron and in Gaza. The knock on the doors of houses, meyreemim old
women or children. But slowly slowly, I started to look and to see that there isn’t only
one side. There are two sides. And it isn’t possible to live only on this fear all the time.
The Palestinians aren’t the whole Arab world. And the Palestinians already suffered enough from the Arab world, and from Jordan. And then with Operation Defensive Shield, really, this crossed all the borders.”

Yousef responds, “That’s to say, you don’t have hope that there will be peace. But I have hope.”

Liad says, “Not because of you [pl]. Because of my people.”

Yousef responds, “But I have hope. Because of your people. But I have hope.”

Ra’ad says, “Because of her people also.”

Everyone is quiet, staring at the ground, then at the flames or out at the darkness, sometimes quietly making eye contact. Ra’ad, his cigarette dangling out of his mouth, says softly, “It’s hard la’allah.”

Liad says, “Operation Defensive Shield is exactly what the Israeli wants. You try to tell him about things, and he says no Jenin is terrorists, and we have to destroy house, house, house. And these are still the regular, not extreme people.”

Yousef asks, “Have you heard of Halomot (Dreams)? It’s a program with children 17 years and younger, Palestinians and Israelis, we send 15 kids from our village, they sit with Israeli kids. So I don’t trust in older ones, who have already gone through the brainwashing and everything, but in the younger ones. I’m telling you that I have hope that there will be peace, but when. That is the question.”
Liad says, “Sharon doesn’t want to give up on the territories. They don’t want to give up on the territories. Only when someone will force them. Only when there won’t be another option.”

Eventually, as the sky starts to lighten, the conversation slows down, and in quick succession we all retreat to our sleeping bags to finally go to sleep. In the morning, I wake to the sight of smoke blowing from what is left from the smoldering fire. Tea is boiling in the silver tin koom koom set on top of it. The metallic noises from the bulldozers and the abrasive insistent sound of drilling has started. I look to the side and see that one of the bulldozers has come closer to the campsite and is picking and clanking dirt and bolders a few meters from sign against the wall.

In the following weeks I returned to the camp for short visits. The nights usually were spent in conversation around the fire. Daytime was spent in quiet, sitting in the shade, playing sheshbesh, and sometimes in organizational and strategizing meetings Palestinians and Israelis who came especially for the meeting, raising the number of people there to one or two dozen. At the demonstrations that resulted from some of these meetings, 50 to 200 people would come.

Other demonstrations also began to be organized against the separation barrier, separate from the activities in Mas’ha. One of the bigger ones was a joint demo at the site of the wall around the Palestinian city of Kalqilya. When I arrived, and Israeli demonstrator was speaking emphatically into a megaphone, addressing the Israeli soldiers and border police standing feet away from us, saying in Hebrew, “and they didn’t
let them move, and the didn’t let them do anything. That is a ghetto! What was once done to the Jews, the Jews are now doing to others. Look in the mirror when you think about this, and see if it comes to you to feel ashamed or not.”

The border police are in dark blue and gray uniforms and the soldiers in their green fatigues, all with bullet proof vests, some with helmets. Both soldiers and border police were armed with automatic weapons, but some also held cameras which they held directly in front of us, filming us as some of us filmed back. The demonstrators begin chanting, “Lefnay hakol, hahoma teepol, acharakach Sharon ve Bush, ve az gam hakibush!” (Before everything, the wall will fall, and then also Sharon and Bush, and then too the occupation). And then in english with a heavy Hebrew accent, “the facist wall, it must fall!” The Palestinians are on the other side of the fence, and we can see each other and hear each other, but only from a distance. I can’t see Nazeeh well, but we talk on our cell phones. The gray cement wall, and the watchtower dominate the place, several meters high. We are meeting at the gate, where the wall turns into fence, so the two sides are visible to one another.

While the Mas’ha campsite marked the beginning of the formation of a joint Palestinian-Israeli struggle against the separation barrier that led to thousands of joint demonstrations in the subsequent years in Palestinian villages and cities along the route of the barrier, what was remarkable about the campsite was the space it constituted in terms of everyday interaction, protest through physical presence at the site of construction, and the formation of relations between the participants involved. It was not
only about planning demonstrations, but was a form of demonstration in and of itself, organized by individuals and not by organizations or political parties with already established political agendas, even if both parties and organizations attempted at times to claim the space in their name. After about 8 months of a constant presence and hundreds of participants, in August 2003, the Israeli army arrived at sunrise and destroyed the campsite. In the following weeks the construction of the separation barrier on Mas’ha’s land was completed. The joint struggle moved south and gained momentum, following, and sometimes preceding, the path of the construction of the wall. But the struggle also gradually changed, and became a struggle primarily to keep open a space of joint demonstration in terms of protest against the wall in the form of regular, several hour long demonstrations in which protestors would face off with Israeli soldiers in a more or less predictable routine of violence.

August 2003

I walk in to my aunt and uncle’s apartment in Jerusalem. Dirty, drained, upset. Sitting at the dining table with her, my uncle, and my eight year old boy cousin, I try to tell them about what happened. The campsite was destroyed. Nazeeh was arrested, is in solitary confinement and not allowed contact with anyone except his lawyer. He is your friend? my cousin asked. What a simple question, but I pause, wondering what he means. Yes. He is Arab? Yes. I had explained a little bit about what the campsite was about to my cousin before, and I explained again that evening – how the fence was being built on
the villagers’ land, the Israelis and Palestinians were sitting there to try to stop the
construction work, and now the destruction of the camp and Nazeeh’s arrest and the
direct action. “But if he didn’t do anything wrong, can’t you call the police to help him?”
he asked. “The police are the ones holding him in prison,” I reminded him. “But that’s
not right.” He continues, looking genuinely worried and seeing I am upset. “There must
be someone to call. If the police are not behaving properly someone higher up must do
something. What about the prime minister?” At eight years old, his questions are logical,
sharp, worried, injustice is fresh, and not completely registered or coded against my
narration, and because of this differently legible – I wondered what his questions might
be like ten years later.

I suppose that his thinking from which his question emerged is shaped by his
education, broadly defined, both at home and in the general public discourse in school, on
television and in the street, which is based on liberal democratic notions of sovereign
right, in which individuals have fundamental rights to life and liberty, and that those who
govern protect these rights. This is, indeed, also what is stated in Israel’s declaration of
Establishment, which explicitly states that all Israel’s inhabitants, Jewish and non-Jewish,
have such rights. If at his age, my cousin had started to have a different response to the
unknown other based on whether this other was categorized as Jewish or not-Jewish, or
as Palestinian, this response was tempered, if it all existed, by the question of the
unknown other’s relation to someone else who my cousin knew, in this case me. In other
words, the question of whether the person who was imprisoned was my friend or not, was
the question according to which my cousin seemed to decide whether it was definitely wrong that this person had been imprisoned. And after deciding this, it still did not register that it could be the authorities themselves who were in the wrong, from the police to the Prime Minister. What I wondered was whether, over the years, through the effects of a political discourse that prepares children to be soldiers at the age of 18 in multiple everyday ways, and in the environment of ongoing armed conflict with Palestinians, such questions would disappear and be replaced by rejection and judgment against me and/or the potential Palestinian or Israeli friends hurt or imprisoned through protest against the construction of the wall and military occupation. Would thinking about individuals in relational terms be replaced by thinking about individuals in terms of the group? Might we end up, literally, on opposite sides of the fence?\footnote{But it is important to point out that I, along with many of the others with whom I crossed back and forth across the sides demarcated by the fence, didn’t have a side in the sense of treating individuals in terms of group categories; which is very different than saying we didn’t have positions. We moved back and forth between the sides, often in more ways than one, and stood, literally and with our bodies, against the fence and those defending it.}

August 2004

The construction of the fence separating Mas’ha from its lands has been completed. The Amer family’s house is completely enclosed by fences. The joint Palestinian-Israeli protests have moved south along the route of the barrier as the construction continues. There are many demonstrations in the Salfit area. A new kind of
tear gas is used and many of the female protestors who breathe it suffer excessive
menstrual bleeding, cramping, pain. Some Palestinian women in the villages miscarry.
There is a march from Jenin to Jerusalem with Palestinians, Israelis and internationals
along the route of the fence, to protest its construction.

Carl Schmitt (1996) defined sovereignty as the power to decide on a state of
exception – to decide when the rule of law can be suspended in order to defend against an
enemy, whether from within the state or from outside it. For Schmitt, it is the distinction
between enemy and friend that makes the space of the political possible. Central to
Schmitt’s work is his argument that liberalism is depoliticizing through its attempt to
include all forms of opposition, which he suggests erases the friend/enemy distinction
and thus the figure of the enemy that makes the political possible.

While for Schmitt the figure of the enemy is central to the concept of the political,
Jacques Derrida (2005) reminds us that the history of western political philosophy has
been shaped by Greek and Roman philosophy centered around the figure of the friend –
from Aristotle to Plato to Cicero. In his consideration of the figure of the friend, Derrida
points to a weak spot in Schmitt’s concept of the political. He considers the implications
of the fact that Schmitt’s marking of political difference is specifically defined as
opposition; it “cannot be reduced to a mere difference. It is determined opposition,
opposition itself” (Ibid. 85). It is for this reason that for Schmitt an enemy can only be a
public enemy. It is also why in Schmitt’s formulation, the political is located in the
possibility of the enemy being killed. As Derrida goes on to point out, for Schmitt, this
possibility (whether it empirically occurs or not) institutes human community as a combating collectivity:

As soon as war is possible-eventual, the enemy is present; he is there, his possibility is presently, effectively, supposed and structuring. His being-there is effective, he institutes the community as a human community of combat, as a combating collectivity (kampfende Gesamtheit von Menschen). The concept of the enemy is thereby deduced or constructed a priori, both analytically and synthetically – in synthetic a priori fashion, if you like, as a political concept or, better yet, as the very concept of the political. (Ibid. 86)

The boundary between friend and enemy is also, for Schmitt, a boundary between the establishment of law itself, or what he terms the nomos, and the thesmos, or specific laws and legislation which follow. It is thus important for him to differentiate between the two, and between what he distinguishes as “order and orientation:”

Not to lose the decisive connection between order and orientation, one should not translate nomos as law (in German, gesetz), regulation, norm, or any similar expression. Nomos comes from nemein – a [Greek] word that means both ‘to divide’ and ‘to pasture.’ Thus, nomos is the immediate forming in which the political and social order of a people becomes spatially visible – the initial measure and division of pasture-land, i.e., the land-appropriation as well as the

---

2 It is important to note here that by the time Schmitt (2006) writes *Nomos of the Earth* in which he outlines his thinking about the relation between order and orientation in terms of a “new world order,” signaled for Schmitt by the Versailles Treaty and a decline in European dominance, he no longer viewed world politics as organized according to the boundary between enemy and friend. A real enemy was no longer possible, leading Schmitt to rethink the figure of the enemy in relation to the foe in terms of “just war” as that which is legally sanctioned between states. However, it seems exactly in part because of Schmitt’s thinking about sovereignty in terms of such a division between friend and enemy, that he remained invested in the production of amity lines in terms of a global order that would refuse any global universalism through the bringing back the distinction between European and non-European soil and thus, for him, a reinstatement of European international law (Ibid. 232-235).
concrete order contained in it and following from it… Nomos is the measure by which the land in a particular order is divided and situated; it is also the form of political, social, and religious order determined by this process. Here, measure, order, and form constitute a spatially concrete unity. The nomos by which a tribe, a retinue, or a people becomes settled, i.e., by which it becomes historically situated and turns part of the earth’s surface into the force-field of a particular order, becomes visible in the appropriation of land and in the founding of a city or a colony. (2006, 69-70)

In contrast to Schmitt’s reliance on a clear cut division between friend and enemy, for Derrida the moment of decision is significant not as a moment of sovereign decision about who decides who suspends the law in defense of an enemy from within or from outside the polity, and in so doing marks lines of enmity through which politics is able to emerge. Rather, the moment of decision is a moment of having to make a decision in the face of alterity, a decision which calls sovereignty into question. Derrida explains this moment of sovereign decision also in terms of a place of sovereign decision through defined the relation between the topological and the nomological. Derrida suggests that in the intersection of the topological and the nomological, “of the place and the law, of the substrate and the authority, a scene of domiciliation becomes at once visible and invisible” (3). But in this intersection the archive is not only topo-nomological; it also requires consignation, by which he means not only depositing or assigning residence to, but also the gathering together of signs, which coordinate “a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration” (3). Such consignation, Derrida suggests, connects two places of inscription, printing and circumcision (8). The result of such consignation is a an utterance of a subject and claims
to sovereignty and subjectivity; the speaking of an authoritative “I.” The production of such an “I” thus relies on the marking in and of a place, and a body, through which the “I” emerges as such.

Printing signifies marking on an external substrate, while circumcision signifies an intimate mark on the body proper. Derrida calls attention to how these two forms of marking highlight the question of where the outside begins. This question, he suggest, is the main question of the archive. Indeed, returning to Schmitt and those who engage with his work, one can then understand that the question of where the outside begins is also the question of how to understand the definition of the sovereign as he who decides on the state of exception.

The Mas’ha campsite was a site of resistance in part because it was an attempt to forge a new place on Israel/Palestine’s border by both Palestinians and Israelis but without being grounded in Palestinian and Israeli claims. In this attempt, it was different from encounters between Palestinians and Israelis inside Israel, inside Palestine, and abroad. The attempt to inscribe a new place, to be and live together, however temporarily and albeit in a very makeshift way, was significant because it highlighted the political significance of place and territory; the encounter between people was also made on the ground of an encounter with negotiating a relation to the ground and place on which people encountered one another. This ground was not neutral or unmarked; settlers, Palestinians, and the Israeli military all made claims to it; it was a contested border that we inhabited through our encounter and physical presence together at the campsite there.
The military tried to claim it, eventually successfully, as Israeli. Palestinians tried to claim it as Palestinians. Settlers tried to claim it as Jewish-Israeli. All of these attempts reference the border as the mark of a division between inside and outside, theirs and ours, what is inside the polity and what is outside. The Mas’ha campsite, in contrast, marked this place as both inside and outside, both Palestinian and Israeli, both Jewish and Arab, both inside Israel and outside Israel, and as both past and unknown future, through our presence there. What was exciting about the campsite was the encounter between the people there on the basis of trying to understand the past, one another, and how to forge a future, without knowing or coming with already formulated notions of what such a future might be. In contrast, Israel continually acknowledge the difference of the other both within and outside the polity, but only in order to also continually try to expel or guard against it.

In his development of the concept of the political based on the potential of the enemy being killed, Schmitt (1996) engages with Hobbes to suggest that political representation and the possibility of sovereignty necessitates a clear distinction between friend and enemy and inside and outside. There has been a recent resurgence of interest in Schmitt, whose work has occupied a central place in the discussions about sovereignty in the humanities and humanities-inclined social sciences for at least the past decade (Agamben 2005; Bosteels 2005; Derrida 1997; Mezzadra 2011; Rasch 2005). The acknowledgement of the relation and exchange between Schmitt and Walter Benjamin, initially suppressed, seems to signal an increasing willingness to consider how one might
understand Schmitt’s now famous claim that sovereignty is defined by the ability to
decide on a state of exception to the rule in terms of a critique of liberalism, without the
presumption that such considerations necessarily entail a move towards the facist politics
with which Schmitt is rightly associated (Bredekamp, Hause and Bond 1999; Weber
1992). The Mas’ha campsite, and the different significations attached to Israeli-Jew,
suggest the importance of a distinction between inside and outside, known and unknown,
for claims to sovereignty, but the campsite, as well as how Israeli-Jew is made to signify
inside of Israel, also point to the impossibility of achieving sovereignty and of identifying
the enemy or of clearly demarcating a separation between inside and outside, familiar and
foreign. In this sense, Israeli contexts emphasize the importance of Schmitt’s concept of
the political in its critique of liberalism’s attempt to include all difference, but they also
depart from Schmitt’s assumption that a state of exception is marked by the ability of the
sovereign to clearly separate inside from outside, and self from other, or indeed, from his
assumption that true sovereignty is possible at all.

Srinivas Aravamudan (2005), while offering a critique of liberalism informed by
Schmitt, departs from him to suggest a reconsideration of sovereignty discourse through
Hobbes and Ranciere, reading the history of European sovereignty discourse against the
grain to suggest that the political emerges through a radical questioning of the stable
boundaries of police function (644-655), and through the impossibility of a one to one
correspondence between agent and author, identifying politics in a space of
impersonation between, in Ranciere’s terms (1998), all three grammatical persons. This is
in contrast to liberal concepts of the political; “liberal governmentality organizes a play only between first and second persons in order to arrange globally inclusive participation that will always leave out many of those who will still be the part who play no part” (Aravamudan 2005, 645). For Aravamudan, politics can thus be understood to emerge in “the moment of the deregulation of the counting of parts and a momentary collapse of business as usual. The political is a radical questioning of what until then were the stable boundaries of the police function” (Ibid. 644-645). This understanding of the political suggests a relation between representable subjects and those (not yet) represented, whose presence puts into question the stability of boundaries of the collective understood to be protected (and constituted) by police function. In part, I am suggesting here that what is not yet represented is not “subjects without representation,” but rather the difference of alterity that undoes subjectivity from within and from without.

While events that cause the momentary collapse of business as usual, whether on the level of the state or in specific contexts within state boundaries, can often be made legible in terms of discourses of trauma or moral economies as Fassin (2008, 2009) has suggested, such readings focus attention on responding to the wounds caused by such disruption as injuries to be worked through, healed, and returned to a state of business as usual by trying to include all as fully representable subjects in the fold of the political. By responding to the trauma of being undone by such disruptions only through making the trauma legible and representable, such response does not draw attention to how such disruptions, as disruptions before and without possibility for representation as such,
might be constitutive of the political itself through making explicit the framework through which represented subjects are threatened by what is beyond, or before the representable. In these terms, the unknown difference of the singularity of the other can be understood as a part which plays no part, rather than as a source or effect of trauma.

As I understand it, the concept of critical melancholia (Khanna 2003) allows for a quite different understanding of the effects of violence and loss than the understandings presented through frameworks of trauma and victimhood, and the moral logics which often underpin analyses based on such frameworks. Critical melancholia allows trauma and its effects to become a source of critique and critical agency. In this sense then, the difference that is both inside and outside the borders of Israeli-Jew, both the borders of the country and of individuals, can be understood in terms of how such the unknown of such difference undoes attempts to achieve sovereignty and a constitution of human subjectivity in the terms of European modernity’s concept of a universal humanity.

Inside Israel, Jewish Israelis defend the signifier Jew through a defense of Israel as a Jewish nation-state. As can be seen during a time of war, Israel is aggressively defended in the name of defending the Jew against existential threat, with frequent references to the Holocaust. Such defense of Israel is defined as a defense of the Jews and not only as, if at all, as defense of Israel in terms of its government and state policy. Attacks on Israel are similarly understood not as attacks on Israel in terms of its government or state policy, but as attacks on Jews as Jews. That is to say, attacks on Israel are understood as attacks on Jews as Jews have been attacked and persecuted in
other contexts, as a people without a country, as a people who have no country to protect them. Thus Jewish Israelis can go to war to defend Israel while simultaneously disagreeing with the government and military’s decision to go to war and while disagreeing with government and military policy more generally. Those who are understood as a threat to Israel, Palestinians and Arabs, are simultaneously located inside and outside Israel, both in terms of Israel’s territorial boundaries, and in terms of Israeli-Jews themselves. Israel, as both Jewish and as a liberal democracy, simultaneously produces its outside on the inside and vice versa, and attacks the results of such production in an effort to separate inside from outside. Israeli-Jew thus continually reminds that there is an unknown difference of the other that threatens to undo one, but more often than not, it is assumed that this difference is an enemy that needs to be expelled or defended against.

**Hospitality and Hostility: Israeli-Jew and Arab on the Inside**

In this section I highlight three aspects of Israeli society: 1) the ways in which private and public, inside and outside merge into one another without clear separation or distinction; 2) the instability of the signifier “Jew,” with an emphasis on how it is defined in relation to Palestinian and to Arab, and; 3) the coexistence of acknowledgement of Israeli discrimination and racism towards Palestinians as unjust, and the defense and justification of such discrimination.
There are at least three different versions of an Israeli song from the early 1970s called “That Was My Home.” The original is sung by 1970s rock star Meni Beger. Meni Beger came to Israel from Turkey as a child. The song describes, from the perspective of the singer, the interior and immediate exterior of what was once his home through a few details; a corner in which he sat playing games on the carpet with friends and where a cat would sit, a place where they drank small cups of black coffee, a place with a garden, a yard, and a chicken coop. The lyrics address not only a general audience, but a specific other who is identified as having shared in this place. The song can be understood as making reference to a private shared past with an intimate other, but the reference to the

3 These are the lyrics, translated from the Hebrew original:

As friends came each day to sit
Over a cup or two
We told stories of childhood on carpet
in the corner
A cat sat
Black coffee, small cups
Records, dice and games
That was my home
With a garden and a coop, it was my house
It was yours, it was mine, it was ours
With the dawn strangers will live in it
And we
With all the memories disappear, disappear
We don’t see again the candles lit
In the windows since we left
When you went with you went all the same
friends with whom we always laughed
the black cat already disappeared
the voice in the yard is silent
That was my house
details of a home rather than to a person or a relation to a person also suggests an emphasis more on a longing for a past home from which one departed not completely voluntarily than on a longing for a past relation to a person. The first version of the song that I heard was on an Israeli television satire, “Eretz Nehderet” (“Fantastic Country”), in which two actors, one playing a Druze soldier and the other a Bedouin soldier, joke with the host and tell him about the army choir in which they sing. They then get up to perform a hip hop version of the song in Hebrew with heavy Arabic accents, and are accompanied by a video on a screen behind them that displays visual footage of what seem to be either Palestinian or Bedouin families in poor living conditions. Some of the lyrics are revised to reference common names in Arabic and the impoverished living conditions of Palestinian or Bedouin displaced from their homes. When I sent the link to a clip of this version to a friend, she sent me a clip of the original version, and also of a version made by an Israeli group called Kele Shesh (Jail Six), about the forced evacuation of settlers from the Gaza Strip. The latter version also revises some of the original to make reference to the names of Jewish settlements in Gaza that were forcibly evacuated by the Israeli military, and the feelings of betrayal and loss expressed by settlers. Both the coexistence of these different versions of the song in Israel, and the version on the television satire, exemplify the ways in which an awareness and recognition of Israeli politics toward Palestinians coexists with an investment in continuing this politics, and in which multiple displacements are acknowledged simultaneously, one layered on top of another.
I started looking for an apartment in Tel Aviv almost immediately after I arrived in Jerusalem in November of 2005 to begin my fieldwork. Several times a week I would take the bus from Jerusalem’s central station to south Tel Aviv, where I would to walk the streets with my cell phone, visiting places which I had appointments to see, and looking for apartment for rent signs in the neighborhoods through which I walked. The process of looking for an apartment was one which sometimes explicitly highlighted the coexistence of hospitality and hostility, diversity and separation that characterizes Israeli public space.

One day, I met a friend in Tel Aviv who was also looking for place to live there, a young college student who I had met the previous summer in political activities against the occupation and the wall. As we walked the streets of Florentine, we stopped to call a phone number that was written on a sign advertising an apartment for rent on the second, top floor of an apartment. Noaa called out across the street to a man who was standing in front of a store on the sidewalk below the apartment to ask if he knew anything about the apartment up there. He called back that yes, the apartment was for rent but he didn’t know anything about it. As she was beginning to dial the number, he called back again, “you shouldn’t live there; if you live there you will have problems.” we yell back “why?” and he answered: “there are two arabs from schem up there who live next door.” we said so what and shrugged our shoulders, and Noaa finished dialing to ask for more information about the apartment. At one of the apartments that we went to look at, a one room apartment that Noaa was interested in, she pointed out to me the words that were
scrawled on a door on the same floor as the apartment that we were looking at: “arabs are not allowed entry.”

After about a month of searching, I found an apartment on the border between south Tel Aviv and Jaffa. There are independent movers with little trucks who you can find in places like the flea market, and I paid one of them to move some furniture I was borrowing from my aunt and uncle in Jerusalem, and a mattress and bed frame I bought there, to my apartment in Tel Aviv. The mover was a man named Shalom, he had a kippa and looked to be in his fifties. When we arrived to my apartment building he carried my heavy furniture up the three flights of stairs. As we were finishing, a young Palestinian was hanging around in the hallway and came inside my apartment, asking me questions about how much rent I was paying, whether I live here alone, and how many rooms the apartment is, and looking at my stuff. Shalom shooed him away firmly. After Shalom shut the door he told me that I need to be careful here, that in the jungle one needs to always be careful, that the guy was an arab from Yafo, that he knows his kind, and that he wanted to look to see what I had. I told Shalom that I would be careful, but that I thought that maybe the guy was just curious, even thought it did make me uncomfortable. I wondered out loud to Shalom if he thought it was possible to break in to the apartment through the windows in the kitchen, or with the door, and said that the apartment seemed pretty secure to me. Shalom said that no no, someone wouldn’t break in, they just might try to come in another way, that I need to be careful and keep an eye out. After one of his first loads up to the apartment, Shalom had said, “I don’t know personally, but from
stories, from the news, in this area people will eat the walls. You have to be careful.”

In different ways, references to the political histories of who lives where, and of who lived where, are continually evoked in the every day, regardless of peoples’ political positions and opinions about these histories. Soon after I had moved in to my apartment, I got a ride from a university professor back home after a meeting to talk about my research. On the way in the car he told me a little bit about the history of the university of Tel Aviv and how it was built on the land of an Arab village. Most of it was built on the agricultural lands of the village. He said in 1948 the Arabs living there were kicked out and Mizrahi Jews were placed there, together with some Ashkenazi Jews, but most if not all of the Ashkenazim left, and the Mizrahim stayed. When the university expanded, most of the houses were torn down. One house was left standing, the house of one of the Arab leaders of the village, who had worked with the British and probably also with the Zionists. He had hired Italian architects to design his house, so the result was a house in between Italian and Arab styles, a hybrid of both. It is green. The university turned it into a fancy coffee house where they now host their guests from abroad. It is called “The Green House.”

While the everyday outside bears constant reminders of the different ways in which Middle East and Europe, and different political and cultural histories continue to permeate each other, the news is dominated by the threat of potential or actual violence from Israel’s Arab neighbors. I would turn on the television or check the news on the internet upon coming home and hear about forecasts of future violence or violence from
that day. One evening I came home and turned on the television and heard the report that
a soldier was killed in a suicide bombing at a checkpoint that was set up to try to catch a
suicide bomber, based on intelligence reports of a planned attack. The reporter explains
that the soldiers there, with their bodies, prevented a real catastrophe. Dozens could have
been killed if the suicide bomber hadn’t been intercepted. The reporter says that the
soldiers asked to see the Palestinian’s identity card, and that they asked him to get out of
the taxi that he was traveling in. When they asked him to lift up his shirt, he set off the
explosives he had around his waist, and killed an Israeli soldier, two Palestinians, and
himself. Another item in the news; a man in Jerusalem was stabbed and is in the hospital
recovering. While he was waiting for a bus at a bus stop in Jerusalem, an Arab came up
to him and stabbed him in the neck. The police are looking for the assailant. A couple
years later, Levana’s son comes to visit me in my apartment so I can interview him about
his army service. He served as a “Mistarev.” A special unit in which soldiers disguise
themselves as Palestinians to conduct undercover operations in the West Bank, usually
assassinations or intelligence gathering for assassination operations. These soldiers are
usually of Middle Eastern background, and can pass as Palestinian in terms of how they
look and in terms of their Arabic. It turns out that he was there at the checkpoint in which
a soldier had been killed in Jerusalem. As a result of the insensitivity of the army’s
response to his grief and that of others in his unit, he had changed his mind about
continuing longer in the army after his mandatory service was finished.
It is not only in terms of Jew and Arab that inside and outside are woven into each other in Israel. The boundary between public and private is also inside out and outside in. In Israeli public space, strangers often address each other as if they are in the same house, and it is difficult to get the intensity of the public space out of one’s private home. There are endless examples of this. Some are as mundane and fleeting as the comments people sometimes make about one’s expression or apparent mood. For example, when walking quickly towards the central bus station in Tel Aviv I pass an older man who looks at me and asks, “why the sad face on Friday? You shouldn’t be sad on Friday.” I smile and say I’m not sad, just in a rush, and I’m late. He says this is a pity. I shouldn’t be in such a rush. I am in a rush though, and I ignore him and go on until I reach the station, opening my bags as I walk so that they are ready to be checked by the security guard. People on the bus will comment on each others’ behavior, clothes, or invite themselves in to conversations between others. Of course, people are also not hesitant to tell each other to stay out of their business. Official state ceremonies and institutional rituals also address the Israeli-Jew as familiar, emphasizing indiivual names and biographies, highlighting their singularity only to then consume it and replace it with the collective of the nation. This is dramatized in debates such as those which followed the kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in 2006 - debates about whether Shalit’s life was worth the lives of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and the potential future loss of Jewish-Israeli life as a result of releasing them, and five years later, in the responses to the exchange of over 1,000 Palestinian prisoners for Shalit’s return.
I was on my way back to Israel after a week in Portugal in July 2006, when I heard that an Israeli soldier had been kidnapped. The passengers standing in line in front of me as we waited to board the plane in Lisbon held Israeli newspapers in front of them, reading the news below the big black headlines, others were talking on cell phones about the news. Gilad Shalit, a 19 year old Israeli soldier, had been wounded and captured in a cross border attack by Hamas militants on an Israeli army post near the border with Gaza. A little over two weeks later, the 2006 Lebanon war began after Hezebollah fighters attacked two IDF humvees patrolling Israel’s northern border with Lebanon and shot several rockets into northern Israel.

By the end of the next day, Israel had bombed Lebanon’s commercial Hariri airport in Beirut and blockaded Lebanese airspace. The same day it was also reported that the air force bombed the main highway between Beirut and Damascus and places in which they suspected Hezbollah might have weapons stockpiled. The Israeli navy blockaded Lebanon’s ports. Almost immediately, the sense of experiencing a shared threat was heightened on the street, and criticism of official Israeli response, when voiced, was quick to come under fierce attack. I went to the neighborhood in Bat Yam only once during the war, reluctant, I suppose, to encounter what I imagined would be aggressive defenses of Israel’s tactics. I attended demonstrations, read the news, spent time with friends, and stayed in my apartment.

The headlines in those days were difficult to absorb. I spent more time than I had before with Nadav and Limor. We all were taking Arabic classes together in Tel Aviv. I
went with them sometimes to visit the Palestinians from Gaza who were in the hospital in Tel Aviv with their relatives hospitalized there after the Israeli attack on the beach in June. Sometimes a few others, Ronnie or Talila, were also there. Afterwards we would walk in the streets of Tel Aviv late into the night, talking and walking, sometimes stopping for a bite to eat somewhere.

The aggression and fear felt in the streets during the war seemed to spill over into the army’s behaviour in the West Bank. I had planned a trip in August to visit a friend in Turkey, and I went there for about a week, during what turned out to be the last official week of the war. While I was in Istanbul, I received the news that an Israeli demonstrator had been shot in the head from close range with a tear gas canister during a demonstration in Bil’in. It turned out to be Lymor, and he was undergoing brain surgery in the hospital. Upon returning to Tel Aviv a few days later, I went straight from the airport to the hospital, where I met Nadav. We talked and dozed on the chairs there. After multiple surgeries and months of rehabilitation, Lymor recuperated and eventually went back to his work as a lawyer. I continued going to demonstrations in the months afterwards, but they started to feel less and less tolerable. I wanted to start running away from the soldiers almost the very minute we would arrive to face them on the other side of the fence after the walk from the village to the place of the demonstration. It was primarily the physical violence which deterred me, but also, I eventually realized, the proximity to the violence of the soldiers in terms of the engagements that accompanied their violence. Sometimes demonstrators shouted to the soldiers that they would “see
them at home.” Conversation and shouting back and forth in Hebrew with the soldiers about their violence, about the construction of the fence, about notions of justice and the law was a consistent part of the demonstrations before, during, and after their physical violence in the form of beating demonstrators with batons, shooting tear gas, rubber bullets, and sometimes live fire. I would return to the inside of Israel feeling as if it was the people in the street with whom I interacted in the everyday who were attacking us at the demonstrations. And because Israel is such a small country, perhaps this too accentuated the feeling that the violence was coming from people familiar and nearby, making it take time to transition between the position of facing the soldiers in the West Bank to the position of facing civilians back in Israel, all of which was underlined by the fear and shock that the soldiers didn’t seem to really care that they might kill us. So eventually I stopped going to the demonstrations, except for some of the bigger, “special event” ones, like the annual demonstration that commemorates the day the weekly demonstrations began, or the one to celebrate the Supreme Court ruling against the route of the fence between Bil’in and Modi’in Illit. I was always especially happy on Fridays, demonstration days, that I lived on the border with Jaffa, and would stop in the fruits and vegetable store and small grocery run by Palestinian Israelis on my way home. My neighborhood felt like something of a buffer, or a space of transition between the West Bank and Ramat Yosef and other parts of Tel Aviv.

It was not long after the end of the war before noisy criticisms began to be voiced of the military and government leadership. One of the culminations of such criticism was
a protest in Rabin square in Tel Aviv on May 3rd, 2007, after the release of the Winograd report. The Winograd report was a government issued investigation of the government and military conduct during and handling of the war, led by retired judge Eliyahu Winograd. The report focused its criticism on former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, former Minister of Defense Amir Peretz, and former IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz. The report suggested that the war had been a failure; it ended without a clear victory despite Israeli technological advantages and with significant disruption to daily Israeli civilian life and military and civilian casualties. The report identified failures in decision-making and preparation at multiple levels in Israel’s military and political realms. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was reported to have complimented Israel on its ability to commission and produce a public report that was self-critical in such a manner, while Lebanon’s Prime Minister Fuad Siniora criticized the report for not making any mention of the significant destruction and loss of life in Lebanon for which Israel was responsible.

Such criticisms, whether they came from prominent Zionist leftists such as David Grossman or from right wing citizens on the street, resonate with the ways in which people in Ramat Yosef would simultaneously explain the need to go to war and their criticism and skepticism of Israeli government and military leadership and policy. Such dual defense and criticism of going to war and of how the war was conducted can be understood in conjunction with the different ways in which Israelis, and Israeli national narratives, define Jew through relations to Arab, Europe, and to messianic and modern origin narratives. One might expect that intense militarism and national identification
would be accompanied by a certain degree of consensus about the definition of “Jew,” and by a rejection of Palestinians or Arabs, at least by the people who vehemently defend Israeli military and national security policies, including Israel’s actions in the 2nd Lebanon War. But Israeli Jews can defend such military action and identify with it, and include Palestinians or Arabs within the national body politic to be defended, without a clear definition of what defines “Jew” as a collective group.

About a year and a half after the war, I was sitting with Levana (David’s wife who runs the neighborhood store in Ramat Yosef together with him). She was telling me about a recent holiday trip she took with her three kids, her mother, and David to Turkey, a popular tourist site for Israelis. She went on about how delicious the fruits there were, “and the fruits, the fruits,” she shakes her head with emphasis, “so delicious.”

“Nu, your mother doesn’t want to go back there?” I ask, wondering what it is like for Levana’s mother, who is from Turkey, to go back there for holiday.

“They love the beauty there. They love it.” She says. “My mother, the whole family. And you know what, at a hotel there, a Muslim, in the end he couldn’t anymore, and he told my daugther, I’ll give you my telephone number,”

“Who?” I ask, a little confused. Levana explains that a bartender, a Muslim Turkish man, had a crush on her daughter while they visited there. “A bartender,” she says, “he learned in Stage, he is a professional bartender.”

“Wow” I say.
“In the end, he knew we were leaving in two hours, and he couldn’t bear it anymore, he gave her his phone number, and told her that she could call, and that he would be there. He wanted to continue to be in touch after she came back here.”

“Aw” I say. We are momentarily interrupted by David calling from inside the store to ask about some orders that were put in for the store.

Then, not remembering, I ask Levana how old her daughter is.

“Seventeen and a half.”

“Oh, she is big, I didn’t realize she is that old.” . .

Levana cuts back to the point, “In short, he is a Muslim.”

“But what is important is the person,” I say, wondering what kind of response this might elicit.

Levana responds, “She would not agree to it,”

“Oh, she wouldn’t agree?” I am a little surprised, expecting that Levana was going to be the one who wouldn’t agree, not necessarily her daughter.

Levana says, “Look. It’s not impossible, only if he would come, and he would convert, she wouldn’t agree. I know. Look, for me, it would be easier to accept if he was Christian. It’s a very painful problem. To everyone in this country, there is someone who was hurt from, if it was war, if it was an attack, all kinds. So there isn’t such a thing as someone who wasn’t affected from close. There isn’t.”

I say, “that’s right, that’s why it is political, no?”
Levana responds, “it’s a very difficult problem, you understand. I would really want that she could marry a Jew, it avoids a lot of problems. But if it would happen, I wouldn’t try to stop it. There are people who make that mistake, and they lose.”

“Because the family disowns them?” I ask.

“Yes,” Levana says, “the child doesn’t give up, and the parents refuse to be in touch,”

“Once there was less separation between the people,” I say.

Levana says, “Look, that he is a Muslim there in Turkey makes it easier. Why? Because he isn’t tied to all the problems here. But he is Muslim, and there would be problems.”

I say, “It’s complicated. Because it’s to live inside a situation in which the sides are very,”

Levana continues the sentence, “There would be lots of problems.”

“But maybe it could also work out,” I say.

“There are things like that,” Levana says.

“Yes?” I say, wondering of what she might be thinking.

Levana nods, “There are a lot.”

There is a pause.

“Like whom?” I ask.

“There is a family, listen to how absurd, I would tell you to go talk to them, but the woman is very sick” Levana says.
“For sure it wouldn’t be good, even if I came,” I say.

Levana answers, “no, she is very sick,”

“What does she have?” I ask.

Levana says, “She has cancer, it’s already in the bones, very young, only 46,”

“Oy,” I say.

“She is Jewish, and her husband is I think from Rafiah, Muslim, he was a collaborator, they fell in love, got married, three children,” Levana says.

I ask, “the guy, who is skinny, he works in, he fixes all kinds of things, I think?”

“Yes,”

“I think I’ve seen him, awhile ago,”

“And, absurd, he has a daughter hammemet, and a son soldier, he is in the navy I think, at a very good base, so see what a,” Levana pauses.

“Yes,” I say.

“And his family, like, he can’t even get close to the area because they will kill him. And look at him, an Arab. And on Yom Kippur, a holiday that is very holy for us, he dresses in white, and puts on a kippa, and goes to the synagogue,”

“Wow.”

“Yes, yes. There are amazing stories,” Levana says.

“And it’s always Jewish women with Palestinian men, or are there also the reverse,” I ask.
“I haven’t encountered the reverse, because the Arabs simply murder the women who,”

the women aren’t as free to do,”

“They catch them and kill them. There is someone here, a Christian Arab, who lives in a village in the north, but she is a Christian Arab, where for them, the Muslims are worse than for us with terrorists,” Levana says.

“Wala.”

“And she is with a Jew, you understand. But like this, there aren’t” Levana states.

“Are there others like this, here, it would be interesting to talk to them,” I say.

“There was a Russian woman, who got here because she married a Jew and made Aliyah, and then she divorced him but she already had all the papers so she could stay here. She married a Muslim Arab, from a village, they had a daughter., Now her daughter from her first marriage had already grown up. She married her daughter to her husband’s brother.”

“To her second husband’s brother?” I ask.

“Yes, her second husband. And he is Arab. And he married another woman. And with them it’s like this. They can marry more than one woman. They don’t live here anymore, they moved somewhere else. Their daughter, she was little, blond hair and speaking Arabic like this…[Levana imitates fluent Arabic speaking]. It was amazing to see. You should have seen it.”

“Wala.”
“But what I didn’t like with her, when our army eliminated Sheik Ahmad
Yassin,”

“That was a long time ago,”

Levana says, “Yes, it was a long time ago. When it happened she was here with
me, and she called her husband and said to him in Arabic, she didn’t know that I could
understand, she said to him, ‘how sad for us,’ and since then, I can’t stand her.”

I laugh a little, and then Levana says, “yes, listen, it hurts my people.”

“Yes,” I acknowledge.

“You understand?” Levana asks, and then continues, explaining: “Before that I
could sit with her and laugh with her. But since then, I keep my distance from her.”

“Yes,” I say.

“Because if she could, she would give information also about me (alyai). You
understand?” Levana asks me.

“Yes, it’s hard,” I say.

“That’s how it is. It is hard. They are very difficult situations. It’s not easy at all.”

….

A few weeks later I’m chatting with David outside the store. The conversation
turns to the usual “the situation;” the news these days is often about whether or not Israel
should exchange hundreds of Palestinian prisoners for the bodies of the two Israeli
soldiers killed and captured by Hezbollah in the summer of 2006. Such news on the radio
leads to conversation more generally about “the situation.” David explains to me that he
doesn’t think Arab Israelis (the name used in Israel for Palestinians with Israeli citizenship) are a problem for Israel or the Jews. He says, “Most of the ones in Jaffa are good, they’re fine. A person who has an income, a person who has something to lose, doesn’t do nonsense, not with crime, not with anything.”

I nod, “Yes, that’s why it’s important that everyone have a good situation,”

David agrees, “I completely agree, allevai that it would be good for everyone. So why do I say that most of the ones in Jaffa are good, are fine. Because they have to earn for a family, they have kids to raise. I don’t think they even have any interest in terror, they won’t do things that would put them at risk. In contrast, in the villages, for example in a village that doesn’t have much, they don’t have much to lose. They don’t have work, they don’t have enough to eat, they don’t have water. It is a problem.”

I ask, “Don’t you think that the Jews who lived with Arabs in the Middle East know how to get along better with Arabs than Jews who came from Europe?”

David responds shaking his head, “No, no no. I don’t know, I don’t think so, they understand their head.”

“But there’s all the history of living together,”

“I don’t think so, I think the Ashkenazim can live with them better than the Jews from the Middle East. It surprises you?”

“A little,” I answer.

David says, “I’ll explain to you why. The Mizrahim have hate,”

“Why?” I ask.
“hey have bad memories from the past.”

“But they are exactly the ones who lived with them, the Askenazism seem more racist.”

“No no, I don’t think so,”

“Really?”

“I don’t think so,”

A customer comes in and interrupts us. After he leaves we go on talking.

“So, explain to me what how you understand all of this,” I say.

David responds, clarifying, “I think, I don’t understand anything. I think, I only think, I think that the Mizrahim have a difference with the Arabs because they remember them badly,”

“But some lived together well,” I say.

“Some did, that’s true, but some also didn’t, some had a balagan (mess) with Arabs. Not everyone did. And the Ashkenazim didn’t live with them, so they say, come on and let’s try.”

“They say, but they don’t do.”

“They don’t do. That’s why it is a problem. Each limits the other, each stops the other. Really, I think that in Israel half want to live with them and half don’t want to live with them in peace. But there’s isn’t a choice. What are you going to do? We have to, in my opinion, we have to make real peace. To close the stories, that the ones here stay, the ones in Yafo stay, the ones in Acco stay, the ones in Lud, in Ramle stay, the ones in
Israel stay, the ones in the territories in the territories, great. Ours who are in the territories, get them out and move them here, these here those there, Jews here Arabs there, in the middle this, close the story. But who, I say this with ease but the problem is people,”

“Not everyone wants this,” I say.

“They want it but,”

“For some people it’s all business,”

David says, “It’s not just about business, it’s also some people whose hate is strong, so they don’t care if someone else pays the price,”

“It’s peoples’ lives,” I say.

David response, “It’s peoples’ lives. It’s a pity.”

“And what do you say about the history of the Jews here,” I ask.

“I think that, really, there isn’t a country in the world that did in sixty years what was done here. It’s a little imperia today. We have everything in the whole world, connections. We have medanim in the whole world. Listen, there also isn’t a place like this in a world. Where else in the world are there, Ethiopians, who live in the same country, Ethiopians, Russians, Yeminites, Moroccans, Ashkenazim, Iraqis, do you know how many different ethnicities live here? There isn’t anything like it the world. There isn’t.”

“True, but mostly Jewish,” I say.
“Okay, but there are also Arabs, Christians, Muslims, and Greek, and Catholic, whatever you want, everything, there isn’t a country in the world that has all the ethnicities and religions that we have here. On one hand, it is good, on the other, it can be difficult, listen,” David says.

“What’s good about it?” I ask.

“It’s good to have people from all over the world, stam, to take one example, with all the Russians who came, many aren’t the nicest people, but there came good engineers, good doctors, some are really very good, with high tech, so we learn and take some from this, some from that, make a whole cake,” David says.

“And what’s not good?”

“What’s not good? That it’s difficult to get along, what does that mean it’s difficult to get along, can an Ethiopian get along with a Russian, they don’t get along, it’s a fact on the ground, they don’t get along, Ethiopians also don’t get along with Israelis, but can a Morrocan get along with a Russian, they don’t get along, very few, can a Russian get along with a Tripolitani, or with a Teymani? Have you seen a Teymani and a Russian together? Not many, they don’t get along, it’s hard. But I think that in another 50 years it could be that it will all mix, it will all be one salad, and there won’t be anymore Ethiopian, Russian, there won’t be anything, it will all be this.”

The conversations in the neighborhood that summer also turned sometimes directly to the question of whether Israel should return hundreds of prisoners for the bodies of the two Israeli soldiers captured at the beginning of the war.
I’m sitting outside David and Levana’s store in the end of July, talking with Shuli and Uzi and a few others who come in and out of the conversation. Shuli has just moved out of the neighborhood after more than 30 years living in the same apartment there; he and his wife moved to an apartment in Holon, nearby, considered a move up. Another man shows up, his manner of talking annoys me, and it seems most everyone else. He grates on my nerves and often after he arrives if it seems he is going to stay for awhile I decide that it’s time to go and I leave. He makes jokes that aren’t funny, talks a little too much and a little too loudly and as if everyone must think he is hilarious and clever. And he seems always to be particularly enthusiastic about talking to me so it is difficult to ignore him. I chat for a bit with Uzi and Shuli about when Shuli bought his apartment and about the changes in housing prices over the years. Then the annoying man asks why I go around with a pirate hat. I am wearing a black and white bandana. And “how are you today?” He begins, in an annoying tone, as if that already is a funny thing to say. “And why are you with a pirate hat? Did you decide to be a pirate?” He asks, in the tone people ask six-year olds, which is usually no less annoying. “No, I’ve been wearing a bandanna off an on for awhile now, but I lost it,” He interrupts, “What do you mean? If you lost it, how can you be wearing it? It’s a sign that you found it, or did you buy a new one?”

“I bought a new one,” I answer.

“And why are you with short hair, if I may ask?”

I shrug, “it’s fun, comfortable, less hot…”

Shuli weighs in, “less shampoo, less fan.”
The annoying man says, “she is right, less hair to wash.”

“All my life I had long hair, it’s nice to have a change,” I add.

Shuli then jokes, less chance of getting lice.”

I laugh,” that’s true too.”

The annoying man says, “but wait, if that’s true, what is this lice doing here,” and he slaps his arm.

The men then launch into an argument about lice and whether it is possible to keep it from their kids once it is going around in school, and what the best ways of getting rid of them are.

Shuli knows I’m getting irritated and seems irritated himself. He tries to help with moving the conversation to what I imagine he imagines is what I want to talk about. The truth is that there isn’t anything in particular I feel like talking to them about.

“Did you ask him about the prisoners of war?” Shuli asks me, trying to change to subject.

“No, that’s right,” I say. “What do you think about that?” I ask the annoying man, half-heartedly, not really want to talk at all, but feeling the pressure of trying to be a “good anthropologist.”

The annoying man asks, “about what, that they freed the prisoners for the two soldiers’ bodies?”

“Yes,” I answer.
“First of all,” he says, “it was clear to me from the beginning that they would be dead. In terms of what Israel did in the end, she returned the bodies in the end. At any price. It doesn’t matter that it was at a price.”

“Why?” I ask.

The annoying man says, “Because Israel sent her soldiers, she has to return them. She has to stand behind them. It’s the same with Gilad Shalit, and it doesn’t matter what the price will be. That they think about the price before they send the soldiers out. Me, I don’t go after wars, but if someone doesn’t understand, you have to beat them in the language that they understand” he says. He goes on, “and I think that always in these cases when Israel sends her soldiers out, she has to stand behind them. We have a shit of a government, it takes them lots and lots of time to respond to such things, we have a government that worries only about its own ass and pockets, and not about our lives. No one in the government gets up in the morning to really make an effort.”

Uzi chimes in, “We have a garbage government.” The annoying man goes on, “because we don’t have anyone to give what we have to. If I give to A, or to B, or to C, they will enter into all kinds of combinot (combinations to get the best deal at others’ expense).”

“So I don’t understand,” I say, if this is the case, why don’t people refuse to do what the government asks?”

“Because we are a rag of a people,” the annoying man says.

“We are a shit people” Uzi adds.
“Look at what happened when they raised the prices now on rice,” the annoying man points out. “Is there a lack of rice in the world? There will be, but there isn’t. and they raised the prices, and the people didn’t do anything.”

“But then why are people still so willing to go to war when they don’t feel the government is doing anything for them?” I ask.

“Because if you don’t go, someone else will have to go. Who will go then, if no one would go? Because something stinks on top you are not going to go? You have to go to look out for your friends. We go out for friends, we are not thinking about the state of Israel, we go out for each other. What can you do?” A kid comes by with a fast food sandwich, and the annoying man starts giving him a hard time about eating garbage and laughing. Then he concludes, “in short, we are a fucked people. We are a terrible people. We don’t know how to do things. This is our problem. It is a pity.”

Between Dream and Reality: Affective Labor, Israeli-Jew and the Passage Between

I have suggested that the meanings attached to Jew-Israeli are produced through a continual back and forth between the multiple places and others through which Jew has been defined. As the examples from Ramat Yosef and elsewhere in Israel illustrate, the “enemy” in Israel, defined most often as Palestinian or Arab, or alternatively, as the universal human subject which pressures Israel to let go of its claims to Jewish singularity in the name of universalism, is located both inside and outside Israel’s demographic and geographic boundaries, and within and outside the figure of Jew-Israeli
itself. At the same time, “Jew” has no clear or fixed definition. As a nation-state, Israel thus calls on its Jewish citizens to defend a collective that is defined in terms of multiple self-differential relations. I am arguing here that an analysis of this continual movement between different meanings of “Jew,” and the specificity of the instability of what “Jew” signifies in Israel, reveals the fiction of community, identity, and the notion of an autonomous, sovereign subject, and the violence of political frameworks based on such fictions. More specifically, I argue here that an analysis of the movement of Jew-Israeli between these binaries reveals how humanism’s concept of the human is founded on a displacement of sexual difference. This displacement of sexual difference is the foundation for different kinds of political frameworks based on a concept of sovereignty in which difference is situated as either outside or inside the polity and as between individuals, rather than as an unknowable difference of alterity which makes full subjectivity, and sovereignty, impossible.

Israel, defined both as a place of refuge for all Jews, and as a liberal democracy based on liberalism’s principles of universalism, situates Israeli-Jew as both host and guest. The difference of the other, including of the potential enemy, is located both inside and outside the country’s geographic and demographic boundaries, and both inside and outside the constitution of the figure “Israeli-Jew.” I have tried to show how the Mas’ha campsite was a time and place in which the campsite’s participants tried to nourish a politics based on such a concept of the political, even if it was’t explicitly articulated as such in these terms. In contrast, Israeli state policy, and its effects on the Israeli
population, continually reproduce such a concept of the political while simultaneously reacting violently against it in an attempt to establish borders between difference and through the identification and exclusion of an enemy. But by definition, as a Jewish state and a liberal democracy, Israel reproduces exactly that which it then attacks, or attacks exactly that which it claims to defend, through attacking the production of that and those which manifest either the impossibility of full sovereignty, of difference and circumciscion, or which push for an ideal of universality in which the singular is not recognized as between the particular and the universal, rather than as a difference that can be fully included within the universal or be interchangeable with the particular.

Critical melancholia, Khanna (2003) suggests, is a form of affect that links the representation of collective and group structure and ideal to the trace of inaccessible trauma on the individual. She writes:

If the most consistent deployment of Lacan in the postcolonial context is by Homi Bhaba, it is in Bhaba’s use of the notion of affect that Lacanian psychoanalysis is most persuasive….Foregrounding the concept of Nachtraglichkeit, Bhaba reminds us that affects frequently associated with the postmodern today – such as the instability of master discourses, unstable identities, and coexistent temporal multiplicities – can be seen not only now at the moment of decolonization or postcoloniality but also at earlier moments of the North-South colonial encounters manifested as what he calls a time-lag….Bhaba differentiates himself from Derrida and de Man through opposing the ‘foreign interstitial’ with the ‘metonymic fragmentation of the ‘original.’”…But we could bring the two concepts together very usefully as a notion of affect as a concept that acknowledges the catachresis of the origin of a trauma and that leaves its trace on the individual. (220)

By bringing these two concepts together, Khanna combines a psychoanalytic understanding of deferral with a deconstructive understanding of deferral in terms of the
specificity of the postcolonial. In so doing, Khanna both retains the structural understanding of a shared catachresis, and acknowledges that the relation of this shared catachresis to individuated subjectivity is always singular. It is the affect of critical melancholia, she suggests, that can allow individuated subjects to be critical of the group and its claims of belonging and exclusion.

I am not suggesting that all Israeli-Jews are necessarily melancholic nor critical of Israeli national belonging. Rather, I am suggesting that the combination of different meanings attributed to and views about Israeli-Jew, in their specificity of movement between what are set up as binary oppositions such as Arab and European, diasporic and returned, weak and strong, victim and victimizer, universal and singular, lead to an understanding of the singular as between the particular and the universal, making it impossible not just for any subject to stand in for the group, but also making it impossible for a subject to fully belong to itself. More specifically, this movement of Israeli-Jew between oppositions suggests an understanding of subjectivity as not fully belonging to itself, nor as fully representable, with a difference that is both inside and outside the subject, always making full subjectivity and sovereignty impossible. This understanding of subjectivity, through an analysis of the specificity of the political and social genealogies of Israeli-Jew, leads to an analysis of sexual difference that suggests sexual difference is the difference between the utterance of the self and that through which the utterance is made, the difference at the heart of attempts at self-determination which make complete self-determination impossible.
Earlier, I argued that psychoanalysis is important for understanding the Jew in Israel not only because of the theoretical concepts it offers, but because of the specificity of the historical and political contexts which it shares with Zionism and anti-Semitism in turn of the century Europe, and the subsequent aftermath of WWII and upheaval of anticolonial struggle and colonial exit strategies in Europe’s colonies. The psychoanalytic analysand, as Gilman and others point out in detail, was characterized by symptoms frequently attributed to Jews, especially, although not only, in anti-Semitic stereotypes and in the medical and scientific establishment of the time. Freud, through psychoanalysis, attempted to understand the patient’s symptoms, and through this process of understanding, to reduce the patient’s bodily symptoms and to restore the patient’s sovereignty as a speaking subject. Zionism, through the establishment of Israel as both a liberal democracy and a Jewish state, created the figure of the “new Jew” in attempt to restore a perceived lost sovereignty of the diasporic Jew, while simultaneously retaining the figure of the diasporic Jew.

Lacan emphasizes a universal structural lack at the center of subjectivity, rather than the specificity of the content of the ideal through which desires are differently refracted.⁴ One of the words around which discourse forms a hole in the Zionist dream, if

⁴ But he does so in a way which helpfully draws attention how Freud’s psychoanalysis was based largely on his theory of dreams, and on the significance of language in dream-work Lacan (2008) writes:
one reads it as a text in Lacanian terms, is “Jew.” But for Lacan, it is the desire of the Other that is significant, not the specificity of the content through which the subject is refracted in relation to the ideal Other. Lacanian psychoanalysis, including some of its feminist variations, does not allow much room for thinking about the singular and the particular in relation to the universal, because of how the question of desire is understood in terms of a structural lack, a hole which is understood in the same terms for all subjects in modernity, rather than in terms of the trauma of the individual. In other words, Lacanian psychoanalysis reads Freud in a way that does not account for colonial and postcolonial effects, and thus also for a more nuanced address of questions of sexual difference and racialization specific to European modernity. The figure of the Jew in

No one before me seems to have attached the least importance to the fact that, in Freud’s first books, the essential books on dreams, on what they call they psychopathology of everyday life, on jokes, we find one common factor, and it derives from stumbling over words, holes in discourses, wordplay, puns, ambiguities. That is what backs up the first interpretations and the inaugural discoveries of what is involved in the psychoanalytic experience, in the field that it determines.

Open the book on dreams, which came first, at any page and you will see that it talks about nothing but things to do with words. You will see that Freud talks about them in such a way that the structural laws Mr de Saussure disseminated all over the world are written out there in full….

In Freud, a dream is not a nature that dreams, an archetype that stirs, a matrix for the world, a divine dream, or the heart of the world. Freud describes a dream as a certain knot, an associative network of analysed verbal forms that intersect as such, not because of what they signify, but thanks to a sort of homonymy. It is when you come across a single word at the intersection of three of the ideas that come to the subject that you notice that the important thing is that word and not something else. It is when you have found the word that concentrates around it the greatest number of threads in the mycellum that you know it is the hidden centre of gravity of the desire in question. That, in a word, is the point I was talking about just now, the nodal point where discourse forms a hole. (28)
Israel makes explicit the significance of the specificity of the ideal other through which subjectivity is formed for the production of different political formations.\textsuperscript{5}

Sexual difference, as Luce Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir have differently argued, threatens the assumption of a universal subject. If the human is defined as fully present to itself, without difference, as metaphysics suggests, than any representation of the human with a difference within itself becomes something other than human. Thus woman comes to stand in the position of what Simone de Beauvoir (1989) famously termed “the second sex,” through which she called attention to how man, through woman, is able to be marked as essential, objective, true, universal being, while for man woman becomes a being only in relation to him; “for him she is sex – absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other” (xix).\textsuperscript{6} In her effort to think a feminist existentialism

\textsuperscript{5} I am informed here by Khanna’s (2003) discussion of subject formation through a relation to alterity in terms of historical and contextual particularity, through which she problematizes Lacanian models of psychoanalytic frameworks of the relation to alterity and the symbolic by bringing the specificity of different material and discursive effects into a psychoanalytic framework.

\textsuperscript{6} This is also where Beauvoir makes her oft quoted footnote about Levinas:

E. Levinas expresses this idea most explicitly in his essay \textit{Temps et l’Autre}. ’Is there not a case in which otherness, alterity \textit{[alterite]}, unquestionably marks the nature of a being, as its essence, an instance of otherness not consisting purely and simply in the opposition of two species of the same genus? I think that the feminine represents the contrary in its absolute sense, this contrariness being in no wise affected by any relation between it and
through the figure of woman as a being with her own existence that is not only that through which man is able to be more than simply being, Beauvoir emphasizes what she argues is a need to detach woman from reproduction, which she defines as a form of endless repetition rather than as being about the production of meaning, freedom, and consciousness. In my analysis of Israeli-Jew here, I am suggesting that the figure of the Jew in Israel shows how this displacement is about both a displacement of affect and of the corporeal.

Feminist theory, and French feminist theory in particular, has demonstrated how metaphysics has defined man through position woman as the ground through which man is constituted. Postcolonial theory has presented multiple examples of how European modernity has defined the fully human and sovereign citizen-subject through positioning figures of difference among men (and women) as the other, often not fully human, on whose difference they are able to define themselves in terms of a universal humanity. Recent work that brings together psychoanalysis with postcolonial theory moves in the direction suggesting by an understanding of psychoanalysis that situates it in terms of its historical context through the lens of feminist theory invested in the question of how a

its correlative and thus remaining absolutely other. Sex is not a specific certain difference…’
I suppose that Levinas does not forget that woman, too, is aware of her own consciousness, or ego. But it is striking that he deliberately takes a man’s point of view, disregarding the reciprocity of subject and object. When he writes that woman is mystery, he implies that she is mystery for man. Thus his description, which is intended to be objective, is in fact an assertion of masculine privilege. (1989, xix)
transnational feminism might be defined. It is in this interstice that I suggest an analysis of contemporary Israel can both contribute and be informed by an understanding of Israeli-Jew in terms of a question of sexual difference. Because this question about sexual difference is a question about the definition of the human and the foundations upon which Western metaphysics and European modernity’s political frameworks rest, it is not a question that is secondary or peripheral to the debates about sovereignty and the political that have generated so much of scholarly and political attention in the past decade of scholarship across a wide range of disciplines, international political events, and the much longer political genealogies attached to both these discussions and political events. The question of sexual difference is at the heart of questions about sovereignty and the political and until they are acknowledged as such, it would seem that the debates over sovereignty and the different “crises” it generates will repeat a phallogocentric logic of metaphysics in which sexual difference is displaced on to the corporeal as a difference between bodies rather than between the body and language. I have suggested in this dissertation that the Jew in relation to Israel positions the Jew as both guest and host. This position, within the framework of the modern nation-state, raises the question of what happens to sexual difference when the national figure is both “woman” and “man” in terms of the displacement of sexual difference in western metaphysics, and at the same time defined in terms of the division between man and woman in terms of western metaphysics. In what follows, I consider this question in terms of feminist theory and a
discussion between Derrida and Levinas about the figure of the Jew in relation to
hospitality and in terms of Israel.

As Khanna (2003) has pointed out, Luce Irigaray both drew on and departed from
Beauvoir in “returning the womb” to philosophy, in a move that resituated the figure of
the maternal of woman in a way that rereads the history of western philosophy and
metaphysics such that its claims are unsettled. It is in this vein that Irigary brings the
body into a Derridean reading of Levinas’s intervention in metaphysics. As Spivak
(2005) puts it in terms of Irigary’s reading of Plato:

Reading many details in the Greek text, she [Irigaray] shows that the allegory of
the cave, by constructing a disavowed womb (with an unacknowledged
paraphragmatic hymen) as a place where we are and that we can escape, fulfills
the dream-wish of reason to wish away the inescapable control exercised by the
uncanny. Her mesmerizing, repetitive, cyclical reading mimes the structure of
transference and countertransference. The aim of psychoanalysis is to access the
subject to strengthen the agent – to tap the psychic apparatus to restore social
viability. In keeping with this, Irigaray analyses Plato not to dismantle him but to
restore social agency to the dreamer. Acknowledge the presence of the
paraphragmatic way out, acknowledge the vagina as the portal of birth written
into your cave and then…you will see that what you see as rupture is also a
repetition, the saving myth of the death of the scapegoat – Socrates, the man who
escapes and returns – rather than only the singular risk of the escape into reason.
(74)

But one can add here to Spivak’s commentary that Irigaray analyses Plato not only to
“restore social agency to the dreamer” (of reason) but also to resituate the content of the
dream, that is, the uncanny, the unheimlich. In other words, Irigaray challenges the
metaphysical opposition between dream and wakefulness, or between reason and woman
as unreasoned and unreasonable, and between mind and body. Spivak, in an Irigarayan
fashion, then attempts to reread Freud’s notion of the uncanny through Irigaray with an
attention to the difference of the postcolonial, echoing Irigaray’s work to reread Plato
with an attention to the difference of woman. Spivak writes:

As Irigaray attempted to wrest the Platonic text from its narrative commitments,
so do we attempt to separate the Freudian text from the narrative that it inhabits.
How does it figure here? I will give the most mechanical outline and ask the
reader to understand that the way I got here was far from mechanical.

The Heimlich/Unheimlich relationship is indeed, formally, the
defamiliarization of familiar space. But its substantive type does not have to be
the entrance to the vagina. Colonialism, decolonization, and postcoloniality
involved special kinds of traffic with people deemed ‘other’ – the familiarity of a
presumed common humanity defamiliarized, as it were. (Ibid. 77)

Spivak here is inserting racialized, national and other forms of difference made apparent
in the postcolonial context.7

Spivak points out that the difference that makes the home unfamiliar, the
uncanny, need not necessarily be figured as sexual difference rather than another kind of
difference. But Spivak seems to make this point at the expense of recognizing that
precisely because sexual difference is already there at any claim to origin, there is always
also another form of difference, at least in contexts in which sexual difference is put
under erasure as such. In relation to European nationalisms in the 18th and 19th centuries,
the Jew was figured as feminine and animal. In response to such representation, Zionism

7 In so doing, she is also drawing attention to how discourses of identity are tied to particular
forms of territorialization that are shaped by property ownership in different contexts of global
capitalism. Spivak’s illumination of how the subject in capitalism is concealed as producing a
value in excess of itself is useful in a consideration of the history of how the Jew has been figured
as a parasite in economic terms, and its relation as a figure both inside and outside European
modernity.
figured the Jew as masculine and in the terms of European Enlightenment conceptions of
the human. But at the same time, Zionism retained the figure of the Jew in terms that
constitute it in a relation to alterity, terms which produce “Jew” as a kind of empty
signifier whose content is both contradictory and constantly in movement in a relation of
difference with itself. The linking of the figure of the Jew with the liberal subject
signified by “Israeli” thus raises the question of how sexual difference is figured in Israeli
contexts. One way in which the question can be put, is what emerges when a figure
through which sexual difference has been suppressed and displaced is situated in the
position of the speaking subject, and difference is marked as all other difference which is
not its own marked difference. What I consider here, is that within a European humanist
framework, sexual difference is suppressed as the difference of the body in terms of
movement and as what is not solid, fixed and present to itself, and relatedly, is expressed
through and misrecognized as various forms of affect.

An analysis of the figure and terms “Israeli-Jew” leads to an analysis of sexual
difference in terms of European modernity not because of how those we know as women
are defined and positioned in Israel. Rather, an an analysis of “Israeli-Jew” leads to an
analysis of sexual difference because of how the figure of the Jew is positioned in terms
of the specificity of its self-differential relations. Because difference in Israel is both
inside and outside, narratives of origin and representation of individuals in terms of the
group are marked on both the inside and the outside of individuals and of the geopolitical
landscape. This marking of difference on both inside and outside brings with it the
marking of affect that challenges attempts at full representation in language, and which challenges the concept of sovereignty as based on an autonomous, fully knowable and representable subject. Such affect is manifest in movement that refuses a fixity and statis of borders between inside and outside, and between past, present and future. It suggests an understanding of the subject as not completely subject, as partially undone through the call of, and response to, the demand of the alterity of the other. This demand is partly a demand to recognize the singularity of the other, the remainder between the particular and the universal, what cannot be represent in the language of the universal, what speaks through the singularity of the body, whether it is the body of a text or the corporeal of another living being. Sexual difference can then be understood as the difference at the heart of the production of the subject through speaking, the difference of the differend, which to be acknowledged as such is recognized as the movement between what is incommensurable and unrepresentable, a singular translation, both representational and affective.

When sexual difference is suppressed as such, as the difference of the body that is unknown, then what is seen on the body becomes marked as sexual difference in terms of biological reproduction rather than in terms of the unrepresentable difference of and in the body. At the same time, this suppression of sexual difference then produces less than, or other than, human differences among men and of woman in relation to men, precisely because through the suppression of sexual difference as the difference of the unrepresentable in and of the body, the human has become defined in terms of the self-
same man, who cannot recognize a difference other than himself as being part of his constitution. Thus humanism, and its foundation on Greek and Roman political fraternity, produces a concept of the human through a politics based on a phallogocentric understanding of representation. This concept of the human is then also a concept of sexual difference in which woman serves as the foundation, the ground, and the reproductive site for the production of man through the production of what Lacan referred to as the occulted signifier. Bringing together an an understanding of humanism in terms of how woman becomes metaphor for ground helps bring into view the complex ways in which the figure of the Jew in turn of the century Europe was figured as a threat to a logic of metaphysics, refigured in an attempt to respond to this threat, and analysed, not as Jewish but in some of the terms through which the Jew was figured, such as hysterical, melancholic and degenerate. This position and these responses were differently about narrating a relation to past and future, and a relation to alterity in the present.

The Jew in Israel, by being both host and guest in terms of the nation state and national belonging, and because of the specificity of how “Jew” signifies, highlights the passage back and forth between both masculine and unmarked sovereign subject on the one hand, and feminine marked as ground on the other, and between unmarked universal subject and racialized subject. An analysis of the Jew in terms of this movement reveals humanism’s constitution of the human to be based on a displacement of sexual difference onto the figure of woman through which the difference between human and animal is also
established. An analysis of the Jew in Israel suggests that difference is internally constitutive of subjectivity in a way that makes full subjectivity impossible. It does so by bringing together Abrahamic narrative with metaphysical narrative of European modernity, which reveals origin as inaccessible by placing the fraternal figure of God in struggle with the fraternal figure of man; the group is revealed not to exist on the basis of a division of difference between different groups through the production of individual identities, but only as an ideal, imagined by individuals whose subjectivity is not an identity but a “disorder of identity,” a subjectivity produced through a relation of internal difference. It is in this sense that Jew-Israeli draws attention to the passage between a claim to an originary place and its representation, and how this passage in the context of European modernity has displaced sexual difference in the formation of a political framework that places difference either fully inside or fully outside the polity. The dependence of this framework on a concept of the archive that places difference as that which marks the boundary between inside and outside, rather than that which permeates such demarcation, displaces sexual difference as a difference between bodies in the production of a notion of a self-same universal subject, rather than understanding sexual difference as the difference between the body and representation.

I have argued that Israel, by declaring itself as an unconditional place of refuge for Jews and simultaneously as a liberal democracy based on the principles of universal human rights, freedom and fraternity, makes visible the violence of political frameworks based on an understanding of sovereignty based on a state of exception that places
difference either fully outside the frame of the political, or fully inside. Both the former, in a Schmittian concept of sovereignty, and the latter, in various forms of liberalism, are based on an understanding of the human, and thus of the political subject, as fully representable. Israel both insists on the need to protect and offer unconditional asylum to a selected group of people, and as a nation-state functions according to the rules of representation based on an identity politics and filiation of the name in which the name “Jew” must be protected through protecting against what is not “Jew.” I have argued that the specificity of Jew and its genealogies makes such protection impossible because by definition “Jew” is both already named by God as guest to itself, in terms of its language and land, and is always before and outside of the framework of the nation-state both in terms of this messianic narrative and in terms of modern history in which the Jew is by definition something other than and before than the nation from which Jews may thus also always potentially be expelled as foreigners. It is in this regard that it is helpful to consider Israeli-Jew in terms of an understanding of hospitality, and how such a consideration is connected to an understanding of sexual difference.

In his engagement with Levinas on the question of hospitality, Derrida highlights the ways in which hostility and hospitality are inseparable; hospitality signifies welcoming, preparing to host another through offering shelter, but it also is to welcome not only out of duty or only out of natural inclination. To be hospitable is to let oneself be overtaken [surprendre], to be ready to not be ready, if such is possible, to let oneself be overtaken, to not even let oneself be overtaken, to be surprised, in a fashion almost violent, violated and raped [volee], stolen [volee] (the whole question of violence and violation/rape and of expropriation and de-
propriation is waiting for us), precisely where one is ready to receive – and not only not yet ready but not ready, unprepared in a mode that is not even that of the ‘not yet.’ (Derrida 2002, 361)

It is thus through one subject “hosting” another, welcoming and being displaced, held hostage by another, that any form of genealogy, archive, and subjectivity is possible. Through deconstruction, Derrida draws attention to the debts to, and costs of, what came before, and to how the past opens up out of how the present writes the future.

Deconstruction endlessly pursues inaccessible origin, and in so doing reveals the passages between oppositions. The political consequences of such pursuit are repeated challenges to any claims to ownership of and through naming and other, more explicit forms of capitalism, colonialism, nationalism and its various forms of identity politics, even when they may include anti-colonial struggle. It is through this understanding of hospitality as hospitality that it is also possible to see the significance of an understanding of sexual difference in terms of how an analysis of Jew-Israeli challenges metaphysics.

Derrida shows how the work of substitution in hospitality involves the presence of more than two, of a third. Because to be hospitable to the other, is to acknowledge the other as also having an other, and thus to be hospitable to the other is also, in the same moment, to be hospitable to a third, and in so doing, to betray in the act of being loyal, or what Derrida calls an infidelity at the heart of fidelity. This process of substitution and hospitality is also part of the archival logic of fraternity on which Western democratic traditions have been based. Derrida, in drawing attention to the relation between
hospitality and hostility in terms of an ethical relation to the other, raises the question of what it would mean for the figure of woman, and thus of sexual difference, to enter into this relation of substitution. It is worth quoting here at some length from Derrida’s essay, “A Word of Welcome,” written in memory of Levinas after his death. Derrida (1999a) writes:

The final pages of Totality and Infinity return to the propositions that, in the chapter entitled ‘The Dwelling,’ refer to language in terms of non-violence, peace, and hospitality. Levinas there speaks of what ‘is produced in language,’ namely, ‘the positive deployment of this pacific [my emphasis] relation with the other, without any border or negativity.’ Twice in a few lines, the word ‘hospitality’ is identified with recollection in the home, but with recollection [recueillement] as welcome [accueil]: ‘Recollection in a home open to the Other – hospitality – is the concrete and initial fact of human recollection and separation; it coincides with the Desire for the Other absolutely transcendent.’

The at-home-with-oneself of the dwelling does not imply a closing off, but rather the place of Desire toward the transcendence of the other. The separation marked here is the condition of both the welcome and the hospitality offered to the other. There would be neither welcome nor hospitality without this radical alterity, which itself presupposes separation. The social bond is a certain experience of the unbinding without which no respiration, no spiritual inspiration, would be possible. Recollection, indeed being-together itself, presupposes infinite separation. The at-home-with-oneself would thus no longer be a sort of nature or rootedness but a response to a wandering, to the phenomenon of wandering it brings to a halt.

This axiom also holds for the space of the nation. The ground or the territory has nothing natural about it, nothing of a root, even if it is sacred, nothing of a possession for the national occupant. The earth gives hospitality before all else, a hospitality already offered to the initial occupant, a temporary hospitality granted to the hote, even if he remains the master of the place. He thus comes to be received in ‘his’ own home. Right there in the middle of Totality and Infinity, the ‘home,’ the familial home, ‘the dwelling’ in which the figure of woman plays the essential role of the absolute welcomer, turns out to be a chosen, elected, or rather allotted home, a home that is entrusted, assigned by the choice of an election, and so not at all a natural place.
The chosen home [Levinas says, just after having spoken of hospitality as the Desire for the Other absolutely transcendent] is the very opposite of a root. It indicates a disengagement, a wandering which has made it possible, which is not a less with respect to installation, but the surplus of the relationship with the Other, metaphysics.

In the final pages of Totality and Infinity, we find the same themes of hospitable peace and uprooted wandering. Bypassing the political in the usual sense of the term, the same logic opens a wholly other space: before, beyond, outside the State. But one must wonder why it now centers this ‘situation,’ no longer on the femininity of welcoming, but on paternal fecundity, on what Levinas calls, and this would be another large question, yet another marvel, the ‘marvel of the family.’ This marvel concretizes ‘the infinite time of fecundity’ – a non-biological fecundity, of course – ‘the instant of eroticism and the infinity of paternity.’ (1999a, 93).

Derrida remarks that here Levinas replaces the figure of woman as host with the paternal figure of the Divine as host. The figure of the third for Levinas then becomes signified in terms of the relation between oneself, another, and God, in which the figure of woman as ground is displaced by the figure of God as that which hosts and gives ground to man. For Levinas, this host and the election of the guest are tied to the narrative of the Old Testament. Derrida explicitly addresses the relation between Levinas’s philosophy and his political statements regarding Zionism and Israel.

Levinas presents a philosophy of ethics of relation to the other based on a relation to alterity. This understanding of a relation to alterity challenges metaphysics and its basis in an ontology that does not acknowledge how the existence of another challenges one’s own relation to being and to oneself. But Derrida points out that the manner in which Levinas bases his understanding of a relation to alterity in terms of a relation to the divine in the figure of God, ultimately reinstitutes a metaphysics of being by placing the
presence of God in the plane of being, rather than placing being in a relation with the unknown other of alterity. In “A Word of Welcome,” Derrida addresses this move both in terms of the relation between Levinas’s philosophy of an ethics of relation to the other and political positions on Zionism and Israel, and in terms of the question of sexual difference.

The presence of the third, of the other of the other which enters into the relation of the face to face, a specter without ontological or concrete predicates, presents what Derrida calls a silence at the heart of the call of the other. It is a silence, or an illegibility, that comes from the abyss of the relation between ethics and politics, ethics and law, a silence which demands that a decision be taken without full knowledge. Derrida writes that he hears such a silence in Levinas’s conclusion “that speaks of a ‘hope’ beyond ‘refuge.’” Levinas writes:

It is precisely in contrast to the cities of refuge that this claim of the Torah through which Jerusalem is defined can be understood. The city of refuge is the city of a civilization or of a humanity which protects subjective innocence and forgives objective guilt and all the denials that acts inflict on intentions. A political civilization, ‘better’ than that of passions and so-called free desires, which, abandoned to the hazards of their eruptions, end up in a world where, according to an expression from the Pirque Aboth, ‘men are ready to swallow each other alive.’ A civilization of the law, admittedly, but a political civilization whose justice is hypocritical and where, with an undeniable right, the avenger of blood prows.

What is promised in Jerusalem, on the other hand, is a humanity of the Torah. It will have been able to surmount the deep contradictions of the cities of refuge: a new humanity that is better than a Temple. Our text, which began with the cities of refuge, reminds us or teaches us that the longing for Zion, that Zionism, is not one more nationalism or particularism; nor is it a simple search for a place of refuge. It is the hope of a science of society, and of a society, which are wholly human. And this hope is to be found in Jerusalem, in the earthly Jerusalem, and not outside all places, in pious thoughts. (1994, 52)
Derrida suggests that there is a silence at the heart of this call which highlights the exposure of the law to itself, as non-law, in the moment in which law becomes both host and hostage, “when the law of the unique must give itself over to substitution and to the law of generality...when the “Thou shall not kill”...still allows any State....to feel justified in raising an army, in making war or keeping law and order, in controlling its borders – in killing” (1999a, 116). This openness, or silence, at the heart of the call and speech of the other, is what conditions and marks the beginning of responsibility; it marks the moment of indecision, the discontinuity between what Derrida calls “the messianic promise [unconditional hospitality] and the determination of a rule, norm, or political law” (Ibid).

This silence is thus also that of a speech or word that is given. It gives speech, gives over speech; it is the gift of speech.

This non-response conditions my responsibility, there where I alone must respond. Without silence, without the hiatus, which is not the absence of rules but the necessity of a leap at the moment of ethical, political, or juridical decision, we could simply unfold knowledge into a program or course of action. Nothing could make us more irresponsible; nothing could be more totalitarian.

This discontinuity, moreover, allows us to subscribe to everything Levinas says about peace or messianic hospitality, about the beyond of the political in the political, without necessarily sharing all the ‘opinions’ in his discourse having to do with an intrapolitical analysis of real situations or of what is actually going on today with the earthly Jerusalem, or indeed with a Zionism that would not longer be just one more nationalism (for we now know better than ever that all nationalisms like to think of themselves as universal in an exemplary fashion, that each claims this exemplarity and likes to think of itself as more than just one more nationalism). Even if, in fact, it seems difficult to maintain a faith in election, and especially in the election of an eternal people, safe from all ‘nationalist’ (in the modern sense of this word) temptation, even if it seems difficult to dissociate them in the actual political situation of any Nation-state (and not just Israel), it is necessary to acknowledge that Levinas always wanted to protect the thematic of
election (which is so central, so strong, and so determining in his work) from every nationalist seduction. (Ibid. 117-118).

To be responsible to Levinas, Derrida suggests, is to respond to this contradiction, to the places in the text which interrupt themselves. It is here that Derrida explains that Levinas leads him to dissociate a structural messianicity from every determinate messianism,

a messianicity before or without any messianism incorporated by some revelation in a determined place that goes by the name of Sinai or Mount Horeb. But is it not Levinas himself who will have made us dream, in more than one sense of this word, of a revelation of the Torah before Sinai? Or, more precisely, of a recognition [reconnaissance] of the Torah before this revelation? As for Sinai, the proper name Sinai, does it carry a metonymy? Or an allegory? The nominal body of a barely decipherable interpretation that would come to recall to us, without forcing our certitude, what will have come before Sinai, at once the face, the withdrawal of the face, and what, in the name of the Third, that is to say, in the name of justice, contradicts the Saying in the Saying? Sinai: ContraDiction itself” (119).

It can be recalled here that Derrida asks a similar question elsewhere when writing of the abyss of the Hebrew language and when writing of archive fever, one time with reference to Sinai through reference to the moment in which God gives Moses the ten commandments on Mt.Sinai, and another time with reference to the moment when God calls Adam to name the animals, the moment that is pre-originary, that which makes the face (or visage which carries the plural in French), plural, carrying the specter of the alterity of the other, making the encounter with the other always an encounter between more than two. By disassociating a structural messianicity from any determinate messianism, Derrida recognizes the ethics of a hospitality to the unknown other, and the
tension of such an ethics with the demand to respond to specific others through decisions made in the space between ethics and law in which acts of selection and election must be made. The law, in this sense, is both host to and hostage of the singularity of the other, there where ethics brings politics and the law together, and

this dependence and the direction of this conditional derivation are as irreversible as they are unconditional. But the political or juridical content that is thus assigned remains undetermined, still to be determined beyond knowledge, beyond all presentation, all concepts, all possible intuition, in a singular way, in the speech and the responsibility taken by each person, in each situation, and on the basis of an analysis that is each time unique – unique and infinite, unique but a priori exposed to substitution, unique and yet general, interminable in spite of the urgency of the decision” (115).

The “earthly reality” of contemporary Israel, by bringing together two different fraternal narratives, thus creates a situation in which these narratives encounter and contest one another. The result of this contestation is a gathering around and defense of the signifier “Jew;” Jew holds the place of selection, but Israel reveals that the meaning gathered around the signifier is only held in place by its relation to other signifiers, and has no inherent and fixed meaning itself. An analysis of the specificity of “Jew” in Israel, I am arguing, in turn reveals the occulted violence through which the signifier “human” has attained its signification through its relation to “woman,” “animal” and figures of difference among men, and how this concept of the human has come to stand in as the foundation and support for humanism’s political frameworks based on a metaphysics of presence.
Paying attention to the movement of meaning and position of “Jew” in Israel, and to its historical genealogies, leads one to see that the “passage between” supposed origin and representation involves the displacement of the difference of alterity through the production of a notion of sexual difference as between man and woman. This is a simplistic summary of Irigaray’s argument. But this displacement in European modernity comes with the production of a racialization of figures of difference among men and women, precisely because the difference in question is not a difference between different bodies but rather a difference internal to the production of subjectivity. Derrida returns repeatedly to the question of what it would mean for the figure of woman to enter into a politics of fraternity in which one name replaces another, even as it may acknowledge the names which haunt it. I am suggesting that Israel, by bringing together the fraternity of a Levinasian ethics in which messianism is not separated from a certain messianicity with the fraternity of liberalism, leads to an analysis of sexual difference as the difference internal to the production of subjectivity. In such an understanding, the figure of woman would no longer be the figure of sexual difference. That is to say, the ground figured as feminine, as host or as womb for the production of man, would be no more associated with the figure of woman than it would be with the figure of man. Sexual difference would be understood as that relation between language and the body, the affective as a translation and movement between the two, from which multiple formations of gender and sexuality emerge. A politics of representation would then not be based on representing oneself or others in the filiation of a name, but rather on a politics of
translation and desire that carries with it both linguistic and affective labour. Such a politics would emphasize the impossibility of a fixed rule or of the possibility of full knowledge, it would not be based on establishing fixed borders or on the notion of inherent value. Rather, it would acknowledge the need for constant calculation and recalculation, of fluidity of meaning and signification, of the power of storytelling that highlights the singular in the relation between the particular and the universal. Such a politics would recognize the production of subjectivity through a relation to alterity, and through entering into the story of another, for writing oneself through the language of another, making visible the excess of the subject to itself, and thus beginning from a place in which such excess is less likely, perhaps, to be exploited and disavowed in genocidal politics through its displacement through which some categories of life are treated as disposable while others are not, when in fact all life is disposable. Such a politics would be based on a subject never fully a subject, a subject always named and not only naming, and on a relinquishment of the effort to achieve complete sovereignty through a recognition that responsibility is found in the response to the specificity of this impossibility, not in attempting to attain it.
Chapter Seven
Responsibility Without Foundation

The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

From the Declaration of the Establishment of Israel

Every sovereign state is in fact virtually and a priori able, that is, in a state [en etat], to abuse its power and, like a rogue state, transgress international law. There is something of a rogue state in every state. The use of state power is originally excessive and abusive.
Jacques Derrida

Since the origin of authority, the founding of grounding [la fondation ou le fondement], the positing of the law [loi] cannot by definition rest on anything but themselves, they are themselves a violence without ground [sans fondement]. This is not to say that they are in themselves unjust, in the sense of ‘illegal’ or ‘illegitimate.’ They are neither legal nor illegal in their founding moment. They exceed the opposition between founded and unfounded, or between any foundationalism or anti-foundationalism.”

Jacques Derrida

Part Two of this dissertation began with an introduction to Israel’s Declaration of Establishment, and the words of a tour guide there who compared the building in which the declaration was signed to a bomb shelter as a place of refuge. I highlighted how the
guide emphasized Israel’s small size, and that Israel’s national security concerns are both military and demographic. He concluded his talk asking:

Don’t even start to think what will happen to us in fifty years time, when an average Arab family has six kids, and an average Jewish family, modern family, is two and a half kids maybe, two kids and a dog. What will happen to us in fifty years time? Are we going to be a majority in our own country? It is a good question, what will happen to the Jewish country, what will happen to the Zionist dream?

As I have emphasized throughout, national security concerns in Israel are deeply connected to the subject of demography. The separation barrier, as I have suggested, is emblematic of the two kinds of Israeli national security concerns—demographic and militaristic—that I analyze in this dissertation. Keeping in mind the wider questions of this dissertation about subjectivity and sovereignty in terms of the conjunction Jew-Israeli, this chapter focuses on one moment in the struggle over the construction of the security fence in the area between the Palestinian village of Bil’in and the Israeli settlement of Modi’in Illit. I situate this event with reference to two other “cases:” the recent controversy over the attempts by flotillas to break Israel’s blockade of the Gaza Strip, and the work and recent murder of Israeli-Palestinian actor Juliano Mer-Khamis. I draw on the underlying arguments I’ve made in this dissertation to show how these arguments can inform an understanding of these three events in terms of a wider discussion about the relation between the law and justice.

In an article about David Kreztmer’s *The Occupation of Justice* (2002), Israeli lawyer Michal Sfard (2005), who represented Bil’in and the Israeli group “Peace Now”
in the Supreme Court, discusses what he terms “the human rights lawyer’s existential dilemma.” In the article, he draws out the implications of Kreztmer’s analysis for the work of Israeli lawyers who fight against human rights abuses through legal challenges to Israeli Defense Forces actions. Sfard examines the possibility that human rights lawyers in this context might be what he calls “well intentioned but supreme collaborators” in the Israeli occupation. He suggests that through their participation in a legal system through which occupation is perpetuated, the lawyers also produce a legitimizing effect for this system, sometimes successfully reinstituting or guarding the rights of their individual clients but without challenging the meta-legal system through which violations of these rights are perpetrated. Sfard argues that because the legal system itself is predicated on undemocratic processes, the successful cases defending individuals not only give a veneer of legitimacy to this system, but are what allow the occupation to continue. He considers the idea that such “successful” cases make it appear as though any abuses of the system can be rectified in the courts, when in fact the court system itself is a central mechanism through which the occupier maintains control and which works in tandem with the explicit force of the military.

Sfard’s argument presents a critique not of the system of law itself as such, but of Israeli juridical systems specifically. The implicit assumption that undergirds his argument is that there are democratic and just laws and undemocratic and unjust laws. This, of course, seems unarguable. What is more contentious is which laws are considered democratic and just, which not, by whom, and when. In the essay “Force of
Law” from which the second two opening quotes of this chapter are taken, Derrida (2002) argues that the law itself has no foundation except itself, and therefore emerges out of an act of violence, in the sense that any foundation it claims to rest on is always unfounded. It is in this sense that he states that deconstruction is justice. By this Derrida does not oppose deconstruction as justice to law as injustice. It is the deconstructability of law and the undeconstructability of justice that makes deconstruction possible; “deconstruction takes place in the interval that separates the undeconstructability of justice from the deconstructability of law. Deconstruction is possible as an experience of the impossible, there where, even if it does not exist, if it is not present, not yet or never, there is justice [il y a la justice]” (2002, 243). In this chapter, I draw on the argument of this dissertation about the conjunction Israeli-Jew to suggest how such an understanding of justice might inform an understanding of contemporary Israel in terms of three examples from recent Israeli political contexts.

I begin by briefly addressing the recent controversy over the attempts of activists on flotillas to break Israel’s blockade of the Gaza Strip. I then move to focus the main part of this chapter on one action taken by Israeli and Palestinian activists in the struggle against the construction of the separation barrier. I conclude by bringing the argument I have made regarding the Jew in terms of psychoanalysis to bear on the questions posed by these examples and wider discussions about the relation of the law to justice. I suggest that the example of Juliano Mer-Khamis and his work is suggestive of how a politics that works both with and against the law can be understood.
Part I: Of Ships and Jews

On May 31st, 2010, Israeli military forces boarded the Mavi Marmara, a Turkish ship with approximately 700 people on board in international waters in the Mediterranean Sea, just off the coast of the Gaza Strip. Most of the ship’s passengers were Turkish citizens, and the rest were citizens of more than two dozen other countries, including Ireland, Britain, the United States, Greece, Algeria, South Africa, Pakistan, Yemen, Kosovo, Kuwait, and Macedonia. Their languages included Spanish, Italian, ten different dialects of Arabic, Portuguese, French, Norwegian, Urdu, Punjabi, Hebrew, Hindi, Greek, Turkish, Farsi, Russian, and English. Their stated aim was to break and draw attention to Israel’s blockade of the Gaza Strip by delivering humanitarian aid to Palestinians there. During the encounter ten passengers were killed, and dozens of them and several Israeli soldiers were wounded. As soon as news of the violence reached the media, there was outcry across the world, from Tel Aviv, the West Bank and Gaza, and neighboring countries, to Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the United States. The condemnation of the Israeli military action focused on the question of the use of force, on whether or not the passengers on the ship were violent and on their intentions, on the fact that Israel boarded the ship in international waters, and on Israel’s blockade of Gaza. The criticism of Israel’s violence was framed in terms of international law and human rights.

1 “The time has come, the walrus said, to speak of many things…” (Carroll 1999).
discourse. The defense of Israel was framed in terms of Israel’s need to defend itself, terms which referenced the idea that what ultimately must determine Israel’s actions is its need for self-defense on the country’s own terms, and the inability to compromise this in order to submit to international law or to a universal discourse of human rights if the latter do not translate into Israel’s terms of self-defense.

Less than one hundred years ago, other ships with similar numbers and diversity of national origin and language among their passengers approached the same shores and also were turned away, then not by the not yet existent Israeli state but by the British. Then the passengers were not citizens proclaiming the human rights of all in the name of rights-bearing liberal subjects but refugees fleeing Nazi Europe looking for refuge in British Mandate Palestine, legally or not. But in both cases, questions of the rights-bearing liberal subject, citizenship, force and violence are central in the heated arguments over violation, refuge, and rights. In what follows, I argue that “truth” of what happened in the Israeli attack on the Mavi Maramara is not only in the details of what did and didn’t happen in the violent encounter between the ship’s passengers and Israeli forces, but in how the framework of liberalism through which the controversy over what happened was delimited can be read as a symptom that challenges the concept of truth on which this framework is based. In other words, I suggest that Israeli state violence is itself symptomatic of the violence of liberalisms’ models of the nation-state, and of the concept of the liberal subject and assumptions of humanism that accompany it, rather than a violation of these frameworks.
The failure of the model of the nation-state (in its Hobbesian liberal democratic forms) to protect those segments of the population targeted in WWII – Jews, homosexuals, Roma, and select others – created a moment of upheaval in which the basic premises of the nation-state were thrown into question (at least among political philosophers, even if not among policy makers) in the immediate aftermath of the war. Hannah Arendt, in The Origins of Totalitarianism, brought attention to the fact that access to protection and rights have been attached to the decision of a sovereign state to grant these rights, and thus also to whether or not one belongs to a nation-state. Stateless peoples, such as refugees, did not have a political entity “giving” them rights. Arendt thus considered the need for a political community which would include everyone through a form of international citizenship. Khanna, in her work on asylum (2005; 2006) has elaborated on Arendt’s insights;

Arendt shows brilliantly how the refugee is an anomaly in contemporary politics that exposes the manner in which state sovereignty makes everyone vulnerable to being stripped of rights. She also exposes how the rights of man as they emerged in the late eighteenth century were political rather than ‘human’ rights. (13, 2006)

Although the immediate aftermath of the war created a context ripe for questioning the assumptions of the framework of liberalism and for moving in alternative directions, the urgency for establishing forms of protection for those felt to be most vulnerable was channeled into increased efforts to “fix” the framework of liberal democracy through expanding its reach and reinforcing “its rights” to protect those within its borders. World powers thus responded to postwar changes by reinforcing the concept of liberalism in the
form of national sovereignty and the concept of human rights, notably in the creation of
the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the transformation of the League of
Nations into the United Nations.

I have argued for an understanding of Israeli contexts that suggests that Israeli
state violence against Palestinians and others is a symptom, rather than a violation, of the
frameworks of liberalism, its models of the nation-state, and the claims of humanism
which accompany it. I have suggested that linking the figure of the Jew to Israel
emphasizes the Jew as a figure defined in terms of a relation of difference to itself, one
which suggests that origin is possible only in Derrida’s sense of originary supplement.
The Jew suggests this in part because of how it reveals affect as what is beyond language
and representation, and as what undoes the concept of the liberal, rights-bearing subject.
An analysis of the Jew in Israel, informed by psychoanalysis and feminist and
postcolonial theory, thus threatens metaphysical assumptions of sovereignty and
understandings of a political subject based on such assumptions.

What led me to understanding Israeli state violence as a symptom of liberalism
rather than as a violation of its framework was something that I initially had a difficult
time putting my finger on, but which I summarize here as follows. Israel is, on the one
hand, a highly militarized country, and Israel’s citizenry, especially its Jewish population,
is intensely nationalized. Military service is mandatory for women and men, and Israel
has been involved in at least one war every decade from its inception in 1948 until the
present, and in an ongoing “low-intensity conflict” with Palestinians which has included
two Intifadas. The military, as significant as it is in shaping what might be called a national consciousness and identification with “the nation,” is not the only element shaping Israeli nationalism. The Zionist dream has involved the production of Hebrew as a shared modern language, a relation to the land in territorializing the landscape through Hebrew and labor, and a narrative of a future based on the idea of a shared recent past and a Biblical past. On the other hand, the Zionist project has had to emphasize these elements as part of a shared past and future precisely because Zionism involved creating a nation in common for and out of people coming from many very different places in the world – with different languages, cultural practices, and political histories. Partly as a result of this amalgam of peoples, but also because of the ways in which the Zionist dream narrates the figure of the Jew in terms of a relation of difference with itself – in terms of time, place and language - in contemporary Israeli contexts difference is present in ways which continually disrupt any claims to shared commonality, belonging, and origin. This combination of the simultaneous production of difference with the production of nationalism led me to ask what the signifier “Jew” means in relation to “Israel.”

In 2006, Alain Badiou’s "Uses of the Word 'Jew'" was published in *Polemics* (and an excerpt of this piece also came out in Le Monde).² Badiou suggests that what is at

---
² The essay generated some controversy, including accusations against Badiou of anti-Semitism. The anti-Semitic accusations, while not surprising, are in my view a misreading of Badiou’s
stake in discussions about contemporary forms of anti-Semitism is “whether or not, in the
general field of public intellectual discussion, the word ‘Jew’ constitutes an exceptional
signifier… or whether – given certainly distinct and irreducible historicities – we
consider that all forms of racist consciousness alike call for the same egalitarian and
universalist reaction” (2006, 2). To be quick – Badiou’s answer to this question is that it
has been used as an exceptional signifier, but that it shouldn’t be used in this way. He
argues against an understanding of the term ‘Jew’ as occupying a paradigmatic position,
explaining that he cannot accept what he calls “the victim ideology.” Badiou is making
an argument against basing any politics based on identity (including, he is careful to
specify, Palestinian and Arab). His focus on the word “Jew” comes from his concern with
what he argues is the way in which it has been used in France against the possibility of
what he calls a “political universalism, of an equality of all particularist predicates, of a
politics practiced by people who are here, irrespective of their origin” (Ibid.) It has been
used against such a universalism, he suggests, by the production of what he calls “the
triplet Shoah – Israel – Tradition, or SIT, as the only acceptable content of the word
‘Jew,’ and the ignorant, stubborn, personalized violence directed against anybody who
proposes a different mode of signification and circulation of the word” (Ibid. 6-7). I
consider here the possibility that Badiou’s argument, based as it is on this notion of a
political universalism that makes all particularist predicates equal, does not take into
argument. While I disagree with Badiou’s argument, it is not on the same ground as those who
accuse him of anti-Semitism.
account the incommensurable ways in which different particulars (ie the figures of Jew, Palestinian, postcolonial, woman, etc.) relate to the universal. Such a political universalism seems to repeats the mistakes of different forms of liberalism and humanism through which European violences, including but not only anti-Semitism, have emerged.

Throughout this dissertation I have suggested that the term “Jew,” through a refusal of origin, emphasizes the significance of attending to the singular in the relation between the particular and the universal, and the ways in which the particular is not commensurable with other particulars. I have argued that it is in part through an understanding of a psychoanalytic notion of temporality, informed by feminist theory and postcolonial studies, that it is possible to see the significance of the singular in relation to the particular and the universal through the figure of the Jew in its relation to Israel as a self-defined Jewish and liberal democratic state. Such an understanding of temporality challenges humanism’s concept of the subject as selfsame, and so also puts into question a political logic based on a metaphysics of presence which refuses an openness to alterity.

**Modi’in Illit**

Modi’in Elite is currently Israel’s largest settlement, with a population of 35,000 people. Unlike most Israeli settlements, its population is almost entirely made up of Orthodox Hassidic Jews. The settlement is located about a half hour drive from Jerusalem and from the Haredi town of Bnei Brak, on the outskirts of Tel Aviv. Because of it’s location about halfway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and because housing there is
heavily subsidized by the government, making rent significantly cheaper than in cities inside Israel’s 1948 borders, the settlement is particularly attractive to young Haredi couples who are beginning families and do not yet have much savings.

Gadi Algazi, an Israeli historian, in an article titled “Offshore Zionism,” draws on newspaper reports about the settlement of Modi’in Illit to analyze its socioeconomic context within the wider framework of Israeli society and Zionist history. He focuses on the high tech company “Matrix,” which is the largest high tech company in Israel. Matrix shifted from outsourcing its labour in countries in Asia to the Modi’in Illit settlement, citing the benefits of employing orthodox women in the Talpiot center in the settlement, Matrix CEO Mordechai Gutman explained; “[b]ecause the religious population competing for the jobs faces relatively low living costs, Matrix is able to provide its local offshore outsourcing services to customers at prices similar to those in Far East countries, but with the advantages of . . . geographic and cultural proximity” (Gutman quoted in Algazi 2006, 27). Algazi points out that the company doesn’t address that this labor is produced cheaply because it is located in an Israeli settlement in the West Bank, where the government subsidizes the cost of living, thus making such settlements an attractive site for “offshore” labor. As Algazi explains, the development of the settlement is the result of an alliance of interests between corporate real estate developers, politicians, and the Orthodox Haredi women in the settlement, many of whom are mothers of young children, and cannot easily travel outside the settlement, making them what Algazi (2006) has called a “captive labor force.”
On one of my visits to the settlement, a settler named Avraham who is in charge of the community’s security gave me an extensive tour of the place. As he pointed out different people on the street and explained to me the different religious groups to whom people belonged, and what they eat during their special Sabbath meal, he said, “now, why am I telling you all these things? So that you get a sense of how much peoples’ lives here revolve around their religion. People here don’t care about the “whole Israel” ideological agenda. Many people here don’t even know who the prime minister is.” He pointed at a young man walking by us and said, “you see him, he thought that Ariel Sharon is still prime minister. He didn’t know he had a stroke.” This was more than a year after Sharon had been replaced by Ehud Olmert as prime minister, and I expressed my surprise and asked if people didn’t read newspapers in the settlement. Avraham told me that they do read the papers, but only the Hassidic newspapers, in which the main pages report only on matters related to religious subjects. News about Israeli government and what are deemed to be secular politics are found only in limited and short items on the last pages of the paper. It is thus only a handful of the more than 30,000 settlers living there who express strong ideological sentiments about living in Modi’in Illit. But the forces which bring them there, and which keep them there, are powerful enough that they don’t need to arrive with an ideological belief in Israeli settlement in the West Bank to compel them to move and stay there. Most of the residents there are deeply immersed in their religious study and raising their families, and the decision to move to Modi’in Illit is framed more
by economic and cultural interests than by ideological questions about whether or not to live east of the green line in a settlement.

**Bil’in and the Struggle on the Ground**

Bil’in, just to the east of Modi’in Illit, is a Palestinian village with about 2000 inhabitants, about a twenty minute drive north from Ramallah, about a half hour drive from Jerusalem. The land area of the village is about 400 hectares (4,000 dunams). Before the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000, much of the village’s income came from Palestinians who worked inside Israel. After Israel canceled Palestinian work permits en masse and began replacing Palestinian labor inside Israel with guestworkers (often from southeast Asia), the village’s income began to again rely more substantially on agricultural production, consisting mainly of its olive harvest and olive oil production. In February of 2005, the Israeli government began uprooting olive trees on the village’s land to prepare the area for the construction of the security fence. The route of the fence in the area of Bil’in runs from between four to six kilometers from the green line which marks Israel’s pre-1967 border, and it puts almost fifty percent of the villages agricultural land on Israel’s side of the fence. On the same day that the olive trees were uprooted, the village of Bil’in held its first demonstration against the construction of the fence. Since that first demonstration, the village has held a demonstration every single Friday of the week until the final ruling of the Israeli Supreme court more than two years later, on Sept.4th, 2007. In addition to the Friday demonstrations, the villagers, together with
Israelis and international activists, have held additional demonstrations and actions against the construction of the fence and additional settlement housing on the land.

As I have explained through the story of the Mas’ha campsite, the demonstrations in Bil’in have followed the example set by villages further north along the route of the wall which began in 2002. The joint struggle centered in Bil’in has been the longest consistent joint struggle against the wall, and has included not only demonstrations but also the establishment of a “peace outpost” on the village’s land on the side of the fence separated from the village, and the production of relationships between the Palestinian inhabitants of the village and Israeli activists. These relationships have included social visits, invitations to wedding celebrations and the very small scale export of locally made products such as olive oil and embroidery out of the village and into Israel. The struggle in Bil’in has made international headlines on multiple occasions, partly because of the consistency of the weekly demonstrations over what is at the time of this writing a more than six year period, and due to significant media work on the part of the activists. On the annual anniversaries of the struggle against the fence in Bil’in the activists also organize international conferences hosted by the villagers in the village’s school. After some time and repeated demonstrations, the demonstrations have taken on a ritual aspect, in which the events unfold more or less predictably, with the different actions of each party expected by those on all sides.

Before each demonstration, the Palestinian, Israeli and International activists gather in the village at an apartment that serves as an activist center, and wait until the
prayers at the mosque are finished. People mingle, catching up, buying falafel from the
stand a few meters away, and drinks from the little store across the street. When the
march begins, the protestors gather in the main street, some holding signs and flags.
Often, the protestors have planned a creative theme for the protest, and also carry with
them accompanying props; one time they constructed cardboard houses with the
characteristic red colored settlement roofs, and fake hammers which they used to destroy
the houses in front of the soldiers at the beginning of the demonstration, another time
they carried mirrors with lines representing jail bars painted on them which they held
facing the soldiers during the demonstration. The numbers of demonstrators have varied
over the more than two years of weekly demonstrations, but most often they have
numbered between 50 to 150, with the majority being villagers joined by a few dozen
Israelis and some Internationals. On specific occasions, such as before or after Supreme
Court hearings about the construction of the fence or settlement expansion, or on the one
and two year anniversaries of the beginning of the demonstrations, especially large
demonstrations have been organized, with more than 500 people coming, including
several busloads of Israelis coming from Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa, and hundreds of
Palestinians from the village of Bil’in and from other villages in the area, as well some
coming from major Palestinian cities such as Ramallah, Tulkarem, and Nablus.

The usual routine of the demonstrations themselves proceeds as follows: the
demonstrators walk together down the street to the edge of the village where they turn
left on to a dirt road that goes past a small store and then the last few houses on the edge
of the olive groves. They continue walking down the path which goes out into the olive groves and leads to where the security fence has been constructed – by 2006 the gate in the fence had been constructed, and the gate is the point where the protestors and soldiers usually encounter one another, unless the soldiers have advanced into the olive groves and attempt to stop the demonstrators from reaching the gate. During some periods, the demonstrations would begin with some pushing and shoving and verbal confrontations between the soldiers and the demonstrators. Palestinians from the village would tell the soldiers they were violating the Hague ruling against the security fence, or would tell the soldiers that they simply wanted to be able to access their land, and they would shout at the soldiers to go home, to go back to Tel Aviv, to go back to where they came from. The soldiers would shout back different responses, some of them hitting the Palestinians with their batons and rifle heads, every so often there would be a soldier who would engage in the conversation, saying he was only following orders, and that if the courts in Israel decided the fence was illegal then he would leave, but until then he had to follow orders. Eventually, at every demonstration, the soldiers start shooting at the demonstrators, often beginning first with sound grenades, and then also shooting tear gas and frequently also rubber coated bullets. With the first shots, many of the demonstrators beginning running back in the direction of the village, while smaller groups stay put or move nearer to the soldiers where they are less likely to be hit by the grenades and bullets. During some periods over the past years, the soldiers and border police would beat the demonstrators with clubs and rifle butts, sometimes breaking their arms or causing concussions and
head injuries. Sometimes the border police would detain a handful of the demonstrators – the Israelis usually would be released on the same day or within 24 hours, while the internationals would also either be released within 24 hours or faced deportation from the country. The Palestinians would sometimes be held for days or weeks before being released. At the same time that the demonstrators continued a joint struggle against the construction of the fence, demonstrating every single week and repeatedly calling public attention in Israel and in the Arab press to what was happening on the land between Bil’in and Modi’in Elite, a struggle over the construction of the fence was also being waged in the Israeli Supreme Court.

**Between the Courtroom and the Olive Groves**

In 2002, at the same time that Israel’s government and military officials were planning the route of the fence, construction plans began for a new eastern neighborhood of the Modi’in Elite settlement, called Matityahu East, which according to the State’s attorney is the main reason for the specific path of the fence in this area. In 2003, two real estate companies, Heftisba and Green Park, began the actual construction of the first residential buildings of this neighborhood. Officially called a neighborhood of the settlement Modi’in Elite, but in fact a new settlement of more than 2,700 housing units – the construction began in clear violation of the plan for the neighborhood that was approved by the Israeli Civil Administration four years earlier.
On September 3rd, 2005, Israeli lawyer Michael Sfard filed a petition to the Supreme Court on behalf of the Bil‘in village council and the Israeli group “Peace Now” against the route of the fence on Bil‘in’s land. Over the subsequent two years, two more petitions were filed by Sfard, one against the planned expansion of the Modi’in Elite settlement and another against the Civil Planning Administration’s approval of a new plan for the expansion of the settlement. During court sessions, it was revealed that the construction that had begun on Matityahu East had been illegal because it was done according to an urban plan that had not yet received approval. It was also revealed that the Civil Planning Board, under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense (because the construction is in the Occupied Territories), knew about the illegality of the construction by 2004 but did nothing to stop it. These two years of legal struggle have involved multiple court sessions in which settlers from Modi’in Elite, Palestinians from Bil’in, representatives from the real estate companies building in Modi’in Elite, and supporters of both sides shared the courtroom benches in Israel’s Supreme Court building in Jerusalem.

By January 2006, when the Supreme Court issued an injunction against any further construction of the neighborhood, forty-three residential dwellings had already been built, twenty-two of which were constructed with illegal permits from the Modi’in Elite Local Planning Committee, and the other twenty-one without any permit at all. A few days before the injunction was issued, the construction companies moved about sixty families into the buildings. The fence is about 1.5 to 1.8 kilometers from these apartment
buildings of Modi’in Elite’s new neighborhood. In the Supreme Court sessions about the case, the State’s lawyer acknowledged multiple times that the required minimum distance between the security fence and Jewish settlements is about 150 meters – in Modi’in Elite the distance is about ten times this number.

In response to attorney Sfard’s petitions to the court against the illegal construction, in 2007 the Civil Administration’s Planning Board approved a new plan for the construction of the neighborhood. This new plan specified the construction project of an additional 2,700 housing units, for a population estimated to be about 15,000. This construction was designed to take up about 80 hectares of the village of Bil’in’s land. The building nearest to the security fence is planned to be 15 stories tall, and to be 100 meters away from the fence. The final Supreme court ruling came after numerous actions outside the courtroom, which drew national and international media attention.

In February 2007, the villagers in Bil’in, together with some Israeli activists, decided to carry out an action to check whether or not the construction that the Supreme Court had declared illegal and demanded the construction companies to dismantle had in fact been dismantled. They suspected that the real estate companies had simply covered the infrastructure with a few feet of dirt, rather than returning the area to its “original state” as the court had ordered. On the day of the planned action, I went with about a dozen Israelis to meet about a dozen Palestinians from the village of Bil’in in the olive groves on the outskirts of their village. To get there we went through the settlement of Modi’in Elite, and then slithered on our backs, one at a time, underneath the settlement
fence to get to the other side. After the Palestinians arrived we all headed back in the
direction of the settlement together, along with a tractor carrying some olive tree
saplings, pick axes, and shovels. The plan was to plant olive trees and in so doing to also
check if the construction companies had left settlement infrastructure in areas that they
had been ordered to return "to their original state." After about fifteen minutes of digging,
we found a big piece of cement that looked like a piece of foundation - this was in the
place where the residential building had supposedly been removed, but the pieces they
found and the mound suggested it had not been entirely removed. As they worked some
settlers showed up who were not at all happy to see us there. One of their security guards
showed up, and then an army jeep with some soldiers who seemed unsure what to do, and
then the police. Some interesting arguments and conversations ensued between the police
officer and the settlers, between the police officer and the Israeli activists, between the
soldiers and the Palestinians. At the same time a few people kept taking turns digging and
taking photographs of what they found.

After a few more minutes there, I walked with some of the Palestinians and
Israelis to the second area where they were going to do some digging and plant some
trees. In this second area, they found a big water pipe about a meter down, connect to a
big cement container through water was heard to be moving. This was a water holder
through which water was channeled by the Israeli water company to the rest of the
settlement. A few meters away, people digging hit something hard about a two feet deep.
After continuing to dig and scrape away it became clear that they were uncovering a road
and a sidewalk; first some grayish-white curb appeared, and then a little bit deeper next to it, flat black asphalt, until it became clear that what we were looking at was the curb of a sidewalk and the road next to it. About a meter away, two people digging away found a metal container with a lid with the word Bezek (the Israeli phone company) printed on it. Two people together lifted the heavy covers off to reveal a deep hole with metal sides, about a meter and a half deep, wires and cords inside - this was telephone infrastructure for the phone lines for the settlement.

Eventually more police and soldiers arrived, and after some discussion and arguments the soldiers declared the area a closed military zone and ordered everyone to leave within five minutes. We left the area as they ordered, and followed the tractor and driver who the army promised they would let go without a problem if we evacuated as they demanded. But once out of the settlement and on the road between the checkpoint and the settlement, an army jeep pulled the tractor over, and we ended up on the side of the road in the broiling sun for hours. The soldiers and their commander said that they were confiscating the tractor. The Israelis and the Palestinian Israeli driver of the tractor kept asking the commander on what basis he was confiscating the tractor, but he refused to answer. They asked where he was taking it, and eventually he said to "his place." After several hours, the army confiscated the tractor and took it to a military base. The next day I made some phone calls, and found out that the driver of the tractor had gone to the base with one of the Israeli activists to try to get his tractor back. The military officials there told them that they needed to pay 5,000 shekels (the equivalent of about
$1,200.00) to pay for the towing expenses incurred the day before. An Israeli legal assistant did some research and found out that there is a lengthy military warrant “concerning security” which allows the military (including soldiers of any rank) to confiscate equipment in the Occupied Territories if it is suspected that it was used illegally. The warrant specifies that even if it turns out that the suspicion was unfounded and the suspect is found to be innocent, the suspect must pay for all the expenses incurred as the result of the confiscation. Because the tractor that had been towed was confiscated because of suspected of illegal construction work, but not for security reasons, it was initially thought that the 5,000 shekel towing expense would not need to be paid, but the legal assistant found a clause at the end of the document, stating that the above applies to any violation of substantive law. Substantive law includes the Jordanian and Ottoman laws, which includes building and construction. So in the end, the Bil’in village council paid the 5,000 shekel expense and after eight days the tractor was returned to the driver.

This action, and its legal ramifications, illustrated how working against the law (through using the tractor which was confiscated) can also be used to work with the law (in the Supreme court hearings) in the struggle over the construction on Bil’in’s land. Such actions also point towards the difference between notions of justice and the laws making up the judicial system.
Between Justice and the Law

The Supreme Court ruling on Sept. 4th, 2007 in favor of Sfard’s petition on behalf of Bil’in, is a fitting example of how such a legal victory raises questions about the relationship between the law, justice and violence. In what came as a surprise to Sfard and other supporters of Bil’in’s petition, the Supreme Court issued a ruling in which they declared that the route of the fence in the area of Bil’in was illegal. Supreme Court judges Beinish, Prokachya and Rivlin ruled against the route of the fence, and ordered the state to prepare a proposal for an alternative route that will leave Bil’in’s agricultural lands on the village’s side of the fence. In their ruling, the judges declared that the route of the fence had been designed in order to allow for the construction of the Matityahu East neighborhood in the settlement – both the first stage in the western part where construction already began, and in the Eastern part which has not yet been built. They specifically noted that the design of the route should not take into consideration the Eastern part. The judges, in a move departing from previous convention, explicitly questioned the State’s argument that the route of the fence had been designed with security interests in mind; they stated that the route of the fence in Bil’in was built in an area that is topographically inferior in terms of security considerations (putting the nearby Palestinian villages at a height advantage vis-à-vis the Israeli settlement residences), in order to allow construction for all of the planned settlement expansion of Matityahu East.
For these reasons, the Supreme Court ruling on the construction of the fence in Bil’in was a significant victory.

At the same time, however, the very success of the ruling can give the impression, particularly to those unfamiliar with the details of the case and of the situation on the ground in Bil’in and Modi’in Elite, that the route of the fence was a mistake, an exception to the rule, and that the legal system immediately corrects for such mistakes, ensuring that justice is carried out. Such a reading gives the impression that at best, the military and the state may be unintentionally making mistakes in specific instances, breaking the rules, but that the legal system is in place to correct for any such violations, and at worst, that the military and the state are intentionally violating human rights in the interests of specific political and economic agendas, but the Israeli court system is fully able to keep a watch and to intervene to refrain them from doing so. This perspective erases the struggle preceding such a ruling, and it also does not acknowledge the partialness of the victory, and the possibility that the ruling itself could also be upturned in the future.

On the day of the ruling, both celebration of the court’s verdict as a significant victory and acknowledgement of how partial the victory is, and the politics of the ruling, were clearly evident in the village of Bil’in. Palestinians and Israelis who had demonstrated together for two years against the fence, some of whom had also together attended the Supreme Court hearings about the construction of the fence, gathered together to celebrate by the fence’s gate, the site of over a hundred demonstrations. Top level Palestinian officials from the Palestinian Authority, including the new Palestinian
Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad came to mark the special occasion. Both in the meeting between the village’s lawyer, Michael Sfard and the village council, and among the people celebrating by the fence facing the soldiers on the other side, I heard multiple comments about the irony of the event – that Palestinian officials were coming out to celebrate a ruling by the Israeli Supreme Court. People also commented on how many injuries people had incurred over two years of demonstrating, and that while the ruling was a victory, it was tempered both by the costs it had had on the hundreds who had been injured, and by the fact that the ruling itself would at best return less than half of the village’s land which had been confiscated with the construction of the security fence. Indeed, it was only in June of 2011, more than four years later, after repeated returns to the court by attorney Sfard on behalf of the village, and after more than four years of weekly demonstrations after the Supreme Court ruling against the route of the barrier in Bil’in in 2007, that Israel actually began to dismantle the section of the barrier in question, and to reconstruct it slightly further to the west. It was also only after one of Bil’in’s residents, Bassem Abu Rahme, was shot dead in a weekly demonstration as he was in the middle of a sentence asking the soldiers not to shoot. He was hit in the chest by a new, high velocity tear gas canister which killed him almost immediately. And it was after his sister, Jawaher Abu Rahme, died in January 2011, a day after being hospitalized for inhalation of tear gas at the previous day’s demonstration. This simultaneous celebration and critique of the partialness of the victory points toward an understanding of the violence inherent in the law, or what Derrida theorizes as the
“founding violence” which threatens the state, “violence able to justify, legitimate . . . or transform the relations of law . . . and so to present itself as having a right to right and to law” (268). Such an approach of working simultaneously with and against the law might then also provide a response to Sfard’s question about the “existential dilemma” of the human rights lawyer, through making visible how the law itself is always political and violent at its foundation, requiring constant interaction and transformation from both inside and outside the judicial system.

**Political, Figural, Literal: The Jew as Shibboleth**

I have suggested that the proliferation of difference in Israeli contexts demands an analysis that can account for how any attempt at articulating group belonging or self-representation even within a single subject is constantly disrupted. I have argued that it is not the Messianic narrative in Zionism that has led to Israeli state violence, but the liberal framework of the nation-state on which human rights discourse and assumptions of the liberal subject are based. This relation can be understood in part through a psychoanalytic understanding of temporality, which I suggest is hospitable to a messianic concept of time, and which presents a critique of the secular, linear concept of time on which the liberal nation-state is based.

Israeli contexts can be understood in terms of a notion of temporality that acknowledges what Khanna has called the “afterlife of sovereign decision” and in terms of what she develops as the concept of critical melancholia. By the afterlife of sovereign
decision I understand Khanna to mean an understanding of subjectivity in relation to a present that is haunted by the past and by the future. In other words, a concept of the political in which decisions must be made as sovereign decisions, without the possibility of a subject being sovereign. The afterlife of sovereign decision is in part about how claims to sovereignty are haunted by remainders which put subjectivity itself into question. Critical melancholia can thus be understood as a form of affect that links the representation of collective and group structure and ideal to the trace of inaccessible trauma on the individual. Drawing on Homi Bhaba’s use of Lacan in the postcolonial context, Khanna (2003) brings Freud’s concept of Nachtraglichkeit together with Derrida’s concept of a catachresis caused by the structure of metonymy in her development of the concept of critical melancholia, which can thus be understood in part as

a notion of affect as a concept that acknowledges the catachresis of the origin of a trauma and that leaves its trace on the individual. This allows for a reading of historical and political processes as instruments of violence on groups – racism, sexism, colonialism, slavery – rather than seeking an absolute origin that may posit, for example, ethnic violence as always rooted in the same psychical structure of lack; or, on the other hand, trauma as originating in a singular historical event that sidelines the everyday. (113)

Such an understanding departs both from other psychoanalytic readings (not only Lacanian but also from much of trauma studies), and from biopolitical frameworks which do not adequately account for subject formation in terms of how the subject is out of joint with itself in terms of its temporal relation to itself. In this sense, one might understand critical melancholia as the time of the present, in the sense that it is an affect through
which the subject is able to speak itself in a critical relation to past and future through a relation to what is not yet represented, in a present that is never fully present to itself, that is always slipping into and emerging out of the past and the future. Derrida brings in such a sense of deferral in his reading of Freud’s theory of dreams, which Khanna then links to an understanding of sexual difference by bringing the body into an understanding of a concept of affect in terms of temporality.

A psychoanalytic understanding of the temporal, and thus also origin, in terms of such affect points to the body as what is beyond, before and after signification that is suppressed in a political logic based on a foundation of the self-same. In turn of the century Europe, this suppression manifested in bodily symptoms diagnosed as disorders of the nervous system, or what Freud diagnosed as affective states of anxiety, hysteria, and melancholia. Both woman and Jew were prone to such disorders. Sander Gilman (1993) has argued that Freud translated anti-Semitic representations of Jews into representations of women in ways which made racism against Jews invisible in psychoanalysis as a result. Ann Pellegrini (1997), suggesting that such an understanding does not adequately address the place of the Jewish woman in Freud’s psychoanalysis, reinserts the figure of woman into such a reading. Drawing on these analyses but also departing from them, Aylse Weinbaum (2004), argues that these readings position psychoanalysis as a reaction formation to anti-Semitism. In contrast, she argues that Freud’s psychoanalysis resignified a stereotyped and castigated Jewishness to forge a counter-universalism opposing that of Austro-German anti-Semitism, “by casting
Jewishness as a constitutive function of wayward reproduction, and in turn rendering racialized reproduction – nothing less than the race/reproduction bind – productive of a new science with a universal purview” (186). To ask what such a science with a universal purview might mean leads me to rethink her argument about Freudian psychoanalysis, Freud, and Judaism in terms of the concept of critical melancholia (Khanna 2003). as an understanding of the individual as constituted in a differential relation with itself through a relation to the ideal of the group that exists in modernity in a time that is out of joint with itself. This differential relation manifests in affect that is corporeal, beyond and before signification in language.

Shoshana Felman (2003) has persuasively argued that what she calls the “scandal of the speaking body” betrays the human promise as a promise of “giving what you don’t have,” the ways in which the signifying body draws attention to the space of undecidability between the matter of language and its illocutionary force, the act that cannot fully know what it is doing, and which thus acts as a breach between act and knowledge. In her reading of Eichman’s trial, she suggests that it is precisely that act which is beyond language, the failure of the subject to speak, to testify, to answer to and in his proper name, which allows for the framework of the courtroom and the language of law to effectively present a notion of injustice, and so perhaps also to move towards justice (Felman 2002). It is in the language of drama, storytelling, and literature which disrupts and fails the logic of the law through which a response to the demands of justice and injustice can be made. I read Felman here as suggesting that it is in the disruption,
what she calls the “missed encounter,” between the law and literature, through which the particular and the universal come together in the singular.

On April 4th, 2011, Juliano Mer-Khamis was killed outside of the Freedom Theatre he founded in the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank. Juliano was the son of Arna Mer, a Jewish-Israeli woman, and of Saliba Khamis, a Christian Palestinian. Juliano’s mother had been a fighter in the Palmach, the group of Jewish militants who fought against the British and then against Palestinians and which turned into what became the IDF. After marrying his father, who was a member of Israel’s communist party, and a communist herself, Arna became increasingly critical of Israeli policy towards Palestinians. She trained in art psychotherapy, and in the 1980s established an art and theatre school for kids in the Jenin refugee camp. After the Israeli army destroyed the theatre, and after his mother’s death, Juliano went back in 2006 to reopen the theatre.

Juliano co-directed the theatre and acting school with Zacharia Zubeidi, a former militant and former head of the Al-Aqsa brigades. Juliano worked to smuggle art and acting supplies, volunteers and actors past Israeli checkpoints and to the theatre. But his opponents were not only Israelis – there were also Palestinians angered by Juliano’s work – by the fact that girls were allowed to learn with boys at the theatre, by some of the plays (such as Animal Farm and Alice in Wonderland) which the theatre put on. Juliano insisted that the revolution must be one of art and theatre, and he pursued that vision with a refusal of allegiance to any group politics and an insistence on the end to Israeli occupation. Both in his being – Juliano said he was 100 percent Jewish and 100 percent
Palestinian, used the word “we” to refer to both groups, and simultaneously refused group identification, and in his work – focusing on theatre, drama and art in Jenin as a response to the political logic of the nation-state and its effects rather than using a discourse of identity, rights, authority and the law – Juliano presented a vision of a politics that opens up an understanding of truth and justice not bound to or limited by the logic of human rights discourse and the liberal rights-bearing subject or by a logic of cultural relativism. His refusal to align with group sides was visible even after he was killed – in an exceptional scene, hundreds marched with his body from his (other) theatre in Haifa to the military checkpoint in Jenin, where it was passed to the other side to the hands of Palestinian mourners in Jenin. About two dozen of his Palestinian students and friends from Jenin received permits to attend his burial after he was taken back again to the Israeli side. His example, in both life and death, works with the logic of the law and its universalism, but also against the limits of its terms of representation in forging a path that acknowledges the singular in efforts towards justice.

To return to the story of the attack on the Mavi Marmara, Juliano’s work – and an understanding of the figure of the Jew in relation to Israel in terms of the concept of critical melancholia and in terms of a Derridean concept of temporality - suggests a reading of the ship’s passengers’ efforts, and the threat Israeli security forces perceived them to present, as being as much about the movement of difference as about bringing humanitarian supplies to stateless refugees. Similarly, Israel’s attack on the ship can thus be understood as an attack on that which it claims to defend, in the sense that it was an
attack on the possibility of self differential relation, on difference in motion, on the figure
of the wandering Jew, the hysterical, the melancholic, suppressed by the discourse of
human rights and within the figure of the liberal rights-bearing subject, or an attack on
the figure of the Jew, in Derrida’s words, as the figure who inhabits language as a poet,
“led to circumcise language and circumcised by language.”

In a discussion of Paul Celan’s poetry, Derrida (2005b) writes:

If the word circumcision appears rarely in its literality, other than in connection
with the circumcision of the word, by contrast, the trope of circumcision disposes
cuts, caesuras, ciphered alliances, and wounded rings throughout the text. The
wound, the very experience of reading, is universal. It is tied to both the
differential marks and the destination of language: the inaccessibility of the other
returns there in the same, dates and sets turning the ring. To say ‘all poets are
Jews’ is to state something that marks and annuls the marks of a circumcision. It
is tropic. All those who deal with or inhabit language as poets are Jews – but in a
tropic sense. And the one who says this, consequently, speaking as a poet and
according to a trope, never presents himself literally as a Jew. He asks: what is
literality in this case?

What the trope…comes down to, then, is locating the Jew not only as poet but
also in every man circumcised by language or led to circumcise a language. Every
man, then, is circumcised. Let us translate, according to the same trope: therefore
also every woman – even the sister. Consequently… . (55)

But to understand woman, in her difference from man and from Jew, as circumcised,
leads to a different understanding of the difference between man and woman, and
between human and animal, and thus of the categories of man, woman, human and
animal themselves. I have suggested that woman, within humanism’s concept of the
human and its effects, is not circumcised by language in the same way as the Jew. An
analysis of both Jew and woman, in the context of contemporary Israel, reveals how
humanism’s concept of the human displaces sexual difference on to a difference between
man and woman as individual entities, and in the process also producing racialized understandings of other figures of difference among men and women through the mark of the postcolonial. In this dissertation, I have asked what it might mean to recognize this displaced difference when presence is not reinserted via God or the fraternal figures of the state. In the conclusion, I suggest that sexual difference can be understood as the difference in the movement between inspection through language, and that which is inspected by language and through which subjectivity is both possibility and never completed, an impossible translation made possible and undone by the difference of the other that is both inside and outside the subject.
Conclusion

I believe that the affirmation of a certain idiomaticity, of a certain uniqueness, as of a certain differing, deferring, that is to say, impure, unity is irreducible and necessary – and I wanted to thus demonstrate it practically. What one does next, both with this affirmation, and with this impurity, is precisely where all of politics comes in.

Jacques Derrida

In June of 2009 I attended a three day conference at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem about Jonathan Littell’s (2009) book *Les Bienveillantes (The Kindly Ones).* The book is marked as the first, and perhaps only, work of historical fiction that is written from the narrative perspective of a Nazi perpetrator of Holocaust atrocities. The conference brought scholars from Western and Eastern Europe, the U.S., and the Mediterranean together to discuss the controversy surrounding the book. Many of the papers, and most of the discussion, centered around questions of the ethical, the literary, and the differences and relations between fact and fiction. Most interesting to me was the presentation by the Israeli translator of the book to Hebrew. He spoke eloquently and powerfully about the effects of translating the book. Below is an excerpt from his “translation journal” about this process.

I still haven’t gotten used to the fact that people don’t notice, that no smoke is rising from my photocopies, that no smell of sulfur and gunpowder and burnt flesh is giving me away. I have to remind myself that these pages look just like any other pages photocopied from any book, and that I look just like one of the many students, professors and journalists who like to sit in this café (well not exactly like them: there are ways to tell what I do, the “Robert Micro” dictionary on the table, the rhythm in which I glance at the pages, write a line in my notebook, glance again, and only once in an hour turn a page.) Every morning I
used to photocopy the six pages to be translated that day, and take them along with me to wherever I was going. Mostly because of the literally unbearable weight of the book, but also because of the anonymity of the single page, which no-one can recognize. I worked directly from the book only when I was home – which became more and more rare, as I was reluctant to stay tête-à-tête with that text in my study, hour after hour and day after day; I was afraid that in a closed room its poisonous vapors would suffocate me. So I took my photocopies and went out, for at least a few hours a day, to walk around, breath the city air, and ruminate on the long, indigestible sentences out in the open. After a day or two of translation, transcription, revision, having finished the digestion process of these pages (which by the way was probably much slower than the diarrheal secretion process of their writing), I would put them away in the carton box where we put used papers. In the course of time they accumulated there and were covered with other papers, drafts of my wife’s PhD and all sorts of useless printouts and were forgotten, until a short while ago, long after I finished the translation, when my year-and-a-half-old son started scribbling and painting and consuming such quantities of paper that he finally dug deep enough in the carton box to get to the oldest layers. Thus, behind my kid’s splashes of color and my own silly little drawings of elephants and giraffes I rediscovered the old blocks of text, the tight, breathless typo. Except for me no one in the house could understand this French text, certainly not a year-and-a-half old baby, but irrational as it may be, there was still a monstrous feeling about this proximity between a baby – my baby – and Max Aue. Once again it was all impossibly mixed-up, teddy-bears with SS-men, Dumbo and Mickey Mouse with Leyland and Mandelbrod, flowers and butterflies with frozen bodies in Stalingrad. I say once again because that’s the way it was from the very beginning. In my private chronology the translation of Les bienveillantes was born at the same time as my child, and grew up parallel to him, in the same time, in the next room, like his monstrous twin. Translating a book, or another, is hardly the subject matter for a drama. Raising a baby, emotionally demanding and rewarding as it may be, is certainly a very commonplace experience. It was the tension between the two that made me feel as if I was living a unique story. . . . (Ratzkovsky 2009b)

At the conference, in his spoken explanation of this process of translation, Nir said that if the book had been written by a real person, and had been historical fact rather than historical fiction narrated through a fictional character, he would not have translated the book. I asked him in the Q&A why, and he explained that he felt like he would not be
able to, because it would be unethical. Not because he thinks it is unethical in general – he said that he is not against someone else translating such a book were it to be nonfiction, but that he would be unable to for ethical reasons. When I asked for further explanation about what he meant by this, he said something about how the narrator in the book successfully and effectively is able to make the reader (and the translator) enter into his ethical world, to feel bored with him, to laugh with him, and to come to not see the horrors of what he was doing as the horrors they were. Nir generously agreed to meet to continue the conversation a few weeks later. I wanted to understand why he was differentiating the experience of translating historical fiction, which he acknowledged was so historically accurate and detailed that he believed the figure fictional narrator of the book could exist, and translating the same book if it was nonfiction, with author and narrator the same person.

One of the main reasons I was interested in his differentiation was because so much of what he had said about the experience of translation resonated with my experience of fieldwork – feeling a loss of footing, and I didn’t understand how he could make the distinction he did between what this meant in terms of ethical relation to the other in reading and translating fiction and nonfiction. Finally, he offered an answer that explained something to me, even though I did not agree. He said that because the author was not the same person as the narrator, that he knew he was engaging with a representation of evil and not with evil itself. With a literary work of thought and construction representing evil, not with the thing itself. Especially because he knew the
position of the author – in this case that it was someone who had spent years studying genocides, working against them, and who also was Jewish and therefore could not be expressing the evil of genocide himself but only representing it – he felt like he had a rope to which he was tethered throughout the process of reading and translation, that he could know he would stay connected with and end up on the same side of the good.¹

Our conversation sometimes seemed to go around in circles – I kept returning to the question of why he said that if the book had been fact rather than historical fiction, if the author had been the narrator in the novel, he wouldn’t have agreed to translate it. He explained that he wasn’t against such translation in principle, but that for himself, he didn’t feel like he could ethically do it. I felt sympathetic to his position, like I could relate from the experience not only of reading books but from doing fieldwork. But I did not understand why he made the differentiation between being willing to translate it when the book was fiction but not if it would have been fact. It seemed a false difference to me, that he was making the difference but that it was an illusion, not really one that existed in terms of the potential of a book and the experience of reading it. A fiction book could be written much better than a nonfiction one and thus reading it could much more transport you into a different space and perspective than a nonfiction one, I pointed out, trying to explain why I kept returning to my question. What was the difference for him? Finally,

¹ There wasn’t time to pursue this further in that conversation – but as surprising as it was to hear such an explanation, when thought in the context of Israel it is both more and less understandable, and it would be interesting to me to move the conversation to examples specific to Israeli politics.
he offered an answer which I found more satisfying than the others, even though it in turn led to more questions which we didn’t have time yet to discuss. He said that because he knew the author of the book was good, was on the right side, was Jewish, he felt like he had a rope to hold on to as he went through the process of reading and translation. That he knew he would come out okay on the other side, that he wouldn’t lose himself because he was attached to that rope to the author, who was not the narrator.

Nir’s distinction here is based, in my view, on problematic assumptions about concepts of good and evil, how one can know it, and of identity etc., but his discussion of the experience of translating this book addresses a the question of a form of Levinasian relation to the other, and also the potential of the literary to relate to the other and to respond to alterity. When I asked Nir why he thought it was important to translate such books when they were fiction despite the fact that he would be unwilling to do so if they were fiction, he explained that he thought such literature offered the opportunity to try to understand evil, and to relate to those who one cannot come into close proximity in actual life. I am referencing this discussion with him and the conference more generally because I think the discomfort and provocation is largely about the power of reading to relate to difference and alterity, in the sense that Gayatri Spivak (2005) has discussed in terms of Comparative Literature. In *Death of a Discipline*, she writes:

> the proper study of literature may give us entry to the performativity of cultures as instantiated in narrative. Here we stand outside, but not as anthropologist; we stand rather as reader with imagination ready for the effort of othering, however imperfectly, as an end in itself. It is a peculiar end, for ‘It cannot be motivated . . . except in the requirement for an increase or a supplement of justice [here to the text], and so in the experience of an inadequation or an incalculable
disproportion.’ This is preparation for a patient and provisional and forever deferred arrival into the performative of the other, in order not to transcode but to draw a response. . . . In order to reclaim the role of teaching literature as training the imagination – the great inbuilt instrument of othering – we may . . . come close to the irreducible work of translation, not from language to language but from body to ethical semiosis, that incessant shuttle that is a ‘life.’ (2005, 14)

Spivak draws here on Melanie Klein (1984), and goes on to say that “to plot this weave, the reader . . . translating the incessant shuttling into that which is read, must have the most intimate access to the rules of representation and permissible narratives which make up the substance of a culture, and must also become responsible and accountable to the writing/ translating of the presupposed original” (14). Spivak is more explicitly addressing here translation than only reading, but she is, I think, suggesting a reading practice that involves a Levinasian opening to the other as reader, and a response through translation (not only literally speaking).

I am suggesting here that the anthropological practice of participant-observation could benefit from thinking about its work in these terms, while remaining attentive to the ethical questions and decisions the anthropologist must make in the moments of the day to day and of the configurations of the research project and object of study. Precisely because participant-observation makes explicit both the difference between the people and practices the anthropologist studies and the anthropologist herself, and requires her to place herself in relation to them and in relation to those whom they are position in relation, questions about difference, the ethical, and the political are forced to the surface. I think it is a mistake for anthropology to avoid these questions by putting anthropology
in the service of political activism and a waste of the space for thinking offered by the university.

If I had a rope going into fieldwork, it was in the form of books and cassette tapes of lectures about these questions, without me fully understanding the connections. They were a kind of lifeline. Although I don’t think I could have named it as such then – it was exactly because they encouraged and offered food for thought about relation to alterity and losing one’s footing that they allowed me to lose mine while being able to continue to think and hold on to some reference points. It wasn’t that I worried I might come to support the occupation rather than oppose it etc.. It was a sense of psychic and emotional disorientation, partly the result of moving back and forth between very different spaces of the political and sets of relations. It was about sensing that I was entering into spaces and relations that would force me to respond in ways that I could not predict, and that felt like they would entail causing damage and loss to old and new relations through having to make choices in my response, and it was about feeling increasingly at a loss to speak back, and then more and more like I was learning to speak a new language. It is hard to explain. It was a feeling of losing the ability to speak the more I took in and learned, but also about an increasing demand to speak back, and that one of the main reasons for entering into this space was exactly in order to speak back, but I couldn’t do that from the beginning, first I had to try to understand and find out what exactly it was that I was even trying to understand. This dissertation has been in part about exactly this – an attempt to regain my footing through words, and responding in thought.
Not Knowing

In her writings on Socrates and elsewhere, Hannah Arendt’s definition of politics centers on a concept of freedom of movement. She suggests that such movement, whether the freedom to depart and begin something new and unheard-of or as the freedom to interact in speech with many others and experience the diversity that the world always is in its totality – most certainly was and is not the end purpose of politics, that is, something that can be achieved by political means. It is rather the substance and meaning of all things political. (2007, 129)

Arendt’s definition of politics here is significant because it brings together an insistence on the plurality of people in the public sphere (and dialogue between them) and what she discusses as the “speechless wonder” of philosophers which marks the human as a question-asking being, and in so doing marks the human as political. She writes:

It is from the actual experience of not-knowing, in which one of the basic aspects of the human condition on earth reveals itself, that the ultimate questions arise – not from the rationalized, demonstrable fact that there are things man does not know, which believers in progress hope to see fully amended one day, or which positivists may discard as irrelevant. In asking the ultimate, unanswerable questions, man establishes himself as a question-asking being. (Ibid. 34)

Arendt suggests, drawing on Plato who discussed this experience as a “pathos of wonder,” that what differentiates philosophers from those among whom they live is not that the majority know nothing of the pathos of wonder, but rather that they refuse to endure it. This refusal is expressed in doxadzein, in forming opinions on matters about which man cannot hold opinions because the common and commonly accepted standards of common sense do not here apply. Doxa, in other words, could become the opposite of truth because doxadzein is indeed the opposite of thaumadzein. Having opinions go wrong when it concerns those matters which we know only in speechless wonder at what is. (Ibid. 34-35).
The history of Western political thought, as Arendt and many others note, is rooted in Greek philosophy and in the specific political experience of Rome. Arendt suggests that the trinity of religion, authority and tradition has an authentic basis in the history of political thought because of the foundation and preservation of the civitas, but that philosophy is antitradiotional by nature, because of its origin in the experience of being struck by wonder and marvel. Arendt then, seems to be suggesting to bring back concepts of politics from Greek philosophy through departing from traditional political thought about the meaning of human plurality, and focusing on what it might mean for man to always exist in the plural in order to be a political being, and for this existence in plurality to always mean acting and speaking with others. She writes:

The plurality of men, . . . constitutes the political realm. It does so, first, in the sense that no human being ever exists in the singular, which gives action and speech their specifically political significance, since they are the only activities which not only are affected by the fact of plurality, as are all human activities, but are altogether unimaginable apart from it. (Ibid. 61)

For Arendt, what it means to be human is the equality that is manifested only in the absolute distinctness of one person from another. She writes: “[i]f, therefore, action and speech are the two outstanding political activities, distinctness and equality are the two constituent elements of bodies politic” (Ibid. 62). For Arendt then, such speech and action necessitates an acknowledgement of and allowance for difference, or what she calls “distinctness,” and for the space between individuated beings that acknowledges them as such, but also that acknowledges them as plural within themselves, through acknowledging the act of one’s dialogue with oneself. The political is thus here directly
related to a concept of difference and how political space does or does not allow for it.

Arendt writes that in the Socratic understanding, “know thyself” meant that only through knowing what appears to oneself and one’s own concrete existence can one ever understand the truth (Ibid.19). She goes on to write:

> Absolute truth, which would be the same for all men and therefore unrelated, independent of each man’s existence, cannot exist for mortals. For mortals the important thing is to make doxa truthful, to see in every doxa truth and to speak in such a way that the truth of one’s opinion reveals itself to oneself and to others. On this level, the Socratic “I know that I do not know” means no more than: I know that I do not have the truth for everybody; I cannot know the other fellow’s truth except by asking him and thereby learning his doxa, which reveals itself to him in distinction from all others. (Ibid.)

The Socratic method, and the Greek concept of philosopher, therefore always begins with questions; “he cannot know beforehand what kind of dokei moi, of it-appears-to-me, the other possesses. . . . Yet, just as nobody can know beforehand the other’s doxa, so nobody can know by himself and without further effort the inherent truth of his own opinion. . . .” (Ibid. 15). In this sense then, one can perhaps think of the anthropologist in terms of Arendt’s thinking here in terms of the Socratic method, not as philosopher but as a gadfly; “the role of the philosopher, then, is not to rule the city but to be its ‘gadfly,’ not to tell philosophical truths but to make citizens more truthful” (Ibid.). Arendt notes that this kind of dialogue is most appropriate and frequent between friends, and that Socrates tried in this sense to make friends out of Athen’s citizenry. While the implications for thinking through this notion of politics in terms of the figure of the friend and friendship take very different directions for Arendt and Derrida, both address the significance of the
individual’s and the plurality’s relation to difference for concepts of polity and community.

Arendt’s definition of politics in terms of this distinction between private and public situates singularity in the realm of the public. An analysis of contemporary Israel in terms of the conjunction Israeli-Jew, I have argued, suggests that singularity, including alterity as the unknowable difference of the other, permeates through any boundary between private and public, inside and outside, and speech and experience (as emotion). The affect (which in its intense manifestations produces disorders in the normative, symptomatic in the figures of the melancholic and the hysteric) which moves between speech and the body, and between private and public, inside and outside, suggests a concept of the political based not on the narratives of community, identity and belonging, but on the relations of characters to one another in time and space, the narrative of the literary which is part truth and part fabrication, the writing which acknowledges that when we write we are dreaming, and that when we dream we are writing. Such writing, I think, differs significantly from Arendt’s concept of the political in that it understands the possibility for ethical response to the singular in terms of the impossibility of a Kantian equivalence based on commonality among the plural. But Arendt does recognize that a separation between private and public is vital for the possibility of the political, and is what allows the human the possibility of being a political being, through engaging in dialogue with others and so also with oneself about those ultimate, unanswerable
questions. In significant distinction from Arendt, however, this separation is porous, moving, and incomplete.

It was my attempt to understand the category Israeli-Jew in terms of a concept of the political which informed my understanding here of singularity and of a concept of a political subject defined in terms of affective relation through which singularity is acknowledged. Such an understanding of the political, I would argue, can be understood in terms of a continual process of translation, as a passage through “the corridor, the narrow pass, the passage between,” an archival relation based not sole on the name but rather also on affective relation which undoes the name without letting go of it, as a transferential process of auto-affection and relation to the self through being open to and undone by the difference of an other.

For Levinas, the structure of confidence is about a relation of faith to an other who is divine, to God. But the notion of a relation of faith or confidence does not have to signify one based on a belief in God or a relation to the divine – Derrida takes up the concept in terms of placing confidence in the sense of making oneself open, exposed to alterity, to difference that cannot be known (not confidence necessarily in the sense of believing in but rather in opening oneself to uncertainty, confidence exactly in what might seem to be its opposite, risk, taking a “leap of faith” without knowing for sure

---

2 Which is maybe partly what contributes to what seem to be some of Levinas’s blind spots in how he conceives of this dimension of height – making his openness to alterity not quite as open as Derrida’s.
where or how you will land or come through in this crossing over). In the discourse of fraternity (and the various other names and forms political community based on fraternity take), the enemy is the question that calls the questioner into question. For Derrida, it seems that the question that calls the questioner into question - alterity and its different figurations - is exactly the possibility for a democracy to come (rather than a war to come), through an openness to the foreign. This is a notion of politics based on being open to alterity calling you into question, but also responding to the question, responding to difference and its demand without erasing it – the demand is continual, and the demand to decide and moment of decision repeats itself. For Derrida the space of the political is constituted through thinking in relation to the singular other and relating to the plural through a relation to alterity through which the subject is constituted.

One must think and write, in particular as regards friendship, against great numbers. Against the most numerous who make language and lay down the law of its usage. Against hegemonic language in what is called public space. (2005, 70-71)

This dissertation is a response to the singular in public space. To more than one. And a struggle both for the political and to understand it.

The literary, including ethnography, I suggest, is therefore one potential space for the political and for justice, in the sense of response to the singular other in the sphere of

---

3 Derrida discusses the inaccessibility to the friend in terms of what he calls “an interdictive bar in the very concept of friendship,” which he goes on to explain in terms of thought (and mortality); “there is thought for man only to the extent that it is thought of the other – and thought of the other qua thought of the mortal” (2005, 224).
the plural – the writing which is both response, and a call, an address open to the reader.4

This is not to romanticize the literary, nor of course is it to disregard the very material and real injustices “out there in the world.” Rather, it is to address the concept of justice and related terms in relation to alterity and the singular in the context of the general and in terms of the question of the political - both in the context of writing, and specifically ethnography, and in terms of relation to and analysis of the other, difference, and the political “out there in the world.” The “freedom” offered by literature, in writing and reading, comes with its own demand. The demand of the other in thought, which seems is always in some form thought of the other . . . (Derrida 2005, 224). I consider here the idea that ethnography, involving both fieldwork and writing ethnography, can be understood as a demand to respond in thought to the other, those “in the field” to whom

4 Derrida writes:

(In speaking like this, saying that love or friendship is improbable, I am saying nothing. I am neither stating nor describing anything. First of all because it is not certain that something of the sort exists, that anything ever exists outside of what I have to say about it, which you are reading perhaps in your own way; and this is precisely what I mean in drawing the perhaps into this free zone – where we can rely on nothing, nor count how many of us there are. . . .

And yet my saying, the declaration of love or the call to the friend, the address to the other in the night, the writing that does not resign itself to this unsaid, who could swear that they are consigned to oblivion simply because no said can speak them exhaustively?

The response no longer belongs to me – that is all I wanted to tell you, my friend the reader. And without knowing any longer if the rare or the numerous is preferable.

I assume responsibility for speaking rightly, justly, on this point, up until now, up to the point when I am no longer responsible for anything. Hence the point from which all responsibility is announced). (2005, 70)
the anthropologist is responding, and the authors of the texts on whom she draws. But like a postcard, it is uncertain who will read it, and if it will reach its address . . .

Echo, the possible Echo, she who speaks from, and steals, the words of the other [celle qui prend la parole au mots de l’autre], she who takes the other at his or her word, her very freedom preceding the first syllables of Narcissus, his mourning and his grief. We are speaking of anything but the exemplarity of the Ciceronian exemplar. An arche-friendship would inscribe itself on the surface of the testament’s seal. It would call for the last word of the last will and testament. But in advance it would carry it away as well.

It would be extraneous neither to the other justice nor to the other politics whose possibility we would like, perhaps, to see announced here.

Through, perhaps, another experience of the possible. (Ibid. 24)

But maybe only if you are willing to countersign. Presuming I can write an oeuvre for such a signature! How many are there? *Signatures of the Impossible* . . .


Ben-Amotz, Dan and Netiva Ben-Yehuda. 1982. Milon olami Le-Ivrit Meduberet / יִלּוּן עוֹלָם לֶאִבְרִית מְדוּבֵרֵת; Milon Aḥul-Manyuḳi Le-Ivrit Meduberet; World


513


Feld, Steven and Keith Basso, ed. 1996. *Senses of Place*. Santa Fe, N.M.; [Seattle]: School of American Research Press ; Distributed by the University of Washington Press.


Gray, Lila Ellen,. 2005. "Re-Sounding History, Embodying Place: Fado Performance in Lisbon, Portugal.".


520


Stone, Lilo. 1995. "German Zionists in Palestine before 1933."


Films Cited

Dayan, Assaf. 2001. The Hit [Schlager]. Assaf Dayan, Ofra Haza, Gashash ha-hiver (Comedy troupe), United King Ltd. and Inc SISU Home Entertainment. [New York]: SISU Home Ent.
Biography

Netta Ruth van Vliet received a B.A. from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon in 1998, and an M.A. from the Cultural Anthropology Department at Duke University in 2005. Between her undergraduate studies and beginning graduate school at Duke, she spent time in Guatemala working for non-governmental organizations and conducting research on the aftermath of Guatemala’s civil war. Her interest in Israel preceded her work in Guatemala, but was also shaped by her interest in Latin American politics. She was awarded the Wenner Gren Fieldwork dissertation grant in 2007, as well as several fellowships and grants from Duke’s graduate school and from the Duke Women’s Studies program, which supported three years of fieldwork in Israel between 2005 and 2008 and funded preliminary research stints there in the summers of 2003 and 2004.