ישראלים
ISRAELIS

כתב־עת לביכורי מחקר בלימודי ישראל

A Bilingual Periodical for the Study of Israel & Zionism

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The journal is published once a year and serves as a bilingual publishing platform for early-career scholars (up to 5 years from the submission date of their dissertation) that research Israel Studies and Zionism.

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Volume 9

The Ben-Gurion Research Institute
for the Study of Israel and Zionism
The Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Sede Boker Campus

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Preface to Issue Nine of *Israelis*

The ninth issue of *Israelis* includes six articles in Hebrew and English as well as three sections on a variety of subjects related to the field of Israel Studies.

The article by Omer Berkman seeks to reexamine some of the myths surrounding the rescue of the Jews of Denmark and discusses their causes. Adi Isha's article delves into the work of Shoshana Shababo, known as the first Hebrew Sephardic novelist, and her pursuit of an alternative to the Zionist-patriarchal points of view that characterized her generation. Eyal Ginsberg's article investigates the phenomenon of personal ads and matchmaking via newspapers during the first decade of Israeli statehood, treating it as a unique prism through which to examine Israeli society and its daily life during this formative era.

The English portion of this issue includes three articles. The article by Yuri Keum presents two polarized responses to news of the Holocaust within the American-Jewish community, and analyzes the intense struggle between the group associated with Rabbi Steven Weiss and the group led by Hillel Kook (Peter Bergson). Amir Locker-Biletzki's article addresses the representation of homosexual soldiers in the films of Eytan Fox and applies the concept of homonationalism to the Israeli case. Finally, the article by Claudia Dietrich examines the various memories of Jewish Israeli citizens from Iran regarding the 1979 Revolution.

In addition to the above articles, this issue features three long-standing sections: the Interview Section, "From the PhD Dissertation Shelf", and, following its absence from the past several issues, the "From the Archive" section.

Opening the current issue is an interview with former president of the Supreme Court of Israel, retired Justice Dorit Beinisch. The context of this interview is the ongoing, escalating conflict surrounding the role of the Supreme Court and its relationship with Israel's executive and legislative authorities. Beinisch discusses the historical origins of this debate and addresses the inflammatory issue of "unconstitutional

constitutional amendments" in relation to the Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People.

"From the Archive" presents excerpts from the personal diary of a participant in the "Columbus Operation" (1951), during which a group of Israeli naval soldiers sailed two vessels to North America to accompany David Ben-Gurion on his first visit to the United States as Israel's Prime Minister. While there, Ben-Gurion visited the major American-Jewish communities and launched the Development Corporation for Israel (Israel Bonds). The diary, published for the very first time in this issue, offers a fascinating personal perspective on the nascent relationship between Israel and American Jewry.

"From the PhD Dissertation Shelf", which concludes the Hebrew portion of this issue, introduces yet another selection of short abstracts from noteworthy doctoral dissertations written on Israel and Zionism in recent years.

We extend our gratitude to the young scholars and research students who have sent us their articles, some of which are included in the current issue. *Israelis* accepts articles by research students and those whose dissertations were approved no more than five years ago. Submissions for the upcoming issue of *Israelis* should follow the guidelines on our website: www.bgu.ac.il/israelis. Articles are subject to the standard review process of academic journals.

In the Face of Emergency:

American Jewish Leadership and the Bergson Group, 1943

Yuri Keum

Introduction: The Emergency

> by my death, I wish to give expression to my most profound protest against the inaction in which the world watches and permits the destruction of the Jewish people.[1]
>
> Szmul Zygielbojm (1885-1943)

The Jewish representative of the Polish National Council in London, Szmul Zygielbojm, committed suicide shortly after the Bermuda Conference (April 19-30, 1943). The British-United States conference, held in an inaccessible location in Bermuda, confirmed that no immediate resolution would be reached regarding the plight of European Jewry under the Third Reich. Jews in Europe would not be saved from the "final solution".

Two months before his suicide, Zygielbojm dispatched a telegram to American Jewish organizations, urging them to respond to the liquidation of ghettos and Nazi atrocities against Jews: "Only you can rescue us. Responsibility towards history thrown upon you." Alarmed, American Jewish organizations, including religious establishments, gathered four days later (Pinsky 1983). They agreed on the urgent need for a new administrative body dedicated to the affairs of European Jewry under the Nazi regime, which led to the establishment of the Joint Emergency Committee on European Jewish Affairs (JEC). The representatives

* The article received Hillel Kook Prize in the outstanding MA seminar paper category (March 29, 2017).

1 Szmul Zygielbojm's suicide note, retrieved from Yad Vashem Archives: http://yad-vashem.org.il/about_holocaust/documents/part2/doc154.html.

elected to the new Committee were Rabbi Stephen Wise (American Jewish Congress), Judge Joseph M. Proskauer (American Jewish Committee), Adolph Held (Jewish Labor Committee), Henry Monsky (B'nai B'rith), and Israel Goldstein (Synagogue Council of America).

Despite a shared sense of emergency, JEC activities were conducted with little unity and efficiency, as persistent discord arose among the representatives. From committee membership to tactics for raising awareness of Nazi violence, no decision could be made smoothly and without time-consuming, internecine conflicts. Most representatives were particularly concerned about Wise, whose authority was presumed but had to be contested in order to ensure their equal footing in the committee (Ibid.). Wise was founder of the American Jewish Congress and a chairman of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the United Palestine Appeal (later with Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver), and the World Jewish Congress (with Nahum Goldmann). Born in Budapest in 1874 and immigrating to New York as a child, Wise was an ardent Zionist, unlike most American reform rabbis at the time. He was also the spokesperson for American Jewry vis-à-vis President Roosevelt, and a major proponent of *shtadlanut*, quiet lobbying by a handful of influential Jews opposite their host administration (Pinsky 1983; Medoff 2015).

Membership of the Hadassah organization (the women's auxiliary to the ZOA) in the JEC was vetoed by the majority of representatives in order to limit Wise's influence, and a proposal to conduct mass rallies was met with disputes regarding their potential framing and public reach. Above all, while Wise's organizations were entirely committed to Zionist enterprises in-line with the Biltmore Program (1942),[2] the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish

2 Also known as the Biltmore Conference, the Biltmore Program was established at the Biltmore Hotel in May 6-11, 1942, with over 600 delegates and prominent Zionist leaders from 18 countries. It declared solidarity with the Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe, alliance with the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, support for the Yishuv in Palestine, and faith in the Balfour Declaration and the "Jewish Commonwealth" in Palestine. The Biltmore Program was to serve as the blueprint for the American Zionist establishment, but would also be another source of ongoing internal friction within American Zionist circles

Labor Committee, among others, were at odds with Zionism if not downright against it (Pinsky 1983).[3]

Nonetheless, the JEC planned public demonstrations and carefully drafted rescue proposals for the upcoming Bermuda Conference. Consolidating the proposals was a daunting and delicate task, as the JEC was extremely cautious not to condemn the Roosevelt administration in any deliberate way. The proposals had to correspond with a collective American war effort while expressing a particular sense of emergency regarding European Jewry. A three-page document was finally drafted and submitted by the JEC, beginning with a précis titled "Systematic Mass Extermination of Jews". The rescue proposals called for "a planned program of determined action", which was followed by an "Appendix to the Program for the Rescue of Jews from Nazi Occupied Europe" (Pinsky 1983: 487-488).

Much to the dismay of the JEC and the American Jewish community at large, the Bermuda Conference turned out to be a "sham" that tactically discussed the post-war relocation of refugees only, with no specific mention of European Jewry.[4] The JEC's request to meet with Roosevelt

(Heney L. Feingold, "Was There Communal Failure? Some Thoughts on the American Jewish Response to the Holocaust," *American Jewish History*, Centennial Issue I, 81, 1 (1993), pp. 60-80.

3 The American Jewish Committee, which consisted of a small number of established "uptown" German-Jewish elites, was notably anti-Zionist. Judge Proskauer's joining the Wise-led JEC was met with complaints from members of the American Jewish Committee; he had to defend and justify his decision, which he did by emphasizing the escalation in Europe. For more on organizational dynamics and internal disputes in the JEC, see Pinsky, "Jewish Unity during the Holocaust" and David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941-1945*, Pantheon Books, New York 1984.

4 The American delegation was led by president of Princeton University Harold Willis Dodds, and consisted of members with no background in immigration policy (e.g., Senator Scott Lucas of Illinois), known anti-Semites (e.g., Robert B. Reams from the State Department), and astute politicians pursuing careers in the State Department (e.g., Sol Bloom, the Chairman of House Foreign Affairs). The appointment of the American delegation strongly implies the State's unwillingness to engage with the issue at hand. For more, see

and discuss the proposals was not granted. No Committee representatives were allowed to participate in (or even observe) the Bermuda Conference, where their rescue proposals were quickly dismissed. The Bermuda Program included recommendations not to negotiate with Hitler during wartime (thereby confining European Jews to Nazi-occupied areas); to favor Britain's suggestion of relocating refugees (only those safe already in Spain and Portugal) to Cyprus and North Africa; to revive the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (a product of the 1938 Evian Conference that had proven to be incompetent); and for Britain and America to share "neutral shipping" for the *post-war* transport of refugees.[5] With no plans for a rescue operation or broader immigration policy in sight, the Bermuda Program was heavily criticized as a "program of inaction" and "a cruel mockery".[6]

JEC efforts became futile when faced with the self-interest of two powerful entities, Britain and America, which were already determined to confine the refugee issue to Europe. When the news from Bermuda became public, Zygielbojm acutely understood the impending doom: "The latest news [of the Bermuda Conference] indicates beyond any doubt that Germans are now murdering the last remnant of the Jews in Poland with unbridled cruelty."

The Bergson Group and the Conflict

Unbeknownst to Zygielbojm, a small group of foreigners in America had decided not to wait for organizational action regarding the rescue

Monty Noam Penkower, *The Jews were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago 1983; Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*; and Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry 1933-1945*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1987.

5 "Bermuda Conference," Yad Vashem Archives, "From Evian to Bermuda," Hillel Kook Collection (hereinafter: HKC), 13, pp. 15-27. http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206001.pdf.

6 "Why was Bermuda a 'Cruel Mockery'?" *The Answer*, June 4, 1943, ibid., 12, p. 82.

plans. Their leader Hillel Kook, also known as Peter Bergson,[7] had been a "haunted man" ever since the murderous rampage against European Jews was confirmed and publicized in November 1942 (Wyman 1984; Rapoport 1999). The Bermuda Conference was yet another blow. While reactions to the Conference ranged from disappointment to despair, Kook and his group – known as the "Bergsonites" or the "Bergson Group" after his alias – treated it as the ultimate catalyst for making the rescue of European Jewry their top priority.

Kook, nephew of the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Mandatory Palestine Abraham Isaac Kook, was born in present-day Lithuania in 1915, moved to the British Mandate of Palestine with his family in 1924, and received a religious education in Afula and Jerusalem. A relentless advocate for a Jewish army and a formidable "agitator" of the American Zionist establishment, he arrived in the United States in 1940 via the *SS Scythia* to lead the Irgun Delegation. Kook graduated from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he became involved in the Revisionist Movement led by Ze'ev Jabotinsky and met the like-minded David Raziel and Avraham Stern. Arab riots prompted his allegiance to Jabotinsky's philosophy, which stressed strong military power alongside diplomatic efforts in the international arena to secure Jewish sovereignty in Eretz Israel. Kook, Raziel, and Stern joined the pre-state Haganah, but when Arab riots broke out, the three comrades of Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionism dissented from the Haganah to help establish the Irgun Zvai Leumi (National Military Organization, abbreviated in Hebrew as "Etzel"), a paramilitary underground group that would pose long-standing opposition to the organized Ben-Gurion-led Yishuv.[8] Kook was initially sent to the United States to support the

7 While various sources state that the pseudonym was assumed so as "not to embarrass" his family (in reference to his uncle, Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook), the name was adopted in order to protect his family in Mandatory Palestine, as Hillel Kook was targeted by British authorities for his Irgun activities (based on an informal interview with Dr. Becky Kook, daughter of Hillel Kook, conducted December 21, 2015).

8 Initially, the Irgun was known as the "Haganah Bet", and Stern later split from the Irgun and formed another paramilitary group (1940), Lehi, commonly

clandestine "af-al-pi" (Hebrew for "despite") immigration to Mandatory Palestine in response to the infamous "White Paper (1939)", and to raise awareness on the issue of Jews' "right to fight" (i.e., the establishment of the Committee for a Jewish Army, 1942).

He was such an indefatigable fund-raiser and captivating spokesperson that the American Zionist establishment and prominent Rabbi Stephen Wise in particular, became alarmed and tried vigorously to discredit the Bergsonites. Wise's pre-existing enmity toward Jabotinsky and militant Zionism extended to Kook, and Kook's activities and growing network intensified his hostility toward the Bergson Group. Wise was particularly upset to learn that Ben Hecht, an established playwright and part of the Hollywood elite, had joined the Bergson Group. He tried to persuade Hecht to withdraw from the Bergsonites, imploring him to join his own circle instead. His efforts proved unsuccessful, and Hecht did not hesitate to express his discontent with Wise (Rapoport 1999). Kook and Hecht, on the other hand, shared mutual respect and were inspired by one another from their first encounter, forging a lifelong friendship.[9] Their strong fraternal bond was also reflected by the widely successful dramatic pageants *We Will Never Die* (1943)[10] and *A Flag Is Born* (1946).[11] Hecht's membership marked a breakthrough in the small foreign group's influence in America.[12]

referred to as the Stern Gang. Both the Irgun and Lehi were formally dissolved and integrated into the Israeli Defense Forces in the course of the Independence War (1948). See Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1996, pp. 260-270.

9 Rapoport (*Shake Heaven & Earth*) notes the glowing impression and strong chemistry between Kook and Hecht in detail; the lasting friendship between the two was confirmed by an informal interview with Dr. Becky Kook (December 21, 2015).

10 Working manuscripts were fact-checked with Hillel Kook and Eri Jabotinstky, March 30, 1943, HKC, 1, pp. 172-173.

11 Complete scripts of *We Will Never Die* and *A Flag Is Born* are available at ibid., 31.

12 Through close connection and cooperation with Ben Hecht, Kook extended his VIP list of celebrities to include the composer Kurt Weill; the established illustrator Arthur Szyk; Hollywood stars Jerry Lewis, Dean Martin, and

The emergency in Europe did not deter Wise's animosity toward Kook, but rather escalated it. From mid-1943 to early 1944, Kook's activities focused solely on the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People, which put the Committee for a Jewish Army on hold and vehemently pushed for a government agency to save European Jews. Toward that end, the Bergson Group held a conference under the self-explanatory title, "The Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People of Europe". Wise, however, persisted in his efforts to undermine the Bergson Group and sabotage the Emergency Conference – going as far as opposing the Gillette-Rogers Resolution[13] and making a (failed) attempt to have Kook deported.

Considering the fatal circumstances in Europe, which had been widely known in America since late 1942, Wise's "obsession" with the Bergson Group during these pivotal years is a highly charged matter.[14] What did the Bergsonite Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People entail, and why did the animosity between Wise and Kook escalate in the face of the emergency? Based primarily on a content analysis of archival

Frank Sinatra; and the musician-composer Leonard Bernstein.

13 This resolution, formulated as a result of the Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People of Europe (July 1943), is referred to by various names in scholarly literature: the Rescue Resolution, Gillette-Rogers Resolution, Gillette-Taft-Rogers Resolution, Baldwin-Rogers Resolution, and so on. While there seems to be no unified name for this specific Resolution in archival documents, the Resolution is in fact a combination of two identical resolutions: Resolution 203 (in the Senate) and Resolution 352 (in the House of Representatives). The former was led by Senator Guy Gillette of Iowa and the latter by Representative Will Rogers Jr. of California; both were submitted on the same day (November 9, 1943). This paper refers to the two resolutions, 203 and 352, by the names of their leading submitters as the Gillette-Rogers Resolution, or as "the Resolution", to avoid confusion. See HKC, 13, pp. 116-119.

14 The American Jewish Committee, Jewish Labor Committee, and religious organizations were not as concerned about the Bergson Group, and Hadassah was even sympathetic to the cause of a Jewish army; it was the American Jewish Congress and the ZOA (affiliated with the World Zionist Congress), headed by Rabbi Wise, which persistently attacked the Bergsonites in an "obsessive" fashion (Rapoport, *Shake Heaven & Earth*).

documents provided by the Hillel Kook Collection (HKC),[15] this article offers an in-depth examination of the Bergson Group's Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People of Europe (July 20-25, 1943) by comparing it tothe Wise-led American Jewish Conference (August 29-September 2, 1943).

The significance of the Emergency Conference as a case study lies in its isolation of the rescue issue, thereby highlighting stark opposition between Wise and Kook that extended beyond ideological differences (e.g., labor and militant Zionism). By offering a case analysis of the Bergsonite Emergency Conference and its relation to the American Jewish Conference, this article seeks to contribute to existing literature and public debates that do not engage in historical hindsight and the discourse of "missed opportunities". The following archival examination casts light on the extraordinary endeavor of a small foreign group in America to rescue doomed Jews in Europe; in parallel, it rebukes the legacy of American Jewish "inaction" regarding the Holocaust by pointing to critical sociohistorical context.

The Debate: American Jewry, the Bergson Group, and the Holocaust

Scholars have long been scrutinizing the domestic and international political climates to conceptualize American Jewish responses to the Holocaust and the position of the Bergson Group in instigating rescue efforts. Henry Feingold's analysis in *The Politics of Rescue* (1970), Monty Noam Penkower's *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (1983), and Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut's *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933-1945* (1987) represent a few of the early, classical, extensive studies on the subject. These analyses stress the power relations and realpolitik of the West and majority-minority dynamics in 1930s and 1940s America. Within this larger context, the schism between Wise and Kook was hardly relevant as an influence on the atrocities in Europe, and the rescue efforts of both Wise and Kook were bound to be fruitless.

15 The Hillel Kook Collection (HKC) is located in the Ben-Gurion Archives, http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/bgarchives/Pages/default.aspx.

Feingold explains the role of American State Department officials (notably Breckinridge Long, responsible for issuing visas) in hindering the implementation of expanded immigration policies and rescue efforts for European Jewry. No less significant are the sociopolitical characteristics of 1940s America: prevalent nativism, economic recession, and isolationism paired with anti-immigrant sentiment. The concurrent rise of domestic antisemitism placed American Jewish leaders in a peculiar position as they sought to save the lives of their European brethren. Given the indifference and reluctance expressed by Roosevelt himself, the rescue battles of American Jewish organizations were destined to be futile: "Given the circumstances, American Jewry seemed bound to fail" (1970: 324). Penkower, too, highlights the West's unwillingness to intervene in the refugee crisis, arguing that both American Jewry and the Bergson Group "could do no more in the war years than besiege Washington regularly and hope that some understanding would result in action" – which both Wise and Kook did diligently, regardless of their different approaches (1983: 147, 286-288). Breitman and Kaut (1987) conducted a thorough and detailed analysis of bureaucratic webs, rigidly imposed immigration policies, and America's narrowed and isolationist war interests, all of which were supported by public opinion in the 1940s and stood to interrupt grassroots rescue efforts.

Yehuda Bauer, a renowned scholar and a pioneer of Holocaust studies, shares a similar view with the aforementioned scholars but differs critically with regard to the State Department. According to Bauer, the American government was incompetent (rather than indifferent) to shift the course of the European Jewish catastrophe: "Jews were powerless, and so was the U.S., to stop the murder" (2012: 67). He persuasively argues that the economic crisis (i.e., the Depression) was Roosevelt's priority; moreover, although news of violence did reach America, no one was capable of grasping the unthinkable magnitude of the Holocaust, which was revealed after the war. Both Wise and Kook did act, Bauer claims, but it was never up to them or the Roosevelt administration to intervene in the violence erupting in Europe.

Bauer (2012; 2014) pithily opposes "Wyman, Medoff and others" whose erudite studies of the subject draw utterly different conclusions than his own: more could have been done in terms of political awareness

and Jewish unity. The scholarly work of David S. Wyman (1984), for example, postulates that American Jewish organizations and the Bergson Group could have played a more active role vis-à-vis the Roosevelt government and the catastrophic news from Europe. Thus, his most well-known and distinguished work, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (1984), begins with a different question: "Why did America fail to carry out the kind of rescue effort that it could have?"[16]

Wyman's contentions are threefold. First, like Feingold, Penkower, Breitman, and Kraut, he observes that the Roosevelt administration actively frustrated rescue efforts due to nativism and antisemitism as well as fear of communism. Second, Wyman asserts that American Jewish leaders failed to prioritize the refugee crisis and were instead consumed by internal disputes and power struggles during those critical years. Finally, Wyman is convinced that the exceptional and correct approach was that of the Bergson Group, as it was the Bergsonite Emergency Committee that made the "most crucial move" by formulating the Gillette-Rogers Resolution, which hastened the establishment of the War Refugee Board (1984: 155):

> The fact that the tiny Bergsonite faction accomplished what it did toward the establishment of the War Refugee Board is compelling evidence that a major, sustained, and united Jewish effort could have obtained the rescue board earlier and insisted on its receiving greater support than it did. Such an effort could have drawn on substantial strengths (1984: 328).

Although historiographical interpretations cannot fundamentally answer "what if" questions, Wyman provides an exhaustive analysis of the activities of the Bergson Group, to which he gives the considerable credit of saving approximately 200,000 Jews via the War Refugee Board.[17]

16 Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, p. x; emphasis added.

17 David S. Wyman, "The Bergson Group, America, and the Holocaust: A Previously Unpublished Interview with Hillel Kook/Peter Bergson," *American Jewish History*, 89, 1 (2001), pp. 3-34.

Introduced by Martin Gilbert, a distinguished historian and the author of *Auschwitz and the Allies* (1981), Louis Rapoport's *Shake Heaven and Earth* (1999) offers additional explication of the Bergsonite rescue activities. Though highly readable, comprehensive, and rich in detail, *Shake Heaven and Earth* posits a rather simplified dichotomy: Kook vs. Wise. According to Rapoport, Wise and other American Jewish leaders caused "great damage to the Jewish people," whereas Kook embodied the ethical imperatives befitting the agony of European Jews:

> In the end, the politicians who make their careers in Jewish organizations did great damage to the Jewish people, while the Bergson group was piercing the silence around the extermination, transforming the face of Jewish politics, and bringing the requisite pressure to bear on an (at best) indifferent FDR. If the establishment organizations had done as much, hundreds of thousands more lives might have been saved (1999: 226).

Rapoport likens Wise to a "court Jew", driven by egotism, fear, and paranoia. Kook on the other hand, spearheaded rescue plans and acted against the "silence" of the West and the unjustified and virulent opposition of the American Jewish establishment.

Was Wise indeed a self-absorbed and irresponsible leader in the face of the emergency, implicitly sharing responsibility for the fate of Jews in Europe? Rafael Medoff's recent work attempts to explore this precise question. In *The Anguish of a Jewish Leader: Stephen S. Wise and the Holocaust* (2015), Medoff explores Wise's considerations and subsequent actions over the course of his career in America. During the emergency, Wise had two primary fears: the rise of domestic antisemitism and potential threat to his exclusive dominance over the American Jewish arena. The success of *We Will Never Die* and the media-savvy Kook made the Bergson Group a threat to Wise; for instance, Medoff describes a gathering between Kook, Wise, and Proskauer in 1942, in which Wise vied for Kook to withdraw a media campaign that was, according to him, a latent "recipe for Jewish pogroms in the USA" (2015: 91).[18] This

18 Initially, Kook responded positively on the condition that Jewish organizations would make the rescue issue their priority; once he saw that mainstream

was not a justified fear according to Medoff, as no such pogrom ever followed the Bergsonites' all-too-public activities.

Bergson Group activities had absolutely no prestige for Wise, even though their cause was to rescue Jews from the Third Reich (Medoff 2015). As far as he was concerned, "There was no possibility that the Bergson Group could play a legitimate role, since the Jewish Agency alone was the recognized spokesman of the Jewish people in all matters" (Ibid.: 100). In addition, Wise felt that the Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People was Kook's way of "stealing the thunder of the Joint Emergency Committee (JEC) and perhaps of the American Jewish Conference [scheduled in August 1943, a month after the Emergency Conference]" (Ibid.: 114). Medoff argues that Wise's loyalty to Roosevelt, and his deep-seated admiration of Britain for its rich culture and early affirmation of Zionism (i.e., the Balfour Declaration of 1917), further crippled his judgement, prompting him to disregard or bluntly ignore alternatives to his own course of action – and there were alternatives (Medoff 2015). Consumed with internal disputes (including his feud with the Bergson Group and later with Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver), Wise failed "to distinguish between hopes and reality, to speak truth to power, to translate privately expressed doubts about US refugee policy into concrete political action, and to step aside if he was no longer able to do so" (Ibid.: 166).

Along with Medoff's examination of American Jewish leadership in the 1940s, the extensive chronicle of the Bergson Group by Judith Tydor Baumel offers a highly valuable discussion of Kook's approach to the emergency and his efficiently strategized rescue campaigns. Baumel pays close attention to the Bergsonite's ability to generate publicity and Kook's tenacity as a leader. In *The "Bergson Boys" and the Origins of Contemporary Zionist Militancy* (2005), she dedicates an entire chapter to the activities of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jews of Europe and the War Refugee Board (Chapter 4, "A Time to Save":

> American Jewish organizations were not giving the adequate attention to the rescue, he resumed the media campaign and intensified it (Medoff, *The Anguish of a Jewish Leader*, p. 91).

136-196). In it, Baumel expounds on the Bergsonites' shift of focus from a Jewish army to the rescue of European Jews; the success of the Emergency Conference, she contends, was mainly attributable to "the complete divorce of the rescue issue from the Palestine question" (2005: 194-195). Such "divorce," however, was inconceivable to American Jewish leaders as they "sincerely believed" that the sole solution for the Jewish refugee crisis was the "opening of the gates of Palestine to Jewish immigration" (Ibid.: 168). Wise saw the Gillette-Rogers Resolution as a failure formulated by "a handful of Jews and Christians" without a representative authority (Ibid.). According to Baumel, the American Jewish Conference may have been an "anti-Emergency Committee struggle" led by Wise (and Silver, who was embroiled in bitter competition with Wise in the American Zionist circle) in order to "liquidate" the Bergson Group in the American Jewish scene (Ibid.: 161-162).

As illustrated above, scholarly discussions on American Jewish leadership and the Bergson Group tend to employ a dichotomous framework (i.e., Kook vs. Wise) and, both implicitly and explicitly, focus on "missed opportunities" riddled with historical hindsight. Such discussions are essentially consequence-oriented. Despite their merits, they inevitably cloud the in-depth examination of events by focusing on the intentions of the actors themselves. Even Bauer, despite stressing the significance of the American socioeconomic and political complex in the 1930s and 1940s, promotes a result-centric approach: "The problem … is not the usual one of inner-Jewish arguments about who did what, but – what was the result, and is the whole argument really relevant? What did the War Refugee Board achieve?" (2014: 231).

In hopes of contributing to the ongoing scholarly debate on the subject, this article offers a micro-perspective focused on the rescue effort itself rather than its outcome through a case study of the Emergency Conference, which eventually led to the submission of Gillette-Rogers Resolution for the establishment of the War Refugee Board. This examination ultimately deduces the underlying causes, not for the discontent between Kook and Wise and its relation to the larger context, but rather for the escalation of this discontent in the face of the emergency.

The Emergency Conference, July 1943

Kook was devastated when the *Washington Post* (November 25, 1942) reported the shocking news: two million Jews had already been slaughtered, and their systematic extermination in Europe was well on its way. The nature and scale of violence against Jews were deplorable and unprecedented, undoubtedly distinct from the bitter yet familiar pogroms and sporadic persecutions (e.g., a blood libel) prevalent throughout Jewish history. The "cruel mockery" of the Bermuda Conference had taught the Bergson Group important lessons; the quiet lobby of American Jewish elites was ineffective (as was reliance on Western administrations), and strong public pressure was needed for urging the U.S. government to engage in rescue efforts (Wyman 1984; Rapoport 1999; Baumel 2005).

As an immediate response to the Bermuda Conference, the Bergson Group gathered signatures from over 1,800 prominent figures and elected officials toward the "Proclamation on the Moral Rights of the Stateless and Palestinian Jews" (May 1943).[19] The Proclamation emphasized Jews' right to fight persecution and the anti-Christian character of Hitler, signed and endorsed by congressional representatives and senators.[20] Needless to say, the wide media coverage and support for the Bergson Group initiative frustrated Wise, who viewed the Bergsonites as "hooligans" who undermined the ZOA's primacy in representing American Jewry. Despite the disapproval and oppositional activity of the Wise-led ZOA, the Bergson Group held a conference in July 1943 and published various advertisements on the peril of European Jewry, one of which asked: "How well are you sleeping when innocent men, women and children are being slaughtered?".[21]

19 "A Proclamation on the Moral Rights of the Stateless and Palestinian Jews," HKC, 11, pp. 335-345; "A Proclamation on the Moral Rights of the Stateless and Palestinian Jews (Abridged)," ibid., 14, pp. 92-99.

20 The Bergson Group made the mistake of publishing some names without consent, prompting a few to withdraw their public support; notably, Senator Harry S. Truman was enraged over the mistake, and despite Kook's sincere apology, responded briefly to confirm the withdrawal of his name. See correspondence from Truman to Bergson, May 24, 1943, ibid., 1, p. 200.

21 "How well are you sleeping? Is there anything you could have done to save

Interest and support poured in from prominent figures including former president Herbert Hoover, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (though indirectly), Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr., Senator Guy Gillette, Congressman Will Rogers Jr., and Secretary Cordell Hull, among others. The successful publicity was largely owed to the strategic shift the Bergson Group had made. The Group realized that in order to reach a wider audience (e.g., non-Jews, non-Zionist Jews, and Christians) – and efficiently generate public pressure for rescue (and rescue only) – the Emergency Conference had to appear nonsectarian, nonpartisan, candidly humanitarian, and essentially apolitical. In full commitment to the Emergency Conference and its conclusions, the Bergson Group renamed itself the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People.

"Stress Need of Speed to Save Jews in Europe," read the headline published July 2, 1943 in New York, announcing the upcoming conference and notable participants such as Admiral Yates Stirling Jr., Secretary of Interior Harold L. Ickes (who refused to dissociate with Kook despite Wise's advice),[22] and Herbert Hoover as one of the honorary chairmen of the Emergency Conference.[23] It was crystal-clear that the Emergency Conference was a direct response to the Bermuda Conference; unlike the latter, it would concern "potential corpses" rather than "potential refugees".

On July 20, as the Conference opened at the Commodore Hotel in New York, the Committee distributed a document containing "Questions before the Conference" in order to direct the conference discussions.[24] The first question aimed to internationalize and universalize the issue, asking: "Does the Jewish disaster – the millions of Jewish dead and the millions more doomed – constitute a specific problem which requires the urgent moral, military, and diplomatic attention of the United

millions of innocent people – men, women and children – from torture and death? What are you doing now?" ibid., 13, pp. 205-210.

22 Correspondence from Wise to Ickes, December 24, 1943, ibid., 1, p. 249.

23 "Emergency Conference to Save Jews of Europe," *Jewish Review New York*, July 15, 1943, ibid., 12, pp. 102-103; "Plan is Outlined for Feeding Jews," *New York Times*, July 23, 1943, ibid., p. 128.

24 "Questions before the Conference," ibid., 13, p. 12.

Nations?" The second aimed to assess and criticize the American (and British) "policy of indifference" by asking: "Is the 'wait-until-the-war-is-over' attitude of the United Nations toward the Jewish disaster warranted? Or should something be attempted now in order to save countless lives threatened with 'total extermination'?" The third question on the role of "the Church, International Labor Unions, and the international associations of authors and artists, and above all… the governments of the leading United Nations" called for the direct involvement of the non-Jewish world. Next, conference participants were asked to name "realistic possibilities" for moving Jewish refugees to Hitler's "satellite governments" (e.g., the Balkan countries) in order to expand options of refuge beyond Palestine.

The Zionist disposition of the Bergson Group was implicit in the final two questions, without impeding on the objectives of the Emergency Conference. In response to the sixth question on "measures… to force the Nazis to stop the mass murder of European Jews", the Bergson Group suggested a "suicide squad" of Jewish fighters that would infiltrate Nazi-occupied Europe, an idea all too familiar from the Jewish army. The final question further indicated the Bergson Group's Zionist inclinations, implying the necessity of Jewish statehood: "What can be done, apart from practical relief and evacuation, to give hope and strength to the agonized Jewish people of Europe, to restore their dignity and honor as a people, to make them feel that they are partners in the global struggle for a better world, not merely helpless victims?"

The Zionism of the Bergson Group was more of an unspoken nuance than a subject of explicit discussion. Conference proceedings stayed impeccably true to the main cause; the Emergency Committee presented the historical background of the Evian and Bermuda Conferences with detail and erudition; shared expressions of disappointment from various media sources; and discussed the "shame before the future generations" that ignoring the magnitude of violence in Europe would cause. There were five parts to the diligently structured Conference: international relations, transportation and relief, military affairs, religion, and public opinion – all of which highlighted a shared sense of responsibility for rescue.[25]

25 "From Evian to Bermuda," ibid., pp. 16-27.

Interestingly, the mention of American Zionist organizations in the Bergsonite position paper suggested that the Emergency Committee somehow represented a consensus. The twelfth point of the paper concerned the importance of a refugee agency, stating: "This demand for the immediate creation of a United Nations Agency… was presented by the Zionist Organization of America, by the American Jewish Congress as well as by the Emergency Committee to Save European Jewry in which all the major Jewish organizations are participating."[26] The Emergency Committee stressed that its demand for a refugee agency was not new but persistently sought after due to the severity of the matter, and in truth, the JEC had submitted similar resolutions (i.e., the JEC's rescue proposals prior to the Bermuda Conference). On the other hand, the American Jewish Congress and ZOA were led by Wise, whose disapproval and animosity toward the Bergson Group could not have been more evident, and "all the major Jewish organizations" participating in the Emergency Committee were not specified.

In fact, those associated with the Emergency Conference and the Committee's designated "advisors" were primarily the Bergsonites themselves (e.g., Peter Bergson, Eri Jabotinsky, Ben Hecht, and Samuel Merlin), a few Jewish and non-Jewish professionals in international relations and immigration, Christian clergymen (and Archbishop Athenagoras), eight rabbis, and a number of congressional representatives and other well-known politicians such as Herbert Hoover.[27] Not a single person involved in the Emergency Conference was indicated affiliation with the ZOA, the American Jewish Congress, or any other "major Jewish organizations".

Approximately 1,500 people participated in and observed the Emergency Conference, and established figures successfully conducted their presentations in front of a driven and passionate audience.[28] Eleanor Roosevelt sent "a message of encouragement" that was read aloud, sending enthusiasm through the audience. Congressman Will Rogers Jr.

26 "A United Nations' Agency," ibid., pp. 30-31.

27 "The Composition of the Conference," ibid., p. 80; "Executive Board," ibid., p. 98.

28 *The Answer*, August 1943, ibid., 41, pp. 4-37.

underscored the failure of the Bermuda Conference participants: "The case of the world's tortured Jews is a sharp and undeniable index of a combined incompetence, laxity, cruelty, and deliberate self-indulgence of the diplomatic policy of the United Nations, and we might as well put the blame where it belongs – on England and the United States." The Bergson Group also managed to gain contribution from Dr. Y. C. Yang of China, the Secretary of the Chinese delegation to the League of Nations, who not only connected the issue to China ("China… a country which has suffered atrocities at the hands of the Nazis of the East, can well understand and appreciate the hard lot of the suffering Jews") but also stressed the universal character of the cause ("We see a silver lining in the high ideal and solidarity among the United Nations and the growing consciousness of the oneness of the world and of mankind as a whole."). He further expressed his support for the Emergency Committee, stating: "If there is anything we Chinese can contribute, either morally or materially, I am sure we will be more than happy and more than eager to do it."

About two and a half months after the death of Zygielbojm, the Emergency Conference "corrected" the Bermuda Conference, promptly declaring its conclusions:[29]

> The saving of the Jewish people of Europe constitutes a specific problem which should be dealt with as such, not as a part of the general refugee problem;
>
> 1. Most of the four million surviving Jews of Europe can be saved from annihilation without detriment to the successful prosecution of the war;
> 2. A specific governmental agency should be created for that purpose.

After the Conference, the Emergency Committee pushed forward by organizing the Rabbis' March[30] and tirelessly lobbying congressional

29 "Findings and Recommendations of the Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People of Europe," ibid., pp. 23-24.

30 The Emergency Committee organized a Rabbis March to Washington in

members for the fulfillment of the conference conclusions. Finally, two Emergency Conference participants and supporters of the Bergson Group, Senator Guy Gillette and Congressmen Will Rogers Jr., agreed to submit resolutions to the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The two identical resolutions (Resolution 203 and Resolution 352), collectively referred to as the Gillette-Rogers Resolution or the Rescue Resolution, articulated three concise, penetrating points that were practically identical to the Emergency Conference conclusions: (1) the urgent situation of European Jewry, (2) the "American tradition of justice and humanity", and (3) "a plan for immediate action" that would establish a refugee agency to rescue the remaining Jews in Europe.[31] Concurrently, the Emergency Committee published the names of Resolution supporters, which included Eleanor Roosevelt, Henry Morgenthau, "500 Rabbis", prominent senators and congressional representatives, and officials of the Catholic Church. The Church stated:

> As Christians and as Americans, we urge the passage of the Senate Resolution proposing the creation of a special governmental commission to find ways and means to save the surviving Jewish people of Europe. As Christians, how can we do less? As Americans, we recall our liberal tradition of the past. …Let each door of refuge be opened and kept open. This is the Christian way.[32]

With extensive media coverage and "6000 churches" praying in solidarity,[33] public pressure on the Roosevelt administration was now substantial, seemingly foretelling the passing of the Resolution.

October 1943; most rabbis were from the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, with over 400 participants. Roosevelt avoided meeting the rabbis, due partly to the advice of Rabbi Stephen Wise. See Rapaport, *Shake Heaven & Earth* and "The Washington Pilgrimage," HKC, 14, pp. 51-53.

31 "Resolution 203" and "Resolution 352," ibid., 13, pp. 116-119. For a complete list of senators and congressmen behind the Gillette-Rogers Resolution, see 14, p. 60.

32 "The Church Appeals for the Resolution," ibid., p. 62.

33 "6000 Churches Prayed for Compassion in Connection with the Rabbis' Pilgrimage," ibid., p. 63.

The American Jewish Conference, August 1943

Frustrations ran high within the American Jewish establishment as the Emergency Committee posted the Resolutions in the Senate and the House of Representatives, especially as Wise, too, had been planning a conference since March 1943, scheduled for about a month after the Emergency Conference. Competitiveness and divisiveness were inevitable.

The Bergson Group was not solely responsible for this frustration, however. Internal discord accompanied planning for the conference from the outset. Zionist and non-Zionist divisions were exacerbated by Wise's uncompromising view of Palestine as the sole solution to the European Jewish problem (one he shared with Rabbi Silver), resulting in the withdrawal of the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Labor Committee (Penkower 1985; Feingold 1993). Moreover, Wise was embroiled in bitter rivalry with the young Rabbi Silver, who attacked him at the conference (August 29-September 2, 1943) for his moderate stance on the Roosevelt government and the Biltmore Program.

Despite their differences in opinion and personality, Wise and Silver shared their ultimate agendas in Palestine to advance the rescue effort (Feingold 1993). The Conference consolidated their positions with an emphasis on "rescue through victory" and heralded the phrase, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" (Penkower 1985: 104).

By all accounts, the "unity" that the American Jewish Conference expressed was not a reality. In addition to being "caught-up in Wise's furor",[34] which led to the withdrawal of non-Zionist organizations, the American Jewish Conference released a scornful press release about the Emergency Conference. The Bergson Group, claimed the American Jewish Conference, consisted of "a small political party which had been in conflict with the constituted Jewish leadership," and

> …instead of cooperating with established and recognized national Jewish agencies, they have entered into competition and sought to

34 American Jewish Conference, Yad Vashem Archives, http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205734.pdf.

> undermine them. Many men and women of good will, moved by humanitarian sympathy with the plight of the Jews of Europe, have been misled into believing that these committees represented the Jewish people and have contributed to their support.[35]

The issue of representation was not new, and the Bergson Group had indeed made the confusing statement in its position paper that "all the major Jewish organizations" were included in the Emergency Committee. The Emergency Conference employed "mistaken propaganda" that "would not save a single Jew", declared the American Jewish Conference, further problematizing its heritage (i.e., the Jabotinskyian and Irgunite Committee for a Jewish Army).

More crucially, the American Jewish Conference sternly expressed its contempt for the Gillette-Rogers Resolution.[36] The reason for its opposition was threefold. First, the Resolution was formulated in "complete disregard of the rescue program which is being actively pressed in Washington by representative Jewish agencies", although the advance of such a rescue program was not discernible, unless one supposes American Zionist leaders were conducting "backstage diplomacy". Second, the Resolution was "limited" as it did not mention Palestine – a deliberate choice made by the Emergency Committee in order to reach wider audiences and focus solely on a rescue program. Finally, the American Jewish Conference insisted that the Emergency Committee aimed to forge "an open attack on the World Zionist Organization", an accusation stemming from the Bergson Group's heritage and traditional insubordination to American Zionist leaders. In December 1943, Wise stood before the House of Foreign Affairs Committee to disqualify the Gillette-Rogers Resolution as the initiative of "near-fascists" who had defied the authority of American Jewry and the World Zionist Organization.[37]

35 "Press Release from American Jewish Conference: American Jewish Conference Criticized 'Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe'," HKC, 13, pp. 144-147.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

The Gillette-Rogers Resolution

Once the Resolution was submitted (November 9, 1943), the role of the Emergency Conference was either ignored or praised. *The Jewish Chronicles, Jewish Post*, and *Jewish Review* disregarded the contributions of the Emergency Committee to the Resolution while advocating for its approval by the Senate.[38] Publications would discuss the Resolution without any mention of the Emergency Conference, one example being a particularly illuminating *B'nai Brith Messenger* editorial (November 12, 1943)[39] that welcomed the Resolution but mentioned only Rogers, Gillette, and the Swedish and Norwegian Jews being saved. Similarly, *The Jewish Record* (November 18, 1943)[40] chronicled the names of senators and congressional representatives who supported the Resolution while completely omitting the Emergency Committee and its input.

There were also instances of recognition and acknowledgment. The *Jewish Morning Journal* of New York (December 5, 1943) affirmed the Bergson Group's influence on the Resolution in an article by Jacob Glatstein titled "Simple and Clear". Glatstein writes (originally in Yiddish):

> The Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe has certainly achieved much in arousing the conscience of the American people... Nor should it be overlooked that the Emergency Committee succeeded in finding friends among members of the House and Senate who are willing to help, and who realize that the American people now bear a great task and a deep responsibility.[41]

"Is Dr. Wise Right?" asked the daily *Jewish Courier of Chicago* (December 7, 1943) rhetorically, strongly criticizing Wise for "hindering the resolution". It acknowledged the objective of the Emergency

38 Clippings, HKC, 13, pp. 167-172.

39 "Congress Initiates Plan to Save European Jews," Editorial, *B'nai Brith Messenger*, November 12, 1943, ibid., p. 168.

40 "Ask Congress to Create Specific Agency to Save Jewish People of Europe," Editorial, *Jewish Record*, November 18, 1943, ibid., pp. 167-172.

41 Jacob Glatstein, "Simple and Clear," *The Jewish Morning Journal*, December 5, 1943, ibid., pp. 191-192.

Committee and the agenda of the Bergson Group: "The Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe has made a public statement that the resolution in Congress to rescue the Jews of Europe has nothing to do with political questions about Palestine or other territories… This is to say that Dr. Wise has confused several issues which have no connection one with the other."[42] Ohio's *Every Friday* (December 10, 1943) also engaged in self-reflection and criticized Wise. It addressed the role of the Emergency Committee, stating: "We have to admit that the [Emergency] Conference to Save the Jewish People of Europe… stir[s] up public opinion in favor of the present resolution calling for immediate and special action."[43]

Regardless of attitudes toward the Bergson Group, the Resolution itself was broadly supported and became one of the driving factors for the establishment of the War Refugee Board in January 1944 (Wyman 1984; Rapoport, 1999; Baumel 2005; Medoff 2015). Having already passed in the Senate (Resolution 203), it was due to be debated in the House of Representatives (Resolution 352). The passing of the Resolution was palpable, until Roosevelt preemptively announced Executive Order 9417 – thereby sideswiping the discussion on the Resolution in the House and precipitating the establishment of a governmental agency for refugees, which the Bergson Group had so determinedly pushed for.

Roosevelt was motivated by political considerations, as the forthcoming discussion in the House of Representatives prospectively bore critical embarrassment to his administration. Two proponents of the Bergson Group and Emergency Conference participants, Henry Morgenthau and John W. Pehle, would share their thorough investigations of bureaucratic inertia and questionable delay in the transfer of funds and other aids to Jewish refugees in Europe (Lipstadt 1990; Baumel 2005). Furthermore, in opposition to the Resolution, the assistant secretary in charge of issuing visas, Breckinridge Long – who had long sided with Wise against the Bergson Group – had made a fabricated statement on refugee

42 "Is Dr. Wise Right?" Editorial, *The Daily Jewish Courier*, December 7, 1943, ibid., pp. 187-188.

43 "Too Much Fault Finding," Editorial, *Every Friday*, December 10, 1943, ibid., pp. 172-173.

admission to the United States, a blunt lie that was widely exposed, already causing embarrassment to the administration.[44] Both the investigations by Morgenthau and Pehle and Long's erroneous statement would be on the table in the upcoming debate in the House of Representatives. Conscious of public opinion in the face of approaching elections, Roosevelt made a calculated decision; he equipped himself with universal, humanitarian language and proclaimed the establishment of the War Refugee Board.[45]

The victorious moment prompted celebration within the Bergson Group, as the goal of Emergency Committee had now been realized. A day after the announcement of the War Refugee Board, Kook wrote Roosevelt (January 23, 1944) with overwhelming gratitude, praising democracy itself:

> We raised the cry of our tortured and forgotten people. It may be that in our anguish, Mr. President, we sometimes raised our voice out of tune yet that too was understood and gave us renewed strength. These three years have taught us the meaning of democracy for the American people have heeded our cry and yesterday you, Mr. President, heeded them.[46]

The year 1944 marked Kook's fourth year in America. His letter of gratitude to the president was answered by Pehle, the first director of the War Refugee Board: "I assure you that everything in our power will be done to see that effective action is taken to carry out the policy of this Government to save the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death."[47]

44 In opposition to the Resolution, Long supported a governmental commitment to the Bermuda resolutions and defended the American immigration policy, asserting that the majority of the 580,000 refugees admitted during the war years were Jewish. The actual numbers of issued visas and admitted refugees did not match Long's statement, and the discrepancies were exposed by the State Department. See more at Deborah E. Lipstadt, "America and the Holocaust," *Modern Judaism, Review of Developments in Modern Jewish Studies,* part 1, 10, 3 (1990), pp. 283-296 and Rapoport, *Shake Heaven & Earth*.

45 "An Historic Document," HKC, 14, p. 35; "America Acts: War Refugee Board," ibid., 14, p. 43.

46 Correspondence from Bergson to Roosevelt, January 23, 1944, ibid., 1, p. 254.

47 Correspondence from Pehle to Bergson, February 7, 1944, ibid., p. 257.

Discussion

Strained by its own operational problems and offering "too little too late", the War Refugee Board eventually saved approximately 200,000 Jews from Europe (Wyman 1984). As mentioned, the Board was established through an array of correlated and intertwined factors, including the Gillette-Rogers Resolution, which the Emergency Committee pushed to bring under discussion in the House of Representatives. For the American Zionist establishment, however, the Bergson Group was a troubling entity, regardless of its noble cause. The emergency made both groups cling to their orientations and approaches, intensifying tension and disunity, a phenomenon that can be partly attributed to the imagined "establishment" of American Jewry.

One crucial sociological factor evident in JEC activities (in response to Zygielbojm's telegram) and the American Jewish Conference is the characteristic division between American Jewish organizations. Such organizations multiplied due to linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity among Jewish immigrants. Furthermore, they adapted to individualistic and liberal American norms (i.e., became "Americanized"). The divisions had become a "norm", particularly following the Great Migration of 1881, when two million Eastern European Jews immigrated to America. The established, well-to-do, "uptown" German Jews were extremely reluctant to support Jewish newcomers and, in some cases, openly opposed the mass immigration of their brethren from the Russian Empire (Howe 2001). All too prevalent were fear of domestic antisemitism, triggered by the visible presence of Yiddish-speaking, poverty-stricken, traditionally religious Jews; a sense of burden with regard to ensuring communal welfare; and general anti-immigration sentiment in-line with broader American society. Nonetheless, fraternal and philanthropic organizations were established to assist Eastern European Jewish immigrants, as exemplified by the American Jewish Committee, the Joint Distribution Committee, and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. Disinclined to be political, these philanthropic bodies and their successor organizations independently framed their directorial and operative structures and were largely inflexible when it came to cooperation (Feingold 1993).

The representative authority of American Jewish leaders (e.g., Wise) was shrouded in other peculiarities within the organizational makeup

of American Jewry during the 1940s. An editorial in *Common Sense* (March 1944) cogently describes the reality of the community on the ground: "The average Jew [in America] is likely to be unaware of, indifferent to, or puzzled by many of the pronouncements issued in his name."[48] It states that five million Jews lived in America, one million were registered with a Jewish organization, and 25,000 of these were affiliated with Zionist organizations. Anti-Zionist organizations, too, made their voices heard; the American Jewish Committee withdrew from the American Jewish Conference due to the Palestinian agenda, for instance, and in response to the Rabbis' March in October 1943, the American Council for Judaism released a public statement of opposition to Zionism, signed by approximately 100 Jews.[49]

The acute political, socioeconomic, and ideological stratification among American Jews in the 1940s made representing the entire five million an impossible task. Zionism appealed to a small segment of the American Jewish population that generally included the less wealthy and integrated, whose memory of the old country often remained intact (Peck 1980). Developed as an internal means of integration and networking, and stemming predominantly from *Landsmannschaften,*[50] this brand of Zionism did not call for a mass *aliyah* or interfere with the "American dream" (Shiff 1994; Howe 2001). It is likely that those who expressed staunch support of Jabotinsky and made considerable contributions to the Bergson Group were indeed members of several *Landsmannschaften* (Baumel 2005). Thus, put bluntly, American Jewish unity was nonexistent outside of the rhetoric and minds of antisemites.

There was, however, one issue that five million American Jews could all agree upon: the quick victory of the Allies over the Axis.[51] This was

48 "Speaks for the Jews?" *Common Sense*, March 1944, ibid., 14, pp. 28-32.

49 Ibid.

50 *Landsmannschaften* refers to numerous small-scale benevolent communities that bonded members around birthplace and socioeconomic status. They flourished in early twentieth century America in particular, not only providing solidarity rooted in memories of the old country, but also sharing information to support their members' integration into broader American society.

51 "Speaks for the Jews?" *Common Sense*, March 1944, HKC, 14, pp. 28-32.

the bottom-line, cohesive American reaction to the war, and its all-encompassing Americanness provided a broad common denominator in moments of protest regarding Jews in other parts of the world. When American Jews organized demonstrations in response to the Kishinev Pogrom (1903), they forged an alliance with the Christians and emphasized their "brotherhood"; the demonstrations had no impact on the distant Jewish victims but rather evoked solidarity within the United States, boosting American Jews' sense of moral achievement and self-affirmation in American society (Howe 2001).

In this highly divisive yet American context, socioeconomic pressures ran high for Jews. Accusations of un-Americanness, or dual loyalty, would be a severe blow to the community in the 1940s. Over 120 antisemitic organizations were established in the 1930s, some infused with European fascism (e.g., Fritz Kuhn's German-American Bund). Industrial moguls such as Henry Ford were able to be openly antisemitic, and Ivy League colleges imposed quotas on Jewish applicants. Meanwhile, memories of the lynching of Leo Frank (1915)[52] and the Rosenbluth case (1924)[53] were all too vivid – making the politicization of domestic anti-Semitism (as was the case in Europe) a real possibility in the collective consciousness of American Jewry. Economic recession and nativism exacerbated the insecurity, further contributing to the *sha shtil* [be quite] mindset of American Jewish communities in the 1940s (Feingold 1993).

It is therefore highly likely that Wise's fear did not stem from memories of diaspora or paranoia. In fact, his fear was well founded and consistent with American Jewish leaders' emphasis on security in the face of the

52 Leo Frank was a Jewish-American factory manager who was falsely convicted of murdering a 13-year-old girl in Atlanta, Georgia. B'nai Brith and the Anti-Defamation League were established to defend him. He was lynched by a local mob (1915), which led Jewish residents of Atlanta to flee their homes. Frank was granted a posthumous pardon in 1986.

53 Robert Rosenbluth, an American Jewish Captain from World War I, was accused of killing Major Alexander Cronkhite (1918), and the publicized case led Henry Ford to openly claim that Rosenbluth was part of an international Jewish conspiracy. Rosenbluth was acquitted (1924), but the distress profoundly lingered in American Jewish communities. The Rosenbluth trial was billed as "America's Dreyfus case".

emergency. A tangible example is Wise's nearly compulsive opposition to the Bergsonites – a "noisy", unmistakably foreign entity without much of a foothold in American society. One of Wise's rifts with Kook concerned the Roosevelt administration. The Bergson Group did not hesitate to openly criticize the president, whose relationship with Wise must have been cultivated over years of dedication and discretion for the sake of American Jewry, or so Wise believed. The emergency of European Jews and the outcome of the Bermuda Conference prompted an emergency within American Jewry itself; it was hardly advisable for Wise to risk privileged access to Roosevelt by challenging him, not in spite of the emergency but *because* of the emergency. Esteemed scholars of the Holocaust and American Jewish leadership tend to attribute Wise's uncompromising, intolerant personality to the persistent strife and tension within American Jewish circles and around the Bergson Group[54] – but claiming that his antagonism toward the Bergson Group was completely unfounded in this context is hardly justified.

From the perspective of the American Jewish Conference, fusing the rescue effort and Palestine issue was a way to address the complex emergency of American Jewry. Beyond Zionist convictions, this was a safe and affirmative approach to securing the locus of American Zionist leaders in American society and concurring their Anglo-American alliance. Their focus on postwar American policy regarding Palestine presumed the victory of the Allies, which would inherently solve the Jewish refugee problem (by relocating the refugees to a newly established national home in Palestine) under the pretext of the Balfour Declaration (1917) and the Biltmore Program (1942). In effect, they did not touch on American immigration policy nor demand that the American government act for Jews during wartime – issues that the Bergson Group publicly heralded through the Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People in Europe, thereby obstructing the very delicate status quo that American Jewish leaders painstakingly tried to maintain in the face of the emergency.

54 Wise's harsh treatment of opponents and his egocentrism were widely acknowledged, even by his supporters; Wise also developed paranoia and would tell others that Kook would assassinate him on the street (Rapoport, *Shake Heaven & Earth*).

Precisely because of the context of emergency, both Wise and Kook leaned harder into their respective approaches, thus exacerbating tensions during those agonizing years. The visibility of the Bergson Group's activities does not indicate general American Jewish inaction; Wise and Kook had woefully disparate orientations that corresponded with different dimensions of the America they encountered. American Jewish elites reacted to the emergency based on the sociopolitical contexts in which they lived. The Bergson Group, on the other hand, enjoyed relative independence and had fewer elements to consider in devising its *modus operandi*, which appealed to American values – values American Jews themselves struggled to rely on due to their experience of the American democratic norms and social "melting pot".

Conclusion

In his interview with Wyman in 1973 Kook lamented, "Why did we respond the way we did? The question should be: why didn't the others?" This lingering question has lent itself to a legacy of American Jewish inaction during the Holocaust. With Wise as the usual suspect, American Jews have attempted to make sense of six million European Jews perishing while life in America was relatively comfortable. What were our leaders doing? Or as Elie Wiesel later put it, "How was he [Wise] not driven mad?"[55] The question implies another excruciating thought: if Wise had indeed gone "mad" over the issue, would this have made any difference in America in 1943-1944? Would it have prompted intervention in the violence overseas? Inevitably, possible answers to this have caused intense public and scholarly debates.

In 2011, in partnership with the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem held the *International Symposium: The Bergson Group and America's Response to the Final Solution* (July 11, 2011).[56] In response to Wyman's presentation on Kook's contribution to the establishment of the War Refugee Board, Yad Vashem Director Dr.

55 Quoted in Rapoport, *Shake Heaven & Earth*.

56 For the Symposium program, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/institute/pdf/symposium_bergson_group.pdf.

Robert Rozett read a letter from Bauer (who could not be present) aloud to the audience. Bauer's letter bluntly refuted Wyman's key arguments: "To claim today that Kook was responsible for saving lives in Budapest [via the War Refugee Board] is little short of preposterous… In a sense, the [US] administration was right, as it was powerless to save the millions. The only answer was to win the war and kill the murderers. Kook and Wise could not do much about that."[57] Medoff harshly shot back: "The idea that there was nothing the American government could have done in 1944 to rescue more Jews – that is preposterous." The subject is a contentious issue to this day, and the burning debates concerning it often blur the lines of what was possible and what was outside of Kook and Wise's control, such as America's restrictive immigration policies and the operation of the War Refugee Board during wartime.[58]

Consequences do not absolve actors of their choice to set certain goals or of subsequent actions. An examination of archival sources on the Emergency Conference lucidly illustrates the goals and activities of the Bergson Group in the face of the emergency. In his third year of residence in America, Kook led the Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People in Europe and brought much public attention to the rescue issue, leading to the Gillette-Rogers Resolution. Even by today's standards, these were truly extraordinary accomplishments for a small, foreign group – and marks Kook's tremendous achievements in 1943.

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The Other Brother in Arms

The Representation of the Gay Solider in the Films of Eytan Fox

Amir Locker-Biletzki

Introduction: Analysis, Discipline, and Structure

The Israeli film *Yossi & Jagger*, directed by Eytan Fox and written by Avner Bernheimer (2002, Israel, Lama Films), finds gay[1] love in the most unlikely place – an Israeli military outpost on the Lebanese frontier, where the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) has been battling the Lebanese Shi'a organization *Hezbollah* since the ill-advised 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon to this very day.

The current article analyzes the above-mentioned film, an earlier film by Eytan Fox titled *After*, written by Fox along with Natan Brand (1994, Israel, Ronit Ben Menachem), and finally *Yossi*, the sequel to *Yossi & Jagger*, written by Itay Segal (2012, Israel, Lama Films). The following analysis of these films is informed by three theoretical frameworks: The

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1 This article uses the terms gay and homosexual interchangeably in reference to men engaging with other men in a wide range of homosocial to homoerotic acts, including but not limited to same-sex acts. Another term used in this article is "queer", which refers to a non-normative sexual identity. Lesbian soldiers in the IDF – whose circumstances are more complex due to the army's gendered division of labor – are not the focal point of this work. Tellingly, there are no depictions, to the best of my knowledge, of gay female soldiers in Israeli cinema. I use these terms while remaining mindful of the insight offered by Jasbir K. Puar who notes "the inadequacy of all these terms, because they are both excessive and simultaneously too specific." Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Duke University Press, London 2007, p. 230.

first is Queer Theory, generated by both Israeli and non-Israeli queer theorists; the second is homonationalism, which is associated with the queer theorist Jasbir K. Puar; and the third is the critical study of film history in Israel by Israeli scholars Ella Shohat and Yosef Raz.

Using these interpretive concepts, I analyze the narratives of these films as well as their key scenes. The purpose of this study is to elucidate how the films in question create a homonormative and homonationalist liberal discourse that rejects more dissident queer interpretations of the place that soldiers and the army occupy in Israeli society, and that, to a certain degree, negates the possibility of queer radical politics in the Israeli context. In generating this discourse, the film becomes part of Israeli "pinkwashing" – a tactic meant to portray Israel as a Western liberal democracy while averting any criticism regarding the role of the Israeli army in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and furthering the ongoing violent engagement between Israel and her neighbors. This aspect of the study and its context will come to the forefront in my discussion of several recent cases during which radical queer politics was attempted in Israel.[2]

The films of Eytan Fox – the primary cinematic texts in question – are significant for several reasons. First, being well-reviewed box office successes, they represent mainstream Israeli cinema made by an important filmmaker. Second, the clear thematic link between the films makes them a kind of cinematic triptych. Last, the films chronicle the way gay soldiers, and gay men at large, are viewed and received by

2 Reflection on heteronormative aspects in Eytan Fox's films can also be found in the work of Nir Cohen. In his thesis, Cohen contrasts Fox's films with the groundbreaking films of Amos Guttman. Contrary to Guttman's emphasis on the isolation and otherness of his characters in Israeli society, claims Cohen, Fox makes "narrative choices in which the gay story often 'succumbs' to heteronormative, mainstream conventions, reflecting gay men's dependence on hegemonic culture rather than their equal standing." Nir Cohen, "Different Shadows: Gay Representation in Israeli Cinema", PhD Diss., University College London, London 2006, p. 152. This article therefore coincides with the crux of Cohen's contentions regarding Fox's films, but differs in its theoretical frameworks and exclusive discussion of films dealing with the gay soldier narrative.

general Israeli society and by one of its core institutions: the army.

This article does not assert that there is a complete contradiction between queer identity and Israeli nationalism. In fact, the relative lack of contrast between the two is evident in IDF policies that have admitted queers into the ultimate standard-bearer of Israeli nationalism, the army, since the 1980s.

Additionally, the article does not seek to repudiate the homonormative phenomenon, but merely to offer a radical critique of some of its aspects. Borrowing a leaf from Lisa Duggan's work, I will point to a link between the new homonormative discourse and neoliberal economic practices. In her article "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism", Duggan elucidates "the new neoliberal sexual politics" that "might be termed the new homonormativity – it is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutes but upholds and sustains them."[3] This assumption is an extremely pertinent one in the context of this work, as Fox's films can be seen as an Israeli variant of the discourse Duggan references, though they are more sophisticated compared to the materials she analyzes.

Queer Theory

Queer Theory is rooted in the Homophile Movement, which was primarily founded in Germany by German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, but spread to the United States by the 1920s. It can also be traced to the post-1969 Stonewall Riots, Gay Liberation Movement, and Lesbian Feminist Movement.[4]

Queer Theory emerged parallel to the deconstructionist phase of Western thought, drawing on the theories of Jacques Lacan, Ferdinand de Saussure, Louis Althusser, Judith Butler,[5] and most notably, Michel

3 Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism," in: Russ Castronovo and Dana .N. Nelson (eds.), *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, Duke University Press, London 2002, p. 179.

4 Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction*, New York University Press, New York 1996.

5 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*,

Foucault and his seminal work *History of Sexuality,* Volume 1.[6]

The disruption of normative and non-normative sexual and gender identities implied in the works of Foucault and Butler[7] gave rise to the definition of "queer" as that which "problematizes normative consolidations of sex, gender, and sexuality."[8] "Queer" seeks to destabilize and disrupt all political, identity-related, and communal concepts that are deemed "natural".

Homonationalism

The following analysis of *After, Yossi & Jagger*, and *Yossi* is informed by the works of American gender and sexuality theoretician Jasbir K. Puar, who coined the term "homonationalism" in her seminal work *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*.[9] In this text, Puar discusses how the neoliberal discourse of empire and consumerism coalesces into homonationalism as a cultural and political practice.

Delving into the development of gay tourism, Puar unearths the subtle link between American patriotism, consumption, and queer identity.

Routledge, London 1990.

6 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* volume 1: *An Introduction*, Vintage Books, New York 1990.

7 Of special interest for this study, which deals with the performative art of cinema, is the theorization of gender by Judith Butler in her groundbreaking work *Gender Trouble*. Butler concludes that, "The inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that gender can be neither true nor false, but is only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of premier and stable identity", Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 99. The understanding of gender as a discursive product with no naturalized substance leads Butler to see political efficacy as arising from subversive bodily acts. In the context of the early 1990s, she recognizes drag as a parody of heterosexual femininity. Thus, "The parodic repetition of gender exposes… the illusion of gender identity as an intractable depth and inner substance." Ibid., p. 200.

8 Jagose, *Queer Theory*, p. 99.

9 Puar defines the term as "understanding the complexities of how 'acceptance' and 'tolerance' for gay and lesbian subjects have become a barometer by which the right to and capacity for national sovereignty is evaluated." Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, p. 336.

Analyzing how gay-orientated tourism businesses reacted to the 9/11 attack, she observes that "National identity is being reoriented toward excellence in consumption… gay tourists are representatives of a form of U.S. exceptionalism expressed through patriotic consumption."[10] Exploring the institutionalized infrastructure of gay tourism, Puar asserts that it was mainly gay men who were drawn into the post-9/11 patriotism expressed through consumerism. Her portrayal of gay tourism is very conscious of the fact that "The industry in general is uninterested in the consumption practices of queers of color, queer women, and working class queers."[11]

Examining the American Supreme Court ruling in *Lawrence v. Texas* – a 2003 case that struck down Texas' sodomy law, making same-sex legal across U.S. territory – Puar unearths how the verdict's expansion of "privacy" to include gay sex in the private domain of the home is "a racialized and nationalized construct, insofar that it is granted not only to heterosexuals but to certain citizens and withheld from many others and from noncitizens,"[12] creating an acceptable model of a gay citizen that is white, middle class, and liberal. The U.S. Supreme Court ruling, perceived as progressive for its expansion of gay rights, is in actuality quite conservative. It narrowly defines who can be admitted into full citizenship.[13] The same mechanism is at work in Israel, where the army, a marker of full citizenship, is hailed as progressive for its acceptance of gays while effectively excluding many alternative and diverse gay identities.

Puar's rendition of homonationalism as a convergence of liberal tolerance, patriotism, and neoliberal consumerism is highly pertinent to the film analysis in the current work. The movies discussed in this text construct the gay Israeli subject as a Zionist (i.e., patriotic) solider

10 Ibid., p. 252.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., p. 124.

13 "Citizenship" in this context does not refer to the formal bureaucratic concept, but rather to access to public goods. For instance, while Palestinian citizens of Israel are formal Israeli citizens, their ownership of land is extremely restricted, as the State clearly prefers Jewish land ownership.

engaged in neoliberal consumption; within this structure, Israeli liberal society is able to extend tolerance to a privileged part of the LGBT community. Using the conceptual tools of homonationalist theory, I trace these elements within the cinematic narrative of the films in question.[14]

The Queer Soldier and Death

Cultural Militarism in Israel

Soldiery and armed force are a core theme of the Zionist nation-building enterprise in Palestine.[15] Baruch Kimmerling characterizes Israeli militarism as a form of cultural militarism:

> Wars are perceived as necessary and unavoidable societal processes – with respect both to internal and foreign affairs. Each major societal goal – education, industry, technological advance, science, the arts or even leisure – are perceived to be enlisted to serve the "homeland"; and the military is viewed as the purest and most conspicuous embodiment of the "motherland".[16]

14 Nir Cohen asserts that behind the gay "revolution" of the 1980s – when gay rights were largely recognized by the state and the gay lifestyle was accepted into the mainstream – stood a conservative alliance. It was an alliance between the LGBT community and the depleted, old Zionist Ashkenazi elite. This elite, he states, is increasingly threatened by "ethnic, cultural, and religious groups that have undermined its once undisputed reign" and therefore, cannot afford to "turn its back on lesbians and gay men". (Cohen, "Different Shadows," p. 118). Many gay activists internalized the heterosexist heteronormative norms of mainstream Israeli society in return. This alliance is reflected in the films of Eytan Fox and provides a wider social context for the basic premise of this article.

15 This article asserts that militarized violence is central to the Zionist and Israeli nation building enterprise. However, in considering this statement one should remain mindful of the complexity of Zionism. Zionism, among other things, is a movement driven by the revival of Hebrew culture and the intricate societal building of class and capital in Palestine/Israel. While alert to these aspects of Zionism, the current article is primarily concerned with the Israeli army, and therefore, in its context there is greater pertinence to stressing the violent aspects of Zionism.

16 Baruch Kimmerling, "Patterns of Militarism in Israel," *European Journal of*

Kimmerling demonstrates the prevalence of Israeli cultural militarism in spheres of social life outside of the army, where continued conflict on one hand and periodic wars on the other become part of individual and familial experience, constructing the soldiers' world and identity not just as part of the collective, but as individuals.[17]

The Gay Man and the Army

Zionism was not just a political and national revolution but a sexual revolution as well, meant not only to transplant Jews from Europe to Palestine but also to recreate the Jew himself. As shown by Michael Gluzman and Daniel Boyarin, early Zionism strove to disassociate the new Zionist body from the anti-Semitic perception of exilic Jewish men, all while implicitly rejecting the possibility of this body's homosexuality.[18] Colonial imitation as a way to reshape Jewish manliness is intertwined, as Boyarin demonstrates, with violence: "colonial imitation can be [a] bloody pursuit".[19]

The official policy of the IDF regarding homosexual soldiers has changed since it was first formalized in the early 1980s. Generally, it moved through gradual liberalization until gay soldiers were allowed into the army in 1998.[20] Despite this liberalization of IDF policy, the treatment of queer soldiers varies from unit to unit and is highly dependent on the social surroundings in the place of service. For the most part, gay and straight soldiers sparingly refer to sexual orientation,

Sociology, 34 (1993), p. 202.

17 Ibid., p. 134.

18 Michael Gluzman, "*Hakmiha Lehetroseksualiyut: Tsiyonut Veminiyut be'Altnoyland* [Longing for Heterosexuality: Zionism and Sexuality in Herzl's Altneuland]," *Theory and Criticism*, 11 (1997), pp. 145-162. and Daniel Boyarin, "*Neshef Hamesibot Hakoloniyali: Tsiyonut, Migdar, Hikuy* [Colonial Drug: Zionism, Gender, and Mimicry]", ibid., pp. 123-144.

19 Boyarin, ibid., p. 139.

20 For a detailed historical account see Aeyal Gross, "*Miniyut, Gavriyut, Tsava ve'Ezraḥut: Sheyrut Homo'im veLesbiyot Betsahal Bemishkafaim Hashva'ati'im* [Sexuality, Masculinity, Army and Civics: Gay and Lesbians IDF Service from a Comparative Perspective]," *Plilim*, 9 (2000), pp. 141-142.

abiding by a tacit agreement of "live and let live".[21]

In his groundbreaking book *Brothers and Others in Arms*, Danny Kaplan describes the reality of gay soldiers undergoing IDF service. Based on interviews with combat soldiers[22] who served in the IDF from as early as 1980 through the early 2000s, respectively, he reconstructs the lives of gays in the IDF. The crux of Kaplan's argument is that gay Israeli soldiers adjust well to the masculine culture of the army. For a variety of reasons, the soldiers in his study identify with the IDF and revel in male bonding and homosocial interaction.[23] However, their attachment to IDF masculine culture does not merely assume the form of positive enthusiasm.[24] The bond with the IDF is also strengthened by war making at its most brutal, as depicted in the story of Shaul from the Nahal (Hebrew initials for *Noar Halutzi Lohem*, lit. "Fighting

21 Danny Kaplan and Amir Rosenmann, "Presence of Openly Gay Soldiers in the IDF does not Undermine Unit Social Cohesion," *Research Report Submitted to the Michael D. Palm Centre* (2010), pp. 1-18.

22 Most soldiers in the IDF do not serve in combat roles. As of the early 2000s, "Less than 20% of the men on active duty serve in definite combat roles." See Danny Kaplan, *Brothers and Others in Arms: The Making of Love and War in Israeli Combat Units*, Southern Tier Editions, Oxford 2003, p. 116. The clear divide between frontline and rear echelon soldiers is expressed well in military slang: a noncombat solider is called a *Jobnik* (roughly translated as someone with a job, implicitly, an easy job), as opposed to *Kravi* (one in combat). This article focuses specifically on combat soldiers. This choice is naturally dictated by the films at hand, whose main protagonists are in active duty as well as veteran combat soldiers. It also stems from the way combat service is structured. For combat soldiers, the relatively long periods spent with their units as well as harsh training and living conditions, ensure that their primary group is other male soldiers, all at a formative age in terms of sexual identity. In contrast, noncombat soldiers, mainly those who spend more time at home than the base, retain more connection with civilian life, and are more free to express their sexuality in sites outside the army.

23 Kaplan, *Brothers and Others in Arms*. Homosocial refers here to a set of acts of male physical closeness that can be overtly sexual while not engaging in actual same sex acts.

24 Danny Kaplan and Eyal Ben-Ari, "Brothers and Others in Arms: Managing Gay Identity in Combat Units of the Israeli Army," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 29 (2000), p. 400.

Pioneering Youth") Brigade,[25] as he recounts his experiences from the First Lebanon War in 1982:

> I recall another event. There were Israeli lookouts near us who were snipers. And they would watch the houses all day. If they saw someone, they would shoot. So one time I went to visit them… One of them said to me, "Come here; I want you to see something." I looked, and I saw two *mehablim*, one fucking the other in the ass; it was pretty funny. Like real animals. The sniper said to me, "And now look". He aims and puts a bullet right into the forehead of the one that was being fucked. Holy shit, did the other one freak out! All of a sudden, his partner died on him. It was nasty. We were fucking cruel. Cruelty – but this was war.[26]

This extreme case uncovers the depth of the soldier's attachment to the IDF's masculine culture of war, as, although he is himself gay, Shaul refers to the Palestinians on the opposite side – who presumably share his desires – as animals. Additionally, gender hierarchy is preserved in the story, as the Palestinian on the "feminine" side of the sexual act is slain, another clear motif of this culture and its narrative. As I later show, it is the same attachment to the masculine culture of the Israeli army, albeit in a softer iteration, that permeates the films analyzed in the current work.

Israeli Cinema Theory and Queer Theory

Israeli filmmakers have had a long and creatively prolific relationship with war and its main instrument, the army. The current film critique is informed by the works of cultural critic and scholar Ella Shohat,

25 The Nahal infantry brigade was established in 1948 after the dismantling of the Palmach (Heb. initials, lit. "strike force"), which was identified with the Zionist left. The brigade was formed as a way to preserve the unique character of the Palmach, in which youth movement members combined settlement activity with military duties. The brigade is largely identified with the left, although in recent years the IDF has tapered off the traditional model whereby soldiers spend half of their 3-year service in a settlement and half in deployment, replacing it with a regular infantry model.

26 Ibid., p. 58.

primarily by her work *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, and the scholarly analysis of Israeli films by cinema researcher Yosef Raz in *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema*.

Ella Shohat's pivotal work, which analyzes Israeli cinema along an East/West axis, is herein used as an analytic point of departure. Influenced by the discursive critique of Edward Said's European Orientalism,[27] Shohat recognizes three main genres typical of the Israeli film industry that emerged in post-1948 Israel: the heroic-nationalist genre, the "*bourekas*" films,[28] and personal cinema, which includes a wave of anti-Occupation political films from the 1980s.

The films in question largely belong to the heroic-nationalist genre and to personal cinema. The years following the establishment of Israel in 1948 were characterized by films "focused on the virtually mythic Israeli heroes: Sabras, Kibbutzniks, and soldiers."[29] The Zionist hero of the heroic-nationalist genre is described as one motivated by idealism, a dreamer (Heb. *holem*) who actualizes the Zionist nation-building enterprise, and a tough warrior (Heb. *lohem*) fighting to defend the Zionist enterprise against hostile Arab and Palestinian surroundings. Post-1967 films on the other hand, depict "greater emphasis on the 'negative' quality of toughness".[30]

By the early 1960s, the heroic-nationalist genre began to decline with the rise of capitalist consumer culture and more individualist concerns among Israelis, making way for personal cinema. To great extent,

27 Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, I.B.Tauris, New York 2010, and Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Random House, New York 1978.

28 "*Bourekas*" films, named after a Mizrahi pastry, are a genre of popular comedies that were a great commercial success in Israel from the 1960s to the 1980s. They usually depict the exploits of a male Mizrahi protagonist as he manages to undermine the elite Ashkenazi social order. The films, mainly those featuring Israeli actor Ze'ev Revach as their star, are not without subversive sexual messages and gay characters do appear in them, albeit in effeminate, stereotypical form. See Cohen, "Different Shadows," pp. 24-25.

29 Shohat, *Israeli Cinema*, p. 55.

30 Ibid., p. 101.

the genre of personal cinema was a reaction to the demise of heroic-nationalist films and the commercial success of "*bourekas*" films. Most personal films were "hermitically introspective within an intimate, understated style".[31]

Film scholar Yosef Raz further developed and elaborated on Shohat's theories. In his study of representations of the queer body in Israeli films, he sets out to explore the "crucial role played by Israeli cinema in the construction of heterosexual masculinity". Raz argues that the invention of a Zionist heterosexual body was only possible as part of an "attempt to marginalize, sequester, discipline, and normalize queerness in Israeli national masculine identity".[32] In addition, Raz claims that the construction of a Zionist-heterosexual-corporal self, one perceived as Ashkenazi (European-Jewish), is only possible through the disavowal of Palestinian and Mizrahi bodies as well as the exilic Ashkenazi body.[33]

Raz describes heroic-nationalist military films in the wake of George Mosse[34] as "concerned with constructing a myth, which would mask death in war and emphasize the meaningfulness of fighting and sacrifice."[35] He further elaborates on the "military band movies" of the late 1970s and 1980s, addressing their critical political content,[36] but prefers to anchor his understanding of these films in the concept of masochism. Through "the masochistic practice", claims Raz, male soldiers "seek pain and passivity as a way to act out their queer identification with other soldiers."[37]

Queers as Cinematic Soldiers

How are the ideas discussed thus far expressed in the diegeses of the films *After*, *Yossi & Jagger*, and *Yossi*? *After* opens with a shot of the

31 Ibid., p. 179.

32 Yosef Raz, *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema*, Rutgers University Press, London 2004, p. 1.

33 Ibid.

34 George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1990.

35 Raz, *Beyond Flesh*, p. 49.

36 Ibid., p. 20.

37 Ibid., p. 56.

Israeli flag, identifying the film's locality while corresponding with the patriotic motifs of the heroic-nationalist genre. The film unfolds the relationship between Yonatan (Hanoch Re'im), a young recruit, and his commanding officer Erez (Gil Frank), and is set in the early 1980s as the First Lebanon War rages. There are two parts to the story. The first takes place in the army base where Yonatan and his company are undergoing basic training with the tough Erez. Yonatan, who has a friendship with another solider named Ido (Benjamin Jagendorf), is singled out and hazed by his officer. The second part of the film takes place in Jerusalem, where Yonatan and his company take a short leave on their way to a rumored deployment in Lebanon.

One scene in the first part of the movie echoes the tent scene from another military band film, Uri Barabash's *One of Us* (1989, Israel, Israfilm), in which the main protagonists huddle together in a tent, sharing a moment of homosocial intimacy. In *After*, Yonatan recounts the pleasantries of home to Ido, as they share a homosocial relationship akin to that which Danny Kaplan describes in his work.[38]

The second part of the film, while revealing the "gay secret" to the viewer, also gives it an ethnic, class-related, and political context. On the bus ride to Jerusalem, a loud political argument erupts between Ido and a group of overtly Mizrahi soldiers about the war raging in northern Israel. At one point, a soldier named Gazoli (Uri Mauda) shouts angrily, "Forget them, these north Tel Aviv leftists, they do not understand," thus ascribing to Ido and Yonatan the affluent neighborhoods of Tel Aviv, identified with the left. This class marker is also an ethnic one, signaling that the two are Ashkenazi. This is an element at the center of all three films at hand: the ethic and elite-class background of their heroes. Such characters are the products of the Zionist sexual revolution. In the discourse reflected by these films, the type of man who is "allowed" to be a gay IDF solider, and thereby enjoy full membership in the Israeli body politic, is Ashkenazi and middle class. The films therefore reject the possibility of non-militaristic participation in Israeli society, and marginalize other queer identities – Mizrahi, Palestinian, and

38 See Kaplan, *Brothers and Others in Arms*, pp. 219-247.

transgender – that do not fit the aforementioned norm. Comparable to the legal definition of citizenship that Puar describes,[39] here citizenship defines gay men and is awarded to them through military service. On Erez's orders, the argument is cut short and Yonatan, who plays guitar, sings a melodic song.

As the company arrives in Jerusalem, Yonatan drifts through the city in a vain attempt to call his mother. At one point, he witnesses a political argument, as Israeli political debates usually become shouting matches, between antiwar demonstrators and other citizens. In both this scene and the above-mentioned bus scene, Yonatan remains essentially uninvolved, preoccupied with his personal voyage of sexual and personal self-discovery. This detached, apolitical motif will present more overtly in the following films, linking them to the personal cinema of the late 1960s and 1970s, which disregarded the wider Israeli context in favor of personal and artistic expression. In this sense, *Yossi & Jagger* and *Yossi* are also concerned with the personal journeys of their heroes more so than the social and political context that is faintly reflected in their diegeses.

As he drifts through the city, Yonatan spots Erez in Independence Park, a known gay cruising spot, and becomes a voyeuristic witness to Erez having sex with an older man in the public bathroom. As he goes to leave once his officer has gone, he finds the latter's military I.D. card. When Yonatan is late getting to the bus, he is once again hazed by Erez. He breaks down, shouting "Enough!" at his tormentor and object of attraction, and shows him the card, revealing their secret. Erez stops the abuse, and while still taking away Yonatan's weekend leave he softens toward him. As the soldiers climb onto the bus, Erez takes back his card. While they drive through the night, the song Yonatan played earlier is heard on the radio. Erez turns to Yonatan and says, "Miller [his last name] do you hear the song?" When the pensive Yonatan does not reply, he calls, "Can you hear me Yonatan?" The film ends upon the bus's arrival at the border fence between Israel and Lebanon.

Yossi & Jagger, set in a snow-covered Israeli outpost on the Lebanese frontier, tells the tragic love story between Yossi (Ohad Knoller), a

39 See Note 14 supra.

tough Golani[40] commander, and his junior officer Lior (Yehuda Levi), nicknamed Jagger for his rock-star good looks. The tension at the core of the film is Jagger's desire to come out with their affair, expressed in his wish to go on a joint vacation in the southern Israeli resort town Eilat. Yossi, on the other hand, is afraid that if discovered, their relationship will undermine his ability to command the company. Yossi identifies with the army so fully that he is unwilling to be discharged with his lover when their service comes to an end, as Jagger teasingly says in one of the key scenes of the movie: "Why are you staying in this army, when you've already got yourself an officer?" Yossi drills and re-drills his soldiers and diligently prepares for the fatal ambush at the culmination of the film. Jagger, who at first seems more casual in his relationship to the army, still greatly identifies with it. When Yaeli (Aya Steinovitz), a female solider who is secretly in love with Jagger, unaware that he is gay, tries to confess her love while he is on guard duty, he removes her while citing military regulation in a harsh tone. Jagger thereby marks the outpost a masculine space in which female presence is limited. The identification with the military depicted in the film corresponds with Kaplan's findings, evincing that gay soldiers feel a strong bond to the army.

Yossi & Jagger presents a moment of gender performance, such as that which Butler describes, without subverting the conservative military gender binary. Yossi and Jagger are two contrasting types. Yossi is "a typical national man. Task oriented, rugged, introverted, at times violent. He is a stable man who bears the all-Israeli name 'Yossi'." Jagger, on the other hand, is "another kind of man. Open, sensitive, a bit of an actor, a bit campy."[41] The contrast between the two lovers can be seen in one of the key scenes of the movie, during which Yossi and Jagger patrol around the outpost. In a series of rapid shots, the two heroes

40 The choice to reference the Golani Brigade is not accidental. In contrast to its Brigade archrival, the Paratroopers – who traditionally recruit Ashkenazi kibbutzniks and young men of the urban middle class – Golani has enlisted young Mizrahi immigrants, giving the unit a less disciplined and more "masculine" character.

41 Yaniv Ron-El, "Wyoming/Warrior Stories: Homosexuality, Masculinity and Nationality on Screen" (presentation, Sixth Other Sex Conference, Tel Aviv, Israel, June 4-6, 2006).

throw snowballs at each other, then fall to the ground and make love in a scene described by *Ha'aretz* film critic Uri Klein as one whose sense of "daring" "would not shame American-youth films of the 1950s."[42] After the act, Jagger brings out a radio-set and turns to a channel playing the song *Bo* ("come"), which was originally popularized by Israeli singer Rita, an LGBT community and Israeli transgender icon, and later performed by the openly gay singer Ivri Lider. The song speaks to one of the film's central motifs: the courage to expose oneself. As he dances suggestively, Jagger playfully and coyly alters the movie's theme song, replacing one of its lines, "It is easier to be afraid together," with "It is easier to get fucked in the ass" (in Hebrew, the lines rhyme), to which Yossi replies, "You're such a faggot with your musical taste." Jagger retorts in an exaggerated masculine voice: "This is 'radio straight', we are here with Yossi, a tough guy, a company commander that takes it up the ass, who would like to listen to Meir Ariel." The reference to Meir Ariel (1942-1999) – a singer and a *kibbutznik* who served in the army as a paratrooper and expressed overtly homophobic views – serves to enhance the gender performative moment. However, the performative moment is not a subversive one: the whole scene is shared only with the viewers.

The film as a whole lacks political context; as indicated above, it does not blur sexual binaries to challenge the centrality of the IDF's masculine, heteronormative culture of war in Israeli society. As Yosef Raz noted, the film is part of the LGBT community's "politics of normalcy", which "do not challenge the hegemony of these institutions (i.e., the IDF)." The political line he describes promotes inclusion of "an exclusive group consisting mainly of Jewish, middle class gays and lesbians" in the IDF.[43] The conservative essence of *Yossi & Jagger* did not escape Uri Klein – one of the few critics who were not won over by the presumed daring and progressiveness of the film. Klein wrote that the movie "represents a reaction that pretends to be subversive" and can

42 Uri Klein, "He didn't Know his Name," *Ha'aretz*, September 13, 2002.

43 Yosef Raz, "*Hapolitika shel Hanormali: Min ve'Uma baKolno'a haHomoseksuali ha'Isra'eli* [The Politics of Normality: Sex and Nation in Gay Israeli Cinema]," *Theory and Criticism*, 30 (2007), p. 160.

construed as part of the patriotic wave that swept through Israel in the wake of the Second Intifada.[44]

Ever the obedient officer, Yossi gives in to the pressure of his regimental commander and takes his exhausted soldiers to execute an ambush. After quarreling with Jagger and refusing to reveal their affair, he leads his soldiers to the fatal ambush. When an explosive is detonated near them, Jagger is killed, dying as the stunned Yossi professes his love to him. The fatal ambush scene highlights the absence of Arabs from the film: the only time the enemy appears is as a *deus ex machina* in the form of a bomb. The absence of the Arab Other is also expressed in the opening shots of the film, as Israeli helicopters sweep across a barren, empty landscape with no signs of human activity. This elimination of indigenous presence from the landscape is characteristic of settler colonial societies such as Israel. Consider the impressions of explorer-surveyor Thomas Mitchell as he travelled through the Australian landscape in 1838 and saw "an empty landscape… the indigenous inhabitants remained a presence only detected by reference to 'camp-smoke', or to 'camp-litter' that was left behind."[45]

The film ends in the home of Jagger's family, where the introverted and traumatized Yossi cannot bring himself to share his and Jagger's love story with the grieving parents. Instead, Yaeli claims that she was Jagger's girlfriend. Thus, the secret is buried with Jagger's torn body, while the heteronormative order remains intact.

The film *Yossi* catches up with the character of Yossi, once again played by Ohad Knoller, ten years after the death of his lover. *Yossi* is set in a hospital in a Tel Aviv-adjacent location, and in the southern city of Eilat. Ever closeted, Yossi is now a successful and dedicated cardiologist, whose life consists of work, microwave dinners in his uncongenial apartment, masturbation to gay internet porn, and falling asleep in front of the TV. In a comedic scene, Yossi attempts a gay, internet-facilitated one-night stand, and suffers humiliation from an

44 Klein, "He didn't Know his Name."

45 Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2010, p. 83.

arrogant hyper-masculine partner. However, a chance meeting in the hospital with Jagger's mother (Orly Silbersatz-Banai) reopens old wounds, and Yossi comes to visit his dead lover's house and reveals their secret to his parents. Following his confession, he finds rejection rather than acceptance, as the stunned mother asks him to leave. However, in a cinematic quote taken from Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005, United States, River Road Entertainment), Jagger's father (Raffi Tavor) allows him to see the deceased soldier's room.

While his personal life is in turmoil, Yossi's professional life suffers as well, and he mishandles an important medical procedure. Emotionally drained, he departs for a vacation in the Sinai Peninsula. On the way, he picks up a group of young soldiers who missed their bus to Eilat. One of them, Tom (Oz Zehavi), a beautiful, blond young man, catches Yossi's eye. The car ride to Eilat becomes the site in which the film marks the difference between Yossi and his new love interest Tom, and the Mizrahi and Arab Others. As they make their way to Eilat, one of the young, Mizrahi-looking officers asks Yossi to play some music. When the CD player utters Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 5,[46] the soldiers demand that Yossi stop playing "Mozart" and start playing Mizrahi music. The only one who defends Yossi's musical taste, which includes old Israeli songs, is Tom – who also knows Gustav Mahler's full name. As in the previous films, this short scene designates the heroes of the film as Ashkenazis who are familiar with "higher" and more "profound" European culture. Finally, a suitable CD is found and Yossi and his newfound companions enter Eilat to the sound of Israeli superstar Eyal Golan's song *Jungle*, whose associations with colonialist European images of "primitive" Africa fit well with the repudiation of the non-European in the scene.

In the same scene, when Yossi tells his hitchhikers that he is driving to Sinai, they answer, "Are you crazy? Haven't you heard all the warnings? They will kill you out there, it's dangerous there." Yossi shrugs off their

46 The film references Thomas Mann's novel *Death in Venice*, which deals with an older man's infatuation with a younger boy. In one scene, Yossi is seen reading the book near the pool. Mahler's music references Luchino Visconti's masterpiece adaptation of the novel (1971, Italy/France, Alfa Cinematografica).

cautionary words, claiming that Sinai is as dangerous as the highway they are driving on, but the next scene proves him wrong. After dropping off his newfound companions at their hotel, Yossi arrives at the Egyptian-Israeli border. As he stops his car near the checkpoint, he surveys his surroundings. While the Israeli flag waves overhead, signifying national territory, the PA system sounds security instructions, the last of them, tellingly, in Arabic. He glances at two security men operating the checkpoint, then turns his car around and heads back to Eilat. Through these images and the use of diegetic sound, the scene gives concrete expression to the fear of the Arab Other, the fear articulated by the soldiers during the car scene.

The elimination of the Arab Other from *Yossi* as well as *Yossi & Jagger* stands in contrast to the treatment of Palestinian/Arab presence in other Israeli films. The most prominent example is Daniel Wachsmann's *Ḥamsin* (1982, Israel, Hamsin Film Production), the story of a relationship triangle between Gedalia, a Jewish farmer, his Palestinian farmhand Khaled, and Hava the farmer's sister. The love story between Khaled and Hava unfolds against the background of nationalist tensions, as Jewish farmers and their Palestinian neighbors struggle over land rights. While not expressly shown in the film, "Gedalia's close relationship to Khaled can be seen in a homoerotic light."[47] When the Palestinian protagonist crosses the racial divide, implicitly betraying the homoerotic bond as well, his punishment is to be killed by Gedalia. While this violent rejection reinforces the socioeconomic and national subordination of the Palestinian native to the Jewish settler, serving the film's radical political message, it still endows the Palestinian character with corporality and agency, precisely the elements which are absent from *Yossi* and *Yossi & Jagger*.

Back from the border, Yossi arrives in Eilat, which is portrayed as a kind of neoliberal paradise. The hero's entrance into the hotel – an artificial marbled structure with deep blue pools – can be interpreted as an act of patriotic consumption. Yossi is going to spend his vacation in this Israeli capitalist dreamland under the national flag rather than

47 Raz, *Beyond Flesh*, p. 127.

outside of national territory. Along with the Eilat dream world comes Tom, his Hebrew name meaning "innocence", who represents a hybrid figure. When he is with his comrades in arms, he appears at ease with their homosocial jokes, which revolve around sexual encounters with each other's family members and homosocial roughhousing in the pool. Although he is the only one to defend Yossi's musical taste in the car, which ascribes to him the same class and ethnicity as Yossi (one further highlighted by his blonde, European appearance), he still has no qualms with Mizrahi music and even appears knowledgeable about it. Above all, he is openly gay, and his homosexuality is treated by his friends as a matter of fact – reflecting the indifference of many servicemen in today's IDF toward the subject.

Like its prequel, *Yossi* allows for a few moments of gender performance, and like the heroes of *Yossi & Jagger*, Yossi and Tom represent two different types. Yossi is still an introverted, heavyset man. Tom is young, full of daring and life, and to some extent, childlike. The scene that marks the start of their courtship takes place at the hotel bar. Yossi watches a group of female singers wearing slightly over-the-top colorful clothing and makeup, reminiscent of drag, sing cheesy love songs on a stage. Tom sits next to his love interest, echoing the singers while placing a cocktail umbrella behind his ear. In an effeminate voice, he asks, "What did I miss?" As the film progresses, Tom slowly tears down the walls of isolation surrounding the traumatized Yossi, culminating in an intimate love scene. The film ends with the two lovers at the beach drinking beer. Tom asks Yossi when he is due back at the hospital, and Yossi replies in two or three days. Tom asks whether he *wants* or *needs* to return. Yossi answers, "Look around you; do you think this is real life?" When Tom suggests that they stay in their neoliberal dreamland, Yossi asks about the army, to which Tom answers that they can do without him. After thinking about it for a short while, Yossi makes the surprised Tom an offer to stay forever, implying a long-term commitment between the two.

How does Eytan Fox himself perceive his films? In an interview conducted just before the release of *Yossi* with one of his harshest critics, the aforementioned Uri Klein, the filmmaker openly discussed different issues ranging from the politics of his films to their place in Israeli cinema. Fox explicitly places his films at the center of the LGBT politics

of normalcy. The tragedy of *Yossi & Jagger* "is not just the loss in battle of a handsome, promising young man, which corresponds with the Israeli myth of the dead soldier, but that at the end of the film Yossi cannot say 'I am a war widow; look at me'."[48] His films are meant to depict his own experience as an Ashkenazi, middle-class *kravi* (combat) soldier:

> I decided that I would be the next homosexual director. I would show the Israeli flag at the opening of *After*. I would present soldiers in my films. I would portray more mainstream families. I want my life to be stable, to have a family.[49]

This acceptance of the central institutions within the Israeli militarist patriarchy – the reproductive family and most notably the army – places Fox's work at the center of the limited liberal discourse of inclusion. His characters, hailing strictly from a narrow class and ethnic stratum, make his films palatable to wider audiences. While discussing his film *The Bubble* (2006, Israel, Uchovsky Fox), which portrays a love story between two men, one Jewish and one Palestinian, he comments:

> *The Bubble* was too difficult a story for the Israeli audience. Two Zionist men in the Israel Defense Forces; that, the Israeli audience can see. But an Israeli and a Palestinian man, that was too much.[50]

Asked about the political efficacy of his films, Fox locates it squarely within the mainstream of LGBT official politics. As stated in his interview with Klein, he is "proud to be part of the change that happened in Israeli society… presenting models of gay love has generated some social change."[51] When considering his place within the various genres of Israeli cinema and his relation to earlier Israeli films, Fox denies any link to the heroic-nationalist genre. However, the place he does claim in the Israeli cinematic context effectively rephrases this very genre. When asked by Klein whether *Yossi & Jagger* would have been successful as a story about a man and a woman, Fox answers:

48 Uri Klein, "What does '*Yossi*' Say about Israel in 2012," *Ha'aretz*, May 18, 2012.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.

> The story represented in Israeli cinema in films like *He Walked in the Fields* or *Siege* is false. Not because what is depicted is a lie, but because the national and historical narrative portrayed is untrue. It is a narrative that paints us as a strong, just people who engage in defensive battles in which men defend women… making the two heroes men allows a reconnection to the national and historical narrative from a different and more authentic place that challenges the myth on which it is based.[52]

The historical and social moments depicted in the films at hand might help us to further understand Fox's work in its context. *After*, made in 1990, reflects the stormy 1980s, an era that saw Israel go from plunging into the Lebanese quagmire to engaging in open confrontation with the Palestinians during the First Intifada. As Israelis painfully learned the limits of Israel's military prowess, iconoclastic elements that would challenge certain long-held beliefs began to form. In this sense, *After* can be observed within the broader context of the rise of post-Zionism in the Oslo era. As certain Israeli coteries began to take a harder look at issues such as the Palestinian *Nakba* and Israel's treatment of its non-European Jewish citizens, the possibility of talking about sexual minorities, even in the IDF, emerged.

Yossi & Jagger, as noted by Klein, is a reflection of the Second Intifada period. As a wave of nationalist neo-Zionism washed over the cultural tendencies of the 1990s, the film, with its definitive patriotic undertones, sought to include gays in the new national and cultural mood. *Yossi*, on the other hand, mirrors the escapist tendencies of Israeli society under the long rule of Benjamin Netanyahu's successive governments. Ever mistrustful of the Palestinians and supported by a right-wing electorate, Prime Minister Netanyahu was able to convince many Israelis that the conflict can be "managed" and they can turn inward, disregarding the root cause of their plight. *Yossi*'s nearly absolute focus on a gay love story in a neoliberal, manufactured paradise echoes this moment in Israeli history.

52 Ibid.

Roads not Taken

The films *After, Yossi & Jagger*, and *Yossi* represent the Israeli-Ashkenazi, secular-liberal mainstream, which accepts gay culture so long as it couched in militaristic, homonormative, middle class sensibilities and eliminates Palestinians along with queer "Others". Transgender and Palestinian queer identities are marginalized in the cultural politics of representation and are not afforded any visibility. Is there an alternative politics of culture and representation that could counter the images depicted by the films in question? In the final part of this text, I examine some alternative representations of queer politics. Although the moments, events, and bodies discussed cannot achieve the same resonance among wide Israeli audiences as the films of Eytan Fox, they can point to the possibility of more radical queer politics, which can perhaps find expression in Israeli films.[53]

The fact that an alternative, radical queer identity has indeed formed in various sites and spaces, suggests the possibility of images that can counter the mainstream homonormative and homonational discourse at the center of Eytan Fox's cinematic imagery. The ongoing debate about queer voices from within the LGBT community that challenge the politics of normality, and the attempt to marginalize them, exposes the disapproving undertone of the militaristic and conservative discourse discussed in the current work.

In her article "Performative Politics in Israeli Queer Anti-Occupation Activism", Israeli queer theoretician Amalia Ziv describes a short-lived queer political organization, *Black Laundry*, which, in the midst of the Second Intifada, "inaugurated the queer moment in Israel". Using means such as "direct local interventions in the public arena, a

53 Nir Cohen notes a new sensibility that began to develop in the mid-2000s in the works of young Israeli documentarians regarding Mizrahi and Palestinian queer identities. (Cohen, "Different Shadows," pp. 154-205. Part of this trend is Jake Witzenfeld's *Oriented* (2015, Israel, Conch Studios), which depicts the lives of three gay Palestinian Israelis living in Tel-Aviv. However, Israeli mainstream fiction film has yet to portray stories of queer identity that go beyond the homonationalist and homonormative norms depicted in Fox's films.

preference for performative practices, and a confrontational 'in your face' approach",[54] they sought to disrupt the official LGBT community's tendency toward "longing for assimilation and implying a republican notion of citizenship as premised on contribution to the common good."[55] Their aim was to disrupt the evolving Israeli consensus regarding an LGBT culture that can be palatable to large segments of the mainstream. Despite the obvious limitations of *Black Laundry* politics – the lack of a stable organization, the limited pool of activists, their young age, Ashkenazi and middle class orientation, and the fact they could not include Palestinian queers as these were unable to expose themselves publicly – its activity unearthed possibilities of political and cultural activism that had never been previously exploited.

The first transgender "refusenik" Aiden Katri, a 19-year-old activist and blogger who identifies as a woman, delivered another queer-activist challenge to the Israeli consensus regarding gender roles and the military. Katri shared her misgivings about serving in the army, likening it to "a white man with an outdated point of view".[56] When the time for her induction finally came she decided to refuse, citing her objection to the Israeli Occupation as stemming from "a feminist and humanist worldview".[57] After briefly incarcerating her in a men's prison, the army decided to discharge Aiden on the grounds of a mental condition. Aiden's charge that the IDF was thereby branding her "as mentally ill instead of dealing with my ideological statement against the Occupation" was met with a response that represents the limits of the IDF's liberal discourse regarding the LGBT community. The IDF responded that the discharge is authorized by "certified officials and based on medical and professional considerations only… dozens of transgender persons serve in the IDF, receiving, when necessary, aid from relevant institutions. If she chooses

54 Amalia Ziv, "Performative Politics in Israeli Queer Anti-Occupation Activism," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16 (2010), p. 538.

55 Ibid., p. 539.

56 Aiden Katri, "Transgender Young Adult Hesitations regarding my Army Service," *Ha'aretz*, June 6, 2015.

57 Tammy Riklis, "Transgender, Mizrahi, Refusenik," *Haokets*, April 10, 2016. http://www.haokets.org/2016/04/10/.

to volunteer, her voluntary service will be taken into consideration."[58]

A short time before Aiden Katri challenged the interaction between LGBT soldiers, the IDF, and the fundamentals of Israeliness, another case surfaced that emphasized the collusion between the gay establishment and the Israeli state. As the Israeli Gay Pride festival approached, the LGBT community rose up against the Ministry of Tourism's campaign to bring gay tourists to Israel. The generously funded campaign, which included painting an airplane belonging to the national airline, El Al, with a rainbow flag, roused a wave of indignation across social media.[59] LGBT officials and organizers argued that the state starves LGBT organizations financially while seeking to profit from Israel's reputation as a gay-friendly destination.[60] The claim, justified as it may be, disregarded the government's pinkwashing ploy to bring gay tourists to Israel. It also emphasized that the Israeli LGBT community had become part of the neoliberal matrix of not only gay tourism, but Israeli society itself. The backlash against the government plans prompted it to scale down the campaign, while the leaders of the LGBT community – like in many sectors of Israel's privatized society – were promised funds by Minister of Finance Moshe Kahlon.[61]

As the story of LGBT soldiers in Israel unfolds, one can only wonder whether Israel's gay cinema will develop to include those who defy the norms of Israeli society. Will an Israeli filmmaker emerge to describe the lives of Mizrahi and Palestinian gays and transgender persons, those who do not serve in the army? Or will their place in Israel's cinematic imagination remain a road not taken? This remains to be seen.

58 Gili Cohan, "The Transgender Conscientious Objector Aiden Katri was discharged from the IDF for Mental Reasons," *Ha'aretz*, April 4, 2016.

59 Ilan Lior, "Protest in the Gay Community: The State Invests in Tourists and not in Promoting LGBT Rights," *Ha'aretz*, April 17, 2016.

60 Ibid.

61 Ilan Lior, "Kahlon Met with the Heads of the Gay Community and Promised to Increase Funding to LGBT Organizations," *Ha'aretz*, May 9, 2016.

Memories by Jewish Emigrants from Post-1979 Iran

Claudia Dietrich

Background

The Jewish population plays a significant role in Persian history.[1] The first known Jewish settlement in Media dates back as far as 727 BCE, preceding the inception of Islam by over a thousand years.[2] Roughly 80,000 Jews were living in Iran prior to 1978, but by the beginning of 1979, this number dropped to 50,000-60,000.[3] Within one year, about 20,000 Jews had left Iran.[4]

This article discusses the life of Iran's Jewish community before and after the 1979 Revolution, later known as the Islamic Revolution. It concerns two different periods: the first begins with the reforms of Mohammad Reza Shah (who reigned during 1941-1979), and the second ranges from the outset of the 1979 Revolution, to the Ayatollahs' rise to power, to present day.

Mohammad Reza Shah maintained and expanded the reforms established by his father, Reza Shah Pahlavi, which aimed to modernize Iran and unite its citizens by heralding nationalism rather than religion.[5] The Shah's strategy was to separate religion and state

1 Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani, *Iran Facing Others*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2012, p. 219.

2 Massoume Price, "A Brief History of Iranian Jews," *IranOnline*, February 28, 2016, http://www.iranonline.com/History/jews-history/index.html

3 Eliz Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, p. 48.

4 David Littman, *Jews under Muslim Rule: The Case of Persia*, Institute of Contemporary History, London 1979, p. 5.

5 Orly R. Rahimyian, "The Pahlavi Era (1925-1979)," in: Houman M. Sarshar (ed.) *Jewish Communities of Iran*, Encyclopedia Iranica Foundation, New York 2011, pp. 60-62.

in order to curb the power of Muslim religious leaders.[6] This trend brought Iran closer to the West and led to accelerated modernization processes that benefitted both women and minorities. It is important to note that minority-majority gaps remained apparent and were to some degree sustained by the Shah's regime despite its egalitarian policies.[7] Nonetheless, the regime made significant progress.

While the standard of living among Iranian Jews was low when Reza Shah came to power, during his reign the community rose to a state of prosperity that would later be referred to as the "golden age" of Iranian Jewry. In the late 1960s, Iranian Jews were considered the wealthiest Jewish community in the world.[8] Gradually, they assimilated into Iranian society and gained confidence, and at the time, it seemed they had a bright future in store.

Needless to say, the Shah's reforms were not unanimously supported by the Iranian public, and opposition to them emerged primarily from two polarized social groups: religious conservatives and secular liberals. The secular groups, which attracted some Jewish young adults,[9] advocated for more freedom and democracy.[10] The religious groups on the other hand, opposed westernization and secularization and wished to preserve the power of Muslim institutions.[11] Eventually, this opposition led to the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The Revolution was spearheaded by Ruhollah Khomeini, who returned to Iran after 14 years of exile and established the Islamic Republic of Iran, which stands to this day. With the Revolution hijacked by religious extremists, liberal opposition groups had to face a new reality.[12]

The Revolution completely altered the national mindset of Iran.

6 David Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution*, Holmes & Meier, New York 1990, p. 3.
7 Amanat and Vejdani, *Iran Facing Others*, pp. 225-228.
8 Rahimyian, "The Pahlavi Era (1925-1979)," pp. 66-68.
9 Amanat and Vejdani, *Iran Facing Others*, p. 230.
10 Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution*, p. 20.
11 Rahimyian, "The Pahlavi Era (1925-1979)," p. 67.
12 Roger M. Savory, "The Export of Ithna Ashari Shi`ism," in: David Menashri (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO 1990, pp. 34-35.

Minorities took a particularly heavy blow, as the new regime was Islamic-oriented and now judged all legal, social, and moral matters according to the Islamic Sharia laws.[13] While Khomeini acknowledged religious minorities such as Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews, these groups did not enjoy the same rights as the Muslim majority.[14]

Jewish representatives allowed into parliament were forced to accept the new government policies in Iran,[15] as were the Iranian Jews who remained in the country. Although Iran still hosts the largest Jewish community of any Islamic country, estimated to include up to 20,000 individuals, the Islamic Revolution was a dramatic turning point for Iranian Jewry, prompting the emigration of 40,000 Jews, the majority of Iran's Jewish population at the time.[16] Jews who remained in Iran were kept "under the government radar" and marked as non-Muslims. The identity of Jews who remained in Iran also changed significantly with the Revolution, with their primary identification shifting to Judaism and their Iranian national identity becoming secondary once again.

The current article focuses on the stories of Jews who lived in Iran prior to the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and left the country at some point following it. By sharing the life experiences of Iranian Jews, the article discusses the Revolution and its consequences through a personal lens.

Methodology – Narrative Interviews

This work is based on qualitative research using open-ended interviews. The open-ended interview is often used in the oral history context and includes a set of questions that guide the exchange between the interviewer and interviewee,[17] allowing the latter to respond as he or she

13 Haleh Esfandiari, "The Majles and Women`s Issues in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in: Mahnaz Afkhami and Erika Friedl (eds.), *In the Eye of the Storm*, I. B. Tauris, London/New York 1994, p. 63.

14 Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution*, p. 14.

15 Liora Hendelman-Baavur, "The Islamic Republic of Iran (1979-2009)," in: Sarshar (ed.) *Jewish Communities of Iran*, p. 76.

16 Amanat and Vejdani, *Iran Facing Others*, pp. 231-232.

17 Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History*, AltaMira Press, Plymouth, UK 2005, p. 8.

chooses. Rather than assert their prior knowledge or understanding, the researcher using this format approaches the interview with a willingness to learn from the interviewee. The open-ended interview hinges on the interviewee's willingness to tell his or her story and share their subjective experiences, and the interviewer's belief in the value of this contribution.

Seven interviews with eight contemporary witnesses were conducted for the purposes of this study (one of the interviews was given by a couple). Some of the interviewees experienced the Revolution as children and some as adults, with one taking an active role in pre-Revolution demonstrations. The economic background of the interview subjects ranges from low to high, as does their level of employment and education. Most subjects were previous residents of Tehran, with only one hailing from Isfahan; this ensures that they personally experienced the main events of the Revolution, which took place in Tehran. Other than one, all interviewees are current residents of Israel.[18] All original names of interviewees were changed in order to protect their privacy.[19]

By exploring and presenting personal stories, a researcher can reconstruct a given event from the individual perspectives of their interview subjects.[20] While the facts of Iranian history are well known, the effect of this history on ordinary Iranian citizens has yet to be sufficiently understood or investigated. The current study focused on the daily life and education of its subjects, giving members of Iran's Jewish minority the opportunity to share personal accounts of Iranian history. This microhistorical perspective lends a rarely encountered context to widely known, macrohistorical events.[21]

18 See the table in the appendix.

19 Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History*, p. 130.

20 Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA 2012, p. 3.

21 Yolande Cohen, "The Migrations of Moroccan Jews to Montreal: Memory, (Oral) History and Historical Narrative," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 10, 2 (2011), pp. 245-262, here p. 257.

The Daily Life of Jews in pre-Revolution Iran

The emancipation of Iranian Jews, prompted by the aforementioned reforms under the Shah, ultimately made Jewish neighborhoods far less cohesive. With Jews able to work in more places, the security of a tight-knit Jewish community was less needed, and Jews migrated to areas that could benefit them as individuals. This shift was well-articulated in the interviews conducted for this study. For instance, one of the interviewees, Meir, stated, "There was a kind of ghetto. Let's say 90% of Jews lived in the ghetto. Let's say a neighborhood where everyone was Jewish. But later it wasn't like this."[22] Dasi (21 years old at the time of the Revolution) shared that in periods of greater threat, such as that which preceded the Shah's reforms, Iranian Jews maintained a more isolated community in order to protect themselves. This changed in Meir and Dasi's early adulthood.

With the increased dissemination of the Jewish population, their interaction with Iranian neighbors changed as well. Rahel (27 years old at the time of the Revolution), for instance, explains that the neighborhood in which she lived was very mixed; her immediate neighbors were Muslims, and the relations between Muslims and Jews were good.

This dissemination also improved the standard of living for the Jewish population, and led to the so-called "golden age" for Jews in the 1960s-1970s.[23] Before the Revolution, Jews from Iran visited Israel and were thus able to compare their own economic status to that of Israelis. Shirin, who was about six years old at the time of the Revolution, remembers that prior to 1979 Iranian Jews had certain advantages over the population of Israel: "I remember our first visit to Israel… we had a refrigerator from General Electric; they did not have that here [in Israel]; we had a color television; here they did not have it."[24]

All interviewees described Jewish education in Iran as "traditional", but this education did not prepare them for immigrating to Israel. Most were taught Hebrew in order to read religious texts and weekly Torah

22 Interview with Meir, November 2013.

23 Rahimyian, "The Pahlavi Era (1925-1979)," p. 66.

24 Interview with Shirin, January 2014.

portions, but did not have conversational fluency. For instance, one of the interviewees, Nastaran, relayed, "So we knew basic Hebrew, because in the synagogue we read the siddur and the Torah in Hebrew. …But to talk… really not until we immigrated to Israel." Nastaran stated that she did learn to read Hebrew letters: "…you learned it because people wanted you to learn it."[25]

The observance of Jewish rituals was partial. Rahel, for instance, shared that she did not belong to a certain synagogue, and that one would normally go to the nearest synagogue available. Even on Shabbat this was usually done by car, as synagogues were relatively few and spread out. Rahel recalls that while her mother went to the synagogue every Shabbat, her father seldom did so. Rahel herself only went for festivities and special events. This account aligns with that of the author Stanley Abramovitch, who described how Jewish traditions slackened under Pahlavi's reign as the economic status of Jews improved.[26]

Like Rahel, Nastaran stated that her family was not very involved in the Jewish community: "We were not necessarily religious people […] my father wanted us to learn about the world and be worldly people." While she later learned that her grandmother kept a kosher kitchen, Nastaran stated that at the time, her grandmother would have given a rational rather than religious reason for this decision: "If you would ask her, she would have said it was better for your diet […] it was a healthier way of eating, but it was never necessarily tied to religion."

Some interviewees remembered the days before the Revolution, when Iranians dressed in "Western" clothing, and shared that life mainly revolved around Westernization, openness, making changes, and taking advantage of opportunities. "At the time, religion didn`t matter like it does nowadays," shared Nastaran, stating that they were not raised to refuse certain things because they were Jewish. According to the interviewees, the Jewish community tended to see itself as "part of the larger society" and, as Nastaran relayed, most of its members described

25 Interview with Nastaran, July 2013.

26 Stanley Abramovitch, *From Survival to Revival*, Gefen Publishing House, Jerusalem 2008, p. 41.

themselves as "Iranian Jews" rather than "Jewish Iranians".[27] In other words, the interviewees saw themselves as a part of an Iranian nation rather than as a Jewish minority.

However, even after the Shah's egalitarian reforms were passed, the Jewish population in Iran did not feel entirely safe. Some chose assimilation as a way to gain more personal security. As Nastaran explains, assimilation did not necessarily mean changing your values, but rather deemphasizing your differences: "It was crucial that one not look different."[28] Therefore, for some, being "part of the masses" meant personal security in Iran, and Iranian Jews in particular needed to show that they were just as Iranian as everyone else.

On the other hand, the quest for security also led some Jews to remain within tight-knit, isolated communities. The need for security was therefore reflected in two seemingly opposing social patterns: life within a closed community, and attempts to assimilate into general society and avoid standing out as a Jew, much like Nastaran had experienced.

Pre-Revolution Education

Based on the interviewees' accounts, it seems that Jews in Iran at the time of the Shah had several options in terms of children's education, including public Jewish or Muslim schools and various types of private schools. Different considerations affected families' choice of schools: from prosaic reasons such as distance and transportation, to preference for remaining within the Jewish community. Sometimes schools were chosen based on curriculum, reputation, or for economic reasons. Therefore, some preferred Jewish education, which included basic Hebrew and religious teachings, while others preferred private schools that were more expensive but better prepared pupils for university.

Yossi, who studied in one of the Jewish public schools in Tehran, stated that, "The government established Jewish schools," which were closed both on Friday, the day of rest for Muslims, and Saturday, the holy

27 Interview with Nastaran, July 2013.

28 Ibid.

day for Jews. Staffing depended on the availability of Jewish teachers. Usually, only Jews attended the schools labeled as "Jewish": "To my knowledge it was not common for a Muslim to go to a Jewish school. Jews went to the Muslim schools," Yossi recalls.[29]

Indeed, some Jews, including Rahel, attended public Muslim schools. Rahel joined a coed public primary school where boys and girls studied together in one class, but for her secondary education she enrolled in an all-girls school. Many Jews in Iran also attended the school established by Alliance Israélite Universelle, a Jewish-French organization that promoted modern education for Jews, especially in Islamic countries.[30] Although it was open to other population groups, the Alliance school attracted strictly Jews, being a private Jewish school. Pupils would generally begin their studies at the age of six and graduate at the age of 18. The school was subsidized by international sources, with parents paying only partial tuition costs.[31] During the 1960s, the Alliance schools underwent a significant change in shifting from a French orientation to an English orientation, as Meir recalls from his years as an Alliance school student.

Tehran also had exclusive private Jewish schools that served the upper class. The Ettefagh and Kourosh schools, for instance, had a prestigious reputation and according to Dasi, were sought after by parents for their high educational standards.[32] In Iran, being accepted into a university was quite challenging, with a limited number of vacancies and a large number of applications that increased annually. The above-mentioned schools, however, improved their graduates' odds of successfully completing university entrance exams:[33] "Very rich people and many of these kids [pupils of the two schools] would go to university afterwards,"

29 Interview with Yossi, November 2013.

30 Amnon Netzer, "Alliance Israélite Universelle," in: Sarshar (ed.) *Jewish Communities of Iran*, p. 315.

31 Abramovitch, *From Survival to Revival*, p. 34.

32 Netzer, "Alliance Israélite Universelle," p. 316.

33 Maryam Poya, *Women, Work and Islamism: Ideology and Resistance in Iran*, Zed Books, London/New York 1999, p. 71.

said Dasi.[34] It is likely that other Jewish pupils chose private, university-oriented schools for much the same reasons.

Nastaran's family is a good and perhaps unique example of a middle class, Western Jewish family that successfully assimilated into Iranian society thanks to the reforms established by the Shah. Her father was a military man, and his generation was in fact the first in which Jews were permitted to join the army.[35] Nastaran shares that her father was sometimes asked to relocate for work. While the family traveled with him at first, it eventually settled down in Tehran, as Nastaran's mother wished to provide the best possible education for her children. Wanting Nastaran and her brother to attend university, their parents enrolled them in a private school that reportedly offered a more structured curriculum and more personal attention for students compared to public schools.

The private school curriculum included the study of a third language other than Persian and Arabic. Nastaran therefore studied English, for which her school had a strong program. She and her brother would also attend an additional English-speaking American school every afternoon from the eighth grade on. Their days began when it was still dark outside and ended when the sun had already set. "So we went to the second school because my dad didn´t believe the English we were learning in our regular private high school was adequate,"[36] Nastaran explained. Her father, who knew English himself, would also test his children from time to time.

Nastaran described the Jewish high school as "too religious", even though it eventually became more open, and shared that this was the reason her father did not want her to study there. As 90 percent of the students in the Jewish high school came from isolated Jewish communities, her father saw the school as overly conformist.

From a young age, Nastaran was pushed to study as much and as quickly as possible and to exceed the accomplishments of her peers. Believing it was the best way to prepare her for the future, her father pressured her to excel. Nastaran's father clearly felt that Jews might

34 Interview with Dasi, November 2013.

35 Rahimyian, "The Pahlavi Era (1925-1979)," p. 61.

36 Interview with Nastaran, July 2013.

not enjoy the same status in the long-term and wanted to make sure his children were prepared:

> "You need to learn or know many skills..." he always said to me, "I want you to know how to work with your hands just in case you are in a situation where your smarts and your intelligence are not allowed; so if you can't work based on your grades, you should be able to support yourself with your hands."[37]

Thus, every summer Nastaran and her young brother were sent to various camps or courses to learn additional skills. Nastaran learned how to sew, work with silk, make flower bouquets, ride a horse, and handle a rifle, which would later save her and her family's lives.

Nastaran and her brother were outstanding students. In her interview, Nastaran explained that her father was a visionary and saw the transformation in the world around them, and it was this that pushed him to support her skill building: "It was just the way my father saw the future of the world, that you needed to be skilled, you know, to know a lot of things…"[38] It seems Nastaran's father tried to prepare his children for whatever the future would bring. He remembered a time in which Jews were not permitted to work for the government, join the military, or attend university, and the way in which Jews were perceived in Iran during Nastaran's childhood appeared to give him the sense that this might recur.

During the period in question, Tehran University was the leading higher education institution in Iran. It had a difficult entrance exam and accepted only a small percentage of its applicants. However, according to Rahel and Nastaran, being accepted into university was more difficult in Iran than actually attaining your degree, unlike in the United States and Israel. Interestingly, the interviewees stated that university entrance exams were not discriminatory at the time, and that the most promising students were accepted regardless of religious affiliation or ethnic background. As mentioned, private school education bettered students' odds of earning a favorable score

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.

on their university entrance exam, as was the case for Meir as well as Nastaran and her brother. On her and her brother's education, Nastaran stated, "He was accepted into Polytechnic University – he now has a PhD in engineering – and I was accepted into Tehran University, into the social sciences and demography [department]."[39] The two graduated from high school in the same year, as her brother skipped one grade.

The Outbreak of Religious Fanaticism

In January 1978, the first official public calls for a new government were heard on the streets of Iran, eventually escalating into the 1979 Revolution against the Shah.[40] Explaining the cause for the demonstrations, Shirin stated:

> [The Shah] pulled Iran in the direction of the West too quickly. … He certainly led a revolution, but he was also a monarch. His prisons were very scary. And he used the "Zavak", the "secret police", if someone was against him.

Yossi on the other hand, claimed that the Revolution was prompted by pervasive illiteracy among Iranians and their ignorance about the world and even specifically Iranian issues. This cultivated a conformist public that was unable to question its leaders, a fact that religious revolutionaries used to their advantage.[41]

As Shirin recalls, speeches by religious revolutionaries had a tremendous psychological impact on the public at the time: "I remember the speeches. I almost wanted to be a Muslim, not that I really wanted to be one, but because of these speeches..." As these

39 Ibid.

40 Shaul Bakhash, "Sermons, Revolutionary Pamphleteering and Mobilisation: Iran, 1978," in: Amir Arjomand (ed.), *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam*, St Antony's/Macmillan Series, Palgrave Macmillan, London 1984, p. 177.

41 Currently, 11 million Iranians out of the total population of about 77 million are illiterate (14%). See: Roja Assadi, "Iran`s Education Ministry looks to cut illiteracy rate," *BBC News Middle East*, January 5, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25339007

revolutionaries introduced their agenda, they reminded the crowd of their heritage, stating that if given power they would make life in Iran even more religious with their policies – a promise that was apparently highly appealing to many of the Iranian people. According to Shirin, the Shah himself did not believe he would be overthrown. He hoped the Iranian people would understand his intentions, but many did not. She also criticized the peaceful surrender of the Shah's regime, comparing it to Israel's humane behavior toward its enemies, and stating that sometimes one must react aggressively to safeguard what they value:

> So I remember the speech by the King [the Shah], who said, "I believe in my people and my people will not rise up against me." He did tell his soldiers not to shoot at anyone. This is what made him fall. Because he could have easily taken care of himself. …and the others were throwing stones and shooting. …and here in Israel the soldiers are also not allowed to shoot, the same thing. The same stupidity, excuse my saying so. …I remember that the soldiers with these roses [civilians gave flowers to soldiers] became part of the people.

As mentioned, different opposition groups including mainly religious conservatives and secular liberals united against the Shah. By the time the liberals realized the implications of the upheaval, it was already too late, and many felt very afraid. At a certain point, Shirin's father and uncle joined the protesters in the streets. Living close to the location of the demonstrations, they feared for their safety: "They went, out of fear, into the streets, so they [the Muslim fundamentalists] would see that we are with them."[42] First, her father and uncle went to the streets to get information and ascertain the sentiments among the people, after which they decided to show support for the revolutionaries. They joined the protesters to make their support visible to those clearly bound to take power.

The Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi left Iran in January 1979, after a wave of demonstrations against him in 1978. This finally gave the exiled Ruhollah Khomeini the chance to return to Iran, which he did in February 1979, and the Shah's monarchy was turned into the Islamic

42 Interview with Shirin, January 2014.

Republic under the reign of Khomeini in April 1979.[43] Following the Revolution and the ensuing changes, the liberal groups regretted their previous actions. Nowadays, the young liberal generation in Iran criticizes its predecessors, as Shirin attests:

> They [the liberals during the Revolution] said… "What did we do to ourselves and what did we do to our children?" Today it is more the students on Facebook and so they say, "What did our parents do to us?" and they were the students back then. So it was out of good intensions.[44]

Daily Life after the Revolution

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Islamic Republic of Iran were established by decree of Ayatollah Khomeini, although the IRGC had already begun working informally several months prior in order to guard the country's new order.[45] On the revolutionary guards, Shirin stated, "They went to the streets and they had guns and suddenly they were the revolutionary guards. Who are the revolutionary guards to this day? You ask a Jew, a Muslim, or any Iranian. Who are the revolutionary guards? The riffraff, the people who have problems, those people." These guards were used to force the laws of the new regime on the Iranian population.

Moshe was six years old at the time of the Revolution. His parents did not participate in the demonstrations. He remembers the negative effect the Revolution had on him: changes could be felt in every aspect of daily life, which became more depressing and tense as insecurity and suspicion began to permeate. Muslim traditions were given constant visibility by any means necessary. David Menashri, for instance, states that the 1979 Revolution created an internal revolution

43 Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution*, p. 7.

44 Interview with Shirin, January 2014.

45 Ali Alfoneh, "The Revolutionary Guards` Role in Iranian Politics," *Middle East Quarterly*, 15, 4 (2008), pp. 3-14.

within the Jewish community of Iran,[46] as every Iranian citizen was "newly educated", or more accurately, indoctrinated:[47] "After one hour of a children's TV program, they would all of a sudden have a prayer. In the middle of the children's program, there would be 15 minutes of prayer."[48]

Religious fanaticism had changed the nature of an entire nation almost overnight.[49] For example, Nastaran claimed that under the Shah, women's head covers were a sign of modesty and not necessarily religious practice, and that both Jewish and Muslim women of the older generation would cover their hair. She also recalled that in the 1930s, Reza Shah Pahlavi, the father of the last Shah, introduced his wife to the public without a head scarf, which changed the national dress code: "From that point on, if you came out [in public with a veil], the gendarmes in the street would rip it off because that was the Shah's command."[50] Ironically, the reverse happened with Khomeini's return to power in 1979. Women were once again obligated to cover themselves and abide by the authorities' rules of religious modesty, which were enforced by the revolutionary guards. In many ways, the Revolution of 1979 was a return to the 1930s.[51]

Shirin remembers her childhood as a struggle to adjust to the changes prompted by the Revolution. The entire population, including Muslims and members of other religions, had to obey and become accustomed to the new laws of the regime. Disobedience, Shirin recalls, was met with force:

> I remember we were on the way to the synagogue and it was a feast… So everybody wore black …but I did not. And they [the

46 David Menashri, "HaYehudim Tachat haMalucha haPahlavit vehaRepublica haIslamit," in: Chaim Saadon, *Iran*, Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Jerusalem 2006, p. 63.

47 Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution*, p. 275.

48 Interview with Moshe, November 2013.

49 Jo-Anne Hart and Farhad Kazemi, "The Shi`i Praxis," in: Menashri (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*, p. 60.

50 Interview with Nastaran, July 2013.

51 Haleh Afshar (ed.), *Women and Politics in the Third World*, Routledge, New York 1996, p. 155.

> revolutionary guards] put color on my face to mark me. They said to me, "Are you not ashamed, not obeying the rules?" I was a little girl… and I cried "It's burning! It's burning!" It was itching. They used a green color and I was sure it was acid.[52]

Despite the pain and humiliation, Shirin felt lucky that nothing worse had happened to her. She also recalls the day she had to start wearing a head cover, as it is associated with her memory of other dramatic events. The incident occurred around the same time as the American Embassy takeover and the burning of local branches of American companies.[53] Shirin's family lived near the sites of these events and witnessed them first-hand, finally surmising it was time for the females in the family to cover their heads.

> My mother came to pick me up from school and said, "Put this on". …I knew I had no other choice. And I remember the street and the way everything looked. …And I remember that we went on the roof to see what was going on. And the people went to this company [General Electric] and just took washing machines, televisions, and anything else they could take.[54]

After this incident, people could only purchase American products illegally. As many in Iran had had a high standard of living and access to the latest fashions, which they wished to maintain after the Revolution, a vibrant black market was established in the country. Thus, an "underground life" developed parallel to life under government law that is rarely talked about. In Shirin's words: "You know, it's all underground and bribing… The police was very corrupt… if someone had money, they would be fine."[55] As most of the revolutionary guards came from a low socioeconomic status,[56] taking bribes became a significant source of income for them.[57] Corruption eventually ran rampant in Iran.

52 Interview with Shirin, January 2014.
53 Hart and Kazemi, "The Shi`i Praxis", p. 61.
54 Interview with Shirin, January 2014.
55 Ibid.
56 Afshar, *Women and Politics in the Third World*, p. 124.
57 Reza Afshari, *Human Rights in Iran: The Abuse of Cultural Relativism*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2001, p. 65.

Several attempts have been made to overthrow the Ayatollah's regime. However, the regime is very aware of such possibilities and responds with force to any attempt at a freer life, keeping Iranian citizens in a state of fear. The interviewees in the current study have observed subsequent events in Iran and connect these to their past experiences. Shirin, for instance, stated as follows:

> Look, they are waking up [the Iranian public]… But they [the regime] are very cruel, so they are afraid. …Compared to Syria, what's happening there is nothing, what is happening in prisons there. … Everything is done in the name of Islam. …Killing an innocent woman is not permitted, so they rape her one after the other and then there is reason to kill her. You know, everything is according to the law. …they hang people in the streets… even a 15-year-old.[58]

The revolutionary guards are given charge of the population and can harm citizens for random reasons, with minority groups being the most vulnerable. For instance, the word of a Muslim is always believed over that of a minority citizen, regardless of the truth.[59] Likewise, the word of a man is believed over that of a woman. In Iran, one's life can come under threat in an instant.

Contrary to its expansion under the Shah, after the Revolution Iran's Jewish community became tight-knit and isolated once again. This seemed necessary from a security perspective, and was also the result of Jews being identified as a minority by the government, which drove them out of general society.

Post-Revolution Education

Shaul was an eight-year-old child living in Isfahan at the time of the Revolution. Under the Shah he was able to attend an independent Jewish school, but things changed after the Revolution: "During the rule of the Shah, when I was about five or six years old, I went to a Jewish

58 Interview with Shirin, January 2014.

59 David Yeroushalmi, *The Jews of Iran in the Nineteenth Century*, Brill, Leiden/Boston 2010, p. 6 ff.

school. Later, when Khomeini came, I had to go to a Muslim school. The school principal was a Muslim."[60] Thus, the Iranian authorities were able to control the curriculum studied by Jewish children. The Muslim principal ensured that educational content at the school coincided with the regulations of the Islamic authority.[61] Coed schools no longer existed after the Revolution, and Shaul's was an all-boys school. Moshe shared that he and his family lived in a once-Jewish neighborhood that became mixed under the Shah's reign, as many Jews had moved outside of the community. Moshe recalls befriending mainly the Muslim children in his neighborhood: "I went to a Jewish school, but in my neighborhood there weren't many Jewish kids around."[62]

Shirin attended a public all-girls Jewish school.[63] Other than the Judaism teacher, the entire staff at the school was Muslim. Shirin describes the daily routine at her school, which was reflective of Iranian policy and included psychological inculcation from a very young age. Every child in Iran had to participate in a daily morning ceremony during which, among other announcements and recitations in support of Islam, they had to recite: "Death to America, death to Israel, Allah HuAkhbar." The ritual was meant to incite hatred toward these countries. Shirin described this routine in her interview, discussing the difficulties and dilemmas she faced as a child: "At home you hear 'Israel, Israel, Israel' and outside you are not allowed to talk."[64] At the time, Jewish children in Iran learned Jewish prayers and traditions at home, but were not allowed to discuss these subjects in public or at school. Thus, from a young age, they had to learn how to reconcile the hatred they were indoctrinated to feel with their own family history.

Whereas schools were closed on Shabbat prior to the Revolution, after 1979, the rules were changed and schools remained open on Saturdays. Disciplinary action against rebellious behavior would sometimes go

60 Interview with Shaul, November 2013.

61 Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran*, p. 76.

62 Interview with Moshe, November 2013.

63 Nesta Ramazani, "Women in Iran: The revolutionary Ebb and Flow," *Middle East Journal*, 47, 3 (1993), pp. 409-428, here p. 419.

64 Interview with Shirin, January 2014.

as far as involving government authorities. According to Shirin, the Muslim principal of her school would protect the Jewish students at times, whereas others could have responded differently and placed them in serious danger. At the time, a teacher could easily tell a lie in order to harm a pupil. Shirin explains:

> They had a lot of power… And they could have done more than complain about us, she [the principal] could have easily made one phone call, to say we were Zionists and they found Zionist materials in our bag. Even if they wouldn't have looked into our bags, they could have just said this and taken us to the car. And all the parents would have asked where we were.[65]

After the Revolution, Jewish schools had to instate a Muslim principal and follow a Muslim curriculum. The author of the current article was told that nowadays, Jewish schools in Iran have shut down completely and Jewish education is given in synagogues only.

Conclusion

This article has focused on the stories of Jews who lived in Iran before the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and left the country at some point following it. This microhistorical perspective allows a fascinating glimpse into life in Iran before and after the Revolution via testimonies from members of its Jewish minority.

The article first introduced interviewees' memories of life in Iran under the reign of the Shah, during the so-called "golden age" of Iranian Jews. The increased sense of security and access to professional opportunities among women and minorities at that time eventually led to the dispersion of the Jewish community. Life in areas outside of closed Jewish communities provided Jewish individuals with more opportunities to succeed and acquire new professions.

However, while the changes made under the Shah's regime were seen as progress, they did not completely eradicate the gaps between Jews and the majority population.

65 Ibid.

As indicated by the interviews, under the Shah some Iranian Jews made significant efforts to be part of general Iranian society. However, it is also evident that some of them did not take the "golden age" in Iran for granted, as they constantly sought to gain knowledge and awareness regarding the undercurrents that drove Iranian society. The Iranian Jewish community of the time was characterized by a general striving for secularity and worldliness. This can be seen as a tactic for ensuring security, as freedom and security are to some degree synonymous. Iranian Jews were in great need of security, which they were finally able to gain under the Shah. Often, a secure lifestyle is associated with stability and constancy, and for Iranian Jews, such constancy in daily life was absent before the Shah's reign. However, as confirmed by the interviews, Iranian Jews were also able to establish internal security through long-term traditions, a structure that was taken for granted by some members of the community.

The liberal groups in Iran were among those who initiated the upheavals against the Shah, but while they wished to replace him as a leader, they did not want to relinquish the advancements he had introduced to Iranian society. Nonetheless, the upheavals resulted in the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is ruled by religious leaders and abides by Islamic law.

The Revolution dramatically changed the life of every Iranian citizen. It posed a threat to those who did not align with the values of the new religious authorities in general and to non-Muslim minorities in particular, as expressed by the interviewees.

In the field of education, the Revolution resulted in the eradication of historically independent Jewish schools by placing them under the supervision of Islamic representatives. In this case, reforms made under the Shah actually supported the Islamic Republic that rose to power following the Revolution; the establishment of governmental schools by the Shah's regime made it easier for religious authorities to revise their educational standards in compliance with Islamic values. Anti-Semitic sentiments, even if subliminal, were always present, as corroborated by Nastaran's family history. These age-old sentiments were also useful to

Muslim fundamentalists in achieving the goals of the Revolution.[66]

This article has provided insight into the personal implications of the Revolution for members of the Jewish minority in Iran. These individuals had to suddenly abide by a religion other than their own, and were forced to follow edicts that affected and changed their personal lifestyle. The Iranian population was suddenly told how to dress, directed as to when and how to pray, and exposed to the propaganda of a group that began to reign with force. This state of affairs must have been traumatic for many, and induced fear about what the future would hold. Such sentiments were expressed by both Dasi and Shaul, who stated that adults were afraid for their children and tried to protect them, while the children themselves did not understand what was happening around them but were clearly aware of the life-threatening changes that had transpired.

After the Revolution, Iranian Jews were embroiled in a dichotomous existence, forced to conceal aspects of their heritage and to reconcile indoctrinated hatred toward the State of Israel with their own family history.

66 Amanat and Vejdani, *Iran Facing Others*, p. 228.

Appendix

Group Profile Interviewees

Name	Female/Male	Age in 1979	Last Location in Iran	Originally from	Year of Emigration	Education/ Occupation	Economic Situation	Siblings	Children
Meir Dasi	Male Female	27 21	Tehran	Isfahan	1989	University Administration	Middle	5 5	3
Rahel	Female	27	Tehran		1989	Administration	Middle	5	1
Nastaran	Female	23	Tehran		1982	University	High	2	2
Yossi	Male	12	Tehran	Tehran	1979	Food Industry	High	2	3
Shaul	Male	8	Isfahan	Isfahan	2002	Merchant	Low	5	None
Moshe	Male	6	Tehran	Isfahan	1987	University	High	1	None
Shirin	Female	6	Tehran	Kashan/ Isfahan	1988	Social Assistance	Middle	2	3

Abstracts

Myths Surrounding the Rescue of the Jews of Denmark during the Holocaust

Omer Berkman

This article reviews some of the myths surrounding the well-known story of Jews of Denmark being "smuggled" out of Nazi-controlled territory and onto the safe shores of Sweden in 1943. More than 7,000 Jews were able to escape from Denmark in fishing boats and were thus saved from death. Denmark has been given a place of honor in the collective memory of the Jewish people, and is associated with human kindness and heroism. However, over the years, other aspects of the affair have come to light, which depict a more complex reality. Current historical sources paint a sobering picture of the events in question, and recent studies have adopted a critical stance toward Danish policy during WWII and its alignment with Nazi Germany. Unlike previous studies on the subject, the historical facts presented in this article are strictly designed to illustrate that the above-mentioned myths are not pieces of folklore developed in response to heroic acts, but rather the result of Danish public relations on one hand, and Jewish gratitude on the other. Arguably, these myths might also be a tool in the hands of those who claim that more could have been done against Hitler.

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The Poetics of Disassembly in the Works of Shoshana Shababo

Adi Isha

During the 1930s and 1940s, Hebrew literature was predominantly concerned with the cultural and social changes taking place in Israel at the time, and was particularly focused on Jewish nationalism. As a result, Hebrew literature sought to glorify the image of the "new Jew", a "pioneer" who represented the antithesis of the Diaspora Jew. The pioneer was characterized as a burly man, brave and well-built, a symbol of the Jewish people's resurrection (Newman, 2009). A similar image of the pioneer woman did not exist. Tamar Hess (1995) attributes the pioneer woman's lack of inclusion in the symbolic order of this period to the fact that this right was reserved for those who appropriated Israel's physical space, which represented the images, icons, and signs of the Zionist narrative.

Shoshana Shababo (1910-1992) was the first known Sephardic woman writer in Israel until the early eighties. Shababo was a seventh generation descendent of a family that had immigrated to Israel from Persia and Morocco. She was born in Zichron Ya'acov, studied at the local primary school, and later at the Levinsky Seminar in Tel Aviv. Shababo began writing when she was only 16 years old and published only two novels: *Maria – A Novel about the Life of Nuns in Eretz Israel* was published in 1932 when she was only 22, and *Love in Safed* was published a decade later. In addition, about forty short stories by Shababo appeared in various press outlets of the period.[1]

Shababo's works centered on Sephardic society and the status of the Sephardic woman, avoiding the topics commonly identified with the Zionist collective. Even in the few stories in which the "pioneer" archetype appears she handles it differently than the typical Zionist literature of the period. Shababo's writing was formed through dialogue with canonical Western literature and other Sephardic writers, generating a feminine poetic protest that was far ahead of

1 E.g. *Bostenay*, *Doar Hayom*, *Hadoar*, *Ha'artez* during 1928-1942.

its time and seen as a challenge to dominant discourse.

At the time, her literature was perceived as pulpy, one-dimensional fiction. However, thorough research indicates that Shababo's Zionist stories are allegories designed to create a female character that is distinct from the accepted model in Jewish society (both Zionist and Sephardic). In fact, Shababo's writing has two dimensions: the allegorical side that answers to the male voice, and another side that undermines it.

This article examines the ways in which Shababo violated national power and patriarchal structures through six of her short stories. The article also presents Shababo's "poetics of disassembly", which undermine the Zionist myth on human perception and reality and offer alternatives to it.

Matchmaking Adverts in Israeli Press during the 1950s

Eyal Ginsberg

This article examines the phenomenon of matchmaking as reflected in the Israeli press during the first decade of statehood. The newspapers of the period contained a great deal of information about matchmaking, matchmakers, love, and marriage, through either content articles or advertisements on finding a partner via personal initiative or professional matchmakers. These materials are a treasure for those seeking to trace the atmosphere and everyday life of this formative period. Nonetheless, this subject has yet to garner comprehensive academic research in a historical context.

With this point of departure, my work discusses who required matchmaking services at the time, and what led them to do so. Its primary question is: What can the characteristics single men and women were seeking in romantic partners teach us about Israeli society during this period? In order to answer this question, I analyze three popular newspapers that addressed a secular and adult audience: *Ma'ariv*, *Davar*, and *La'isha*.

In addition, I use sociological theories on the subject along with research and literature on relationships and love, as well as general historical background on the State. Based on these sources, I claim that the search for partnership through matchmaking adverts and matchmakers was not solely in pursuit of love, but was driven by other factors such as building a family and upgrading one's social and economic status, which meant potential partners were required to have appropriate economic, social, and personal qualities.

Describing the past by better understanding the behavior of individuals opens a channel into a history that is meaningful not only to researchers of Israel's first decade or to those interested in the stories of its citizens. This type of investigation also contributes to readers who wish to expand their horizons and deepen their historical knowledge and insight regarding everyday life during this period at large.

In the Face of Emergency: American Jewish Leadership and the Bergson Group, 1943

Yuri Keum

Scholarly and public discussions regarding the rescue effort of the Bergson Group and the responses of American Jewish leadership to the Holocaust have been widely polarized. The subject often invokes a dichotomous comparison between two main figures: Rabbi Stephen Wise as a representative of American Jewish leadership vs. Hillel Kook, the leader of the Bergson Group. While the schism between the two men was evident in the pre-war years, the animosity between them intensified even further during the Holocaust – leading to a bitter legacy that remains the subject of heated historiographical debates to this day. Through a content analysis of archival documents from the Hillel Kook Collection, the current article offers an in-depth analysis of the Bergson Group and the American Jewish establishment; primarily by examining the Emergency Conference to Save Jewish People in Europe, led by the Bergson Group (July, 1943), in relation to the Wise-led American Jewish Conference (August, 1943). Eschewing the consequence-oriented approach that stems from historical hindsight and the prevalent discourse of "missed opportunities", this archival examination not only highlights the motives of the Bergson Group and its activities for the doomed Jews in Europe, but also critically discusses the multifaceted emergency that faced American Jewry during the years in question. It is precisely because of this emergency, and not despite it, that both Kook and Wise clung to their respective approaches and attempted to advance their separate agendas, leading to an intensely competitive and divisive reality in the American-Jewish arena during the agonizing, pivotal year of 1943.

The Other Brother in Arms:
The Representation of the Gay Solider in the Films of Eytan Fox

Amir Locker-Biletzki

The Israeli film *Yossi & Jagger*, directed by Eytan Fox and written by Avner Bernheimer (2002, Israel, Lama Films), finds gay love in the most unlikely place—an Israeli military outpost on the Lebanese frontier, where the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) has been battling the Lebanese Shi'a organization *Hezbollah* since the ill-advised 1982 Israel invasion of Lebanon.

The current article analyzes the above-mentioned film, an earlier film by Eytan Fox titled *After*, written by Fox along with Natan Brand (1994, Israel, Ronit Ben Menachem), and finally *Yossi*, the sequel to *Yossi & Jagger*, written by Itay Segal (2012, Israel, Lama Films). The following analysis of these films is informed by three theoretical frameworks: The first is Queer Theory, generated by both Israeli and non-Israeli queer theorists; the second is homonationalism, which is associated with the queer theorist Jasbir K. Puar; and the third is the critical study of film history in Israel by Israeli scholars Ella Shohat and Yosef Raz.

Using these interpretive concepts, I analyze the narratives of these films as well as their key scenes. The purpose of this study is to elucidate how the films in question create a homonormative and homonationalist liberal discourse that rejects more dissident queer interpretations of the place that soldiers and the army occupy in Israeli society, and that, to a certain degree, negates the possibility of queer radical politics in the Israeli context. In generating this discourse, the film becomes part of Israeli "pinkwashing" – a tactic meant to portray Israel as a Western liberal democracy.

Memories by Jewish Emigrants from Post-1979 Iran

Claudia Dietrich

In 1979, Iran's monarchial regime was replaced by a theocratic regime that enforced the Islamic Sharia laws as a society-wide standard. As a result, significant restrictions were placed on the rights of women, as well as those of minorities such as the Jewish community.

The current study addresses the effects of the 1979 Revolution on the Jewish community in Iran from a qualitative perspective. It presents personal accounts of life in the throes of a revolution that made a massive impact on Iran's entire population, giving voice to Jews who emigrated after 1979 by focusing on their memories of pre and post-Revolution Iran.

This research draws upon oral history via narrative interviews. The life stories and personal traumas suffered by the interviewees, and the monumental and life-threatening external changes they endured, are crucial elements of this work. The personal accounts, memories, and perspectives of the interviewees give insight into the life of the Jewish community still living in Iran, and will help shed light on this persecuted minority.