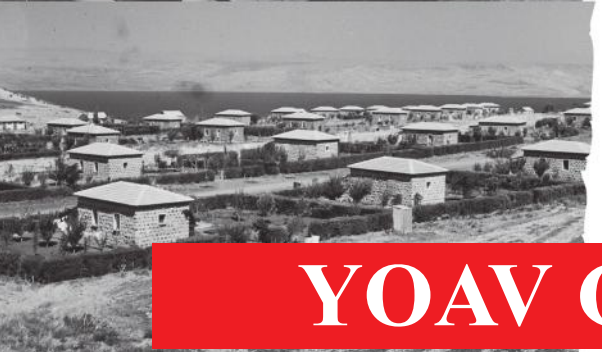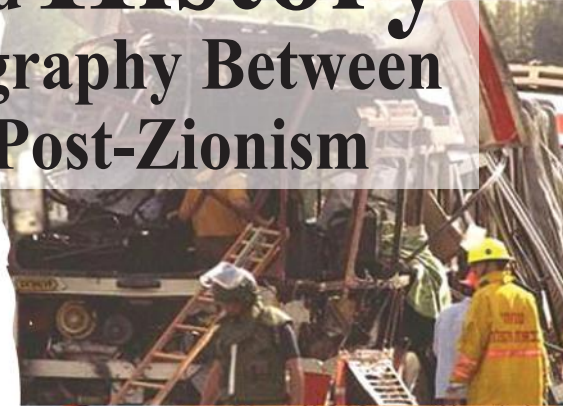# Nation and History

Israeli Historiography Between Zionism and Post-Zionism

YOAV GELBER

NATION AND HISTORY

To Ruthi, my wife

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Israeli Historiography between
Zionism and Post-Zionism

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Contents

Acknowledgements

This book has emanated from my Hebrew work *History, Memory and Propaganda*, published in 2007 by Am Oved, Tel Aviv. While that study had broader perspective and covered the old, new and new-new trends in world and Jewish historiography, this study concentrates primarily on the shaping of the Israeli attitude to the past.

The Israeli view of the past became controversial in the 1980s, with the appearance of the so-called 'new' historians. In the next decade disagreements about the past spread to other disciplines and turned into a dispute between 'Zionist' and 'Post-Zionist' academics, artists and journalists. This conflict stands at the center of the present book.

Yoav Gelber
October 2010

Preface

Since antiquity Jews have been a unique phenomenon, fascinating themselves and their surroundings. When other people worshipped images and icons, they sacrificed and prayed to an abstract divinity. When monotheism spread after the advent of Christianity and Islam, they stubbornly adhered to their older version of deity and prophecy. Sometimes their proud segregation and separatism aroused astonishment, and often it was a source of hostility and persecution. For the most part of their history, Jewish historical consciousness highlighted the differences between Jews and other people. Modernity, however, caused them to ponder the similarities between them and other people, nations and religions.

Until the eighteenth century, Jewish communities in Europe and the Middle East greatly resembled their precursors in Babylonia and the Land of Israel in the third and fourth centuries. Despite the differences of the scattered Jewish communities, emanating from their different surroundings in the Diaspora, in the seventeenth century they were all still basically uniform, adhering to the same interweave of social and spiritual life formed after the destruction of the second Temple.[1]

The dissolution of European corporative society in the early modern period and the growth of nationalism posed an existential challenge for Jews: if they were part of the indigenous peoples (German, French, Poles, etc.), why were they different? And if they differed from the rest of the population, why did they live in their midst? With the expansion of nationalism in the twentieth century, the problem extended from Europe to the Middle East and to North Africa. The emerging challenge was simultaneously external and internal, and it is the gist of the modern Jewish problem. This was no abstract problem of shaping a new Jewish identity, modern and secular. Mainly, it was a practical, multifaceted predicament entailing status, rights and obligations, freedom of movement, education and learning, social relations, employment, economic and vocational opportunities and living conditions. All these determined the admittance of Jews to new social circles and their acceptance by the surrounding society, affecting relations both among Jews and between Jews and their milieus, individually and collectively.

The French revolutionaries and their successors were ready to apply the principles of liberty and equality to Jews as individuals and to grant them the 'full package' that this entailed. The third revolutionary principle, however – the fraternity of nations – they withheld from Jews. 'As a nation, we give them nothing', they declared in the National Assembly.[2]

At first, the common Jewish response to the challenge of the European nation-states was to surrender their different, exclusive identity as a people while holding on to their religious distinctiveness. In an increasingly secular era, this uniqueness did not appear problematic. Jews wished to assimilate and merge with the surrounding peoples of Western and central Europe, a pattern in sync with the course of Enlightenment–emancipation–assimilation, culminating in occasional conversion and self-detachment from Judaism and the Jewish community.

But three generations of emancipation and assimilation failed to merge the Jews with their environs and bring about their full acceptance. In France, Germany and the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, Jewish efforts to assimilate provoked hostile responses in the form of political anti-Semitic parties. In the name of new racial doctrines and theories, anti-Semites rejected the feasibility of a Jewish merger with European nations, portraying it as a menace to the nations' integrity. In terms of rights, legal status and economic prospects, the Jews of Western and central Europe certainly made huge strides in the nineteenth century. In terms of social incorporation and acceptance, they had virtually stood still since the start of the century.

The emancipation solved very little. It did not resolve the problem of Jewish identity or its practical application in the modern world. Nor did it resolve the question of Jewish affiliation to the majority culture in the age of nationalism. Quite the opposite. Among both Jews and non-Jews, the emancipation sharpened the awareness of difference and distinctiveness. It opened new fields of economic and professional competition as well as social friction between Jews and Gentiles, and Jewish achievements stoked the flames of modern anti-Semitism.

Emancipation's apparent success in Western Europe – despite anti-Semitism – could not be imitated in Eastern Europe. Here, Jews had lived for centuries as an intermediate community squeezed from above and below. They were caught in the middle between landlords and peasants, Catholic Poles and Greek Orthodox Ukrainians, and after

Poland's partition, between Russians, Austrians and Germans on the one hand and Poles, Ukrainians and Lithuanians on the other. A similar situation prevailed in Romania, the Balkans, parts of Hungary, Slovakia and Bohemia-Moravia. In all the countries of multinational European empires, Jews faced the problem of whom to identify with, assimilate into and merge with: whether the ruling peoples (Germans, Russians and Hungarians) or the ruled peoples (Poles, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Czechs, Croats, etc.). Both rulers and ruled suspected Jews of sympathizing with their adversaries. In the absence of an indigenous middle class, assimilation and merger with the surroundings were impractical options for the masses. Nonetheless, in the regions controlled by Germany and Austria, emancipation did progress, albeit partially and at a slower pace than in Western Europe. At the same time, many Jews emigrated westwards from the Prussian districts of Poland, from Austrian-ruled Galicia and from Slovakia. Reaching Berlin, Vienna, Prague and Budapest, they soon enjoyed formal emancipation.

In the Russian Pale, in contrast, their huge natural growth and the severe restrictions the authorities placed on their movement left Jews with four alternatives. First, turning their backs on modernity since it did not seem to offer them much, and cleaving to the traditional Jewish way of life (this was the path chosen by the ultra-religious, later *Haredim*). Second, acquiring a general education in an attempt to gain entry into Russian or Polish society, with the help of the few enlightened liberals who countenanced the admission of Jews provided they underwent socialization and acculturation. Given the demographic, social and political conditions in Eastern Europe, this alternative was not open to many. Third, aligning oneself with revolutionary forces aspiring to change the social order and build 'the world of tomorrow', in the hope that a more just world might resolve also the Jewish problem. Jews wishing to act in general revolutionary movements usually had to surrender their Judaism and sever their ties to the Jewish public. But, finding Russian and Polish socialists no more amenable than the liberal bourgeoisie to mass Jewish inclusiveness, the Jews established their own Jewish-socialist movement, the *Bund*. Exclusively Jewish, its national dimension revolved around Yiddishism and was close to Dubnow's autonomism.

A fourth alternative, from the 1880s, was emigration overseas, and until the First World War, this was chosen by some two million Jews. Emigrants headed mostly for the United States, but also for Western

Europe, Latin America, Canada, Australia and South Africa. The New
World offered economic prospects and was relatively free of the tradi-
tions that had shaped the European social order and the Jews' place in it.

The enactment of the United States immigration laws in the years
1921–24, followed by the Great Depression in the next decade, put an
end to the mass migration. Though emigration slackened further dete-
rioration of the Jewish condition in Eastern Europe, it could not and
did not resolve the problem: the number of Jews in Eastern Europe
remained the same, the high Jewish birth rate and rise in life expectancy
balancing the emigration figures.

Against this background, Jewish nationalism, chronologically the last
alternative, appeared as a fifth response to the modern Jewish problem.
Basically, Jewish nationalism encouraged Jews to attain collective eman-
cipation as a historical nation rather than individual emancipation, which
had failed in Eastern Europe and had provoked opposition on other parts
of the continent.

How deeply was the national idea rooted in Jewish history? Was it
a revolutionary innovation or a continuous concept? From its incep-
tion, Jewish nationalism provoked internal opposition. Assimilants,
socialists and extreme religious Jews regarded it as a hasty response to
anti-Semitism and a threat to their ways of coping with the Jewish
problem and modernity. Jewish nationalists, too, included assimilated,
socialist and religious Jews, and the dispute was not about liberal assim-
ilation, socialism or religion but on the question whether or not the Jews
are a nation. After the Holocaust and the foundation of Israel, the dis-
pute became dormant. It was almost taken for granted that Zionism won
the case and proved its justification in the first place. Forty years later,
Zionism's triumph appeared to be an illusion. The issue of Jewish
nationalism re-emerged and has remained controversial to the present
day.

This book was born out of this controversy. Eight years ago I was the
Chair of my university's School of History. At that time an MA thesis
was written in the department of Middle East history, on the occupation
of two Arab villages – Tantura and Um al-Zinat – in nascent Israel in
May 1948. The supervisor and readers appraised the work as *summa
cum laude*, but soon it was exposed in court as a blood libel based on
arbitrary falsifications. The author turned a blind eye to key principles
of the history discipline and ignored elementary rules of oral history's

ethics. By granting his thesis the grade 97, the panel of readers made themselves accomplices.

The dissertation of one prejudiced student is not an adequate reason for writing a book. But in this case, the scandal soon expanded to the media in Israel and abroad and embraced many members of the world's and Israeli academic community, particularly (but not exclusively) historians. Several academics and other public figures rallied to defend the author, using a variety of arguments. Few, unfamiliar with the field, were innocent and sincere. Most advocates of the thesis, however, had ulterior motives. In addition to the political implications of the case, they strove to undermine Israeli historical research in the name of new fads that took over much of western historiography, to make these vogues orthodoxy and dictate new consciousness and methodology to their colleagues.

Disagreements between 'old' and 'new' Israeli historians began in the late 1980s. I have been involved in these disputes from their beginning, and took part in several media and academic panels on the history of Israel's War of Independence, the Arab–Jewish conflict and the absorption of mass immigration. In 1994, with my colleague Hagit Lavsky from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, I organized a three-day conference entitled 'Israeli Historiography between Vision and Revision' that brought together scholars from both sides of the barricade. I was probably naive at the time, believing that the dispute was academic, the participants had a common language – that of the history discipline – and were capable of holding fruitful discussions. The disgrace of the aforementioned thesis, and the campaign that several colleagues launched to defend it, proved me wrong and made me aware of my naivety. The ostensibly academic controversies of the 1990s masked a campaign to delegitimize Israel as a Jewish nation-state.

Excluding Benny Morris, the new historians and their comrades from other fields assumed the title post-Zionists. At first, post-Zionism appeared to me a resurrection of the traditional anti-Zionism of liberal-assimilationist and socialist brands that were popular in Europe and America in the first half of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the new millennium, I (and others) realized that this was only a partial explanation of the post-Zionist phenomenon.

In the first half of the twentieth century Zionist, non-Zionist and even some anti-Zionist historians might disagree on the preferred solution to

the Jewish question – whether it should be national, socialist, traditional, autonomous or assimilatory. Usually, however, they remained on good terms, professionally and personally, because they adhered to the same code. They were all committed to the principles and rules of the history discipline. Moreover, they all shared a common goal: approximating Truth. Distinguishing between knowledge and opinion, they dismissed each other's views about the present and the future and at the same time were capable of cooperating or, at least, learning from each other about the past.

This has not been the case in the Zionist–post-Zionist wrangle. Professional arguments about the past soon made room for ideological and personal antagonism. The discords had nothing to do with what happened in the past of Zionism and Israel, but were connected with what should happen to them in the present and future. From an apparently historical controversy the argument became a political and ideological one.

This change was due to the other origin of post-Zionism: the postmodern and other post- theories that had swamped the campuses of Western Europe and the USA since the late 1970s, and the ideas of some British, French and American New Left radicals such as Noam Chomsky. Indicating post-Zionism's affiliation to traditional, pre-Holocaust anti-Zionism does not adequately explain it. Comprehending the post-Zionists' fervour and reasoning demands tracking down post-Zionism's relationship to postmodernism, post-colonialism and other post- isms.

Israeli faculty staff who returned from sabbaticals or from their PhD or post-doctoral studies abroad imported these crazes to the Israeli academe. In their struggle to eradicate the capitalist and bourgeois world order, postmodernist scholars and theoreticians undermined the history discipline, claiming it had no added value in describing the past. They dismantled history to an assortment of narratives, ascribed equal value to each and argued that it was impossible to decide which one was closer to the truth. Their Israeli comrades introduced the new trends to the Israeli discourse and used them to undermine what they dubbed 'Zionist hegemony'. Postmodernists turned historiography into a crusade to expose the past and present sins of the West: colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, chauvinism, Orientalism, etc. Post-Zionists have applied these tactics to Israeli history and launched a *Kulturkampf* that has used history to undermine the Israeli collective memory and identity.

Any discussion of Israeli historiography cannot be detached from the development of writing on the past in the West. The growing influence of the social sciences on historiography after the Second World War, the transforming role of the universities and new scholarly approaches, methods and contents of research changed the methodology of the discipline. The methodological change was followed by an epistemological revolt. The revolutionaries sought to return history to the eighteenth century, maintaining that there was no historical truth and historians could not be objective; historiography was nothing but documented fiction, and it did not differ in principle from other fictional genres. They minimized the findings of research and the quality of the evidence. In their view, the value of an historical study depended on the researcher's ideology, politics, creative insight and similar qualities.

In the postmodern era, little has been left of traditional or conventional historiography. First and foremost, it has lost its one-time monopoly of the past. Among the variety of ways in which human beings relate to the past, from longing to research, the status of academic study and the writing based on scholarly enquiry has deteriorated. In the last three decades scholarship has withdrawn, making room for other ways of referring to bygone times.

Nowadays, history is a field open to everyone. Sociologists, anthropologists, psychoanalysts, folklorists, scholars of culture, literary critics and theorists, linguists, philosophers, oral historians and geographers engage in writing history and speaking on the past. This is not an interdisciplinary blend of knowledge, but a devastation of the discipline, its rules and principles as the basic cell of organizing science and academe.

Postist influences have not been unique to history, but it was affected by them more than other disciplines. This trend gathered pace in the West in the 1970s, was imported to Israel in the 1980s and prospered in the 1990s. All over the world historians were among the last to realize what was happening. When they did, some chose to align with the new vogues rather than counter them, and this accelerated the discipline's decline.

What started in the late 1980s as an academic debate among historians on the war in 1948 grew up into a political and ideological onslaught on Zionism, Zionist hegemony, Zionist narrative, Zionist establishment, Zionist ethnocentrism, Zionist colonialism or Zionist orientalism. Post-Zionist academics and other activists aligned with

Israel's detractors abroad of all creeds to launch the offensive. They introduced a new vocabulary into Israeli discourse and disguised their ulterior motives by academic studies and quasi-studies. In Israel, the attack culminated in the late 1990s. In the new millennium it has continued mainly in Western Europe and in American campuses, reaching a climax in demands to boycott Israeli universities, faculty and students and in a campaign of divest-from-Israel.

Discussing post-Zionism simultaneously as a branch of worldwide fad and as an internal Israeli phenomenon with pre-statehood roots, has required background chapters on the immanent and permanent problems of the history discipline (Chapter 1) and on the impact of postmodernism on the discipline (Chapter 2). A third introductory chapter copes with individual and collective memory and their position in relation to history.

The main body of the book tackles the fundamental questions of Israeli historiography, beginning with its genealogy: the emergence of modern Jewish historiography in Germany and, later, national and Zionist historiography in central and Eastern Europe (Chapter 4). Another chapter refutes post-Zionism's denial of the existence of Jewish nation and national identity and characterizes the uniqueness of Jewish identity and nationalism. Chapter 6 contests the post-Zionist accusations of Zionism's past sins towards the Palestinian Arabs and Jews from Muslim countries.

One chapter deals with the place of the Holocaust in memory and history, and what its connection was, if there was any, to the foundation of Israel in 1948. The next chapter (Chapter 8) discusses the role of the school system in shaping Israeli collective memory and identity, and elaborates on a few case studies that illustrate the transformation of collective memory in Israel in the last three decades. The final chapter debates the function of history and memory in the torn community Israeli society has become since the early 1990s if not earlier. It discusses the handling of the Tantura MA thesis and compares it to the way two similar scandals were handled in the United States.

Introduction:
The Past, its Study and Scholars

WHAT IS 'HISTORY'?

The word *history* has more than one meaning: it connotes the reality of the past, the scholarly study of the past, and the narrative – real, imaginary or mixed – of past events. This triad – reality, study and narrative – has been responsible for a good deal of tension and ambiguity around the growth of the modern discipline of history.

The tale of the past does not depend on study and research, of course. Stored in memory, it was often transmitted as an oral tradition down the generations. Throughout the ages, the connection between past and present has caused speculation as people sought clues in the past to understand the present and prophesy the future. In numerous ways, the past was a source of fascination: from longing and nostalgia to individual and collective memory, from imaginary trips through the tunnel of time to fictional depictions in literature, or 'spectral sightings' in dreams and nightmares. It was glorified by both collectives and individuals in search of a golden age and the submission of forgotten historical claims. Historical study has been merely one among several avenues used to ponder past events.[1]

The three meanings of the word *history* have raised questions about their interrelation, about the authority of historical research and the authenticity of the knowledge historians produce. History being simultaneously the study and its object implies that a historian cannot withdraw from history to observe it from the sidelines as scientists do with natural phenomena in the field or in the laboratory. The historian is part and parcel of the game, and the study of history has its own history. Nonetheless, the ambiguity of the word *history* suggests an inherent relationship between the three meanings, and historians should make every effort to have their work mirror the past as much as possible.[2]

For millennia, historians and philosophers have asked who and/or what directs the course of history. Is it coherent? Are historical facts absolute? Are they infallible? How can knowledge of the past be established? On what authority is a historical explanation based and, above all, can the historian be objective and convey a true representation of the past? The answers to these questions have been numerous and conflicting. They have pitted historians against outside critics as well as against one another. Though internal critics may openly aspire to disciplinary harmony, such accord, at the debut of the twenty-first century, seems more remote than ever.

Historians subscribe to a broad range of views about the profession. At one end there are scholars asserting that historical knowledge constantly increases via humility in the face of evidence and proper training; history is a discipline of accumulated learning, and the aggregate compensates for individual error and shortcomings. At the other end one finds historians and philosophers believing that everyone is entitled to their own view of history, and that historians configure evidence into a picture of the past according to their own interests, aspirations and predispositions.

On a different scale we find, on one side, scholars who believe in the existence of historical truth and regard the quest for truth as part of a unified scientific endeavour patterned after the natural sciences; prominent advocates of this approach were philosophers Carl Hempel and Karl Popper, who enjoyed a considerable following among historians. On the opposite side, we find historians who hold that human conduct is essentially different from natural phenomena and historians should develop their own specific theories rather than try to imitate the natural and social sciences.[3]

Most historians aim at a balance between the opposites: history should weigh the known against the unknown, change against continuity, mobility against permanence. Expressed thoughts and intentions should be measured against actions, free choice against the impact of mysterious, nameless socio-economic forces. To maintain such equilibrium, historians must continuously strive to avoid the temptations of either pole: they must not emphasize change over continuity, glorify their protagonists or sympathize with the actions or thoughts of the objects of their study.[4]

THE ROLE OF 'THE GRAND NARRATIVE'

Ancient history was universal and comprehensive. Modern history subdivided in the nineteenth century into political, military and ecclesiastical history, and in the twentieth century, also into social, economic, cultural history, etc. Apart from the horizontal plane of history's various fields, there is a hierarchic classification as well. This is a pyramid, its base consisting of various stories about the past. The level above them contains the super-story: a synthesis of several stories that explain a particular aspect of history – periodical, thematic or spatial. The next level holds the great story (or the grand narrative) that offers a comprehensive explanation of history. The apex harbours the meta-narrative, a belief in a central organizing power that dictates the course of history – God, Natural Law, Progress, the survival of the fittest or any other world order that may justify a grand narrative.

Allan Megill has suggested four approaches to history's great story. The first, typical of the Judeo-Christian tradition, states that there is a universal history and we know what it is and where it is heading. Jewish history moves towards the coming of the Messiah and the End of Days. For St Augustine and his medieval successors, history was the process of instating *The City of God*. In the eighteenth century, with the shattering of history's theological foundation, a search began for ways to study and comprehend the great story without the divine. Emmanuel Kant and George Friedrich Hegel, each in his own way, put forth Progress as the central organizing idea that lends history coherence and consistency. Later, Marxism became an extreme manifestation of this secular meta-narrative of Progress.

A second approach to the grand narrative also accepts the existence of a single universal history, but adds that in order to know what it is, research is warranted. This attitude emerged with the maturing of history into a scientific discipline. Its goal was to discover the great story, an objective that nineteenth-century historians believed to be within reach. Their confidence derived from the advances of science and technology, and did not necessarily clash with religion. Leopold von Ranke, the devout founder of the scientific historical discipline, formulated the approach: one God creates a single history and only He can fully know it.

The third approach accepts the existence of a grand narrative, but only as an unattainable ideal. History's consistency and coherence are

articulated not in the story but in the modes of thought, the patterns of research, the rules and principles of the discipline. This attitude prevailed for most of the twentieth century and still holds sway despite the opposition that emerged towards the end of the century.

The fourth approach rejects the notion of one universal history – both subjectively, as a research project hoping to expose it, and objectively, as a great story to be told once it is discovered in the future. Advocates of this approach maintain that the historical discipline should move beyond its traditional, autonomous boundaries towards other disciplines and new methodologies. The historical narrative, Megill writes, is no longer interesting; hence, historians should develop theories rather than uncover more details of the story.[5]

Megill's final verdict has been hasty. Theoretical subversion aside, historical narrative appeals to readers more than the theory and philosophy of history. Historians still produce super-stories that synthesize monographic studies. These narratives, like their predecessors, seek to order and explain the past. Sometimes they are used to explain the present and, occasionally, to predict the future.

The consideration of the principles of history is as old as ancient Jewish and Greek historiography, both of which derived from an older, nearly lost, Persian historiography.[6] Jewish history had a meta-narrative – God's will, and a grand narrative – the Old Testament. By sanctifying their historical tradition, the Jews surrendered all critical examination; the question as to the truth of their saga or the credibility of its sources was, until the nineteenth century, irrelevant to Jews.[7]

Compared to the history of ancient near eastern peoples, including Jews, Greek history was compact. Greek historians did not purport to write comprehensive history or to begin with Creation. Their early past – from the age of the gods to the days of Homer – was timeless and lacking in chronology. The encounter with ancient eastern cultures, however, particularly in the wake of Alexander's conquests, impelled Greek historians to synchronize Greek and eastern chronologies.

Unlike the Jews, the ancient Greeks did speculate about the reliability of historical evidence. They looked for additional sources to verify testimonies, to reinforce a story's credibility and to make it trustworthy. For the Greeks, choosing between true and false or, at least, credible and incredible, was an essential part of the historian's role. Greek historians sought to go beyond narration, to connect facts and to identify

cause and effect. To a large extent, they explained causality in terms of chronology, thus lending time a special status in history.[8] Greek historians also recognized the significance of a story's literary packaging and the potential damage of eloquence to credibility.

In antiquity and the Middle Ages, Christian historiography followed in the footsteps of ancient Jewish historiography. The critical character of modern historiography is primarily due to the revival of the Greek historical tradition during the Renaissance. The modern discipline thus continues a tradition dating back to Hecataeus and Herodotus: the effort to distinguish between truth and myth.

Since Thucydides, history has been written as a narrative, on the model of the story of the Peloponnesian War. Ancient historiography regarded narrative as the highest level of history writing. The historical account related political and military events in chronological order. It had its heroes and heroines, and often too a degree of fictional tension. In writing the narrative, the historian rendered the meaning of his findings, selected the relevant details and arranged them chronologically.

Besides the narratives of politics and wars, Greek historiography cultivated an additional scholarly tradition in other areas of knowledge of the past: religion, art, customs, names and places. Greek antiquarians collected and presented facts, such as lists of Olympic Game winners and temples of the gods across the ancient world or royal dynasties in Egypt. Contrary to political history, which was contemporary and in its narrative rested on the testimonies of living witnesses, antiquarian scholarship dealt with the remote past and relied on written sources.[9]

A SCIENCE OR AN ART?

'Almost everyone is convinced that history is not a science like others, and some people even believe that it is not a science at all.' This statement opens discussion of the term *history* and its derivatives by French historian Jacques Le Goff. It launches the debate of the relation between history, its study and philosophy, leading into Le Goff's thorough analysis of the paradoxes and ambivalences involved in the term.[10]

History, British historians John Tosh and Raphael Samuel agree, is a hybrid form of knowledge blending past and present, memory and myth, written documents and spoken words. Its practitioners should

combine analytical and narrative skills, and simultaneously display empathy and detachment. Historians are concerned with reconstruction and explanation, and the discipline is both scientific and creative. These contrasts can be complementary though they have generally been a source of friction.[11]

Before history became a scientific discipline, it and its practitioners enjoyed little esteem. Comparing history with poetry, Aristotle deemed the latter, which tackles universal issues, more philosophical and significant than history, which deals with the unique.[12] Two millennia after Aristotle, Dr Samuel Johnson wrote of eighteenth-century historians: 'Great abilities are not requisite for a historian; for in historical composition, all the greatest powers of the human mind are quiescent.'[13] Elsewhere, Johnson argued that the historian commanded ready-made facts, the raw materials of history, and thus did not need to be inventive or to show originality. The rest, 'the colouring, all the philosophy of history, is conjecture'. Nor, in Johnson's opinion, did the historian require much imagination, merely enough to write in a lower poetic form.[14]

Dr Johnson was unjust even to his contemporaries, to say nothing of posterity's historians. None of them had or has 'ready-made facts' at their fingertips. Historians have to search for facts, to discover, understand and reconstruct them. They then have to uncover the connection between the details. The more complex a historical issue, the more competent a historian must be at abstraction, generalization and conceptualization. In reconstructing the past, a historian needs the imagination to perceive it from within – as regards both the terms and the conceptual framework of the researched period. If these are not intellectual gifts, what are?

A few decades after Johnson, Thomas Babington Macaulay admitted that 'to write history respectably is easy enough'. However, to be a great historian 'is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions'. Since at that time Macaulay was not yet the famous historian he later became, one may suppose that he was referring to the pursuit rather than to himself.[15]

Ranke, the acknowledged founder of scientific history, nonetheless asserted that history differs from other sciences in that it is not only a science but an art. It is a science in the sense of collecting, discovering and penetrating the crux of the (past) matter. It is an art in the sense of recreating and describing what it has uncovered and identified.

Whereas other sciences are content with recording their findings, history requires the faculty of recreation and therefore mediates between science and art.[16]

Ranke's successors abandoned his dualist approach. John Bury, a prominent British historian at the turn of the twentieth century, declared: 'history is simply a science, no less and no more'.[17] This catchphrase, reflecting the atmosphere of Bury's times, has long since ceased to be self-evident; it was undermined by historians, philosophers and other scholars. Yet most historians still consider their occupation a science by its very nature. They rigorously strive to separate fact from opinion and evidence from interpretation. Because of their adherence to history as a science, they distinguish between the objective reality of things 'as they were' and a subjective wish for things to have been as one would like.

History's definition as a science, which was commonly endorsed in the nineteenth century and which remained the mainstream in the first half of the twentieth century, became controversial as the century wore on. British anthropologist and historian Philip Bagby rejected outright the phrase 'the science of history'. Although the techniques historians use to discover and verify facts amount to methodology, and might be rational, in Bagby's view history was neither a science in the ordinary sense of the word, nor a scientific methodology at all.[18] American historian Jack Hexter dismissed even Ranke's concept of history as a merger between science and creativity, claiming that history is a special discipline of knowledge, neither science nor literature.[19]

British historian Arthur Marwick has remained faithful to the definition of history as a science. He dismissed the view that history has a literary dimension, and underscored the differences between the writing of history and the writing of novels, poetry, plays and other genres of fiction. According to Marwick, the historian's duty is to provide knowledge of the past that should be well founded and accurate. Knowledge, accuracy and reliability do not apply to creative writing.[20]

Among the few historians who displayed interest in the theoretical problems of the profession before the recent fad of theorization, the British scholar Geoffrey Elton regarded history primarily as a search for truth. By this he meant to say, in the spirit of Bury, that the study of the past is first and foremost a scientific inquiry.[21] Peter Gay explored the argument, asking if the quest for truth is enough to make history

scientific. Examining the writings of Gibbon, Ranke, Macaulay and Burckhardt, he concluded that history 'is almost a science and more than a science'.[22]

Opponents of the scientific definition argue that the essence of history resides in the present rather than the past. History, they say, consists of the knowledge and imagination of present-day historians. The past is dead, existing only as a collection of images and beliefs. People living in the present have no access to the past or the means to revive it. Historians cannot know what happened in the past on the basis of residual traces, nor can they found any truths on these. Furthermore, conditioned by forces beyond their control, historians cannot arrive at an impartial or impersonal perspective on history.

This smattering of contrasting views on the relation between history, science and the creative arts should suffice to illustrate the varied approaches to fundamental issues among past and present historians.

HISTORICAL RELATIVISM AND RELATIVISTS

In the early twentieth century several historians began to be sceptical about history being a science, a trend encouraged by the First World War. The sceptics maintained that the idea of scientific history was nothing short of a myth tendentiously devised to sow hope and faith in the future. American historian, the sceptical Karl Becker, rejecting the idea that history is a science, noted dryly that while the historian does not adhere to facts, facts adhere to him. Three arguments nourished his relativist stance: (1) facts are subjective; (2) history is the product of a historian's imagination; (3) the historian's view of the past is influenced by the ideological climate of the present. In a paper delivered before the American Historical Society in 1932, he maintained that everyone may be his own historian since history is nothing but a social tool that helps improve the world. Thus, way back in the 1930s, Becker was already the forerunner of later approaches to history that radiated uncertainty, scepticism and relativism. He questioned not only the concept of Progress but the very notion of historical consciousness, though he did wonder whether he had not gone too far in challenging the 'old' history.[23]

Becker and Charles Beard, each in his own way, stressed the importance of the present in recapturing and comprehending the past.[24] To the extent that the past exists at all, it does so in the present through

source material. Although historians study sources written in the past by persons who lived in it, the sources – unlike their authors – exist in the present. The historian, too, lives in the present and his attitude to the past is molded accordingly. These conjectures seeded a relativist approach focusing on historians rather than on history. Relativist historians belittle the importance of sources. Nevertheless, the methodology based on the investigation of sources has remained the common denominator of historians and a precondition for any comparative evaluation of historical works throughout the twentieth century.

The relativists contend that the screening of sources by their authors in the past and by historians in the present make dualism inevitable. Historians can write history only by selecting evidence from facts of the past that people living in the past considered worthy of preservation. Relativist historians maintain too that historical knowledge is selective, the vast amount of facts making selection imperative. History is determined by choosing certain facts from the endless ocean of the past and by ignoring – deliberately or at random – others. In the early 1960s, Edward Halet Carr asserted that only the historian's selection turns a mere fact from the past into a historical fact, and he concluded that even facts are not purely objective.[25]

Elton, the chief opponent of the relativists in the 1960s, dismissed these arguments with the retorting that a historian does not select facts randomly, but rather applies them in a controlled manner. Furthermore, most of the evidence from and on the past did not materialize to mislead or manipulate future historians. The documents were generally aimed at other purposes. Their authors spared little thought for the future use scholars would make of them.[26]

Elton accused Carr of legitimizing subjectivity in historical research. As to Carr's differentiation between plain and historical facts, Elton retorted that all facts were historical and it was not the historian's choice that made them so. They were 'out there', in the past, before the historian ever uncovered them, and they remained there whether or not the historian chose them. Elton acknowledged that the past ceased to exist but claimed that it had existed in reality and traces of that existence had survived into the present. These traces – the historical evidence – are the historian's raw materials.

According to Elton, history is a science of reconstruction, decoding and interpreting. In addition, it has a narrative dimension that differentiates

it from the natural and social sciences. Contrary to the critics who ascribe ulterior motives to historians, and distinct from fiction writers, historians are motivated primarily by a curiosity for the truth. The starting point of every historical study is the researcher's urge to know 'what really happened' regarding a particular matter at a specific time and place. This curiosity is certainly personal. However, after the research sets out from the subjective phase of deciding on a topic and a period, it strives to be as objective as possible.[27]

One principal weakness of the opposition to scientific history is that most nay-sayers have no direct contact with practical research work. Though wide-ranging, the critical literature on the historical discipline lacks concrete examples beyond generalizations and clichés to substantiate theoretical arguments. Actually, the critics hardly know what the historian's craft is. They relate to it abstractly. In the best of cases, they examine the historian's product but ignore the process that brought him to the final conclusion.

In treating a vanished world, historians, unlike their critics, do not speculate and theorize. They scrutinize documents and other sources remaining from that bygone age. In most instances, they are not alchemists conjuring up the past. They simply add knowledge about the past while striving to overcome the discipline's limitations and approach the truth. Elton compared the historian's observations on the past to a medical diagnosis, based on both knowledge and intuition. Like diagnoses, historical observations too are real and true, but occasionally may be mistaken.[28]

Despite the pretensions of some historians to dabble in individual or collective psychoanalysis, they are neither mind readers nor emotion decoders. Usually, they cannot know what the objects of their studies thought or felt, only what they wrote or what others wrote about them. Most documents deal with what people did in the past. A tiny fraction – mainly diaries and private correspondence – occasionally tells us about emotions, hidden desires, fantasies or thoughts. When a historian writes about the thoughts or feelings of his objects without citing direct evidence from the sources, he is likely writing about his own thoughts or sentiments, not theirs.

PAST AND PRESENT

One key aspect of the debate that has preoccupied historians and philosophers is the relation between past and present, and between these and the purpose of history. Is the purpose to understand the present through the past, or an effort to understand the past with the help of the present? While the fundamental nature of the nexus of the past (known from remaining traces), of the present (guided by knowledge of the past) and of future expectations (based on past and present experience) is an ontological question, different answers have been supplied by various epistemological schools and methodological approaches.

For Ranke in the nineteenth century, and for Michael Oakshot, Herbert Butterfield, Elton or Marwick in the twentieth century, the study of the past was a legitimate undertaking in its own right, regardless of present utility, requirements or expectations. The Whig interpretation of history, on the other hand, justified its study because it served the present and present needs.[29] This approach distinguishes between good (Whig, liberal, progressive, etc.) and bad (Tory, conservative, reactionary or autocrat) in history, examining the past through the eyeglasses of the present in a kind of retroactive activism.

Laymen and scholars from other disciplines often expect historians to provide guidance through the labyrinth of the present. But if the purpose of historical study were to understand the present, history should be researched and taught backwards: the historian would look around, ask himself when, how and why one or another present state of affairs came about, and seek the answer in the immediate past. In the process, he would come across new questions about the immediate past that shaped the present. He would then have to probe a little further back, and so on, until he arrived at the origin of history in the distant past. This backward form of study might be feasible and, perhaps, even didactically useful. It is, however, philosophically dubious and methodologically deficient. The focus on immediate causes obscures long-term processes, ignores the element of chance and misses the breaks in historical continuity. Furthermore, it rigidly confines explanation to causality when history consists of intentions, ideas, visions and other elements that cannot be subsumed only under traceable causal explanations. For all these reasons, historians do not study history backwards but forwards, from the past to the present.

Since the late 1960s, public opinion on many American and west

European campuses has insisted on making history 'relevant'. Rioting students demanded that history serve society and respond to the needs of people living in the present. They called on historians to merge the past and present, declaring the separation to be artificial. Moreover, they dismissed the search for truth as redundant since the historian's personal stamp on his writing subjected history to selection and interpretation – the opposite of truth.[30]

An instrumental attitude to the past subsequently became widespread. Almost everywhere, the expansion of higher education has made the struggle to shape collective memory more intense. In many countries, questions of identity feature high on the social and political agenda, and history has become a school battlefield. According to Samuel, it would be absurd for historians to abandon the moral and political disputes of the present and withdraw to libraries and archives in search of the past.[31] Faithful to this attitude, a growing number of historians took part in the central controversies of the preceding generation.

Historians who subscribe to a belief – whether in God, the End of Days, reincarnation, reward and punishment, Progress, dialectical materialism or in some postmodern guru – add a future dimension to the relation between past and present. The future, as it concerns history, has a double meaning: both the unknown future ahead of the researcher's time and the future of the past he is studying. The latter rests somewhere between the scholar and his object, and is therefore known.

Historical perspective depends heavily on the distance of time between the researcher and the researched object. Time shapes the historian's perception of the past's future and, consequently, of the past itself: the further back in time the researched period, the more the historian knows about its future, and the broader and deeper his perspective. The nearer the researched period to the historian's time, the narrower are his perspective and ability to properly assess the object of his study.

In the study of contemporary history the two futures – that ahead of the historian and that ahead of the researched period – almost merge. The lack of perspective thus becomes the principal hindrance to the study of the 'history of the present', as the French call it. Occasionally, the researcher may himself have experienced the events he describes and/or analyses as a partner, participant, observer, beneficiary or victim.

At the very least, as a contemporary, he was a passive witness. In this case, he cannot assume the detachment expected of historians studying earlier ages. This particular minefield does not apply to scholars writing on antiquity, the Middle Ages or the early modern period. The upside, however, is that the public regards him, the researcher of contemporary history, as more relevant.

The temptation to learn from history notwithstanding, history is not necessarily relevant to the present, nor does it lend itself to deductions about the future. Unless it is intended as support for theology or any other worldview, historical research hardly provides a basis to anticipate the future or clues to comprehend it. Man is unpredictable and social behaviour even more so. History shows that free will and individual choice do not depend on rules or circumstances. In similar conditions, whole societies, smaller groups and individuals act and respond in a variety of ways and each response is to be explained separately – history, after all, is the study of the unique.

Nor does history repeat itself. Its lessons are limited to retrospective explanations about specific human behaviour under particular circumstances in the past. Even when events are similar, the outcomes do not allow scholars to extrapolate or generalize. The lapse of time between two events creates different contexts, and what appeared practical under one set of circumstances becomes impractical after these have changed. One can use the endless ocean of past events to 'prove' everything from soup to nuts. Hence, studies on the past do not help anticipate the future and barely contribute to an understanding of the present.[32]

Nonetheless, history should not be ignored or renounced. The accumulated knowledge of the past can direct our thinking, shedding light on the interaction and limitations of historical forces. Although these are not recipes for present conduct, they may further our comprehension of our own times and, occasionally, help avoid a repetition of past errors.

PERSPECTIVES AND INTERPRETATIONS

In its primary, most elementary sense, history – the events of the past – can have occurred in only one way. Anything else would refute Aristotle's law of contradiction, namely 'either P or not P' – loosely paraphrased, this means an event either occurred in a certain way or it did not. It

could not have happened in two different ways. A person can be killed in, or after, an action but not both, since he can't die twice. The number of casualties of a particular event may be 50 or 250, but both figures can't be correct. Persons have identities and names, and even if these are duplicated, as in the case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, the given person is still one and the same, not two distinct individuals.

The synchronization of a commonly agreed calendar rendered dates unambiguous. The storming of the Bastille took place on 14 July 1789, not on any other day or in any other year. Chronology determines the order of events and offers a framework to identify causal links. Temporally, an outcome cannot precede a cause even if history is not linear, its course changing with ruptures and turning points.

According to American historian Oskar Handlin, history is the progress towards truth. The historian's most elementary credo is that truth is as definitive as the world is real. Truth does not exist because people aspire to it, just as the world does not exist for human benefit. While observers who behold truth may see only a partial picture, truth itself does not depend on their will or perspective. For Handlin, truth is knowable and attainable, and science is the process of approaching it.[33]

History is not only monolithic or simply true; it is also multi-dimensional. The distinction between political-, social-, economic-, military-, technological-, scientific-, intellectual-, cultural-anthropological, grassroots- or any other hyphenated history is to a large extent artificial and arbitrary. Every major historical event or process incorporates several of these fields. Almost every political or military history has also geographical, economic, social and cultural aspects not to be overlooked. The information explosion – the infinite pool of historical raw material and recorded past experience – may have made it impossible to write total, all-encompassing history. Still, historians can focus on one or two aspects of a topic in what would indeed be deemed partial research while other colleagues, in turn, study other facets of the same issue. Ultimately, the various fields would be synthesized in a written history.

Social history is not merely 'history with the politics left out', as Trevelyan phrased it.[34] It has political context – it is affected by and affects politics. Economic history, too, proceeds in a given political and social setting, influenced by and influencing political decisions and social processes; it cannot be separated or treated in isolation from it.

Military history is not only the description and analysis of battles and campaigns. It deals with force-building – recruitment, training and organization; with the development of military thinking and technology, and with attitudes to human life and soldier welfare, all of which have political, economic, social and cultural aspects.

The campaigns of the Swedish king Carl the 12th, Napoleon and Hitler in Russia were no less contingent on geographic and climatic conditions than on tactical genius or strategic folly, or vice versa. The daily life of troops falls into cultural history. The literature and poetry of and on any war are part of the history of that war, not of a sealed-off intellectual history. The affinity between war history and literature was demonstrated by Paul Fussell in his book on the First World War. In another book, on the Second World War, Fussell illustrated the psychological perspectives – patterns of behaviour and modes of perception and comprehension – of protracted war. These, just like the daily life on the front lines or the home front, also belong to the phenomenon of war. Fussell, to study these unconventional aspects (for his time), had to address varied material quite different from the customary sources of military history and the study of war.[35]

Another scholar of the First World War, Jay Winter, showed a way to handle a historical-anthropological subject with historical rather than anthropological tools. He makes admirable use of archival sources, private correspondence and personal diaries to treat such subjects as attitudes to death and the deceased, mourning customs and patterns of commemoration, the spawning of war myths, and even the spread of spiritualism and superstition among soldiers and civilians. He also relied extensively on contemporary literature and the press, though it is the archival foundation that makes his book unique.[36]

The essentials of historical research are dry facts. Chronological, numerical, personal, geographic, technical and other details connect assorted facts into a historical event. On the other hand, the actors or witnesses – who later became sources for reconstructing, analysing and studying the event – had different perceptions of what they did, saw or heard. Their varying experiences resulted in many versions depending on numerous causes, from physical distance to geometric viewpoint, conceptual worldview and ulterior motives. Scholars studying these sources later add their own subjective and contradictory analyses, explanations and interpretations.

Interpretation creates context and enables synthesis with other events. The number of diverse interpretations increases with the passage of time, and revisionism is an inherent part of historical research. However, even if viewpoints vary, every historical interpretation, explanation or evaluation must emanate from and be supported by sources, thereby permitting common ground. Historians *do* agree – not only on facts but also on interpretations. Alongside controversies and disputes over conflicting interpretations there is also much accord, though it generally earns less prominence in public debate or academic conferences.

A single historical event may have several interpretations. This may be due to the varying weight ascribed to different pieces of evidence, to opposing worldviews, un-alike methodologies, temporal and spatial perspectives, and even a scholar's personality or temperament. The discipline is able to accommodate this sort of diversity provided the interpretations are anchored in documentation and ensue from professional analysis of the source material rather than from a historian forcing his worldview and values (or absence thereof) on the evidence.

To some extent, of course, the historian does impose himself on the evidence in analysis and interpretation, and he must be alert to the pitfalls entailed in penetrating a source's text. Interpretation is rational whereas the events themselves may not have been. This is a built-in occupational hazard even if one makes allowances for the emotional, the irrational and the erratic in history. Rational assumptions and explanations may distort a picture that, to begin with, was basically muddled if not downright daft.

Historians enjoy a certain legitimate freedom in drawing on imagination to reconstruct the plausible from the known to fill in the gaps. In this case, the historian does not rely on (unavailable or inaccessible) sources but on his knowledge of the period and his understanding of human nature. Similarly, but not always legitimately, the ambition to interpret and explain drives a historian to rely on imagination. Though the temptation to explain and evaluate everything is understandable, in history as in life there are inexplicable occurrences that do not lend themselves to rational assessment. The historian is neither omnipotent nor omniscient. He must accept the imperfection of his work; there will always be points that he has failed to understand or will be unable to explain.[37]

Diversity does not endow viewpoints and interpretations of history with equal significance or render them totally insignificant. The fact

that the form of an object looks different from different distances and angles does not mean that it has no form at all (as Jacques Derrida implies) or that it has endless possible forms, all imaginary, as Hayden White would have it. A mountain looks bigger as we draw nearer, a cabinet minister looks smaller as we come closer. Nonetheless, both the mountain and the minister are fixed 'things'. They are not virtual images that change with distance, angle of vision or the linguistic ability to describe them. An analysis that utilizes the bulk of sources, thoroughly examines their significance and interrelations, minimizes reliance on the imagination, uses clear and accurate language, and manages to treat the object from as many angles as possible results in an up-to-date, in-depth interpretation that weighs far more than any anachronistic, partial, intuitive, uncritical, superficial, blurred or biased interpretation.

Since history was one – that is, can have occurred in only one way – the historian's description, narration and analysis should attempt to integrate all relevant angles: from above, below and all sides. The relative weight of different bodies of sources changes according to topic. The testimony of industrial workers and their families is vital to the study of working conditions, the workers' way of life and their perception of professional struggles. But it is almost worthless for a study of the considerations, policies and business decisions of industrialists and entrepreneurs, or a research into government policy for the background to and framework of business and class struggles. Employer decisions and official economic policy influence workers and working conditions, and this influence should be part and parcel of any study of the workers' ways of life. However, the sources for these aspects of investigating working conditions are to be found in archives, not in pubs on the town square where retired workers get together and loitering oral historians interview them.

In describing a battle, grassroots observations from the battlefield are crucial. However, in the analysis of wars or campaigns, the decisive material is comprised of aims, situation assessments by senior commanders, planning, intelligence, logistics and physical infrastructure; hence the significance of the view from above: from headquarters, general staffs, political leaderships and their archival sources.

Similarly, a POW camp appears differently to guards and to inmates. Yet the historian should describe camp life and its interactions from both perspectives and, if possible – from supplementary viewpoints as

well (for example, the prisoners' families). A study of prison life should naturally involve prisoners and wardens, but also legislators, judges and even the families and social backgrounds of the convicted.

THE HISTORIAN IN HISTORY

One common, recurring set of arguments against the discipline of history concerns the role of the historian throughout the process of research and writing. This line of reasoning is epistemological; it denies the historian the competence to comprehend the objects of his study through the traces they left behind.

The past as history, claimed the French Philosopher Paul Valéry, is no more than imagination based on documents.[38] A hundred years earlier, Jacob Burckhardt asserted that every description and interpretation of the past is personal, and the historian cannot escape his self. Others contend that since the historian is a product of his own times, society and culture, he cannot probe the concepts and values of the period or society that he purports to portray.

Bendetto Croce's famous statement that all history is contemporary implied that historians explore the past from the present – from its concepts, problems and needs; the past is therefore nothing but a continuous, eternal chain of the presents of historians who take part in the historical process and view it from their own times.[39]

Several historians followed in Croce's footsteps. Robin Colingwood coined the phrase 'each generation writes its own history'. Dutch historian Pieter Geyl defined history as 'an endless argument', and Edward H. Carr called it 'an endless dialogue between past and present'. The radical British historian Christopher Hill maintained that each generation should rewrite history. Whereas the past is stable and unchanging, the present does change and each generation asks new questions about the past.[40]

From today's vantage point (unlike in their own time), these statements appear to be pushing at an open door. Most historians now agree that they are products of their times and part of the world around them; the present not only affects their questions, it also determines the conceptual framework that guides their analyses and answers.[41] However, armed with historical methodology, historians strive to adopt and sustain detachment. This is especially true of historians of the present who study

the history of active makers and passive witnesses still alive; the researcher is only one of them.[42]

Current events of course influence the writing of history and occasionally modify it drastically. Decolonization, for example, whetted the interest of westerners in the history of Third World countries and boosted its study from the viewpoint of colonized peoples rather than as European imperial and colonial history. Similarly, the downfall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe made archives in these countries accessible to scholars. The newly available documents raised new questions and provided answers to old ones. The main revelations concerned Russian history since the Bolshevik revolution, the history of the Second World War and the Holocaust, and the history of the Cold War. In a different sense, the civil war in Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s, or the wars in the Balkan and the Caucasus in the 1990s, contributed new perspectives and concepts to the understanding of the Arab–Israeli war of 1948.

The statement that historians ask questions from the present, thereby articulating the problems of their own times, is trivial. Virtually every historian knows from personal experience how contemporary events have affected his choice of fields, his definition of subjects, formulation of questions and comprehension of the source material. In the fast-paced modern period, a historian may go through several transformations of approach or a change of interest during his career. Nevertheless, the present and its problems are merely one factor out of many – neither singular nor principal – that influence the historian's choices, understanding and conclusions.

Though historians rely on sources left over from the age under study, they also search for, and sometimes discover, what contemporaries of that period may have tried to conceal. Under the historian's scrutiny, the evidence of the past changes in form and substance. The rules of the discipline control these changes yet leave room for the imagination. Apart from available source material, there is evidence of missing documentation that historians know must have existed. Along with the gaps in ancient and medieval texts, there are also clues about other texts that have been lost.

Historical evidence expands and changes under interpretation. Going beyond direct corroboration of the source material, historians bring imagination and deduction to bear, making sure that controversy

will continue. Interpretation and analysis warrant thought and consideration, reducing the scientific accuracy of a historian's work and generally stirring the pot. These polemics are legitimate, but they must be controlled by the principles of historical scholarship, not by personal or political-ideological rivalry. The very writing of history and accompanying debates show that historians see themselves able to reproduce historical truth whether or not this assumption guides their practice.[43]

THE HISTORIAN'S TOOLS

When I ask students what a historian's primary resource is, I usually hear the spontaneous though mistaken answer, 'the sources'. This is expected and has been so since the days of Dr Johnson; in fact, most theoreticians who criticize historians without being familiar with their practice would probably respond similarly. Nevertheless, of all the resources a historian needs and uses in his work, the sources, for all their importance, are not foremost.

Apart from intellectual curiosity about the past, particularly about certain fields defined by time, place and subject, the preconditions for being a historian include a broad general education and historical erudition. These are necessary in order to both understand the sources in context and guard against mechanically accepting them: historical erudition equips the historian to control the sources rather than vice versa. A historian with a limited general education often becomes the prisoner of his sources.

In addition to a general education and training in the history discipline, certain fields of research require specialized knowledge of concepts and theories from related disciplines such as international relations, geography, economics, demography, anthropology, ethnography or statistics. Furthermore, since most history studies in one way or another deal with people and human behaviour, thoughts and emotions, historians will always benefit from insight into the human psyche, though they must beware of pretensions to practise psychology on their objects of study.

The next prerequisite is linguistic skills, which serve the textual aspects of the historian's work. A command of languages and an understanding of their semantics and etymology are among the historian's most important tools. They are a precondition for textual and philological analyses, and for an accurate grasp of the intent. What is more, many historical

topics require proficiency in several languages. Thus, for example, to study the Holocaust in Greece, one should know Greek (the national vernacular), German and Italian (the languages of the occupying powers), Ladino (the Jewish vernacular) and French (the language of educated Jews).

Historians should be familiar with the geographic area of their study. As early as the mid-nineteenth century the French historian Jules Michelet asserted that history depends on geography. Nor is this dependence limited to political and military history. Geography is also highly relevant to anthropological, social and economic history. Processes of urbanization and modernization, or the emergence and development of customs, ceremonies and festivities, are incomprehensible without knowledge of environmental, climatic and geographical conditions. Indeed, from Michelet to the Annales and our own times, French historiography has characteristically underscored the role of geography in shaping history.

Life experience is apparently not a necessary precondition for practising history. Many fine historians have hardly set foot outside the campus except to visit archives and attend conferences; the only life they know is the life of the academic bubble (or swamp). Nonetheless, life experience is a significant bonus and the more varied, the greater its value. Ever since Edward Gibbon remarked that his service with the Hampshire militia had helped him to understand the Greek phalanx and the Roman legion, historians have wondered whether their own personal experience had similarly contributed to their professional skills. Mark Bloch acknowledged that it had, and Henri Rousso, too, maintained that personal experience in the two world wars had affected the approach of historians to armies and wars.[44]

Military service and combat experience impart a singular view of military history, a better understanding of army life and organization, as well as sensitivity to and empathy for various aspects of the combat exigencies and accompanying emotions. Involvement in the procedures of political, administrative or business decision-making helps to understand their internal dynamics. Running an election campaign affords a different insight into political anthropology from that shaped by television viewing of either mass assemblies or behind-the-scene documentaries on elections and primaries. Historians would benefit from personal knowledge of a political protest or demonstration, its organization and its handling by the police. Life in a remote village or urban slum would enrich one's

social insight and sensitivity, and thus also understanding of social issues from the past.

A historian has to be able to integrate his findings in a coherent, comprehensive picture, showing the forest for the trees. The uncovering, collection and concentration of facts might be likened to the classification of the trees. The forest view emerges in the process of digesting source material: establishing links and relations between the facts and ordering them chronologically and thematically in relevant contexts. There will always be gaps in knowledge and understanding – forest clearings – but locating these is just as much part of sketching the whole forest picture.

Ensuing from these preconditions are the apparently self-evident tools – the sources. One must point out that historians did not invent these sources. They were not created so that historians could find them in the future and use them to serve the ulterior motives of the authors. Even deliberate forgeries (for example, Emperor Constantine's gift to the Church or the Protocols of the Elders of Zion) were made for contemporary polemic purposes, not for future historians. Part of the historian's work is to expose such forgeries and the reasons for peddling them.[45]

STUDYING THE PAST FROM WITHIN

A historian striving to approach truth and to become familiar with and comprehend the past must step back from his own times to penetrate the world of his study. This should be clear to the historian before he embarks on a research project, and he should be confident of his ability to meet the requirement.

Of course, the aspiration to truth and all that this entails compels the historian to cover a topic from all sides, examining not only opposing views, movements or societies ('others'), but also the ones to which he is partial. As regards the latter, he must avoid the pitfall of propagandizing for his worldview, gender, sexual preferences, religious credo, nationality, ideology, political party or any other object of his identification. Whatever direction or topic he chooses, his duty is to avoid taking things for granted or at face value, but to treat every matter, including personal preferences, sceptically and critically.

This approach is no longer self-evident. A relativist historian would argue that the writing of history is determined by the world or the

society from which the historian comes, not by the world or the society he is attempting to penetrate. E.H. Carr raised this argument in the early 1960s, maintaining that to understand Theodor Mommsen's *History of Rome* one had to know of the author's disappointment with the 1848 liberal revolution. Similarly, to understand Louis Namier's book on eighteenth-century English politics one had to know that the author was 'a conservative from the continent'. Carr's approach found many adherents in Britain and the United States, as well as sharp critics on both sides of the Atlantic.[46]

WRITING HISTORY

Writing is the final stage of a historian's work. It is hardly the easiest one and, for some, even the most difficult. It begins after the historian has read, appraised and digested his sources, after having mentally shaped the historical picture that emerges from the evidence. Presenting one's work in an essay or article entails simplifying processes, illuminating events in a balanced manner, explaining their interrelation, and formulating all these in clear, understandable language and, hopefully, also in an interesting way.

Scholars in the natural and social sciences publish their researches in professional peer-reviewed journals aimed at colleagues; to address a wider public, they need to translate their findings into common language – the books of popular science. Unlike them, historians address their readers directly. They speak and write the language of ordinary people (or, at least, they did until the theorization of history writing), the substance being taken from real life. This seeming advantage over other scientists comes at a price: anyone can use a historian's writings, adapt them to their own needs and take them out of context.

The writing of history takes three basic forms: description, analysis and narration. Description presents a 'still life' of past time. Analysis, though also static, juxtaposes description with synchronic and diachronic situations, and explores their connection. The backbone of the historical narrative is the passage of time. In this type of writing, the author presents his research findings chronologically by means of the determination of cause and effect, a search for motivations and a sketch of evolutionary processes. The narrative answers the 'what' and 'when' whereas the integration of analysis explains the 'how' and 'why'.

The rules of scientific writing differ from those of literary prose, and the historian is often torn between the two. Processing sources into a story that will be both readable and faithful to the past underlies the historian's struggle with truth. This struggle demands rigorous attention to detail in archival and other sources, but also imagination, a talent for storytelling, and the ability to unravel, reconstruct and interpret – to faithfully portray the past in a manner pleasing to the reader. It is a struggle that goes back to ancient historiography, as Anthony Grafton showed in his book on the history of the footnote.[47]

Though history writing is descriptive and narrative, it is not fiction. It is analytical, yet different from the typical writing of other disciplines that occasionally may deal with the past (for example., sociology). Unlike the fiction writer, the historian describes the past on the basis of traces it left behind, he does not make it up. Unlike the journalist, he must expose and define the gaps of knowledge, not gloss over them with what appears logical or necessary. Unlike the sociologist, he is committed to authentic, primary sources, not to theories that have been developed from secondary and partial sources or derive from speculation.

Doubts about historical knowledge have often revolved around the feasibility of transmitting knowledge through writing. The reality of the past (like that of the present) was chaotic. Research and reconstruction are rational, orderly processes. The very writing of history reduces the chaos of the past to processes with direction and purpose. To make the picture intelligible to the reader, the historian must supply a beginning, middle and end, suggest links of causality and consequence, and indicate substance and intent. As the historian gains more knowledge of a topic, the picture becomes more complex, as do his dilemmas about how to translate it into narrative writing and explain it to the reader.

Narrative writing conveys linear evolution while reality defies clarity and continuity. In certain respects, it is impossible to write proper history. Historical processes took place across a broad front and along several axes with numerous points of contact and intersections. Each of these connections followed its own progress and links to other developments. A researcher may be able to make order out of this complexity in his head, but it is far more difficult to reconstruct the complete picture in writing and to tell it in a way apprehensible and digestible to others. Despite the scientific nature of historical research, its presentation and dissemination depend on language skills.[48]

The three forms of writing – description, analysis and narrative – articulate the diverse approaches and internal tensions within the discipline. Description and narrative answer the demand to reconstruct the past, while analysis corresponds to its interpretation. Narrative lends history its popularity and history books do attract a larger readership than the scientific material of other disciplines. The reader is able to follow the pace of a historical narrative: hour by hour in the narration of a battle; day after day in a political crisis; or an entire human life in a biography.

Narrative may not always be the most appropriate form for a history explanation. Occasionally, the question of causality turns the historian's attention to events in different times and places that do not necessarily merge into a coherent story. Political and military history managed to bridge the gap between knowledge and story, meeting the demands of both narrative and science. Military, diplomatic and political events can be described, and often explained, by historical narrative. Comprehensive structural changes, however, cannot be exhausted by narrative writing and require other analytical tools. The growing interest in social, anthropological, demographic and economic history, as well as historical geography and the expansion of research to common, at times marginal, people who left few traces in archives, have caused historians to look for new research and writing methods. They have borrowed from the social sciences and detached themselves from narrative that they found unsuitable for explaining certain types of historical problems.

In *Annales* hands, the pragmatic solution of abandoning narrative writing became an ideology. *Annales* advocated the substitution of narrative by a more advanced 'conceptual' genre. They deemed narrative writing inferior because its chronological description of events was not accompanied by analytical or theoretical explanation, and they held up the intellectual value of conceptual writing. But they did not define what intellectual value is or how it is to be measured for the sake of comparison. The high sales of a few *Annales* authors notwithstanding, 'advanced' writing or that of 'high intellectual value' naturally addresses a narrower circle. Rank-and-file readers continue to opt for interesting historical stories or a 'good read'.[49]

Annales' success induced many historians to adopt analytical writing as the proper writing model for the history of issues. In the late 1970s the trend shifted back towards narrative writing and the history of events. Analytical writing had apparently not offered a better solution

to the problems of writing history. This, depending on the subject, was to be sought in a balance between the two, which sometimes merged and sometimes separated for variant treatment in the same work. The historian thus had to master both genres and apply them judiciously.[50]

The historian's own rhetoric should be reserved for the preface and the epilogue of a book where they properly belong. The function of a research text, as Oscar Handlin used to say, is to convey the heaps of cards, xeroxed documents, newspaper clippings, oral testimonies and other products yielded by the scholar's countless hours of collecting, arranging and digesting source material.[51]

OBJECTIVITY AND TRUTH

The principal aim of history's methodology is to narrow, as much as possible, the gap between the objective occurrences of past events and the contexts in which they took place, on the one hand, and the representation of those events in written sources or as perceived by contemporary witnesses or treated by later scholars, on the other. The narrowing of the gap delineates the boundaries of historical interpretation and brings us closer to historical truth. But the process of approximation is apparently infinite.

History's methodology, instituted by German and French historians in the nineteenth century, seems to have derived from the ascetic erudition of medieval scholar-monks. According to Gertrud Himmelfarb, the rigors of the method have an additional role: to enable transparency in the historian's work, open it up to criticism, and encourage the historian to strive for objectivity despite temptations to the contrary. Until recently, this was the common methodology of all historians, including relativists. Now, too, it guides the work of many historians though others have abandoned it in vociferous disregard.[52]

Considerable confusion has surrounded the idea of the quest for truth or objectivity, the latter in the sense of impartiality, of not taking a stance. In his history of American historiography, Peter Novick placed the quest for objectivity at the centre of his discussion. In the past, the historian was perceived as a neutral judge, committed first and foremost to objective historical truth. Novick maintains that this ideal has become confused and obsolete, and the search for objective truth is doomed to failure. In his hands, relativism, and even nihilism, thus become kosher.[53]

Thomas Haskel dismissed Novick's identification of objectivity with neutrality, detachment, non-involvement, etc. He suggested a more flexible definition of objectivity that would allow historians political or ideological involvement provided that they were open to opposing opinions and that they backed up their partisan views with valid evidence and cogent arguments. In Haskel's view, this flexible definition may render the ideal of objectivity attainable.[54]

Although he considered absolute objectivity impossible, Philip Bagby believed it should be the historian's goal and aspiration. While historians must be aware of their biases in order to neutralize them, they should not be indifferent to the objects of their studies.[55] Salo Baron pointed to the multiple meanings of the concepts of objectivity and truth, and to the different varieties of subjectivity, such as a manipulative use of language or the elevation of one cause above others in a historical process. For all the growing scepticism among historians, Baron insisted that the historian who does not exert himself to be as objective as possible, turns into a preacher, a political or social propagandist, or a religious determinist.[56]

My own view is that, if objectivity means neutrality and impartiality, then truth – historical, legal or internal – is not objective. Historians are not supposed to pretend to be neutral judges when they draw conclusions from historical evidence. The historian's purpose is to uncover the evidence, select, analyse and evaluate it professionally, and thereby approximate the truth that may well refute the claims of one or more parties and sometimes even his own beliefs, views and preliminary assumptions.

A work that does not aim to approach the truth and distinguish between true and false may be many things, but it is not a history study. Of course, at the start of the research, the historian should attempt to shed all bias and partiality. This, I believe, is what the partisans of objectivity mean. A historian may rightfully adopt a viewpoint and take a position – but he may do so only after he has studied the evidence, digested its significance and completed the process of research, drawing conclusions. His test is not to what extent he managed to eschew a clear stance, but to what extent his assembling, analysis and presentation of the evidence were professional, systematic, complete, penetrating and rigorous. Another, equally important criterion is the compatibility of the historian's conclusions with the evidence and whether the conclusions emanate as far as possible from correct, unprejudiced interpretations.

Political, ideological or social loyalty need not hamper a historian's professional qualities provided he is capable of separating his work from his other commitments. Several good histories have been written by partisan historians and sometimes even stemmed from their commitments. The accomplishments of Eric Hobsbawm, Lawrence Stone or Raphael Samuel are good examples. The study of the past may support social or political empowerment in the present, but only if it is persuasive and based on strong evidence, not by the clamour and repetition of propaganda slogans. If he wishes to convince of his integrity and objectivity, the committed historian must adopt an especially rigorous and critical attitude toward the sources and searching self-criticism. Moreover, should he find that the sources do not support his political views and biases, he must be prepared to abandon them.

None of the talents required of the historian are beyond reach. It is rare, however, to find the right combination of attributes in one person. Few historians command the desirable measure of historical erudition, language proficiencies, historical imagination, empathy, an aptitude for abstraction, conceptualization and generalization, a capacity to penetrate past society and the gift of attractively and/or analytically transferring the findings from the past to readers in the present. If to these we add the necessary qualities of integrity, modesty and decency, which do not apply only to historians, the numbers would shrink even more. This was apparently what Macaulay meant when he discerned between writing history and being a great historian.

The Impact of the Postmodern Gospel and its Apostles on the History Discipline

SCIENCE AND RHETORIC

Thus far, we have looked at topics relating to the evolution of the history discipline from its inception to the positivist-relativist dispute. The main question absorbing historians at that time concerned the essence of historical knowledge. Philosophers and historians asked whether it was possible to know the past, what qualified as a historical explanation, and whether objective historical knowledge existed at all. In the past thirty years the discussion of knowledge has been replaced by a linguistic and literary debate. The new controversies involve the mode and language of historical description, analysis, interpretation and explanation. History's uncertain connection to science has left room to align it with literature – in other words, the question is how the content of historical writing is affected by its literary form.

The linguistic turn, as this development is commonly known, is part of a broader change in the humanities and the social sciences. Thomas Kuhn, in the concept of paradigm, and Hayden White, in the concept of trope, undermined the positivist approach to science and emphasized the rhetorical aspects of scientific and historical knowledge based on conviction rather than empirical findings.[1] They were, of course, not the first to underscore language and rhetoric. Since Socrates' dispute with the Sophists, western thought has swung like a pendulum between the reality that language is able to articulate and the linguistic tools it uses to do so. Reality advocates regard language as a means to arrive at whatever is outside of it. Language advocates regard it as the agent that shapes 'reality', maintaining that the only meaningful reality is that described by language, that there are no other 'realities'.

The linguistic turn anticipated a new realignment between language, literature and history. The origins of the change go back to two early twentieth-century linguistic theories. Swiss linguist Ferdinand De Saussure argued the inadequacy of language to reflect reality: it is neither a mirror of reality nor a neutral medium. Roman Jacobson, a Russian scholar who emigrated to the West after the Bolshevik revolution, stressed a text's autonomy of any non-literary context. At the end of the century, both theories became a major tool in the hands of postmodernists.

The expansion of the rhetorical approach elicited several question marks that soon evolved into exclamation marks about the basic assumptions, principles and methodology that had guided historical research and writing. Almost every one of the principles discussed in the previous chapter – the autonomy of the past and the ability to describe it in the present; the existence of and commitment to historical truth; the examination of the past on its own terms and not according to moral criteria of the present; the findings and objectivity of historical research – has become fair game for a mixed bag of 'postists'.

'POSTISM'

Three hundred years after the emergence of the Enlightenment, rationalism and progress, people who consider themselves rational and progressive still cling to superstitions. Enlightened and reasonable westerners seek peace of mind in horoscopes, Indian worship, cults and drugs, allegedly attesting to the bankruptcy of modernity. Postmodernism endorses this situation by undoing the nuts and bolts of modernism, primarily progress, reason, science and the nation-state.

The trend originated in the aftermath of the Second World War. In Western Europe national identity retreated before a growing awareness of the heterogeneous – regional and ethnic – nature of the nation-state, and aspirations rose for economic and political unification. In American society, hidden domestic tensions surfaced, a process accelerated during the Vietnam War. The tyranny of political correctness took over public and academic debate. A discourse of 'rights' invaded the political discourse, replacing persuasion and dialogue with judicial or quasi-judicial decisions.

Even before the collapse of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Marxism had proved inadequate in dealing with the

new burning social issues of the day – ethnic, national, religious, gender, etc. – that had replaced class tension or capital-labour differences. Added to the transition from an industrial to an information society, and the delayed after-effects of the Holocaust, the changes raised ontological questions about the usefulness of modernity and the validity of its assumptions. This reassessment undermined the conviction in the march of progress, albeit with temporary interruptions and setbacks, and paved the way for postmodernism.[2]

In the absence of a systematic doctrine or clear manifesto, the definition of postmodernism becomes problematic. Apparently, every one is free to describe it at will. In the eyes of some of its believers, postmodernism is an intellectual trend. Others claim that it is the political, cultural, social and economic condition in which 'we' (some unnamed first-person plural) live. If postmodernists can hardly define themselves, it is all that much more difficult for observers from the outside to do so: to them, it is a catch-all for a long list of post-isms that developed in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

The post- prefix means not only after and beyond, but also antagonistic. It signifies a new beginning; not continuation, but a break with and end to everything that came before. It symbolizes the postmodernist aspiration to all-inclusive revolution. Modernists assigned history the role of liberating mankind from the burden of tradition. Postmodernists, for all their diversity, strive to unshackle mankind from the yoke of history and bring history to an end or, at least, predict its end.

Like religious faith, postmodernism, too, takes a determinist view of the world. It is fatalist – denying free will and offering absolution; no one can be held responsible since everybody is conditioned by forces beyond one's control. 'We cannot choose whether to live in postmodernity or not', asserted Keith Jenkins – one of the leading spokesmen of postmodernism in Britain – 'because this is not an ideology that we are free to decide whether we espouse or not. It is our historical fate to live in this condition.' Jenkins merely says explicitly what many postmodernists affirm implicitly.[3]

Postmodernism reveals a religious-mystical facet in an almost messianic expectation of the collapse of capitalism and in recurrent prophecies about its end. This anticipation is neither new nor original. Marxists had been predicting it from 1848 to the Paris Commune in 1870–71,

the Bolshevik revolution, the Third International and the Cold War. In the postmodern departure from Marxism, true believers have been waiting for capitalism to fall since the student riots in Europe in 1968. Capitalism, however, continues to thrive, much to the chagrin of its detractors, and as things seem now, it will probably survive the current global crisis.

THE GENEALOGY OF POSTMODERNISM

Post-colonialists date the start of postmodernism to the Algerian war, launched in 1954.[4] Other postmodernists often pinpoint the founding myth in the 1968 riots in Western Europe. That unrest was a far cry from the heroism of previous revolutionary measures. It was not the initiative of oppressed, resolute masses prepared for sacrifice because they had nothing to lose, but a naive and childish outburst of spoiled students.[5] Renault employees and other industrial workers took to the streets to show solidarity with the rioting students though they soon forgot all about protest and guarded their own interests. Yet, for some of the participants, then in their early twenties, and for some of the professors and thinkers who inspired them, the riots were the defining experience of their youth or the climax of their socio-political involvement and influence. They continue to yearn for those years even as they become septuagenarians, redolent of the title of actress Simone Signoret's autobiography: *Nostalgia Isn't What It Used to Be*.[6]

After the student riots died down, several other movements and political concerns – feminism, gay rights, homelessness, environmentalism, etc. – spread through Europe articulating diverse dissatisfaction with existing conditions. The trend included academic Marxists looking for a substitute for historical materialism and finding it in various new theories: literary, semiotic, psychoanalytic and feminist.[7] In the eyes of this 'new' Left, the Communist party was part and parcel of the old order that had to be disabled and replaced.

Disillusioned communist intellectuals spurned the political arena, whether membership in the Communist party or support for it from outside. They called on intellectuals to consistently resist all 'systems of thinking' or ideologies, and the attempts to translate them into reality or 'history'. Leftist intellectuals gathering at Paris coffee shops replaced the preaching of class war with enthusiastic espousal of Third World independence struggles. Their erstwhile heroes – Lenin, Stalin and Mao

– made room for new ones: Boumediene, Gaddafi, Humeini, Yassir Arafat, Saddam Hussein and Bin Laden. Casting about for a comprehensive new theory on social processes, they substituted Marxism with structuralism and went even further to post-structuralism.

POSTMODERNISM AND HISTORY

Postmodernists of every ilk ascribe the utmost significance to history and at the same time dismiss the assumptions that have guided the field since the nineteenth century. Their notion of history rejects the ideal of reconstructing the past *as it was*. They write off all claims to universal truth that might lend its adherents authority.[8] Apparently this explains why some of them have become keen partisans of the Shi'ite fundamentalism of Ayatollah Humeini and his successors, while others pledge support for the Wahabi fundamentalism of al-Qa'ida.

Postmodernists disapprove of the prevailing socio-political order, and the historical discipline that champions it, on three levels: ontological, epistemological and methodological. Ontologically, postmodernists discard the ideas of the Enlightenment, first and foremost the concept of progress. They are not interested in new or more accurate versions of truth, but aim to stop the search for it altogether. Truth is incompatible with their goal of a non-hegemonic world. Postmodernists oppose every sort of meta-history (even as they are busy building one of their own). Their world is fluid, a total, chaotic flow that no historical consciousness can apprehend. In their eyes, the search for a coherent universal history has been a dangerous illusion that nurtured the tyrannies of the twentieth century and caused its disasters.

Epistemologically, postmodernists object to the entire infrastructure of the history discipline, primarily the nexus between the past, the present and expectations of the future, as well as the relation between continuity and change. While most historians stress continuity as the dominant element of history, postmodernists emphasize ruptures and gaps. Postmodern theories rock the pillars of historical research by blurring the distinctions between literature and science, between an allegedly unattainable reality and its representations.[9]

Postmodernists reject scientific positivism and any differentiation between objectivity and subjectivity, whether as facts versus values or as scientific empiricism versus political and moral partisanship. They deny

the fixity of the past, the existence of a past reality independent of the historian's narrative, and the validity of truths about the past. Since they argue that language conceals more than it reveals, documents do not mirror fact and should not be perceived as an authentic representation of past reality.

Methodologically, postmodernists continue previous trends condemning the way that history is researched and written: its fields of interest – the 'what' and 'who' – as well as its methodology – the 'how'. For them, the representations of history through documentation and research are mere ideological structures. They value theory over empirical research, asserting that methodology and knowledge are moulded and structured by culture and society.

Unlike earlier revisionist historians whose criticism ultimately merged with and helped shape mainstream history, postmodernists totally reject traditional or political history and the 'new' or social history. They claim supremacy for the 'new-new' cultural history they have devised. Some of them also contend that postmodernism has transformed the relationship between the historian and the profession of history. 'Contemporary historians', David Harlan declared, 'write history not to deepen our indebtedness to the past [through learning and erudition], but to liberate us from the past.'[10]

HISTORIANS AND TEXTS

Post-structuralism is the theoretical basis of postmodernism. Post-structuralists emphasize language, essence and interpretation as the central elements of human understanding in approaching their surroundings and, therefore, also people. Primarily, they strive to undermine conventional assumptions about the objectivity of knowledge and the stability of language. They argue that texts have no fixed meaning and that there is no such thing as a preferred path to truth. As part of their offensive against the scientific ethos, they contend that the writing of historical studies is only one of many forms of representation of the past. Historians, they hold, cannot integrate the fundamental nature of history, as the reality of the past, and its representation in the present because the limitations of language make such integration unfeasible.

Unlike previous attacks on the history profession, the post-structuralist onslaught aims at the very heart of the discipline. Post-structuralists

purport to invalidate history's epistemological assumptions. Historians, unlike scientists, they argue, do not produce knowledge that other people can use. Essentially, they cultivate discourse – a system of symbols and terms about the past – and in this they are no different from poets and novelists.

French scholar Roland Barthes proclaimed back in the 1960s that the historical narrative was not fundamentally different from the epos, the novel or the drama, all being subject to the same semiotic rules. The historian's use of these rules to describe the past, he said, did not take precedence over the fiction writer's. Moreover, he criticized the 'fetishism of the real'; contrary to history's pretensions to constitute an antithesis to myth, the two, he said, shared many characteristics.

In his manifesto *The Death of the Author*, written in 1968, Barthes preached cancelling the borders of writing. He called for demolishing the walls between the writer and the scholar, allowing the critical scholar to write about himself through the objects of his study. This innovation enabled a new reading of literary history: not as comments in the margins of a literary work, but as an intimate dialogue between reader and writer. Via projection, detachment and other methods used in the original literary work, the dialogue tells about the life of the literary scholar, his opinions, values and qualities. This approach, however, suffers from a weakness. It is usually not a dialogue between two writers but a monologue by the literary critic who thumbs a ride on the author's back.

What might be appropriate to various genres of fiction is inadmissible in historical research. The historian and the literary critic or theorist approach texts differently. The historian treats the literary text as a document: as testimony to the time and place of its composition by the author. The critic seeks to have the text conform to general categories (beauty, truth, goodness, etc.), and, in the process, he relieves it of its spatial and chronological contexts.[11]

Unlike historians of antiquity, the Middle Ages or the early modern period, scholars of contemporary history often find themselves at odds with the authors of their source material or the objects of their studies. They must be prepared for the encounter with the protagonists, exercise caution, and firmly anchor their interpretations in the text, whether written or photographed. Notwithstanding the pretensions of some historians and the temptations of psycho-history, the historian is not a

psychoanalyst. The sources offer evidence of what people wrote or said in the past, they do not suggest what people felt or thought (with the exception of diaries and private letters that occasionally may reveal thoughts and feelings). The historian is not qualified to interpret the subconscious, hidden intentions, fantasies or dreams, and he cannot attribute intent without authentic, unequivocal documents to back this up.

In non-contemporary history, freedom of interpretation is limited mainly by the scrutiny of a scholar's peers. They decide whether the analysis derives from the text and is compatible with its context or, on the other hand, is a figment of the imagination, or worse, an arbitrary attempt by the historian to force his will and opinions on the text. Such discussion would of course appear redundant to subscribers of the 'every-interpretation-is-equal' school or to observers who 'know' that their interpretation is always the true one – or, indeed, to both.

Contrary to the claims of deconstructionists and postmodernists in general, it is not the historian who forces either his will or his authority over a text from the past. Quite the opposite, the historian usually insists on proper representation of the past, shunning hindsight, polemic, retroactive activism and apologetics for the author of the source material or the modern-day critic. The latter are influenced by the political correctness of the present and attempt to impose it anachronistically on texts from the past that knew nothing of 'PC'.

KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

The postmodernists' rejection of fixed truth was a necessary precondition for their attempt to revolutionize historical consciousness. Actually, they took issue with six common arguments of historians: (1) the past as it was (*als ist eigentlich gewesen ist*) is accessible through evidence directly affiliated to it and enabling its reconstruction; (2) selection and creative imagination are merely auxiliary aids in constructing historical description; (3) historians can be objective (that is, can detach themselves from their own values and context), and serve as a neutral channel connecting the evidence and the historical narrative; (4) the essence of past phenomena emerges from the reconstructed past; (5) the language used to construct the historical narrative plays mainly a passive role; and (6) both continuity and change shape human life. Postmodernists ascribe these assertions to

a double illusion: namely, that arriving at past realities is possible, and that proper methodology can prevent distortions in a scholar's findings.

Some of these assertions are trivial. There are no immaculate historians, as historians worth their salt would be the first to admit. The fact that they *can* err does not knock the bottom out of the discipline. Moreover, the mistakes of individual historians can be – and regularly are – corrected by the work and judgement of their colleagues and successors.

But the confession that historians are fallible has not satisfied postmodernists. They are concerned with history's epistemology, not its methodology. The claim to truth and objectivity, they maintain, presupposes the existence of an emancipated, rational human subject capable of controlling his life, a product of western culture. The subject's comprehension of the past is part of that control. Nonetheless, the argument continues, this ostensible comprehension and all that derives from it are misleading: subjects who live in the present have no direct access to the past *as it was*. What have remained from that past are texts and discourses that mediate between the past and its scholars through linguistic tools. The only world open to the historian is that constructed by language, and it is not a doorway to reality. Hence, the very claim to objective knowledge and a single authoritative truth doesn't hold water. It is deception. When manipulated, it becomes a tool of repression.

Rejecting the distinction between truth and fabrication, postmodernists contend that truth flows not from consciousness but from power relations. The first to indicate the relation between truth and power was the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Through another German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, an unrepentant member of the Nazi party, Nietzsche's ideas were passed down to Michel Foucault. In his historical writings, Foucault translated the abstract philosophy into terms of the real world, and thus became the symbol of the 'knowledge is power' approach.

From the 1970s until his death in 1984 Foucault was one of the leading authorities of the French New Left. Historians considered him a philosopher and essayist while philosophers considered him a historian. Peter Burke, editing an anthology of articles on Foucault, was perplexed as to how to classify him. Although Foucault fans thought him one of the most original thinkers of our time, many of his critics claimed that he was a charlatan. His works straddled the borderline

between history and philosophy, yet they contributed to change in several other disciplines, from literary criticism to geography. His writings wielded wide influence, though many readers found them indigestible and abstruse.[12]

Regarding science as only one form of knowledge out of several, Foucault contended that the scientific discourse was controlled by ideology and that scientific theories were not neutral. They were associated with authority; knowledge and power were intertwined. Texts were not the fruit of an author's thoughts; they were ideological products of the dominant discourse.[13] For Foucault, knowledge and writing were a way to demonstrate the elite's power vis-à-vis the masses. The acceptance of one version of the past and the rejection of another did not mean that the accepted version was closer to the truth or more consistent with the evidence; it merely reflected the greater power of its partisans in the history establishment, in academe or in society at large.[14]

In his later books, Foucault moved from history to generalization and theory. He strove to transcend language and the 'history of historians', dismissing the basic conventions of historical rhetoric: tradition, influence, development, evolution, spirit, cause and effect, fusion and splits, sources and references. Instead, he stressed history's epistemological ruptures. Since it was impossible to attribute to people who lived in the past the intentions, values and interests of our own time, it was impossible to write any continuous history. The medieval priest's confessional was not the modern psychoanalyst's couch. Hence, Foucault concluded, historians should either write about the past through the prism of the present or not write about the past at all.[15]

In the name of genealogy (an analysis of changing power relations – a concept borrowed from Nietzsche's genealogy of morality) and of the archaeology of knowledge (a virtual excavation of the subsurface of discourse to uncover the intellectual structures resting in its foundations and the laws that created it), Foucault stormed the history of ideas to relieve it of its chains. To signify that human beings are not autonomous, he and his followers spoke of 'subjects' instead. Human beings were a myth of liberal society whose legal system was based on the notion of personal responsibility. Continuous history, he said, strove to preserve the subject's sovereignty and resist all attempts to decentralize it.[16]

THE BREAK BETWEEN POSTMODERNISTS AND HISTORIANS

Foucault and Derrida's successors went further in denying past reality and any truths about it. In place of 'absolutist' aspirations to objectivity and truth, postmodernists sought to introduce a new, overarching model of absolutism – subjectivity and relativism. By declaring that everything, including knowledge, is a matter of power relations, Foucault's successors tout the futility of looking for 'objective' truth: always, the strong did, do and will dictate their subjective 'truth' as objective.

Along with truth and objectivity, two other basic concepts of the history discipline vanished from the postmodern vocabulary: bias and empathy. Since the past is not reality, it is impossible to empathize with or, indeed, to properly understand people who lived in it. In the absence of truth and objectivity, there are no criteria to examine bias. One person's bias is another's truth. Jenkins maintained that bias and empathy are the problem of empiricist historians. To them, bias is an obstacle on the road to truth. To postmodernists, it is irrelevant.[17]

Another key concept of postmodernist thinking holds that science (including history, of course) and technology are social and cultural constructs engendered by interest groups to strengthen their own hegemony. According to Foucault and his followers, scientific claims in the name of truth and objectivity are mere manipulation, and the apparent objectivity of scientific facts is plainly an ideological construct cultivated by scientists to camouflage their role of selecting and shaping information.

While there is a grain of truth in the statement that historical knowledge is socially and culturally constructed, postmodernists have taken it to the absurd. Historians, like other scientists, are certainly affected by, and occasionally try to affect, their surroundings. But this two-way influence is diverse. It changes from one environment to another and acts differently on different people. As such, it is hardly a basis for sweeping generalizations or conclusions.

At first, most historians ignored postmodernism and blithely went about their empirical research.[18] In the late 1980s, however, this changed. By then, a few American and British historians had embraced the postmodernist religion and strove to convert their colleagues. Other historians were opposed, warning of the immanent danger to the profession harboured by the new approach. The disputes became hotly fanatic. Unlike in the 1960s, the main point did not revolve around

'what is history?' and how it was to be researched and written. It centred on whether history was at all necessary, and whether it could be studied.

Historians' disregard for the postmodern challenge was to no avail. By 1997 Richard Evans acknowledged its threat to the discipline. He wrote of the 'barbarians' knocking at the gates of the discipline with malice. Citing Frank Ankersmit and Jenkins, among other 'barbarians', he called on historians to press them into service wherever possible. If history could open up to the influences of social science, there was no reason for it not to open up to literary critics and linguists, though their influence had to be approached carefully and critically.[19]

At first, historians tried to stem the relativist wave that swept up many Humanities scholars rejecting the pretensions of scientific objectivity. By the 1990s, however, some historians succumbed to the fad and climbed on the bandwagon: they embraced the general trend in the direction of 'cultural studies', positioning themselves at the forefront of the struggle against modern elitism.[20]

Ernst Breisach described the controversy between postmodernists and their historian-opponents as a moderate philosophical debate, courteous and 'clean', taking place on some academic Olympus and concerning epistemological issues, such as the existence of truth, the essence of historical evidence and the objectivity of the historian.[21] It was actually far less genteel and, to a large extent, fell on deaf ears. The language was as much impulsive, ideological and political as academic.

Because of its social and other implications, history has been a quality target for postmodernists and, in comparison with their other prey, they invest inordinate energy in attacking it. Beyond their rejection of truth and objectivity, postmodernists criticize the concept of historical narrative and seek to alter the historical basis of linear-chronological time. Historical time, Ankersmit argues, is a late, artificial invention of western civilization, a cultural rather than a philosophical concept, and historical narratives based on this perception of time are built on shifting sands.[22]

Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth predicts the imminent abandonment of tellable real time for postmodern time, the rhythmus. Unlike historical time, rhythmic time is not neutral, though whom or what it benefits, Ermarth does not divulge. She declares that the postmodern undermining of historical time threatens human rights, the definition of disciplines, the possibility of representation in politics and arts, and the informative

roles of language.[23] If these are the anticipated returns of the assault on history, it makes it easier to understand why postmodernists invest so largely in it.

HISTORY AS PROPAGANDA

Foucault and his partisans turned history upside down. From researching the past from the traces it left, they turned the study of history into a crusade for investigating past sins in order to expose and reproach them for present needs. Unlike previous criticism of history, postmodern theories have attempted to pull the rug from under the discipline's scientific existence and revert it to a literary genre.

In the eyes of postmodernists, history may be justified only if it exposes the class, racial and gender ulterior motives embedded in historical texts. They labour at deconstructing the past (or, rather, what has been written about it) as a substitute for reconstructing what happened in it. Postmodernists regard any meta-narrative – religion, progress, science, nation building, liberalism or Marxism – as a sometimes open (Marxism), sometimes disguised (progress, science), ideology. History is a western myth, and the meta-narrative is totalitarian and propagandist fiction. The historical story is a form of propaganda, and the structure of beginning, middle and end – as a way to look at reality – is part of the myth of history as a state of knowledge. In other words: History is redundant.[24]

In place of the great historical story that ignores the victims and losers of western history – so they claim, and occasionally rightly – postmodernists offer a variety of theories, a rashomon of narratives and a cacophony of voices responsive to the pressures of political correctness dictated by feminism and multiculturalism. Actually, behind this rashomon, there looms a new meta-narrative based on Foucault's 'knowledge is power' doctrine. In this meta-narrative, progress has been replaced with oppression and history has changed from an evolving story into an inventory of sins and wrongs. Though postmodernists complain about (usually imagined) rejection, discrimination and persecution, their polemics have long crossed the boundaries of academic controversy and become a struggle for power and loyalty. They do not concern the existence of truth. The question is, which version of truth will gain hegemony.[25]

Traditionally, historians endeavoured to avoid political writing, though they never fully managed it. Postmodernists do not strive to purge historiography of politics but to replace one ideology with another. History is a bourgeois ideology, wrote Jenkins, and he urged his readers to read his argumentation 'because it is important'. He argued that the apparent liberal pluralism limited its tolerance to histories adopting academic values. Those motivated by Marxist, feminist or ethnic ideologies were rejected by professional historians.[26] Historians, according to Jenkins and other postmodernists, should be revolutionaries or at least committed to change. They should research the past to change the present for the future. Jenkins (a former priest) displays more than a grain of missionary zeal when he invites opponents of postmodernism to join it and enjoy its spiritual riches rather than attack it.[27]

This is not new-new history, but a new-new Testament that is not based on argument but on a gospel of redemption and the promise of correction for the soul. Beverley Southgate followed suit, arguing that it was impossible to write history without taking a philosophical or ideological stance. In his book, more of an ideological manifest than an essay or a research summary, Southgate promptly denied the existence of history aimed at studying the past for its own sake. A historian who tries to be objective, he declared, is a conformist committed to the existing order.[28]

Historians who write to advance political or moral goals rather than to approach truth (whose existence they deny) turn into missionaries and propagandists. They do not ask questions, because they already know the answers. They acclaim their own theories and selectively 'pick up' facts to 'prove' them. They distort historical evidence to adjust it to their political agendas. They ignore sources that inconveniently confute their assumptions. Occasionally, they tamper with the evidence, twisting it to prove their case, or they misinterpret the sources for the same purpose. If historical research is not a search for truth but an attempt to promote political, ideological or moral goals, and if objectivity is a concept that was invented to repress alternative views, criteria such as the standard of research, the variety and nature of the source material and the reliability of the evidence are irrelevant to assessing a historian's arguments. If we do not believe in absolute truth, wrote Elizabeth Smith and Elen Somekawa, we have to believe in the moral or political stance we take in our writing.[29]

If there is no 'history' but only a philosophy or politics of history, if

all interpretations are similarly valid (except the postmodern, which is apparently superior) and if the writing of history aims at political or moral purposes, then there is no scholarship. Research yields not only to paradigm and theory, but primarily to ideology and politics, in other words: to propaganda.

HISTORY AND THEORY

As said, postmodernist theories influenced historians rather late. Were it not for the internal changes that took place in the history discipline, they might have remained on the margins. In the early 1990s, Geoff Eley described a series of developments that had begun in the mid-1960s and, so he claimed, within twenty years had changed historical research and shifted the focus from methodology to theory and from social to cultural history.[30]

In his study of American historiography, Peter Novick played down the impact of these changes on historians. He thought that the gurus of the linguistic turn were relevant only to a small group of historians looking to an interdisciplinary, multicultural community of philosophers and literary and cultural critics.[31] Novick's observation was true for the 1980s. But by the time his book came out, the situation had already changed as became plain in the 1990s. This sort of historical-theoretical writing had initially been the turf of American radical journals, but in the late 1980s it extended to the mainstream.[32]

Until then, most historians displayed little if any interest in theorization. Since the early 1990s, the theoretical debate of historiography's epistemological assumptions has had increasing influence on historical research. Yet, most historians have not adopted the methods of reading, interpretation, analysis and writing offered by the various 'turns' – linguistic, interpretative, rhetoric, cultural and historical – or found them useful for their needs. Not theory, but the distinction between truth and fiction was and remains the core of a historian's work, first when he reads the evidence and then when he writes his study. The concept of 'truth' has become ever more complex, and no one claims that the objectivity and scientific nature of historical knowledge are definitive. Nonetheless, most historians have not abandoned the search for truth in one way or another; they remain committed to avoiding deliberate distortions and exposing the distortions of others.

The growing closeness between history and literature, philosophy and the social sciences, along with the pretensions of several historians to psychoanalysis, have altered history's identity as a discipline. Rather than expose the unique in the historical event and its contexts, historians began to look for generalizations and, to that end, they had to compromise with or ignore the evidence. Theory worship swelled in the 1980s. Allan Megill hastened to pronounce an end to the interest of historians in discovering the past and adding new pieces to the puzzle. Their interest, he wrote, had shifted to theoretical innovation.[33]

The growing weight of theory has wrested methodology from the process of training historians. One of the first historians to be affected by postmodernism and to attack the discipline's methodology was the American, Theodore Zeldin. As early as the 1970s he asserted that the traditional writing of history rested on tyrannical concepts such as causality, chronology and collectivity (of nations and classes). He called for unshackling history from its chains: liberating the historian from the authority of the discipline and the reader from the despotism of the historian.[34] The disrespect for evidence, references and documents (since in any case there are no solid facts) has also influenced non-postmodernist historians who are only too happy to free their creative writing from the disciplinary harness.

Postmodern history is primarily a history of 'meanings'. It prefers imaginative interpretations to the explanations of solid research. Postmodernist historians have used techniques of deconstruction to unfetter a text and unearth ulterior motives, unconscious intentions and hidden meanings. These motives, intentions and meanings, however, are all in the minds of the said historians – not in the source texts. Several theories pretend to penetrate into the souls and psyches of people of the past, but empirical research disables such intrusion: when a historian claims to have found a specific intention 'at the back of the mind' of the author of a text, it is his own mind he has taken it from, since he has no access to the author's mind. Historical questions concern the sources and essence of evidence, which seldom relates to what went on in a person's mind.

The theorization trend has bred literature professors who never studied or interpreted a literary work, and historians who never researched an event or a period in history. The latter have become disconnected from the past, devoting their professional life to theoretical speculations anchored in the present.[35] Elder historians who wrote

about the methodology and epistemology of the discipline, such as Carr, Elton, Stone, Himmelfarb or Evans, were all experienced in practical research and credited with impressive accomplishments. At advanced stages of their careers, they sought to rise above the practice of research to gain a comprehensive overview of the historian's work. By contrast, the participants of contemporary volumes treating new theories of history include very few historians. Most of the contributors belong to other disciplines.[36]

The connection between these theoreticians and the practitioners of history is akin to the relationship between art critics and artists, literary critics and writers, sports fans and athletes or 'kibitzers' and chess grand masters. Those who can't do – in art, research or sports – sit on the sidelines, speculating, advising, and basking in their own bright ideas. Their very existence depends on the doers, whereas the latter do not need the critics at all.

HAYDEN WHITE'S THEORY OF HISTORICAL WRITING

From the mid-1970s to the end of the 1990s, Hayden White's thesis on historical writing was at the centre of debate and controversy among historians, and particularly among literary critics and philosophers of history. Postmodernists found support in White's doctrine both for their rejection of historical truth, objectivity and facts, and for their relativist, sceptical approach to history. White began his career by studying the medieval Catholic Church, but in the 1960s he turned to the historiography of the nineteenth century, applying theories he borrowed from literary criticism.[37] At that time, literary critics were trying to formulate comprehensive theories that would relate to literature as linguistics relates to language. Regarding history as a mere literary text, White strove to develop a similar theory of history. He thus reopened the debate on history writing, placing it between a scientific text and creative fiction.

In White's view, the supra-historical linguistic structure shapes the writing of the historical narrative. In this structure there are 64 (4 x 4 x 4) possible writing variants: four possibilities of emplotment (romance, tragedy, comedy and satire); four possible forms of explanation (formative, organic, mechanic and contextual), and each of these can be presented through four ideological prisms (anarchist, conservative, radical and liberal). No historical event, White said, is essentially tragic.

It can only be perceived as tragic from a particular viewpoint, since in history what appears tragic from one angle may seem comic from another. In making this sweeping statement, White ignored the Holocaust and several other tragic events, illustrating his argument with two nineteenth-century works on the French Revolution. According to Jules Michelet, the revolution was a romantic drama; according to Alexis de Toqueville it was an ironic tragedy. White opined that the distinction did not emanate from different knowledge or evidence but from the intention of the two scholars to tell different stories. The emplotment, he maintained, guided their choice of facts, both those they stressed and those they omitted.[38]

White's determinist linguistic approach provided the background and framework for an extreme relativist position. He rams the historian's aspiration to describe past reality objectively or to approach objectivity. There is not and cannot be, he holds, a single true view on any subject in history, only a variety of opinions, each with its own style of representation. In itself, White asserted, the past is formless or, at least, has no rhetorical form – and the latter alone conveys explicable meaning.[39] Considering that the past is also yesterday, his assertion strikes one as odd. Indeed, 'yesterday' will move farther away from us. But are yesterday, last month, last year or even what happened thirty years ago meaningless? And, if they have meaning, why should there not be meaning to what transpired fifty, a hundred or five hundred years ago? The reality of the present will tomorrow become the reality of the past; the fact that it will no longer exist in the future does not mean that it will not have existed in the past. The difference between present and past is not ontological, as White argued, but epistemological.

White's relativism went far beyond that of his predecessors. They doubted that it was feasible for historians to attain absolute objectivity but nonetheless maintained that a certain degree of objectivity was both possible and necessary. White held: 'We are free to conceive "history" as we please just as we are free to make of it what we will.'[40] He condemned the reluctance of historians to see historical narrative for what (in his opinion) it is – verbal fiction invented (by historians) – and although its content existed (in archives), its form was closer to literary than to scientific writing.[41] He wanted to redefine the history discipline as interpretive art rather than as a science providing answers and explanations. To explain the past causally, he held, amounts to imposing

tyranny on the present by stripping it of choice. Interpretations, by contrast, imbued the past with spirit, enabling people living in the present to give their imagination free rein; to choose from, replace and change various interpretations.[42]

In his polemics with historians, White stated that the historian changes archival sources in his writing, subordinating them to his considerations as author.[43] Yet, he did not examine the drafts or different versions of manuscripts, nor compare the latter with primary sources to show that findings had been changed, adjusted, omitted or subordinated by the authors to the considerations of writing. This statement was simply groundless.

According to White, in the absence of standards to distinguish between reliable and unreliable stories, historical narratives can only be appraised by literary and/or social yardsticks. Every fictitious work certainly has a right to exist and the same applies to historical narratives even if they are contradictory. White and his advocates insist that there are no tools to evaluate historical narratives so as to determine their worth in terms of accuracy, truthfulness, reliability, likelihood or reasonability.[44] By the same logic if we are to be consistent, this argument by White and postmodernists in general is true too of their own narrative. It is impossible to determine whether it is true or false, well founded or sloppy.

If history is a construct built by historians from source evidence, White stated, then it is imperative to identify the ways in which a historian's language turned the object of research into a subject of the historical discourse (for example, the use that some historians found for the term ethnic cleansing in describing Israel's War of Independence and the ensuing debates). Hence, every discussion of the content or form of historical research should begin with a definition of the linguistic and discursive terms used by the author.

This statement is wrong. The choice of terms, words and phrases such as the Second World War, the imperialist or the anti-fascist war, the Holocaust and the Final Solution, the War of Independence and the Nakba, the Arab Revolt or the Disturbances of 1936–39, settlement, colonization and colonialism may have discursive meaning, but it is irrelevant to historical research. The researched phenomenon remains the same even if called by different names. Proper historical discussion should begin with an examination of the evidence, not of the terminology.

HISTORY, CULTURE AND FOLKLORE

Under the influence of postmodernism, the research of social history has shifted in recent decades from macro-historical and macro-social subjects to a 'new cultural history' and micro-history. The words *culture* and *cultural* have replaced *society* and *social* as key concepts in defining historical entities, a development regarded by several scholars as a kind of 'cultural academic mania'.[45] The fashion is part of a wider trend of 'culturalism' that overtook the humanities and some social sciences and was designated by its advocates as the cultural turn. Academics who until the 1980s defined themselves as literary critics, historians of art or historians of science, have since the 1990s chosen to call themselves historians of culture, studying visual or scientific culture. Culture, according to this trend, has not only a history but also a sociology and (of course, a cultural) geography of vague definition. Political scientists and political historians research political culture. Historians of organizations investigate organizational culture. Scholars of welfare services examine the culture of poverty, while economists have shifted from the study of production to the study of consumer culture. Recently, the concept of 'historical culture' made a debut. Its promoters swear that terms like historiography, and historical thinking, consciousness or writing are inadequate for describing an interest in the past.[46]

British philosopher Terry Eagleton dismissed the dichotomy between 'high' and 'low' culture and the geographic distinction between cultures of continents. Instead, he emphasized the conflict between 'western civility' and cultures based on everything else: a combination of nationalism, tradition, religion, ethnicity and popular sentiments that is basically tribal and revolves around solidarity. This mix, he maintained, is to be found in the West too.[47] Actually, this cocktail can be found everywhere outside the ivory towers of academe and occasionally even inside if the denizens – apart from a few exceptions – are to be seen for what they really are: just another tribe rather than an elite with pretensions to superiority, ostensibly emanating not from any outstanding virtues but from its university habitat.

A basic axiom of traditional cultural history was the existence of cultural consensus. This might have been true for the Renaissance or baroque periods, but not for the twentieth century. By the end of that century, the established meaning of culture has disappeared and traditional cultural history, now occasionally called intellectual history,

followed suit. In the 1980s, Dominique LaCapra complained about the marginal place of intellectual history in the history discipline.[48] A few years later, Peter Novick contended that intellectual history had ceased to be a research field, and intellectual historians had lost all common denominator as regards problems, subjects, methods and concepts.[49] The sense of marginalization among intellectual historians propelled several to join the ranks of the literary theorists, adopting their theories and criticizing their former associates. The most conspicuous example has been that of Hayden White.[50]

MICRO-HISTORY

Nineteenth-century historians nurtured the trunk of the history tree. Their twentieth-century successors split into diplomatic, political, social, economic, military and intellectual historians, cultivating, instead, the tree branches. Cultural historians study the leaves; the post-modernists among them glean the fallen leaves from the ground. They, however, claim to have reached the top of the tree – the intellectual pinnacle of a new history discipline.

Dissatisfaction with the accomplishments of macro-social history and the expansion of the new cultural history have driven historians to research micro-topics. The definition of micro-history, its connection to macro-history and the demarcation line between the two are obscure and largely arbitrary. Usually, though not always, the decisive criterion is magnitude. Yet occasionally, the historical significance of a group, place or event does not depend solely on size.

Several historians writing on the micro-level looked for the special, unexpected, local, unsystematic and exceptional. They turned the historical spotlight on the experiences of individuals or small groups, thereby illuminating the diversity of meanings concealed beneath social structures and big systems. The emphasis on the unique and the individual also affected the selection of source material feeding micro-historical studies. Carlo Ginzburg rightly stated that a close reading of a few texts might be more fruitful than the massive accumulation of repetitious testimonies.[51]

Natalie Zemon-Davis portrayed the life of peasants in sixteenth-century France through the individual story of one villager, Martin Guerre. In another book on life in France in that period, based on

appeals for pardons, Zemon-Davis described the world of contemporary 'others' – persons embroiled with the law.[52] Ginzburg sketched a picture of artisan life in sixteenth-century north-eastern Italy based on the individual life story of miller Dominico Scandala, alias Menocchio. The miller, who was burnt at the stake for heresy, was not a typical contemporary artisan: he was literate and read books, which would seem to make him an unlikely subject for extrapolation. But Ginzburg found an interesting methodological solution to the problem. He compared the contents of the books that Menocchio had read with what he said at the trials. From the discrepancies, he inferred the accepted traditions and ideas of the times among illiterate people, on the assumption that Menocchio had absorbed these from non-reading sources.[53]

German historiosopher Jörn Rüsen presents the works of Davies and Ginzburg as typical postmodernist historical writing. This writing, he argues, prefers micro-history and highlights the quality of narrative historiography, positioning lively description against abstract analysis, and empathy against cold theory.[54] He may be right, but this writing does not characterize postmodernist historiography as such, and goes back at least to Eileen Power's *Medieval People* that came out in 1924.[55]

THE ANTHROPOLOGIZATION OF HISTORY

The alliance between history and anthropology goes back to the late 1950s. In France it was led by the *Annales* and in Britain, by Phillip Bagby, who died shortly after the appearance of his book on culture and history. Bagby pointed to the weaknesses of a history that wavered between the unique and the general, and sought a middle ground between the two. He suggested that the terminology and methods designed by anthropologists for the study of primitive societies be employed by historians for the study of more complex, advanced civilizations. At variance with cultural historians of the present, Bagby had reservations about historical theories, maintaining that only empirical research offered a foundation for understanding the past. He stressed the distinction between civilizations, the subject of a historian's work, and cultures, the turf of anthropologists.[56]

The trend towards anthropological history has obscured the distinction. History and anthropology, both holistic disciplines, did not only draw nearer one another but they began to mix. Like history, anthropology

too was affected by the linguistic turn. In the chaotic, fluid world of post-structuralism, it became a key discipline for the study of human life beyond the exotic or primitive societies of its traditional purview. The linguistic turn sparked controversy among anthropologists as well. Several resented the transformation of their profession into the interpretation of texts (on the assumption that culture too is a text). They also objected to the disregard for stability and continuity in favour of constant change and unchecked relativism. Leading the opposition, Ernest Gellner warned prophetically that absolute permissiveness and apparent freedom of interpretation would ultimately end in arbitrary dogmatism.[57]

Anthropology's revolution under the impact of the linguistic turn and its coming together with the new cultural history are associated with American anthropologist Clifford Geertz. He changed cultural anthropology from a search for rules and explanations to a search for meanings to be interpreted. Customs, ceremonies and festivals became texts, and culture was a collection of such texts.[58] According to Breisach, the history influenced by Geertz's paradigms articulates the ideal of postmodern historiography in a fluid world. It lacks permanent structures and truths, and praises the search for meanings rather than for explanations.[59]

The maxim that people look primarily for meaning and find it in worship, ritual, contests and festivals – which renders the hunt for meaning of the utmost importance to students of human society – is not self-evident; it warrants empiric examination. Firstly, meaning itself must be defined and, secondly, the argumentation must substantiate the all-inclusive generalizations that may derive from Geertz's field studies in Morocco or Indonesia on mankind's quest for meaning.

Robert Darnton's chapter on the Great Cat Massacre in Paris illustrates the problematic nature of historical writing that adopts the anthropological approach of search for meaning. It is about the apprentices' 'massacre' in 1732 of the cats of their master, a Parisian printer. The story is based on three pages in the memoirs of a French printer, in which he recalled his days as an apprentice. The memoirs were written thirty years after the event, in 1762, and he described the killing of the cats – if it really did happen – as a symbol of the bitterness the apprentices felt about their employer and, especially, about his wife. This nice though dubious story led Darnton, in his search for hidden meanings, to explain it in terms of a general hatred apprentices bore for

bourgeois masters. He portrayed the story as a clue to the violence of the French Revolution, especially to the artisans' riots in Paris in September 1792.[60]

How a story about a prank, emanating (perhaps) from hatred of a master, is connected to a revolution against the monarchy, the aristocracy and the clergy – remains unexplained. As Raphael Samuel contended, Darnton does not critically examine his source (the printer's memoirs), he simply presents it as an allegory of France's *Ancien Régime*. Did Darnton consider other possible readings or explanations of the story? Other alternatives may appear more cogent than a questionable connection between the 'massacre' and a revolution that took place sixty years after the event, thirty years after the incident was written down, and twenty years after the death of the writer.[61] For all anyone knows, the story may simply reveal a normative maltreatment of pets in the early modern period as opposed to our own pampering attitude. Other of Darnton's works, particularly about the history of books and reading, contributed to historical knowledge much more than the speculations about the meaning of the Great Cat Massacre.

The erasure of the demarcation line between history and anthropology engendered an essential change in the study of history. In the ocean of apparently 'cultural' details that make up daily life, it has become impossible to distinguish between cause and effect, both concepts having lost their relevance. In their attempt to blur the differences between elite and mass culture, the new cultural historians have turned culture into folklore and its history into ethnography.

One main reason for the loss of focus of cultural history and its deterioration into dealing with marginal issues is political. Primarily, the new cultural historians sought to abolish the hegemony of European white male elites. They strove to replace hegemonic European or western culture with multiculturalism to enable the involvement of all the others who had not participated in the old culture and its history.[62]

Under the pressure of post-colonial political correctness, the history of culture has become the history of the kitchen, the boutique, the fair and the marketplace, of festivals, ceremonies, folk dancing and popular music, of fashion, hygiene, daily habits, magic and superstition.[63] In the past and, in most cases in the present, non-elite groups did not have philosophy, science, canonical literature or what is generally considered High Art or High Culture. Hence, the concept *multiculturalism* had to

be invented to recognize what these groups did have to contribute to culture and to make them partners in it. Having been admitted into the circle of social-anthropological history, these groups now demand entry into the circle of political history as well.[64]

Apart from the rhetoric of innovation – which is not new – and painting history in folkloric hues, the cultural turn has not signalled any breakthrough. It was a camouflage for conformists to postmodernism and, indirectly at least, legitimized ideological bias in historical writing. The field is eclectic, fluctuating according to what's 'in' at the moment. Scholars have looked for new reflections of 'the cultural' that seemed worthy of research, hitting on such practices as killing pets, witch-hunts, show trials and lynches. However, Lynn Hunt protests, the contribution of these eclectic topics to the understanding of history and culture and their relation to society continues to be vague, and the topics themselves smack heavily of nihilism.[65] Although not every new cultural historian is necessarily a postmodernist, there is a great deal of overlap between them.

POST-COLONIAL HISTORY

The expansion of the new cultural history and its fondness for micro-history are one link in a successive chain that altered the history discipline. Another has been the expansion of research beyond the boundaries of western civilization, and the realization that the history of non-western peoples was part of world history. This recognition spread with the progression of decolonization.

Yet, the departure from western history was not an outcome of decolonization nor does it pertain solely to the history of former colonies. Until the mid-twentieth century most European and American historians ignored Jewish, Arab, Persian and Turkish histories, as well as those of the Far East, South-East Asia and Latin America. Nonetheless, history is not, and never has been, the monopoly of western culture. The Chinese have an ancient history tradition.[66] In the Middle Ages there was Arab historiography, culminating in Ibn Khaldun's fourteenth-century work.[67] Muslim-Arab historical writing declined in the following centuries, but it had some continuance among Persian and Turkish authors.[68]

In his book *Europe and the Peoples without History*, Eric Wolf presented an interesting Marxist analysis of European ties with peoples

beyond the continent, from the fifteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Wolf stressed the economic aspects of European imperialism, from the medieval Italian cities to the industrial revolution and subsequent transformation of world economics. He described white–native relations as the two sides of a coin. This is contrary to the common view of imperialism and colonialism as a one-sided European process, a competition between colonial powers for spheres of influence and economic resources.[69]

Decolonization stepped up the interest in the history of Third World countries. But its study was hampered by political and revolutionary militancy. According to post-colonialist historians, their predecessors' touted aspiration to objectivity was a mere camouflage for their smug, subjective writing from a white, male point of view. They were emphatic that only they could write post-colonial history objectively, answering such questions such as 'who we are' and 'how historical memories are internalized in our life'. This is actually the politics of identity, disguised as history.[70]

The writing of Third World history began to radicalize in the early 1960s when Franz Fanon, a black native psychiatrist from the island of Martinique, proclaimed the advent of new history – not the first nor, very likely, the last such proclamation: 'Come, then, comrades, the European game has finally ended ... It is a question of the Third World starting a new history.'[71] But a revolutionary manifesto presenting the Third World as a radical alternative to the existing world order (of the 1950s) and to the tension between capitalism and socialism, is not history. Fanon outright rejected the history of white settlers in European colonies, saying that they regarded their history as an extension of that of the mother country rather than of the land that the colonial power had seized.[72] Fanon played on post-colonialist guilt and won the sympathy of French left-wing intellectuals (Jean Paul Sartre wrote the preface to his book). His work, however, promoted no research, neither into colonialism as a phenomenon nor into the history of the peoples granted independence by European powers.

Another manifesto preaching a new approach to the history of part of the Third World was Edward Said's book *Orientalism*.[73] The so-called 'orientalists' sought to open up the world of the East to westerners and even to protect it from the West's imperialist arrogance. But orientalism, Said argued, did not protect eastern cultures from western

imperialism or enable their survival. It enunciated the West's intellectual and technological domination and the means to bolster its political, military and economic superiority. Said portrayed orientalism as a symbol of control and force, accused western scholars of arrogance, and claimed that they were incapable of truly understanding a culture different from their own. Hence, they misunderstood and misrepresented the Orient.

Whether or not their approach was haughty, as Said and his followers assert, German, French and British scholars – not Arab, Persian or Turkish – laid the foundations for historical, social, ethnographic and linguistic research of the Middle East. In the second half of the twentieth century western scholars were joined by middle easterners educated at European and American universities: Elie Kedourie, Albert Hourani, Panayiotis Vatikiotis or Fouad Ajami. Together with European, British and American colleagues, they extended the research into the region's modern history and its relations with the West. It would be odd to accuse these scholars of orientalism.

Said borrowed his paradigm from Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, but transferred Gramsci's concepts and principles from class cultural hegemony to the arena of ethnic representation and imperialist control. He also drew on Foucault's 'knowledge-is-power' doctrine though his postmodernist critics held that he did not go far enough in applying it.[74] Other opponents charged that Said's discourse ignored women or situated orientalism in the context of later, irrelevant disputes between modernists and postmodernists or Jews and Arabs.[75]

Like Fanon, Said pandered to the western predilection for post-colonialist breast-beating, but he did not cross the line between criticizing an existing paradigm and offering an alternative. He remained a western academic who criticized the West's attitude to the Orient with the help of the very tools and system that he attacked.

Orientalism provoked lively controversy, mainly among literary critics and multicultural scholars in the United States. It was less influential both among historians, who argued that Said's generalizations disregarded the diversity of orientalism, and among orientalists.

The son of an American citizen of Palestinian origin, Said grew up and was educated in Egypt. Nonetheless, on the basis of occasional family visits to relatives in Jerusalem, he fabricated an autobiography of a 'model' Palestinian refugee. Indeed, he had visited Jerusalem with his

parents at the age of 12 when the UN adopted the Partition Resolution on 29 November 1947 and the Arab Higher Executive declared a general strike in response. This was the beginning of the Israeli War of Independence. However, Said left Jerusalem for Egypt in early December and, from January 1948, lived in the United States until the end of the war, when the family returned to Egypt.[76] Rather than a 'model' refugee, Said reflected the Palestinian elite and the guilt they felt for abandoning their people upon the outbreak of war.

Said's fans empowered his refugee identity and he occasionally tempered their enthusiasm with the statement that to describe him as a refugee was a bit of an exaggeration. However, he omitted this (under)statement from his autobiographical book.[77] As an Egyptian of Palestinian origin teaching English literature at an American university, who had built his scholarly career on a Polish sailor that became an English writer (Joseph Conrad), Said's assertion that western orientalists could not comprehend the East and easterners because they were born into a different culture, seems somewhat bizarre.

Linguistic conundrums and cultural differences certainly make it harder for western scholars to study other cultures but by no means disqualify them from research. As for the Middle East, its history is not only anthropological and cultural, but mainly political, social and economic. Most western and Israeli orientalists are not of Middle Eastern origin, just as many westerners who study the history of the Far East are not necessarily of Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Indian origin. The quality of the research does not depend on ethnic origin but on acquired skills and training.

When anthropological-historical research is less influenced by the paradigms of discrimination and persecution exemplified by Fanon or Said, and examines Third World societies from within rather than as real or imagined victims of colonialism and western arrogance, it comes up with more possibilities of using and interpreting sources. In an interesting study, Indian scholar Shahid Amin shows how the 1922 massacre of Chauri-Chora, with its various narratives about what happened, and why and how, was an internal Indian problem and not just an episode in the anti-colonial struggle.[78]

Steven Feierman harboured reservations about the simplistic model propounded by post-colonialist historians that white settlers and officials had repressed the pre-colonial history of the countries in question.

Feierman demonstrated how tribal traditions had been influenced by whites. Like European 'invented traditions', some traditions had been devised by missionaries and portrayed as authentically African. At the same time, tribal traditions had affected white colonial history, and it is difficult to clearly separate the two. Feierman exposed the problematic nature of the sources and the dubious reliance on them to sketch a coherent historical picture of African history. In his view, many areas of pre-colonial and colonial African history remain unknown, still waiting to be uncovered.[79]

Illuminating Third World history requires archival and fieldwork, not theoretical casuistry and ideological manifests. Feierman's open approach to the study of African history is outstanding. In recent decades the study of non-European societies has suffered from radicalization. The dichotomies of master and slave, ruler and subject, discriminators and subalterns, self and other have virtually become the exclusive paradigm in the area.

HISTORY OF IDENTITIES AND DIVERSITIES

Postmodernism legitimized the writing of mobilized history provided it was committed ideologically and politically to 'others', the 'invisible', the 'powerless' or the 'subaltern'. These definitions included workers, peasants, women, the mentally ill, perverts, homosexuals and prisoners. Blacks, Native Americans and other minority groups also jumped on the bandwagon, as did peoples formerly under colonial rule, claiming that until their independence, their true history had been denied them.

The challenge to hegemonic identities has rested on the authority of the experience of witnesses. Postmodernists present subjective emotional experience as more authoritative than any other historical evidence. Many regard experience as irrefutable and the point of departure for historical analyses and explanations. It is, however, quite complicated to distinguish between the experiences of discriminators and of subalterns or even to determine the discriminator and the subaltern. Despite Fanon's view that the western bourgeois attitude to Blacks and Arabs is similar, the connection is not at all obvious.[80] Matters become even more complex with the categories of Western, Black and Arab women.

Were the Indian maharajas or leaders of the Congress party who guided India in the first generation of independence subalterns or

discriminators? On which side of the barricade do we situate the tyrants of liberated Africa, such as Idi Amin, Mobuto Sesse-Seco, Robert Mugabe or the Central African Caesar Napoleon? To which subaltern group does Winnie Mandela belong? How do we categorize the salon hostesses in Enlightenment France and Germany? Are Arab slave traders to be seen as subalterns suffering from western discrimination just like the Africans whom they traded? What role did white women play in the American South, in India or colonial Africa – were they among the oppressors or the oppressed? The answers to these questions will not come from theoretical hair splitting and general slogans, but from empirical examination.

Some historians of women, Afro-Americans and the Third World went beyond the history of subalterns to assert that history, in general, is nothing but the politics of identities. Joan Scott argued that women's unique experiences legitimize the restriction of writing women's history to women only. As feminists write history to benefit their needs and aspirations, so Blacks demand a monopoly on the writing of their history (even as they marginalize Black women). The same is true for scholars of the working class who marginalize Blacks and women to highlight white male workers, or for writers of gay and lesbian history, etc.

Postmodernist historians view history as an identity struggle. Outsiders not sharing a particular group's memory or experiences cannot, therefore, study, comprehend or write about it authoritatively. The origins of this odd, pro-tribal argument are to be found in radical feminism; in the objection of American Blacks to white historians' studying their history; in the rejection of anthropological and archaeological findings that testify to the Asian origins of Native Americans, and in Edward Said's theory of orientalism.

Apart from its logical flaws, the assertion of tribal priority has often been put forward as an excuse for dodging the intellectual effort necessary to an in-depth understanding of other groups and societies. The postmodernist excuse is that without the appropriate emotional experience, it is impossible to arrive at such understanding. To endorse the postmodernist assertion means, among other things, to abolish anthropology since it researches primitive societies with the use of western tools. In regard to history, it means that only subalterns can write the history of subalterns; the history of Nazi death camps can be written only by survivors or, to take it to absurd lengths, by the victims (and,

perhaps, by the German guards and staff, and their collaborators). Women cannot write a proper history of men and vice versa. Whites are barred from writing Black history and vice versa. Germans cannot write the history of France, Christians cannot write Jewish history, and atheists cannot write the history of religion, and so on.

This line of reasoning is groundless. Female historians who wrote about male subjects such as the industrial revolution (Eileen Power), the Holocaust (Lucy Dawidowicz and Lenny Yahil) or the Zionist resort to force (Anita Shapira); and Yehoshua Porath's history of the Palestinian national movement or Geoffrey Barraclough, A.J.P. Taylor and Richard Evans' works on German history are random examples of its vacuity.[81] If we were to take the assertion to its logical limit, namely that personal experience determines the capacity to study and write history (an argument that old history-makers often fling at young scholars with their: 'I was there'), the sole authoritative historical genre would be autobiography. Yet the example of Said shows that this genre, too, can be fabricated.

CAUSES, EXPLANATIONS AND SINS

The study of subaltern history predated postmodernism. Contrary to their predecessors, postmodernists entering the field were not content with adding knowledge on those who had been excluded from history. They resorted to new interpretations from the viewpoints of the minorities or marginalized groups. At the same time, they dismissed previous interpretations on the grounds that they represented the predisposition of middle-class historians – male, heterosexual, white and Eurocentrist. They also argued that diverse views on a specific historical topic did not stem from differences in quantity or quality of sources and evidence nor depend on factual accuracy or the lack of it; they were the result of cultural structures and the political and moral positions of historians.

The anthropological usage of the concept of culture combined with ethnic, feminist and post-colonialist radicalism to impose on the study of intercultural relations a paramount or hegemonic paradigm of exploitation, discrimination and arrogance and, on the other hand, self-righteousness, bitterness and defiance. This paradigm dovetails nicely with the postmodernist crusade of exposing the past sins of the West. But there are also other paradigms of historical analysis, freer (though not

free) of political correctness and plain politicizing, which may better explain the differences.

Rather than adopt Said's orientalism wholesale, as a comprehensive, nearly exclusive paradigm to understand Western–Middle Eastern relations since the eighteenth century, a historian might use anthropological, sociological and economic tools to analyse the reasons for the rapid decline of Islamic civilization after its military, political, economic and scientific apex in the Middle Ages. So far, virtually the only prominent historians to do so have been Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami.[82]

Muslims reached the heart of Europe at the end of the seventeenth century, and the Ottoman army besieged Vienna. A hundred years later, Islam was in general retreat before the military, economic and colonial expansion of the superior European powers. During the nineteenth century Islam surrendered to European expansionism in North Africa, Egypt, the Balkans, India, Central and South-East Asia. Contrary to the post-colonialist claim, this European advance differed from the imperialism in Africa, America or the Pacific islands that vanquished primitive tribes or peoples. It was a struggle between two historical civilizations that for centuries had competed over world hegemony. In this contest, Europe has had the upper hand since the eighteenth century. Rather than see East–West relations as cultural imperialism, after Said, one can regard them as cultural interaction.[83]

Seeking explanations for the decay of one civilization and the rise of the other, as well as reasons for the developing gaps between them over the last three centuries and the present tensions, is both feasible and imperative. Some accounts would point to the absence in the modern history of Muslim countries of modernization processes – secularization, enlightenment, expanding education, industrialization and social mobility. Others might branch out to the history of religion and *mentalités*. It is worth examining both the influence of the *Ulamah* and the part tyranny played in the Ottoman Empire and its periphery in the process of Islam's decay. The assessment of the Ottoman Empire's impact on the Middle East's socio-economic structure presents scholars with a significant challenge. The economic role of the middle class was left to foreigners or minorities without social or political influence. This state of affairs, particularly after the Crimean War, apparently prevented or delayed the spread of nationalism, liberalism and democracy – ideas that usually emerge from the middle class.

Elie Kedourie has shown how the basic concepts of democracy, such as sovereignty, which underpin the legitimacy of governance, constitutional and representative regimes, elections and political institutions laid down in law, the separation of powers and state secularism, were alien to the traditions of the Arab world and Islam. This was his explanation for the failure of the interwar attempts to constitute democratic regimes in mandated Arab countries. All the democratic regimes that were installed collapsed within a few years of independence.[84]

This approach, of the genesis of the gaps between East and West, leaves room for gender-historical explanations since some of the divergence emanates from the different status of women in the two civilizations.[85] In addition, sociological research methods and theories could be utilized to explore the distribution of public resources, such as land, water, concessions and monopolies. Within the same parameters of political traditions, gender, social theories, etc., it would be useful to appraise the interactions between the West and Islam in the past generation: the prosperity of Islamic fundamentalism and the spread of Islam to the West through immigration. Similarly, the motivations, trends and characteristics of this mass movement need investigation.

Another aspect of the cultural differences worth exploring relates to values and concepts, such as truth, honour, freedom, war, peace, rights, obligations, ownership or tenure. There are distinctions between a culture based on the Ten Commandments, including 'You shall not bear false witness', and a culture that glorifies Muhammad's Hudaiba agreement – and his cynical violation of it – with the Jews of that town; between Christian confession, Jewish self-recrimination and the Arab attitude that 'everyone else is to blame for my lot'; between a culture that sanctifies life and one that adores *shahids*; between a culture that investigates and condemns deviants from its norms and one that exalts the murderers of children as freedom fighters; between upholding freedom and criticism as opposed to obedience and conformism. Indeed, this aspect of the study of cultural differences is not the exclusive turf of historians. However, they, too, have something to contribute. The issues may be difficult to examine, analyse and explain, but they are no less significant for our understanding of the past and the present than cock fights in Indonesia, worship in Polynesia or women's circumcision in Sudan. The latter may be left to ethnographers and folklorists.

Exploring real cultural disparities in a sense totally different from

folklore and ethnography, and reflecting on the religious, political, historical, social and economic reasons for the diversity, may promote a better understanding of intercultural relations; certainly better than that offered by the deconstruction of buildings, paintings and ornaments, by the search for meanings in ceremonies and festivities or by an analysis of dress and eating habits – all trivial. Such an exploration can yield only good. Surely, it is more valuable than the post-colonialist grumblings *à la* Fanon or Said about western arrogance. These grumblings do not tackle but dodge the problem. They strew blame and responsibility in all directions while avoiding self-examination or criticism.

Ultimately, postmodern theories undermine themselves just as they undermine their predecessors because they suffer from an internal contradiction: if there is no truth and everything is relative, so are their arguments. To attempt to annul history without offering alternatives for our understanding of time and the changes that take place over time makes postmodernist history impossible.[86]

The same qualities that enabled postmodernist rhetoric to undermine history and knowledge in general have made it unfit to produce an alternative.[87] Rather than promote new historical thinking that cultivates subjectivity, postmodernists advanced a meaningless system of categorization and classification. They stirred up the field, but remained captive to a scholastic and vain formalism.

Memory and History

MEMORY AS A HISTORICAL SOURCE

In the eyes of ancient Greek, Roman and medieval historians, the best historical sources were eyewitnesses reporting on events from memory, on condition that they spoke truthfully. Early historians did not conceive of witnesses as conscious or unconscious prisoners of their own viewpoints, or of their accounts as dependent on deeper levels of personality and culture that tied them to a time and place.

Upon the emergence of modern historiography, eyewitnesses were sidelined. But, to some extent, the earlier attitude to eyewitnesses as historians or, at least, a first-rate historical source survived and was adopted by the modern history discipline. In the mid-nineteenth century, Jules Michelet travelled across France to collect testimonies, stories and traditions for his monumental work on the French Revolution. Michelet, the curator of the French national archives, was also one of the first modern historians to use non-archival sources. At the time, however, most of his colleagues were striving for recognition as scientists and they steered clear of oral and popular sources, deeming them unreliable.

Notwithstanding their aspirations to the scientific method, and the limitations of memory, historians do rely on it considerably. One approach stems from Freud and the belief that psychoanalytic recall makes it possible to reconstruct unconscious past experience. The other stems from Maurice Halbwachs' theory on social memory. Halbwachs held that memory functions according to social rather than psychological dynamics. In his view, memory is not the hidden origin of history, as it was for Freud, but a mental activity of the brain; irretrievable, it can nevertheless be remembered.[1]

Individual memory is the common denominator of oral testimonies, memoirs and autobiographies. Unlike other sources, however, historians

have not yet devised methods to critically examine the credibility, reliability and accuracy of memory. Critical assessment is necessary for both contemporary history and the direct testimony of witnesses, and for earlier periods where scholars encounter memory indirectly. Oral testimonies are immersed in the written documents of all periods, and historians must be able to properly identify and handle them.

Radical historians consider oral history a key tool of history from below. Yet, Eric Hobsbawm, a pioneer of this genre, maintained that, 'we shall never make adequate use of oral history until we work out what can go wrong in memory with as much care as we now know what can go wrong in transmitting manuscripts by manual copying'. Memory is a selective, not a recording, mechanism. To date, Hobsbawm claims, historians have no clear criteria for judging oral sources – 'It either sounds right or it doesn't.' Occasionally, testimony can be checked against independent sources but not always, and the problem remains.[2]

Unlike ancient historiographers, modern historians do not regard memory as historical knowledge. They treat the memoirs like any other evidence, using critical standards to evaluate them. Presumably, one's presence at a historical event helps one 'know' about it, but 'knowing' and knowledge are not the same thing – knowledge requires some distance and objectivity.[3]

Oral testimony is an exceptional history source in that it was not created in the past. It is based on recollection formed at the time of the interview rather than the experience itself. It reflects also the knowledge of the interviewer and the problems that may have disturbed him at the time of the interview, just as it reflects later knowledge gained by the interviewee since the episode.[4]

Another unique quality of the oral testimony is the interaction of the historian and his source during the interview, and the implications of that relationship.[5] A witness does not simply remember incidents from the past, he interprets them. In other words, he is not only a source but a would-be historian. In many cases, what witnesses remember – whether in interviews or memoirs – is coloured by a wish to influence knowledge. The historian, too, wields influence and he must be aware of it: his very presence, questions, comments and body language affect his source.[6]

In a macro-historical study of political events or social structures, it is often possible to compare memory with other sources. Reliance on memory becomes trickier in micro-history when the historian has to

supplement scanty documented evidence with oral sources that often cannot be corroborated. Historians find themselves in a similar quandary with memory-based sources when studying oral societies, such as tribes, clans and families that have left behind mainly traditions and stories, but hardly any written documents.

THE BEGINNINGS OF ORAL HISTORY

Systematic oral history was introduced in the early twentieth century and practised mostly by sociologists and anthropologists in the study of Native Americans or American cities. It penetrated into the heart of the history discipline in 1948 when New York's Columbia University established an Oral History Association. American historians ignored the new branch though it was adopted by archivists, librarians and ethnographers pursuing local history. At first, the material was of second-rate quality and questionable reliability. The interviewers were amateurish, working without supervision, control or prior training; they showed up at interviews unprepared. As a result, their work contributed little to historical research.[7]

The use of oral history spread in the 1970s. Chief efforts centred on collecting testimonies, most of which are still awaiting a historian's hand. Alongside local history and the history of trade unions, labourers and miners, which had begun earlier, the newer projects addressed mainly the fashionable topics of the history of 'others': women, Afro-Americans and Native Americans.[8]

By the 1980s oral history had mushroomed into an information explosion. In France alone, 300 teams were busy collecting testimonies. French historian Pierre Nora wondered what use they would ever serve and who would devote the time and resources needed to listen to and transcribe them. He was uneasy about archival overloading, which he defined as 'the clearest expression yet of the "terroristic" effect of historicized memory'.[9] There was a similar evolution in the United States. Numerous projects collected oral testimonies on local history, labour history, the Holocaust and even American foreign policy. They were stored at universities, presidential libraries or the local associations of various states – and for the most part have been gathering dust.[10]

Unlike the West, where the trend has been grassroots history, in Israel the focus of oral history was mainly on macro-history and

office-holders. Even with regard to Holocaust survivors, where the interviewing has been comprehensive, the tendency of researchers was to prefer the testimonies of former community activists or members of youth movements, organizations and institutions.

The driving force behind the early development of oral history in Israel was neither ideology nor methodology but constraint and the need to compensate for the lack of Jewish written documentation of the Holocaust. Volunteers began collecting testimonies in Palestine at the start of the Second World War as immigrants arrived from war-torn Europe, witnesses of the early Nazi occupation of Poland or of persecution in Germany.

Another Israeli field that has relied largely on oral testimony is the history of pre-state paramilitary and other clandestine organizations and operations. Oral history features in military history as well. Much like the history departments of other armies that systematically interview senior commanders at the end of service or record their accounts of battles, special operations and other significant events, the IDF History Department has amassed thousands of testimonies over the years.

ORAL HISTORY AS IDEOLOGY AND POLITICS

Apart from its utility for several disciplines, some practitioners have used serial interviewing for its own sake. Considering themselves primarily or exclusively 'oral historians', they emphasize their distinction from conventional historians and contend that their occupation draws legitimacy from its interdisciplinary nature.[11]

A number of oral historians have been influenced by postmodern theories. Under the umbrella of these theories, they maintain that oral history is neither a research method nor a plain and simple technique of collecting source material, but an autonomous discipline or, indeed, an art. The Italian Alessandro Portelli, one of the first to articulate a theory of oral history, deems it a distinct genre; in his definition it is 'an art dealing with the individual in a social and historical context' that studies the interrelation of personal experience and history.[12]

This group of oral historians represents a new, subversive approach, which they call anti-history. To them, flawed memory is an asset, not a liability, a possible avenue to the inner mental and ideological worlds of witnesses, leading perhaps to change in history's accepted paradigms.[13]

Not content with a functional definition of their profession – interviewing people to reconstruct the past on the basis of testimony – they see oral history as a unique opportunity to plumb human consciousness, to radically revamp the historian's practice and reshape the history discipline, to make people aware of their own history, and to transcend the boundaries and distortions of written documents.[14] Trevor Lumnis is an exception among oral historians, faulting the radical image upheld by most of his colleagues. In the best case, he claims, oral history is neutral and often conservative.[15]

Oral history is usually identified with new trends in the history discipline, such as history from below or new cultural history. In the view of western practitioners, who on the whole are not historians by training, oral history documents and publicizes the historical experience of common folk. Practitioners brandish a stereotyped picture of established history or 'hegemonic collective memory' and claim to produce its antithesis. According to this picture, academic history and collective memory serve a national ethos, distort the past, marginalize women, caricaturize minorities, accord precedence to men over women, white over yellow, black or brown, and even physical bravery over moral courage; oral historians, on the other hand, redeem subalterns from anonymity.[16]

Fulsome in their praise of one another, oral historians nonetheless draw quite a bit of fire from conventional historians. The British historical geographer David Loewenthal, who coined the phrase 'the past is a foreign country', pointed to the similarity between autobiographical testimony and heritage tales. Though both are systematically updated and upgraded, the methods used are divorced from the rules of the history discipline. The life stories of witnesses, he said, gain coherence and reliability only through invention that often contradicts the facts.[17]

Paul Thompson, the most prominent British oral historian, retorted that the opposition to testimonies stemmed as much from emotional motive as from methodological disagreement. Beyond the logical, professional arguments about oral history's value or lack thereof, its opponents, he claimed, were afraid to step outside of their sheltered, familiar libraries and archives and rub shoulders with witnesses 'in the field'.[18] Whether or not this is true, Thompson does not substantiate it. My own reservations about oral history actually grew out of my experience of 'rubbing shoulders' in 'the field'.

Thompson describes oral history as a new approach allowing 'the true voice of the past' to be heard: the voice of the disempowered, of women and others with rich experiences of historical change, family life, labour, and even politics from below.[19] In Italy, oral history openly developed as anti-history. Its practitioners constructed an ideology elevating their vocation as the true history of the masses, whether peasants in southern Italy or industrial labourers in the country's centre and north.[20]

The most prominent among Italy's oral historians is Alessandro Portelli. His world, however, is not the historian's. The concepts, examples and comparisons are taken from folklore, anthropology and ethnography. He does not refer to the existing historical research on modern Italian history, Fascism, the Second World War or the Cold War, although he has interviewed many people on these topics. It is not the past that attracts him, it is the past's significance for his interviewees in the present. This reductionism is typical of most oral historians all over the world whose books rely solely on testimonies they have collected, not bothering to supplement or critically compare the testimonies with other sources. They are certainly not historical studies, but anthologies of testimonies that, at most, may furnish evidence for future historical research.

Portelli, despite his strong sense of political mission and emotional involvement, is one of the most professional oral historians and displays keen insight. For this very reason he exemplifies the gap between oral historians, who are interested in witnesses and their stories, and conventional historians – including those who use oral history and acknowledge its significance – whose principal interest is in the past, not the witnesses.

Another Italian oral historian, Luisa Passerini, makes no bones about her wish to apply postmodern theories to oral history and to use the latter to shake up the general order and historiography. In her view, oral history is the way to wipe out the stubborn residues of the historicist/positivist approach to history. The oral historian, she declares, should use subjective sources to take hold of history's subjective dimension and cognitive, cultural and psychological aspects, and penetrate the worldviews and subconscious of the witnesses. Since Marxism failed to liberate the oppressed masses, it is the ultimate goal of oral history, she proclaims, to rescue them from marginality.[21]

Engrossed in their own subjectivity, Portelli and his colleagues ruminate on the tension between their identity as intellectuals and their affinity for the masses, between their empathy for witnesses and a critical approach to the latter's accounts. Portelli formulated a new theory of the relationship between the intellectual and the crowd, which sits well with the concept of the 'other'. He rejects the non-intervention of conventional historians, and considers an interviewer's involvement a valuable element of his fieldwork: it stimulates self-awareness in interviewees, bolsters their respect for their culture, and improves their self-image. However, while boosting self-images may be a by-product of historical research, it is not its purpose.

THE INTERVIEW AS EXPERIENCE

From the standpoint of historians, the interview is a unique instrument because it is interpersonal – quite uncharacteristic of their profession. But oral historians want more. They want to be 'critically involved', as Ronald Grele put it. They are not satisfied with the witnesses' subjectivity and they bring their own subjectivity into play in order to create 'a science of the subjective'. This science is meant to establish new categories to explain historical events without the discipline of history.[22]

The problems involved in the way oral historians conduct interviews were driven home by Peter Friedlander. His study on the founding of the automobile workers trade union in Detroit in the 1930s focused on a single witness, the union president in the first eighteen years, and the interviews extended over fifteen months. When the witness's answers did not meet Friedlander's expectations, he took to cross-examination: he asked leading questions until he got the answer he wanted. Friedlander portrays this cross-examination as the climax of the testimony and a proper methodological model for oral history. A historian, however, would consider the very attempt to put words into a witness's mouth sufficient reason to impugn the testimony.[23]

Historians, unlike other professionals engaging in oral history, have no training in interpersonal interaction, which makes it hard for them to make the most of oral history, even when the material elicited is historically valuable. The literature on interview techniques comes mainly from the social sciences, psychology or folklore, and suits their requirements. The techniques have not been adapted to history interviews.[24]

University history departments do not include courses or train students in interviewing. Moreover, the techniques often conform to theories from therapeutic disciplines, encouraging the interviewer to identify with the witness. For the historian, this is an added disadvantage, impairing the interview and the reliability of the findings.

ORAL HISTORY VERSUS WRITTEN DOCUMENTS

Witness's testimony is evidently not equivalent to a documented experience. At best, it is a reconstructed experience that surfaces from talking about the past. It is drawn from memory and prone to all the pitfalls that this entails: forgetting, repression, egocentrism, later knowledge, suggestion, auto-suggestion and even fantasies lodged in consciousness after the event itself. Advocates of oral history ignore these pitfalls or hawk them as the method's great virtues. They claim that the same flaws and many others apply to written sources too. They consider them irrelevant to the work of oral historians and to the questions they are trying to answer.

Oral historians are divided on the question of memory. Grele rejects the arguments against the inadequacies of memory, and also the prejudices and tendentiousness of witnesses. The utility of any source, written or oral, does not depend on the knowledge it transmits, but on the questions asked of it, he says. A linguist studying Native American idioms, an anthropologist observing sexual behaviour in a tribal society, or a sociologist researching the impact of sanitary conditions in an industrial suburb are looking for a different type of accuracy from that of the historian.[25] Grele is right, which is exactly why oral history may be of benefit to various scholars, but least of all to historians.

Unlike Grele, Friedlander allots witnesses' memory a central place. He was impressed with his own witness, deeming his testimony detailed, accurate, clear and unequivocal.[26] This is one of the most common traps of the judicial system and oral history. Fluent, self-confident witnesses who formulate sentences clearly do impress both judges and oral historians as more credible. Yet self-assurance and fluency may often indicate the reverse – a constructed, rehearsed narrative of which the witness either is or has become convinced. Often the more trustworthy witness may hesitate, waver and exert himself to remember.

Sociologist Paul Connerton presents a different argument for oral

history and against written sources. He contends that documents omit what at the time was the obvious; things that might have been taken for granted and were therefore not written down. In every period, he says, things happened that were not talked about or committed to writing. As a result, many undocumented political experiences were lost.[27]

Connerton's argument has little substance. Every historian with some experience of German documentation during the Third Reich, for example, is familiar with the winks and innuendos, special terminology, euphemisms and word-washing of Nazi language. It does not require much imagination to understand what things were taken for granted and not written down. The same is true, albeit less conspicuously, of the correspondence of other governments. Nevertheless, slip-ups occur and often enough the unmentionables trickle or are leaked into contemporary documentation. There is no need for oral history to retrieve them.

Portelli goes further. Offering several arguments, he states that witnesses have the advantage over documents. Like lawyers and anthropologists, and unlike historians, Portelli considers written documents a supplement to the main evidence of oral testimony. The credibility of oral sources, he maintains, is of a different sort: it rests in the departure from, not the adherence to, facts, expressing symbolism, imagination and desire. In his view, witnesses cannot be wrong because they tell their subjective truth, whereas written documents are mistaken and misleading.[28]

Oral historians claiming that documents are not the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth are pushing at a wide open door. Historians with a critical eye are well aware of the shortcomings of the written word, but the arguments against documentary sources do not cancel out the weaknesses of oral testimony. Obviously, written sources are not free of error or bias, or immune to distortion and forgery. But historians experienced with the variety of archival documents know just what they do reflect, where their weaknesses lie and how to spot them. They know when they can count on a certain document and when not. They also know what is not to be found in documents. They are able to distinguish between diverse forms of diaries, minutes, records and stenographs, assessing each with a suitable yardstick. For oral historians, on the other hand, documents, to say nothing of minutes, are all of a piece.

TESTIMONY AS A HISTORICAL SOURCE

Theoreticians of oral history, as well as many practitioners, relate to it not as history, but in therapeutic, literary and narrative terms. 'Every interview', writes Portelli, 'is an experience even before it turns into a text.'[29] Anthropologists, folklorists or therapists, and following them, also oral historians, are interested in a witness's human side, in his testimony as a story, and in the connection between the two: how the witness has lived with his story through the years and why he did so. For the historian, testimony is one of several avenues to the past. His interest in the witness and testimony is instrumental: they are a source from which he may learn about an event, which he will then try to contextualize, and his context will often be different from that of the witness.

One reason for the popularity of oral history among historians is the availability of witnesses who are usually ready to grant interviews, relate their accounts and offer interpretations. It is not uncommon for witnesses who took part in major historical events to be interviewed a number of times. Although their memory does not improve with time, successive generations of scholars return to interview them, usually ignoring their older, already archived testimonies. The historian/interviewer not only looks for information, but often looks forward to the meeting itself. While speaking with a witness, he may find answers to niggling questions, resolving threads he had been unable to unravel from the ample web of conflicting sources.

Oral history would seem to make a researcher's life easier. He might save himself the precious time and hard work it takes to comb archives. Moreover, testimonies describe events 'as they were', directly from the horse's mouth, so to speak, or from people closely involved. Not bound by archival laws, witnesses need not wait thirty or fifty years to tell their stories. Scholars who have no patience to wait for archival material to become public must rely on the testimonies of history-makers or observers.

Obtaining oral history is easy. However, the historical credibility of testimony – unlike its psychological authenticity or ethnographic value – is uncertain. Historians in search of truth and objectivity tend to forego personal memories. But the rules change in the case of exceptional events, such as the Holocaust. In these instances, the obligation of bearing witness and respect for those who lived through the experience may take precedence over faulty memory.[30]

Any memory, oral or written, is told from the present. Witnesses, like memoir writers and autobiographers, imbue the past with substance, the result of retrospective knowledge. Testimony entails selection, arrangement and simplification to create coherence, but also apologetics and myths of self-justification that often confuse fact and fantasy.

It is commonly agreed that the memory of witnesses reporting on events far in the past is selective and flawed because of the passage of time. Actually, as far as reliability is concerned, there is little difference between testimony given within a few years or months of an event and testimony given many years later. During my work with the Agranat Commission that investigated the 1973 Yom Kippur War, I had the rare opportunity of comparing testimonies given within months of the war with authentic documentation such as headquarters' log books, minutes of meetings and forums, recordings of wireless networks, operational and administrative orders, etc. The comparison confirmed that the processes of forgetting and selecting begin shortly after an event.

Witnesses and testimonies are not free of egocentrism. Testimony almost always revolves around the witness, whether he was an exalted or a humble person. For example, the Ben-Gurion Archives at Kibbutz Sde Boker contain several testimonies of retired IDF generals that I interviewed thirty years ago about working with Ben-Gurion. On the whole, their main theme is 'I and Ben-Gurion' rather than 'Ben-Gurion and I'.

Many witnesses slip apologetics into their accounts to explain their conduct (or misconduct) by selectively presenting facts and retrospective arguments. In these cases it is difficult if not impossible to isolate the factual description from excuses and exonerations, especially when the witness is totally in the grip of apologetics.

Another recurring problem in testimony is a confusion of contexts. Occasionally this is due to faulty memory, egocentrism or belated apologetics, but every so often it is because a witness did not know or understand the context in real time: he may be presenting it innocently, but in an untrue light.

Faulty memory mars written memoirs too. Raphael Samuel warned against relying on autobiographies, saying they should be treated as exercises in remembering.[31] George Gusdorf indicated that memoirs and autobiographies are usually written for apologetic purposes and

retroactive justification. They are subjective, egocentric and reflect the author's viewpoint in the present, not the past he is describing. They also suffer from the wisdom of hindsight – at the time of writing, the author knows things he did not know at the time of the occurrence.[32] Be that as it may, innocent memory errors are more frequent in oral testimony than in memoirs for the simple reason that people treat the written word more seriously. Passerini illustrated the difference by comparing the responses of relatively young witnesses, participants of the 1968 riots, with those of older witnesses who had testified about the Fascist period in Italy. The younger witnesses paid more attention to their transcribed testimonies. They reread and proofread them once and again, correcting or rewriting paragraphs that involved other people. When they learned that the testimonies were to be preserved, archived and publicly accessible, they asked that names and/or places be omitted or changed to avoid identification. What's more, all along they carefully thought about the dividing line between the real and imagined in their own stories.[33]

Given the built-in problems of oral history, the question is, why use it at all in historical research? For topics with an abundance of authentic documentation, there is certainly little reason to do so. At best, the testimony and memoirs of the players might add colour. As long as documentary evidence remains inaccessible, it might be more prudent to wait rather than rely on faulty, selective, egocentric and often self-interested memories.

If there is a shortage of documents or only a slight chance that they will ever become accessible for research, the historian has no choice but to resort to oral sources. In such cases, their use should be reduced to the essential minimum. Alert to the shortcomings of testimony and memoirs, the researcher must approach them cautiously and critically; he should both respect and suspect them.

THE HISTORIAN AS A USER OF ORAL HISTORY

In interviewing witnesses, oral historians stress their role as *producers* of evidence. Most historians, however, are primarily *consumers* of testimonies, created either by colleagues or serial interviewers; their main interest is not the interview, but the proper use of testimony.

Ostensibly, the rules governing document analysis apply to oral

testimony as well, which makes the historian equipped to deal with it. But, in fact, it is more complex than that. There are basic differences in the handling of documents and testimonies. Unlike a written document, where a historian is concerned only with content, in oral testimony he is confronted with the witness's story (or content), personality and storytelling manner. This is especially true when the historian is the interviewer.

The witness is not committed to historical testimony. He does not testify under oath as in court. Furthermore, he is not intimidated by the interviewer, as might happen in police investigations, nor does he develop dependence on the interviewer, as in psychotherapy. If the testimony concerns macro-historical events, the witness's personality – particularly if he was one of the history-makers – is often more dominant than that of the researcher-historian. This makes it all the more difficult for the historian to treat the story with the scepticism and criticism it deserves.

An opposite problem affects micro-historical interviews. Here the dominant party is often the educated, mostly middle-class historian, and he must shun all expression of superior learning or manipulation. He has to let the witness tell the story freely and fluently, without pressuring or leading him. The historian should also avoid correcting a witness. If an interviewee's confidence in the truth of his story is shaken, the interviewer might lose him altogether.

The historian-interviewer's main advantage vis-á-vis the life exper-ience of his witnesses is precisely what oral historians lack: the know-ledge he has gained from studying additional sources. It requires an interviewer well versed in source material to fully utilize and appraise testimonies in the proper context. Historians are in a slightly better position when using testimonies collected by others since they do not have to confront the witnesses directly. On the other hand, they may often find that the questions asked by other interviewers do not exactly match their own needs.

Oral history rightly belongs in the final phase of research, after the historian has achieved some competence in his subject and knows enough to treat witnesses' accounts with a grain of salt. As far as possible, he should juxtapose these accounts with rival testimonies (of political oppo-nents, business competitors, soldiers of opposing armies, etc.), on the assumption that the points of convergence more nearly approach the

truth. In addition, self-critical witnesses are usually more trustworthy. Experience has shown, too, that it is helpful to distinguish between important and ordinary witnesses. The former may have been involved in numerous events over long periods and may tell a variety of stories, experiences and lessons. But they are also more likely to mix up experiences and contexts in their testimonies. The latter, who may have been involved in a single event and remained anonymous, are often more apt to present it in the correct context and render the details accurately. The downside, however, is that their perspective may be too narrow.

To use oral history in a study, the historian must determine the degree of access witnesses had to the event described. They should be classified into several types according to their personal credibility and the reliability of their information: (1) action witnesses – actual participants; (2) eyewitnesses – non-participant observers; (3) attendant witnesses – whose knowledge comes from indirect personal involvement, such as passive participation in consultations, discussions, briefings or debriefings; (4) auditory witnesses – who heard things during the occurrence itself; and (5) hearsay witnesses – who heard about the occurrence from others after some time. During his testimony, a witness assumes every one of these roles, each, of course, having different weight. For analysis, the testimony must thus be broken down according to the witness's different roles in the event.

THE ETHICS OF ORAL HISTORY

The approach to interviews espoused by many oral historians, as a joint enterprise of interviewer and interviewee, is characteristic of the social sciences, which regard the experience as part of the studying/learning process. But in the history discipline, learning from experience must be based on prior knowledge, rendering the approach inapplicable; contrary, in fact, to its basic rules.

The assumption that oral testimony is a joint product raises questions about the nature of the interviewer–interviewee partnership: is it a contractual bond in which each side has rights and obligations? The American army's guide for interviewers says it is.[34] Academe, too, recognizes the right of interviewees to limit the use of their testimonies. Grele notes that the interviewee retains the rights to the interview

unless he signs these over to an archive or other institution for safe-keeping and/or releases the testimony for use by scholars.[35]

In 1989 the American Historical Association (AHA) adopted ethical rules for interviews. These included an obligation to transparency, reg-ulations for preserving and accessing testimony, and declarations about the duty to observe usage limitations imposed by interviewees and to respect any other commitments the interviewer might make to the interviewee. The AHA statement also regarded the relationship between interviewer and interviewee as contractual. It warned against abuse, directing interviewers to quote accurately and refer readers to the location of the testimonies for verification. Finally, the statement instructed historians at universities to apprise their students of these rules, whether they worked as (conventional or oral) research assistants or were writing theses or dissertations.[36]

The AHA document relates mainly to interviews, not to their use by historians, leaving several questions open: what, precisely, are the inter-viewer's obligations to the witness? May he use the testimony as he sees fit? Is he free to interpret it contrary to the witness's intent, or must he quote the witness and leave interpretation to the readers? Is it proper for him to ignore portions that are incompatible with his thesis or opinion, or must he substantiate his reservations or dismissal?

Another problem with using oral history concerns the separation of facts – in itself difficult – from a witness's interpretations and appreci-ations. The witness's interpretations are usually irrelevant to the histo-rian – but is he free to ignore them? In my opinion, he is. If scholars will have to explain every disagreement with their witnesses, books will be-come too unwieldy and unpublishable.

The question of credibility poses further problems. How should a scholar relate to a witness who contradicts himself or is found to be mistaken or misleading? Does a single such instance cast doubt on the rest of the witness's testimony or on parts that cannot be verified?

One of the historian's tasks is to track down the source and cause of error: is it a matter of forgetting, confusing contexts, distortions based on hindsight, apologetics, or some other reason? It is virtually impos-sible to identify mistakes and trace their origins on the basis of oral evidence alone. A good example is the agreement of all the witnesses appearing before the Agranat Commission on the war in 1973 that Egypt and Syria had planned to launch war against Israel in April–May

1973 but were deterred by Israeli alert and mobilization. The testimony was unanimous and commission members bought the story. Yet they were all wrong. In March 1973 Egypt and Syria had already scheduled the war for October. A careful reading of the Israeli minutes of government and General Staff meetings leads to different conclusions about what happened in that month.[37]

HISTORY OR FOLKLORE?

What is the place of oral history in the history discipline? Their similar names notwithstanding, in most cases oral history is not history. Unlike written sources (except memoirs) and even other oral sources such as traditions, oral history does not reconstruct or research the past, add knowledge about it or tell its story. It is anchored in the present. Oral historians are interested in how people remember the past and live with their memories.

Memory, on which oral history is based, is not the same as history, of course. Nor, however, is it its antithesis. Despite its flaws, deficiencies, distortions, caprices, denials and repressions, memory is an important historical resource. It is informative, and even when it deviates from truth, it may have historical significance. Memory and history complement one another: through historical criticism, memory becomes clearer, more accurate.

If interviewers would abandon the pretension that oral history is an ideological and methodological alternative to documented history, interviews might well benefit the historical picture by contributing additional dimensions. The testimonies, however, must be collected with a view to completing the historical panorama rather than creating an alternative scenario.

The role of the interviewer is to ask questions, not suggest answers. As far as possible, he should examine a witness's answers in the light of written documentation; it is not enough to compare them to other testimonies. After the testimonies are taken, transcribed and signed by the witnesses, they are subject to all the disciplinary rules governing the scrutiny of sources. Most historians, who do not define themselves as 'oral', use oral history in their studies in accordance with these principles.

Portelli, Passerini, Thompson, Lumnis and their colleagues rely on a mixture of ethnographic, anthropological, linguistic and literary paradigms, often with affectations of psychoanalytical interpretation. Sometimes they are no more than mouthpieces for their witnesses, at other times they champion a cause or an idea. Most see no point in criticizing witness testimony from the perspective of history. At best, they brush up on the historical background superficially, from secondary sources. Many of them are impelled by a sense of mission and political engagement. To them, the interview and its experience are cardinal, for themselves as for their interviewees. For all these reasons, their contribution to historical research is limited. Mainly, they contribute to the study of folklore.

WHAT IS COLLECTIVE MEMORY?

In recent decades the catchphrase 'collective memory', whose roots are in sociology and anthropology, spread to historians, and some have shown a growing interest in the interrelation of memory and history. Memory, however, cannot be collective. The term is actually a metaphor, used in different, and occasionally contradictory, senses. These include: (1) a perception of the past that preceded written history and found expression in oral traditions; (2) popular and/or amateur history; (3) a representation of the past through means other than research – museums, statues, monuments, ceremonies, commemoration, literary works, documentaries, feature films and the media; (4) a synonym for history; (5) the antonym of history; (6) an alternative to history; (7) a synonym for historical consciousness; (8) the consciousness of past trauma, as in the case of Holocaust survivors or collectives who experienced mass murder, slavery, refugee-hood or defeat; (9) the basis of a national or other identity; and (10) the presence of the past in the present. All these come to explain memory. As for 'collective', the meaning is even vaguer since remembering remains an individual act, even if it takes place in a social context.[38]

The term 'collective memory' has gone a long way since it was coined in the 1920s by sociologist-philosopher Maurice Halbwachs.[39] It sank into oblivion for many years, only to be revitalized in the 1980s, not necessarily in Halbwachs' sense, but in one of the above.

Halbwachs was referring to the memory of social groups and its correlations with individual memory on the basis of one's psycho-cognitive knowledge of the times. Apart from his borrowings from psychology, he sought to show how individual memory is shaped by one's society or group. The social framework, he asserted, enables individuals to remember events from their past and determines what would be remembered and how.

Halbwachs discussed 'social', not 'collective', memory. Remembering, he stressed, is an individual act by members of a group, not by the group as a collective. He also differentiated between autobiographic and historical memory. Autobiographic memory comprises an individual's learning and experiences. It becomes social when the experiences are common to all the members of a given group. To be preserved, it needs to be refreshed periodically at meetings, commemorations, assemblies and similar events. Historical memory, in contrast, is indirect. It is expressed in texts, minutes and images. The individual does not remember the occurrence directly because he did not experience it. He learns about it from reading, listening, watching or participating in events. Autobiographic memory is stored in an individual's mind; historical memory is stored in social institutions and they interpret and disseminate it.[40] When tradition slackens and autobiographic memory vanishes, then they are replaced by history and historical memory as the main avenue of knowledge of the past.[41]

Since the 1980s memory has become a central concept in the debate about the past with a broader definition. Freud's psychoanalytical terminology has invaded Halbwachs' sociological language. The linkage between memory and knowledge, and Foucault's doctrine of 'knowledge is power', whetted both the curiosity of historians, sociologists and anthropologists and their interest in the construction of social memory, the development of its representations and their uses. In these discussions, historians are alternatively seen as the agents or critics of memory.

French historian Jacques Le Goff described five stages in the development of social memory: (1) the era of ethnic or primitive memory typical of oral societies; (2) the transitional era from storytelling to writing, corresponding to the transition from prehistory to history; (3) the Middle Ages, when oral and written memories coexisted in balance; (4) the expansion of written memory after the invention of print

and the gradual fading of oral memory since the sixteenth century; (5) the present explosion of memory and knowledge.[42]

<div style="text-align:center">MEMORY BEFORE HISTORY</div>

The pioneers of the historical study of memory conceived of it as primitive and sacred, the very reverse of modern historical consciousness. Ethnic memory belonged in western and middle eastern societies to prehistory. Before the advent of Europeans it characterized native tribes in the Americas, Africa and the Pacific. These societies preserved memory in folk songs, legends, ceremonies and celebrations. The most common form of preservation was an often mythical, oral tribal tradition. Its main theme related to the origins of a society or tribe, followed by its wanderings in the nomadic phase and, then, its permanent settlement.[43]

Originally, the study of ethnic memory and the means of conveying it attracted mostly anthropologists and ethnographers. In the last decades of the twentieth century these scholars were joined by a growing number of European, American and indigenous historians studying the Third World. The leading pioneer in the field was the Belgian, Jan Vansina, who studied the history of pre-colonial Africa. In significance, his studies reached far beyond Africa and back to antiquity, influencing other scholars examining ancient traditions in Greece.[44]

Tradition tends to mingle past events with didactics, mythology and commemoration. Non-linear traditions, as many are, are difficult to translate into chronological terms or order along a time line. Chronological difficulties can sometimes be surmounted with the help of outside sources or circular chronologies drawn from astronomy, climatology or ecology (information on natural disasters, eclipses or the sightings of comets).[45]

In the absence of a linear chronology and because of their legendary character, traditions often do not lend themselves to the extraction of clear historical facts. It is virtually impossible to determine if a particular tradition relates to something that actually happened and can be considered historical. In recent years scholars have almost despaired of achieving this end. They have become more interested in decoding the symbolism of traditions than in extracting objective facts about past occurrences.[46]

Several ancient traditions were written down later; this is true of the Old Testament books such as Genesis, Kings and Chronicles, and the writings of Homer, Herodotus or Josephus Plavius' *Antiquities of the Jews*. To explore a tradition's evolution and situate its layers in historical context, scholars have to isolate the addenda. This is as true of the oral traditions of the Third World as of the written and sealed traditions of the ancient world.

Script led to a divergence of memory between the educated and the illiterate. The former had at their disposal archives, biographies and the family trees of royals and the aristocracy; eventually, these became history. The memory of the common people remained folklore, restricted to distinct groups and small geographic areas. It was not continuous and, in many instances, bounded by the lifespan of a period's elderly able to recall things they had heard in their youth from their fathers and grandfathers.[47]

The need grew for writing as an aid to remembering. To protect written memory, ancient manuscripts were kept in monasteries and manuscript copying, for the sake of preservation, was indicative of the transition from memorizing to reading and writing. Temporal authorities, churches and private persons all kept records: writs of privileges accorded to towns and feudal fiefs, documents on land grants and tenure, as well as registries of marriage, birth and death. In the twelfth century archives re-emerged: first, royal archives, then archives of aristocrats and prelates, and later also ecclesiastical, regional and municipal archives that stored political, administrative, judicial and commercial documents. Besides storage, they helped the authorities control society.[48]

The invention of print caused a further split between the memory of the educated elites and the illiterate masses. Printed matter too distinguished between the written memory of the West and the oral memory of tribes and peoples discovered by European travellers, merchants and conquerors from the fifteenth century on. This memory – of the common people of nations and the world – has recently transfigured them into 'others'. It had been preserved according to the old methods and sidelined by written memory until rescued by ethnographers and anthropologists in the twentieth century.

TRADITIONAL AND REVOLUTIONARY MEMORY

Christianity and Islam erased much of the pagan world's memory, vestiges of which had penetrated both. In the modern period, too, almost every revolution strove to refashion memory to bolster its own legitimacy. Each tried to spread a blanket of oblivion over what had come before or to modify it to its own needs. The French Revolution sought to obliterate all trace of the *Ancien Régime*, as illustrated by the public execution of King Louis XVI and Queen Mary Antoinette. Revolutionaries worked to create new collective memories using memorial days, monuments, ceremonies, celebrations, commemorations for revolutionary heroes, new modes of dress, and even new calendars and new names for the months of the year.

Later revolutions followed the French model, employing similar means: the Bolsheviks murdered the Czar and his family, restored Moscow as the capital and replaced the Julian calendar with the Gregorian. Kemal Ataturk transferred the capital to Ankara, instituted the Latin alphabet, separated religion from state, and adopted drastic measures against the Muslim establishment. The Zionist Revolution saw a revolt against the Diaspora, skipping eighteen hundred years of Diaspora history, a return to the Old Testament and to the Jews' history in antiquity, the revival of Hebrew and the Hebraizing of family names.[49]

Revolutionary regimes are not alone in mobilizing memory. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger have shown that many ostensibly medieval traditions re-emerged in Europe between 1870 and 1914 to meet the requirements of the new nation-states in France, Germany, Italy, Russia, etc.[50] Hobsbawm claimed that the invented traditions utilized materials from the distant past to empower a national movement or nation-state and to stake a claim to historical continuity, that is, legitimacy. At the same time, invented traditions included innovations such as national anthems and flags, and symbolic national images such as Marianne (in France), Germania, Uncle Sam or Isrulik (the typical Israeli). The main purpose was to engineer a new national identity in place of former corporative identities and to give the impression of continuity from a distant, glorious past.[51]

The Serb version of invented tradition is a case in point. Medieval Serbia lost its independence after the death of its leader, Prince Lazar, in the battle of Kosovo against the Ottoman Turks in 1389. In the nineteenth century the story was reshaped, paralleling the sacrifice of Prince

Lazar to Christ's with a pre-battle Last Supper: the Prince was sur-
rounded by twelve knights and betrayed by one of them to the Turks.
The revised version inspired Serb nationalism in the nineteenth cen-
tury as well as its revival in the 1980s.

Like Halbwachs before him, David Lowenthal showed that the aspi-
ration to adjust the past to the needs of the present was a time-honoured,
universal practice. Invented traditions are merely a particular case of a
widespread human phenomenon. People remember themselves present
at historical events when they weren't there at all. They improve the
past, exaggerating the favourable and minimizing the unfavourable. In
other cases, Lowenthal wrote, people remember the past in a way that
comforts them in the present, or they draw the past in the image of the
present.[52]

COLLECTIVE MEMORIES AS MYTHS

Among the terms that try to define or explain what 'collective memory'
is, the nearest is probably 'myth'. Originally, myths were tales told by
the ancients to explain phenomena they could not understand. Long be-
fore written history, myths made sense out of the past, explained Cre-
ation, the emergence of language, the origin of wisdom and beauty, the
roots of tribes and peoples, and the causes of enmity. They established
a scale of importance and served as a background for the work of early
historians.[53]

Still later, myths were invented to support claims of legitimacy,
status, power and jurisdiction or to raise funds. In the Middle Ages,
European monasteries recruited the best scholars to fabricate stories
that struck roots and turned into myths about miracles at specific sites
and the saints that had visited them. They did so to attract pilgrims and
donations. In these myths the monasteries grew older and older as com-
petition increased for the pockets of believers.[54]

Mythologies and historical legends have often been considered part
of history or, at least, one of its representations. The question of the
remembered past's evolution into myth was tackled by Peter Burke. He
did not take myth to mean inaccurate history, but symbolical stories
with heroes 'larger than life', kings and rulers, such as Harun al-Rashid
of *The Arabian Nights*; rebels like Bar Kokhba; or outlaws like Robin
Hood in medieval England or Jessie James in the Wild West.[55]

Modern myths are not mere fabrications designed to manipulate popular memory, as Hobsbawm and Ranger imply, or folktales about semi-legendary heroes of the past. Primarily, they are stories that a collective believes really happened and regards as a vital component of its identity. Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson maintained that all collective memories contain mythical elements. These are both evidence on the past and a historcal force continuing from the past to the present. Historians, they added, should regard myth and memory not only as clues to understanding the past, but as windows visibly framing individual and collective consciousness and identity in the present. The myths, they concluded, promote better understanding of the struggle over the past that continues through the present in an attempt to shape the future.[56]

THE CONSTRUCTION AND DEBUNKING OF MEMORY

Various agents invent and spread myths, thereby shaping collective memory. But the debunking of myths by historians, one after another, has dented the popularity of creating them. As a result, the agents are no longer 'cultivators of myths' but 'stylists of collective memory'.

What does myth or collective memory have to do with history? The answer should be: very little. History is neither individual nor collective memory. Nevertheless, there has been a widespread construction of memory and, like other human actions, it deserves historical attention. The historian's curiosity about collective memory focuses on three major questions: (1) Why and how were collective memories shaped and changed, for what purposes and by whom? (2) What are the past and present uses of collective memories? (3) What causes collective forgetting, and why?

Historians vary in their opinions about the relation between history and memory. Pierre Nora claims that memory dictates and history commits to writing. Peter Burke regards the historian as responsible for the remembrance. Henri Rousso, by contrast, warns against confusing history and memory. The historian is not memory's spokesperson but its critic. If he relays witness accounts as they are, he forfeits his autonomy and ceases to function as a historan.[57] The historian's responsibility is the exact opposite: he must query, test and criticize memory, using what it can offer to approach truth and rejecting what takes truth further away. He is not an automatic mouthpiece. Raphael Samuel – who defined

popular (read 'collective') memory as 'the anti-thesis of written history' – expressed a similar opinion.[58]

If, on the basis of their findings, historians debunk collective memories dating back hundreds or thousands of years, no one can argue with them apart from other historians. But if historians do the same with collective memory that overlaps autobiographical memory, contemporaries rarely accept the findings as truth: they 'know'. They question the historian's competence as arbiter when memory and historical truth clash. In most cases, their memories betray them but there's no point in arguing with them because they are not given to persuasion. Occasionally they are right, usually when the historian dismisses one memory in favour of other memories. In these instances, the dispute is not between research and memory but between two memories or narratives, and the historian must have good reason to prefer one over the other.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MEMORY AND HISTORY

The waning of political, national and class traditions has contributed to a growing tendency to view the past in terms of memory rather than history.[59] The New Cultural History made memory a key concept, blurring the distinction between individual and collective memory and confusing recollections with history. On occasion, cultural historians have portrayed memory as an alternative to history or described it as the opposite of history. Jörn Rüsen offers a third way. Regarding history as a representation of experiences, he proposes that memory be a possible bridge between the ostensibly irreconcilable modern and postmodern approaches to the past.[60]

The connection between memory and history was already discerned by Hegel. The German philosopher considered history a blend of the objective and subjective; of events that had happened and the narrative about them. It was not a fortuitous nexus, Hegel explained, since without memory the collective has no meaningful history – that is, an awareness of its past experiences. Collective awareness depends on memory. Without it there is no law or justice or political construction, no common goals, history or state.[61]

Amos Funkenstein tried to sort out Hegel's meaning: did he mean the writing of history or 'that elusive entity known today as "collective

memory"'? Where, he asked, 'does this reside, how is it expressed and how does it differ from the writing of history or thought about history?' Basically, Funkenstein tried to examine the connection between the abstract nouns of memory and consciousness, which can be attributed only to individuals, and the modifier of collective. Remembering is an individual act and the memories of people who experienced the same event are not identical. Yet even the most intimate self-consciousness and personal memory cannot be dissociated from the social context.[62]

Unlike Funkenstein, Kerwin Lee Klein thought Hegel's contribution to the history-memory debate was his counter position of memory and historical consciousness, and his ascription of memory to peoples without history outside Europe.[63] Bernard Lewis has pointed to 'the need for memory' and 'the dangers of deprivation of memory'. 'The Group', he argued, 'no less than the individual, needs some form of collective memory and record'.[64]

Whatever the approach to the two, it is generally agreed that memory and history are linked. Following Hegel, some historians have portrayed memory and history as opposites whereas others have attempted to see them as nearer one another. In the former, dichotomous approach, history defines itself through and against memory. Memory becomes the anti-thesis of history, or its 'other', as Dominic LaCapra phrased it.[65] In the latter, coalescent approach, the significance of memory stems from its alleged status as the origin of history. Advocates of this approach consider memory – if not identical with history – at least its source of inspiration. The synthesis stimulates a fictional, imaginary perception of history confluent with memory.

LaCapra has made a useful distinction between primary and secondary memory, reminiscent of Halbwachs' between autobiographic and historical memory, though with additional psychoanalytical insights. Primary memory applies to someone who experienced an event and remembers it in a certain way. His testimony may include denial, repression and evasion, but it is nonetheless powerful because of its primacy. Secondary memory is the outcome of critical work done on the first, whether by oneself or others. It demands interpretation and assessment of the first's non-factual elements. Historians shape accurate secondary memory, based on the primary memories of witnesses and other evidence, which they then impart to readers who did not experience the event. Having the Holocaust in mind LaCapra, of course, acknowledges

that memory is not history nor, however, is it its opposite, as Pierre Nora claims. It is an important historical-informative source, and its deviations from truth are also significant.[66]

Up to a point, psychoanalytical metaphors may be helpful in understanding the phenomena of remembering and forgetting as applied to collectives, though their benefit is limited. Personal memory is connected with the subconscious, but there is no evidence about the existence of a collective sub-consciousness. Klein maintains that the idea of memory as a meta-historical concept that represents the return of the repressed is speculation, not historical argument. In his opinion, psychoanalysis does not adequately explain the rise of memory to the level of a key concept in the general historical debate or the connection between collective memory and identity.

Klein sees a religious aspect to the competition between memory and history. The prominence of memory as a focal theme in historical theory is not accidental; it coincided with the postmodern criticism of history as oppressive fiction. Memory, he concludes, became prominent in an era of historiographic crisis because it appeared to be a comforting, therapeutic alternative to historical discourse.[67] Obscuring the distinction between history and memory is part of the effort to undermine history. If no reality exists outside language, Frank Ankersmit asserts, history is no longer a reconstruction of what happened in the past, but the constant toying with the memory of those events.[68]

The gap between history and collective memory precludes both their amalgamation and their equivalence as ways to comprehend the past. The study of history emanates from an aspiration to knowledge and the pursuit of truth. Memory, by contrast, is influenced by what people believe or think they should believe. Memory is based on experience, as told by the person experiencing it. Often, it is selective, distorted and inaccurate. Some of its defects are inherent, others are the result of external social constraints.

Nora accused history of destroying memory. He objected that what is called memory today, is actually history. Memory develops dialectically between remembering and forgetting; history is 'the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete of what is no longer'. Memory is a phenomenon of the present, while history is a representation of the past. Memory is emotional and magic, selective in choosing the facts and exposed to various influences. History is an intellectual activity of

analysis and criticism. Memory situates remembering in a holy context, while history extracts it from that context. The historian does not regard it as his duty to enhance memory; rather, the reverse: his role is to repress memory and destroy it.

Interest in the past and the relationship between present and past are part of Nora's definition of memory, but the relationship remains vague:

> Memory is constantly on our lips because it no longer exists … Societies based on memory are no more: The institutions that once transmitted values from generation to generation – churches, schools, families, governments – have ceased to function as they once did … More than that, our very perception of history has, with much help from the media, expanded enormously, so that memory, once the legacy of what people knew intimately – has been supplanted by the thin film of current events.[69]

Memory, Nora claims, has turned into a huge effort to preserve what cannot be remembered. Modern collective memory is not stored in people's minds anymore, but in records. Archives collect and keep relics of the past, and the process of moving from 'natural' memory to history – that started with the onset of writing and was accelerated by the invention of print – has been completed with the development of recording devices and photography.

The historian of Jewish memory, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, expressed a similar view in his book *Zachor* (Remember!), fearing that history would defy memory.[70] Jacques Derrida considered archival stores not only the preservation of memory, but also the beginning of forgetting: 'Because it [memory] is kept, it can be lost, it can be forgotten'.[71]

David Lowenthal was firm that heritage (the British equivalent for the term 'collective memory') is not history and that the two should not be confused. He used different frames of reference. History strives to persuade through truth. Heritage exaggerates and hides, invents and forgets, thriving on error and ignorance. Though passing time and widening perspectives change the view of history, historical revision, too, is subject to the rules of evidence. Heritage, by contrast, changes flexibly and arbitrarily, easily accommodating knowledge on the past that professional historians tend to overrule.

Heritage shapes historical relics and stories into legends immune to criticism. It is not scholarship but a belief system based on faith in and fidelity to a particular picture of the past. There is no point in writing it off as biased since bias is the very essence of heritage, not a departure. Heritage/memory and history differ not in bias but in their attitudes to it: history strives to reduce bias; heritage/memory consecrate and empower it.[72]

Memory strives to reconstruct the past, either idealizing or demonizing it, and ignores chronology. While history examines changes over time, memory is fixated on events. It brings the present closer to the past. History does the opposite: it conveys the past to the present, but only so as to illustrate the distance between them and the many changes that happened in the interim. Memory does not transmit or produce knowledge, nor is it trustworthy documentation of past experience.[73]

One of the most telling observations about the disparity between history and memory was made by American medievalist historian Gabrielle Spiegel, who compared Jewish memory of medieval persecution and post-Holocaust memory. The attempt to replace history with memory is doomed to failure, she said, because 'memory cannot perform historically, since it refuses to keep the past in the past'. Summing up the differences, she wrote:

> History re-presents the dead; memory re-members the corpse in order to revivify it … unlike the backward gazing history, it faces forward from the living present to an imagined future. The one [memory] is oral, liturgical, and essentially prophetic; the other [history] is written, archival, and essentially analytical.[74]

SITES OF MEMORY

Notwithstanding the difference between history and memory, the construction and moulding of collective memory have been common human endeavours worthy of historical study. The most ambitious undertaking in the field to date was Nora's attempt in *Les Lieux de memoire*, which he initiated and edited, to rewrite French history as a history of memory-construction.[75] Raphael Samuel embarked on a similar project, surveying and analysing various sources of British historical consciousness. But because of his premature death his project

remained unfinished. Nora's project had a large team at its disposal. Samuel's was a one-man show, starting with nineteenth-century public schools and ending with documentary films and television.

Nora rejected both the positivism of earlier French historians and the *Annales* approach. He hoped his project would replace Ernest Lavisse's canonical *History of France* that had appeared in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Nora's work is highly impressive in scope, exaggerated in pretension and teetering on postmodernism. It illustrates the dangers inherent in abandoning real history for an excessive preoccupation with images and representations – the concepts are confused, the significant and insignificant are jumbled, and the differences between the past, its commemoration and its research are blurred.

Australian historian Richard Bosworth rightly characterized Nora as 'the inventor of ego-history'.[76] Nora sees himself as the fourth link in the chain of great innovators who wrote French history – after Michelet, Lavisse and the *Annales* School. But his originality, in his eyes, surpasses theirs because his project subjected French history to a process of 'basic rethinking'. The process took place under the impact of De Gaulle's retirement, the diminishing revolutionary idea after the fiasco of the 1968 riots, and the economic crisis of the mid-1970s. All these, Nora explained, substantively changed the attitude of the French to their past and their national sentiments, a change that is at the basis of *Lieux de memoire*.

Nora concedes that his ambition is to depict a France without nationalism. His project is divided into three parts: the republic; the nation; and Les France – the plural article denoting that there is not (nor was there in the past) a one and only France.

He tried to create a history devoid of any commitment to rules and principles; to fashion, in fact – 'histories' – the opposite of orthodox history:

> The goal [of *Lieux de memoire*] is to reinterpret the history of France in symbolic terms … Adopting such a view opens the way to a new kind of history: a history less interested in causes than in effects; less interested in actions remembered or even commemorated than in the traces left by those actions and in the interaction of these commemorations; less interested in events themselves than in the construction of events over time, in the disappearance and

reemergence of their signification; less interested in 'what actually happened' than its perpetual reuse and misuse, its influence on successive presents; less interested in traditions than in the way in which traditions are constituted and passed on … History that is interested in memory not as remembrance but as the overall structure of the past within the present: history of the second degree.[77]

Only time will tell if Nora's self-confidence was justified, if *Lieux de memoire* is indeed the history of the present and the future. In the last three decades the history discipline has heard several statements that were enthusiastically hailed as revolutionary turning points but soon turned out to be groundless pretensions. The abolition of 'previous history' and its replacement with 'history of the second degree' may also burst like a bubble in the face of reality.

MEMORY, IDENTITY AND POLITICS

Collective memory still plays an important role in consolidating society and especially in shaping identity. Associating it with national heritage, its critics have been casting about for alternatives to shape other collective memories: gender, ethnic-racial, global, universal or cosmopolitan.

Collective memory's current significance issues from, among other things, its complex mutual connection with collective identity.[78] Like memory, identity is an individual matter that has become a collective metaphor. The collectivization of memory and identity added rhetorical force to the concepts but it also obscured them as their use either spread to include societies and large groups or was downsized to commemoration.[79]

Memorial ceremonies unite unconnected people to make common cause. Behind every commemorated event or hero, there is a story from the past. Historians try to examine the story and verify, amend or dismiss the details. Commemorators, by contrast, use the story to spread a message, shape consciousness and consolidate identity. In the name of these noble goals, they permit themselves the liberty of straying from historical accuracy. For their purposes, precision is a trifle. They have made memory a value in its own right and occasionally define it as 'a secular religion'.[80]

According to Alon Confino, one of the main purposes of studying collective memory is to investigate the influences of its construction

on society's power relations.[81] Long before Confino, Le Goff already maintained that collective memory attracts the interest of historians and anthropologists because it is a central theme in the power struggles of political, national, class, gender and other groups, all contenders scrabbling for the right and power to decide what will be remembered.[82]

The growing body of writing on the politics of memory has revitalized political history. Confino complains that extensive preoccupation with the politics of memory has changed the history of memory from the cultural to the political. He would like to see a theoretical framework for the study of memory. Separate discussion of the dissemination and acceptance of collective memory, he objects, blurs the whole picture – which amounts to more than the sum total of its components – and sets up a dichotomy between the memory's text and its various contexts. It is not enough to look for diverse and/or contrasting memories, he says. One should also ask what enabled groups with conflicting memories to imagine themselves part of one national community. These are pertinent arguments. But alongside them, Confino often expresses an a priori, unreasoned suspicion of every memory that comes from above simply because that's where it comes from.[83]

In areas of political, social and cultural friction, collective memory has been a divisive factor. Memories clash wherever there are national, religious or ethnic conflicts: in Alsace-Lorraine; in Serbian Vojvodina (Magyar Ujvidek); in Kosovo with its Albanian majority and the Serbs' recollections; in Algeria, South Africa, Ireland or the Land of Israel, which, for the Arabs, has remained *Filastin*. Everywhere, history was one. But its derivative memories have been diverse and contradictory, and the divergence has increased with the passage of time. The same is true of conflicts between majority and minority cultures or memory in multinational or multireligious states. The polarization may involve commemorations that articulate conflicts of memory: Israel's Independence Day is the Palestinians' *Nakba* Day. Similarly, different place names harbour their own meanings: a German's Breslau or Königsberg means nothing to a Pole in Wroclaw or a Russian in Kaliningrad, respectively.

Nostalgia for a glorious past is typical of immigrants desiring to preserve their original identity. Jews looked back for two millennia, to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. As a modern example, Irwin-Zarecka cites Ukrainian immigrants to Canada who cherish the memory of their national hero, Bogdan Chmielnitzki. On the other

hand, for Canadians of Polish origin and for Jews, the name conjures up the massacres of Poles and Jews perpetrated in the Cossack revolt he led in 1648-49.[84]

Clinging to memory is sometimes a reaction to its repression. The past and memory of the past have special significance for nations struggling to preserve their identity against occupation, repression or dispersion. A regime bent on erasing memory causes the downtrodden to fear that no witnesses will remain to tell of the oppression. The struggle against oppression is thus also a struggle for memory and against its would-be obliterators. Connerton's examples include Solzhenitsyn's books on the Gulag and portray Elie Wiesel as an author with a mission to commemorate the Holocaust. But both of these represent a retrospective struggle against forgetting. A forward-looking struggle to preserve memory for posterity is more aptly illustrated by Emmanuel Ringelblum's project of documenting life in the Warsaw ghetto during the Holocaust.

Palestinians, particularly the refugees among them, have shaped their identity around the memory of their places of origin. Neighbourhoods in refugee camps were named after the first residents' original towns and villages. Inside Israel, Arabs make pilgrimages to mosques and churches in deserted villages. Families would assemble around fig trees and fountains on the former family tract. The websites of *al-Nakba* (the disaster) and *al-Auda* (the return) are organized by local sites: districts, sub-districts, towns and villages. At the same time, the Palestinians repressed the memory of the leadership that brought them to the fiascos of 1936–39 and 1948.

THE STUDY OF MEMORY AND REPRESENTATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO STUDYING THE PAST

Difficult access to archival material or the complexity of adapting and digesting it have driven historians to use sources that rely on memory – memoirs and oral testimonies – or that shape memory: media and literary coverage of historical events or their representations in the visual arts and in film. These sources, including earlier historical writings, describe the ways that people memorized, commemorated, perceived, interpreted, represented, studied or portrayed the past. But they contribute very little to exposing the past itself: the way that events

took place, their contexts and connection. Yet this drawback does not daunt historians in the postmodern era: 'If the old ideal was to resurrect the past', Nora declared, 'the new ideal is to create a representation of it'.[85]

The study of representations has been part of cultural history. Though significant, it cannot be a substitute for researching events – political, military or social. The study of the past should not be confused with the study of its representations. The history of representing history – through historiography, fiction literature, poetry, art, monuments, film or other popular means that are bound to shape memory and influence it – supplements but does not replace the history of people, nations, organizations, institutions, societies, ideas and other human activities and social structures.

To illustrate the power and significance of representation, Nora invokes a story about a former standard geography textbook in French schools that first appeared in 1877 and remained on the syllabus for many decades. The minister of education, he wrote admiringly, could look at his watch at 8 a.m. on a certain day of the year and declare: 'all our children are now crossing the Alps'.[86] The inevitable question is: So what? Does the example demonstrate the power of the book, or the representation, or does it show the might of France's centralized school system?

The border between studying and making history is hazier in the study of collective memory than in any branch of history. A historian who participates in the production of a 'narrative' or the refutation of a myth imagines himself an actor of history; he is not merely describing, analysing or explaining. This is apparently one of the reasons that historians are tempted to act as agents of collective memory or study memory and its representations.

The historian's duty is to describe the creation of memory, expose the various influences that helped to shape it, and explain why and how they affected it. A historian is neither a producer nor an agent of memory. He should not deliberately shape or destroy it. If he is actively involved in constructing or razing memory rather than explaining it – if, instead of researching history, he cultivates one narrative or wipes out another – he becomes just another manipulator of memory, a propagandist.

The past may be a source of inspiration but it can also be a burden and drive people to expunge unpleasant memories or knowledge. Just

as history serves as a starting point for constructing memories that may contribute to the shaping of identity, so there are people who flee their history and their memories. They change their names to erase their past in the process of shaping a new and different identity without history. Typical examples were the apostates in the Middle Ages, extreme assimilants among Jews in the modern period, or Pinchas Aron, who, after the Second World War and the Holocaust, became Pierre Nora. By choosing the anagram, however, he might wish to avoid a complete erasure of his past.

Jewish, Zionist and Israeli Historiography

MEMORY AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN JUDAISM

Historical awareness developed for the first time among the ancient Jews and Greeks. Both cultures regarded their roots as being located in historical rather than mythical times. They saved the memory of recent beginnings that had been preceded by eras of wandering and deemed themselves exceptional compared to older cultures such as the Egyptian or the Acadian. Jewish and Greek cultures developed the historical writing, and through it searched for meaning and causality in life.

The Jews' attitude to the past and their devotion to historical memory were exceptional in the ancient Near East. This commitment did not develop in an empire that had large cities, governmental facilities, archives and a tradition of official historical writing in the manner of annals and inscriptions. It evolved among half-primitive tribes in the transition from nomadic life to permanent settlement, and apparently preceded the consolidation of the tribes into a people. The common historical memory played a central part in integrating the tribes and founding the nation.[1]

Jewish and Greek historiography prospered in the Persian Empire. They were influenced by a Persian historiography that left only very few vestiges. Eventually, they developed in different directions. For the ancient Jews, religion and history were the same. Biblical history was continuous, and began with the Creation. The responsibility to remember the history of Truth and bequeath it to the next generation was a religious duty that had no parallel among the Greeks. For this reason, Jewish historiography did not develop critical tools for the selection of a true version among several alternatives, as the Greeks' did and they handed it down to modern historical discipline.

In Judaism, religion came before history. Jewish education was based on studying the Torah, and knowledge of the past was not included. The Jewish sage was an interpreter of holy texts, not a historian. The Greeks, by contrast, distinguished between sacred religion and material history, and left the last one as a legacy to the western world. Greek laws were objects for a critical study, while the Torah was beyond historical criticism.

Arnaldo Momigliano stated that after the destruction of the Second Temple the Jews lost interest in history, and returned to its study and writing only in the sixteenth century, under the influence of the Renaissance. What was left of ancient Jewish historiography in the Apocrypha was written in Greek or translated for non-Jewish readers, and was saved by Christian monks.[2] Josef Chayim Yerushalmi took a similar stance. Separating collective memory from history, he insisted that the central place of historical memory in religious worship notwithstanding, the ancient Jewish historiographic tradition had vanished in the Middle Ages.

Nonetheless, Yerushalmi agreed that medieval Jews knew more history than they cared to write and document. The evidence was two epistles, one written by Rav Shrira Gaon in the tenth century and the other by Maimonides in the twelfth century (the Yemen Epistle). Ben-Sasson regarded the medieval Jewish chronicles as additional evidence of historical creativity. Yerushalmi, on the other hand, asserted that these chronicles, as well as *Sefer Yosifon*, were exceptions testifying to the rule. Historical literature, he maintained, was written on the margins of medieval Jewish creativity and its role was secondary.[3]

One reason for the gap between the progress of Christian historiography and the freezing of Jewish historiography was the Jews' attitude to contemporary history. Until the nineteenth century, European history was political, dealing with rulers and their actions. The Jewish communities had no such history. They did not regard the history of the surrounding societies as theirs because they conceived of themselves as its object and not as its subject.

To the extent that medieval Jews displayed interest in the past, it was the distant biblical past from which they took names and geographic terms and applied them to their environs (such as *Tzarfat* [France], *Ashkenaz* [Germany] etc.). The Jews also had several chronological systems, some linear, counting the years since the creation, and

some circular, like the weekly reading of the Torah. Their holy scriptures served as an archetypal pattern for all present events and those in the future. Memories were saved in holidays and in affiliated texts (that is, the Passover Hagadah, Esther Scroll and Antiochus Scroll). They were also remembered in historical fasting and memorial days, but not in historical writing.[4]

In Amos Funkenstein's view, even in the absence of historical writing the Jews never ceased to think creatively about their history. Primarily, their historical awareness continued in the judicial area. He compared the *Halacha* with Roman law and regarded both as articulations of historical consciousness. Deep historical perception, not just collective historical memories, stood at the basis of Jewish culture. This awareness clarified the Jewish people's exclusivity in various ways, and it was honed in the Middle Ages under the pressures of Christianity and Islam.[5] Until the nineteenth century, Funkenstein observed, the Jews' place in the world was clear to them and to others because it was backed by a Divine promise in which most Jews still believed. Nevertheless, the Jews' very existence was a source of constant wonderment for them and for non-Jews. From the emergence of the nation in ancient times to our own days, he wrote, Jewish existence has never been taken for granted and it always required an explanation. Jewish identity and destiny also have never been self-evident, neither to Jews nor to their environs.[6]

The differences between Yerushalmi and Funkenstein concerned also their appraisal of the impact that the historicizing of Judaism in the nineteenth century had on Jewish history and Jewish collective memory. Yerushalmi maintained that their separation became absolute. Funkenstein thought that this was an exaggeration and suggested another explanation: until the nineteenth century the Jews' historical consciousness focused on what distinguished Jews from Gentiles. In the era of emancipation, this realization was turned upside down, and Jewish historiography began to look for the common basis of the Jews and other nations.[7]

THE BEGINNING OF MODERN JEWISH HISTORIOGRAPHY

The Historicizing of Judaism, or its return to history, was one aspect of the complex process of the Jews' adjustment to modernity and their exertions to redefine their identity in a world based on nationalism.

Basically, they wished to imitate the nations of central and Eastern Europe. In the last two decades, however, several Jewish historians have examined the phenomenon of Jewish nationalism in a broader perspective. They match it with the national awakening of Third World countries in response to European imperialism. As far as historiography is concerned, these scholars grasp the beginning of modern Jewish historical writing in the nineteenth century as an effort to deny non-Jewish Hebraists the monopoly on the historical representation of Judaism. They compare it with Bengali texts of the late nineteenth century that in the view of Indian historians such as Partha Chatterjee strove to deny colonial British officials the monopoly of representing Indian history.[8] In a similar way, David Myers attempted to explain nineteenth-century Jewish historiography as a hybrid phenomenon, combining unique paradigms of Jewish self-representation on the one hand with the rigorous German scientific ethos on the other. Myers portrayed Jewish historians as torn between their Jewish heritage and their aspirations to assimilate into and be accepted by the surrounding society.[9]

The equation of the early Jewish historians, such as Itzhak-Mordechai Yost, Leopold Zunz or Heinrich Graetz to the pioneers of the colonial peoples' self-historiography, or comparing *Hochmat Israel* to seemingly similar movements in India, are highly doubtful. The Jews were an integral part of Europe, not 'others'. Their historicizing was part of the modernization of Europe. Applying post-colonialist theories of Third World nationalism to the European Jews appears artificial, subjugating the past to present fads.

The revival of Jewish historical awareness began in Germany with the Enlightenment, but first signs of modern Jewish historiography appeared a generation later. It was influenced by the prevailing cultural trends in Germany after the Napoleonic wars – romanticism and historicism. In the nineteenth century religion remained the focus of Jewish identity in Germany, and the first Jewish historians were interested primarily in Jewish religious texts. Like their German contemporaries, their scientific approach was philologist.[10] They wrote apologetic history, emphasizing the rational aspects of the Jewish religion and ignoring or concealing its mystical dimensions.

During the nineteenth century German-Jewish religious identity split with the appearance of the Reformist movement led by Abraham Geiger, the historical-positivist (later: conservative) trend founded by

Zecharia Fränkel and the Orthodoxy of Shimshon-Raphael Hirsch. The development of Jewish studies, including Jewish historiography, widened the cracks in Jewish identity and whetted the conflicts between the religious trends.[11]

Historicizing Judaism articulated the aspiration to normalize it. This ambition has been erroneously identified with Zionism, but Zionism continued and empowered a trend that preceded Jewish nationalism: it began with Jewish Enlightenment, *Hochmat Israel* and the evolution of Jewish studies in Germany. These movements sought in the historical study of Judaism answers to questions such as what are Jews, Jewish culture and Jewish society, and what they should be. They all wished to find a balance in the tension between normality and exclusivity in Jewish existence.

JEWISH HISTORIOGRAPHY AND JEWISH NATIONALISM

The comprehensive Jewish history that Heinrich Graetz wrote between 1852 and 1876 was a turning point in the Jews' historical awareness and renewed self-consciousness and a substantial contribution to crystallizing the perception that the Jews were a nation. Graetz's monumental work described the Jews as a people having a continuous history. This was still a history of ideas and their bearers – Rabbinical scholars and philosophers – not of the Jewish nation. Contrary to the spirit of contemporary historicism, Graetz underscored the stability of Jewish life rather than the change. He innovated not only in the description of Jewish history, but also in appraising its place in world history.

Beyond Graetz's talents and scholarship, Salo Baron ascribed his popularity to his patriotic Jewish interpretation.[12] Graetz modified his views several times, but he always remained a proud and occasionally haughty Jew. His letters to Moses Hess reflect a feeling of Jewish superiority and reservations about the Germans, whom he belittled. In the late 1870s he argued with the prominent German historian Heinrich von Treitschke about Jewish history, and did it sharply and sarcastically.[13]

Jewish historians, especially those who specialized in Jewish history, were not admitted as faculty to German universities until the beginning of the twentieth century. Hence, they established their own institutions of research and learning, such as the Jewish Studies Association that was founded in Berlin in 1819. More institutes were founded later,

such as the seminars for training Rabbis in Berlin and Breslau, and the academy of Jewish studies that was founded in Berlin in 1919 and was active until the Nazis' seizure of power.

Research in Jewish studies in the German language, striving to get an entrance ticket to modern European society, was accompanied by scholarship in Yiddish and Hebrew. This was the project of *Hochmat Israel*, which was a part of the Jewish Enlightenment movement. *Hochmat Israel* was influenced by the linguistic revival and the cultural-national awakening of the peoples of the great European empires. Contrary to the assimilationist tendency of the *Wissenschaft des Judentum* in Germany, the Hebrew and Yiddishist *Hochmat Israel* strove to reshape Jewish identity on a national basis, and not solely on religion. The champion of this trend was Peretz Smolenskin in his Hebrew journal *Hashachar*. Contrary to the preoccupation with texts of a religious and spiritual community, as Judaism was perceived by its scholars in Germany, Smolenskin stressed the social existence of the Jews as a nation. He began to shape the perception of Jewish history as a national history, and this perception was further developed and applied by Shimon Dubnow.

Dubnow was no Zionist. Sceptic about the prospects of moving masses of Jews to Palestine, he favoured the attainment of cultural and communal autonomy for the Jews in their present locations. Nonetheless, he made a decisive contribution to the development of a national approach to Jewish history. Dubnow was also the first to rally around himself a group of Jewish historians and establish something resembling a 'school'. Affected by the East European romantic nationalism of the second half of the nineteenth century, Dubnow and his followers emphasized the continuity of Jewish existence throughout the ages, the typical economic and social characteristics of the Jewish Diaspora and the existence of a coherent Jewish culture. They belittled, however, the significance of the Jews' affiliation to the Holy Land as a factor that shaped their history.[14]

In the interwar period European Jewish historiography expanded to Palestine and the United States. In the 1930s the 'Jerusalem School' was taking shape in Palestine. At the same time, Salo Witmayer Baron arrived in New York and held the new chair of Jewish history in Columbia University – the first Chair of Jewish History and the second of Judaic Studies in the United States. In contrast to the Zionist historians

in Jerusalem, who looked for the distinctiveness of Jewish history and presented it as a continuous internal history, Baron insisted on the need to study it from a general historical perspective and presented Jewish history as an integral part of world history.[15]

Baron vehemently opposed Jewish segregation and criticized Graetz and Dubnow for isolating the Jews from their surroundings. Three principles characterized his writing: (1) a focus on the mutual affiliations between social and religious forces in Jewish history; (2) an emphasis on the connections between the Jewish communities and their surrounding societies; (3) negation of the 'lamenting approach' to Jewish history that exaggerated, in his view, the dimensions of plight and suffering in Jewish history, particularly in the Middle Ages. The origins of this approach, he maintained, could be seen already in the Jewish historiography of the sixteenth century, written after the expulsions from Spain and Portugal.[16]

Unlike the contemporary Zionist historians, Baron put down the significance of anti-Semitism and its impact on Jewish history. Thus, for example, he argued that the mass emigration from the Russian Pale at the turn of the nineteenth century was not motivated by the pogroms of 1881 but by the deterioration of economic conditions owing to natural demographic growth and the persistence of restrictions on the Jews living in the Pale. To support his argument he examined Jewish emigration in relation to the emigration from Russia of other groups, combining his criticism of the 'lamenting approach' with the relation between Jewish and general phenomena. He was forced to admit, however, that all other reasons for Jewish emigration from Russia were reinforced and accelerated by the pogroms.[17]

THE ZIONIST APPROACH TO JEWISH HISTORY

Unlike other contemporary ideologies, Zionism had no 'scientific' pretensions; it did not purport to offer a scientific resolution of the Jewish question. At the same time, it did believe in Jewish genius and in science, and sanctified both, including history. At the laying of the cornerstone ceremony for the Hebrew University in 1925, on Jerusalem's Mount Scopus, the speakers related to the university as a new Temple, succeeding the two that had been destroyed in ancient times.[18]

Zionism was a pluralistic movement, thus leaving itself open to charges and counter-charges of every kind, as Anita Shapira wrote.

Following Jacob Talmon, Shapira regarded Zionism as a secular-messianic trend of the modern period and supported her claim by noting Herzl's aspiration for a historical breakthrough – for the Jews to obtain an international 'charter' over the Land of Israel – and the messianic fervour he had generated in the Russian Pale where he earned the title of Moses from some Jews.[19]

Herzl, according to Shapira, displayed little interest in reviving the Jewish past. For him, the return to Zion was mainly the disengagement from exile and its tragic historical legacy. As far as Jewish history-in-exile was concerned, Zionism stressed events that manifested the Jewish rebellious spirit, such as messianic outbursts: 'What was sporadic and marginal in Jewish life was elevated to the level of utmost importance, as expressing a trend that culminated in Zionism.'[20]

As regards Yishuv history, the Zionist historians who had immigrated to Palestine after the First World War had been preceded by several scholars of the Old Yishuv. The latter sought to modify the picture drawn by *Hokhmat Israel*, which was dominated by the Hebrew Enlightenment [*Haskalah*] and emancipation. They also wanted to re-place the history of the country, which had been written by churchmen and monks, to highlight the Jewish role in its past.[21]

Zionism's approach to historiography derived from both the rationalist Enlightenment tradition of the German *Wissenschaft des Judentum* and from the national-romantic heritage of East European *Hokhmat Israel*, seeking to integrate the two influences. Despite their differences, the Zionist historians who flocked to Jerusalem from the 1920s onwards fundamentally changed the paradigm of nineteenth-century Jewish historiography. Like Simon Dubnow in Poland, they shifted the emphasis from Judaism as a religion to Judaism as a nationality. Unlike their predecessors in central Europe, they focused on topics that underlined Jewish sovereignty or autonomy and lent political interpretations to phenomena hitherto considered religious or communal.

Like most of their colleagues in Europe at that time, the first Zionist historians were historicists by training and professional consciousness, and connected historical research with national revival. The founders of the Jewish History Department at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Itzhak Baer and Benzion Dinur, had been trained by such historicists as Friedrich Meinecke and Eugene Taubler respectively. They resolved the tension between universal science and nationalism

through historicist eyes – they believed that a Jewish historian's very nationalism was what lent him the necessary empathy to understand Jewish history from within, thereby making it easier to write objective history.[22] Occasionally, however, Baer's emphasis on the continuity of Jewish history, and Dinur's on Palestine's centrality in Jewish life-in-exile, strayed beyond the boundaries of historical explanation to the open vistas of Romanticism and even arbitrary beliefs.

As they saw it, Jewish scholarship had developed in Germany as the apologetics of assimilation. To change the direction of Jewish historiography, they established the Jerusalem School around the journal of *Zion*. The journal replaced the periodicals of Jewish studies that had vanished in Russia after the civil war and in Germany after the Nazi seizure of power, and constituted an alternative centre for the study of Jewish history.[23]

Baer and Dinur aspired to make *Zion* the common platform of all historians interested in Jewish history, which they viewed as a continuous national story of internal unity above time (historical periods) and space (the Jewish dispersion in exile). Both strove to stress the elements unifying Jews and to play down their local histories in different countries: 'We do not think that there is room for studies that have only local value. Any detail that does not point to a general historical rule has no value as a detail either.'[24]

Their close partnership notwithstanding, there were significant differences between them. Baer considered the study of the past a goal in itself, while Dinur thought that historical study should serve the present; from his perspective, the study of the past was to legitimize Zionism in the present by uncovering its early roots. He traced these back to the end of the seventeenth century – and the relatively minor event of the immigration of Rabbi Yehuda he-Hasid (the Pious) and his disciples to the Land of Israel in the year 1700.

Dinur believed that a historian was to be not only a scientist but a pedagogue. Though familiar with the scientific method, his sentiments and sense of mission regarding national education often triumphed over his scientific rigour. In certain respects, he was Dubnow's successor despite the ideological differences between Zionists and Autonomists. Both attached historical significance to the masses, unlike their predecessors, such as Graetz, who gave the greatest weight to the elite of rabbinical scholars.[25]

David Myers has noted that the Jerusalem School was less homogeneous than its critics have claimed, questioning whether it was a 'school' at all. The scholars of the Hebrew University stemmed from a variety of backgrounds – Central European and East European, rabbinic and Enlightened. Many of the first-generation faculty members had studied in Germany, though not all were natives of Germany. They arrived in Palestine with diverse personal and professional baggage and, Myers stated, they were in fact exiles in their new country – an extension of European science in a foreign, alien and backward Middle East. While they helped to forge a new Jewish identity, they remained ambivalent about it. They were torn between the cultural worlds of Europe and Palestine, and between conflicting demands: promoting scientific research, on the one hand, and shaping Jewish-Zionist collective memory, on the other.[26]

As regards historians born in the *Deutsche Kultursgebiet*, Myers is right. But the same was true of most of the central European immigrants in the 1930s and not only of historians or academics. Some of them (such as Hans Kohn, the scholar of nationalism) did not adjust and left the country. For scholars born in Eastern Europe (even if German-educated), Myers' observation is less valid, and the change was not as extreme as he portrays.[27]

Gershom Scholem, another of the founders of the Jerusalem School, supported the revolt of Zionist historiography against the heritage of *Hokhmat Israel*. But by the 1940s he had already deemed the revolt a failure, at least from the point of view of scholarship:

> We revolted and found ourselves deteriorating … from bad to worse: the one void, of assimilation, was followed by another void, that of a boastful national rhetoric. We have cultivated a national exegesis and a national platitude in science as a substitute for religious exegesis and platitude.[28]

Scholem was ambivalent about the Jews' return to history and its connection with secularization and the politicization of Jewish endeavours. On the one side, he favoured Zionism and the return to history; on the other, he feared it: 'Should Jews try to explain themselves solely by the historical dimension, they will have to come to the idea of total destruction and liquidation.'[29]

MY TEACHERS AND MASTERS

Baer and Dinur's disciples inherited many of their basic assumptions, particularly the notion of the Jewish People as a living organism. In other words, despite their dispersal and the variety of influences they had absorbed in the course of history, they had retained their unity and continuity. At the same time, free of the romanticism, commitment and apologetics characteristic of the mentor generation, the student-disciples diverged on several important issues. Dinur had emphasized the country's centrality and the immigration (*aliyah*) to it in the life of the Jews in exile, striving to prove the existence of a continuous Yishuv (Jewish community in the Land of Israel). Ben-Sasson did not base the historical connection on the actual Jewish presence in the country or on the immigration of small groups, but on the yearnings for the Land of Israel (enshrined in daily prayer, holidays and traditions) and on the country's role in Jewish consciousness though the Jews were far from its shores:

> The Land of Israel has been perceived as a special country either because of the Jews' consciousness of it or objection to that consciousness. This country has never had any distinctiveness except in our patterns of thought and feeling; or in order to deny our thoughts and feelings.[30]

Shmuel Ettinger saw Dinur as a combination of ideologue and national historian, much like some of his European predecessors had been ideologues for their respective national movements.[31] As Dinur's disciple, Ettinger tried to consolidate the accomplishments of the Jerusalem School, but at the same time he had reservations about some of the implications of his teacher's romantic view of Jewish history. Ettinger underscored the central role of anti-Semitism in Jewish history, both the uniqueness of and outside influences on that history, and, above all, the vying centrifugal and centripetal forces that alternately acted on it.[32]

Ben-Sasson charged that the apologetic Jewish historiography of the emancipation and *Hokhmat Israel* era were responsible for making Jewish history loathsome to teachers and pupils and for their alienation from the Jewish past, particularly the period of exile. These apologetics, he objected, had impacted also on Zionists, causing them to conclude that 'to be a nation like all other nations means – unlike the rest of the nations – to detach oneself from the consciousness of continuity of the historical past'. Ben-Sasson directed his criticism mainly against the

Canaanite trends prevailing in the Yishuv and penetrating Israeli acad-
eme in the 1950s and 1960s.[33]

Ben-Sasson considered historical consciousness or awareness an
actual historical force articulating the postures and motivations of both
individuals and collectives, and shaping the course of historical events.
His concept of 'consciousness' was closer to *mentalité* as used by the
Annales School than to American psycho-history. He, however, did not
borrow it from any existing model but came to it on his own, from his
observations of the changing attitude of Jews to their national identity
in his time. For him, historical consciousness articulated an attempt
to regulate the flow of past events in order to comprehend life in the
present.[34]

Ettinger, Ben-Sasson and most of their colleagues regarded history
as an autonomous discipline. Particularly, they objected to imitating the
social sciences and adopting their models. The first (in Jerusalem) to
expand research in Jewish history to the past institutions of Jewish
society and apply sociological theories, terminology and research
methods was Jacob Katz. Unlike his contemporaries at the Hebrew
University, Katz was not a student of Baer and Dinur. He had been
educated at the rabbinical seminary in Frankfurt and trained in the
socio-historical method of Max Weber and Karl Manheim.[35] In his book
Masoret u-Mashber (Tradition and crisis), he shifted the emphasis from
historical events to the institutions of Jewish society, its economy and
relations with surrounding society.[36]

Masoret u-Mashber analysed the disintegration of traditional Jewish
society and its institutions under pressure of the Enlightenment in West-
ern Europe and of Hassidism in Eastern Europe. The book aroused
passionate opposition. Ettinger contended that the methods of social
science were adequate for studying present society but not for investi-
gating societies in the past because the conventional generalizations
contributed little to the understanding and interpretation of historical
complexities.[37] Ben-Sasson frowned on Katz's static, introverted model
of European Jewish society in the late Middle Ages. He held that in the
sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Jewish society had been more
dynamic and involved in its milieu than Katz was prepared to
concede.[38] Nevertheless, Katz took his place as one of Israel's most
prominent historians with a following of his own who continued to
merge the methodologies and terminologies of sociology and history.[39]

In the late 1960s the three-volume *Toldot Am Israel* (History of the Jewish people), which was translated to several languages, showcased the efforts of the Jerusalem School over two generations: laying the groundwork for a perception of Jewish history as a continuous national history – from the Old Testament tradition to the modern State of Israel – as conceived by Baer and Dinur and carried on by the next generation. Ben-Sasson's introduction summarized the authors' historicist approach to historical study in general, their national approach to Jewish history, and their response to the early changes in the history discipline after the Second World War.[40]

THE CRITICS OF THE JERUSALEM SCHOOL

From the very beginning, the Jerusalem School's paradigm of Jewish history drew fire. Its early critics were mostly non-Zionist, European and American Jewish historians. One major arena in the 1930s and 1940s were the disputes between Baer and Baron, whose interpretations of the Jewish past were separated by an unbridgeable gulf, yet they were highly appreciative of one another's endeavours.[41]

In Dinur's lifetime, the few Zionist historians who took issue with him did so while showing empathy for his efforts and accomplishments and identification with shared national goals; their objections revolved around his methodological approach and specific emphases. Dinur's disciples, and certainly their own, broke with their teacher's unfounded statements (that is, his division of modern Jewish History into subperiods) and delved into the writings of pre- or non-Zionist historians such as Graetz, Dubnow, Meir Balaban or Baron. Baer's successors, too, drew inspiration from him even as they refuted some of his ideas. In particular, they did not buy his shifting emphasis, late in his career, from medieval history to that of the Second Temple period, and from the Jewish–Christian nexus in Europe to the Jewish–Greek one in Palestine as the constitutive element of Jewish history.[42]

The criticism of the early Zionist scholars did not necessarily address actual issues. Israel-Jacob Yuval questioned the decisive weight given to internal forces in shaping medieval Jewish history, and rose up against Baer and Ben-Sasson. Moshe Idel shook up the canonical history of Jewish mysticism moulded by Scholem. Both caused brouhaha, but it was of an academic, not political nature.[43]

In recent years, however, the principal criticism of the Jerusalem School has emanated from other sources, ideological rather than methodological. Just as the history discipline has been the butt of post-modernist attacks in the West, so the Zionist approach to Jewish history has been attacked by post-Zionists, historians and non-historians alike. Zionist historiography has been accused of 'enlistment in the [Zionist] political struggle as one of the auxiliary forces in the country's takeover'. Zionist historians have been castigated as 'authorities and articulators of the nation's spirit' or, in the words of Gabriel Piterberg, as 'cultural priests'.[44]

Anyone familiar with the status of academe in the Yishuv during the Mandate period and early statehood must treat such hyperbole with an indulgent smile. The power and importance ascribed by post-Zionists to the Hebrew University and Zionist historians in those years is nothing short of fanciful. The bulk of the Yishuv regarded the Hebrew University as a bourgeois enclave and a luxury, of minor ideological and political influence.[45] In Dinur and Baer's time, the university engendered (internal-Zionist) opposition rather than empowerment. To a large extent, post-Zionists project today's universities or themselves as 'intellectual elite' on to that period, ignoring the fact that at the time the university and the values it represented were far from the public interest. Even in the absorption of immigrant scholars, the university contributed minimally, failing to accommodate most of the scholars of Judaic studies that immigrated to Palestine in the 1930s.[46] Up until the Second World War the university admitted mainly immigrant students while local high school graduates pursuing higher education on the whole did so abroad: in Beirut or in Paris, in Britain or in the United States.

As Shmuel Almog has said, the founders of the Hebrew University were 'a generation of giants'. Under the special circumstances of the 1920s and 1930s, a rare group of people came together in Jerusalem to constitute, at a small, new university in a primitive country, a far superior aggregate than might have formed under normal circumstances. Nonetheless, the impact of the 'giants' on the nation's spirit, culture, Zionist policy and Yishuv's society was limited. The Yishuv favoured 'the valley' (pioneering settlements in the Yizrael valley and the Jordan valley) over 'the mountain' (Mount Scopus, the university site). 'The university', Almog wrote, 'was and was not part of the Yishuv'. It was

perceived as elitist, haughty, isolationist and arrogant. The mutual attitudes of society and academe softened only after statehood, when much of the pioneering spirit was lost and the university became a mass institution.[47]

The sweeping charge that the Jerusalem School clung to a romantic heritage and was unscientific and ideological in its work has, of course, been disingenuous. Indeed, every Zionist historian has been torn between his ideological convictions (just like other historians may support Marxism or the Palestinian cause) and the aspiration to write objective history. Notwithstanding the generalized condemnation of Zionist historiography, Zionist historians in the past and certainly in the present did not and do not speak in a single voice. There are enormous methodological as well as ideological differences between them. Far more than any ideological loyalty, their approach to the study of Jewish history has shown a commitment to the contemporary principles of the history discipline.[48]

Dinur's present critics try to cast him in the light of a political commissar distorting history to serve ideology. By contrast, Ariel Rein, in a scrupulous study, portrays him as a national historian of the European type: he strove to shape the collective past according to national concepts, and his work was built on the analysis of source material and was therefore scientific. Like national historians in Europe, Dinur sought to pass on his picture of the past to the general public and, as Minister of Education, to disseminate it through the school system.

But Rein also found several differences between Dinur and national historians in Europe, which essentially paralleled the differing content of Jewish and world history. Contemporary European historians focused on political and military history; Dinur stressed culture and religion. The Europeans dealt with national history, though they considered its connection to universal history; Dinur devoted himself solely to Jewish history. For him, world history was merely the external framework for research projects uncovering internal occurrences, the unity and continuity of Jewish history. Inter-Diaspora relations were equivalent to international relations in world history.[49]

THE STRUCTURE OF HISTORICAL STUDIES IN ISRAEL

The Jerusalem School applied historicism – including its affiliation to nationalism – to the study and teaching of Jewish history. However, contrary to European historicism and its linkage of national and world histories, the Hebrew University decided in the mid-1930s to separate Jewish from world history. It adopted a similar decision with regard to philosophy, and established separate departments of Jewish history and Jewish thought (or philosophy).

These decisions followed arguments between historians who favoured a single history department, as was customary worldwide, and other scholars from the Institute of Jewish Studies. The 'separatists' feared that the humanities – philosophy, history, linguistics and literature – would contain and swallow up Jewish studies. In addition, their insistence on separate Jewish studies articulated their historical sense that Jews are an *'Am Segula* (the treasured or chosen people).[50]

The Hebrew University's department of Jewish history grew out of the Institute of Jewish Studies and maintained close contact with its other branches, particularly the departments of Bible, Talmud and Jewish philosophy. Within a few years, a department of world history was established under Professor Richard Köbner, who had been fired from the University of Breslau after the Nazi rise to power and made his way to Jerusalem.[51] By 1926 the Hebrew University had already set up the Institute of Oriental Studies to promote the study of classic Arabic, Arab literature and early Islamic history. A department of Modern Middle Eastern History was added later.[52] Younger Israeli universities emulated the Jerusalem model of multiple history departments. Some even added a department of Land of Israel Studies that taught the history, geography and archaeology of the country and its inhabitants. Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Indian history is taught at the recently established departments of regional studies of the Far East. Israel thus found itself in a unique situation with the history discipline divided over several departmental units at every university.

Shlomo Zand, of the department of world history at Tel Aviv University, called the separation of Jewish and world histories the original sin, which to this day casts a shadow on the development of Israel's history discipline. He accused the Hebrew University's Jewish history department of 'immediately [after its foundation] producing exclusive mechanisms of conceptualization unknown in world history

studies'. Above these mechanisms, he argued, was the concept that Jews had always constituted an ethnic nation living in political exile and striving to return to its homeland. He insisted that the concept, which had dominated Zionist thinking since the nineteenth century and in Jerusalem enjoyed academic recognition and the status of a scientific paradigm, had been false all along. Its proponents, he said, had turned the traditional-religious antithesis between Diaspora and redemption (through the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel in the Days to Come) into a modern-national contrast, between exile and homeland. Furthermore, he added, they had maintained that the Jewish past was inimitable and could not be compared to other religious civilizations.[53]

Shlomo Zand has recently elaborated on this in a new book, arguing, among other things, that the ethnic-biological origin of most modern Jews is not in the Land of Israel. Rather, they are the descendants of pagan converts in North Africa, Yemen and the Kazars' kingdom in the Volga basin. This fact, he charged, was deliberately concealed by Zionist historians who cultivated the myth of a nation that had been expelled from its homeland and for 2,000 years yearned to return to it.[54] However, Zionist historians, from Dinur to the present, never tried to conceal or minimize the scope of conversions in antiquity and the Middle Ages, nor did they evade the issue. Zand added no new information or knowledge on the topic. All he achieved with his mixing of ideology and methodology was shallow intellectualism, as Anita Shapira and Israel Bartal showed in their reviews of the book.[55]

Zand has complained that the takeover of Jewish history departments at Israeli universities by Zionist historians has resulted in the exclusion of non-Zionist historians. In his eyes, the problem is not simply intellectual, but material: the exclusion of (apparently less Zionist) scholars of world history from budgets, institutes, scholarships, chairs and PhD tutorships on Jewish subjects. But here, too, his criticism has missed the point. University research in these fields was late in flourishing. Up until the 1980s the bulk of research in Jewish history – from Zionist, non-Zionist and anti-Zionist perspectives – had been done outside the universities. World history departments, on the other hand, helped PhD students and future faculty members (including Zand himself) study and write dissertations abroad – a privilege denied to researchers of Jewish history.

THE STUDYING OF ZIONIST HISTORY

From the beginning, the writing of the history of the Zionist movement was characterized by tension between change and continuity. Historians such as Dinur viewed the Land of Israel as a major force in exilic Jewish history, and described Zionism as a new link in the chain of yearning for Zion. Other historians stressed the uniqueness of the Zionist revolution vis-à-vis everything that had come before in Jewish history.[56]

Early historians of Zionism were, on the whole, dilettantes – Zionist activists who became historians under the pressure of circumstance. Such were Nahum Sokolow, Adolf Böhm and Yitzhak Gruenbaum, writing comprehensive histories of Zionism in the 1920s. They were followed by Richard Lichtheim, a prominent Zionist diplomat and later the first historian of German Zionism. A few professional historians of Zionist background, such as Nathan Michael Gelber, also chose to study the movement's history, even though this sort of research was not recognized academically at the time.

The writing of Zionism's history ensued from the movement's political success in obtaining the Balfour Declaration and was clearly affected by it. The Declaration and subsequent achievements of the Zionist delegation at the Versailles Peace Conference put the Zionist movement on the map of international relations, attesting to its historical vitality.

The apologetic approach that characterized early Zionist historiography strove to antedate its beginnings as much as possible. According to Sokolow, the history of Zionism began with the return of Jews to England in the mid-seventeenth century. He ended his account in 1918. Faithful to the spirit of the age and the new British–Jewish alliance embodied in the Balfour Declaration, he maintained that the roots of Zionism were primarily English. They derived from a profound affinity with the Bible and its language as evinced in English literature from Shakespeare to Milton, Byron, Shelley, Browning and George Eliot. Regarding Herzl's Zionism as a 'New Zionism', Sokolow devoted less than 10 per cent of his first volume to him. That little space dealt also with the general historical background of Herzl's diplomatic efforts – the decay of the Ottoman Empire and British policy in the Middle East.[57]

A few months after Sokolow's book appeared in London in 1919, Böhm's first volume of *Die Zionistische Bewegung* (The Zionist movement) came out in Berlin, describing the history of the Zionist movement

up to Herzl's death. The second volume, published in 1921, reviewed the next decade up until the outbreak of the First World War.[58] Böhm's approach to the history of Zionism was radically different from that of Sokolow. He ignored the biblical, millenarian and messianic roots central to Sokolow's search for legitimacy, and, apart from quoting Balfour's famous letter to Lord Rothschild, did not mention a Zionist–British connection. Such a connection at that juncture would not have enhanced Zionism's standing with German readers; rather it would have situated the Zionist movement in the camp of Germany's backstabbers.

Böhm's point of departure was the reality of Jewish life in the nine-teenth century: emancipation and its consequences, cultural assimila-tion, demographic growth, the transformation of economic and social conditions in the wake of modernization, and the subsequent dispari-ties between the Jewish communities in Western and Eastern Europe. According to his emphasis, Zionism was essentially an internal Jewish development and his narrative focused on the growth of the movement: its organizational consolidation in institutions and parties, Zionist ideologies and intellectual trends, the emergence of Hebrew culture, domestic controversies, and the tension between concern for the Jewish public in the Diaspora and the onset of Jewish settlement in Palestine. Zionist diplomacy, by contrast, received marginal treatment.

Zionist historiography – apart from defending Zionism against its opponents and critics through the 1920s and 1930s – hoped to win both domestic (Jewish) and international legitimacy and recognition for the new enterprise. Whereas Sokolow had identified the roots of Zionism in seventeenth-century England, Gelber discovered that the idea of the Jews' restoration to their ancient country had emerged also in Germany, France, Italy and Denmark. Proponents of this idea in the eighteenth century were mostly eccentric visionaries who carried very little weight, if any. He linked the expansion of the idea to the nine-teenth-century European debates of the Jewish Question and Palestine, from the Vienna Congress in 1815 to the Berlin Congress in 1878.[59]

Apologetics characterized also the early historiography of Zionism's implementation. Kurt Nawratzky and Arthur Ruppin's pioneering books on the history of Zionist agricultural colonization in Palestine and, later, Alexander Bein's works in this field, were written primarily to convince readers that settling in Palestine was a feasible proposition

– agriculturally, economically, socially and politically – that met the contemporary needs of the Jewish people. These works strove to allay doubt among both Jews and non-Jews as to the practical prospects of the Zionist enterprise.[60]

The absorption of immigrants from central Europe in the 1930s expanded the concept of 'building up the country' to mean more than agricultural settlement. Thus, several economists – not historians – began to write the economic history of the Zionist enterprise. Alfred Boneh, David Horowitz and Abraham Ulitzur endeavoured to demonstrate Palestine's economic prospects and the role of the Zionist enterprise in developing the country. Though written to support Zionist arguments in the polemics over Palestine's part in alleviating the plight of European Jewry, and over the resolution of the Palestine problem, these works laid the foundation for Zionist economic historiography as later developed by Nahum Gross and Jacob Metzer.[61]

In his monograph on the Balfour Declaration, Gelber analysed the political power of the Zionist movement, its ability to manoeuvre politically and take advantage of international circumstances. The book appeared in 1939, after the Zionist leadership had lost its bargaining position among rival powers and had become totally dependent on Britain. Politically, this resulted in a major setback as is evident from the White Paper of May 1939.[62]

Gelber's book was the first in a series of scholarly works on the formation in the First World War of the British–Zionist political alliance, a topic that engrossed several scholars in years to come. He relied mostly on Zionist archival material, his access to British and other foreign sources being limited, and the picture he painted was necessarily partial. A dozen years later, Leonard Stein was able to present a considerably fuller picture.[63] Mayir Vereté also spent many years examining British motives for issuing the Balfour Declaration, a topic that has apparently been exhausted now by Isaiah Friedman's description and analysis.[64]

The historiography of Zionism's apologetic era culminated in a comprehensive, collective project, the ESCO Foundation's two-volume *Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab and British Policies*, published in 1947–49. Most of the chapters had been written during the Second World War in anticipation of the post-war struggle over the fate of the Land of Israel. The project addressed the American public and reflected

the transformation of Zionist historiography during the interwar period. British and Zionism's other millenarian forerunners, as well as the early days of the movement up to the First World War, received only brief mention, in the introduction. Three chapters analysed the promises, claims, rights and policies of the parties to the Palestine problem – Jews, Arabs and Britons – from the First World War to the Balfour Declaration, the Peace Conference and the granting of the Palestine Mandate to Britain. The rest of the book described the development and accomplishments of the Jewish National Home in the face of Arab violent resistance and Britain's retreat from its commitments.

True to the spirit of the period, the chapter on the Middle East in the Second World War highlighted the Yishuv's contribution to the Allied war effort, contrasting Jewish cooperation and assistance with Arab inaction and disloyalty. The concluding chapter reviewed various past proposals for Palestine and analysed the positions of the parties towards each. The apologetics of Zionist historiography that initially had addressed domestic opponents within Jewish ranks, applied itself, after the Arab revolt of 1936–39 and the Second World War, to British and Arab arguments.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF LAURELS

Statehood changed the direction of Zionist historiography. Zionism's rivals – assimilation, Bundism and religious Orthodoxy – nearly disappeared in the Holocaust, and its own success in establishing a Jewish state three years after the war seemed to confirm the movement's original justification. The military achievements in the War of Independence allayed fears about the state's ability to survive Arab hostility and British intrigue. Under the new circumstances, the writing of Zionist history lost its apologetic tone and – moving to the opposite pole – began to dress the victors in laurels.

Success has many fathers, and historians of the Yishuv have spent much time looking for them. Yishuv society consisted of a motley lot of Zionists, non-Zionists and anti-Zionists, an 'organized Yishuv' and dissidents, immigrants from different countries and different immigration waves, contestant ideologies from both inside and outside the Zionist movement, political organizations, parties and movements, paramilitary organizations and competing economic interest groups.

Each of these elements claimed (sometimes exclusive) recognition for the overall accomplishment. Each, in retrospect, attempted to account for its position in the numerous disputes that had characterized pre-state history. Controversial issues in the history of the Yishuv proceeded to take their place in the historiography. This was not merely a matter of historical interest or deciding on the narrative that would shape collective memory. Along with distributing laurels for past achievements, there was now a new pie to be divided, and the resolution of these issues affected the determination of leadership shares and partnerships.[65]

One outcome of the historiography debates was a series of projects on the history of paramilitary organizations, political parties, trade unions and other groups. Three studies dealt with the history of the Zionist Labour Movement.[66] As for the history of the Yishuv's paramilitary organizations, the first project to appear, in 1953, focused on the youngest force – the Palmach.[67] Next came the history of the Haganah, the most comprehensive historiography project at the time on Yishuv history; its eight volumes were published over nearly twenty years. Initially conceived as an official history of the Yishuv and its struggle for statehood, its editorial committee boasted such public figures as Israel's second president, Itzhak Ben Zvi, and its editorial board was chaired by Dinur. Authors of the first volumes included Ben-Sasson and Vereté, succeeded in the following volumes by Yehuda Slutzki. Considering the limited sources at the writers' disposal, the work was written with great professional skill. The authors had no access to British archival material and even the Jewish documentary base was partial and restricted. Witnesses played a crucial role, the entire undertaking being accompanied by an oral history project that had begun right after the War of Independence and continued through the early 1970s.

The dominant figures on the editorial board were Shaul Avigur and Israel Galili – prominent pre-state and statehood political and defence personalities. Both had been deeply involved in the main themes and controversies treated in the book, and both had chaired the Haganah Command Council. They gave the writers their guidelines and decided what was or was not to be written for the time being; in particular, the gag order applied to such sensitive issues in the Yishuv's domestic relations as the operation of agents within the ranks of rival organizations, or the attempts to utilize the transfer agreement with Nazi Germany in the 1930s to smuggle in weapons to Palestine for the Haganah.

A quasi-official history of the Yishuv, the first five volumes were published by Ma'arachot, the IDF's publishing house. In the 1960s there was growing criticism that the book was not a general, objective history of the Yishuv but rather a factional history of the Haganah and that, therefore, the army should not have officially published it. As a result, the last three volumes, dealing with the Second World War, the anti-British struggle and the early phases of the War of Independence, were published by the Histadrut's Am Oved publishing house.[68]

A few years after the appearance of the first part of the *History of the Haganah*, the pre-state, right-wing underground organization, Irgun Zva'i Le'umi (*Etzel*), countered by publishing its own history project.[69] The third (and much smaller) organization, Israel Freedom Fighters (LHI or the Stern Gang), did not publish a broad history. Its veterans made do with publishing memoirs and a collection of original propagandist documents, leaving history to the historians. They did, however, exert themselves to influence the historians who undertook to study their organization.

The early writing of the history of the War of Independence also falls into this period. The extensive works on the war by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) History Department were summed up in one volume by Netanel Lorch. Alongside this official effort, the veterans of several IDF brigades initiated the writing of their regimental war history. Some of these histories were mere collections of testimonies and memoirs. Others – such as Abraham Ayalon's study of the Giv'ati Brigade – were the product of serious research providing a basis for further studies.[70]

Some research projects in that era of factional history were the work of individuals, others were teamwork, but the editorial boards of all featured interested parties. It would be worth conducting an independent study of the relations between the writers and the boards, and not only in the case of Haganah history.

THE HEBREW ENCYCLOPEDIA

Among the projects begun in early statehood, the Hebrew Encyclopedia occupies a special place in terms of scholarship. The private initiative of the Peli family, owners of the Masada publishing house, the idea of the encyclopedia preceded statehood and entries began to be written

during the War of Independence. Zeev Tzahor, a historian and the president of Sapir College adjacent to Shderot and the Gaza Strip, has noted that though it was a private venture, 'the orientation was national, infused with the enthusiastic Zionist spirit of the early years of statehood'. Tzahor pointed to an apparent unevenness between the universal entries written by scholars and the entries on the history of Zionism and the Yishuv written by 'authors with a clear ideological affiliation'.

The main target of his criticism was the encyclopedia's sixth volume, on the Land of Israel and its history. Its chief editor was Benzion Netanyahu (professor of Jewish history and a veteran of Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionist movement); the authors of the key entries were Joseph Schechtman (an expert on migration and resettlement, and Jabotinsky's first biographer); Benjamin Akzin (one of Jabotinsky's aids and later a professor of political science); and Chayim Yahil of Mapai, who produced the entry on the history of the State of Israel. As Tzahor saw it, the rigorous scientific approach of the encyclopedia's editors was upheld only with respect to the universal entries. Otherwise, there was a 'clear bias in entries relating to Zionist and Israeli historiography', marked by the exclusion of Hebrew University historians from the major historiographic projects of early statehood.[71]

Tzahor's criticism reflected a mistaken view of the period. The Hebrew Encyclopedia had no problem finding enough scholars in Israel's small academe – which at that time consisted of the Hebrew University, the Technion and the Weizmann Institute – to write entries in the natural and social sciences, Judaic studies and the humanities. But on the history of Zionism and the Yishuv, there were no experts in the 1950s and this was no accident. The university deliberately disassociated itself from these fields. Thus the omission was not influenced by official pressure or interests.

Tzahor contrasted the political nature of private- and movement-sponsored research with ostensibly objective academic research, but the distinction is artificial. All the scholars at the university, even those with a communist past, were Zionists to one degree or another, just as current Israeli universities include many post- and anti-Zionists. In those years, the Hebrew University undertook national projects and even performed special services for the IDF and the Israeli Intelligence community in research, instruction and teaching, in such fields as history, geography, economics, sociology, anthropology and Middle Eastern languages. It

is anachronistic to speak of a-political and non-ideological research on the history of Zionism and the Yishuv in the 1950s. To do so is to project on to that period concepts that were born later and under different circumstances. The question is not whether the research was political, rather whether it was sound, adding credible, accurate knowledge. It did stand that test, at least partly.

ZIONIST HISTORIOGRAPHY IN ISRAELI ACADEME

For almost two generations, Zionist historiography flourished outside of academe. The history of Zionism, Israel Kolatt wrote, was the most natural subject for university research and teaching. Yet it was also highly problematic. From the start through these very days, Zionist historiography was overshadowed by questions of its academic legitimacy. Though the Hebrew University abided by Zionism's revival of Hebrew (which was then perceived as a political choice) and the assumption that science was possible in Hebrew, it took care to maintain ideological independence, steering clear of internal Jewish political divisions. The university had been established by the Zionist movement, but it nonetheless counted Zionists of every ilk, as well as non-Zionists among its supporters and donors.

Up until the 1960s the reigning atmosphere at the Hebrew University was that active Zionists ('agitators') had no place at university and their 'propaganda topics' even less so. University heads were determined to keep out of the Zionist movement's domestic squabbles. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Zionist historians were treated as suspect and the study of Zionism was shunned on campus.[72] All the historiographic and commemorative research projects listed above were initiated, written and published outside of academe. Only in the early 1960s did the study of the Zionist movement and the Yishuv penetrate the Hebrew University and, subsequently, Israel's younger universities.

The first monographs on the history of the Yishuv, based on PhD dissertations written under the supervision of Dinur, Israel Heilperin, Jacob Talmon, Katz and Ettinger, appeared in the 1960s. The research proceeded according to the declassification of documents and the opening of party, movement, institutional and personal collections, and especially the central Zionist and state archives. It was a lengthy affair; in fact, in some cases, new archives or archival sections from pre-statehood

were only exposed years later and even recently. These have shed new light on certain domestic affairs and processes, and on issues concerning the Yishuv's relations with its Arab neighbours and the British.

The release of documents from the Mandate era at the British Public Record Office enabled the study of Zionist–British relations from both sides. This was helpful for a better understanding of the decision-making of the Palestine government and the Cabinet in London, as of the motivations, sentiments and considerations that had guided British policy in Palestine. The result was naturally a more balanced view of Britain's role in Palestine. Scholars such as Bernard Wasserstein, Gabriel Cohen, Michael Cohen and Ron Zweig were freer of the British stereotype formed during the anti-British struggle in the 1940s.[73]

The study and research of Yishuv history brought scholars and history-makers face to face. Many of the saga's heroes were still alive and filling high positions in various walks of life. Younger scholars who made the Yishuv their field of study disputed axioms that had taken root in public consciousness. They also critically examined the consensus views deriving from the official and/or factional histories previously written outside of academe. They, and certainly their supervisors, had been educated in the light of this consensus and in the shadow of these axioms. The process of disengaging from these traditions – or of challenging these myths – has been slow and is still incomplete.

Before the archives were opened to historians and sometimes even after, scholars of Yishuv history relied on the history-makers and cited their testimonies and memoirs. Very few national histories have relied as strongly as Israel's 'state-in-the-making' on oral history. It is often claimed that the extensive use of oral history was due to the clandestine or semi-clandestine nature of many of the events, with secrecy precluding proper documentation. But this claim does not hold up: very few underground activities in world history have been as amply recorded as the Haganah's, the illegal immigration to Palestine during the British blockade or other covert Yishuv operations. History-makers are usually more dominant than history-writers and they influenced the writing. They did so directly – with diaries and memoirs – and indirectly, by impacting on scholars who documented and relied on their testimonies.

THE EARLY HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE ARAB–JEWISH CONFLICT

On the whole, pioneering Zionist scholars were interested in Palestine's Arabs as an independent, neighbouring society rather than in the context of Arab–Yishuv relations. The first comprehensive historical projects and monographs on Zionist policies discussed Jewish–Arab relations as ancillary to the principal topic of Zionism's political and military struggle. Here, historiography reflected policy. Without exception, the Zionist leaders believed that the fate of Zionism would be decided in London and, later, in New York or Washington, not in Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus or Nablus. Similarly, the historiography focused on Zionist–British relations in which Arabs occupied a minor place. The only departure from this rule was the historiography sponsored or inspired by Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir. Historians of this ideological leaning, with its belief in the brotherhood of nations, gave more emphasis to Zionist–Arab relations, and they broke away sooner from the typical presentation of the subject.[74] Simcha Flapan, the editor of the party's English organ, *New Outlook*, was the forerunner of Israel's new historians with two books he published on the conflict in 1979 and 1987 respectively.[75]

The disappearance of the Palestinians from the military and political arena after the 1948 war removed them also from the eyes of historians. They became hyphenated: there were now Israeli-Palestinians (the Arab citizens of Israel), Jordanian-Palestinians (the indigenous residents of the West Bank and the refugees on both banks), Egyptian-Palestinians (in the Gaza Strip), Lebanese-Palestinians (in the refugee camps in Lebanon), and Syrian-Palestinians (at the Yarmuk camp near Damascus). There was no such thing as simply Palestinians. In those years, the Arab–Israeli conflict was seen in terms of the relations of Israel and the Arab states. The Arab question debated before statehood had revolved around the political and moral dilemma posed for Zionism by the presence of Arabs in the Land of Israel. After the War of Independence, it was replaced by the threats the Arab world posed to Israel's very existence, the continuous economic and political warfare that the Arab League waged against Israel, and the sporadic attempts to break the Arab political siege and economic boycott, and initiate covert diplomatic moves.[76]

Between 1949 and 1967 the only monographs to deal with the Palestinians concerned the problem of refugees.[77] The question of Israel's relations with Arab states was virtually taboo in Israel's academe. Only

after the Six Day War did these relations begin to attract the attention of political scientists such as Yehoshafat Harkavi or Nadav Safran.[78]

The Six Day War changed the character of the conflict and stimulated new interest in the Palestinians. All Egyptian-Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and a large part of the Jordanian-Palestinians – both indigenous inhabitants and refugees on the West Bank – ceased to be Egyptian and Jordanian as these territories were lost to Israel. But since Israel did not annex the territories, the residents did not become Israeli-Palestinians, they returned to being simply Palestinians. Questions pertaining to the attitude to Arabs and to the territorial framework of the Zionist enterprise – that had preoccupied the Zionist movement and the Yishuv before statehood and sunk into oblivion after 1949 – now returned to the heart of the political and ideological debate. Their reappearance stepped up interest in the history of the various approaches to, and disputes of, the issue.

The Palestinians returned to the forefront of the conflict following the 1973 war when relations between Israel and the Arab states stabilized. The comeback encouraged research into their plight and generated a new historiography of the Yishuv and the State of Israel. Quite late, the history of Zionism became an integral part of the history of the modern Middle East (in addition to its Jewish context and the general historical framework).

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF YISHUV SOCIETY

The third, academic generation of historians of Zionism and the Yishuv shifted the focus from the movement, its policies and colonizing enterprise, to the new society that Zionism aspired to build in Palestine. Scholars researched the origins of Zionism's social vision and the implementation of its social revolution. Anita Shapira, a dominant historian in this field since her studies on the Labour Battalion and the competition for jobs, termed then the 'conquest of labour', went on to write a biography of Berl Katznelson, one of the leading lights of the Labour Zionist movement, and *Land and Power*, examining the Zionist movement's attitude to power and the use of force.[79] Yosef Gorni researched various political, diplomatic and social aspects of the Labour Zionist movement as well as Zionist attitudes to the Arab question and Zionist utopian visions. Jacob Shavit studied the social and colonization

ideology of the Zionist Revisionist movement.[80] A few monographs and collective projects investigated the various immigration waves, analysing their part in shaping Yishuv society.[81] Moshe Lissak and Dan Horowitz created a comprehensive schema of the development of Yishuv society, political organization and institutions, and Jonathan Shapiro explored the survival and transformation of Zionist social ideologies over changing generations.[82]

After the Six Day War research expanded to the history of the Old Yishuv and its relations with the pioneers that had arrived in the country in the early waves of Zionist immigration. Other studies addressed the modern historical geography of the Land of Israel, particularly the history of the Yishuv in Jerusalem, Jewish land purchases, patterns of settlement and the morphological and demographic changes that took place in the country from the beginning of the Zionist enterprise.

In addition to a long list of dissertations, monographs and biographies, the academization of Yishuv history has generated diverse research and documentation projects and periodical publications: journals, such as *Cathedra* and *Studies in Zionism* (later: *Journal of Israeli History*); annual volumes, such as *Ha-Tzionut* (Zionism) and *Yahadut Zmanenu* (Contemporary Jewry); the series of Weizmann letters; the inter-university project on the *Ha'apala* (illegal immigration); the series of documents on Israel's foreign policy published by the Israel State Archives; the series of documents from Ben-Gurion's archives and his diaries of 1948, and Sharett's diary from 1953 to 1956. The flagship of this robust output was to be the comprehensive history of the Yishuv undertaken in the late 1970s by the Israel National Academy of Arts and Sciences, of which four volumes have been published so far and two others are forthcoming.

Another innovation of the third, post-1967 generation of historians was the integration of history and other disciplines and the introduction of new research methods that had been developed by the social and political sciences. The writers were more critical of, and less involved in, the topics of their study than their predecessors. At the same time, an image of 'establishment historiography' clung to them and they were soon challenged by a new school of revisionist historians.

Archival research into the history of the Yishuv was conducted mainly in Israel and by Israeli historians (though also by a few American and Canadian colleagues).[83] Syntheses of Zionist history or the history of

Zionism in the Diaspora and the development of the Zionist idea, which did not require protracted searches in Israeli archives but could draw on secondary sources and books of Zionist thinking, were written mainly abroad. The earliest, as mentioned above, were the books by Sokolow and Böhm. In the late 1950s Arthur Herzberg published a history of *The Zionist Idea*, consisting of an extensive introduction by the author and a collection of the writings of various Zionist thinkers. In the early 1960s Ben Halpern's *The Idea of the Jewish State* appeared, describing the emergence of the idea of Jewish statehood.[84] Walter Laqueur and Howard Sacher's comprehensive books on the history of Zionism appeared in the 1970s.[85] The middle of that decade saw the appearance of the first volume of David Vital's work on early Zionism.[86] In that same decade a history of Israel was put out by Noach Luckasz, who is regarded by Derek Penslar as the forerunner of the new historians.[87] All these were published abroad and not all were translated into Hebrew.

<h2 style="text-align:center">THE SIX DAY WAR AS A TURNING POINT</h2>

The Six Day War in 1967 marked a turning point in Zionist historiography. Missing pieces in the puzzle of the ideological, diplomatic and domestic-political history of the Yishuv were increasingly filled in. Fields virtually taboo in the 1950s and early 1960s came under study and marked a shift in focus: historians now turned their attention to Zionism's attitude to the plight of European Jewry before, during and after the Holocaust, and to Jewish relations with the Arab world. These two topics, along with the transition from the melting pot concept to that of a multicultural society, still play a leading role in Israeli historiography.

The war, the third manifestation of Zionism's major success in fifty years, generated increasing attention to the history of the movement. If the first generation of Zionist historiography was apologetic, and the second, statehood, generation was polemic, the third generation was more critical than the previous two. The removal of the existential threat to Israel in the wake of the war bolstered Israeli self-confidence and facilitated a critical approach to the past. For this reason, Israel Bartal dates the critical study of Zionist movement history to the war's aftermath. In his view, the two previous phases belong more to the history of Zionism than to the study of Zionism.[88]

Israel Kolatt – a pioneer in the research and teaching of Yishuv history – summed up the chapter of Zionism's evolving academic historiography in a painstaking essay, 'On the Research and Researcher of the History of the Yishuv and the Zionist Movement', which was published in the early 1970s and reprinted in 1976.[89] He linked the penetration of Zionist historiography into universities to the broader generation changes in Israeli academe, and pointed to the difficulties awaiting academic research in this (at that time) still virgin minefield:

> This project of uncovering the past – buried under heaps of stereo-types, images, memoirs, polemics and phraseology – is a huge en-terprise … Even more difficult is the scholar's intellectual need to overcome inherited concepts, examine his prejudices, experiences, memories, feelings and preferences and view the research object as a historical phenomenon. The burden of Zionist ideology and apologetics has turned the reassessment of Zionist history into a complex and delicate process.[90]

From another, more personal angle, David Vital mentioned the same problem in the preface to his monumental work, *The Zionist Revolution*:

> In my father's [the revisionist leader Meir Grossman] eyes, like in the eyes of many of his contemporaries, the basic views of Pinsker and Herzl were beyond any doubt. They never seriously debated the aims of Zionism. All the big issues that bothered them con-cerned only the means: not what or why, but how. Years ago, my generation began to ask more profound questions. Obviously, the generation of my sons asks and will continue to ask many other questions.[91]

Years before the outbreak of the post-Zionist controversy, Kolatt pre-dicted the condemnation of Zionism by revisionist historians. He linked their probable emergence to Arab anti-Zionist propaganda and the preva-lent ideas of the European and American New Left. He also identified a widening gap between the dominant concepts at western universities and the essentials of the Israeli phenomenon. Enlightenment, progress and liberalism notwithstanding:

> The unique connection between the Jewish religion and Jewish nationalism deviates from the conventional definitions of national

movements. The Jewish bond with the land of Israel … is not the normal bond of a people to its land. The international character of Jewish existence and the close tie to the State of Israel felt by Jews who are citizens of other countries mystify many people, and mysteries are always open to libelous interpretation.

Besides citing a lasting ideological confrontation between Zionism and its adversaries, Kolatt pointed out the difficulty of reconciling the needs of Zionist historiography with the current trends in western historiography:

> As far as the respect for the facts, the unbiased appreciation of the truth and the rejection of utilitarian myths are concerned – we are part of the Western world. However, the character and level of development of the Yishuv's historiography make it difficult to adapt the new methods that have developed in the West to the subjects that stand at the center of Zionist and *Yishuv* history … Western historiography now gives preference to the critical and cognitive over the underlying role. The needs of Zionist historiography are different.[92]

A generation later, Kolatt's observations and predictions on the development of Zionist historiography under pressure of the social sciences, the media and the press, and under the impact of western historiography and postmodernist trends, appear almost prophetic.

Post-Zionism and Jewish Nationalism

Post-colonial and postmodern vogues penetrated Israel's public and academic discourse from the 1980s. Under the rubric of 'post-Zionism', they posed new challenges to Jewish, Zionist and Israeli historiography. Yet their emergence was only to be expected. As said, Jerusalem historian Israel Kolatt already anticipated heretical tendencies among Israeli historians and warned against them in the early 1970s. At the time, the main concerns were the place of history between the humanities and the social sciences, and the proper training of historians. While these questions have remained pivotal, several others have been put forward. Israeli historiography faced these issues in the final decade of the twentieth century and continues to grapple with them in the twenty-first century.

In the West, 'postism' has objected to the values of bourgeoisie society and the capitalist socio-economic world order, mainly globalization. In Israel, the opposition has taken the form of post-Zionism while its universal aspects, with the exception of feminism and environmentalism, have been marginal.

The post-Zionist onslaught consists of two distinct aspects. One is the appearance of new or revisionist historians and critical sociologists, marking a new phase in Israeli historiography; this internal development in the history and sociology disciplines stems from the accessibility of new source material, the introduction of new research methods and suggested new interpretations. Controversial issues have been debated mainly in professional-academic forums, the participants elaborating their opposing views in academic books and journals.

The other aspect is a meta-historical debate with post-Zionists from various disciplines – not necessarily academics, but artists and journalists too – assaulting the values, beliefs, assumptions, methodologies and objectivity of Zionist colleagues.

Academics and journalists openly defining themselves as post-Zionists and their tacit supporters explicitly accuse colleagues of having voluntarily enlisted in the service of Zionism, thereby helping to impose the hegemonic Zionist discourse on Israeli culture and national identity.[1] Though the condemnation might apply to specific books or articles, there are no grounds for such a sweeping generalization.

Whether or not post-Zionism is a leftist monopoly remains a bone of contention with Israeli scholars. On the one hand, Jerusalem historian Israel Bartal regards attacks from the right wing of Israel's political-cultural establishment as part and parcel of the post-Zionist fashion. In particular, he singles out Yoram Hazony's book, *The Jewish State*, and the Shalem Center in Jerusalem, founded and headed by Hazony for several years.[2] On the other hand, Uri Ram, a sociologist at Ben-Gurion University, distinguishes between right-wing criticism and post-Zionism, calling the former 'neo-Zionism'. He links it to the emergence of the religious-Zionist Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) in the mid-1970s, a decade before post-Zionism.[3] Tuvia Friling, the editor of an important polemical volume against post-Zionism, also distinguishes between the two. He argues that the right-wing disapproval of the Israeli establishment does not include any of the typical bases of post-Zionist criticism; it attacks other elements of Israel's political, social and cultural way of life.[4]

Like postmodernism, with which it has much in common, post-Zionism is difficult to define and defies universal agreement. Ram, who claims copyright for the term 'post-Zionism', gave it a vague definition. He emphasized cultural aspects, arguing that post-Zionism is to be understood in the context of a changing world: the impact of globalization, post-structuralism and post-colonialism; the transformation of identity and the challenges to it from competing concepts such as otherness, difference and hybridism.[5]

Ram focused on the writing of Israeli history. Zionist historiography, he maintained, was historicist and, like European national historiographies, it cultivated national identity. Post-Zionism corresponds to post-historicism, dismantling the national identity and historical laws that shaped it. Historicist memory built nations, post-historicist memory smashed them. Zionist historiography made room only for the history of self-identity, post-Zionist historiography has written the history of 'others'. For Ram, the historians' controversies have been only one out

of many aspects of the crisis of national identities in the era of globalization – around the world as in Israel.[6]

Another sociologist, Avishai Ehrlich, described post-Zionism as the Israeli version of liberal, assimilated anti-Zionism in Western Europe and America before and after the Second World War. This type of anti-Zionism, which was represented in the United States by Lessing Rosenwald's Council for Judaism, hardly existed in Palestine during the Mandate period and in early statehood. According to Ehrlich, liberal post-Zionism represented capitalist globalization and was therefore the opposite of other versions of anti-Zionism that derives from religious-orthodox and socialist convictions.[7]

Historians Eyal Naveh and Esther Yogev portrayed post-Zionism as a contemporary mindset: the challenging by scholars, thinkers, journalists and artists of the shaping of Israeli collective memory and the Zionist narrative, and their disapproval of the values and normative messages conveyed by the narrative. The roots of this mindset are varied, they noted: from traditional anti-Zionism in the Diaspora to groups peripheral to the Zionist movement and the Yishuv (such as the Canaanites or Brit Shalom), to persons not admitted into Israeli academe, and the impact of imported postmodernist fads.[8]

Ignoring post-Zionist roots in earlier manifestations of anti-Zionism, American-Jewish scholar Lawrence Silberstein, oddly enough, argued that had Israel not won the Six Day War, post-Zionism would probably not have emerged. In another peculiar speculation, he drew a straight line from Itzhak Rabin's well-known speech on Mount Scopus after the 1967 war to his assassination in 1995.[9]

The most systematic effort so far to define post-Zionism has been made by Mordechai Bar-On – a retired IDF colonel and former MK for the left-wing *Meretz* party who turned scholar. He distinguished between two categories: the first considers Zionism an ideology that achieved its goals and became redundant. Bar-On calls this trend 'post-Zionism' as it ponders what should succeed Zionism on the basis of its achievements. Others choose to call it neo-Canaanism. Well-known representatives of the craze have been writer A.B. Yehoshua, philosopher Menachem Brinker and historian Motti Golani.[10]

The second category of post-Zionism repudiates Zionist ideology and its basic assumptions lock, stock and barrel. It frowns on Zionist policies in all fields and all periods, rejects the very notion of a Jewish

nation, and denies the need for a Jewish nation-state. Most of its spokespersons call on Israel to become a state of all its citizens. That euphemism does not mean a pluralist society on the model of the United States or Canada, but a resurrected version of the bi-national state touted by Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir and German-immigrant parties in the 1930s and 1940s or a Palestinian state as envisaged by the British White Paper of May 1939 (and rejected by the Palestinians). Bar-On regards this form of post-Zionism as a new version of the old anti-Zionism. Moreover, he challenges the integrity of proponents in this guise, who claim not to oppose Israel's existence, but only its exclusive nature as a Jewish nation-state.[11]

According to Jacob Katz, both categories of post-Zionism stemmed from alienation from nationalism, in general, from Jewish nationalism, in particular, and from the failure to understand it:

> If today someone is a post-Zionist, postmodernist, and thinks that the time has come to say that Zionism has exhausted itself and become redundant, and perhaps claim that it was an error from the beginning – if that someone wants to write the history of Zionism he would do well to attain such a degree of proximity as enables him to penetrate the consciousness of those who did what they did according to their understanding.[12]

Katz, in his ageing days, seems to have approached the epistemology of the Jerusalem School's second generation – his former rivals of the 1950s and 1960s, Ettinger and Ben-Sasson.

The New Left and postmodern fashion in the West has had a tremendous impact on the evolution of post-Zionism. At the same time, traditional Marxist criticism reminiscent of the Old Left persisted and targeted mainly the Zionist Labour movement. A typical example is Zeev Sternhell's book, *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism and the Making of the Jewish State*.[13] Sternhell, whose academic expertise is the French Right rather than the Israeli Left (where he had a political mishap in the late 1970s), objected that between the alternatives of nationalism and socialism, the Zionist Labour movement had consciously chosen nationalism. The Zionist socialists, he complained, had enlisted wholeheartedly in the service of national revival, had used socialism as a mobilizing myth and a tool to achieve national aspirations, had rejected Marxist socialism and had neglected social reform.

Anita Shapira refuted Sternhell's assumptions and conclusions. She pointed to his predilection for dogma over practice and showed convincingly that he had relied on the philosophical writings of the Zionist Labour movement's founding fathers without examining the social realities in Palestine that had made the policies imperative.[14]

According to Amos Funkenstein, one principal reason for the post-Zionist revision of Jewish and Israeli history was the loss of a hegemonic meta-narrative. As he saw it, Israeli historiography was finally subjected to changes that had affected world historiography since the end of the Second World War:

> In the generation of Itzhak Baer and Ben-Zion Dinur, Michael Avi-Yona and Chayim Hillel Ben-Sasson, the historian had a clear national function and an educated, captive audience beyond his discipline. In our generation, [the historian's] national role is dubious and he writes almost exclusively for his professional colleagues.[15]

This may adequately explain the condition of western academic historiography. But in Israel, unlike the United States, historians still have a readership beyond their colleagues and students. Historical conferences and symposia on all periods of Jewish and world history still draw diverse audiences beyond professionals, and history documentaries enjoy high ratings.

THE NEW HISTORY: INNOVATION, OBJECTIVITY OR POLITICIZED HISTORY?

Post-Zionism is not a homogeneous trend. It represents various tendencies, theoretical approaches, epistemologies and methodologies. Its most widespread common denominator is ideological: the denial of Jewish nationalism, at least in its present form of a nation-state. Post-Zionists want to see Israel as a state of all its citizens, its boundaries trimmed down. They deny or ignore the connection between historical Judaism and the State of Israel, aiming to transform the nation-state of the Jewish People into a liberal, multinational and multicultural state. This ideal state is to have no Jewish identity, secular or religious, or any particular moral and social pretensions. For this political-ideological campaign, history and historiography have been mobilized.

Post-Zionism has often been linked to two other – partially overlapping – Israeli phenomena: new historians and critical sociologists. Benny Morris coined the phrase 'new historians' in its Israeli context. He was referring primarily to historians who rely comprehensively on archival material, do not excise unpleasant events and, on the basis of the documented evidence, question the so-called official version of Israeli historiography.[16] At the same time, post-Zionists like Ilan Pappé, Uri Ram or Baruch Kimmerling have stressed the ideological rather than the methodological dimension of the new history.

Uninformed Zionist opponents have frequently disregarded this basic difference, portraying all new historians as a monolithic group, school or movement of Israeli historiography. This is wrong. They are not a school or even a coherent group with a shared worldview, programme or methodology. They are individuals of diverse backgrounds, with different viewpoints and professional approaches. Characterizing the new historians, Anita Shapira has stressed the differences that make generalization impractical. She suggested biological and academic age as a common denominator, but even this observation falls short: the new historians vary in age and academic seniority. Some are not much, if at all, younger than colleagues who do not boast a revisionist or critical approach.[17]

On the post-Zionists' part, Uri Ram attempted to classify Israeli historians according to a template of knowledge (objectivists vs relativists) and a body of knowledge (apologetics vs critical).[18] The drawback is that the categories do not bear close examination. Not all objectivists are apologetic, not all critical historians are relativists. Furthermore, the application of these concepts to Israeli historiography is ideological rather than methodological.

Kimmerling insisted that a Zionist worldview was contrary to the norms of an academic community. He accused Zionist historians of choosing Zionist over academic values whenever conflict arose.[19] Moreover, he said the real division was not between old and new historians but between more and less ideologically committed scholars.[20]

Coming from Kimmerling, this is odd, to say the least. Kimmerling wrote extensively on both sides of the Israeli–Arab conflict. His books may have made him an academic authority in the field, regardless of whether one concurs with his conclusions. However, despite his assertion at the end of the preface that he wrote the last book out of patriotic

concern for the future of Israel, he did not lay the ground for, or support, *Politicide* in terms of relevant historical or other evidence.

The book is an inventory of past sins presumably committed by Israel, the IDF and particularly Ariel Sharon against allegedly innocent Palestinians since the 1950s. Starting with Major Sharon's actions as commanding officer of special forces Unit 101 (and later of Paratroopers' Battalion 890 and Brigade 202), the list follows Major-General Sharon's campaign against the Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip in the early 1970s, politician Sharon's patronage of settlers in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, Defense Minister Sharon's role in the 1982 war in Lebanon and, more recently, Prime Minister Sharon's term in office.

Politicide is neither a research nor a synthesis of previous studies. It is a polemical book, openly motivated by resentment. Its protagonist is Sharon, but there is an underlying reproach of Israeli society, which allowed his career to flourish over several decades and democratically elected him to lead the state in the crisis of the second Intifada. At the same time, the subtext glorifies the Israeli dissidents who identify with the Palestinian cause and narrative.[21]

Some of Sharon's actions during his long military and political career certainly warrant criticism. Others, however, which Kimmerling ignored, deserve praise. The point is that one does not have to be a professor of cultural or political sociology to condemn or laud Sharon. Professorship, as such, bestows neither ideological or political criticism or adoration nor any special scholarly or moral authority. Kimmerling could not be an exception to this rule. To be convincing, his allegations required documentary substantiation, which he did not supply. Any journalist or political activist hostile to Sharon could have made equally uncorroborated allegations and many did make them.

Politicide's principal merit was that it clearly showed how academic status can be abused to further ideological and political aims. Kimmerling was of course entitled to his views and I can only appreciate his dedication, though I think he was wrong. Unfortunately, there was no room for brandishing his academic credentials to support them, and – in my personal opinion – it is academically and ethically unbefitting.

Following in Kimmerling's footsteps, Dan Zachs attempted to classify Israeli historians according to their political and ideological stands. He concluded that most new historians were born since statehood and fall under the liberal, 'dovish' half of the political spectrum. The

old historians are older, more conservative and support a more 'hawk-ish' policy.[22] At first glance, Zachs' distinction appears sound. However, there are many liberal doves who reject the post-Zionist theses, and there are also older critical scholars and even young historians who support conservative and/or 'hawkish' positions. Apparently, any comprehensive typology and classification of Israeli historians is perforce contrived.

Boasting of their innovation, the new historians imply that they are also objective and open-minded. Presumably, these qualities cannot characterize the old historians of the generation that implemented Zionism and who must therefore be biased, take one-sided positions and display emotional involvement.[23] One-sided positions, however, are just as – if not more – typical of the new historians. Ilan Pappé's and Idith Zertal's latest books, or Baruch Kimmerling's *Politicide*, as said, are good examples of politicizing history.[24] Nor is emotional involvement the monopoly of old historians. To some degree, every historian becomes emotionally involved in his subject. The difference does not lie in the involvement but in the emotions: loyalty, admiration and, occasionally, enthusiasm among the old historians as against self-hatred, cynicism and disrespect for their study objects among the new ones.

At least partly, the new historians have succeeded in revising the accepted presentations of Israel's birth. But their different methodological approaches, the varied quality of their scholarship, and the validity of their analyses and interpretations are just as open to criticism as their predecessors' of the old school. Their self-portrait, as free of ideological sympathies and loyalties, is totally groundless. Derek Penslar has noted that despite the new historians' claims to objectivity, their motivation reflects primarily exhaustion from the long-lasting Zionist struggle. This fatigue tends to lead them towards cynicism, not irony.[25]

THE CRITICAL SOCIOLOGISTS

Critical sociologists are ideologically close to the post-Zionists among the new historians, though they differ from them methodologically. In a sense, they parallel in Israel the historic turn in western sociology. Avoiding the study of contemporary mainstream Israeli society and its numerous problems, critical sociologists probe Israel's past without possessing the necessary tools to do so. This poses no impediment to

them. In dealing with Israel's past, they often lean on new historians, finding in their writings the very answers they sought in advance to their questions. Methodological inadequacy is thus compounded by ideological bias.

Critical sociologists regard the Hebrew University as the bastion of obsolete functionalist sociology. Like much of the new historiography, critical sociology appears to be more of an ideological than a methodological innovation. Like the new historians, critical sociologists are a disparate group, there being substantial differences between the works and stances of, for example, Debbie Bernstein or Shlomo Svirski and the works of Barbara Svirski and Marilyn Safir.

Early manifestations of critical sociology began to be associated with post-Zionism when the spotlight turned on Zionism as a colonial movement. The approach was adopted and cultivated by Kimmerling, Gershon Shafir, and Yehuda Shenhav among others. They portrayed Israeli society firstly as colonist dispossessors, and secondly as repressors of oriental Jews, Arabs and women.[26]

The functionalists did not remain silent in face of the onslaught. Moshe Lissak has systematically debunked the theses of critical sociologists. He contended that the criticism of Israeli society had begun at the Hebrew University long before the advent of critical sociologists at younger universities. He accused Ram and his colleagues of reductionism – emphasizing a few factors and totally ignoring others. The critical sociologists, he maintained, disregarded the international background of immigration and the power of ideology, ethos and myth in explaining the patterns that shape society. They wielded general theories while ignoring Jewish uniqueness and, on the whole, addressed a pot-pourri of esoteric topics in disregard of key social processes.[27]

In the 1990s critical sociology attained a central place in all Israeli sociology departments, including at the Hebrew University, and became – as confirmed by its opponents – a leading trend in Israeli sociology. At the same time, the rush of the critics to demolish myths for the sake of demolition, combined with the commitment to imported models incompatible with Israeli realities, have prevented any serious debate of the special aspects of life in Israel, and as a rule have cast doubt on the reliability of Israeli sociological research.[28]

Most critical sociologists – with the exception of Yoav Peled (who is rather a political scientist), Debbie Bernstein, Shlomo Swirsky and a

few others – do not analyse Israeli society empirically. They pass theoretical judgement on the processes affecting it though they barely corroborate their criticism with sound, illustrative examples. They do not recognize any hierarchy of sources, primary or secondary. From the ocean of historiography on the Yishuv and Israel, they randomly glean pieces of 'evidence' that serve their theories or arguments. They generally look to post-Zionist historians as authorities on Israeli history without examining their data, interpretations, conclusions or claims. They are not actually concerned with the credibility of the evidence. For them, the significance of the controversies among Israeli historians is not historical content or methodology, but the manifestation of 'a new, post-Zionist political culture that is being shaped in Israel' and articulated in these controversies.[29]

Ram, one of their prominent spokesmen, regards the historians' controversies as an outcome of 'the end of the creative phase of the project of settling and building the Israeli nation-state'. Furthermore, the disputes mark the transition from a homogeneous recognition of a dominant historical version or grand story to the acceptance of a variety of versions that is typical of 'a civil, consumer and, perhaps, multi-cultural society'. Few historians would accept the definition of their audience as 'consumers'.

In Ram's eyes, the controversy is not over historical issues, but symbolizes

> A [political and ideological] struggle over collective memory in Israel … that is likely to bring about a transformation in the definition of Israeli identity … On the contextual plane, this is a comprehensive controversy about the official, national, historical consciousness of Israel, which is also the dominant popular consciousness, namely Zionism.[30]

Israeli critical sociologists play a role similar to literary theorists in historiographic debates abroad: they relieve the discussion of disciplinary rules and transfer it to a speculative, ideological plane – from debate of what happened in the past to disputes about what should have happened or should still happen in the future.

POST-ZIONISM AND POSTMODERNISM

Many, in Israel and abroad, perceive post-Zionism as Israel's particular brand of the postmodernist torrent that swept over the world in the 1980s and 1990s.[31] American advocates of post-Zionism, such as Lawrence Silberstein, the author of a book on the post-Zionist debate in Israel, has retorted that to link post-Zionism to postmodernism is to misunderstand the latter. Linkage advocates, he argued, rely on slogans and catchphrases without seriously tackling the basic assumptions that shape the postmodernist and post-Zionist discourse.[32]

Silberstein may have a point, though not necessarily the one he has in mind. The Israeli version of postmodernism is more political and ideological than its western parent. Israeli postmodernists are less interested in epistemological and methodological abstractions; most exploit the issues to advance current political goals, primarily the dismantling of the Jewish nation-state in favour of a state of all its citizens. Though this goal has nothing in common with American or West European postmodernism, western postmodernists are quite eager to back their Israeli colleagues and comrades.

While he easily dismisses the association of post-Zionism with postmodernism as superficial, Silberstein has labelled all new historians and critical sociologists as post-Zionists. But there is no such clear-cut division. Benny Morris, for instance, is a new historian, but he has never declared himself a post-Zionist. The absence of precise definitions for postmodernism and post-Zionism leaves definers plenty of room to manoeuvre. Silberstein's reservations notwithstanding, the criticism of Yosef Dan, Eliezer Schweid and others who have linked post-Zionism to postmodern influences, remains sound: post-Zionism has applied postmodern theories and systems to Israeli realities.

Silberstein's own pet historians play against him: Post-Zionists such as Ilan Pappé openly admit the linkage. Only a few Israeli postists (that is, Ilan Gur-Zeev and Moshe Zukerman) declare allegiance to the Frankfurt School, deriving their inspiration, ideas and concepts from Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Hans Horkheimer rather than from Foucault or Derrida.[33]

Pappé pointed to 'a leap from positivist pre-history to postmodern meta-history' in the development of Israeli historiography. In Israel, as elsewhere, the majority of participants in the theoretical debates of history are not historians. Nevertheless, Pappé asserted, the postmodern

discourse influenced Israeli historians indirectly, by showing how 'to undo the hegemonic, white, masculine narrative dominating the historical story of "others" and "otherness" in the country'.[34]

In the Israeli form of postmodernism, native postmodernists endeavour to undermine the Zionist order. To this end, they attack both the history and study of Zionism. Their criticism seeks to pull down the Zionist discourse, portraying it as a deliberate distortion of historical truth. They want to shake up Israeli historical consciousness, deconstruct Israeli identity, dismantle Israeli collective memory and present it as a Zionist meta-narrative that usurped Jewish history and identity.

Israeli postmodernists have expanded the usual list of modernism's deprived and discriminated victims (in Israel's case: the Palestinians as the victims of alleged colonialism), adding former residents of *ma'abarot* (transit camps for new immigrants), first- and second-generation Holocaust survivors, and erstwhile kibbutz children who grew up in communal homes. They borrowed theories of identity and otherness taken from post-structuralism, Foucault's doctrine of 'knowledge is power' and the post-colonialist discourse in the West, and applied techniques of deconstruction. But the comparison of the parables of Foucault, Derrida, Said and others with Israeli cases is contrived and constrained.

Most post-Zionist historians are faithful to the postmodern axiom that historiography is politics. Tom Segev flaunts this faith proudly and openly. He says that politics is what makes history fascinating and that the historian's prime goal is not to discern between true and false, but to fascinate.[35] By dismissing Jewish nationality, excoriating the negation of the Diaspora, describing Holocaust survivors and Mizrahi Jews as the prey of Zionist indoctrination, and the Palestinians as innocent victims of the collusions and atrocities of others, they wilfully serve the allegation that Israel was born in sin. Pappé, who has spearheaded this line for years, abandoned his academic pretence at the start of the second Intifada and signed up as a soldier of Palestinian propaganda, calling to boycott Israeli academe and especially his own university of Haifa, and impose sanctions on Israel.[36]

Post-Zionist positions scarcely derive from or rely on empirical research and are generally uttered in theoretical debate and public polemics in the media. The claim of Palestinian innocence, for example, could only convince the convinced, not anyone familiar with the source material. Post-Zionists scarcely provide new evidence or previously

unknown sources in support of their claims. They use the works of their predecessors and occasionally expropriate works by non-conformist authors, not necessarily post-Zionists, to prove their case. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin turned Israel Jacob Yuval's article on medieval blood libels and *Kiddush Hashem* (literally, sanctifying His name, refers historically to Jews choosing death over conversion) into a springboard to censure Zionism's attitude to Palestinians and Mizrahi Jews. With startling linguistic acrobatics, he linked the historiography of the pogroms accompanying the First Crusade in Europe in 1096 to the expulsion of both Yemenite Jews from the Kinneret colony in the early twentieth century and of Palestinians from Palestine in 1948. Then he compared the responses to Yuval's article with the 'tribunal nature' of the debate on Zionist history.[37]

The characteristic narcissism of postmodern historical writing has infiltrated Israeli historiography. A typical example of mixing up auto-biographical passages, thoughts, impressions and some meagre fruit of research was Motti Golani's *Milhamot lo Korot me-'Atzman* (Wars don't just happen).[38] Golani held the Israeli record for historians' self-exposure only briefly. It was soon snatched by Shlomo Zand as he opened one of his last books with an 'autobiographical confession' baring his profile. From a tour of his communist family, his communist youth movement, and his radical left-group, *Matzpen* (Compass), he guided readers to his studies at Tel Aviv University and the PhD he wrote in France. Zand's novel exposure went even further: the book jacket was graced with a figure reminiscent of Rodin's Thinker: Zand, himself, as it tran-spires, in that adopted pose thirty years earlier – a detail he forgot to mention.[39]

Modesty is an equally rare quality among Israeli postists. No praise is high enough for themselves or their comrades. Tom Segev, for exam-ple, declared that the new historians 'are the first to make use of archival source material … It is the first generation of [true] historians. They are plowing virgin soil.'[40] Segev knowingly and deliberately ignored the many historians of Zionism and the Yishuv who did and do slog away in Israeli, British, American and other archives – prior to, concomitant with, and since the advent of the new historians. It is not archival work that separates the self-proclaimed innovators and their detractors. The difference is in the writing, ideological versus academic: the postists write ideologically; occasionally, they may come up with

something original and innovative, though this is the exception rather than the rule. The others usually write academically; occasionally, they may slip up and expose an ideological leaning. But, again, this is the exception rather than the rule because, unlike the postists, they take pains to avoid this pitfall.

When the new historians and critical sociologists appeared on the scene in the late 1980s, they were mostly outsiders attacking imagined historiographic and sociological establishments of Israeli academe. Today, they hold tenured university positions in Israel and abroad, expanding the controversy between old and new, functionalist and critical, from research and writing to teaching and supervision. The very fact of their academic status is a sign of the openness of Israeli academe. It is also a measure of the truth of their grousing about persecution and discrimination by the Zionist academic establishment.

ZIONISM'S AFFILIATION TO THE JEWISH PAST

The post-Zionist controversy concerns specific issues that will be detailed in the next chapter. At the root of the dispute, however, we find opposing perceptions of the essence of Judaism, the patterns of Jewish history, the meaning of the modern Jewish problem, the existing of a historical Jewish nation that Zionism is carrying on.

Initially, Zionism was merely one variant of Jewish nationalism, alongside the autonomism of Dubnow and the territorial movement of Israel Zangwill. Zangwill dissented from the Zionist movement after the Uganda crisis in 1904 because, given the untenable existence of Jews in Eastern Europe, he saw Zionism's principal duty as finding any asylum (for example, Uganda) – not necessarily in the Land of Israel.[41]

Of all the variants of Jewish nationalism, only Zionism – reconnecting the Jewish people in a national bond to their traditional, religious locus of identity in the Land of Israel – matured into a real national movement and built a national culture. Zionism's success testified to the importance of territory in Jewish nationality and to the significance of the Jews' affiliation to their past. Territorialism lacked historical basis, while autonomism was anchored in Eastern Europe, its connection with Judaism's earlier roots limited. The link with the Jewish past led Zionism, from Pinsker's and Herzl's territorialism, to adhere to the Land of Israel. In Palestine, the Yishuv adopted national characteristics that differed

from both non-Zionist Jewish nationalism and Zionism in exile. Actually, the Yishuv considered itself the antithesis of the Diaspora.[42]

Post-Zionists contend that Zionist historiography took a central part in 'inventing' Jewish nationalism and linking it to the Land of Israel. Their favourite target in this respect is Dinur.[43] Unlike historians who (according to Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm) played the role of nationalism's forerunners or inventors in central and Eastern European countries, Zionist historians were neither the forerunners of Jewish nationalism, nor did they invent it. Heinrich Graetz may have played a similar role to the European historians inspiring their respective national movements, but he was not a Zionist. Dubnow was evidently a Jewish nationalist, but he, too, was not a Zionist. Zionist historiography emerged a generation after the founding of the Zionist movement. It was born into the realities of a national movement that sought its legitimacy in the past.

THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF JEWISH NATIONALISM

How deeply was the national idea rooted in Jewish history? Was it a revolutionary innovation or a continuous concept? The question preoccupied Zionists, supporters of other versions of Jewish nationalism and non-nationalists. Some argued that nationalism was foreign to Judaism, constituting a revolt against the Jewish anomaly to the point of a rupture with continuous Jewish history and a return to world history. Others held that Zionism was the outcome of Jewish history's continuity, but it lent the Jewish past a new interpretation.[44]

Anita Shapira pointed to Zionism's exclusive self-image. The Zionist movement accused its rivals of propagating illusions; while Zionism offered a route to redemption, the assimilationists, communists and Bundists offered solutions that distanced the Jews from true redemption. Against this background, she explained the fanaticism of the relations between Zionism and its opponents and between rival trends within the movement as the outcome of 'a burning faith in one total and complete truth that dismissed any alternative as threatening the totality of the idea and hence the redemption that it embodies'.[45]

The doyen of Israeli sociology, Shmuel Noach Eisenstadt, maintained that Zionism was part of the Jews' return to history. Although the process had begun a century before it appeared, the Zionist movement

became its standard-bearer by stressing the political and territorial dimensions of Jewish history and by aspiring to build a new Jewish culture and society. Zionism's success and Israel's establishment strengthened the political dimension of Jewish history in Diaspora communities and in the international arena. But this new dimension has not always or necessarily been Zionist.[46]

Notwithstanding Eisenstadt's argument, Zionism did not return the Jews to history. Jews had always been part of history, although their role changed from time to time and from place to place. The historical position of Jews in medieval Spain differed from that of Jews in central Europe, and even the latter were not totally excluded from the general history of their time. Mainly, however, they were influenced by, rather than influencing, it. The place of Jews in the history of early modern Europe was defined by the function of the Jewish corporation in European corporative society. The gradual disintegration of corporative society since the seventeenth century in due course changed the legal and social status of Jews along with their place in European history. By the eighteenth century Jews were already the subject of public debate in several countries. They began to display interest in the life of surrounding society and they made their first attempts to take their fate into their own hands, whether by taking advantage of the general changes or in response to them.

Jewish nationalism reappeared in the wake of the general national awakening in central, southern and Eastern Europe following the Napoleonic wars. It was influenced by this revival and adopted its concepts and vocabulary. Nonetheless, it differed in several significant respects from European national movements. Just as Judaism has defied any comprehensive theory – religious, Marxist or post-colonialist – so it was problematic for theories of nationalism, diverging from the model on various issues.

Whereas the phenomenon of Jewish nationalism is modern, its biological roots, as well as its ethnic, linguist and cultural origins are much older than those of European national movements, excluding the Greek movement, whose direct affiliation to the ancient Greeks is, however, debatable. In historical experience, Judaism antedated these movements by many centuries. But since the destruction of the Temple, this experience had not been articulated politically or militarily, only through religious, cultural, communal, social and economic history.

Zionism also differed from the European national movements in its

approach to a national language. The East European movements culti-vated local vernaculars as a counterweight to the languages of the imperial authorities – German or Russian – and as a means to shape national identities. Zionism, however, discarded the Jews' vernaculars – Yiddish and Ladino – and chose to resuscitate Ancient Hebrew as the basis for creating a Jewish national culture.

As for territorial base – the bedrock of any national movement – in Judaism, it was abstract. The concrete locus of identity existed mostly in the daily prayer book, in land-based Jewish laws and in holidays. Zionism revived it by revolting against the realities of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, aiming to transfer the Jews en masse to the national territory in the Land of Israel.

Just as the Jews preserved their language as a holy tongue down the generations, so, throughout history, they preserved their connection to a specific territory. This bond was based on historical memories from the distant past and messianic expectations of the future. The traditional religious and spiritual bond to the Holy Land shaped the consciousness that eventually led Jews to regard the Land of Israel as their national home. Initially, the Zionist movement wavered between loyalty to the ancient land and immediate concern for the Jewish masses in the Pale of Settlement. The decision fell only in 1904 after the crisis stirred up by the Uganda plan, when the Zionist congress turned down a proposal to settle Jews in the British colony. Thereafter, the Zionist movement regarded Jewish nationalism as indivisible from the Land of Israel and rejected any other territorial solution to the Jewish plight.[47]

Of all the elements that constitute a national movement – territory, culture, economy and common destiny – mostly the Jews had a common heritage that shaped Jewish identity. One could adopt Jewish tradition as it was, like the orthodox did, or use it selectively and reinterpret it like the reformists and conservatives did, but no one, including the oppo-nents of the tradition, could ignore it.[48]

Other national movements – in Poland, Serbia or Bohemia – had high-lighted a relatively close past prior to the takeover of ruling empires. Zionism was different. It rejected exile and portrayed Zionism as the obverse experience. To regain the distant historical era it sought to revive, Zionism had to skip over 1,800 years of communal Jewish life in exile and return to the political history of the Jews in their land prior to the Bar Kokhba revolt.

THE OPPOSITION TO JEWISH NATIONALISM

Zionism has provoked several adversaries who shared an objection to Jewish nationalism or, at least, to its connection to the Land of Israel. Orthodox, socialist-Marxist and assimilated-liberal Jews regarded it as a panicked response to anti-Semitism, an imitation of European nationalism and a distortion of Judaism's true essence and image. This anti-Zionism was mainly a product of exile. Post-Zionism, by contrast, is purely 'blue-and-white' – a product of Israel, devised by people born and/or raised in Israel.[49]

Post-Zionist arguments against Jewish nationality and Zionism as its principal expression echo liberal and Marxist polemics dating back to the early twentieth century. Both liberals and Marxists adamantly rejected a Jewish national identity and accused Zionism of fabricating it. Liberals opposed any expression of Jewish exclusivity apart from religion (which they called 'Mosaic' since Jewish had a national, exclusive connotation), and Marxists considered the Jewish question a civil rights issue, not a national one. Marxists not only negated Zionism but the future of Judaism in general. They viewed Jewry as a decaying sect, a relic of an anachronistic civilization whose time had passed and who would likely disappear from the reformed 'world of tomorrow'. In their eyes, Jewish nationalism was a backward step, contrary to the march of history and social progress.

Up until the First World War, Marxist polemics were directed mainly against the Bund. The Marxists ignored Zionism at the time or considered it insignificant. After the Balfour Declaration and the Bolshevik revolution, however, communist Jews began to take Zionism more seriously. They accused it of being a tool in the hands of the Jewish bourgeoisie to repress the Jewish proletariat and to serve British imperialism. In its stead, they proposed their own solution to the Jewish national problem in the form of an autonomous Jewish district in Siberia, Birobijan. In the 1930s the Marxist proposition of Judaism's decay turned into a dispute between 'progressive' versus 'reactionary' and 'bourgeois' forms of Jewish nationalism. After a brief honeymoon following Israel's founding, Marxist opposition to Zionism gradually developed from an abstract controversy to active identification with the foes of the Jewish State.[50]

Zionists and anti-Zionist Marxists in Eastern Europe had shared one basis – the recognition that there was an acute Jewish problem. The

Marxists argued that Zionism did not offer a real, practical solution to the plight of the Jews. Moreover, they added, the Zionist insistence on settling Palestine did not resolve one predicament (the Jews), but created a new one (the Arabs), opening new avenues for hatred of Jews. Unlike the Jewish communists in the Soviet Union and the Bund in Poland, the PKP (*Palestinensicher Kommunistische Partei*), the bulk of whose members were Jews, totally ignored the Jewish problem in exile and identified completely with the national Arab position.[51] Post-Zionists have continued the PKP tradition. Like their predecessors in the riots of 1929 and during the Palestinian rebellion of 1936–39, their opposition to Zionism has led them to identify with its Palestinian enemies.

Most Jewish communists in Palestine who chose to return to the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s to take part in building 'the world of tomorrow' became victims of the very problem they ignored, whether in Stalin's gulags, by *Einsatzgruppen* shooting squads, or in Nazi extermination camps. There, the Jewish problem was not a religious or corporative issue, as the Jewish communists had wanted to believe. It was national.[52]

THE DENIAL OF JEWISH NATIONALITY

In post-Zionist eyes, nationalism is a mere discursive practice. The Canaanite Israeli thinker Bo'az Evron and Jerusalem historian Moshe Zimmerman, each for reasons of his own, deny the existence of a historical Jewish nationality, arguing that it was invented by Zionism.[53] They ignore the difference between national reality and a national narrative that develops and transforms on the basis of that reality. Even if the narrative is historically inaccurate, its inaccuracy alone does not disprove the existence of a national entity. This was as true of Jews in the nineteenth century as of Palestinians at the turn of the twentieth.

Today's objection to Jewish nationalism draws from relatively new theories of nationality and colonialism. Primarily, post-Zionists quote Benedict Anderson, who defined a nation as an imagined community – imagined by its members and manipulated by bureaucrats and educators. In addition, they frequently cite Eric Hobsbawm's statement that the allegedly old national traditions were invented in the nineteenth century to cultivate national myths. Usually, they ignore or refute other theorists of nationalism, such as Anthony Smith, who regards nationality as the

continuation of an older ethnic identity, or Ernest Gellner, who asserts that nationalism is an outcome of modernization. They barely relate to earlier scholars of nationalism, like Hans Kohn or Friedrich Hertz.[54]

Theories that link nationalism and modernization, like Gelner's, explain the disintegration of traditional corporative society, emancipation and assimilation – the development of the opposing trend to Jewish nationalism – but they ignore the growth of Jewish self-awareness whose roots go back to the ethnic elements of Jewish existence. Smith's theory, if any, therefore appears better suited to explaining Jewish nationalism.[55]

Endeavouring to portray Zionism as a colonialist movement, post-Zionists deny that it is a national movement. At most, they would define it as 'national colonialism' – but Israeli, not Jewish. A nation that does not exist (read: the Jewish nation) cannot have a national movement and does not need a nation-state. Thus, they prepare the ground for new Jewish *millet* (autonomous religious community) in a future Palestinian state as existed in the Ottoman Empire. Non-religious Israeli Jews will then become assimilated among Palestinian Arabs just as Jews assimilated into surrounding societies in Europe and America. Dedicating his recent book on the history of modern Palestine to his sons, Pappé, in this spirit, wished them a peaceful life in the modern Palestinian state that will be constituted on the ruins of the Jewish nation-state.[56]

'ISRAELI NATIONALITY'

Since they do not recognize Zionism as an authentic expression of Jewish nationalism, post-Zionists have invented an 'Israeli nationalism'. Pappé has developed a theory to explain it and mobilized Benedict Anderson, Hobsbawm and other historians for support. His principal argument asserts that 'Israeli nationalism' is a Middle Eastern phenomenon to be studied in the framework of Third World national movements. His ulterior motive is transparent: denying Zionism's origins in the Jewish question in Europe and its endeavour to resolve that question by turning it from a movement that emerged out of the Jewish plight in Europe into a territorial-colonizing phenomenon in the Middle East.

Pappé's theory is based on an unusual reading of *Imagined Communities*. A check of the references to Anderson reveals little, if any, corroboration for his arguments and when he cites his own examples,

he demonstrates an embarrassing disorder. Thus, for example, he confuses the Norman duke William the Conqueror, who became England's King William the First in the eleventh century, with the Dutch prince Willem of Orange, who became England's King William the Third after the revolution of 1688. This is just one of many factual errors.[57]

Pappé is not original in his denial of Jewish nationality and his theory of 'Israeli nationality'. The source of both is recognizable – Eric Hobsbawm.[58] Hobsbawm, however, is scarcely an authority on Jewish or Middle Eastern history. He specialized in the history of Europe and Latin America and is an anti-Zionist Marxist who, long before Pappé, denied the existence of Jewish nationality and Zionism as its representation. He coined the category 'Israeli nationality', but pointedly did not say who its bearers are.[59]

To identify the Jews' historical-religious yearnings for the Land of Israel, their pilgrimages to the country, and their hopes of return after the coming of the Messiah, according to Hobsbawm, with the aspiration to concentrate all Jews in a modern territorial state in the Holy Land is utterly illegitimate. Deeming Judaism a religion, not a nation, he compared the Zionist claim to gather the Jews in the Land of Israel to a hypothetical demand for Saudi citizenship by pilgrims to Mecca. Like Arnold Toynbee before him, who hypothesized about the Jews being a fossil relic of 'Syriac civilization', Hobsbawm merely posited a personal view that derives neither from evidence nor erudition.[60]

Religion, Hobsbawm said, becomes a significant force in nationalism only when a national movement matures into a mass movement; not in its infancy, when it is still a minority movement. He based this debatable general statement on a 'Zionist' example: 'Zionist militants in the heroic days of the Palestine Yishuv were more likely to eat ham sandwiches demonstratively than to wear ritual caps, as Israeli zealots are apt to do today.'[61]

This biased, ill-informed statement has little to do with either the past or the present. Most Zionists came from traditional homes in the Diaspora. The vast majority of the Yishuv treated tradition with respect. Though they did not observe most commandments, secular Jews in Palestine married in religious ceremonies, circumcised their sons, observed the holiness of Yom Kippur even if they did not fast, and were buried according to Jewish tradition. This was also true of most of the pioneers of the Second Aliyah to whom, apparently, Hobsbawm was referring.[62]

Even now, Jewish nationalism is far from the preserve of the religiously observant public; its ranks are filled with people who disregard the laws of *kashrut* (Ariel Sharon was just one conspicuous example). Hobsbawm and his imitators, however, are not ones to allow the facts to confuse them. They either totally ignore or are ignorant of Judaism's immanent connection between nationality (or ethnos, as some call it) and religion; of Judaism's uniqueness, which upsets some overarching grand theories (Marxism, or postmodernism) that they believe in to explain everything. This connection is not found in any other nation, where members may adhere to various religions or convert without it affecting their national–community ties, or in any other religion, where members may belong to different nationalities.

Hobsbawm has argued that, in its attempt to skip two millennia of history and return to its pre-exilic past in the Land of Israel, Zionism neglected and negated real Jewish history. For him, the Jews' language was Yiddish. Scornfully, he compared Hebrew's revival to the attempts of the Welsh to rejuvenate the language of the Druids. The comparison only testifies to its author's lack of knowledge about modern Hebrew culture.[63]

Hobsbawm's statements about Zionism in his books on nationalism, like his articles and papers that relate to Israel, have not relied on any references apart from a handful of journalistic sources composed for political or ideological polemics. The statements made by Hobsbawm derive from nothing but his own hard feelings towards Zionism and Israel and, particularly, from his hostility towards the Likud party.[64] Pappé's attempt to use Hobsbawm's partisanship as authoritative corroboration for an ostensibly scientific claim appears disingenuous.[65]

Purporting to draw on 'the view of many scholars of nationalism, including Anderson' (I have not found any reference in Anderson's book to the following claim), Pappé declares that 'Zionism does not differ essentially from other national phenomena in the Third World'. Nor however, in Pappé's view, does Zionism completely correspond with Anderson's model of imagined nationalism because it is a mixture of nationalism and colonialism – 'a national movement that has used and is still using colonialist tools to achieve its goals'. Also, he turns Britain into the 'imperialist motherland' of Jews from Eastern and central Europe who wished to realize their nationality in Palestine.[66] One can only wonder (a) why Britain would have assumed the role of 'imperialist motherland' for Jews from the continent (as if France would have undertaken the role of

motherland in the case of Gypsies in Chad or Armenians in Gabon), or (b), whether there has been any parallel situation in the history of imperialism and colonialism.

Pappé's line of attack on Jewish nationalism is not exceptional. Most post-Zionists share it to one degree or another. Shlomo Zand – who can hardly be called a post-Zionist because he was never a Zionist – deems Zionists 'a community of immigrant-settlers' that legitimized its claim to Palestine by transforming the Bible, a sacred religious canon, into a national history textbook.[67] Ram maintains that, contrary to the conviction of Israeli high school graduates that there has always been a Jewish nation, the Zionist movement invented a tradition for a nation that had never existed and would not have been created without the Zionist initiative.

In Ram's eyes, Israel's scroll of independence articulates the gist of the Zionist national narrative. He admits that this narrative was not made up and that the materials from which it was put together were taken 'from the real history of the Jewish communities', but insists that 'Jewish existence was diverse and divided, and for most of the time was not national. Only from an ideological-national vantage point was it seen as necessarily national and having a national destiny.'[68] Ram further claims that modernity

> Did not unchain a Jewish nationalism waiting for two thousand years to be liberated, but … began to dismantle the pre-national Jewish identity. Jewish nationalism did not burst out from Jewish identity, but was thrown to it as a lifesaver when it was about to drown in the whirlpool of modern times.[69]

Ram takes pains to prove the self-evident: until the eighteenth century no nationalism in the modern sense of the word could exist in Europe and therefore no nationalism existed. Like the identities of the European aristocracy and clergy, of the burghers according to branch of commerce and artisanship, and of the peasants according to level of serfdom, Jewish identity, too, was corporative.[70]

Compared to its surroundings, the medieval and early modern Jewish corporation featured a high degree of solidarity, a developed autonomous and communal organization, religious affiliation to the Land of Israel and the expectation of the redemption and return of all Jews to Zion, which from time to time surfaced in the form of Messianic

movements. Zionism translated these attributes into modern concepts – not as 'politics of identity', but as a response to the constraints and pressures that Ram and his comrades blatantly ignore. To be sure, Zionism was not a thousand-year-old phenomenon as its pious advocates foolishly maintain and its sworn enemies deny. It was a historic movement that emerged in Eastern and central Europe at the end of the nineteenth century in response to the contemporary needs and desires of the Jews in those countries; it, however, derived its legitimacy and conviction from far older roots.[71]

The Jews' responses to European nationalism and modernization were not 'strategies of identity', as Ram defines Zionism. They were not abstract ideas, but real experiences. Zionism was a reaction to the plight of the Jews, particularly in areas where they were densely concentrated. Its principal aim was to ease the lot of the Jews and, only in second place, to deal with the problem of Judaism, or Jewish identity. The situation of Judaism in face of modernity may have preoccupied Zionist thinkers such as Ahad Ha'am, but it hardly disturbed the field activists who built the Zionist movement or the masses who joined it.

The plight of Judaism spawned various proposals for the construction of a modern Jewish identity, from religious reform to the idea of a Jewish mission to disseminate monotheism (or plain morality) in the world. None of these provided an answer to the existential distress of the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe. There were only two ways out: a national solution in the Land of Israel or a pluralist solution via emigration to the United States. American immigration laws of the 1920s halted mass emigration and indirectly had a crucial impact on the dimensions of the Holocaust and on the founding of Israel.[72]

One common argument often used to deny the historical existence of the ancient Jewish people that created the modern Zionist national movement, has it that prior to the emergence of Zionism, there was a Yiddish People in Eastern Europe. This old argument was shared by Jewish communists, Bundists and liberals. Zand carries forward the tradition of the Bund and Dubnow's autonomism, which seemingly had vanished in the Holocaust. He describes the Yiddish language as the centre of Jewish identity and life in Europe: alongside the Yiddish People, he writes about (popular) Yiddish culture, about the Yiddish middle class and about the anomaly of Yiddishist life in Europe. The anomaly, of course, was not one of language but of socio-economic realities. While the Jewish upper

middle class were Russified or Germanized and, occasionally, Zionized, in the small towns and workers' quarters of Warsaw, Vilna or Lodz the masses continued to speak Yiddish. Yiddish was just as robust in Jewish national culture as in socialist culture. It prevailed not only in the Bund but also in the Zionist parties; it was the only way to communicate with the masses and both movements published newspapers, journals and brochures in Yiddish.

Zand laments the grim fate of Yiddishist intellectuals. They had difficulties finding their proper place and had to choose between emigration, socialism and Zionism. The latter, he asserts, was the hardest on them. Those who chose it 'took the risk of a radical change in their social and cultural status'.[73]

FROM NEGATION OF THE DIASPORA TO RETURNING JEWS TO EXILE

Unlike the historical debates in the West on epistemological and methodological issues, the controversies between Zionist and post-Zionist historians in Israel focus on the substance of knowledge rather than the avenues to it. Similarly, just as postmodernism attempts to revert the status of historiography to a literary genre, as it had been until the nineteenth century, post-Zionism relocates the core of Jewish identity from the Jewish State and Jewish sovereignty to the Diaspora and its ghetto mentality – at least in the theological and philosophical sense, if not on the territorial and normative levels.[74]

Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, who leads this post-Zionist trend, has accused Zionism of 'nationalizing' Jewish religion, lending theological meaning to politics and national meaning to concepts that defined traditional Jewish consciousness, such as *galut* (exile), *geulah* (redemption) and *shiva* (return). He claimed that the incorporation of the religious dimension in Zionism's political language enabled the development of a national consciousness that was also colonialist. Nevertheless, he was honest enough to admit that, in some respects, Zionism did differ from other colonialist movements.[75]

In his eyes, the negation of exile has been the gist of Zionist historical consciousness. Between the two eras of Jewish sovereignty, in ancient times and since 1948, exile – according to the Zionist paradigm – was an interim period of imperfect, partial and abnormal existence; the country's history, too, was incomplete during the Jewish people's exile.

Raz-Krakotzkin claimed that Zionist writing ignored the non-Jewish population, describing the land as empty and expecting its children to return from exile.[76]

The exile that Zionism negated and opposed was not a mere element of Jewish existence, Raz-Krakotzkin said, but rather its central pillar. The theological meaning of *galut* (exile) is not limited to the condition of *Am Israel* (the Jewish People); Jewish exile represents a universal condition prior to redemption. The concept of exile distinguished between Jew and Christian. But the exile was not forced on the Jews – they chose it. Hence, he declared, the Zionist negation of exile was a negation of Judaism.[77]

The return of Jews and Judaism to history, he argued, was tantamount to erasing the true Jewish history. The return to history in its national form detached Jewish history from the cultural surroundings in which Jews lived – from exile – and from the communal structure that characterized Jewish social history. The history to which Zionism returned was that created by the national-Christian European historiography. The principal victims of this process were, in his view, the Jews of Arab lands, because their history was not part of the European concepts of history and they were required to undergo 'historical retraining'. Zionism's attitude to them, he objected, reflected the western orientalist attitude to the Middle East and its culture.[78]

Orientalism is the attitude of cultural haughtiness shown by French, British and German scholars and travellers to the Muslim East and its culture. In order to accuse Zionism of western orientalism towards the Jews of Arab lands and their culture, one must be able to demonstrate the influence of English, French and German scholars on the heads of the Zionist movement, its activists and intellectuals. Most of them did not attend universities that cultivated orientalism. The few Zionists who did, pursued the sciences and medicine, not Middle Eastern studies. Their heritage was East European, not western. Their attitude to the 'orient' was indeed haughty, but it was shaped by their encounter with the realities of Palestine, including the Old Mizrahi Yishuv of Jews from Muslim lands, not by western influences. At worst, they transposed the attitude of western Jews to their 'primitive' Jewish brethren in Eastern Europe – who had not yet come within the orbit of modernization, Enlightenment and emancipation – to the Jews of the Middle East. This has nothing to do with orientalism.

Raz-Krakotzkin has conceded that he is not calling for a return to the past of exile and that he has no wish to idealize it. Looking to the future, he suggests that exile be recreated in the Land of Israel. He is not interested in the exile experience of Jews living outside of Israel, but in 'how we can feel exile here in the country, without forgetting those who are in real exile – the residents of the [Palestinian] refugee camps'. Raz-Krakotzkin, a partisan of the bi-national idea (or one state solution in post-Zionist jargon), strives to separate national identity from political structure and regards the attitudes of Zionist historiography to Palestinian nationalism and to Messianism as 'one and the same question'. For now, he regrets, political Messianism has taken over Israeli historical consciousness. The consciousness of exile as the basic condition of life in the Land of Israel characterizes only ultra-orthodox religious Jews and that, in response to the Zionist challenge. Searching for a secular parallel to this religious position, Raz-Krakotzkin has found it in the doctrine of the Jewish-German philosopher Walter Benjamin, to whom he devoted a considerable part of his work.[79]

While Raz-Krakotzkin blamed Zionism for past sins, the forward-looking Ilan Gur-Zeev, a University of Haifa philosopher of education (and historian by training), prophesied Israel's imminent end as the national home of the Jewish People. His philosophy calls for training the younger generation of Israelis for life in exile. 'The barbarization of Judaism by Zionism', he states, has been the reason that 'Jews in Israel have no real opportunity to practise the commandment of living a worthy life and fulfilling the promise of creating a liberal democracy here'. His training-for-life-in-exile rejects the 'Zionist-Israeli option' in favour of progress towards 'the Messianic struggle for world redemption'. This vision can be achieved in two possible ways: (1) a life of wandering in the cosmopolitan space; or (2) the establishment of a new *Yavne* (site of the Sanhedrin after the Temple's destruction) as the centre of a decent, spiritual Judaism – 'Jewish exile in a *Filastin* liberated from Zionist hegemony'.[80]

Negation of the Diaspora was indeed one of Zionism's more problematic principles. Zionists objected to the idea of the Diaspora and, even more so, to exile as praxis – a mindset and socio-economic reality. The principle did not relate to countries that granted Jews full emancipation, but mainly to the Russian Pale, the Balkans and Muslim lands. This negation of exile was not exported from the Yishuv to the Diaspora.

Its roots lay in the Pale, and were part of life in exile in the face of modernization.

Contrary to the presentation of Raz-Krakotzkin and other post-Zionists (as well as some Zionists), the new Jew that Zionism aspired to create was not a Hebrew, a Sabra (native of Palestine) or an Israeli, but a Pioneer (*halutz*). He or she was not born in the Land of Israel but in exile, and revolted against its way of life and mentality. The pioneers underwent gruelling training to prepare them for the hard life in the Land of Israel and for manual labour, they studied Hebrew and immigrated to Palestine to fulfil Zionism, preferably in the framework of a kibbutz. Only after the reserves of Europe's pioneering youth perished in the Holocaust did the Sabras, native youth, strive to replace them in implementing Zionism and settlement, and they did so far less successfully.

The revolt against exile notwithstanding, the pioneers' culture was exilic. It was the Hebrew culture of the East European Enlightenment that preceded and was adopted by Zionism. But the pioneer was not only the antithesis of exilic Jewry. Above all, he was the antithesis of the colonialist, which is why post-Zionists are careful to ignore him.[81]

In the Yishuv, negation of the Diaspora was connected with Canaanism, which was more widespread as a way of life than a worldview. In principle, all Zionist streams shared the negation of the Diaspora, but in practice there were different approaches and opinions, in both substance and degree. From time to time, these erupted in sharp controversy – during the Uganda crisis; in the dispute between the *Zukunft Arbeit* (work for the future in Palestine) and *Gegenwart Arbeit* (dealing with current problems of Jews in exile); in the arguments over ways to help German Jewry in the 1930s, and in the controversy over selective immigration after statehood. These controversies refute any contention that there was a unified Zionist stance towards the Diaspora, cutting across ideological and party boundaries.

Zionism could not expand without negating the Diaspora. As a revolutionary movement, it had to rise up against the existing order that it sought to change – and this order was the Diaspora. The grim implications of the alienation of the Zionist movement and the Yishuv from exile became conspicuous as the plight of European Jews deteriorated in the 1930s and culminated in the Holocaust. The after-shocks could still be felt in the attitude towards survivors arriving in Palestine/Israel during and after the war.

Zionist historians such as Dinur and Baer dissented from the prevalent negation of exile and assigned the Diaspora historical value. But for post-Zionists the negation of the Diaspora is not a historical issue to be discussed in terms of time and context. It is a political question concerning the negation of Jewish nationalism in the present. Raz-Krakotzkin's ostensibly historiographic analysis is merely a cover for polemics. The discussion of historical issues, he argues, should not be separated from political issues since 'their very separation is an ideological decision making it possible to avoid the context in which history was written and the comprehensive implications of the consciousness reflected by research'.[82] Subsequently, he applies this argument in his work, using a discussion of Zionist historiography of the Middle Ages to condemn Zionism and Israel's policies regarding the War of Independence, the attitude to Arabs or the absorption of immigrants from Muslim lands in the 1950s – the three principal controversies over the history of Zionism and the Yishuv.

The Controversy over the History of Zionism, the Yishuv and the State of Israel

THE COLONIALIST PARADIGM OF ZIONISM

The attempts of Palestinian scholars to prove Zionism's colonial (as distinct from colonizing) nature received a boost from Israeli post-Zionists, especially as regards Israel since 1967.[1] Zionism's portrayal as a colonialist movement, however, hardly began with Palestinian historiography and post-Zionism. It is as old as the Arab–Jewish conflict itself, going back at least to the first Palestinian Congress convening in Jerusalem in January 1919.

Baruch Kimmerling and Joel Migdal portrayed a peasants' insurrection in the Samaria Mountains against Ibrahim Pasha's tax farmers during Egypt's occupation of Palestine and Syria in the 1830s as the beginning of Palestinian nationalism. The revolt was much broader than that, embracing Syria as well as Palestine. Nor do the Palestinians themselves begin their national history so early. Rashid Khalidi sees the beginning in the clash between Arab villagers and Jewish settlers in Fula (near today's Afula) in 1911. In Khalidi's view, the incidents and their publication symbolized the tenants' opposition to the disposal of their land by landowners attempting to sell it to Jews.[2] In both cases, the aim was to artificially antedate the start of Palestinian nationalism in order to underpin the claim of dispossession and to show that British imperialism had granted Palestine to the Jews when another people was already consolidating its national identity there.

To what extent did the Arabs evince opposition to the Zionist enterprise in the early days of Jewish immigration and settlement? From a

twenty-two-year period, Baruch Kimmerling gleaned four examples of press articles and petitions against land purchase by Jews in Palestine, which, he claimed, demonstrated genuine Arab political and national objections. This is thin evidence. Kimmerling did not specify the scale of the land transactions concluded between Jews and Arabs in those twenty-two years, something that might have shown the opposition to have been the exception rather than the rule.[3] Nor did he note that a similar number of articles in the Arab press and petitions to the authorities were in favour of Jewish immigration and its consequent benefits to the country. These articles and petitions were indeed financed by Jews, but the same is true of the anti-Zionist propaganda at that time, financed by private interests and not necessarily nationally motivated.

Like the Iraqis or the Syrians, the Palestinians date their particular national liberation movement to the new world order in the Middle East that took shape after the First World War. They portray themselves as struggling against a foreign colonial power (the Zionist movement) supported by British imperial military might that strove to appropriate a land belonging to others. The Palestinians developed their case from the resolutions of the Palestinian congresses in the early 1920s to their appeals to the British government and the League of Nations, and their official and non-official deliberations with the various commissions seeking a solution to the Palestine problem in the 1930s and 1940s. In that period, colonialism was seen as legitimate and Palestinian–Arab arguments did not attract attention. World opinion did not attribute greater weight to their claims than to the Jewish plight in Europe before, and certainly after, the Holocaust.

Circumstances changed for the Palestinians after decolonization. Since the late 1970s their arguments have fallen on receptive ears, particularly in a Western Europe torn by post-colonial feelings of guilt. Under the inspiration of Edward Said, Palestinian intellectuals have embarked on a campaign (to substantiate for the West) Zionism's colonial nature. But the indictment of colonialism stands on shaky historical legs. It relies mainly on tendentious interpretations jumbling past and present and serving propaganda interests in the Jewish–Arab conflict.

Post-Zionists have adopted the Palestinian arguments. They try to mask a distorted use of alleged historical evidence and interpretation with the catchphrase of comparative history, currently – they declare – the mainstream of historical research. Comparative historiography is

far from being a mainstream genre. It is a vanguard that has come up against severe methodological and epistemological problems as its more solid practitioners well know. Aware of the difficulty of distinguishing between historical and political-propagandist considerations in comparing societies, events and processes, they agree that comparative historians have to be adept in all the fields compared. Those who would equate Zionism with colonialism generally lack competency in both.

Lawrence Silberstein, a champion of post-Zionists and some of their positions, has praised Kimmerling and Joel Migdal's *Palestinians* as 'a first effort by an Israeli scholar to present a balanced and comprehensive description of the social and political development of the Palestinian nation'. Notwithstanding the significant question marks surrounding many of the authors' arguments, Silberstein apparently thinks that Israeli historiography on the Palestinians began with Kimmerling. He makes no reference to Yehoshua Porath's two volumes on the history of the Palestinian national movement, to say nothing of earlier works by Michael Assaf and Jacob Shimoni.[4]

Nor did Kimmerling, Migdal or Gershon Shaffir break new ground in prosecuting Zionism for dispossessing and depriving the Palestinians of their land and rights. Jewish communists in the 1920s already objected to the Zionist enterprise because of its purported colonialist nature. Their comrades in Palestine supported Arab nationalism, accused Zionism of being a tool of imperialism, and regarded Jewish settlement of the land as capitalist extortion of Arab tenants.[5] They did not pose behind academic research but preached this openly. Their successors in the 1960s and 1970s were Matzpen radicals, a small anti-Zionist group that blamed Zionism for all the sins of both the old and new capitalism.[6]

Several critical writers outside of Israeli academia have published books condemning the Zionist past and Israeli present before the advent of post-Zionism. Prominent among these were: military historian and convicted spy Israel Ber; journalist and former MK Uri Avneri; and Aron Cohen, an autodidact who founded and, together with Eliezer Bauer (Beeri), headed the Arab department of the Hashomer Hatza'ir movement and the Mapam Party.[7] Starting in the late 1970s, the gist of the genre was exported from Israel to the West. Several books by former Israelis as well as by American and French Jewish activists of the New Left have presented an anti-Zionist/Israeli version of the history of

Zionism and Israel. In particular, they have stressed the injustices done to the Palestinians by the West, notably by Israel's very founding, regardless of the question of borders. Some of these authors were academics from such disparate disciplines as mathematics, chemistry, linguistics and psychology. Others were noted journalists.[8]

Post-Zionists travelled the well-trodden road of these earlier detractors, elaborating on their arguments. Under the banner of comparative history, they cultivated the stereotype of the colonialist Zionist immigrant, comparing the farmer-settler in Rosh Pina or the pioneer at Deganya to the officials of the Dutch East Indies Company in what is now Indonesia or the French *colons* in Algeria. One of their pet analogies aligns Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel with the Boers in South Africa. They matched up the US acquisition of Louisiana from France in 1803, and of Alaska from Russia in 1867, with the purchase of Arab tracts of land in Palestine by the Jewish National Fund (JNF). And they weighed the attitude of Jews to Arab tenant farmers against the American handling of Hispanic settlers in Texas.[9]

'Political Zionism', Kimmerling asserted, 'emerged and consolidated on the threshold of the colonial period in Europe, when the right of Europeans to settle in every non-European country was taken for granted.'[10] Presumably, this statement represented the comparative approach, though it does not take an expert on colonial history to know that the colonial era in European history began much earlier, in the sixteenth century. Zionism emerged towards the end of the era, not on its threshold, and West European colonialism had been preceded by other colonialisms – Arab, Turkish, German and Russian – a fact that post-colonialists blatantly ignore. The supposed parallel between the Louisiana and Alaska transactions and the JNF's land purchases is curious. A good deal of the problems might have been avoided or resolved had the Zionist movement had the means to buy up the whole of the Land of Israel in one fell swoop, as the United States did in the nineteenth century, had Britain and the other powers truly supported Zionism, as Kimmerling and his colleagues claim. It is precisely the slow pace of development of the Zionist enterprise, because of the need to purchase land and the scarcity of resources, that attests to its non-colonial character.

Ilan Pappé has compared Zionism to missionary activities in Ghana and to previous attempts by Christians to settle in Palestine and expel

the Arabs from the country (that is, the Crusades). He found an 'astonishing similarity' between the hidden hopes of Victor Guerin, a nineteenth-century traveller and explorer of Palestine, and the hopes of Zionist leader Menachem Ussishkin: Guerin strove to revive the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem; Ussishkin strove to revive the kingdom of David and Solomon!

Drawing on unconventional and unverifiable sources, Pappé further asserted that from the start, Zionist settlers in the Land of Israel sought to dispossess the Arabs. He cites a 'well-known' Zionist leader by the name of Itzhak Rielf, the rabbi of Memel (Klaipeda, then a German town in Russian-dominated Lithuania), who, according to Pappé, in 1883, fourteen years before the establishment of the Zionist Organization (actually, the rabbi had been an activist of the pre-Zionist Lovers of Zion, who later became an autonomist and ended up in the orthodox anti-Zionist Agudat Israel) called for the expulsion of Arabs from the country. His second authority is Ussishkin's seeming ambition to purchase the bulk of the land of Palestine. But most convincing is Pappé's third authority: Palestinian historian-propagandist Nur Massalha, who cited an assortment of quotes out of context as proof, in his view, of Zionist intentions to dispossess and expel Palestinian Arabs.[11] The founders of the postmodernist/post-Zionist journal, *Teoria u-Bikoret* (Theory and criticism), sociologist Yehouda Shenhav and literary scholar Hanan Hever, opened an article on post-colonialism with a description of the battle at Tantura on 22 May 1948. From this battle they drew a straight line to Israel's control of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, and on to the US reaction to 9/11: 'The atonement of thousands of innocent people in New York was replaced with the atonement of thousands of helpless Afghans that were killed or became homeless refugees.' As the common denominator of the 1948 battle, Israeli rule of the West Bank since 1967, and the war in Afghanistan in 2002, Shenhav and Hever proposed the concept of colonialism – a mixture of past sins and present injustice.[12]

A single entry at the beginning of Herzl's diary appears to support the claim that Zionism, from its inception, schemed to expel or transfer the Arabs from the Land of Israel, and is frequently quoted by Palestinians and post-Zionists. Even Benny Morris fell into this trap. Indeed, he noted that the entry was exceptional, but his conclusion was that the Zionists regarded the issue of 'transfer' as sensitive and therefore refrained from

speaking about it publicly. He ignored other explanations (that is, that it was early wishful thinking, marginal to Zionist thought). The entry for 12 June 1895 fills twenty pages of the published diary and had Morris and the others read a few more pages after pouncing on their ostensible trump card, they would have found that Herzl was referring explicitly to South America, not to Palestine, at a time when he was not yet a Zionist in the sense of faithful to Zion (a synonym for the Land of Israel).[13]

Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin attempted to furnish other grounds to equate Zionism with colonialism. He criticized two facets of the Zionist view of the nexus between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel: Dinur's emphasis on a continuous Jewish presence in the country; and the romantic approach regarding Arabs as the descendants of the ancient Jews and an exotic model to emulate. Both approaches, he maintained, did not leave room for Arabs or Arab consciousness. This attitude to the Arabs was conditioned by Zionist consciousness. In Raz-Krakotzkin's view, it was the beginning of Zionism's total denial of the Arab claim to national rights in the country.[14]

All Zionist historical writing after the Balfour Declaration and the First World War, he stated, was aimed at distancing the Arabs from the history of the land to portray it as a Jewish country whether because of the continuous Jewish presence or because it was the target of continuous Jewish affiliation, longing and pilgrimage. Zionist historiography of the old Yishuv depicted a ghetto segregated from its surroundings, he said – even though no such ghetto ever existed. In Dinur and Baer's programmatic article in the first volume of *Zion*, he added, 'the colonial dimension assumed full meaning … as a story relying on the theological-redemptive framework'.[15]

According to Raz-Krakotzkin, the emphasis on a continuous Jewish presence in the country and Jewish affiliation to the Land of Israel served the Jews' claim to the country. Zionist historical writing was clearly linked to the organization's diplomatic activity. The historical claims, he argued, were the foundation of the Zionist demand that Britain adopt an exceptional policy in Palestine that would disregard the national aspirations of the indigenous population and deny their right to their own state or some other political entity. There is no evidence that the British read, were meant to read or were affected by Zionist historiography. The absence of such evidence is one of Raz-Krakotzkin's

main flaws. Apart from Sokolow's book and the two volumes of the ESCO Foundation study, history books by Zionist writers were not written in or translated into English. Nor did Lord Balfour have them in front of him when he wrote to Prime Minister Lloyd George, after the opening of the Versailles Peace Conference, that Britain rightly considered Palestine an exception to the principle of self-determination because the Jewish Question outside Palestine had worldwide significance that outweighed the wishes of the local population.[16]

Zionist political demands were based on Jewish history, not on its modern writings. In Zionism, diplomacy preceded historiography by at least a generation and it influenced historians, not vice versa. Zionist historiography did not aim 'to convince the British' as Raz-Krakotzkin puts it and, in any case, there was hardly a Briton who read medieval or early modern Jewish history. The recognition of Palestine as the home-land of the Jewish People, and of its Arab inhabitants as deserving protection of their individual rights but having no collective political rights to the country, had nothing to do with Dinur's articles. British statesmen may have been influenced by Hebraist Christian scholarship (as Raz-Krakotzkin acknowledges in another context), but not by Zionist historiography.[17]

Searching high and low for a colonialist conspiracy, Raz-Krakotzkin regarded the Hebrew University in Jerusalem as a symbol of Zionist colonialism. It was, he argued, a colonialist university from its found-ing, established not for the indigenous population but for immigrants, and preventing the establishment of universities for the natives. It was 'a political weapon that denied the majority of the populace access to higher education'.[18]

He was not referring to the graduates of Jewish high schools in Palestine who, until the Second World War, generally went abroad for higher education. No, he meant the local Arabs. But which candidates for higher education did he have in mind? In 1925, when the Hebrew University was created, Palestine had 49 Arab elementary and high schools in towns (29 for boys and 20 for girls) and 265 rural schools (all elementary, of which 11 were for girls). They were attended by 16,146 boys and 3,591 girls (out of a population of circa 750,000). Most pupils attended school for four or five years. Twenty years later, in 1945, the total number of Arab pupils rose to 71,468 (out of a pop-ulation of circa 1,200,000), but only 232 went through the 11th and

12th grades, making them potentially eligible for Arab higher education.[19] The Arab population needed elementary schools, not a university, and the British Mandate certainly developed Arab education considerably. The argument that the establishment of the Hebrew University prevented the development of Arab higher education is patently ridiculous.

The Hebrew University stirred also David Myers to thoughts of colonialism, though for a different reason. He compared the involvement of Chayim Weizmann and the Zionist organization in the university's affairs with the relations between US patrons of Beirut's American University, established in the nineteenth century, and its faculty and students.[20] Unlike the Beirut university, however, the Hebrew University did not aim to bring western light to the natives (of the old Yishuv), but to attract Jewish youngsters from the Diaspora to Jerusalem and establish there a centre for Jewish scholarship in various fields, including Jewish studies.

THE CASE AGAINST 'ZIONISM EQUALS COLONIALISM'

Zionism required immigration and colonization – just as the Spanish conquistadors in South America, or the Pilgrims in North America. For a while it was assisted by an imperialist power, Britain, though the reasons for British backing were more complex than straight imperialism. But this is where the similarities end. The comparison with colonialism fails to adequately explain the Zionist phenomenon.

Jewish immigrants to the Land of Israel, in contrast to the conquistadors and their like, did not arrive armed to the teeth or make any attempt to seize the country from the native population by force. The immigrant pioneers conceived of Jewish normalization in terms of returning to manual labour and agriculture, not exercising military power. Until the First World War, the idea of creating a Jewish military force to achieve political aims was confined to a few visionaries and, even at the end of that war, volunteering for the Jewish battalions of the British army remained controversial among Palestine's young pioneers. Semantically, until 1948 the Hebrew word *kibbush* (occupation, conquest) referred to taming the wilderness and mastering manual labour, agriculture and shepherding; in its most militant sense, it referred to guarding Jewish settlements. Terms such as *gdud* (battalion) or *pluga* (company) did not refer to military but to labour formations. The

armed Jewish force emerged late, in response to attacks and threats from the Arabs, and the key word in the process of its building was 'defence'. The ethos of using force was, as Anita Shapira showed in *Land and Power*, defensive – at least until the Palestinian Arab Revolt of 1936–39.

Since then, 'defence' has not necessarily been perceived in tactical terms. Tactically, the Yishuv's youth did become aggressive. Yet, the use of the word defence symbolized a broader perception of the Zionist enterprise as being under constant threat from its Arab surroundings and, sometimes, also from other powers. It implied that the Yishuv was the responding side, not the initiator of hostilities, even if and when it tactically took the initiative, unleashed the first blow or fired the first shot.

Unlike white societies in the British dominions, to which post-Zionists compare Zionism when they define it as national colonialism or colonialism that develops into territorial nationalism, Zionism voluntarily imposed restrictions on itself, consistent with the democratic principles of self-determination. It strove to achieve a demographic majority in the Land of Israel before gaining political control of the country. For the Zionists, a Jewish majority was a precondition of Jewish sovereignty. They believed that it was attainable through immigration rather than expulsion or annihilation as the whites did to Native Americans or Aborigines.

The Zionist case also defies economic theories of colonialism and sociological theories of migration movements. Palestine differed from the typical countries of colonialist emigration; it was underdeveloped and poor. Generally, Europeans had immigrated to countries rich in natural resources and poor in manpower in order to exploit their wealth. In contrast, Palestine was too poor to support even its indigenous population. By the end of the Ottoman period, natives of Palestine – Jews and Arabs both – were emigrating to seek their fortune in America and Australia.

The importation of Jewish private and national capital along with Zionist ideology compensated for the dearth of natural resources and accelerated the modernization of the Palestine backwater. Colonial movements totally lacked these two factors: the importation of capital and ideology (except for the missionary kind). On the whole, imperialist powers exploited colonies for the benefit of the mother country,

investing no more than was necessary towards that end. In contrast, the flow of Jewish capital to Palestine was in one direction only. Neither Britain nor the Jewish People derived any economic gain from the Zionist enterprise.

A central claim of the Zionism-is-colonialism school revolves around the takeover of Palestine's lands and the dispossession of Arab tenant farmers. Yet the argument does not stand close examination. Until 1948 Zionists did not conquer or expropriate land, but – unparalleled by colonial movements – bought up parcels in Palestine. Kimmerling wrote that between 1910 and 1944 land prices in Palestine multiplied by a factor of 52.5. According to his data, in 1910 the price of farmland in Palestine was twice its average price in the United States; in 1944 the ratio was 23:1. Between 1936 and 1944 land prices rose three times more than the cost of living index.[21]

In these circumstances, Palestinians could hardly resist the temptation to sell land to Jews. The sellers belonged to all the prominent clans of the Palestinian elite. Palestinian and some post-Zionist Israeli scholars blame the land sales and the eviction of Arab tenant farmers on foreign landowners such as the Sursuq family of Beirut, concealing the part played in such transactions by resident elite families, among them the leaders of the Palestinian national movement who separated personal profits from national sentiments.[22]

Upon Israel's statehood, circumstances changed again. State land (land registered in the name of the Sultan and, later, the British High Commissioner that passed to the government of Israel, *Waqf* land, land collectively held or tenured by Arab villages but not privately registered, absentees' land and uncultivated land) was requisitioned and private lands were expropriated. But the state compensated private owners, either monetarily or with alternative tracts, and individual Arabs continued to sell off holdings. The land trade has always been marred by underhandedness on everyone's part, but this cannot obfuscate the Palestinian fiasco in failing to check land sales, despite the violent measures against and numerous assassinations of land dealers and sellers throughout the twentieth century.

In contrast to other countries of immigration and colonialist settlement, Jewish immigrants had no wish to integrate into the existing, mainly Arab, economy or to overrun it. Barring certain reservations about the colonizers of the First Aliyah immigration wave, they laid the

foundation for a new, separate economy, free of the master-dependent relations characteristic of colonial societies.[23] During the Mandate period and in the early years of statehood, Jewish immigrants competed with indigenous Arabs and Arab immigrants from adjacent countries in urban and rural, public and private unskilled labour markets – as agricultural workers, in the building industry, as stonecutters, road builders, porters and stevedores.[24] Although *kibbush ha-'avoda* (the conquest of labour) had ideological, economic, social and political connotations, such competition between white settlers and natives in colonial countries was inconceivable.

A cultural appraisal, too, must exclude Zionism from the colonial paradigm. Contrary to the latter stereotype, Jews immigrating to the Land of Israel severed their ties to their countries of origin and their cultural past. Instead, they revived an ancient language and, on the basis of Hebrew, created a new culture that permeated every walk of life. The revival of Hebrew had begun in Eastern Europe and preceded Zionism, but the Zionist movement and the Yishuv implemented it in full. In the Land of Israel, Hebrew became the national language spoken by all: from kindergarten through higher education.[25]

Furthermore, all over the world colonial emigrants either quested after a lucrative future or sought to escape a dreary present. Jewish immigrants to the Land of Israel shared these motives, but their primary, unique impulse, distinguishing them from colonial movements, was to revive an ancient heritage. This aspiration was typical of national revival movements, not of colonialism.

The above arguments should suffice to refute Zionism's identification with colonialism were it not for the fact that the would-be historical case strongly impinges on the present. Long after most other national-liberation movements have achieved their goals and shed colonialism, Palestinians continue to tread water. This alone should have led Palestinian intellectuals and their western and Israeli sympathizers to re-examine their traditional paradigm. By cultivating the Zionist-colonialist prototype, Israeli historians and social scientists continue to nourish Palestinian evasiveness regarding *self*-examination and encourage them to proceed along a road to nowhere.

THE NEW HISTORY OF THE ARAB–JEWISH CONFLICT

With the colonial paradigm as their point of departure, post-Zionists focus on three main issues in the history of Zionism: its attitude to Arabs, to the Holocaust and Holocaust survivors, and to Jews from the lands of Islam. Their choice of interests is not accidental: apart from undermining Zionism as the authentic expression of Jewish nationalism, post-Zionists strike at the justification of Zionism and Jewish statehood in three systems of relations: Israel and its surroundings; Israel and the Jewish people; and Israel and its Jewish citizens, against whom it allegedly discriminates.[26]

The first issue, the history of the Arab–Israeli conflict, has been the most charged and complex, and the postmodern approach to the writing of history only aggravates the complexities. Historians writing on most wars and conflicts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can more or less detach themselves from the objects of their studies since these confrontations – the competition between colonial powers, the two world wars, the Third World's wars of liberation against colonial powers, the wars in Korea and Vietnam, and the Cold War – came to an end and are clearly separate from the present. The study of these conflicts is relatively free of the tensions and legacies of the past, and historians researching them are not party to former hostilities between Nazis and Communists, Britons and 'Huns', or Americans and Japanese or Chinese.[27]

The Arab–Israeli conflict is another matter. The clash is ongoing and there is no end in sight. None of the problems either left open at the end of Israel's War of Independence in 1949 or emerging later have been resolved. Every word written or uttered about that war, the subsequent major military confrontations and endless skirmishes along or within Israel's borders, or about Israel's attitude to its Arab citizens or its relations with Palestinians and the Arab World, has real ramifications. The issue is often discussed and interpreted not in its historical context, but in terms of the persistent conflict in the present and a view to the future.

The persistence of the conflict draws attention to its current aspects at the expense of its historical roots. The origins of the row have ostensibly lost their relevance. Ignorance is rife, memory is short, public opinion and politicians are impatient, and under these conditions propaganda successfully tackles historiography. Post-Zionists portray

the clash as a conflict between good and bad: in their eyes, being a victim is tantamount to being right and 'good', regardless of the reasons for the victim's situation, while being the victor is inherently wrong and 'bad'. Hence Zionism, the triumphant side, is nothing but colonialism of the worst kind, in the guise of a national liberation movement and a social revolution. At the end of the twentieth century, according to the post-Zionists, Israel was unmasked and exposed for what it is: an imperialist outpost in the Middle East, a sick capitalist society despite the avowed labour Zionist ideology that shaped it.[28]

In the 1950s and 1960s early Israeli historiography and fiction held up the 1948 war as a miracle. Like the ancient glory of David versus Goliath, or of the Maccabeans, it was portrayed as the triumph of the few over the many, the weak over the strong, the just over the unjust. To magnify the heroic achievement, writers blamed Britain for covertly orchestrating the Palestinian onslaught on the Yishuv and Israel's invasion by Arab armies. They condemned the British for attempting to thwart Jewish statehood and deny Israel the fruits of victory. This naive approach changed with the progress of academic research on the war and its consequences.[29]

In the course of the 1970s attitudes in western academia changed towards Israel, becoming more critical. In Israel, early signs of this transformation appeared in the mid-1980s. In 1984 Tom Segev published *1949: The First Israelis*, in which he condemned the prevailing interpretation of Israeli history and attempted to show that the growing polarization of Israeli society had been endemic in the Jewish state since its founding.[30]

In the late 1980s Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim and Pappé shifted the focus of research from Israel's accomplishments to the Palestinian ordeal in 1948. Respectively, they portrayed the Palestinians as victims of (Israeli) violence and oppression, of (Israeli–Transjordanian) collusion, and of (British and Arab) treacherous diplomacy. In a later book, Pappé portrayed the Israelis as uncompromising conquerors, wicked and pitiless, that cynically exploited the Holocaust to win the world's backing for the establishment of a Jewish state to the detriment of the Palestinians' rights to their country. The appearance of these books in the West, and some of them later in Israel, in Hebrew, provoked intense public debate and contributed to the growing interest in Zionist history and historiography. From academe, the debate spilled over into public discourse in Israel and abroad.[31]

The writers' self-proclaimed title of new historians implied objectivity and open-mindedness as opposed to the allegedly engaged and partisan old historians.[32] The new historians revised the traditional presentation of the 1948 war and its aftermath, but their varying methodological approaches, standards of professional performance and historical analysis have been as open to criticism as those of their predecessors and 'old' contemporaries.[33] Nor is there cause to assume that the revisionists have been more impartial and freer of ideological bias than other historians. Wittingly or unwittingly, by sketching the Palestinians of 1948 and after as innocent victims of conspiracies and atrocities, the new historians significantly bolstered the Palestinian charge that Israel was conceived and born in sin.[34] Anyone familiar with the sources and unprejudiced will find this simplistic approach unconvincing. The Palestinians have indeed been victims – in 1948 and ever since – but they were very far from being innocent. They have been the victims of their own pugnacity, intransigence and lack of realism.

Morris linked the emergence of the new historians and their revised picture of the conflict to the changing generations and the opening up of the archives. Kimmerling argued that the growing openness of Israeli society was more significant than the opening of the archives.[35] Pappé initially shared Morris's approach, maintaining that the new history emanated from archival findings, 'not necessarily from an awareness of the change in the historians' self-perception nor even from an awareness of the passage of time'.[36] A few years later Pappé modified his stance, adopting a seemingly moralist position: 'It is not the historical materials but a new moral consciousness that has opened up for us interesting and troubling questions in regard to our past.'[37]

Whatever the reasons for their emergence, the new historians have never been a school or even a coherent group with a single message. They clung to independent approaches and employed different methodologies of varying value to revise the previous, common representation of the conflict. Morris, for example, is an empiricist and has remained faithful to the documentary evidence, though sometimes his conclusions may be disputed. He refuted both versions of the birth of the refugee problem, the Israeli and the Palestinian. However, he refuted the Israeli version loudly and the Palestinian version in a whisper. His critics and advocates ignored what he wrote about the Palestinian narrative, quarrelling over his criticism of the Israeli one. Recently,

Morris has been blamed by his former friends of returning to 'the old narrative' because he refused to join their propagandist campaign that blamed Israel for deliberate ethnic cleansing in 1948.[38]

Avi Shlaim uncovered significant Arab–Israeli contacts, such as the connection between the Jewish Agency and, later, Israel, and King Abdullah, as well as between Israel and Syrian dictator Husni al-Za'im. These accounts had been on the grapevine earlier; Ber mentioned the alleged collusion with Abdullah in a book he wrote in prison.[39] Shlaim adopted the gist of Ber's thesis and was the first to provide some documentary basis and a historical explanation for the story. He made extensive use of oral testimonies though his Israeli and Jordanian witnesses often led him to a dead end. Shlaim (at least in the early 1990s) was more open to criticism as evinced by his withdrawal from the 'collusion' in the title of his first book on the subject. The revised edition was named *The Politics of Partition*.

Pappé, in the 1990s, presented himself as a relativist historian claiming equal rights for the Palestinian narrative. A few years later, apparently following an epiphany, he was reborn a positivist, discovering the existence of 'objective and definitive truth'. This objective truth is the new Palestinian narrative, which claims that there was no war in Palestine in 1948 but ethnic cleansing, initiated and planned by the Jews. Pappé calls anyone who does not accept this definitive truth, a Nakba denier. Moreover, he holds that the war 'should be reconstructed on the basis of its victims' testimonies rather than their victimizers' documents'.[40] Such evidence apparently allows him to argue that 'only the Egyptian army invaded the Jewish State in 1948'. Thus, by a stroke of the pen (or a click on the keyboard), he amended the Partition Resolution, excluding from the Jewish state the Jordan Valley, the Beisan Valley and the Sharon, which were invaded and attacked by Syrian and Iraqi armies.[41]

These are mere trifles in Pappé's eyes when compared to the wrongs he maintains were done to the Palestinian Arabs. He openly declares that historical research and writing have a political end and that everything – truth, honesty, integrity, methodology – is apparently subordinate to this end.[42] His demand to legitimize an ideological approach to history is a cover for ignorance and methodological negligence. In one of his recent books, Morris found dozens of elementary, factual and chronological errors.[43]

What initially appeared to be a common revisionist front challenging a virtual establishment of old historians has gradually disintegrated. Pappé, Shlaim and others have radicalized their anti-Israeli stances, while Benny Morris, the copywriter of the term 'new historians', has updated his work and gained wide acceptance and recognition in Israel and abroad. When the new historians and critical sociologists first burst upon the scene, most of them were outsiders attacking the historiographic and sociological establishment. Today, they all belong to the academic community in Israel or abroad. They hold tenured university positions and the polemics have been extended from their research and writing to their teaching and supervision.

THE INVENTION OF 'ISRAELI MILITARISM'

While revisionist historians focused on the War of Independence in 1948, critical sociologists targeted 'Israeli militarism'. Several critical sociologists maintain that the Arab–Israeli conflict is the key to understanding Israeli history and Israeli society. Yagil Levy and Yoav Peled dismissed the approach of their functionalist colleagues on the nexus between the conflict and the evolution of Israeli society, and rejected the idea that the Six Day War was a turning point in the history of both. In their view, the functionalists were tripped up by reading the conflict as an external phenomenon shaped by changing regional and international realities. Having failed to study the conflict in the context of the evolution of Israel's social order, or to detect the reciprocal influence of the two, the functionalists, they claimed, regarded its effects on society as an outside force. Levy and Peled held that the functionalists had adopted an ideological image of Israel as a society under siege, which they introduced into the academic discourse. Moreover, they contended, the Six Day War was anchored in the social order and therefore was neither a revolutionary nor a watershed event. It signified both continuity and change, articulating 'a strategy aimed at preserving the class power structure'.[44]

Post-Zionist sociologists define Israel as a militarist state. The turn to militarism, they say, was not forced on Israel by circumstances but was the consequence of its calculated choice to use force against the Arabs. In the late 1980s, University of Haifa sociologists Henri Rosenfeld and Shlomit Carmi wrote a long article titled 'The Rise of Militarist

Nationalism in Israel'. Contrary to the common view of Israel's steady evolution from a state-in-the-making to a state, they juxtapose the Yishuv with the state, finding a basic contrast in what they see as its post-statehood militarism. There was, they say, a break with the compromising approach that characterized the Mandate period, when the Yishuv sought integration and coexistence with the Arabs, in the spirit of the socialist brotherhood. After the War of Independence, Israeli society succumbed to a desire to expel the Arabs from the country.[45]

Factually, this peculiar theory stands on poor soil. The transition from Yishuv to state or from a voluntary community to a sovereign, hierarchical society was marked by continuity in several fields and change in others, some revolutionary. In the attitude to Arabs, however, there was no notable change. The Yishuv's attitude to the Arabs in the Mandate period had not been compromising, and the exercise of force had no connection to the state's founding; it had to do with the invasion of the Arab Liberation Army before independence and of Arab regular armies once the state was proclaimed. Holding up Israel as the antithesis to the Yishuv in its attitude to Arabs requires a uniquely warped view of both the Yishuv and the state.[46]

While the article brims with factual errors (for example, the maritime line Eilat–Nairobi), on certain points Rosenfeld and Carmi did raise some interesting, even convincing, ideas but the bulk of their article reads like a propaganda manifesto from the Cold War period. They aimed most of their darts at the once dominant Mapai party, their annoyance reminiscent of Zeev Sternhel's later complaint that Zionist socialists preferred nationalism to socialism and to changing the world. Similarly, the two sociologists condemned Mapai for retreating, after statehood, from socialism and its imperatives, such as the brotherhood of nations. Mapai had actually distanced itself from these principles long before, becoming a mass party instead of the party of a particular class.

Another Haifa University sociologist, Uri Ben-Eliezer, elaborated on the Israeli militarism manufactured by Rosenfeld and Carmi.[47] Militarism is commonly defined as: (1) an army's interference in state politics and civil life, including such phenomena as military putsches or military regimes; (2) a government policy of investing heavily in and strengthening the army; (3) the pursuit or celebration of military ideals; (4) military spirit; and (5) a policy of aggressive military preparedness. For Ben-Eliezer, militarism is a cultural phenomenon: a perception of

reality that considers war or violence an acceptable way to solve politi-
cal–diplomatic wrangles, and legitimizes the use of force for that purpose.
In fact, he argues, militarism is an ideology.

The use of violence has served many ideologies but it cannot be an
ideology in itself; it is a means, not an end. Ben-Eliezer intimates that
the Yishuv and Israel had several options open to them, but they chose
to exercise force. He dates the beginning of Israeli militarism to the
Arab Revolt of 1936 and its maturation to the Sinai War twenty years
later. One conspicuous peak in this process was Israel's taking of the
initiative in the later phases of the War of Independence. This time line
seemingly corresponds to Anita Shapira's description in *Land and
Power* of the shift from a defensive to an offensive ethos. However, an
offensive ethos is not militarism, especially since it emerged in response
to the growing Arab threat to the Yishuv during the revolt. It was not
an unprovoked move to expel Arabs.

Ben-Eliezer's historical explanation is even weaker than his definition
and periodization. He states, for example, that in 1937 Mapai's mode-
rate leaders, not acknowledging the existence of a Palestinian entity
deserving of a state, were compelled to accept the Royal Commission's
partition idea. The Royal Commission did not suggest establishing a
Palestinian state; it proposed enthroning Amir Abdullah of Transjordan
over the Palestinians and annexing the Arab part of Palestine to his
kingdom. If anything, Mapai's moderate leaders were in fierce disagree-
ment with their less moderate colleagues about the partition princple (not
its borders), and they were not coerced into accepting it.

Another typical misconception concerns the catchphrase coined by
Ben-Gurion in 1939 that it was time for a fighting Zionism. Ben-Eliezer
takes this as directed against the Arabs. But Ben-Gurion used it in the
context of the struggle against the British White Paper of May 1939
and British policy in the country.[48]

For Morris Janowitz or Samuel Huntington, the concept of 'militarism'
referred to the role of the military in a civil society. Ben-Eliezer argues
that this dichotomy was appropriate for western countries, though not
for the Third World or communist countries, nor for militarist states such
as Germany, France and Japan in the nineteenth century or for Israel in
the twentieth century.[49] This is false. Communist states maintained a strict
separation between civil and military spheres, the Communist party (read:
civil) keeping tight rein on the army. In the Third World, there is so

much variance that it is impossible to generalize about civil–military relations. In France and Germany militarism was a social rather than an ideological or political phenomenon. As for Israeli militarism, this is where Ben-Eliezer's explanation is most surprising.

His chief argument is that the Jewish political leadership 'bought' the army's loyalty and agreement not to interfere in civil decision-making by consenting to the military's use of strong-arm tactics to solve the Arab problem. In other words: to avoid regular militarism the leadership adopted Ben-Eliezer's special interpretation of the concept. This process, he maintains, began during the Arab Revolt. By 1948 the 'military status groups', as he calls the Haganah and the Yishuv's other paramilitary organizations, had succeeded in imposing their policy on the leadership. Under their pressure or influence, the leaders legitimized the use of force towards solving the conflict, giving this recourse precedence over other solutions of compromise or diplomacy.[50]

The thesis is wobbly. Israel's leadership, or more precisely, Ben-Gurion, did not 'buy' the Haganah's loyalty; he bent the Haganah to his will in a series of crises, from the policy of restraint in the Arab Rebellion of 1936–39 to the cessation of the armed struggle against the British after Operation Agatha in late June 1946, his resignation amid the war in July 1948, and his return to office two days later. Similarly, Ben-Eliezer ignored Ben-Gurion's efforts to impose his authority on the army during and immediately after the War of Independence: his clashes with Yigal Alon over the conquest of the West Bank late in 1948 and the withdrawal from Sinai in January 1949.

Above all, Ben-Eliezer forgets to present the diplomatic solution or possible terms that were at all feasible between 1936 and 1956. To this day, the resolution of the conflict has remained a political – not a historical or sociological – problem, and it cannot be sought in authoritative scientific solutions. The inherent dilemmas were instructively treated by Ami Gluska, albeit for a later period, in his book about the lead-up to the Six Day War.[51] The Arabs had rejected all compromise solutions during the above-mentioned twenty-year period, including the British White Paper of May 1939, which went a long way towards meeting their demands. Without pointing to a real Arab partner capable of delivering the goods for a diplomatic solution, and without estimating the cost of such a solution, it is mere historical fantasy to grouse about a Zionist ideology of force.

For his authoritative sources, Ben-Eliezer cites Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser and British anthropologist Raymond Williams. The relevance to the Haganah of Williams' Marxist cultural theory or Gramsci's theory on the ideology–hegemony nexus, let alone Althusser's article on ideology and state, is, nothing short of peculiar. To introduce theories from a different conceptual world, play with words and indulge in intellectual hair-splitting cannot compensate for the lack of a factual basis.

Ben-Eliezer's history suffers from scads of errors. For example, he declares that Operation Nahshon in April 1948 was the most meaning-ful landmark in the institutionalization of Israeli militarism, inaugurating it as a key factor in politics. Historians agree that Operation Nahshon was a major milestone in the war, though not for the reasons Ben-Eliezer gives. He attributes its importance to the alleged realization that the only way to establish a state was through the use of arms and by occupying territories beyond the UN Partition borders to which Israel had publicly committed itself. Israel has never committed itself to the Partition borders. To this very day, it has consistently refrained from defining boundaries within Palestine. In Operation Nahshon the Haganah gained control of hills and villages overlooking the road to Jerusalem in order to bring in supplies to the besieged city; the opera-tion was not aimed at statehood or redrawing borders for an as yet unborn state.

Nor does Ben-Eliezer make it clear who it was the Yishuv might have negotiated with in April 1948. Talks with Fawzi al-Qawuqji, the field commander of the Arab Liberation Army, did take place. They, however, broke down when the Lebanese *condottieri* demanded that his Jewish interlocutors place themselves under his protection and he launched an attack on Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'Emek. As for Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni or Hasan Salame, who led the Palestinian *Mujahidin*, there was obviously no room for negotiations. The same was true of the Mufti in Cairo. If this is the underpinning of Ben-Eliezer's 'most mean-ingful landmark', one wonders how much evidence he has for other, less significant milestones in Israeli militarism.

Ben-Eliezer's methodology is as faulty as his arguments. His chronology is filled with errors. He uses his primary sources, mainly Ben-Gurion's diary and the protocols of Israel's Provisional Govern-ment and the Histadrut (Labour Federation) Va'ad HaPo'el (Action

Committee), capriciously, selectively and tendentiously. Usually, he refers to friendly secondary sources that back his arguments; when there aren't any, he brings forward other secondary sources to claim that they support his thesis. Since some of my own books are among his references, I can state without hesitation that, not only do they *not* support his assertions, but the two are mutually contradictory.[52] A scholarly work may legitimately aim to empower a political or ideological stance, as Ben-Eliezer endeavours to do in his book. Such an empowerment, however, requires higher, not lower, academic standards. Ben-Eliezer does not come close to meeting the requirements.

Motti Golani's treatment of Israeli militarism is more moderate though not much sounder. He argues that Zionism became accustomed to the use of force as is inevitable in a society living under prolonged conflict, and that force leads to either hatred or exhaustion. In his view, Israel's use of force culminated in the 1973 war and ever since, Israeli society has been trying to 'kick the habit' of its intoxication with power.[53] Both theses, Ben-Eliezer's and Golani's, treat Israel in isolation from Arab positions, demands and actions, as if history depended solely on Israeli aspirations and stances.

FACE TO FACE WITH PALESTINIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

The age of the 'other' and affirmative action (or reverse discrimination) brought Israeli historiography face to face with its Arab counterpart. Given the inaccessibility of archives in Arab countries, even to their own scholars, one can hardly speak of an Arab historiography of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Important corpuses of Arab primary source material do exist in Israeli, British and American archives, but most Arab scholars have shunned them, showing little interest in the documents or in what they represent. These scholars generally offer a counter-history based on tendentious readings and interpretations of selective Israeli documents and studies. Sporadically, they use British and American sources, drawing heavily on declarative UN papers, memoirs, grassroots oral testimonies and the press.[54]

In an attempt to antedate the formation of their national identity (to prove that the Jews usurped Palestine from an existing national entity), Palestinians treat as historiography – not as sources – almost every genre of writing: journalistic, legal, didactic, ethnographic and folklorist. Since

the time of the British Mandate, their writing has aimed primarily at substantiating Palestinian grievances against Zionism and Britain, and emphasizing that the country had been Arab. 'For most Palestinian historians', wrote Tarif Khalidi, 'history was a national legacy to be used for reinforcing the ongoing debate with the Zionists and the British over the issue of the right to Palestine.'[55]

Lacking access to Arab archives, Palestinian writers have increasingly turned to poetry, literature and folklorist sources – folk songs, folk stories and oral testimonies – in a quasi-grassroots historical approach.[56] Occasionally, they refer readers to works of Israeli scholars, mainly (though not exclusively) those who adopted the Palestinian narrative. Their use of Israeli works has been selective: Palestinian scholars who often embrace Benny Morris's criticism of the Israeli explanation for the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem, ignore or repulse his criticism of Palestinian explanations.[57]

For many years Arab writing on the *Nakba* and its consequences was recriminatory rather than analytical. Palestinian office holders who wrote memoirs on the 1948 war hardly ever condemned the Jews. First and foremost they accused their own leadership and the Arab states of negligence, blaming them for the catastrophe that befell their people. Nimr al-Hawari, the commander of the Palestinian militia *al-Najada* and later an Israeli district judge in Nazareth, held the Mufti and Arab Higher Executive responsible. Nimr al-Khatib, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Haifa, criticized the Arabs for their lack of preparedness, while the Mufti and his aides censured Arab governments.[58]

Arab historiography has been obsessed with the question of injustice and unfairness. Arab scholars have largely ignored the full context of events, scarcely endeavouring to find out what really happened – the how or why. Instead, they dwelt on right or wrong, legitimate or illegitimate claims, ascribing undue significance to judicial or declarative documents such as UN resolutions. They avoided any mention of the stubborn resistance of Arab states to UN resolutions (181 – on Partition, and 194 – on, among other things, refugees, on which the Palestinians base their demand of the 'right of return'). Only in the wake of their military defeats did the Arabs turn to the UN resolutions, which they had vehemently opposed and obstructed, making them the cornerstone of their case. Israel was forty years old by the time the PLO joined the club of Arab states demanding, since 1949, the implementation of the

Partition borders; in 1988 the PLO hesitantly endorsed Resolution 181. Ashamed to admit that the tiny Jewish Yishuv on its own, without outside help, had defeated the Arab expeditionary forces, Arabs sought to alleviate the humiliation they felt by pointing to accomplices. Immediately after the war they accused Britain of betraying them, reproached the US for supporting its Zionist protégés and condemned King Abdullah of Transjordan, the only Arab ruler to profit from the general debacle, as a collaborator.[59]

The books appearing in Arab countries after the war and the translated Arab documents published in Israel – summaries, commission of inquiry reports and memoirs – teem with mutual recrimination: they simultaneously glorify the Arab military war achievements and blame Arab politicians of regimes that soon collapsed because of the war's devastating results.[60]

One noteworthy exception – despite its apologetic tone – is Arif al-Arif's six-volume history of the war, written in the 1950s. Unfortunately, it has not been translated and remains inaccessible to most Israeli or western readers. Recent Arab works on the conflict may be more sophisticated, wielding fashionable academic jargon, but none approximate to al-Arif's thoroughness and relative accuracy.[61]

Apart from official Jordanian historiography, Arab and Palestinian works on the war have deliberately disregarded the fact that Abdullah literally saved the Palestinians twice: the first time, by invading the Arab part of Palestine; the Arab Legion's participation was a necessary precondition for the establishment of the Arab coalition and the invasion. The second time was Abdullah's decision to quit the war and negotiate with Israel, thus preventing the occupation of the West Bank by the IDF. Not only Arab historians but Shlaim too ignored the Palestinians' thanklessness, depicting Abdullah's actions as collusion against them.

The primary goal of Arab historiography is to prove that Israel is a bastard state. Palestinians have portrayed Israel as conceived and born in sin, and Zionism as an ideology of force aiming, from the start, to conquer and expel the unarmed, helpless Palestinians. Taking their cue from Edward Said, Palestinian historiography since the 1980s has focused on two themes: (1) the refugee problem; and (2) the lost Arab world that had prospered in the country until 1948. The original criticism directed against the Palestinian leadership and Arab states left the stage. In its place, Israel was charged with the deliberate, systematic expulsion of

Palestinians to allow for the hundreds of thousands of immigrants the Jews planned to bring to their new state. This line prevails in Palestinian historiography to this day.[62]

Palestinian scholars writing on the refugee problem have ignored the bulk of relevant source material. In general, they have turned a blind eye to the historical context, such as the impact of combat or socio-economic conditions on mass flight. Instead, they chose to collect testimonies and publish memoirs of personal experiences during the *Nakba* and on Palestinian society in the pre-war period, which they represent as a Palestinian golden age. This may be seen as a particular Palestinian expression of the broader wave of memory and nostalgia sweeping the world. It is, however, not a flight *to* the past, but *from* it: there was no golden age at all before 1948; it was an age of misery, iron, blood and fire.

Contrary to the ethnographic-folklorist approach portraying the pre-*Nakba* years as a golden age, Rashid Khalidi argues that the roots of the *Nakba* are to be sought precisely in that period. These were the structural weakness of the Palestinian political institutions and con-straints on their actions; the fragmentation and factionalism of the Palestinian elite; the failure of the 'politics of notables'; the personal shortcomings of the leaders and the fiasco of the Palestinian revolt in the 1930s. All these, he claims – thus far correctly – predetermined the outcome of the 1948 war. The Palestinian state that the UN resolved to create in November 1947 did not materialize because it was strangled at birth. The Palestinians killed it by rejecting Partition – though Khalidi refrains from citing this as the main reason. He further argues that the Palestinians never had a chance against Israel's enormous military superiority. In addition, he condemns the Arab states for colluding with Britain and Israel, and the world of being indifferent to the Palestinian fate.[63]

Khalidi's book *The Iron Cage* is neither a historical study nor a political or ideological essay. Basically, it is an apology. He attempts to exonerate the Palestinians from their failure to achieve national goals in the twentieth century and their indefatigable fumbling in the present century. He thus blames everyone but the Palestinians themselves, including their old and new leaderships (that is, pre- and post-1948) as if the latter were an entity distinct from their people. On the face of it, he makes no bones about Palestinian follies and even discusses many of

their less prudent positions – yet he always finds someone else to blame, someone who is ultimately responsible for them.[64]

Should Arab 'new historians' ever emerge, one can only wonder what they will produce. Recent Arab works already brandish post-modern gobbeldy-gook and social science theorization though they are still weighed down by gross factual and chronological errors. The writers hardly use non-Arab source material, while their Arab sources are limited and sporadic. Often, they rely on a single dubious source (such as a book of memoirs), adopting its arguments without ascer-taining the latent motives.[65] Another trendy current focuses on grass-roots counter-history, which completely ignores documents and relies on subjective memories of the *Nakba*. Its underlying assumption – much like that of the post-Zionists – is that the victims are just and innocent by their very victimhood, while the victorious must be wrong and immoral. This is the tack taken by Ahmad Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod in a recent book they edited, while Pappé openly de-clared that the *Nakba* should be studied through the testimonies of the victims, not through the documents of the victimizers. This, of course, is anything but historiography.[66]

Post-Zionists maintain that since Palestinian historiography repre-sents the 'other', it deserves status equal to Israeli historiography – never mind its propagandist nature and poor professional standards. They regard Palestinian and other Arab works as a counterweight to the Israeli historiography of the conflict or, at least, as a supplement that can lead to the creation of a joint or agreed narrative.[67] Palestinians, however, tend to insist that their narrative be accepted in advance, before any serious discussion of the evidence. They deem any demand to first discuss the evidence as a typical reflection of arrogant orientalism. Hence, a joint debate of Israeli and Palestinian historiographies is possible only if the Jewish side is ready to adopt the Palestinian narra-tive lock, stock and barrel.

FROM MELTING POT TO MULTICULTURALISM

The second key issue in Israeli historiography – the absorption and integration of the 1950s mass immigration and its impact on post-Yishuv Israeli society – began to be studied by historians rather late. The first to describe and analyse the handling of immigrant absorption

and integration were Hebrew University functionalist sociologists in the 1960s and 1970s. While they criticized various elements of the process, they nevertheless agreed about the necessity of modernization or what was called, at the time, 'the melting pot' policy. In recent years, however, they have been reproached by their critical successors for allegedly concealing the ulterior motives behind the absorption processes and ignoring the repression of immigrant cultures. The critical sociologists have also suggested extending the colonialist paradigm described above to Zionism's attitude towards Jews from the lands of Islam.[68]

Because of the late start of historical research into this field, the functionalists did not have a historiographic framework for their studies. Their younger critical colleagues, on the other hand, had the works of post-Zionist historians to rely on. Nonetheless, the historical basis of their arguments is questionable. Raz-Krakotzkin complained that Zionist historical and ethnographic studies of the old Yishuv missed the opportunity to merge the new arrivals from Europe with the existing culture and tried to impose a new one. He maintained that the immigrants viewed the local Jews as part and parcel of oriental Jewry and Arab culture. Therefore, he argued, 'the institution of [Jewish] nationalism relied from the beginning on orientalist practices'.[69] In post-Zionist jargon, *orientalism* has become a code word for colonialist hubris. Yet Raz-Krakotzkin ignored the disdain of the old Yishuv's Sephardi aristocracy for the new immigrants from Eastern Europe in the early days of the Zionist immigration. His work later served Gil Eyal's thesis on the history of *Mizrahanut* (expertise in Middle Eastern affairs) that lumped together Israel's attitude to Arabs and to Jews from the lands of Islam.[70]

One original, peculiar view of the Zionist attitude to Jews from Arab and Muslim countries is offered by Yehouda Shenhav. He describes the work of a group of Solel Boneh Jewish engineers and artisans in Abadan (Iran) during the Second World War as 'Zionist colonialist settlement' serving both British interests – the takeover of Iranian oil – and Jewish national interests – the 'Zionist project' – by establishing contacts with Iraqi and Iranian Jewries.[71]

Shenhav drew on Foucault to portray the employees as a symbol of the colonialist alliance between Zionism and Britain. He wrote about Abadan but targeted the entire Middle East, Zionism and Israel's role in the region:

The Abadan project, made possible by Great Britain, constituted a Zionist bubble in colonial space … The presence of Solel Boneh in the region constructed the space as a place without geography by deterritorializing it … a site that was managed as a hybrid territory, part British and part Zionist … In the Abadan project, heterogeneous chronicles – European time, local time, Zionist time, and colonial time – converged in the same place.[72]

Drawing on two other postmodernist thinkers, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Shenhav also asserted that the Abadan project 'was an act of deterritorialization that appropriated a seemingly uniform, homogeneous continuum and redefined it'.[73]

Any observer of the Iraq–Iran war in the 1980s, the subsequent two Gulf Wars and events in Iraq since 2003 can only wonder where Shenhav stumbled upon the homogeneity and unity he ascribes to the region – sundered by various national, tribal, ethnic, religious and other conflicting identities – and how the Abadan project appropriated them. Solel Boneh's team arrived in Abadan as part of the Allied war effort to build and maintain a new refinery. The company executed a similar project in the Bahrain Islands where there were hardly any Jews. The talks with Iraqi and Iranian Jews were limited to the small communities of Abadan and Basra, and the employees played a minor role in liaising between the Yishuv and Iraqi Jewry. This was done mainly in Baghdad by emissaries of the Jewish Agency and the Pioneer (*HeHalutz*) movement, with the assistance of Jewish soldiers in the British army stationed in Iraq, and of local Zionist activists. Contrary to Shenhav's contrivance, the Abadan project did not play any significant part in preparing the ground for what he calls 'Jewish migration to *Filastin*'.

Unconnected to the anti-Zionist propaganda of Shenhav and his ilk, the attitude of the organized Yishuv to Jews from the Middle East was indeed supercilious and marked by alienation. Many in the Yishuv, particularly in the Labour Zionist movement, associated them with 'the East' or 'the Orient', and everything that they might have thought or imagined came under this rubric, from Jerusalem's Sephardi old Yishuv to the village *fellahin* living next door to a kibbutz. This issue was discussed long before post-Zionism mobilized it to deconstruct Israeli identity.[74] Apart from his postmodern jargon and references to questionably relevant theories of Foucault and others – such as the 'theoretical' statement that the Abadan project was 'a laboratory for crossbreeding

ethnic identities' – Shenhav has not contributed anything novel about the attitude of the Labour Zionist movement or the Yishuv to Jews from Arab countries.

According to Yagil Levy and Yoav Peled, mainstream sociologists writing on Israeli society had meant Israeli-Jewish society, disregarding the Arabs. As if there was no national conflict in the country, Sami Smoocha added that Israeli democracy was not consensual but ethnic – for Jews only, and Oren Yiftachel developed the concept of ethnocracy.

Shlomo Swirsky and Shenhav portrayed the absorption of the 1950s mass immigration as a conspiracy of the Ashkenazi establishment to exploit and repress the immigrants. Along with Kimmerling and Pappé, they argued that the approaches and findings of mainstream scholars were affected by the fact that they belonged to the elites, that they were high up on the stratification ladder or that they were Ashkenazi males – all of which accounts for their adherence to the Zionist narrative.[75] One might note that many of their critics belonged to the same white, male, Ashkenazi elites. Be that as it may, sociologists are not committed to history's research methods and they are certainly entitled to their own professional views and conclusions. While many of them have written on the past, this does not make either their findings or their allegations about the absorption of immigrants 'history'. The few historical studies that did address the same issues have categorically refuted all suggestion of a conspiracy against the immigrants, whether Holocaust survivors or Jews from the lands of Islam. To be sure, they describe the many mistakes made at the time, but these were made innocently, under dire conditions, which the critical writers choose to ignore.[76]

Several post-Zionist historians and social scientists followed the lead of the critical sociologists and accused Zionist historians of patronizing, orientalist writing on the Jews from Muslim countries. Gabriel Piterberg applied Said's *Orientalism* to the manner in which the Zionist discourse related to the eastern mentality, to show the former's influence on the exclusion and marginalization of oriental Jews. He replayed the gist of Ram and Raz-Krakotzkin's criticism of Dinur and Baer, in whom – according to post-Zionists – Zionist historiography apparently begins and ends. His main contribution was to accuse the two of orientalism.[77]

Henrietta Dahan-Kalev attacked the melting-pot policy in Israel of the 1950s and 1960s from a different angle – autobiographical, feminist and oriental. In a bitter article smacking of a strong sense of discrimination, she presented herself as a multifaceted, repressed woman, a victim of European, colonialist, western and Zionist repression that had fought for her right to be recognized as 'other'.[78]

Contrary to the hegemonic image that post-Zionists ascribe to it, the melting-pot policy was simply the social revolution that Zionism sought to generate in the Jewish people and the Yishuv. To some degree, it succeeded, at least temporarily. The revolution revolved around the ideal of the 'new Jew'. The vision articulated romantic and anti-intellectual trends, such as Max Nordau's aspiration to replace the Diaspora Yeshiva prototype with a 'muscular Judaism'.[79] It also conveyed elements of rebelliousness, as seen in Bialik's protest poem, *Be-Ir Ha-Harega* (In the city of slaughter), against the cowardice, passivity and compliance of the young Jews of Kishinev in the pogrom of 1903.[80]

The model of the new Jew emerged from a combination of the negation of exile (life in the Diaspora, particularly in the Russian Pale), socialist ideology and vanguard elitism, on the one hand, and a realistic appreciation of life's hardships in the Land of Israel, a lesson learned by the pioneers of the Second Aliyah. The result was the pioneer: mobilized on behalf of the Jewish People, country and society, he did manual labour, tamed the wilderness, revived the Hebrew language and shaped the new Hebrew culture. From the 1936–39 Arab Revolt, security issues and the Yishuv's defence were perceived as equal in status to the pioneering mission.[81]

Contrary to the impression the post-Zionists have tried to create, the melting-pot approach – meant to remove the disabilities of the Diaspora and build the basis for a new, healthy society in the Land of Israel – was not introduced to assimilate oriental Jews or repress their culture. It was aimed originally at Jewish youth from Eastern Europe. The *shtetl* youngster arriving on *hakhshara* (training camp for would-be pioneers) at Klosova or Gorochov in Poland voluntarily submitted to a Spartan re-education that overwhelmed even visitors from Palestine, such as labour leader Berl Katznelson. It was tougher than anything encountered later by the immigrants to the country.[82]

All the immigrants during the Mandate period, as well as the old Yishuv of oriental Jews and the immigrants that arrived after statehood,

had to contend with the dominant ethos of the mobilized, pioneer core that advocated the melting pot. Most adjusted. A minority remained alienated. But all influenced the image of the Yishuv person in this melting pot, distancing it from the original, desirable vision of the new Jew.[83]

The model of the new Jew was the pivot of the melting-pot concept and suited the Zionist social experiment in the 1920s. Even in those years, however, most immigrants did not satisfy the rigorous criteria explicitly adopted by the Zionist organization. The gap between the ideal and the real widened in the next decade. Against the background of the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, and the subsequent worsening of the plight of European Jewry, circumstances changed and the pioneering nucleus had to absorb large numbers: the Yishuv's population more than doubled in 1931–36, and Israel's, again in 1948–51. Under the growing pressure on the country's gates, Zionist immigration policy became less selective, initially by force of circumstance – as European Jews fled Europe – and then because there was no alternative – in efforts to bring the survivors of a drastically decimated European Jewry to the country's shores.

The two periods of mass growth and the interim years overlapped the era of the Arab rebellion, the Second World War, the anti-British struggle, the War of Independence and the trials of recovering from that war – austerity and rationing. The veteran Yishuv society stood the absorption tests successfully. It did so despite the hardships endured by old-timers and newcomers alike, and despite the many mistakes made by absorbers and the bitterness felt by the absorbed. This is the main point. And this is what post-Zionist criticism ignores. Shifting the spotlight from centre stage to the wings, it dwells on trivia.

Moshe Lissak has argued that critical sociology has dodged the real issues of Israeli society, such as the absorption of Russian immigrants or the sociology of Israeli political culture, choosing to deal with social psychology, collective memory and symbolic anthropology. Although these are legitimate areas of interest, he considers the field's alienation from the macro-sociological questions of Israeli society an unwelcome development.[84]

Lissak dismissed the arguments of critical sociologists who accused their predecessors of conforming with the socio-cultural policies of Mapai governments in the 1950s and 1960s. According to him, a research group

under Shmuel Eisenstadt had already rejected the melting-pot concept in immigrant settlements in the 1950s, and recommended changing the patterns of absorption. Contemporary anthro-pologists, too, questioned various aspects of the absorption policy. At the same time, all the scholars agreed at the time that modernization was important for the immigrants so as to enable them to function in modern society. Lissak admitted that the modernist paradigm had not covered all the issues of absorption and pointed to the contribution of several critical sociologists to completing the picture with empirical research.[85]

Israeliness, Kimmerling asserted a few years ago, is a vanishing invention.[86] Today, the melting-pot concept may appear to have been misguided, especially since the current winning catchword is *multicultur-alism*. The present predicaments of Israeli society, however, shed very little light on the past. The rise of multiculturalism in Israel is not due to the failure of absorption back in the 1950s and 1960s, but to a variety of processes that affected Israeli society in the past two or three decades: decreasing external pressures, new waves of immigration, an influx of foreign labourers, a growing minority consciousness, widening economic gaps, and, primarily, the changing ethos from collectivism to individualism. Multiculturalism and the politics of identity and memory mark a retreat from social solidarity and pave the way for a dominant global and predatory capitalism, accompanied by individualism and hedonism in Israel as everywhere else.

The Holocaust between History, Memory and Commemoration

THE HOLOCAUST'S IMPACT ON THE HISTORY DISCIPLINE

The western, modernist, progressive, optimistic view of history was laid to rest once and for all by the Holocaust. This, at least, is what historians in the West claim. The 'for all' may be exaggerated, particularly as regards historians, but the Holocaust certainly played a significant role in the emergence a few decades later of postmodernism, born from the denial of progress and rationalism.

Much of the historiographic treatment of the *Shoah* to date has obscured the demarcation lines between research, memory and commemoration. Recent debates on the Holocaust further bolstered the fashionable postmodern view of memory as either a substitute for history or an alternative path to the past. Holocaust recollections of survivors, perpetrators and bystanders, as the ultimate traumatic memory, have become synonymous with collective memory and are subjected to theorization deriving primarily from psychoanalysis.

The main goal of the historiography has been to uncover what happened during the Holocaust – to the victims, the perpetrators and the observers who stood idly by. The *Shoah*, however, ceased to be the monopoly of historians if it ever was; for various reasons, several other disciplines have shown growing interest in it. Apart from adding knowledge in their respective spheres, they all endeavour to comprehend why the Holocaust happened and what it meant for the Jews and for a world that had believed in progress.

It remains a moot question whether or not historical knowledge lends insight into the human psyche and mind. Knowledge is no guarantee for understanding, especially when it comes to something as traumatic as the *Shoah*. Poetry like that of Paul Celan, films like Claude Lanzman's *Shoah* or a photography exhibition on ghetto life may show more

discernment about the Holocaust than extensive historical studies. Nonetheless, creative insight is not a substitute for knowledge of what happened, when and how.

In recent years, the academic discourse on the Holocaust has been appropriated by memory and trauma. Both concepts contribute little to our knowledge and understanding, and blur the lines between what happened and what people remember. Thus, Henri Rousso can be carried away to write about *Shoah*: 'This outstanding film, completed in 1985, is as unique and special as the event that it describes and will have a long term impact.'[1] With all due respect to Lanzmann and Rousso, there is an infinite difference between a film, no matter how forceful, and the Holocaust. Rousso's odd comment is just one example of the dangerous notion that representation is more meaningful and significant than the event itself.

THE HOLOCAUST AND THEORY

The Holocaust occupies centre stage in the debates of historians and theoreticians about historical reality, historical truth, objectivity and the status of facts. It is an extreme case of the triple contradiction between the meaning of past reality as knowledge, the representation of the past as opinion, and the relationship between the past's presence in the now and the past itself. Survivor testimonies are recorded to convey the meaning of the *Shoah*. In the twenty-first century, according to postmodernists, meaning is what 'we' are looking for.

Because of its enormous emotional and moral impact, the *Shoah* poses a special challenge to theories claiming that there is no historical reality but only fictional representations of history, which have equal value. If we were to be consistent with Hayden White's theory, for example, Holocaust denial would be legitimate on the basis of narratives' equality and the impossibility of deciding between them.

White was by no means a Holocaust denier. Following criticism of his approach, he retreated from his extreme relativism in the early 1970s, revising his stance in regard to the Holocaust: morally, it was out of the question to deny its reality, but at the same time it was impossible to establish objectively, through historical narrative, that it did take place.[2] In the 1990s he took another step back, excluding the Holocaust altogether from his theory. He said that some interpretations of the Nazi

period (that is, Holocaust denial) are unacceptable because they are incompatible with the historical facts.[3]

Exclusion of the Holocaust brought White's entire theory into question. Roger Chartier remarked that White reinstated the verified historical event through the back door, against the assumption that facts exist only in language. How, Chartier asked, was the historian to establish which facts and events deserve the special status of 'true', if not on the basis of the same rules and principles of the history discipline that White had dismissed? White left narrow margins for the potential differentiation between true and false – the Holocaust. Why, Chartier rightly asked, was this space to be limited? If historiography is capable of making this distinction in the case of the Holocaust, it should be capable of making it in principle in any other case.[4]

White's advocates complained that, by excluding the Holocaust, he had cut off the branch on which his general theory sat.[5] Hans Kellner stated that the Holocaust could not be represented rationally: anything written about it would either add unnecessary words or omit essential information. The testimonies, he claimed, do not tell us about the Holocaust – none of the witnesses saw the Holocaust with their own eyes since they are survivors, not victims [*sic*]. Moreover, the names used for what transpired in the Second World War are all rhetorically charged: Holocaust is a Greek word, taken from Homer and denoting the burning of a sacrifice on an altar. The Final Solution is a bit of Nazi irony. *Shoah* comes from a language not spoken by those involved and popularized as a result of Claude Lanzman's film [*sic*].[6]

The idea that the testimonies of survivors – whether of the death marches at the end of the war or the *Einsatzgruppen* executions who rose from the heaps of corpses in the Soviet Union – cannot represent the Holocaust because they emanate from eyewitnesses who did survive, is obtuse, cynical and patently ridiculous intellectualism. It reduces the *Shoah* to crematoria at a few extermination camps from which no one survived, and ignores everything else that should be included in the term *Holocaust*.

Kellner protested that the notion of making the Holocaust unique was contrary to everything White had said in the preceding twenty years or, at least, to how he had been understood. It reflected fear, he added – not fear of Holocaust denial, but fear that scholarship might suppress Holocaust memory. In Kellner's view, historical research was the real

threat to responsible representation of the Holocaust, and research was pointless if it did not contribute to its commemoration.[7]

Unlike White's frustrated followers, Carlo Ginzburg was disturbed by what he saw as White's *continued* adherence to his basic principles. He concluded from White's wrestling with the arguments of Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson that he had remained faithful to his original theory.[8]

The philosopher Berel Lang suggested that the question of the Holocaust could be summed up by the Wannsee Conference – did it or did not take place? The answers had to be mutually exclusive: either facts are the basis of history or history is what one wishes it to be. This holds true, he argued, not only for the stratosphere of explanation and interpretation where historians and readers float, but for the depths of the pits where facts, names, dates and numbers compete for a place in history – like the meeting of German bureaucrats known as the Wannsee Conference.[9]

THE HOLOCAUST AS AN 'INTELLECTUAL EXERCISE'

The postmodern discussion of the Holocaust has tackled problems of its representation though not the content it represented. It has reduced the Holocaust to the geographic and conceptual space between Wannseestrasse in Berlin and Auschwitz/Birkenau in Upper Silesia, ignoring all the rest: the historical background, ideological zeal, bureaucratic efficiency, bestiality, avaricious collaboration and a host of other phenomena.

A landmark in the evolution of this debate was a Los Angeles conference in 1990 that focused on the Holocaust in an attempt to probe the limits of representing historical events. It continued in *History and Theory* with some of the articles later reproduced in a postmodernist anthology edited by Keith Jenkins. For the postmodernist participants of these debates, the Holocaust was a test case. If they succeeded in refuting its historical reality, the obvious conclusion was that past reality could not exist in other, less extreme cases. If they failed, however, their entire historical theory would collapse. None of them were interested in the Holocaust as a historical phenomenon. As Gertrude Himmelfarb put it, for the postmodernists the Holocaust was not a historical event but a metaphoric problem. Of course, they have not denied it, but they have deconstructed it. They have treated it as 'a reality', not as reality.

They have set it aside and at the same time regarded it as part of a broader problem of genocide and suffering.[10]

American historian Wulf Kansteiner defined the Holocaust's uniqueness as 'a theory' used for empowering other goals. In his view, treating the Holocaust uniquely amounted to excluding Nazism from any context of historical continuity or similarity to other phenomena. This approach, he asserted, had been dominant until the historians' controversy broke out in Germany but up-to-date research has undermined it.[11] Except that the approach was never dominant – in Germany or elsewhere – and it did not need undermining. Since the 1960s Nazism has been researched both in the context of the continuity of German history and in comparison with other forms of fascism.[12]

For another American scholar, Robert Braun, the Holocaust was a theoretical exercise in the feasibility of representation and in posing universal moral challenges; the represented subject was of secondary significance. He claimed that there was an unresolved conflict between experiencing an event and recounting it. 'His' Holocaust, cut off from Europe, Germany and the Jews, was an event that occurred in undefined space and time:

> A nation [anonymous!], with the authority of its leader [anonymous!] decided and announced that it would kill off as completely as possible a particular group [anonymous!] of humans, including old people, women, children and infants, and actually put this decision in practice, using all the means of governmental power at its disposal.

Braun claimed that the questions about the Holocaust could be extended to history in general. He advised caution so that 'moral outrage not be intermingled with rational judgment'.[13]

Scrutinizing the approaches of three scholars – Saul Friedlander, LaCapra and Raul Hilberg – Michael Dintenfass contended that, each in his own way, had acknowledged the poverty of research and reconstruction to represent what had happened in the Holocaust. Friedlander distinguished between historical knowledge and comprehension, and looked for understanding beyond research findings. LaCapra argued that theory, particularly psychoanalysis, rather than the sources dictates how historians represent the past. Hilberg, a creative artist, used documents as his raw material.[14]

Dintenfass was right in emphasizing the poverty of historical research to explain the *Shoah*. Scholars of the Holocaust learn this lesson early on in their career. Back in the fall of 1974, in the first class of the first university course I taught, on an 'Introduction to the Holocaust', I already told students that historical knowledge and the tools of historical research are inadequate for comprehending the Holocaust. Possibly, the works of survivor-writers like Primo Levy or Aron Applefeld; psychotherapeutic case studies of survivors, or a special genre like Victor Fränkel's *Logotherapy* provide keener insight into the Holocaust and may explain it better than historical studies. Nevertheless, as I told my students at the time and still believe, it is both important and feasible to know what happened in the Holocaust even if knowledge does not ensure comprehension.

In contrast to the make-believe postmodern debate of the Holocaust and as evidence that the discussion could have taken a different course, one might read what LaCapra has to say about the weight of trauma in memory and history. Other historians and philosophers presenting an alternative include: Dan Diner, on the limits of historical understanding in the face of irrational behaviour such as that of the Nazis; Omer Bartov's book on the problems of representing the Holocaust; and Chris Lorenz's historiosophical analysis of the German historians' controversy.[15]

WHAT WAS THE HOLOCAUST?

With this question, Yehuda Bauer began his book, *Rethinking the Holocaust*. His answer was that the Holocaust was genocide, though different from all other cases of genocide. The principal difference was that there was no escape route; all were hermetically sealed, even Jews prepared to abandon their Jewish creed, identity and affiliation. The Nazi campaign against the Jews had no geographical, religious, utilitarian or other limits. Nazi ideology and propaganda presented Jews as a universal demon to be wiped out in all places, for all ages, at all costs; opting out of Judaism could not save them. Bauer also argued that the Holocaust may be explicable in principle though not in practice, and not by historians who did not go through the experiences of survivors.

The notion of experience as a precondition for understanding and explaining is shared by several scholars. However, any generalization about the experiences of the survivors is out of place. There was more

than one avenue of survival and each entailed separate experiences. Although there may have been similarities, each was unique and can represent and explain only itself, not the others. Furthermore, do Bauer (and others) mean to say that the next (that is, the current) generation of historians is in principle incapable of explaining the *Shoah*?

Bauer's explanation model converges on the Germans. The political elite of *Lumpenintellectualen* that seized power for reasons other than their racism was obsessed with messianic anti-Semitism and led the German nation to execute a program of genocide. Owing to the general German dislike of Jews, there was hardly any opposition.[16]

Arno Mayer stressed the Holocaust's distinctiveness as Judeocide (rather than genocide), though the Jews were not its only victims: 'The mass slaughter of the Jews of continental Europe during the first half of the twentieth century was an integral part of enormous historical convulsion in which Jews were the foremost but by no means the only victims', he wrote.[17] Mayer linked the Holocaust to earlier pogroms in Eastern Europe after the Bolshevik revolution and the First World War that had killed some 100,000 Jews and uprooted many more. He viewed the Second World War, and particularly the invasion of the Soviet Union, as vital preconditions for the mass murder.[18] The Germans, he stated rightly, were not the only ones to kill Jews. The majority of the central and East European peoples supported the Final Solution or took an active part in implementing it. Yet, the Jews were not Germany's principal enemies: 'If Hitler's worldview had any epicenter, it was his deep-seated animosity toward contemporary civilization and not his hatred for Jews, which was grafted onto it.'[19]

Mayer's explanation, like Bauer's, is partial. The Holocaust was indeed part of a broader historical quake, not just the racial messianism of a few thousand Germans or, as Daniel Goldhagen maintained, the centuries-old fanatic anti-Semitism of all Germans.[20] Yet, this explanation misses a central point. The *Shoah* was also the culmination of the Jewish problem that emerged with modernization and the formation of nation-states. In Western and central Europe the Jews' attempts to shed their distinctiveness and assimilate provoked modern anti-Semitic movements in the last third of the nineteenth century. Emancipation exacerbated competition between Jews and non-Jews, extended it to new fields and added novel dimensions to the Jewish problem. Racial anti-Semites insisted that Jews could not truly assimilate and their

emancipation threatened and undermined the nation from within. At the same time, traditional and popular anti-Semitism, occasionally encouraged by the Russian and Romanian governments and churches, continued to hold sway in Eastern Europe.

The collapse of Europe's multinational empires and the establishment of new nation-states after the First World War complicated and aggravated the situation of the Jews. In some new states (that is, Poland, Ukraine, Hungary), independence was accompanied by civil wars, riots and waves of pogroms. The minority treaties forced upon the new states by the victorious allies at the peace conference were gradually discarded. Livelihoods were decimated by the creation of new borders and the economic policies of the new nationalist governments. And in most new states, on top of their traditional pariah stereotypes, both religious and social, Jews were perceived as a menace to nation building and as the competitors of the new indigenous middle class that had led the national movements in these countries. The plight of East European Jews was further exacerbated by the halt to mass emigration after the promulgation of the American Laws of Immigration in the early 1920s.

The Nazi seizure of power, the end of emancipation and the political, legal, economic and social persecution of Jews in Germany from 1933 had ramifications all over Europe. Several governments in Eastern Europe imitated the German model of official discrimination and persecution. In Poland and Romania, anti-Semitic gangs harassed and intimidated Jews with or without government sanction. In Western and central Europe the appearance of Jewish refugees from Germany at a time of economic depression and vast unemployment sparked or reinforced hostility to local Jews as well.

These developments were not just part of 'a huge historical shock', as Mayer argued. They started long before the First World War, served as background to the Holocaust, and were specific to Jews. On the eve of the Second World War the Jews' legal status, social acceptance and economic standing, always precarious, seemed to be collapsing. In their home countries in central, southern and Eastern Europe they were rapidly losing the base of their existence. Their egress narrowed: the gates to the United States and Palestine, the two principal destinations, were shut to mass immigration. International efforts to solve or mitigate the problem by reviving old schemes to settle European Jews in the Third World – from Latin America to the Far East and Africa – proved

abortive. The international community had no mechanisms at the time for involvement in the domestic problems of sovereign states. It refrained from steps that could be interpreted as interference in the policies of the German, Romanian, Hungarian or Polish governments towards their Jews. Six million Jews were thus isolated and abandoned to face their anti-Semitic governments on their own, with very little – or no – local or international support or assistance.

The outbreak of the Second World War stirred hopes of an end to Jewish isolation. Two great powers, France and Britain, were now fighting the arch enemy of the Jews. But the expectations proved false; having no alternative solution to the Jewish Question, the Allies took pains to dissociate the war from the Jewish cause lest it serve German propaganda and alienate Europe's populations.

Nazi anti-Semitic ideology was shaped by Hitler in *Mein Kampf* and by several of his intimates long before the war. Its translation into practical policies was a long process, carried out not by ideologues but mostly by bureaucrats and policemen who gradually became the authority on Jewish affairs. Many of the bureaucrats were not diehard Nazis but self-interested conformists who joined the party after the seizure of power to advance their careers. Nonetheless, they performed the tasks with typical German efficiency, occasionally reinforced by ideological fervour.

From 1938 onwards a host of collaborators from all over Europe – Germany's allies, satellites and occupied territories – helped the Germans implement their Jewish policies. They were a motley crowd from all strata of European society – hooligans and criminals, officers, soldiers, gendarmes and policemen as well as priests and intellectuals. Some served the German extermination apparatus directly, as guards and executioners. Others, like the Croatian *Ustasha*, the Romanian *Siguranca*, gendarmerie, army units and the Iron Legion, or the Hungarian army in 1942 and the Arrow Cross gangsters in the fall of 1944, did not need German bureaucrats to encourage or organize them; they harassed, robbed, deported and killed the Jews in their countries on their own initiative and with their own means. Likewise, Lithuanian and Ukrainian mobs preceded the *Einsatzgruppen* in leading pogroms in Vilna, Kaunas, Lwow and other cities upon their occupation by the *Wehrmacht*, though the *Einsatzcommandos* occasionally claimed credit for these pogroms to aggrandize their role. Wider circles of the population of central and Eastern Europe benefited directly and indirectly from

plundering the assets of murdered Jews: from industrial plants and mines to businesses, homes, jewellery, clothing, footwear and the most trivial personal items.

The Nazi leaders, ideologues and bureaucrats initiated and planned the *Shoah*. But the combination of their zeal, organization and efficient employment of all the means available to a modern superpower and the deeply rooted traditional Jew-hatred of the East European masses determined the enormous dimensions of the mass murder. This blend caused the Jews' isolation and prevented wider resistance. Neither of these two elements alone could have snowballed into those dimensions. The planners needed executioners and menial labourers for their dirty work; the executioners – adept at spontaneous pogroms – needed planning and organization. The war brought the two elements together: in this sense it was indeed a precondition, providing a conducive background to something that was not part of it yet was impossible without it. It was a combination limited to the mass murder of Jews. Non-Germans were hardly involved in such Nazi projects as euthanasia or the killing of the polish intelligentsia.

THE HOLOCAUST AS COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

The recollections of the war and the Holocaust constituted a unique crossroads of conflict between traumatic individual and disturbing collective memories. In many countries, the clash generated public debate of the issues of commemoration and war trials, encouraging historical research that frequently contradicted memory.

Not only were survivors traumatized by the *Shoah*, but Europe and the world at large. Just as individuals try to escape from their memories, to deny, repress or forget them, so nations and other collectives try to do the same or to invent alternative memories, or myths, for the period of the trauma's occurrence.

The Second World War and the Holocaust continue to haunt Jews, Germans and Europeans – resistance fighters as well as passive and active collaborators. Each nation has its glorious and/or shameful memories. As the generation of that war gradually vanishes, the memories turn from autobiographical to historical.

The status of survivors was different from other witnesses. Rules of

evidence did not apply in their case. As much as historians call for normalizing Holocaust scholarship, others call for humility in the face of horrors incomprehensible even to those who lived through them. Irwin-Zarecka – a daughter of survivors – suggested that only survivors, and notably the artists among them, were capable of judging the authenticity of personal Holocaust tales. In this connection, she mentioned Elie Wiesel, Saul Friedlander and the Israeli historian and survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, Israel Guttmann.[21]

Dominick LaCapra tabled some of the main questions in the debate of Holocaust research versus memory and commemoration: which aspects of the past should be remembered and how? What are the traumatic phenomena that prevent their comprehension and cause the dismantling of their memory? What is the significance of trauma in history? Are there events that pose moral and representational problems also to groups not directly involved in them? Should the history discipline differentiate itself from memory, base itself on it, or subscribe to a more complex interaction of the two?[22]

The *Shoah* has become a test case for the relationship between individual and collective memory, on the one hand, and history on the other. It has come to symbolize an absolute reference point for the existence of historical truth. At the same time it indicates the limits of historical representation. Irwin-Zarecka implies that the Holocaust is a litmus test for the attitude of European nations to both Jews and their own past. It is a measure of European readiness to digest and confront collective memories not of heroism and glory, but of doubt, shame and guilt.[23]

Outside Israel, public and academic interest in the Holocaust only began in earnest in the course of the 1980s. Saul Friedlander maintained that the essential turning points in historical research are connected with the transformation of collective memory, but he did not specify how the connection works. He claimed that the escalation of academic debate on the Holocaust in the 1980s marked the explosion of repressed traumatic memories. I humbly beg to differ with my teacher of the late 1960s. While this might be true in specific instances, primarily the debate intensified as part of the transition from autobiographical to historical (or from individual to collective) memory. The transition coincided with the gradual demise of survivors, the debates articulating their last-ditch attempts to affect the way the Holocaust would be remembered. They also heralded the advent of a new generation of scholars who had not

experienced the Holocaust and the war, but had learned about them from books, documents and testimonies or the stories of their elders.

The attitudes of European historians to the memory of the Second World War have differed from country to country. Under communist regimes, Eastern European historians referring to the war atrocities mostly refrained from alluding specifically to Jews, preferring terms such as 'Soviet citizens'. Mainly, they endeavoured to exonerate, conceal or deny the collaboration of their peoples.

French historians, for a long time, have avoided any brush with French political history since the 1930s. Their rigorous preoccupation with the Middle Ages, the early modern period, the *Ancien Régime* and the French Revolution was a convenient dodge of interwar France, appeasement, the Second World War defeat, Vichy's relations with Nazi Germany, the real weight of the Resistance and the scope of collaboration. These 'events' in French history have not been less important than the demography of Languedoc or the history of climate changes in Provence based on tree rings that so fascinated the *Annales*. French historians on the whole were reluctant to confront them. This changed slightly at the end of the twentieth century with the opening of archival source material for the Vichy period.

The term 'Vichy Syndrome', adopted by Rousso as the title for his book on French collective memory of the war, is still widespread in France.[24] Alon Confino claimed that even the scholarly works of Rousso and Robert Gildea, which did address French memory, failed to study the real collective memory but rather traced the changes in the official memory imposed from above.[25] Most of the French would be happier to forget, and have others forget, Vichy, just as Belgians would prefer to forget King Leopold III, and the Norwegians would like to put Widkon Quisling out of their minds. But history seldom gives discounts.

Contrary to the attitude of French historians to the recent past, their German colleagues have written extensively on various aspects of the Nazi period, and the German public has displayed interest in the debates on the Nazi dictatorship, its domestic and foreign policies, the war and the Holocaust. This curiosity culminated in the historians' controversy that erupted in Germany in 1986. The dispute revolved around a group headed by veteran historian Ernst Nolte, who claimed that the Nazi crimes had not been exceptional; that the Bolsheviks had been worse and that Gulags had preceded concentration camps. Nolte and his followers

called on Germans to stop obsessing about the past, shed the recollections of that period and get on with their lives. The other group of historians, led by philosopher Jürgen Habermass, countered that the Nazi crimes had been exceptional, that Germany was historically responsible, and that the Germans had to work through the trauma of the Second World War and the Holocaust before they could get on with their lives.[26]

Apart from Habermass, the dispute was confined to historians, but it concerned memory rather than history. Both sides published their positions and responses in daily newspapers rather than scientific journals. They did not debate the issues of the past, but the way that they should affect Germany's present. The participants added no new knowledge on the Holocaust and suggested no original interpretations for further understanding. Non-German historians who entered the fray (that is, Ian Kershaw and Richard Evans) pointed out the futility of the discussion in terms of knowledge and comprehension. They therefore urged that Holocaust history be separated from Holocaust memory and commemoration.[27]

Friedlander and LaCapra disagreed with the detached professional approach of the two British historians and adopted a different line. Friedlander conducted a publicized correspondence with the German historian, Martin Broszat. Since his brief foray into psycho-history in the 1970s, Friedlander has often used psychoanalytical terms to characterize the Holocaust. He has argued that the Holocaust – the ultimate trauma – crossed the boundaries of historical discourse and historians should feel unease when trying to interpret it. Not that it is inexplicable, but that the dilemmas defying explanation are enormous. Understanding, he maintained, required a lengthy process of adaptation to and confrontation with the memories; it was too early to merge the memories into an ordinary historical narrative and there were limits to the representation of the Holocaust. Hasty historization of the *Shoah* meant forgiving the murderers. Incorporating it into a broader historical context would lead to trivialization of its memory and to its desecration.[28]

LaCapra took a similar position though for different reasons. Comparing the Holocaust to other genocides, he warned, would dim the consciousness of Auschwitz. He regarded the controversy among German historians as a dual test case: (1) of the correlation between history and psychoanalysis; and (2) of the touted theory that Freudian psychoanalysis can be applied to collectives. His efforts to apply

psychoanalytical concepts – transference, repression, adaptation, mourning, acting out and others – to collectives appear forced. They are mere metaphors. They do not help to clarify the issues; rather, the reverse.[29]

LaCapra jumps back and forth between a general discussion of coping means for individual and collective traumas to the German handling of the special trauma of the Holocaust.[30] Ultimately, he seems to be more interested in the relationship between history and psychoanalysis, between traumatic events, memory and imagination, and in extending Freud's theory from the individual to the collective, than in the Holocaust and how Jews and Germans remember it.

Kerwin Klein disagreed with LaCapra. He was emphatic that there was a huge difference between using such terms as *trauma* and *mourning* when listening to the testimonies of Holocaust survivors, and applying clinical psychoanalysis in historical research. He thoroughly rejected the notion of any kinship between the two, if such were implicit in the historical and philosophical debates on the Holocaust.[31]

Alon Confino has attempted to bring the Holocaust (and memory in general) into the orbit of cultural studies. Contrary to Friedlander's and LaCapra's psychoanalytical approach, Confino called for crossing the boundaries of psychology to examine Germany's role in the Holocaust from a cultural-historical perspective. The key concept in such an examination (which, he claims, has not yet been undertaken) should be memory. The goal would be to try to answer, in due course, not only what happened in the Holocaust, but also why it happened.[32] For some unexplained reason, Confino ignored Friedlander's book on the persecution of Jews in Germany, which met these criteria to a tee.[33] Nor did he explain how culture and memory can illuminate the 'why', or why the debate should be limited to Germany, exempting other perpetrators of the mass murder.

In the United States the general consciousness of the Holocaust began later than in Europe, hinging on the popularization of memory. Knowledge of the Holocaust spread chiefly through feature films (the 1978 *Shoah*, or the 1993 *Schindler's List*), through museums and centres of oral history. But the Holocaust is hardly part of American memory. At most, it is limited to the recollections of American soldiers involved in liberating the concentration camps in 1945 and postwar immigrants to the US: some, survivors; others, perpetrators or collaborators. For most Americans (including American Jews), the Holocaust is not an object of

memory but the sublimation of collective guilt for standing idly by, or a focus of identity.[34]

Peter Novick wondered why on the threshold of the twenty-first century the Holocaust became conspicuous in American political culture, and not only among Jews. In his view, American interest has more to do with the present's identity politics than the past's atrocities.[35] A few American Jews regard Holocaust commemoration as a pressure point for Jewish unity and solidarity, comparing it with the oath of allegiance demanded of American professors under McCarthyism. Charles Maier spoke out against the surfeit of Holocaust memory. He argued that Holocaust commemoration reflected a psychopathological condition. Why, he asked, was it necessary to establish a Holocaust museum in the US, which had no connection to the Holocaust, but not a museum to commemorate slavery or the ethnic cleansing of Native Americans?[36]

Henri Rousso recommends that ways be sought to live with the memory of the *Shoah* rather than without it – as the Europeans tried to do after the war – or against it, as they seemed to be doing at the close of the twentieth century.[37] Sooner or later, the era of memory will make room for the era of history. Then, history – relieved of political, communal and identity constraints – will be able to play its part by assessing the Holocaust from a distance.

HOLOCAUST MEMORY IN ISRAEL

In the field of Holocaust study and memory, Israel occupies a special place. Not because its establishment was an outcome of the *Shoah* (it was not, see below), nor because the *Shoah* attained a central place in Israeli life, but because Israel is considered the nation-state of the nation earmarked for annihilation in the Holocaust. Some Jews and non-Jews may dislike this fact and others may be indifferent to it, but this is the way that both Israel and the world have perceived it.

Notwithstanding historians and other academics who fault Israel's attitude to the *Shoah* and its survivors as instrumental, institutionalized Holocaust memory and commemoration developed earlier in Israel than elsewhere. The plight of European Jewry began to be recorded as early as 1940, based on interviews with Jews who had managed to flee Europe and arrive in Palestine. The testimonies were published at the end of the war in a volume titled *Sefer Ha-Zva'ot* (Book of abominations). It was to

be the first of a series, though it did not continue.[38] Later arrivals were interrogated in depth in an office established in Haifa by British intelligence and the Jewish agency. They provided useful intelligence on their home countries' infrastructure that served the RAF's bombings, and on daily life and Jewish life in the occupied countries in south-eastern Europe that served the mission of the Palestinian Jewish parachutists to those countries in 1943–44.

Systematic interviews of survivors began after the war in the Displaced Persons camps in Germany and Austria on the initiative of the Surviving Remnant's Historical Commission. The project later moved to Israel and was continued by Yad Vashem. The underlying assumption was that Jewish documents from the war years were irretrievable, having either been destroyed or disappeared. It was inconceivable that the picture of the Holocaust to be left for posterity was to be drawn from German documents and the testimonies of war criminals at Nuremberg and other war crimes' trials. Oral history was deemed an alternative to the apparently non-existent documents.

Reviewing Holocaust memory in Israel, Alon Confino maintained that the state had been indifferent to it until the Eichmann trial in 1961. At the same time, survivors had repressed their individual memories. Nonetheless, he wrote, the Holocaust had been omnipresent in those years too, palpable in the small gestures of daily life. Fiction writers had sensed and responded to it more so than historians.[39]

In the first decade of statehood the Holocaust was by way of being an 'absent presence' in Israel. Historians and other academics did not respond to it because Holocaust research in Israel hardly began before the 1960s. Nevertheless, Confino's criticism of state indifference is groundless. Discussions on ways to commemorate the Holocaust began as early as 1945. The national commemoration centre, known as Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, was founded in the 1950s. Zionist youth movements, too, created commemoration centres in that decade. The Law of Return, the result of a major lesson of the Holocaust, as well as laws on Holocaust commemoration and the punishment of Nazi war criminals and their collaborators were legislated in the 1950s. The state undertook the manhunt for Eichmann and brought him to trial in Israel. In those years, the Holocaust was also the focus of several public debates and trials that racked Israeli public opinion and dissolved political coalitions.

In the 1950s and 1960s the attitude towards West Germany stood at the heart of heated debates emanating from the still fresh memory of the Holocaust. At the time, opposition from the political Right and Left attacked Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's pragmatic line. Ben-Gurion sought economic support for the absorption of immigrants and the modernization of the economy, and he anticipated Germany's key role in the European Union. His opponents played on the emotions, invoked national honour and the moral obligation to the legacy of Holocaust victims.[40] However, the real attitude of Israelis to Germany and their growing readiness for reconciliation with 'the other [or 'new'] Germany' was measurable less by speeches and articles than by theincreasing number of Volkswagens on Israeli roads and German appliances in Israeli homes.

The debates reflected the rupture between here and there, between the Land of Israel and occupied Europe that had begun during the war and was aggravated in the wake of the encounter with survivors. Another dichotomy of the period was the dissonance between what Israelis perceived as the Jews' conduct in the Holocaust, 'going like sheep to the slaughter', and the Israeli ethos of self-defence and heroism. In these debates, the surviving Zionist ghetto fighters and partisans were the principal, almost sole representatives of the Holocaust (non-Zionist rebels and partisans were usually ignored). The centre-weight of Holocaust commemoration was placed on the valour of resistance fighters and the few dozens of Jewish Yishuv's emissaries who had parachuted into Europe, particularly those who had never made it back. Heroism was Zionist. Israelis born or educated in the Land of Israel could identify with it. Going like sheep to the slaughter represented Exile. The generation that grew up during the Palestinian revolt, the anti-British struggle and the War of Independence did not comprehend it and could hardly empathize with the survivors if they were not ghetto fighters or partisans.

In recent decades, privatization has come to many spheres in Israel, including Holocaust memory. The process began in the wake of the Yom Kippur war in 1973, when the personal shock experienced by many Israeli soldiers in the war, and the collective trauma of Israeli society, aroused empathy with the Holocaust victims and survivors in the vein of 'now I understand what they went through there'. The reduction of the Holocaust to individual experience and suffering was the first phase of its privatization. The *Shoah* was more than the suffering and death of individuals (many others, Jews and non-Jews alike,

have suffered persecution or been killed in wars and atrocities). Primarily, it was the annihilation of a civilization, the attempt to completely wipe out a people after ostracizing it from mankind, and to obliterate its memory.

Holocaust commemoration has gradually dominated official Israeli collective memory though, in essence, it has changed. In the first decades of statehood, remembrance emphasized the enormous loss and national tragedy of the Jewish collective. In privatized commemoration the Jewish tragedy made room for the individual victim who has become the hero of memorial ceremonies under the catchphrase, 'every person has a name'. Moreover, human and universal lessons blurred the Jewish tragedy, and the role played by collective reparation fell away as individual claims came to the fore. Brought down to the level of the single victim, the Holocaust lost its uniqueness and became comparable with other atrocities and catastrophes.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ZIONISM'S ATTITUDE TO THE HOLOCAUST

The positions and actions of the Zionist movement and the Yishuv during the Holocaust, their attitude to the plight of European Jewry before the Second World War and to survivors afterwards, while insignificant in the eyes of most Holocaust scholars abroad have been a major concern of Israeli historiography. In addition, the impact of the Holocaust on Israeli society, identity and politics has gradually evolved from a secondary field into a principal issue.

Dan Michman has defined four key topics in the study of the Zionist movement vis-à-vis the Holocaust: (1) forecasting or failing to anticipate the Holocaust against the background of the basic Zionist prognosis of the Jews' situation in the Diaspora; (2) the attitudes, stances and actions of Zionist leaders during the Second World War; (3) Zionist policy towards survivors after the war and the nature of the nexus between the *Shoah* and the establishment of the Jewish state; (4) the meaning of the Holocaust for the Jewish people, its place in Israeli society and the shaping of its memory and commemoration.[41]

Scholarly research of these issues had to wait until the early 1970s. In early statehood the elation over Zionism's success overshadowed the Holocaust in Israeli historiography. The journal *Zion* did not mention

or hint at the Holocaust throughout the 1940s.[42] Another instance of disregard was the revised 1955 version of Dinur's programmatic article 'Modern Times in Jewish History – Their Diagnosis, Essence and Image' that had originally been published on the eve of the Second World War. The new version had not a word on the Holocaust.[43]

Dinur, one of the founders of Yad Vashem, and Yehuda Bauer – one of the pioneers and leaders of Holocaust studies in Israel – separated the history of Zionism and the Yishuv from the Holocaust. Bauer, in his first book, *Diplomacy and Resistance*, which dealt with Zionist policy during the Second World War, mentioned the Yishuv's attitude to the Holocaust in a single phrase:

> The response of the Yishuv and of world Jewry to information on the annihilation of the Jews of Europe is, perhaps, one of the most daunting and grave problems challenging modern Jewish historiography.[44]

The question troubled Bauer. In the English version of the book (published four years later), he elaborated on it as background to the mission of the parachutists the Yishuv dispatched to occupied Europe.[45] Though he was to deal with the Yishuv extensively in coming years, he did not do so then. The historians of the war generation apparently shrank from the subject. It was my choice of topic for a PhD dissertation in the early 1970s, but my supervisor, Shmuel Ettinger, poured cold water on my enthusiasm. He said it was too early and too sensitive to deal with the Yishuv's attitude to the Holocaust. He suggested another topic on the war period, which I accepted.

The first chapters in the historiography of the Yishuv's attitude to the Holocaust were written by journalists covering Israel's publicized Holocaust trials: Shalom Rosenfeld wrote on the Kastner–Grünwald case (a 1954–55 trial in which the State of Israel sued Malkiel Grünwald for libelling Rudolf Kastner, a wartime rescue activist in Hungary and later a civil servant in Israel – the state, however, soon found itself on the defensive against the defence lawyer's charges of Mapai leaders collaborating with the Nazis in Hungary in 1944) and Chayim Guri wrote on the Eichmann trial.[46] The Eichmann trial has commonly been seen as a crossroads in Israel's attitude to the Holocaust, and it inspired a younger generation of Holocaust researchers.

In the interim, weeds overran a field untilled by historiography,

reviving prewar Diaspora anti-Zionist polemics – religious Orthodox, Bundist, communist and liberal-assimilationist – as well as domestic arguments between Labour and Revisionist Zionism. Critics fiercely condemned both the Yishuv in Palestine and Zionists in occupied Europe – leaders as well as rank-and-file. Anti-Zionists portrayed their ideological rivals as Nazi collaborators in theory and practice, who, because of their own Zionist agenda, had abandoned the masses of (Orthodox) faithful or (communist and Bundist) workers to their fate.[47]

In the mid-1970s a book by Shabtai Bet-Zvi accused the Zionist movement of having obstructed rescue efforts that were unrelated to or unable to advance the Zionist cause.[48] Written by an amateur, the book nevertheless raised uncomfortable questions about the position of the Zionist leadership on the eve, and in the course, of the Holocaust. Bet-Zvi's answers, however, had no sound basis. Israeli academe at the time, chose, wrongly, to ignore not only his answers but also his questions.

For several years, academic research remained mute on the accusations. Only in the early 1970s did scholarly research of the Zionist movement's attitudes and actions during the Holocaust begin in earnest. Bauer and Ettinger's students in Jerusalem, and Daniel Karpi's in Tel Aviv, wrote on such issues as the Yishuv's rescue mission in Istanbul, the actions of the Yishuv Rescue Committee, how and when the Yishuv had learned of the extermination of European Jewry, or the Transfer Agreement between the Zionist movement and the German government.[49]

The first monograph on the subject – Dina Porat's book *The Blue and Yellow Stars of David*, on the Yishuv leadership in face of the Holocaust – appeared only in 1986.[50] In the following years two studies analysed the position of Mapai, the Yishuv's leading party, during the Holocaust. Other works focused on immigration during the war years and on the Yishuv's mission to survivors after the war.[51] A few years earlier most of these studies would have been perceived as critical and revisionist. By the time they were published, the climate had changed and as post-Zionism spread and peaked, their conclusions appeared almost orthodox and apologetic.[52] The scene was dominated by Tom Segev's *The Seventh Million*, which both condemned the Zionist leadership's and Yishuv's war conduct and critically discussed Holocaust consciousness as a developing component of Israeli identity.[53] Segev and, particularly, Idith Zertal, accused the Zionist leaders of manipulating the survivors to promote political goals and ignoring their wartime ordeals.[54]

THE JEWS AND THE REST OF THE WORLD

In Israel and abroad, non- and anti-Zionists have condemned Zionism's alleged monopolization of the Holocaust and the emphasis placed by Israeli leaders and historians on its uniqueness. A coalition of the extreme Orthodox and of socialist and liberal-assimilationist, anti- and post-Zionists joined forces with radical leftists and Palestinians to censure Israel and refute its status as the collective heir of Holocaust victims. Tel Aviv historian Moshe Zuckerman, for example, charged Israel with Holocaust fetishism and claimed that it had 'neglected the memory of the Holocaust's victims in favour of cultivating its myth'.[55]

Two issues have featured prominently in condemning the Zionist conception of the Holocaust. One dates back to Hannah Arendt in the 1960s. Arendt's book on the Eichmann trial provoked impassioned debate, mainly in the United States. In Israel, the controversy was revived in the year 2000 when the book was translated into Hebrew. Post-Zionists embraced Arendt's position while their opponents rejected it wholesale. Arendt contended that the Holocaust was a crime against humanity rather than the Jews. It concerned the relations between Jews and Germans, not between Jews and Europe or the world. It was, primarily, the tragedy of modernism and reason.[56]

The second issue is the rejection of the notion that the Holocaust was a unique, unparalleled event. Its exponents lump the Holocaust together with other genocides and atrocities, from the Turks' persecution of Armenians in the First World War to the wars in Cambodia, Bosnia or Chechnya in the last third of the twentieth century, all in the name of comparative research.

The Holocaust's reduction to the level of Germans versus Jews, after Hanna Arendt, is immediately apparent at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington: one is struck by the absence of French, Dutch, Romanian, Hungarian, Croat, Slovak, Polish, Lithuanian and Ukrainian anti-Semites and collaborators who helped the Germans plunder and kill Jews or did it so willingly, requiring no prompts. This evasion is understandable in the United States, with its large communities of Eastern European extraction. Also commemorated are other victims of Nazi persecution, such as Gypsies and homosexuals, pre-empting charges that the museum has taken a unique or segregationist approach to the Holocaust. Nevertheless, in this case, sorrow shared is not sorrow halved.

The search for partner-victims of the Jews in the Holocaust has characterized assimilationists as they shy away from the idea of Jewish distinctiveness. The approach has found partisans in Israel as well. Thus, for example, journalist Ruvik Rosenthal has preached to readers to stop looking on the Holocaust as 'proof of the Jewish people's estrangement in the world'. Instead of this narrow-minded perspective, he suggested viewing the Second World War and the Holocaust as the struggle of the free, enlightened world (including the Soviet Union!) against Nazism, with the Jews caught in the middle as victims symbolizing the war.[57] Rosenthal and others of his persuasion may like to regard the Holocaust in this light, dodging the need to deal with Jewish isolation. The Jews, however, were victims not only of the Nazis but of the Nazi-occupied peoples whose resistance movements at times simply watched from the sidelines, as did the Allies themselves. Besides, the Holocaust was not part of the war. It merely took place against the background of the war. Jewish victims therefore cannot symbolize the war – the only thing they can symbolize is the Holocaust.

Recently, the Holocaust has been used by new advocates of the old idea of the Jews' special mission in the world. Daniel Levy and Nathan Schneider have called for turning Holocaust memory into a transnational culture of memory. This new messianism, carrying the gospel of globalization truth, is to replace national collective memories with a universal one.[58] Yet the Holocaust happened to Jews while most of the universe watched indifferently. How can the descendants of the murderers, victims and bystanders arrive at a joint memory and what is it to comprise?

There is no reason to adopt a narrow explanation of the Holocaust focusing solely on Nazism's perverted ideology and German anti-Semitism. Israeli historiography must continue to hone in on the Holocaust as the crisis of both Jewish emancipation and integration, and of traditional Jewish society in Europe. Apart from the Nazis' ideology and the deep-rooted European anti-Semitism, the Holocaust symbolized the world's impotence in finding a solution to the Jewish Question.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE HOLOCAUST

The second issue, the condemnation of the alleged Zionist appropriation of the Holocaust, is no less significant. Treating the Holocaust as one genocide among many renders it unexceptional and sustains the

assimilationist line of concealing and/or blurring Jewish distinctiveness. Israeli post-Zionists so far have made do with drawing analogies between the *Shoah* and other genocides; they have not gone as far as their postmodernist colleagues abroad in deconstructing the Holocaust. The Israeli philosopher Adi Ofir described the call to define the Holocaust as unique, 'a dangerous myth' because it creates 'endless distance between one atrocity and all other horrors'. His examples of other horrors were the wars in Biafra, Cambodia and Kurdistan. Ofir also claimed that the notion of Holocaust uniqueness, which he described as mythologizing, was tantamount to its vulgarization.[59]

Another Israeli philosopher, Ilan Gur-Zeev, denoted the demand of exclusivity as immoral. In his unexplained view, it denied the genocides of other peoples – mainly the Palestinians.[60] Portraying the Palestinians as victims of genocide is a rare cheapening – not only of the Holocaust, but of the term *genocide* and the peoples subjected to it, such as those mentioned by Ofir.

The two philosophers ignored the bilateral nature of the wars they cited and compared to the *Shoah* – which was a unilateral campaign against the Jews. To be sure, when reduced to the personal level all wars have one common element – individual agony. But an approach that ignores or blurs the contexts of different cases is not historical and can hardly be considered philosophical.

At the other end, the extremist view supporting Holocaust uniqueness goes so far as to exclude it from history and is equally out of place. The Holocaust was part of history, not a meta- or a-historical phenomenon. It took place on earth, not on another planet. It is precisely its historical contexts that make it unique in comparison with other, ostensibly similar events.

The Holocaust was genocide, but, as Bauer has already shown, it was much more than mass killing.[61] It is this increment that post-Zionists in Israel and elsewhere deny by likening the Holocaust to other atrocities under trendy slogans of comparative and interdisciplinary studies.[62]

THE ALLEGED ZIONIST 'APPROPRIATION' OF THE HOLOCAUST

Since the end of the Second World War the *Shoah* has been mobilized for various ends by Israeli leaders and politicians. As early as 1947, Ben-Gurion compared the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husayni,

to Hitler. On the eve of the Six Day War, Egypt's President Nasser was the Hitler of the day. Menachem Begin drew analogies between Arafat and Hitler. During the Gulf War it was Saddam Hussein's turn to be likened to Hitler, and now Hassan Nasralla and Iran's president Ahmadinajad appear to have succeeded him. On one side of the Israeli political spectrum, Shulamit Aloni compared Israel's rule of Judea and Samaria to the Nazi occupation in the Second World War; on the other side, extreme right-wingers dubbed the disengagement from the Gaza Strip and later evacuations of settlers 'transfer', and compared them to Holocaust transports.

As a basic component of post-Second World War Jewish and Israeli identity, the Holocaust has fed impassioned arguments among Israelis and Jews outside Israel over its essence and lessons: was it chiefly universal or uniquely Jewish, whether the lessons should be humanist or nationalist? Moreover, the Holocaust has been increasingly mobilized by Israel's detractors. That the *Shoah* was the ultimate justification of the Zionist solution to the modern Jewish question was once axiomatic. Sixty years after the end of the Second World War, this can no longer be taken for granted. After the Holocaust, Zionism's pre-war ideological opponents seemed to have vanished. Now, they have re-emerged under the modish guise of post-Zionism.

The first to denounce the 'appropriation' of the Holocaust by the Zionists were the opponents of Jewish nationalism in the West. Eric Hobsbawm accused Zionism, and particularly Israel's Likud governments since 1977, of exploiting the Holocaust as a myth for Israel's legitimacy, and of silencing and repressing studies that do not accept the Zionist view of the *Shoah* – including Raul Hilberg's monumental work – by not translating them into Hebrew. Hobsbawm's authority for the accusation was a press article by the Israeli writer and journalist Amos Eilon.[63] To be sure, in the past Yad Vashem's scientific committee had reservations about translating Hilberg's book. However, Hobsbawm's identification of the committee then headed and led by Israel Guttmann and Yehuda Bauer (both prominent members of the left-wing Mapam) with 'the right-wing government' is peculiar, to say the least.

On principle, the criticism of the Holocaust's excessive role in Israeli public life and its abuse by politicians and propagandists is not without justification. It has been reproved by various quarters of Israeli society, targeting, among other things: the organized youth trips to Poland; the

shifting emphasis from victims to survivors; the materialism inherent in the initial reparation and compensation, as well as later efforts to realize insurance policies and retrieve funds from blocked bank accounts; and the trivialization of terms originating in the Holocaust, such as *Judenrat* or *Auschwitz*, by invoking them in political polemics or propaganda. Like the abuse of the *Shoah* by the messianic Right in the campaign against disengagement, the radical Left's use of the *Shoah* to promote the Palestinian cause is unconnected to the legitimate criticism that the Holocaust occupies too central a place in Israeli political life.

COMPARING ZIONISM TO NAZISM AND ISRAEL TO GERMANY

Criticizing Zionism's alleged monopolization of the Holocaust, post-Zionists have accused Israel's cynical use of it to justify its treatment of Palestinians, the 'occupation', strong-arm tactics and other evils that Israel has purportedly foisted on its surroundings. This linkage was introduced in Israel and abroad as early as the 1970s, beginning with Professor Yesha'ayahu Leibowitz's catchphrase *Judeo-Nazis* and similar gems. Yet the Zionism–Nazism analogy was hardly original. Way back in 1942 disillusioned German immigrants in Palestine had already resorted to such expressions as *Yishuvnazim*, *Nazionismus* or 'the spirit of *Der Stürmer* that has taken over the *Yishuv*'. The publicist Robert Weltsch adopted similarly blunt language during the Yishuv's anti-British struggle in 1945–47.[64]

In 1943 hostile British officials in Jerusalem and Cairo drew parallels between Zionism and Nazism, and between the Palmach and the SS. A British journalist covering the war in 1948 compared besieged Jerusalem to Berlin on the eve of the Second World War. She viewed the IZL as the SS of the new state and was quite sure that there was a Gestapo in Jewish Jerusalem.[65] All these examples, however, showed animosity towards Zionism and Jews in general; they had nothing to do with Palestinians.

Israeli historians first joined the barrage in the summer of 1982 when Israel Guttmann started a sit-down strike at the gates of Yad Vashem to protest against the war in Lebanon. There were plenty of reasons to condemn and demonstrate against that war, but Guttman's choice of site was tellingly symbolic.

Jerusalem historian Moshe Zimmerman castigated Jewish settlers in Judea and Samaria, calling their youth *Hitler Jugend* and comparing the

Bible to *Mein Kampf* – two new milestones in the touted analogy between Israel's policies towards Palestinians and the Nazi persecution of Jews. Zimmerman extended the analogy from the territories to smaller Israel by likening his personal status in 1995 – a tenured professorship at the Hebrew University, carrying with it public appointments and frequent media appearances that served as a podium for his strange utterances – to his father's situation in Germany in 1938, the year of Kristallnacht.[66]

The most strident spokesman of the so-called Palestinian–Holocaust analogy has been Ilan Pappé, who told an interviewer: 'The Holocaust does not justify turning 750,000 Palestinians in 1948 into refugees. If the price of Zionism is the displacement of another people, this is too heavy a price and I would have given up statehood.'[67] The Holocaust was not employed to justify the Palestinians' refugee-dom. It was their uncompromising denial of any Jewish right in Palestine that made them refugees. Evading the pre-1948 phase of the Arab–Jewish conflict, Pappé has argued that in 1948 the Palestinians and the Arab League did not launch war to frustrate the UN partition resolution and the establishment of a Jewish state, but that the Israelis initiated ethnic cleansing, anachronistically predating the concept's origin in the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Patterned after the catchphrase 'Holocaust denial', he coined the term '*Nakba* denial', depicting the Palestinians as indirect victims of the Holocaust.[68]

THE HOLOCAUST AND JEWISH STATEHOOD

The chronological proximity between the Holocaust and Israel's founding has tempted many observers to regard Jewish statehood as its direct outcome, an epilogue to it, or the compensation paid by the world, via the United Nations, to the Jews for the suffering they had endured. Palestinian propaganda and sympathizers have amplified the paradigm, implying that it is high time the world compensated the Palestinians for its error of November 1947. Again, Pappé has been the foremost spokesman, asserting that the Zionists had used the Holocaust as a moral weapon to obtain American support to gain control of Palestine and expel its Arab inhabitants.

Although the *Shoah* as such did not play a role in Israel's founding, it has increasingly replaced Israeli society's pioneering ethos as the core Israeli–Jewish collective identity after statehood. The notion of a nexus

between the Holocaust and Jewish statehood has spread far and wide, in Israel and abroad, to academics and laymen beyond Pappé's ilk.

In his book on the controversy of the German historians in the 1980s, Charles Maier asked who had benefited from the Holocaust, and himself answered: Israel, Zionists and Jews in general since, after the Second World War, their identity has depended on the Holocaust. Although Jews were not the only victims of the war, the Holocaust, he added, helped establish the legitimacy of the state of the Jews, even if it did not sanction any particular policy or borders.[69] Maier's view has fallen on eager ears in the United States, Europe and also Israel. With all due respect, however, this simplicity attests to the shortness of memory and a lack of historical understanding. The contingency of Jewish statehood had been on the books before the war, deriving its legitimacy not from the Holocaust but from Jewish history. Its viability was borne out by the survival of the Jewish state, by the triumph of the 1948 war, by Israel's absorption of mass immigration and its consolidation in the 1967 victory and afterwards.

Appealing as it may appear, a causal linkage between the *Shoah* and Jewish statehood is spurious. The Holocaust did not bring about Israel's founding. It, in fact, came close to ending the prospects of Jewish statehood since the war in Europe wiped out the population reserves for a future Jewish state. It is true that the survivors assembled in Displaced Persons camps after the war played a key role in the processes unfolding between the war's end and Israel's founding: they insisted on going to Palestine. But this insistence was part of a concerted postwar effort coordinated with the Yishuv and American Jewry, in some measure as a reaction to the Holocaust, not as its outcome.[70]

Unlike the illegal immigration before the Second World War, which was part of the general mass flight of Jews from the Third Reich and hardly Zionist, the illegal immigration of survivors after the war was Zionism's high point. Its main motivation was the survivors' determination to reach Palestine – the only place in the world where the immigrants could be certain another war awaited them. For sure they were influenced, if not indoctrinated, by a host of emissaries from Palestine – thousands of Jewish soldiers in the British army and later hundreds of civilian emissaries. But the indoctrination fell on most receptive ears.

Idith Zertal and other post- Zionists portray Zionism's guiding hand as one of the movement's terrible sins, showing no empathy for the survivors' suffering, cynically manipulating them for its own political

aims and exposing them to further ordeals. But the manipulation is Zertal's own. In her view, the natural response should have been to empathize with the survivors, pity them for what they had gone through and leave them to disperse around the world to try to rebuild their lives where they may. Had the Zionist leadership taken this course, it is likely that no Jewish state would have arisen – to the satisfaction perhaps of Zertal and her fellow detractors. Ben-Gurion and his colleagues thought otherwise. They realized that this was the last chance to connect the plight of European Jewry with a Zionist resolution of the Palestine question. Before the war they had failed to win over Jewish and general public opinion (to say nothing of the governments) on both sides of the Atlantic to the idea that Palestine could resolve the Jewish question economically and politically. Their successful post-war linkage of the two issues was primarily due to the drastic shrinking of the Jewish question, which now made it solvable in Palestine. In addition, it coalesced with the desire of most of the survivors to willingly follow their lead.

It is possible to put forward the cynical argument that the Holocaust, thereby, facilitated Jewish statehood. This, however, is not the post-Zionists' position. They claim that before the war a Jewish state was inconceivable and that as a result of the Holocaust, the Americans and Russians changed their minds and backed the idea to compensate the Jewish people, particularly the survivors, for their suffering.

Meanwhile, conventional research of the Holocaust goes on, led by such historians as Bauer and Guttmann in Israel, Christopher Browning in the United States and David Cesarani in the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, traditional historiography seems to have lost its central place in the debate on the Holocaust. The 1990s saw two new trends emerge in the Holocaust discourse. One concentrated on individual diaries and memories, seeking to theorize them as representative of *the* ultimate traumatic memories – regardless, at times, of the experiences they represented. The other targeted the collective memories of the Holocaust in various countries, eventually focusing on Israel and the Jews, whether to explain the connection between Israel and the *Shoah* or to criticize Israel's monopoly of the Holocaust. This criticism has been part of a broader attack on Zionism and Israel that added the Yishuv's wartime inaction and post-war monopolization of the Holocaust to other alleged or misrepresented sins of Jewish nationalism.

Memory and Construction of Identity in Israel

Difficulties in accessing official and personal archival material and digesting it have pushed historians to use sources that rely on memory – memoirs and oral testimonies – or sources that shape memory: media and literary coverage of historical events or their representations in the press, literature, theatre, films and visual arts. 'If the old ideal was to resurrect the past', declared Nora, 'the new ideal is to create its representation'. In the postmodern era, determines Frank Ankersmit, the knowledge (read: representation) and reality (read: the represented event) are always different and there is no way of bridging the gap separating them.[1]

The study of representations and commemoration penetrated into Israeli historiography in the 1990s as part of studying the various phenomena of Israeli memory. A growing number of scholars have looked for the roots of myths, images and stereotypes and examine their development. They study the background of myths, ponder the reasons for their emergence, search for ulterior motives behind their spreading and analyse the ways of their cultivation.[2]

Scholars that engage in representation of history tend to exaggerate the weight, importance and influence of symbols, statues, cemeteries, ceremonies and other manifestations of memory. They consider what really happened less significant than how events were saved in memory through commemorating them, and how their commemoration changed with time and circumstances. The pioneer in this field was George Mosse, and John Gillis and others followed his example.[3]

The study of representations has been part of cultural history. Though significant, it cannot substitute the examination of events – political,

military or social. The study of the past should not be confused with the analysis of its representations. The history of representing history – through historiography, fiction literature, poetry, art, monuments, film or other popular means that are bound to shape memory and influence it – supplements but does not replace the history of people, nations, organizations, institutions, societies, ideas and other human activities and social structures.

FROM THE MEDIEVAL HOLY COMMUNITY TO THE MODERN PROBLEM OF JEWISH IDENTITY

Medieval Jewish identity was primarily religious. Jewish memory was incorporated in liturgy – in religious customs and the prayer book. Most holidays commemorated historic events: Passover, Shavu'oth (Pentecost), Sukot (the Feast of Tabernacles), Hanukah and Purim are memorial days for events from the people's past. Several fast days have been linked to the destruction of the two Temples in Jerusalem.

Ancient and medieval Jewish memory integrated historical narrative with legends and traditions. Old traditions – partly legendary or mythological – were absorbed in the Talmud and the *Midrashim* and helped to shape the historical memory of Jews in the Diaspora. In addition to common memories from the distant past, Jewish communities constructed specific communal memories, commemorating martyrs in memorial books and reading out their names in synagogue alongside special prayers in their honour. Various communities established 'Second Purim' days to celebrate salvation from destruction or persecution or, alternatively, additional fast days to commemorate calamities that befell them.[4]

Modernity, followed by growing secularism, challenged the traditional Jewish identity. Various alternatives to religion as the core of the Jews' distinctiveness were suggested, from reformed/modernized religion through a shared mission to disseminate monotheism or morality, to an exclusively national or national-religious identity. Each suggestion has been subdivided according to language, loyalty to tradition, countries of origin, affiliation to the Land of Israel, class and other factors. Zionism, by shifting the basis of Jewish identity from religion to nationality, was the most nonconformist venture to replace tradition in this capacity. More than a century after the emergence of Zionism, and sixty years

after Jewish statehood the complexity of Jewish identity in a modern world is still unresolved, in Israel and abroad.

MEMORY AND IDENTITY IN ISRAEL

The definitions of the Israeli collective, its relation to the Jewish collective, and their shared memories are vague and controversial. Some problems of Jewish identity are as old as Jewish history; others emanate from modernity and recent Jewish history, and some special Israeli problems are typical of every immigrant society. Occasionally, these questions are artificially imposed by sociologists, anthropologists and scholars of culture who copy concepts from other immigrant societies that are hardly compatible with Israeli reality. The main problems, however, are genuine.[5]

'Is it still possible to speak of *the* Israelis?' ask David Ohana and Robert Wistrich in their introduction to *Mitos ve-Zikaron* – a jointly edited volume devoted to the transformation of Israeli consciousness. This volume is not a post-Zionist endeavour to destroy Israeli identity, but a serious scholarly attempt to present a coherent map of Jewish, Zionist and Israeli myths and collective memories, their origins and constructions. The editors felt that Israeliness had been privatized:

> No more the socialist-pioneering ethos of the kibbutz; no more a melting pot for hundreds of thousands of immigrants; no more a common concept of the meaning of peace with our Arab neighbours; no more a unified lesson of the Holocaust. Everyone defines his Israeliness in his own terms: dreams his own utopia, carries his unique heritage. Israeliness today is a collage of aspirations, a repository of memories, and a crisscross of myths.[6]

The diagnosis is debatable, and its purpose was indeed to open a debate. The kibbutz ethos was never the ethos of the majority of the Yishuv, there was no common concept of the meaning of peace, and not even shared lessons of the Holocaust. The axiomatic assumption that there had once been a hegemonic/consensual Israeli memory that split later is no more than nostalgia.

The Yishuv was divided into different groups of immigrants from

various countries of origin that shared a basic Jewish identity but each had also unique characteristics, collective memories included. As Gur Alroi has shown, even in the pioneering wave of immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century the majority of immigrants did not adhere to the pioneer-socialist ethos.[7] Yosef Gorni distinguished between four approaches to the Arab problem that after decades transformed into diverse attitudes to the issue of Israeli–Arab peace.[8] Conflicts originating in different extraction decreased with time and intermarriages. Other divisions, however, persisted.

In the last two or three decades official Israeli identity has been based on citizenship and drew away from Jewish identity despite lip service to the catchphrase 'a Jewish and democratic state'. Alongside citizenship, a new concept has been added – *ethnicity* – that was copied from the American immigrant society. In the absence of an organic American nationality, ethnicity denotes the national or racial origins of American citizens (Irish, Poles, Italians, Jews, Asians, Afro-American or Hispanics). In Israel, too, the term conveys the countries of origin of immigrants, but in the United States all Jews – coming from Eastern or Western Europe, the Balkans or the Muslim countries – are regarded as having a common Jewish ethnicity. In European terms, ethnicity is closer to nationality or, at least, to a national origin.

Jewish identity is a compound (in the chemical sense of the word, as distinct from a mixture) of religion, nationality (or, some would prefer, ethnicity) and biology (or genetics). A modern Jew can be secular, atheist or heretic, and still remain a Jew, but he will forfeit his affiliation to the Jewish People if he converts to another religion. A Jew can be a loyal French, British or German citizen, but not national. Some Jews who wish to avoid the dilemma prefer therefore the concept ethnicity over nationality to define their identity. Actually, ethnicity refers to the biological aspect of Jewish identity: all Jews are descendants of those who camped around Mount Sinai and received the Torah (if such a scene ever took place), or of converts who joined them throughout the ages. Conversion is a religious act, but it is also a precondition for joining the Jewish People and for receiving an Israeli citizenship on the basis of the Law of Return.

Such a complexity does not exist in any other nation or religion, and apparently not in other states. Anita Shapira is wrong in comparing the

Jewish case to one-religion states such as Poland or the Ukraine (or Sweden and Italy).[9] A Pole can be a Protestant and belong to the Polish nation, and there are Catholics in Lutheran Sweden. Although the numbers are small, it is possible in principle. It is impossible in principle to be a Christian member of the Jewish People, nation or even community. This is unintelligible to those who observe it from the outside, and it haunts many secular Israeli Jews, like the writer A.B. Yehoshua, who ponder about their complex identity and ask why it cannot be modified and simplified.[10]

Tension between Israeli and Jewish collective memories existed even when the Yishuv, and later Israeli society, were dominated by a collectivist ethos and enjoyed a basic consensus over most significant issues. In our days, after several decades of privatization and growing individualism, it is difficult to define a general Israeli collective or even a few smaller collectives. Does the Israeli commune defining Israeli collective memory include Arabs, Bedouins, Druze, Circassians and other non-Jews? Is it a Jewish closed society that excludes non-Jews but admits non-Israeli Jews? Does the collective consist of the present generation or is it multigenerational? What about those who joined the community later, like youngsters and new immigrants – do they share the earlier memories of the collective? Do they add memories of their own, like the sinking of the immigrant ship *Egoz* as a symbol of the immigration from Morocco, operations *Shlomo* and *Moshe* to bring the Ethiopian Jews to Israel or the struggle of Russian Jews to preserve their Jewish identity, the Hebrew language and their affiliation to Israel? How far have these new memories been adopted by the veterans?

A crucial question is whether Israeli collective memory is an aggregate of individual memories, or whether it is disconnected from individuals and has an independent essence. Who represents the collective memory – the establishment, the public, the schools system, the media, the historians? Who decides which memory is collective and which is not? How are these decisions taken? Can they be enforced? Why does a certain memory become collective and another not deserve this status? Halbwachs, Nora, Gillis and the other theoreticians and researchers of collective memory do not give clear answers to any of these questions that concern not only Israel and/or the Jews but also immigrants and refugees in the West and many countries in the Third World.

Collective memory and historical research are products of historical evolution. Events and periods are seen, remembered and understood in a different way from a distance of a decade, a century or a millennium.[11] Writing on historical events that turned into memory sites, Nora distinguished between two types of historical events: episodes that seemed unimportant at the time but became significant later, or vice versa. An example of the first was the election of Hugo Capet to the throne of France in the year 860; it took on new meaning after 930 years of French monarchy and the execution of the royal couple in 1792.

As examples of the second type, events that initially appeared memorable but did not stand the test of time, Nora cites the handshake of Hitler and Marshal Petain in June 1940, and De Gaulle's victory parade at the Champs Elysées at the end of the Second World War.[12] By the same token, one could mention the Rabin–Arafat handshake on the White House lawn in September 1993 or the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in 1994, honouring Rabin, Peres and Arafat.

In the Jewish history of Palestine, the story of Masada – the last Jewish fortress in the Judean desert that held out against the Romans after the destruction of the Temple – exemplifies the first type. The story of Tel-Hai – the incident in which Joseph Trumpeldor and his comrades were killed by Arabs in 1920 – is an example of the second type. Both stories, together with Bar Kochva's revolt, stand at the centre of Yael Zerubavel's work.[13] Zerubavel, an Israeli-American cultural sociologist, portrays the construction of Zionist memory as a revolt against traditional Jewish memory. With the passage of time, she claims, Zionist memory itself has become hegemonic and repressed alternative memories.

The picture, however, is more complex. Zionism did not revolt only against traditional Jewish society and its religious memories, but also against assimilation and the worship of 'the world of tomorrow', in which the situation of the Jews would be remedied with the rest of humanity. Zionist memory dismissed all three alternatives. Nevertheless, the Zionist movement was pluralist and integrated both socialists and religious Jews. All believed that their additional identity as liberals, socialists or religious Jews had a place within Zionism.

Zerubavel speaks about Zionist memory as something independent and isolated, depicting the Yishuv society that shaped it as monolithic. She ignores the variety of shades, narratives and memories that

conflicted inside the Yishuv. According to Zerubavel, Zionist collective memory was unified and hegemonic at least until the 1960s. Nonetheless, it was different among religious and secular Zionists, in the right and left wings of the Zionist political spectrum or among those who came from Europe and those who came from Muslim countries. Her approach, writes Alon Confino, results in 'a cultural history that takes place in a social and political vacuum'.[14]

MASADA

Zerubavel embarked on the subject as early as the mid-1980s. Together with Barry Schwartz and Bernice Barnett, she examined the revival of the Masada story and its setting up in Israeli collective memory by Zionism.[15] The question that preoccupied the three authors was the gap between the marginality of the Masada story at the time and the significance that the Zionist ethos assigned to it.

The Talmud and the medieval rabbinical literature did not mention the Roman siege and the fighting in Masada. The single historical source of the siege was Josephus Plavius' book *The Wars of the Jews*, which was written in Greek. Only Christian Hebraists and monks were familiar with the story. It was inaccessible to Jewish readers until its translation into German in 1862 and Hebrew in 1927. For 1,800 years Masada was not commemorated in Jewish history and had no place in Jewish memory.

The three sociologists rightly maintained that Zionism created the new interest in Masada. However, they ascribed it mistakenly to the impact of a poem by this name that the Zionist poet Yitzhak Lamdan wrote in 1927. This poem, they stated, made Masada a symbol of Jewish resistance and revival. Following its publication, they argued, Masada enjoyed vast popularity and turned into a focus for fighting resistance and bravery worship. This rise in Masada's status demanded an explanation and the three provided it: Masada has symbolized courage, resolute commitment and fighting against all odds for the sake of self-respect. Hence it became a national symbol in a time when a large part of the Yishuv chose the way of resolute resistance. This was a worthy symbol for a mobilized society, and it succeeded in penetrating into the hard core of the national and social consciousness of Israeli society. In a textual analysis of the poem, the three have found that it fluctuated

between opposing poles of optimism and pessimism, and they ascribed the empathy that the poem aroused to the fact that its readers felt themselves in a similar emotional situation, identifying with the poet's pathos.

The apparently reasonable theory had a very weak connection to modern and ancient history. Masada was indeed repressed from the canonic literature because it raised difficult Halachic problems. Masada's defenders preferred death to surrender and slavery. They killed their families and committed suicide. Jewish religion sanctifies life, and could not present the collective suicide as a normative act (unlike the stories of Hanna and her seven sons and the Ten Martyrs, where the Talmud glorified martyrdom but not suicide). It is also true that Plavius' book was unknown to Jews until the nineteenth century. They did not read it and *The Wars of the Jews* could not have any impact on their consciousness. Nevertheless, the Masada story had a place in Jewish memory and was transmitted through the *Book of Yosifon* – a popular adaptation to Hebrew of Plavius' book, composed in the middle of the tenth century. It was one of the most popular Jewish books in the Middle Ages.[16]

The authors of the above-mentioned article relate to the *Yosifon* by the way, as 'a new version of the war that was written by Yosifon in the tenth century', as if Yosifon was the author's name.[17] In his introduction to the scientific edition of *Sefer Yosifon*, David Flusser writes that until the modern age it was 'one of the most famous books of Hebrew medieval literature, both among the Jews and the Gentiles'. It was probably written in Italy, and already in the eleventh century it was translated into Russian and was held by Jews in the Kiev kingdom of Russia. The book spread across the Diaspora, and following the invention of print it was translated into additional languages: Latin, German, French, English, Czech, Polish, Yiddish and Ladino. The author remained anonymous, though in the Middle Ages the book was mistakenly attributed to Plavius.[18]

Masada's memory was saved in *Sefer Yosifon*, and influenced medieval Jewish martyrdom, particularly during the first crusade. There is an overwhelming similarity between the descriptions of killing the women and children before committing suicide in Plavius' *Wars of the Jews*, *Sefer Yosifon* and the three chronicles that narrate the events of the first crusade in the Rhine valley.[19] The assertion that in the case of Masada, Zionism redeemed a 2,000-year-old story that had fallen into

oblivion has no ground. Masada was not forgotten, though its memory was not saved in the rabbinical literature but in the underground historiographic one.

Zerubavel and her two partners were way off the mark not only in belittling the place of Masada in Jewish memory, but also in the way they explained the shaping of its position in the Zionist ethos. They overstated the weight of the text (in this case, Lamdan's poem) and its impact, and ignored other causes of the mountain's popularity. Masada held a place of honour in the Zionist ethos, but not owing to Lamdan's poem and not because of the three scholars' arguments.

Lamdan's Masada is vague, undefined in time and space, and is not the Masada of the year 73 AD in the Judean desert or that of the treks of the twentieth century. The story of Masada struck roots in the Yishuv's consciousness in other ways; in the praises of the pioneer travellers, who told people about the amazing beauty of the sunrise viewed from Masada, and the physical challenge of climbing the steep slope. The annual journeys by foot of the teachers' training seminar in Jerusalem and the Herzliya high school in Tel Aviv around the Dead Sea began in 1912 (fifteen years before the publication of Lamdan's poem) and became a tradition until they stopped in 1937 because of the Arab rebellion. The Palmach renewed the treks to Masada in the 1940s. The youth movements continued the tradition in the 1950s. The archaeological excavations of Shemaria Guttmann and Yigael Yadin in the early 1960s stimulated public interest in the Judean desert by enabling people to touch history instead of reading or hearing it. Finally, the reconstruction of the site and its opening to mass tourism after the Six Day War made it accessible to all.

In the treks and journeys to Masada, guides, instructors and officers read primarily the Hebrew version of Elazar Ben-Yair's (the leader of the besieged Jewish zealots) address to his people and seldom Lamdan's poem. Zerubavel's attempt to explain Masada's popularity through textual analysis appears embarrassing. The comparison between Lamdan's text and the emotions in the Yishuv during the crisis of the late 1920s misses the point. The members of *Gdud Ha'avodah* that despaired of the Zionist project and returned to the Soviet Union to take part in building the world of tomorrow, and other emigrants of the late 1920s were not among the travellers to Masada. The students of the Herzliya high school in the 1920s and 1930s, and the youngsters

who marched in the Judean desert in the 1940s and 1950s, were not torn 'by the tension between protesting optimism and despaired pessimism', as she explains. Rather the opposite, they were over-optimistic and over-confident, and certainly did not see themselves standing before the dilemma of Masada's defenders. If Zerubavel's analysis was relevant, the poem should have raised emotions of identification among the ghetto fighters in the Holocaust, not among the youth of the Yishuv.

Zerubavel did correct some of the article's errors and produced a much broader and deeper analysis in a book that appeared nine years later. In that work she mentioned that the author of *Sefer Yosifon* was anonymous, that the story did not disappear from Jewish history and influenced the medieval Jewish martyrs. She insisted, however, that it did not find a place in Jewish collective memory.[20] She also changed her approach to the revival of the story and, instead of the textual analysis, brought to the fore the tradition of treks and the archaeological excavations.

Zerubavel missed the difference between Plavius' version of the end of Masada's fighters, claiming that they committed suicide after they had killed their family members, and the *Yosifon*'s version. The author of *Sefer Yosifon* wrote that after they had killed their wives and children, the defenders broke out of the fortress and perished to the last one in combat with the Romans. Zerubavel, apparently keen to show a Zionist manipulation of memory, ascribed this version to Joseph Klaussner, the Zionist historian of the Second Commonwealth period. Preceding Zionism to the tenth century, she regarded this version as part of the 'Zionist construction' of the Masada narrative.[21]

The popularity of Masada reached its climax in the years of euphoria after the Six Day War. In those years the reconstructed fortress turned from a target for desert treks of the young and strong to an attraction for masses of tourists. In the 1970s some IDF corps (that is, the armour and the field engineers) selected Masada to hold the ceremony of taking the oath by their new conscripts. Lamdan's poem had nothing to do with it, and the tradition itself did not endure and vanished after a few years. In recent years, Masada has attracted mainly non-Jewish tourists. The story of bravery and sacrifice means for them different things than it means for Israelis.

Among Israelis, what happened to Masada myth symbolizes the general transformations in Israeli society. One can hear in the last three decades voices calling to eradicate Masada, and the revolts against the

Romans generally, from the Israeli ethos. The pioneer of this revisionist trend has been former chief of military intelligence and later professor of international relations, Yehoshafat Harkabi, who radically changed his views of the Arab–Israeli conflict after Yom Kippur in 1973. His book about the Bar Kokhba's revolt was an actual polemic, not a historical scholarship. To a certain extent, Bar Kokhba played in the ethos of the dissident organizations, the Irgun and the Israel Freedom Fighters, a role similar to that of Masada in the ethos of the Palmach. Arguing against the 'dissidents' after the political turnover of 1977, Harkabi claimed that the Jewish people had not survived thanks to Bar Kokhba but despite him.[22] He did not mean the second century, but Begin's government and its policy in Judea and Samaria. The question that preoccupied him was not Bar Kokhba's mistakes but the Israeli admiration of the rebels against the Romans.

Indirectly, Harkabi's polemic book spawned the interest in the historical study of the revolt, and also stirred up responses to the actual message that were added to the Hebrew version of his book. Recently, Zerubavel examined meticulously the construction of Bar Kokhba's rebellion in Jewish religious memory and in Zionist collective memory, the differences between them, and the undermining of the Zionist version since the publication of Harkabi's book.[23]

Nachman Ben-Yehuda, a sociologist from Jerusalem, followed in Harkabi's footsteps, taking a highly critical stance against those who had shaped the 'Masada myth'. He indicated the various ways in which ostensibly the story of Masada had been manipulated by the Palmach, the IDF, the archaeologists, the Israeli media and the tourism industry. Seven years later Ben-Yehuda returned to the subject of Masada and accused Yigael Yadin – the former IDF's chief of staff and the senior archaeologist and driving force behind the excavations in Masada – of withholding information, tampering with evidence and constructing a mistaken and misleading story about Masada – all these in order to concoct a myth of Jewish bravery.

Ben-Yehuda is neither an expert on the Second Commonwealth period's archaeology, nor on the history of the Yishuv and the State of Israel. His interest is not archaeology or history, what happened in the first or in the twentieth century. He undermines the theme of bravery in Israeli collective memory and shakes up the virtue of heroism in the Israeli ethos. This is an ideological rather than a sociological goal.[24]

Criticism of the Masada myth and its place in the Israeli ethos were not limited to the academe. A few years ago, the headmaster of the Herzliya high school – the same school that pioneered the treks to Masada almost one hundred years ago – compared the zealots of Masada and their leader Elazar Ben-Yair to the Hamas suicide bombers. He demanded a stop to the worship of the gang that massacred the Jews of nearby Ein Gedi and committed suicide in Masada, and urged instead that his children be given universal and humanist messages. Indeed, the Herzliya high school and Israeli society at large have come a long way since the 'around the Dead Sea' journeys of the 1920s and 1930s.[25]

The narratives presented and analysed by Zerubavel, Harkabi and Ben-Yehuda have nothing to do with the archaeological or historical evidence of the Masada affair and the Bar Kokhba revolt, the ways they were saved in Jewish memory throughout the ages and their role in the twentieth century. They are closely connected, however, with the shaping of an educational framework of collective memory in the Yishuv and the state through the formal (schools) and informal (youth movements, community centres, etc.) education systems. Actually, it is part of an attempt to destroy this framework and to undermine the values that it strove to cultivate.

Zerubavel drew a direct line connecting the construction of the Masada myth in the Zionist movement with a later myth – the story of the 'Masada plan' in the Carmel mountains in 1942. Allegedly, the Yishuv planned to concentrate in the Carmel ridge and fight against Rommel's African Corpus if it invaded Palestine and the British army withdrew from the country. Zerubavel tries to find in this later affair a glorification of the Masada fighters (and their potential followers in the Yishuv) compared to the victims of the Holocaust. However, history of memory's construction, like any other history, is required to have factual accuracy. This cannot be said of Zerubavel's handling of the 'Masada' affair.[26]

The idea of a last fortress in the manner of Masada in the Carmel mountains emerged against the background of a fear of a renewed outbreak of the Palestinian Arab revolt in the spring of 1942, and preceded Rommel's offensive in the Western Desert. At the time, Masada was not the only symbol of a last ditch stand, and comparisons with Musa Dag (the besieged fortress in Franz Werfel's famous novel about the massacre of the Armenians in World War One) and Tobruk (the British

fortress in the Western Desert that survived a six months Axis' siege in 1941) were more popular.

Masada in the Carmel turned into a myth only in the fall of 1944, and in quite different contexts: the controversy between the partisans of enlistment in the Jewish Brigade and their opponents who preferred the Palmach, and the arrival in Palestine of the first partisan survivors who belonged to the Zionist youth movements in pre-war Poland. Contrary to the Masada myth – a didactic story with educational aims – the legend of Masada on the Carmel was moulded in the first place for polemic purposes.[27]

Muli Brug compares Masada to the rebellion of the Warsaw ghetto in April 1943 and relates only briefly to the use of the Masada name in Palestine in 1942. He is aware of the differences between the zealots of Masada and the ghetto fighters, but points out three significant similarities: (1) two small groups of Jewish survivors that fought against enormous odds; (2) the tragic end of both groups; (3) the two events took place during Passover. Brug argues that these historical events served agents of public opinion and educators in Israel in constructing a collective memory of heroism and sacrifice, notwithstanding the different perceptions of heroism in Palestine and in Poland at the time.[28]

TEL HAI

Another myth that Zerubavel examined has been the myth around the circumstances of Joseph Trumpeldor and his comrades' death in Tel Hai.[29] Actually, the Tel Hai affair produced two myths that emerged in different periods and satisfied different needs. The first was the myth of courage that began shortly after the event. Zerubavel shows how the principles of commemorating the fallen in the West were copied in the commemoration of Trumpeldor and his comrades. The starting point was Berl Katznelson's *Izcor*, published in the labourers' organ *Kuntres* eleven days after Trumpeldor's death. Anita Shapira regards Berl's *Izcor* (Remember), which served as a model for the next *Izcor* prayers to commemorate the Israeli fallen soldiers, as the cornerstone of the ethos of defensive courage in the *Yishuv*.[30] Zerubavel did not mention Katznelson's *Izcor* in her book, but a year later she quoted it in an article about the transformations of Tel Hai's place in popular memory.[31]

The myth of courage and the commemoration worship entered a

new phase in 1924, when the remains of the fallen in Tel Hai were trans-
ferred to the new cemetery that was built between Tel Hai enclosure
and the adjacent kibbutz Kfar Gil'adi, and a statue of a roaring lion by
the sculptor Batia Lishansky was erected to honour them. The Story of
Tel Hai was part of the syllabi of the Yishuv's schools and the youth
movements' actions. A special memorial day, marked by pilgrimage to
Tel Hai of all youth movements from Betar on the right to Hashomer
Hatza'ir on the left of the spectrum, was declared on the anniversary
of Trumpeldor's death. Many years later, a small museum was estab-
lished in the original Tel Hai enclosure.

    Beside the commemoration, worship that focused on the eight fallen
pioneers and Tel Hai's site – the cemetery, the statue, the ceremonies
and the museum – Trumpeldor has been commemorated in person. His
disciples in the Russian *he-Halutz* (the pioneer), who immigrated after
his death and founded the Labour Battalion, named it, and the first
kibbutz that they established (Tel Yosef), after Trumpeldor. At the other
tip of the Zionist ideological-political scale, Betar movement was
named after Trumpeldor (and also after the Bar Kokhba's revolt last
fortress). Popular songs written by Zeev Jabotinsky, Abba Hushi and
others, children's books, guides for teachers and youth movement's
instructors widely dealt with the image of Joseph from Galilee, namely
Trumpeldor. In the first decades Trumpeldor's commemoration resem-
bled personal worship. Blurring his human qualities and shortcomings,
it made him a figure larger than life. This legendary image was frac-
tured in the 1960s and broke down by the end of the 1980s.[32]

    The second myth of the Tel Hai affair emerged in the years
1936–39, particularly in 1937 when the Yishuv expected the publica-
tion of the Peel Commission's Partition Plan, and settlements of 'Wall
and Tower' were established. This myth stemmed from the first one,
and asserted that the holding-out of the northern settlements in 1920
determined the demarcation of Palestine's northern border line.

    When the border line was determined and marked on the ground by
an Anglo-French commission the settlers were not there. They evacuated
the settlements after Trumpeldor's death and returned only after the
border was decided and marked, in 1922. The documentation shows
clearly that while the British and the French concluded the demarcation
of the line, the Jewish settlements had no place in their considerations
and arguments. Nonetheless, the message of the second myth was

relevant to its time, to the realities of the 1930s. It was bound to convince people that new settlements will determine the future partition borders and therefore the settlements should be expanded and strengthened as the Yishuv's first priority.

Zerubavel analysed meticulously the symbolic and didactic messages of the Tel Hai story of heroism, the myth around it and the commemoration worship that was meant to bequeath it to younger generations. Like her textual analysis of the poem *Masada*, however, she missed a significant point. Like Masada, and the Bar Kokhba revolt as well, Tel Hai was also a fiasco: the failure of the Labour parties in the Yishuv, who insisted on remaining in the northern settlements after the withdrawal of the British army from Syria, but failed to strengthen them and enable their survival. It was a failure because of the premature death of one of the most promising potential leaders of the future Yishuv. It was a fiasco also because the settlements were abandoned after Trumpeldor's death. However, admitting defeat under the circumstances of early 1920, prior to the confirmation of the British Mandate and when the future of Palestine was still unclear, was a recipe for discouragement and retreat. More than all, the purpose of the Tel Hai myth was to strengthen weak hands: to blur the fiasco by turning it into a story of heroism and courage and to give meaning to the sacrifice by attributing the demarcation of the northern border to the clinging of Tel Hai's defenders to their settlement.

The glory of the Tel Hai myth faded long ago. Historical research put it in the right proportions, and quite exceptionally in this case the research overcame the myth.[33] The Lebanon war in the 1980s, and the ensuing closer familiarity with the problems of this country, offered an additional insight into the Tel Hai affair: not the beginning of the Arab–Jewish national conflict in Palestine, as it had been portrayed, but an inter-Lebanese violent event, of the type Israelis learned to know better in the 1970s and 1980s. Three Jewish settlements became involuntarily involved in the feud, failed to survive in the area and had to evacuate it.

MEMORY AND MYTHS OF THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Not every story of heroism becomes a myth. Modern myths are either didactic, striving to teach lessons, or are polemic and apologetic. The latter exonerate or explain events from the past and allocate guilt or

laurels. Israeli myths are no exception. Like myths of other nations, they cover inactions or turn fiascoes into achievements by glorifying sacrifice and heroism. Successes usually speak for themselves and do not need myths. The typical events that generate heroic stories are failures that because of educational or polemic reasons people want to blur. One can add to Masada and Tel Hai later myths of the type that covers failures, such as the '35' (soldiers who were killed to the last one on their way to Gush Etzion at the beginning of the war in January 1948), and the Etzion block of settlements in general, or the battle of Malikiyya on 15 May 1948.

The War of Independence was probably Israel's most successful war. However, it was also the bloodiest in terms of the absolute number of casualties and especially their proportion of the army and the population. The principal reasons for the high toll were not the Arabs' might, but the lack of preparation for a total war, erroneous perceptions of the imminent clash and amateurish conduct of the fighting's early phases.

Before the war, the Yishuv's political and military leadership believed that the Great Powers would protect the implementation of the UN resolution against any outside attempt to frustrate it. At the same time, the Yishuv would have to cope with the resistance of the Palestinians to such a resolution. They anticipated an encounter similar to the Arabs' revolt against the British in 1936–39, though the Arabs would be stronger and get substantial assistance from the neighbouring Arab countries. Ben-Gurion was the only exception to this perception. His colleagues did not share his vision of a war against the regular Arab armies, and objected consistently to his demands to prepare the Yishuv for such a war and to reform the *Haganah* and rebuild it to meet the demands of the future war rather than the past's rebellion.

Several setbacks that the *Haganah* sustained during the civil war between the Yishuv and the Palestinians under the shadow of the decaying British mandate uncovered that it was not properly prepared even for the scenario that it had anticipated. Difficulties in containing the Arab invasion in May–June 1948 reinforced this impression. The learning and recovery were quick, but drawing lessons, finding the proper solutions, the conscription and mass training, and the reorganization in the midst of combat – all required time. The new circumstances made the abandonment of deep-rooted patterns of thinking and orders of

priorities imperative. The process was a tricky one, accompanied by domestic struggles over status and resources. The high toll was the price of this lack of preparedness. Several war myths emerged to cover on guilt feelings and to exonerate the casualties. Others represented disputes on who was responsible for the negligence.

The principal apologetic myth of the war was its portrayal as the war of the few against the many. Ben-Gurion himself had dismissed this legend already in the final phase of the war, and again after a dozen of years:

> In the War of Independence the Arabs were divided … They were also unequipped. Indeed, in the first month [after the invasion] they had a larger arsenal than we had, because our weapons were abroad and only began to arrive. However, when our equipment arrived, it was better than theirs. Besides, although it may look peculiar, we had a larger army than theirs.[34]

Apologetic myths emerged also to justify the death toll in specific campaigns and battles. The myth that *Gush Etzion* saved Jerusalem was of this type. Until its fall on the eve of the invasion, the *Gush* did not detract Arab combatants from Jerusalem and did not prevent Arab reinforcements from arriving in the city. On the other hand it can be reasonably assumed that had the troops and arms that were invested in holding the *Gush* been spent in Jerusalem, the fate of the campaign for the city and, consequently, the course of the war, would have been different. About 300 people were killed in the *Gush* and on their way to it, and the myth of saving Jerusalem was necessary to justify this enormous sacrifice.

The story of the thirty-five *Haganah* fighters who were killed on their way to the *Gush* acquired a special place within the bigger saga. None of them survived, and the mythical narrative began to shape even before the first details about their fate were known. It drew from stories of Arab informers who had no first-hand knowledge of the battle, but knew what their operators wished to hear and did their best to satisfy and console them.[35]

Another myth that was shaped to justify a specific battle was the containment of the Lebanese army's invasion at Malikiyya on 15 May 1948. Lebanon's army did not take part in the invasion and there was no need to contain it, but the loss of twenty-seven soldiers in Malikiyya on that

day required an explanation. A battle against the defeated remnants of the Arab Liberation Army in Galilee was insufficient justification and the battle has been memorized as the containment of the Lebanese invasion. Similarly, the third battle of Malikiyya on 5–6 June 1948, in which the Lebanese artillery assisted the reorganized ALA to break through into Central Galilee, has become the founding myth of the Lebanese Army.[36]

A characteristic example of a polemic myth is that of the IDF's assaults on Latrun to open the road to Jerusalem. This myth did not attempt to justify the enormous death toll by glorification of the battles. At the time it emerged out of the opposition to the disbandment of the Palmach. It was converted after several decades to a protest by Holocaust survivors against their treatment before statehood and in the early years of the state.[37] Actually, the number of casualties among Holocaust survivors and new immigrants in the battles of Latrun was not outstanding and the general toll of the five attempts to storm the Arab Legion in Latrun between May and July 1948 was far lower than the figure given by politicians and agents of collective memory.

Another polemic myth has been the assertion of collusion between the Zionist leadership and King Abdullah of Transjordan to annex the Arab part of Palestine to the Hashemite kingdom and disguise the annexation with a simulated/faked war. This myth was born out of the concept 'lament for generations'. Originally, this was Ben-Gurion's account of the government's decision to reject his proposal to occupy Samaria in response to Palestinian combatants' attack on an IDF outpost near Modi'in during the second truce. The partisans of 'one Palestine complete' on the left (Mapam) and right (Herut) used this concept to describe Ben-Gurion's refusal to occupy Mount Hebron after the Egyptian defeat in October 1948, and to occupy Samaria in the end of that year.

Under the constraints of strict censorship in Israel in the 1950s the collusion myth spread through the vineyard until it was published in 1966 by Israel Ber. During the war of 1948, Ber held a senior post in the IDF General Staff. He belonged to the left-wing Mapam, and sharply criticized Ben-Gurion's conduct of the campaign. In the midst of the fighting he claimed that Ben-Gurion had a secret understanding with Abdullah on partitioning the country, and for this reason he ordered the IDF to refrain from cracking down on the Legion. In 1961 Ber was arrested and sentenced to ten years imprisonment for spying on

behalf of the Soviet Union. He died in prison before completing his term. His book – *Bitchon Israel: Etmol, Hayom Umachar* (Israel Security: Yesterday, today and tomorrow) – was written in jail and published posthumously in 1966.

In this book, Ber developed the allegation of an Israeli–Transjordanian collusion to let Abdullah take over the West Bank and annex it to his kingdom. His dubious record and personal involvement did not lend much credence to these theories. However, they corresponded to similar accusations on the Arab side, raised in the 1950s by a former Legion officer, Colonel Abdullah al-Tall, the former Iraqi Chief-of-Staff, General Salih Juburi, and the Egyptian press.

For twenty years the collusion theory lay dormant. In the late 1980s Avi Shlaim adopted many of Ber's allegations and elaborated on the apparent conspiracy in his *Collusion Across the Jordan*.[38] The Israeli and British documents refute the allegation unequivocally. If there was any collusion against the Palestinians, it was concocted between Abdullah and the British. From the hesitancy of Ben-Gurion, Foreign Minister Sharett and their advisors throughout and following the war, as they are reflected in the documents, it appears that they would have preferred a Palestinian option if this was feasible, but it was not.[39]

Other polemic myths emerged around the Palestinian refugee issue and the reasons for their exodus. These legends emanated from individual and collective memories on both sides, and expanded as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict persisted. The Israeli narrative claimed that the Arab leadership called the Palestinian Arabs to run away and guaranteed their return in the footsteps of the victorious Arab armies. This assertion does not stand any critical test, although many Israeli veterans of the war generation would swear that they heard such calls on the radio or listened to such explanations by Arabs during the war.

The present Palestinian narrative, backed and propagated by some radical post-Zionists, claims that from the beginning of the war Israel had adopted a policy of ethnic cleansing and strove to expel the Palestinians. This assertion derives from a few massacres and expulsions, particularly the affair of Deir Yassin. However, the cases did not represent any policy, some of them are totally refuted by the documentation or, as in the instance of Deir Yassin, have been inflated in the first place to serve propagandist needs of the IZL and LHI, the *Haganah*, the Arabs and the British.[40]

SCHOOLS AS AGENTS OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Since the nineteenth century teaching history in schools has been a central tool of shaping national identity, first in Europe and later elsewhere. The relativism and scepticism of the academic study of history in the second half of the last century drew a wedge between teaching history in universities and in schools. Historians, pedagogues and teachers of history began to ponder on the purpose of historical education in schools: should it convey a specific version of the past as heritage or collective memory, or should it cultivate critical thinking about the past and its legacy to the present? Study programmes usually include elements of both approaches and in the hands of different teachers they are fine-tuned towards one or the other.

In an age of compulsory education the entire population is exposed to learning history in school. The schools system in general, and history classes in particular, are major channels of passing on collective memory. Naturally, the public discussions of collective memory concern the schools system and its facilities: the curricula, textbooks and personal impact of teachers (or its absence).

Debates on teaching history in schools are worldwide phenomenon.[41] Postmodern American historians and other academics tried to introduce into the schools system the latest cult of the American universities. Together with parents, history teachers, school headmasters, librarians, pedagogues and editors of syllabuses of similar ideological orientation, they devised new standards of history teaching. The project shifted the focus of American history from the War of Independence, the constitution, the expansion westward and the Civil War to the issue of how women, blacks and other minorities suffered discrimination, repression and exploitation, overcame the hostility, and fought to achieve their rights.[42]

The new standards spawned agitation, especially in the media. Partisans of the new standards portrayed their opponents as rightist conservatives, but the opposition comprised much wider circles that were adamant to bar the penetration of postmodern academic radicalism into the schools. From the op-ed columns of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* the dispute moved to the Capitol Hill. In January 1995 the Senate adopted by 99 votes against 1 a resolution that condemned the new standards and buried the project.[43]

The controversies over teaching history in the United States served as a model in similar disputes that broke out in Israel at the end of the

1990s. The Shalem Centre used the example of new standards in a campaign against post-Zionist textbooks for the ninth grade of junior high school. Eyal Naveh, whose book was one of their targets, described the conflicting arguments in the American controversy in a one-sided and biased manner, concealing the arguments of the opponents deep in the footnotes. He wrote of the vote in the Senate that it was: '[a] political farce and ideological hysteria of a group of wealthy and influential American conservatives who tried in vain to change the multicultural agenda of their country'. This is an odd way to describe a vote of 99 against 1. Without any evidence or reference, Naveh asserted that despite the resolution the new standards had been adopted by many schools and teachers. The reader is left with no alternative but to count on this ex-cathedra statement.[44]

ISRAELI SCHOOLS' ROLE IN SHAPING NATIONAL IDENTITY AND MEMORY

A favourable target of the post-Zionist onslaught has been the Israeli collective memory as shaped by the state's schools system. Following the legislation of the State Education Law of 1953, the first core curriculum of history was published in 1954. It replaced the diverse syllabi of the former three main educational trends (general, labour and national-religious). Zeev Tzahor maintains that before statehood the educational trends used their schools curricula of history, literature and other disciplines to mobilize reserves to their political movements. For several years after the legislation of the State Education Law, schools still continued to teach the narrative of the former trend and ignored opposing versions.[45]

This general argument requires empiric verification that has not been furnished. The contents of history programmes varied according to trends, locations and schools. Perhaps this was the situation in the kibbutzim of ha-Kibbutz ha-Meuchad (where Tzahor graduated). My recollections are different: none of the seven elementary and high schools that I attended between 1949 and 1961 in various Israeli cities taught the history of the Yishuv or the State. The Hebrew University, until the early 1970s, ended the Jewish history in 1948, and the history of the Zionist movement and the Yishuv had a marginal place in the curriculum.

Ignorance among the general public and particularly in the schools system is apparently one of the greatest assets of post-Zionism. Schools have enormous difficulties in encountering the open world, and the teaching of history is just one of them, not among the most serious quandaries. Israel, in this sense, is not in a unique situation. The simple, usually unequivocal messages and slogans of post-Zionism are often more attractive than the complex explanations of the textbooks and the teachers who try to follow the guidelines of the Ministry of Education.

The new core programme of 1954 detailed the goals of history lessons. Dinur, then Minister of Education, evidently inspired it, as can be seen by comparing the declarative part of the syllabus to his programmatic article in the first edition of *Zion* in 1936. The syllabus was consistent with the historiographic approaches at the time, with contemporary views about the role of history teaching and with the normative atmosphere in Israel in those years.

Early criticism of the core curriculum and of state education in general preceded post-Zionism. Philosopher of education Zvi Adar argued that the teaching of history should not be based on romantics but on critical thinking. Adar maintained that instruction stirred by nationalism caused wars and encouraged hate, distorted the history of rivals and falsified the past by mythologizing historical heroes. His colleague Zvi Lam maintained that in a heterogeneous immigrant society like Israel no single core curriculum could meet the needs of all sections of the population. He thought that a democracy should not authorize educational goals and that teachers should have leeway in deciding what and how to teach.[46]

Lam's criticism questioned the basic concept of the melting pot, which at the time guided the absorption of immigrants and used the schools system as a major tool for that purpose. The history taught at the Israeli schools should have shaped a shared national identity and collective memory for people that had come from a variety of countries, at the expense of their traditional identities and memories. This concept was part of the broader goal of modernizing the immigrants.

In recent years the 1954 core curriculum was fiercely censured retrospectively by post-Zionist critics. They accused its authors, mainly Dinur, of Jewish-Israeli 'ethnocentrism', indoctrination, subordinating history to Zionist ideology, mobilizing it to promote Jewish nationalism,

negating the Diaspora and more.[47] Much of this condemnation has
been anachronistic, casting on the 1950s and 1960s values, norms, ter-
minology and controversies of the 1990s. One of the critics' principal
objects has been the preference given to Jewish history. It is debatable
whether this priority was more than a statement. Even if they are right,
however, the preference was consistent with the way history has been
taught elsewhere in the West: schoolchildren in the United States have
learned mainly American history and in the UK they have learned pri-
marily British history. World history has been taught as a background
of the national history.

Except for its high wording, it is difficult to find indoctrination in
the curriculum. Furthermore, there was a broad gap between the lofty
words written in Jerusalem and realities in schools across the country.
Contrary to the guidelines that preferred the Jewish history, world and
Jewish history were balanced – apparently because most teachers and
children favoured world history.

The Jewish past as taught in Israeli schools was not necessarily
'Zionist'. Ruth Firer's study has shown that until the 1960s, Hebrew
history textbooks were dominated by the cultural nationalism of Graetz
and Dubnow, the Zionist approach having barely begun to make
inroads.[48] The Jerusalem School comprehensive history of the Jewish
people from biblical times to the present, known in Israel as the 'three
red books', came out only in 1969 and during the 1970s was translated
into English and other languages.[49]

Converging their attacks on Dinur and dubbing him a 'commissar',
the detractors 'forgot' that most contemporary teachers, in history as
in other disciplines, took for granted the Jewish national identity and
did not need official encouragement from above and certainly not
enforcement. The teachers' union in the Land of Israel was founded in
1903, almost twenty years before the arrival of Dinur in the country.
Zionist education was a grassroots phenomenon, not a hegemonic
memory imposed by an establishment of bureaucrats or ideologues.

Israeli society began to transform in the late 1960s and early 1970s,
following the Six Day War, and the changes led to the preparation of
a new core curriculum in history. The plan responded to some of the
earlier criticism, added understanding and toleration of other nations'
traditions and different ways of life, and reduced the national-romantic
pathos of the early 1950s. Three subjects were declared mandatory: (1)

the history of the Jewish national movement and the foundation of Israel; (2) the principal communities of the Diaspora and the Holocaust; (3) the Arab–Jewish conflict. In other topics, schools and teachers enjoyed a larger degree of autonomy than before. The critics praised the novel approach but realized that in practice the changes were minor. Naveh's bottom line stressed that the syllabus preserved the Zionist ethos of the new Israeli Jew, and notwithstanding the recognition of pluralism the dilemma of including 'others' in the hegemonic narrative continued.[50]

The 1970s core curriculum introduced three subjects that had been absent from its predecessor: the Arab–Jewish conflict; the Holocaust; and the heritage of the oriental Jewish communities. The growing self-confidence of Israeli society after the war enabled the inclusion of the conflict, and even a tad of the other side's point of view. Teaching the Holocaust began in the late 1970s, with the emphasis on the emotional experience rather than on historical knowledge. Ever since, there has been a tension between teaching the Holocaust as the special tragedy of the Jewish People and emphasizing its rational and universal lessons. This conflict has overlapped the political friction between Right and Left and the Left bind it also with the relations with the Palestinians. Including the heritage of the Jewish oriental communities was a must, considering the changes in the composition of Israel's Jewish population.

After a long break since the days of Dinur, ministers of education in the 1990s and the 2000s became again involved in the history curriculums, either by trying to stamp on them a personal impact (like Yossi Sarid's suggestion to include the Kafr Qassim massacre) or by appointing advisors and committees to prepare new syllabi for the various types of schools.

THE SCHOOLS SYSTEM AND THE ACADEME

One field in which post-Zionism succeeded to shake Zionist discourse or at least its exclusivity was the Israeli school. At the end of Zevulun Hammer's term as Minister of Education he appointed Professor Moshe Zimmerman, then Chair of the History Department at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, to chair a committee that would supervise the teaching of history and prepare a new curriculum for junior high schools.

The incorporation of professors from the discipline (professors of education had been incorporated long before) into the Ministry of Education's system came simultaneously with the emergence of post-Zionism. The revisionism of the universities penetrated into the schools, whose teachers and students were ill equipped to confront it. Several Ministers of Education from the left-wing party *Meretz* and Peace Now movement (Shulamit Aloni, Yossi Sarid and Yuli Tamir; Amnon Rubinstein of *Meretz*, who succeeded Aloni, was an exception) assisted or at least did not oppose the post-Zionist cultural offensive. Zionist and Israeli history was described in new textbooks and some classes as the history of the evil and misery that Zionism caused to various groups. The emotional picture of the sufferings of Zionism's victims aimed to encourage empathy with the losers and disapproval of the winners. From a post-Zionist point of view, the very fact that Zionism was a winning movement made it immoral. The Likud Minister of Education Limor Livnat's attempt to tip the scales by imposing the memorizing of a hundred Zionist concepts missed the point and soon proved counterproductive.

The Israeli experience has shown that academic professors are not the proper answer to the quandaries of the schools system. Schooling and academic teaching require different talents. Professors teach students who chose to study the field, and occasionally selected the class's particular subject. They hardly encounter problems of discipline and class administration. The lesson lasts 75–90 minutes – enough time to develop an issue and discuss it. A history (or any other) lesson in school is compulsory. It lasts 50 minutes, half of which are devoted to imposing order in class and to disciplinary or administrative affairs. The levels of pupils' concentration are diverse. The concept of time is not fully comprehensible – at least in elementary and junior high school. Above all, the classes' heterogeneity makes teaching almost impossible when a teacher has to speak to his class on several levels.

A professor chairing or advising a departmental committee is hardly familiar with these realities. None of the committees that were chaired by professors solved the problems, and some commissions may have aggravated them. Teachers often found it difficult to implement the recommendations. It may be more useful to appoint to such committees good and experienced teachers, preferably from diverse schools serving various segments of the population, and to turn to the academe only if

and when questions of content arise that require the advice of an expert in the field.

Preparing a good history syllabus for junior high schools does not necessitate a worldwide famous expert on modern German history or the history of the film industry. Innovation is an academic virtue, but not for its own sake. Schooling should be based on stability and reliability, not every new finding or interpretation has a place in the syllabus. In principle, study programmes, classes and textbooks should reflect agreements among historians rather than historical disputes and controversies.

An open question is how profound is the influence of study programmes, textbooks and teachers on the students' identity and consciousness? The answer demands an empiric study that so far has not been done. Ruth Firer's and Avner Ben Amos's works analyse syllabuses and the contents of textbooks, but do not examine their impact on teachers and children. The field is open to arguments over purposes, methods and substance on the basis of mere impressions or, at most, partial and local surveys.

One can, of course, deduce from other countries. To illustrate the power and significance of the representation, Nora brings a textbook of geography that appeared for the first time in 1877 and for many years was the standard textbook in French schools. The Minister of Education, Nora wrote admiringly of the book, could look at his watch on 8 a.m. in a certain day of the year and declare: 'all our children are now crossing the Alps'.[51] The inevitable question is, so what? Does the example testify to the imagined force of the book, or the representation, as can be implied, or does it testify to the real power of the centralized French schools system?

Like Nora, Eyal Naveh and Esther Yogev, too, realize the dialectic tension between the study of history and the research of memory, between critical analysis and emotional association, and regard it as one of the basics of teaching history in high schools. Like Nora, they, too, relate with awful seriousness to the school textbooks' role as moulders of memory: 'The textbook is like a statute or a commemoration site, like a poem or a canonic text, like a flag, an emblem or a holy place – bound to build and develop a national collective memory.' On the other hand, they indicate, the textbook should encourage a critical process that does not accept the national memory at its face value. In their opinion, the textbook should achieve a contradiction.[52]

HISTORIANS AS HISTORY MAKERS

Post-Zionists attribute the shaping of Israeli collective memory to deliberate manipulations of an anonymous 'Zionist establishment' or 'Zionist elites', aimed to preserve their status in the present and secure its supremacy in the future. This all-inclusive attitude to 'Zionists' derives from a false image of a unified, homogeneous and solidary Yishuv as the opposite of the polarized, multicultural and pluralist Israel of the late twentieth century. But the Yishuv society was heterogeneous and torn by struggles over ideologies, religious issues, narratives, identities and memories, none of which was hegemonic in the eyes of the others.

Historians are not supposed to mould collective memory and identity, but to study their construction and development, and the various influences that helped in their shaping. On the other hand, postmodernists and other theoreticians regard the historian as one of the agents who shape collective memory. This approach is compatible with their general tendency to belittle history or reject it totally, claiming that in representing the past the historical writing has no advantage over fiction, and all the more so over memory.

In studying the history of collective memory, its construction and the changes that take place in it, the line separating historical research from making history is much narrower than in political, military, social or economic history. The historian who participates in the production of a narrative or refutes a myth, imagines himself a player of history, takes part in making it, or, at least, affects its making, and not only describes or analyses it. Apparently, this is one of the reasons that attract historians to regard themselves as agents of collective memory and to study memory and its representations.

The historian's role is to describe the creation of memory, exposing the various influences that helped to shape it, and to explain why and how they affected it. This is, at least, what Samuel, Le Goff and Nora did – the first two modestly, and the third in an exaggerated pretension to turn history into a history of memory. Historians are sons of their time and are aware of, and sometimes they are partners to, their period's characteristic assumptions and beliefs and even help in shaping them. However, a historian's goal should not be to shape or destroy memory, and he should abstain from any attempt to influence memory's course. When a historian tries deliberately to take part in consolidating memory or destroying it instead of explaining it – and

instead of historical research, he cultivates a narrative or demolishes another narrative – he becomes, like the other agents who mould memory and deliberately manipulate it, a propagandist.

History and Memory in a Divided Society

HISTORICAL AND ACTUAL PERPLEXITIES

Twenty-five years before the eruption of the post-Zionist tsunami, Israel Kolatt anticipated the revisionist blitz in the study and writing of Zionist and Yishuv history. He forecast that it would be linked to anti-Zionist Arab propaganda and he traced the connection between would-be revisionist historians and the ideas of the New Left in Europe and the United States. Kolatt also discerned the growing estrangement between new concepts taking over western universities and the principal concepts of Israeli society. Enlightenment, progress and liberalism notwithstanding, he wrote, 'The nexus [in Judaism] between religion and nationality, the Jews' affiliation to the Land of Israel and the international character of Jewish existence were and have remained mysteries susceptible to libel.'[1]

Apart from the ideological encounter between Zionism and its opponents, Kolatt detected epistemological and methodological dilemmas in adjusting the needs of Zionist historiography to the relativist approaches dominating much of western historiography. This adjustment was a major obstacle in the way of Israeli historians: 'Western historiography now grants priority to the critical role over the constitutive function. Zionist historiography has other needs.'

Kolatt wrote the article at the peak of euphoria engulfing Israel after the Six Day War in 1967. In the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur war the atmosphere changed and, by the 1980s, the appearance of postmodernism in the West and in its local versions in Israel redrew the boundaries of the debate on Zionist, Yishuv and Israeli history. Following western gurus, Israeli 'postists' have questioned the validity of historical research in general, and of Zionism's 'great story' and main elements in particular. Viewed from the distance of a generation, Kolatt's keen eye and the

accuracy of his forecast about the evolution of Zionist historiography under pressure from the social sciences, the media and the various forms of postmodernism are astounding.

NEW VALUES AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

The watershed in the evolution of Israeli academe's position vis-à-vis the political establishment was the Six Day War, not − as Shlomo Zand has claimed – the Lavon Affair of a few years earlier (a political scandal over sabotage actions in Egypt). At the time a group of professors had sided with Defence Minister Pinchas Lavon in the political struggle, though they had not aimed their barbs at the entire political establishment. After the Six Day War the collective national-Zionist ethos started to wane and individualism emerged as a leading ideal. Within a few years, Israeli academics, journalists and artists became the spearhead of the new individualistic ethos.

The Zionist ethos, until the Six Day War, had stressed the collective experience, primarily national survival and revival. Its myths sanctified individual enlistment for movement, country, people and society. Self-realization meant doing what was good for the collective, not, as is the case today, what is good for oneself. Selfishness was considered a vice. The (at least theoretical) consensus around this demanding ethos derived largely from outside pressures on, and existential fears of, the Yishuv and, later, of Israeli society, beginning with the Arab revolt in 1936 and up to the Six Day War. The external perils – the perception of which was real, whether or not they were – threatened all members of the Yishuv and compelled all components of the voluntary, immigrant society to agree on a basic ideological minimum and on procedures of political behaviour. Detractors who disagreed with the ideology or denied the authority of its representative national institutions were alienated and condemned as 'dissidents' (the ultra-religious, communists or revisionists).

The sense of existential threat gradually weakened after the Six Day War, shattering the consensus and eroding the ethos. Old flags were folded away, traditional ideals and myths were abandoned; new banners were raised. In some sectors, collectivist culture was now mere lip service. A new ethos was shaped, based on novel myths that focused on the individual: one's own self-fulfilment, rights, honour and life.[2]

The past two decades have found Israeli society in a spin. It has seen vehement contests over its identity, source of authority, composition and structure, ethos and leadership.[3] Divided by profound disagreements, it has lost its equilibrium between authority and accountability; reward and punishment; success and failure; the general and the particular; service and parasitism; goals and results; wealth and poverty; labour and capital; solidarity and competition; reality and fiction; words and deeds; truth and lies. The spin has left its mark on academe as well. Under growing pressure from the public, politicians and market forces, Israeli universities have had to reconsider their national mission (if they have any), their social role and academic direction. Academic controversies have mirrored the complexity and diversity of Israeli society.

Israeli historiography was also pulled into the spin. It lost the capacity to discern between professionalism and charlatanism, integrity and opportunism, discourse and reality; between conformism to political correctness and adherence to principles. Historians fluctuate between the requisites of scientific study of the past and their ambition to influence the present in public debates and media controversies; between sounding the depths and brushing the surface. Often, the surrender to media dictates lowers the level of historical debate and adapts it to the framework, language, time and scope of talk shows and op-ed columns.

The democratization of history, the growing interest in individual and collective memory, the empowerment of the media and the technological innovations in disseminating information have all ruptured the relation between the past and its representations, in Israel as in the rest of the world. If a distinguished historian like Henri Rousso could fall into the trap, and balance the Holocaust with Claude Lanzman's film on it, no wonder that in the eyes of the lay public a fictional movie, television documentary, newspaper feature, historical novel and historical study all carry the same weight as regards the past.[4] In the field of contemporary history, the competition between the various avenues of knowledge is especially fierce, with television and the written media usually coming out on top.[5]

The processes affecting Israeli society since the Six Day War help to better understand the impact exerted on Israeli academe by the new trends that took over western universities. Israeli scholars who studied abroad introduced these fads to Israel, projecting them on to different situations incompatible with the imported theories. They boasted that

they had replaced the Zionist discourse (assuming that there was such a single sermon) with the popular discourses of the West – postmodern, feminist and post-colonial. Their belief in the capacity of discourse to shape or substitute for reality has led them to excessive, aimless hair-splitting over such Zionist concepts as *aliyah*, land redemption, war of independence or settlement, and to replace them with apparently neutral terms such as emigration, dispossession, colonialism or the war of 1948.

For more than a decade the journal *Teoria u-Bikoret* (Theory and criticism) has been the podium of postmodernist and post-Zionist ideas and encouraged their mushrooming. The scholars, writers and artists that rallied around it, and the Van Leer Institute that hosted it, have spread the gospel of postmodernist apostles and questioned the principal convictions of Israeli society. Few of the contributors to *Teoria u-Bikoret* have been active historians. The majority were theoreticians of literature and linguistics, anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers and scholars of culture. Not all the writers were or are postmodernists or post-Zionists; occasionally the journal also published articles by Zionist or Marxist writers. The editorial board spurred on the translation into Hebrew of works by western gurus, deeming them relevant to the political and cultural debates in Israel. In this way, the paradigm of discrimination typical of Afro-American and Women Studies in the United States, and of the post-colonialist discourse of western Europe, was imported to Israel. The journal's contributors adapted them to women, Mizrahi Jews, Holocaust survivors and Arabs in Israel.[6]

Another major platform of Israeli postism has been the *Haaretz* daily, especially since the death of its mythological editor, Gershom Schocken. In the wake of the hopes for peace generated by the Oslo Agreement that reached their climax between 1994 and 1996, *Haaretz* featured prominently in the public debate. Under the illusion of an apparently 'new Middle East', Israeli postists pretended not only to reinvent the past, but also to prophesy the future. They were quick to proclaim the disappearance of Israel's cohesive society and the decay of Israeli identity, collective memory and 'Zionist culture'.

One of the prophets of vanishing Israeliness was Baruch Kimmerling. Summarizing previous works on the topic, he classified seven alternative cultures and countercultures in its place. In each, he found internal divisions, arguing that they undermined the hegemonic

national-Zionist version and dismantled Israeli collective memory, replacing it with many opposing and conflicting accounts.[7]

Another prophet, Jerusalem historian Moshe Zimmerman, promised that 'in the next stage the term assimilation will receive massive treatment that may turn Zionist historiography upside down'. The prediction was not prompted by any new knowledge or revelations about assimilation. His inspiration to turn Zionist historiography upside down came from 'parallel debates of minorities, prejudices, and racism that take place among historians and social scientists in Europe and America'. The implication was that Zionism is prejudiced, racist and represses minorities.[8]

Historians are usually experts on the past. But Zimmerman already knew in 1996 which unassailable axioms were to be targeted by Israeli historiography in the future. Most of them have never been beyond doubt and there was no need to assail them. Thus, he argued that the Six Day War would be revealed as a war of choice because going to war had not been the only option. No scholar writing on that war or its background has claimed otherwise to date. His dispute was not with his historian colleagues, but mainly with Israeli collective memory about the waiting period preceding the war, and with the rhetoric of politicians and journalists following it.[9] The innovation of his new historiography was not historical, but political, revision. Like Kimmerling's, Zimmerman's case also showed a post-Zionist historian using his irrelevant academic reputation to advance an anti-Zionist ideology and challenge Zionism.

Zimmerman ascribed the transformation of Israeli historiography to the changing values of Israeli society.[10] He was right, of course, but society's changing ethos had an impact on all historians whom, however, he ignored, limiting the discussion to a small, radical group and its academic milieu.[11] Acknowledging that 'new ideas had been anchored in research for a long time, and the title "new" is not appropriate to all cases', he explained that the innovation was the public debate of these ideas. Public debates usually confront collective memory, not history, and this is equally true of Zimmerman's examples and comparisons.

Zimmerman took the inspiration for his manifesto on the Zionist fiasco from the historians' controversy in Germany in the 1980s. Oddly enough, he drew an analogy between the Holy Roman Empire in the

Middle Ages and the modern German Reich on the one hand, and 'smaller' and 'greater' Israel respectively before and after the Six Day War, on the other hand.[12] He portrayed Zionism as a failing movement that had not accomplished its objectives and had been hijacked by religious and ethnocentric reactionary forces. These arguments may be true or false. But they cannot be uttered *ex-cathedra* without substantiation the way Zimmerman did.[13]

POST-ZIONISM AS AN 'INTELLECTUAL' DEBATE

The post-Zionist controversy featured prominently in academic and public debates in Israel in the 1990s and was the subject of several symposia. By the end of the decade interest in the topic had strayed beyond Israel's borders. A few conferences outside of Israel were devoted to Israeli historiography, new and old, and books were published on it in the United States, Britain, Germany and France.[14]

While the dispute has been ideological and political, it filtered down to the lay public as intellectual. As soon as professors, scholars or writers step out of academe's ivory tower and into the cold waters of ideological, political and other public struggles, they tend to become – both in their own and other eyes – 'intellectuals'.

The concept of 'the intellectual' originated in late nineteenth-century France. In the wake of the Dreyfus Affair, it extended from an adjective to a noun. Following American sociologist Alvin Gouldner, Shlomo Zand argued that intellectuals were a class of their own – an objective given, independent of the will and consciousness of its members and, at one and the same time, a class for itself – the members being part of a union and acting according to the parameters of union identity and for its collective needs and interests. The two definitions are incompatible; in between, there is plenty of room for other possible classifications. Aware of the concept's problematic nature, Zand acknowledged that any attempt at an unambiguous definition was doomed to failure. He was also aware of its relative usage in different societies (for example, where a literate person may be considered an intellectual), and mentioned the existence of intellectuals who refuse to be categorized as part of an 'intellectual elite'.[15]

Zand argued that from the 1930s, until the Likud Party's rise to power in 1977, 'there had been an open ideological alliance between

the [Israeli] political and intellectual elites'. During the Likud reign, the gap between the two steadily widened. The intellectuals' disapproval of politicians radicalized, as did the rejection of academe and academics by the political establishment. Among writers, artists, actors and film-makers, the discord was even more striking.[16]

The issue of the role of Israel's intellectuals (who are hardly an 'elite') at the present time stems from confusion about their function in the past. Zand's generalizations about what had happened both before the 1977 change of course and in its wake, as well as his causal explanation of that year as a turning point in relations between politicians and intel-lectuals, were reductionist. For him, 'political elites' meant Mapai. He did not mention or cope with the rest of the political spectrum. Zand reduced the intellectual elite of early statehood to the professors that founded the *Min Hayesod* group in the late 1950s and already clashed with Ben-Gurion (not with the politicians!) in the early 1960s. He also disregarded another significant group of intellectuals within and outside the Hebrew University, who were affiliated with the Zionist Revisionist movement. Similarly, he took no notice of Mapam's intellectuals, who criticized the political establishment from the opposite direction, and he overlooked communist and Canaanite intellectuals. Little wonder that he skipped over Baruch Kurzweil, who was definitely an intellectual but did not belong to any of these groups.

Yoram Hazony of the Shalem Center in Jerusalem represented an antithetical position. In his view, since its foundation, the Hebrew University was a bastion of opposition to Ben-Gurion and his ideolog-ical and political line. Hazony associated *Min Hayesod* in the 1950s and 1960s with *Brit Shalom* and *Ichud* in the Mandate period, and added to the faction of these 'conspirators' every academic that had ever uttered a word of criticism about the State of Israel.[17]

Both Zand and Hazony confined their attention to specific groups of professors not necessarily representative of the touted categories. Both ignored the silent majority of academics who do not subscribe to the adjective 'intellectual', do not sign petitions or add their irrelevant titles to their signatures, do not rush to the media to proclaim their opinions on any and every topic, but are busy advancing science and adding knowledge in their respective fields.

Tension and alienation between academe and the political establish-ment are not unique to Israel. American academe has often been at

loggerheads with the government, the military forces and the intelligence community since the Vietnam War. The campuses were hotbeds of opposition to the war and professors encouraged student protests and demonstrations. In Israel, in contrast, during the years following the Six Day War, there was a growing rapprochement between academe, the state and the military. However, an increasing number of individual scholars gradually imitated the position of American colleagues, importing their antagonism towards the government and the military.

This antagonism was recently echoed by Gil Eyal, a Columbia University sociologist, in an article titled 'Dangerous [*sic*] Liaisons between Military Intelligence and Middle Eastern Studies in Israel', and then followed up in a book on the history of Middle East studies in Israel.[18] On the basis of theory derived from Gouldner, Foucault and others, Eyal attempted to explain how intellectuals (in this case, Israeli orientalists or experts on Arab affairs) voluntarily enlisted in the service of the establishment at the price of their independence and out of an ambition to influence actual policy. He traced the relations between the experts and the establishment from the days of Shay (the Jewish Agency and Haganah intelligence service before statehood) until Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977. According to Eyal's theory, cooperation with and dependence on the establishment castrated the experts and hampered their interpretations and assessments.

Israeli orientalists in and out of academe, like their colleagues in academies and intelligence communities across the world, have made many mistakes in the past and will probably continue to prove fallible in the future. This plain fact of life has nothing to do with academe–establishment relations. The alienation of US orientalists from the government and their dependence on Arab funds have misled them in their analyses of the Islamic world, just as excessive proximity tripped up experts on Eastern Europe and the Far East who cooperated with the government during the Cold War and the wars in Korea and Vietnam.

As a historian who wrote seven volumes on the history of Israeli intelligence until 1954 (three of them are still classified), and at the end of his military and the beginning of his academic career served as an assistant to the commission of inquiry that investigated the war of 1973 and its intelligence background in earlier years (and have been familiar

with all the evidence), I do not hesitate to state that the historical evidence – on pre-statehood, 1948 and the early 1950s, and 1967–73 – by no means supports Eyal's theory (and assertions) on the intelligence community. On later issues, such as who believes the Palestinian Covenant or Israeli intelligence interpretations of Arafat's stances and attitudes, Eyal's main sources are *Haaretz* journalists; in other words, second-hand news. Without documentary evidence, this is a dubious basis for any theory.

A discussion of Israeli–Arab relations should take into account the Arab side even if the emphasis is on the Jewish side. However, in Eyal's book, the Arabs are passive, mute objects of Jewish/Israeli experts. This is the mirror picture of many debates on Jewish–Arab relations in Israeli academe, in which the participants are experts on Arabs rather than on Jews or Israel, and the dominant issue is the Arabs' wishes, attitudes and positions, the Jewish side being either passive or ignored.

Eyal is a sociologist, not a historian, though he purports to write history. He starts at the end and works backward from a predefined hypothesis, which really constitutes his conclusions following a selective search for supporting evidence (ignoring or misreading contradictory evidence). He recognizes no hierarchy of sources, he examines no sources critically. He chases untested axioms, myths and speculations led by gut feeling. The quantity of errors renders the factual infrastructure too shaky to underpin sound interpretation. Eyal's chronology is flawed, the influence he attributes to the Shiloach Institute – the principal target of his criticism – is highly inflated, his generalizations are invalid and his examples are not representative. His patent anti-establishment bias is regrettable because, having said all this, he does offer several worthy insights and observations that could be substantiated and developed with proper methodology. A recent empirical work on a similar topic – the impact of scholars on Israel's intelligence conception prior to the Yom Kippur war – convincingly shows their complex interaction, the limits of the military's influence on academic research, and the limits of academic influence on intelligence assessments.[19]

Eyal's attitude is akin to that of many contemporary European and American academics. Their main interest in intellectuals relates to their political or social role rather than to their scholarly or cultural work and accomplishments.[20] They regard intellectuals as creators of new ideas casting doubt on established beliefs and epitomizing the social

conscience – but only if this social conscience is at the opposite pole of the prevailing order. Conservatives supporting tradition or serving the existing order with their knowledge or insights are not considered intellectuals. They may even be accused of betraying the unique mission of the 'intellectual elite'.

This, of course, is not a general view. Working on a less politically charged topic than Israeli orientalism, Eyal showed how two different perceptions of the intellectuals' role developed in post-communist Eastern Europe: one regards them as the guardians of collective memory and identity; the other places them outside the collective as spiritual guides representing individual conscience and memory. According to the first perception, the intellectual represents the spirit of the nation and its collective identity. According to the second, intellectuals stand for supra-national values, such as morality, justice and truth.[21]

Zand covered the complexity of the intellectuals' issue from all sides. He showed that one can find among them supporters of every vice, from fascism and Nazism to Stalinism and colonialism, as well as those who made a name for themselves by opposing these tyrannies. But Zand's subtext leaves the reader with three impressions: (a) intellectuals are 'elite' by default; (b) true intellectuals oppose the establishment and aspire to change reality; (c) the book is heavily affected by Foucault's knowledge–power equation as history's organizing force.[22]

In *The Pen and the Sword*, Michael Keren explored the dilemma of the Zionist intellectual caught between universalism and national commitment. His point of departure was the necessity of the Jewish intellectual to choose – as George Steiner put it – 'between the homeland and the text'.[23] Steiner chose the text. Like him, many Jewish intellectuals regard the identification with Jewish nationality to be diametrically opposed to the intellectual's mission. Steiner maintained that the tradition of European Jewish intellectuals since Moses Mendelsohn has been cosmopolitan. In their view, allegiance to the Jewish nation was tantamount to returning to the ghetto and betrayed the intellectual's universal mission. One of the foremost opponents of intellectuals displaying patriotism was the French-Jewish philosopher Julien Benda. His book, *The Betrayal of the Intellectuals*, rebuked the latter for supporting their governments and armies in the First World War.[24]

In Keren's view, Israeli intellectuals did not become missionaries of the nation-state, nor were they actually reconciled to its establishment.

They were certainly committed to the national idea and enthusiastically welcomed political independence and sovereignty, but they were aware of the gap between lofty ideals and reality. Keren noted the deterioration of the intellectuals' position in the state and considered it a typical phenomenon of newly liberated states from the colonial yoke. Thus, he unconsciously adopted the later post-Zionist stance that Jewish nationalism and statehood should be studied in a regional rather than a European context.[25]

Zand, in moving over to Israeli intellectuals, abandoned his detached, cold and balanced discussion of the world phenomenon for involvement, polemics, irony and unfounded charges. He devoted a good deal of space to criticizing the terminology and semantics of Zionist historians, and claimed that they aimed to deliver ideological messages through ostensibly scholarly writing. Himself not a postmodernist, his approach was nonetheless faithful to that of Hayden White, who held that the historian's vocabulary should be examined before the evidence.[26]

Zand argued that Yishuv politics had dominated the intellectual field. He ignored or marginalized non-Zionist figures from the Right or Left and exonerated the Hebrew University of conformism to Zionism, thanks to its president, Yehuda Leib Magnes and the *Brit Shalom* group. His statement that the intellectuals of *Brit Shalom*, mostly residents of the bourgeois Jerusalem neighbourhood of Rechavia, were active 'on the margins of the Zionist left', is odd, casting concepts of Right and Left from the end of the twentieth century on to the 1930s.[27]

The state's establishment, Zand argued, diverted the intellectuals from their mission and turned them into Ben-Gurion's sycophants: 'Most of the enlightened camp responded enthusiastically to [Ben-Gurion's] flattering attention and did not hesitate to supplement the idolization of the state with personality worship'. He also maintained that Ben-Gurion 'was never satisfied with his paramount political position, and aspired to guide and direct cultural planning'. The intellectuals' conformism enabled Ben-Gurion 'to establish a monolithic political culture that silenced radical and critical voices from both Left and Right'. Zand relied on a recognized authority such as Eisenstadt, claiming that Eisenstadt himself had called the attitude of the cultural elite to the state Byzantine sycophantism.[28]

In his eagerness to besmirch Ben-Gurion, Zand altered the spirit of Eisenstadt's words somewhat, interpreting them out of context. Eisenstadt

did not generalize about the intellectuals' Byzantine sycophantism towards the state, but attempted to explain the change in their attitude after statehood:

> In many literary, journalistic, artistic and scientific circles the state became the expression of this great historic event which, despite some elements of Byzantine sycophantism, contained the honest efforts of understanding a great historical event. They sought to participate in it, and to find ways in which to define it and make it meaningful. Inevitably, this tendency to idolize the state gave rise, with the passage of time and the routinization of state activities, to a feeling of emptiness and moral crisis demanding ideological explanations which remained unsatisfied.[29]

In this context, Zand's allegations appear somewhat coloured. Ben-Gurion was undoubtedly involved in academic debates and controversies. He was personally acquainted with many renowned Jewish academics of his time and sought to draw them close. He had certain nation-building roles in mind for academics, just as he related to other sectors of Yishuv society. At the same time, he was highly opinionated on many issues, including the expertise and limits of scholars and science.[30]

It is hard to understand why Zand would fault a leader's involvement and interest in science, the Bible and philosophy. Ben-Gurion may have been a dilettante, but his successors' lack of interest in abstract questions and alienation from intellectual matters and science is only to be regretted. It is to the benefit of Israeli society and academe if a leader makes time, among his numerous other duties, to found or promote such institutions as the Israeli Academy of Sciences, as Ben-Gurion did. True, he had to force it upon hesitant, suspicious professors who were worried about its possible effects on interpersonal and inter-institutional rivalries.[31]

The professors of *Min Hayesod* struck Zand as an Israeli version of the French intellectuals during the Dreyfus Affair.[32] By a stretch of the imagination, he also compared Pinchas Lavon, the powerful, ambitious Histadrut secretary who aspired to succeed Ben-Gurion and failed, with the Jewish officer exiled to Devils Island. As for the 1954 Egyptian sabotage affair, Ben-Gurion's insistence on a judicial inquiry to ascertain who had given the order was no less moral than the stubborn objection of the professors to the inquiry.

When Zand wrote his book on the intellectuals in the late 1990s, he believed that he was seeing the end of the Zionist era. Like many others, he, too, was mistaken, showing once more that the ability of historians to spot historical turning points belongs to the realm of hindsight. Nevertheless, as a former communist and member of *Matzpen*, Zand was more sensitive than other non-Zionist historians to the growing alienation between the intellectuals – whose gaze turned outwards to their colleagues in the United States and Western Europe – and the general public.[33]

Another way of looking at the metamorphosis of Israeli academics is to view the process as the formation of a tribe that shifted the focus of its allegiance from society to itself, to its international peer community, and to the latter's constantly changing fads. Primarily, the post-Zionists consider themselves members of this new tribe and proclaim they are its representatives in Israel.

PROSTITUTING HISTORY: THE TANTURA BLOOD LIBEL

Despite all the talk about 'intellectuals' and 'intellectual elites', the last decade of the twentieth century was marred by a drop in scholarly standards among many Israeli historians and other 'intellectuals'. This development was an outgrowth of the ongoing controversy between Zionists and post-Zionists, with academic research tainted by conjecture, speculation, fabrication and outright disinformation.

The deterioration of academic standards was epitomized by the story of one MA thesis, submitted in 1998 to the Department of Middle East History at the University of Haifa by a graduate student by the name of Teddy Katz. It became 'a story' because his department and many Israeli scholars from a variety of fields, mostly but not exclusively post-Zionist, enlisted to defend him against alleged persecution, and they carried the struggle abroad, mobilizing their New Left comrades in the West. The thesis opened a Pandora's Box and marked the nadir of the golden age of post-Zionist thinking in Israeli historiography. Its ramifications were far-reaching (certainly for an MA thesis), and the scandal spread beyond academe and the country's borders. The thesis soon became a pillar of the Palestinian narrative.[34]

In the spirit of current crazes blurring the boundaries between history, anthropology and ethnography, the thesis rested primarily on

oral evidence. Assisted by an interpreter, the author interviewed Arab villagers and Israeli veterans, and used earlier collections of testimonies picked up by Arab journalists. The factual and methodological problems with this approach are too numerous to recite and discuss here, but the principal flaws concerned Katz's handling of the witnesses and his use of their testimonies. Katz did not cross-check the testimonies with one another or with other sources. Nor did he try to verify the access of the witnesses to the events they described or question their overall credibility. He made no effort to reconcile the many contradictions among them; he simply cited the testimonies, often quoting them in a faulty manner that interlaced his own notes, impressions and thoughts with their words.

Drawing on hearsay or village folklore and ignoring evidence to the contrary, Katz asserted that in Tantura – a village on the Mediterranean coast south of Haifa – soldiers of the IDF Alexandroni Brigade had perpetrated war crimes that caused the deaths of 200 to 250 villagers in 1948. The outstanding grade of 97 (out of 100) that his supervisor and readers awarded the thesis excludes the possibility that it had not been read carefully or that the failure to catch the flaws was an oversight. In essence, their unequivocal stamp of approval made the panel accomplices to what later emerged as a blood libel. The real inspiration for Katz's thesis was Ilan Pappé. Though formally not Katz's thesis advisor, he was, in many respects, his mentor.

At this point, a brief description of what happened in Tantura on the night of 22/23 May 1948 is necessary. A week after the end of the British Mandate, the foundation of Israel and the invasion of Palestine by Arab armies, the Alexandroni Brigade occupied Tantura to cut off the Arab villages in the Carmel enclave from the coast and encircle them. The surrounded villagers had no escape and a battle took place amid a civilian population. Several dozen Arabs and fourteen Israeli soldiers were killed in combat.

A contemporary detailed report described events in the village almost in real time. Katz ignored this report, preferring to rely on oral testimonies given almost fifty years later. The report had been written by Jacob Epstein, a resident of the adjacent colony of Zikhron Ya'akov, who reached Tantura at dawn when the fighting had ceased. His report cited talks he held upon his arrival with both interned village dignitaries and Jewish officers:

> I found the majority of men sitting in two rows face-to-face. The
> families – women and children – were concentrated on the beach
> opposite the village … I saw the commanding officer who asked
> me, as a neighbor, to inspect the rows and see if there were any
> foreigners among the men. I walked between the rows and did
> not spot any strangers. On that occasion I asked the commander
> what would be the fate of the men, and he said that they were
> prisoners of war and he would send them to a POW cage.

Katz claimed that several Arab witnesses had said that Epstein had saved
them and their families. A careful reading of their testimonies shows
that they meant rescue from imprisonment, not from massacre.

The men were taken to a temporary POW cage. The elderly, women
and children went to the neighbouring Arab village of Furaydis that
had surrendered a few days earlier and its inhabitants had stayed put.
Epstein's report explained why they were removed from Tantura to
Furaydis:

> I asked the commanding officer what will happen to the families
> that were waiting on the beach. He replied … that they will stay
> in the village … I then approached him again and told him: Look,
> many soldiers were killed last night and if they [the families] will
> stay in the hamlet together with soldiers who had lost their friends
> in the battle, acts of revenge may occur. Under the circumstances,
> I would suggest removing them [the families] from the site … I
> am ready to take them to Furaydis if I could get a truck for this
> purpose. The commander didn't hesitate much … and I got his
> permission.[35]

Tantura's dignitaries asked Epstein right after the occupation and before
they went to Furaydis, to allow them to go beyond the Iraqi army's
front line. When they arrived in Furaydis, they asked to return to their
village, and if this were impossible – to cross the lines into Arab-held ter-
ritory with the assistance of the Red Cross. On 18 June representatives
of the Red Cross arrived in Furaydis accompanied by Jewish liaison
officers, and transferred 1,086 former residents of Tantura out of
Jewish-held territory, handing the convoy over to the Iraqi army that
accommodated them in the West Bank town of Tulkarm.[36]

Katz alleged that 200–250 villagers were killed in the course of the
battle and in a subsequent massacre. None of the contemporary sources

corroborated this grave allegation. Epstein's report and other testimonies of Jews and Arabs show that no massacre took place after the night-time battle. The villagers did not complain of massacre or mass killings either to the Red Cross or to the Iraqi officers who took charge of them. On 22 June, Radio Ramallah broadcasted the story of an Arab woman who had escaped from Tantura. She told listeners that the Jews had raped Arab women, demolished houses and destroyed the village. She said nothing about killings or a massacre. Surely, the radio station director would have included a massacre in his propaganda broadcasts, had a massacre taken place.[37]

A single Palestinian almost contemporary source reported the alleged massacre. This was Nimr al-Khatib in a book on the *Nakba* that he published after the war in Damascus. Al-Khatib was not an eyewitness, journalist or historian, but a political activist, leader of the militant Muslim Brotherhood in Haifa. In February 1948 he was severely wounded in an attempt on his life. He was evacuated to a hospital in Beirut and later moved to Damascus, where he indiscriminately assembled stories of refugees, among them one by a native of Tantura, Marwan al-Yihia.[38]

Marwan's testimony is contradicted by all other descriptions of the battle, including the testimonies collected by Katz himself. It is even doubtful that he was an eyewitness or personally heard the conversations that al-Khatib cited in his name. Al-Khatib published several concocted horror stories that he had heard from refugees arriving in Beirut and Damascus, such as an imaginary story about hundreds of refugees from Haifa who drowned in Haifa bay while attempting to flee to Acre. Marwan's story is just another of these fictitious tales.

Arif al-Arif, the author of the first Palestinian comprehensive history of the war and from several perspectives the most trustworthy so far, claimed that eighty-eight Arabs were killed in Tantura: eighty-five combatants and three women. Al-Arif mentioned nine names. He made no reference of a massacre. He described a heroic battle to repel the attack on the village that failed owing to the enormous superiority of the Jewish forces.[39]

Another member of the al-Yihia clan described the occupation of the village in a book published in Damascus in 1998. The author, Yihia Mahmud al-Yihia, was older and better educated than other witnesses who testified on wartime events in Tantura. He accounted for several atrocities

that took place in the course of the battle, such as the accidental killing of two women. Nonetheless, he did not mention or imply that there had been a massacre. At the end of his narrative, al-Yihia appended a list of the combatants and non-combatants who were killed in the defence of their village. He listed fifty-two names and ten more of elders and dignitaries that died later, in Tulkarm and on their way to Syria.[40]

The Tantura refugee recollections of alleged atrocities committed in their village were taken with no more than a pinch of salt by their fellow Palestinians. For fifty years Tantura did not enter the Palestinian pantheon of massacres alongside Deir Yassin, Lydda and other villages where Palestinians have claimed – sometimes rightly – that atrocities and massacres took place. In stark contrast, recent references to Tantura as a massacre – not a battle – derive exclusively from Katz.

In this case, numbers are particularly significant because they are the ultimate refutation of the alleged massacre. Katz argued that 'according to all sources, the population of Tantura numbered 1,700 residents'. He did not give references to any statistical source; 'all sources' was apparently the average of various figures between 1,400 and 2,000 mentioned by his witnesses. None of the witnesses counted the residents of the village or had any special or first-hand knowledge of their number. According to the *List of Arab Villages in Palestine* of October 1947, whose data was taken from the last, unfinished mandatory village survey of 1945–46, Tantura's population numbered 1,490 people.[41]

According to the Red Cross's report, 1,086 refugees from Tantura were handed over to the Iraqi army. An Israeli report from October 1948 mentions 170 refugees from Tantura who remained and were counted in Furaydis. Approximately 200 men were sent to POW camps. According to all testimonies but one, there were no foreigners or 'Syrians', namely Arab Liberation Army combatants, in the village. If one subtracts the approximate figure of 1,450 (1,086 + 170 + 200 ±) from the number of the original population based on the mandatory survey, the remainder or those killed is close to 50. Assuming that Tantura absorbed a number of refugees from nearby villages, the figure is consistent with Mahmud al-Yihia's list. The bottom line is that Katz, by inflating the original population of the village to 1,700, made up 200 people who had never actually existed and then 'finished them off' – on paper, at least.

The scandalous thesis might have gathered dust on the library shelf had it not been discovered by a sharp-eyed journalist who published its

main arguments and conclusions in the Israeli daily, *Ma'ariv*, two years later.[42] The scoop, in early 2000, was the forerunner of a long series of interviews that Katz gave to various media channels, mainly Arab, in which he described his findings. In the media, Katz allowed himself even more freedom than in his work. He boasted about the exposure of 'the most important massacre of the War of Independence, bloodier than Deir Yassin'. Arab propaganda hastened to toast the new revelation. Arab MKs demanded a judicial investigation of the 'war crimes', and the accusations were debated on radio and TV, in Israel and abroad.[43]

Alexandroni veterans complained to the University of Haifa. They contended that Katz's thesis had been approved without examining the credibility of his findings and without considering the severity of his charges, their significance and ramifications. The veterans claimed that Katz had distorted what they had told him in interviews, that he had used their testimonies out of context and misquoted them, employing words or phrases they had not uttered. Against all standards of academic transparency, Katz refused to show his interviewees the transcripts of their testimonies or allow them to listen to his recordings. The veterans asked the university authorities to order a re-examination of the thesis and to suspend it pending completion of the inspection. The university refused. Dodging the veterans, it claimed that a review would constitute unwarranted interference in the autonomy of the Middle East History Department. Ignored by the university authorities, the veterans went to court and sued Katz for libel.

Defending Katz became the holy cause of a coalition of Palestinian institutions, pro-Palestinian activists, and post-Zionists in the media and academe. Israeli-Arab NGOs enlisted to assist Katz and finance his defence. Another source of financial help was the PLO through its Jerusalem arm, the Orient House. A group of Jewish radical activists launched a worldwide fundraising campaign to help cover the legal expenses. To create sympathy for the campaign, they linked the alleged persecution of Katz to polemics in Israel and abroad about the Palestinian 'right of return' and the Al Aqsa Intifada that had broken out in October 2000.

The most prominent and vociferous of Katz's advocates was Pappé. As Katz's mentor, he felt (rightly so) that his own credibility hung in the balance. Unfortunately, rather than bring evidence to support the

quality of Katz's scholarship and persuade the court that his conclusions had been reached in good faith, his expert affidavit on Katz's behalf sought instead to discredit and silence the critics as *Nakba* deniers. Pappé tried to turn libel proceedings against an individual into a show trial with Israel in the dock. The suggestion that Israel had plenty of skeletons in its closet found a ready audience among post-Zionists, such as journalist-historian Tom Segev who implied that this must be only the tip of the iceberg and that the veterans of Alexandroni would best back down and withdraw their lawsuit before they made matters worse.[44]

Kimmerling condemned the very idea of taking a scientific research to court, as well as the readiness of the court to discuss it. He argued that it amounted to reappraisal of a historical work by a professionally unqualified judge.[45] In principle, his argument was sound, but academe cannot enjoy legal immunity and the law should not stop at its gates – not as regards animal experiments and not as regards libellous material. Moreover, Kimmerling chose the wrong case for his battle for academic freedom. His very definition of Katz's thesis as 'a scientific research' that had passed 'academic evaluation' was a disservice to the concepts of research, science, academic and evaluation.

In an attempt to avoid disclosing the recorded testimonies, Pappé submitted an expert affidavit to the court, filled with peculiar statements about history and historians – a travesty of prevailing postmodern ideas, distorted for the sake of his protégé. He maintained that a contemporary historian has a right to withhold his sources and that 'the quality and standard of his work does not depend on his ability to present tapes of his interviews'. Furthermore, he declared, a contemporary historian is also a psychoanalyst. Though he has no training in psychoanalysis, 'he is supposed to extract meanings from evasive statements, sub-conscious perceptions hidden behind vague texts etc.'. In a last-ditch attempt to bar any evidence of academic misconduct, Pappé claimed that considerably broad leeway in the use of the content of verbatim tapes and the presentation-interpretation of the informants' words was perfectly valid, even vital to historical research.[46]

Pappé's real purpose and ulterior motive came to light at the end of the affidavit:

> citing the Palestinian version is important and legitimate in its own right – academically and politically – and opposition or denial

illustrates the general Israeli approach that objects to the very debate of the issue. In the end, this is a struggle against *Nakba* denial.[47]

The claimants submitted various affidavits to the contrary by persons who took part in the occupation of Tantura and refuted Katz's allegations. They presented an academic evaluation of the thesis that rated it as 'especially poor', adding that the thesis did not substantiate any allegation about a massacre.[48]

Had the trial been just a matter of affidavits and counter-affidavits, the legal fight might have ended in a draw since the judge's training did not equip her to decide between the opposing opinions of historical actors and professors. However, contrary to Segev's expectations and Pappé's manipulations, the trial was not about conflicting narratives of what had happened in 1948, but rather about whether Katz had acted in good faith in 1998 or wilfully tampered with the testimonies of the plaintiffs and Arab witnesses to fabricate war crimes.

The Bench ruled that the tapes of Katz's interviews were to be examined. Close inspection found fundamental differences – certainly dubious, if not false and deceptive – between the sources Katz referred to as his authorities and the portrayal of events he described.[49] After a single day's cross-examination by the claimants' lawyer, Giora Erdinast, Katz retracted his allegations and in a compromise judgement agreed upon by the two sides, he promised to issue a public apology in the press. On the next day – under pressure from his supporters and fundraisers – Katz backed down and refused to acknowledge his error. His champions wanted him to fight for the good of their propagandist cause, not to apologize, and he was letting them down. Through one of his lawyers, Avigdor Feldman, he appealed to have the judgement revoked, but the appeal was dismissed by both the District Court and the Israel Supreme Court.

Under the new circumstances, the University of Haifa appointed a committee of professors of Arabic and Middle Eastern history to re-examine the thesis against the interview tapes. The team found many examples of negligence, distortion, falsification and disregard for inconvenient evidence. A second committee investigated the conduct of the department of Middle East History in appointing the readers and approving the thesis *summa cum laude*. This committee found several procedural irregularities in the handling of the thesis after it had been submitted.[50]

Consequently, the university decided to disqualify the thesis, but allowed Katz to submit a revised version within six months. The revision failed to pass muster and was roundly criticized. The readers' comments as to content and methodology of the research were quite similar; they all criticized it severely, although they graded it differently. One of them rightly commented that much of the blame should have been assigned to Katz's supervisor. In view of the readers' reports, on 15 May 2003 the university decided to disqualify the revised version as well.[51] This should have set the historic record straight on the so-called Tantura 'massacre'.

THE DAVID ABRAHAM AND MICHAEL BELLESILES AFFAIRS

The Katz affair was reminiscent of a scandal that had absorbed the community of American historians in the early 1980s, when Princeton University Press published a book on the end of the Weimar Republic, by David Abraham. The author blamed German capitalism for the collapse of the Weimar Republic and held it responsible for the Nazi rise to power.[52] Reviews of the book praised its originality. However, one historian, Henri Turner, who for years had worked on the same subject and source material, did not join in the praise but accused Abraham of falsifying the evidence. Abraham admitted a few minor errors but repudiated Turner's other accusations, insisting that his findings and arguments were valid.[53]

Gerald Feldman, a senior scholar of German history who had recommended the book to Abraham's publisher, was overwhelmed by Turner's accusations. As an assignment, he had his advanced students check all the quotations and references in the book. The examination revealed many errors, similar to those Katz made fifteen years later: presenting paraphrased sentences as quotations; mixing up the author's notes with paragraphs copied from documents and presenting the mixture as a quotation; attributing letters and other documents to the wrong authors; referring readers to non-existent sources; misunderstanding texts; mistranslations of German sources; plain invention; and distorting quotations by adding or omitting words in a way that overturned the intent of the person quoted.[54]

Feldman sent the list to many scholars in the field of German history and Abraham, for his part, set out to defend his name by lobbying

throughout the academic community. He published a revised edition of his book in which he changed testimonies and quotations in accordance with the criticism of the first edition. But the reviewers of the new edition contended that, following the changes, there was no basis left to substantiate the accusations against German capitalists. Ultimately, Abraham failed to get an academic position. He abandoned the discipline, changed course and today is a professor of law.

The criticism of Abraham's book appeared in scholarly journals, such as *Central European History* and *American Historical Review*, and made its way to the *New York Times*. Left-wing scholars mobilized to defend Abraham, mainly in the journal *Radical History Review*. The first line of defence marked *ad hominem* attacks on his critics and insinuating suspicions about their political or personal motivations. The second line argued that Abraham was persecuted because of his views and findings, not because his scholarship was unsound. The third line maintained that Abraham's mistakes were minor and innocent, and that similar errors could be found in every scholarly work. Much more significant, the advocates asserted, was the author's productive historical imagination that had enabled him to arrive at new and original paradigms.[55]

Katz dedicated his thesis to the veterans of the Alexandroni Brigade (those who later sued him), perhaps to falsely portray their concurrence with his work. Abraham sought legitimacy by dedicating the book to his parents, whom he described as victims of the Holocaust. Actually, they were survivors, not victims (in keeping with the common distinction in Holocaust research); hence, his 'persecutors' accused him of deceit regarding the dedication as well. One of Abraham's defenders, Natalie Zemon Davis, deconstructed the dedication to demonstrate that it was not aimed at dead parents but at living ones, since nothing is dedicated to the dead but to their memory and the word memory did not appear in the text. Furthermore, she claimed, it was clear that the young Abraham could not be the son of Holocaust victims (or himself a survivor), but only the child of Holocaust survivors.[56] Nevertheless, the dedication was misleading, since the readers were not supposed to know the author's age.

Abraham's teacher and friend, Peter Novick, joined the ranks of his defenders. He insisted that Abraham had been targeted by Feldman and Turner. Novick, however, was not convincing about how the two had succeeded in expelling Abraham from the history profession if so many

prominent historians thought there were no grounds to condemn him or that his errors were not exceptional. Either Novick ascribed exaggerated power to Feldman and Turner or they were not Abraham's only persecutors, as he claimed, and he himself (Novick) had adopted an overly forgiving attitude to his friend and former disciple.[57]

Their zeal in defending Abraham notwithstanding, the advocates' arguments were weak. None of them was an expert on modern German history and their claims about Abraham's persecution for his Marxist views were unfounded. Several Marxist scholars joined Abraham's critics. Moreover, Feldman had backed Marxist historians in the past when he had thought they deserved his backing. It was he who had recommended the publication of Abraham's book in the first place, despite its Marxist leanings. It was therefore difficult to accept the charges that he was persecuting Abraham for his views.

A similar affair excited the American community of historians in the year 2000. Michael Bellesiles of Emory University in Atlanta published a book titled *Arming America* in which he argued that owning weapons was not part of the American ethos. His evidence included mainly wills, only a few of which, he said, mentioned weapons. The National Rifle Association hired historians that checked Bellesiles' references and discovered that many sources had been invented by the author and others had mysteriously disappeared by the time they arrived to peruse them in the archives. Critics also questioned Bellesiles' reasoning, arguing that the fact that weapons were not mentioned in wills proved nothing since they may have been self-evident items, much like pants or shirts, which also received no specific mention.[58]

Abraham, Bellesiles and Katz all sought support in the sources for their preconceived views and arguments, ignoring facts that did not corroborate their theses. All three failed to distinguish between fact and fiction. All tampered with the evidence to adapt it to their needs. Like Abraham's radical defenders and the opponents of private weapons who backed Bellesiles, Katz's supervisor and the chair of his department rejected the criticism of his work (indirectly defending themselves since, in this case, he was a student, not an independent researcher). In all three instances, the defenders asserted that any scholarly work subjected to the kind of scrutiny given the works after the scandals broke out would have revealed a similar number of mistakes. This generalization and unfounded contention evaded the authors'

responsibility for negligence and/or deceit, and besmirched all histor-
ical research and all researchers.[59]

The controversy over Abraham's book lacked actual political im-
plications and did not hurt any living persons, taking place in histor-
ical journals and major daily newspapers. In the dispute over
Bellesiles' book, there were two powerful lobbies behind the scenes
– the supporters and opponents of owning personal weapons – and
the affair ended with severe sanctions against the author. In both
cases the American academy proved itself able to aptly and firmly
handle public-academic scandals.

The Katz affair followed a different course. Katz's thesis supervisor
and the chair of his department, as well as his mentor, Pappé, refused
to acknowledge that there had been a gross breach of good judgement.
Nor did they regard the embarrassing fiasco as a learning experience.
Instead, they argued that it was a legitimate methodological and ideo-
logical disagreement among scholars rather than a violation of all
disciplinary rules.

Initially, the University of Haifa did its best to sidestep the issue. It
was dragged into the judicial case as if possessed to see it through
against its will. The invalidation of Katz's thesis was not the end of the
affair: insisting that a massacre had taken place in Tantura, Pappé
launched a worldwide campaign to boycott the University of Haifa and
then all Israeli universities for 'political persecution' and curtailing
academic freedom, thereby attempting to deflect attention from the
true significance of the Katz affair.

Pappé simply rewrote the rules of scientific inquiry to repel the criti-
cism against his protégé. He blatantly ignored the ethical rules of the
American Historical Association of using and preserving oral testimonies
and the rights of the interviewees. At the same time, he conveniently
dismissed traditional documentary evidence and research standards
shared by old and new historians of the war, claiming both were
biased, and heralded Katz's work as 'a new analytical framework' for
the study of the *Nakba*.[60]

Fortunately, few Israeli historians bought into this notion; the Katz
affair seems to have been a watershed event that has begun to put
Israeli historiography back on track, at least as regards more serious
scholars. The controversy surrounding Katz's thesis and its ultimate
disqualification marked a turning of the tide: the post-Zionist grip on

Israeli historiography is relaxing; it is being replaced by a much needed return to the differentiation between personal views and research, knowledge and opinion, history and folklore.

POST-ZIONIST PROPAGANDA AND ISRAELI HISTORIOGRAPHY

The tenor of the post-Zionist public debates in Israel grew more strident in the era of the 'New Middle East' – an age of euphoria and illusion following the Oslo accords. At the time, some post-Zionists proclaimed an end to the Zionist hegemony and the beginning of a new, post-Zionist, era. Other post-Zionists asserted the opposite, blaming their comrades for concealing or ignoring the continuing force exerted by the Zionist discourse on shaping the structures and patterns of Israeli society and culture.[61]

In the mid-1990s many post-Zionists embraced the prediction of Haifa sociologist Sami Smoocha that, after twenty years of waning, the Jewish–Arab conflict was approaching its end. The termination of the conflict, Smoocha maintained, was an irreversible process backed by international support deeply anchored in both Israeli and Palestinian public opinion. He wrote this fantasy on the eve of the war of terror that erupted in October 2000, proving once again to whom prophecy was given after the destruction of the Temple.[62]

The post-Zionists who joined in the premature celebration of the imminent End of Days raised the question of the identity crisis facing Israeli society at the dawn of peace. They anticipated that defence and survival issues, which had occupied centre stage since Israel's founding, would make room for social and cultural issues. They thus began campaigning for a new definition of the boundaries of the Israeli cultural space, trying to undermine the exclusivity of the Zionist discourse and what they regarded as Zionism's domination of Israeli culture.[63]

Post-Zionist propaganda has been effective mainly outside of Israel, arousing the enthusiasm of Jewish and non-Jewish comrades from the radical Left and earning numerous platforms in academe and the media. The prominence granted post-Zionists by the West European media has misled many to exaggerate their role within Israel. To be sure, they have been significant, merely by raising the issues and contributing to the public and academic debate. But they have been very far from reflecting the mood of the 'generations that grew up after statehood', whom

'Daily reality showed … the weaknesses of Zionism', as Lawrence Silberstein described it.[64]

The post-Zionists, Anita Shapira wrote, have portrayed Zionist history as the narrative of the wrongs and wretchedness perpetrated by Zionism. Their emotional descriptions of the sufferings of Zionism's alleged and true victims aimed to stir sympathy for the losers and criticism of the winners. For post-Zionists, the fact that Zionism was a winning movement was sufficient to portray it as immoral. In the mid-1990s, Shapira still wondered whether post-Zionist historians were a new wave in Israeli historiography or a short-lived ripple. Ten years later, her fears appear to have been borne out: 'we face a total crisis in all the humanities, especially in history'. She was mainly referring to the post-Zionist adoption of the postmodern approach to history, which puts down the sources, the rules for handling them, the principles of research and writing, and above all ignores the aspiration to truth as the guiding principle of historical research.[65]

Other observers viewed the advent of post-Zionism as part of the normalization of Israeli society: the weakening of the collectivist ethos, the collapse of the unifying ideology, and the growing reservations about nationalism and a mobilized society in favour of a civil society, liberal and pluralist (and, one may add: spoiled, hedonist and decadent).[66]

Jacob Shavit of Tel Aviv University rejected these assertions outright. He rightly argued that the connection between post-Zionism and normalization is imaginary, not real. Post-Zionists do not offer or seek an additional narrative in the name of relativist pluralism, which is legitimate. Rather, they try to refute the existing narrative, undermine its hegemony and replace it with an alternative narrative – their own. Notwithstanding their many differences, post-Zionists are an ideological group with clear political goals. Some of its members – their roots, Marxist – indeed exchanged their Marxist terminology for that of postmodernism, but the change of terminology cannot mask the semantics, which have often countered postmodern criticism. Their seemingly pluralist rhetoric, Shavit insists, disguises an unyielding doctrinaire stance. Their dismantling of the Zionist narrative does not target legitimate pluralism, but aims to prepare the ground for the domination of a new, hegemonic narrative.[67]

Jacob Katz was even more uncompromising. He argued that post-Zionists had no place in a university and feared that the academy's accepting their line might facilitate its own end:

> This [the post-Zionists] is a group that does not have solely schol-
> arly but also social and political ambitions. In my opinion, this is
> unacceptable in the framework of the university … The university
> should be a place for people who, despite political and social differ-
> ences, are capable of cooperation because they share common
> criteria to evaluate the results of their research. If this is impossible,
> the university has finished its role and should be shut down … if the
> university and scholarship want to serve as a cover-up for political
> ambitions or to endorse them, then scholarship becomes a fraud.[68]

At the heart of the dispute, empirical history research has indicated the
historical complexity of the issues as opposed to the simplistic post-
Zionist generalizations about the exclusion of others from Zionist and
Jewish history. At times, the research has completely debunked the post-
Zionist position. But post-Zionists rarely respond to these studies and
if they do, it is to grumble about persecution and witch hunts; to
dismiss the criticism as absurd, and, above all, to denounce the person-
ality, motivation and skills of the critic so bold.[69]

University of Haifa historian Danni Gutwein calls the post-Zionist
attack on Israeli historiography 'the privatization of [Israeli] collective
memory'. He situates it within the broader framework of privatization
occurring in Israeli society. In his view, the purpose of historical revi-
sionism is not history or what happened in Israel's past. Its principal
target is memory and historical consciousness in the present and
future. This aim, he argues, explains the prolific post-Zionist media
activity that stands in stark contrast to their scholarly productivity.[70]

In the eyes of their New Left comrades in the West, Israeli post-
Zionists have been too soft in criticizing Israel. Perry Anderson, the
editor of *New Left Review*, contended that post-Zionism is a combination
of courage and cowardice: most post-Zionists are lions in analysis but
sheep as far as solutions and prescriptions are concerned. Edward Said
objected that the post-Zionists were incapable of completely abandoning
the Zionist narrative and drawing the evident conclusions from their
positions. Ephraim Nimni exonerated his comrades of impotence with
an explanation deriving from Gramsci's theory of hegemony: post-
Zionism is simultaneously experiencing the death spasms of the old order
and the labour pains of the new, and it is fluctuating between the two.[71]

Nimni's excuses are far-fetched and post-Zionism is a long way from
shaping any new order. It has not lacked for platforms, from the

Haaretz daily to Israeli theatre, the film industry and television. There is a huge gap, however, between the plethora of post-Zionist messages in academe, art and cultural life and the almost total absence of political and social commitment or response to post-Zionist slogans.[72]

Gutwein is, in fact, right. The controversy between Zionists and post-Zionists is not a historical dispute about what occurred in Israel's past or the interpretation of these past events; it is a dispute about what should happen in Israel in the twenty-first century. Postmodernists have transformed history into a crusade to expose the wrongs inflicted by the West in the past, in order to undermine the social and political order in the present. Similarly, post-Zionists strive to turn the history of the Yishuv and Israel into a campaign to unmask the sins and wrongs of Zionism in the past, and to subvert it in the present.

To blur their role as propagandists for an ideological, political struggle, post-Zionists dub their opponents 'mobilized academics'. The detractors of post-Zionism ostensibly represent the hegemonic Zionist discourse and defend its apparent evils, past, present and future. Their use of postmodernist assertions that there is no history but historians, and that any history writing is political and ideological, aim to legitimize the politicization of historical research and justify their own political and ideological commitments by applying them to all historians.

To restore the status of Israeli historiography, it is primarily necessary to determine what historical scholarship is, what it shares with other disciplines, such as political science, sociology or anthropology, and what distinguishes it from them. Clear criteria should determine whether a certain work adds to human knowledge or is mere fiction or propaganda. Beyond the differences between historians studying different fields, regions and periods, historians should agree that they are partners in a discipline that has rules and principles, a discipline in which scholarship comes before ideology and partisan membership, not vice versa. They have to condemn and expel from their ranks those who put their *opinion* – even if disguised by slogans and catchphrases such as 'multiculturalism', 'critical approach', 'analytic framework', 'comparative theory', 'oral history', 'reinterpretation' or any other sweeping mottos – before their *knowledge*.

Epilogue

In the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of twenty-first the Jewish State, Zionism's creation, has prospered as it never did before. At the same time, Zionism has been under continuous onslaught from various corners, domestic and external. Apparently it has been losing ground and pondering if it has a future. Israel is in a paradoxical situation of prosperity, progress and power on the one hand, and fears of an imminent end on the other hand.

The Zionist enterprise was conceived and born in Europe, as a solution to a European problem, but was implemented in the Land of Israel in the Middle East. Nationalism was the youngest solution to the modern Jewish question, and initially Zionism – linking national revival with mass migration to the promised country – was one variant among several other nationalist options. It was, however, the only one to survive the Holocaust, owing to the emotional appeal of its connection to the Jewish distant past and the basis of power it had built before the war in the Land of Israel. After the Second World War the Zionist enterprise in Palestine was a lighthouse that attracted Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe and the Displaced Persons camps in Germany and Austria. They were reinforced after statehood by hundreds of thousands of Jews from Muslim countries.

The vanishing in the Holocaust of the Jewish movements and ideologies that competed with Zionism, and the foundation of Israel three years after the end of World War Two, seemingly proved the justification of the Zionist approach to the solution of the Jewish problem in the first place. Until the 1990s, this reasoning was taken for granted by the vast majority of Israelis and by most Jews around the world.

Post-Zionists dub Zionism a failure. While this name-calling is, of course, tendentious and pretentious, to what extent the Zionist enterprise really has been a success story?

One of the project's principal goals was concentrating the Jewish

people in its homeland. This objective has been achieved only partially: after 112 years, less than half of the Jews live in Israel. A hundred years ago, however, the Jews of Palestine were less than half a per cent of world Jewry. Moreover, the slogan calling for the concentration of all Jews in the Land of Israel has never been meant as more than a vision for the Days to Come. Zionism endeavoured to offer a solution mainly to Jews who could not be emancipated in their home countries. Among these Jews, its success was almost complete: few non-emancipated Jews live outside Israel today.

A principal argument of emancipation's opponents from the excitement over the Jew Bill in England in the mid-eighteenth century to the aftermath of the Second World War was that granting emancipation to the indigenous Jews would attract mass emigration of non-emancipated Jews from other countries. Similarly, one of the main obstacles preventing rescue before and during the Holocaust was the refusal of neutral countries to admit large numbers of Jewish refugees. These countries – Switzerland, Sweden, Turkey, Spain and Portugal as well as Latin American countries – refused to serve as temporary asylum fearing no country would receive the refugees after the war and the temporary shelter would turn permanent. The foundation of Israel three years later, and the legislation of the Law of Return, made these arguments redundant. Indirectly, the implementation of Zionism benefited also Jews in the countries of emancipation.

Another major ambition was solving the Jewish question through the establishment of a sovereign, internationally recognized Jewish national home in the Land of Israel. So far, Zionism has achieved this target only in part. Although many states have recognized Israel, they have not acknowledged its present borders and have not complied with Jerusalem as its capital.

Zionism transferred the Jewish question from Europe to the Middle East and elevated it from the individual and communal level to a national and regional issue, apparently without a stable solution. The post-war world has admitted Jews as individuals and as communities. Many non-Jews, however, are still reluctant to put up with a strong Jewish nation state in the Land of Israel and many Muslims oppose the idea of a Jewish state violently.

To a large extent, Zionism failed to normalize the Jews' social and vocational structure. The Jews' traditional role in European and oriental

societies was that of a middle class. The emergence of a Jewish prole-
tariat was a temporary side effect of the industrial revolution. The
Zionist ideal of return to the land and to agriculture also proved short-
lived. In the post-industrial societies, including Israel, Jews mostly
returned to their traditional socio-economic function of a middle class.

By shifting the focus of Jewishness from religion to nationality,
Zionism offered a solution also to the problem of modern Jewish identity.
Yet, only about half of world Jewry considers itself primarily as Jewish
by nationality. This half include most Israeli Jews and parts of the Jewish
communities abroad that display a stronger affiliation to Israel than
others. The other half consists of ultra-orthodox Jews who underscore
the religious dimension of Judaism, and assimilated Jews that regard
themselves primarily as citizens, or even nationals of their countries of
residence, including a growing number of Israeli Jews that claim to be
Israelis rather than Jews. However, on the eve of the Holocaust, in
1939, the proportion of Jews considering their identity as national-
Zionist was about 15 per cent.

In less than a century Zionism succeeded in turning Palestine – a
backward province of the Ottoman Empire – into a modern post-indus-
trial country that in addition to Jewish immigrants attracts work immi-
grants from the Far East, Africa and Eastern Europe. This is something
that none of the Zionist founding fathers foresaw in his best (or worst)
dreams. The non-Jewish work immigrants have generated plenty of
problems that concern the nature and identity of the Jewish state as
well as the place, rights and obligations of non-Jews in the country.

The special dilemmas of Jewish nationality and identity that have
accompanied Zionism from the outset were reinforced in the end of
the twentieth century by the apparent decay of nationalism in the West.
Reservations about the justification and value of Jewish national iden-
tity spread also among Israeli academics, artists and journalists. These
post-Zionists demand that Israel relinquish its Jewish features, surrender
any claim to uniqueness, and become a normal state of all its citizens.
They are not speaking about a pluralist state in the manner of the USA,
however, but of a bi-national one in which the Arab component will
soon be predominant thanks to its higher birth rate.

The so-called 'peace process' that began in the early 1990s egged
on the post-Zionist craze. From the time of its foundation, Israel has
wanted to establish a *modus vivendi* with its neighbours. The majority

of Israelis have realized for more than two decades that to accomplish this end they have to compromise and make concessions. Domestic arguments focus on the extent of the concessions and compromises, not on the principle.

This approach has faced a Palestinian discourse that does not recognize the words compromise or reconciliation, and concentrates exclusively on justice. What one side regards as indispensable price for the sake of coexistence, the other side considers its rightful estate, not something freely conceded and deserving reciprocity. As long as Israel's concessions – agreed or unilateral – corresponded to the Palestinians' concept of justice, the peace process continued. When Israel stopped yielding, the Palestinians went back to violence. This pattern has highlighted their unwillingness to surrender anything they regard as theirs. At the same time it has intensified suspicions of their sincere aspiration for a settlement and coexistence.

The consequences of the Oslo agreement were devastating for Israel and the Palestinians. Following a premature outburst of euphoria on both sides, expectations for peace have dropped while apprehensions made an increasing upturn. If reconciliation was genuine, the very opposite should have happened. Contrary to the illusions, history did not change course in the summer of 1993. Arab reluctance to accept a strong and prosperous Israel did not change: if anything, it deepened and intensified.

At the same time, it appears that Jews as individuals have found a successful alternative answer to the question of their survival and identity – the pluralistic society of the United States. What could be simpler than imitating the American prototype in the Middle East? In other words, what is more natural than eliminating the problem of Jewish collective survival by giving up the idea of a Jewish nation-state and replacing it with a pluralistic one?

This is precisely the post-Zionist delusion. Israel remains in the Middle East, not in the Mid-West. The region does not recognize the concept of pluralism in the sense of a nation whose historical-ethnic-cultural identity is not determined by a dominant group. Zionism has been perceived by the Arabs as a spearhead of an alien western civilization, interferring with the alleged regional homogeneity. Meanwhile, in the West, Israel is increasingly being seen as part of the Middle Eastern mess. Israel's European roots are weakening and in due course may be totally forgotten.

There are good reasons for re-examining, refreshing and updating the original concepts of the Zionist ethos, and to relinquish some of its anachronistic myths. Yet, the adoption of a new pluralistic and/or individualistic ethos is a radical negation of Zionism's real meaning. From the perspective of Jewish history and identity, pluralism and individualism can lead only to national self-destruction.

Post-Zionists openly call for embracing this ethos. In Israel, they are a vanguard with very few political and ideological followers and little influence. For twenty years the post-Zionists have failed to persuade most Israelis to espouse their agenda. Consequently they turn their efforts to the West, where they are well received in the campuses and by the media. Often they appear on various floors and panels as representing the Israeli side, while actually they endeavour to undermine Israel's position in the eyes of public opinion. Some post-Zionists align with Palestinians, local Muslims and radical left activists in organizing protests, boycotts, demonstrations and legal harassments of Israel and Israeli public figures. Under the slogan 'Israel is an Apartheid State' they spread doubts over the legitimacy of the Jewish state.

As an ideology, post-Zionism has remained on the ideological, political and social margins of Israeli society, but post-Zionist practices are increasingly striking roots and may be more meaningful to the future of Israel. Legalism prevails, but the law enforcement and judicial systems deteriorate. Words replace deeds. Corruption spreads and taints the uppermost levels of the government and other hierarchies. Solidarity is declining. Social and economic gaps are widening. Authority (of government, army commanders, police officers, universities, rabbis, teachers and parents) vanishes and the mess expands into additional areas. Irresponsible media, enjoying immunity, encourages the chaos.

Much of this bedlam is the outcome of excessive and indiscriminate privatization of material, social and spiritual public assets. No national enterprise can go hand in hand with unrestrained individualism, and Israel is primarily a national project. The challenge facing it is twofold: (1) finding means to preserve the democratic character of the state in an environment of external threats and security risks; (2) devising a new model of a post-industrial nation state that balances human rights and civil obligations.

From a historical perspective of more than a century, obviously Zionism has not accomplished a comprehensive solution of the modern

Jewish question. Possibly, this goal was a pipe dream in the first place. But Zionism's achievements in moving millions of Jews to Palestine/ Israel and creating a modern society in a backward country, reviving a language and creating both high and popular cultures, shaping a state and state's facilities, building a modern economy, and occupying a prominent place in the international system have been enormous, notwithstanding their imperfection.

Israel did all these while fighting almost incessantly against its surroundings. The implementation of Zionism has not lacked for mistakes and some wrong-doing. Considering the odds and the domestic and external objections – from Jews adhering to other creeds as well as Arabs, Soviets and liberal Europeans – Zionist feats look far more impressive. The post-Zionists' complaints about Zionist ethnocentrism, oppression, discrimination, exclusion, dispossession, chauvinism, hegemony, instrumentalism, and so on may be true in some specific cases. However, a 'comparative approach', which they claim to be their favourite, demonstrates their insignificance compared to the achievements.

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CHAPTER 6

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CHAPTER 7

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CHAPTER 8

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CHAPTER 9

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47. Ibid.
48. Prof. Alon Kadish's affidavit, Dan Censor's website.
49. Protocol of the Tel Aviv district court meeting, TA 001686/00, 13 December 2000, pp.10–15 and 17–21, archived at http://www.ee.bgu.ac.il/~censor/katz-directory/
50. All the legal documents, committees' reports and press articles, letters to the editor etc. as well as the arguments on various internet forums and email networks, and more relevant material on the Tantura affair and Katz's thesis can be found on the website http://www.ee.bgu.ac.il/~censor/katz-directory.
51. The revised thesis and the (anonymous) readers' reports are accessible on Dan Censor's website.
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53. Turner's letter to the editor, *American Historical Review*, 88, 4 (October 1983), p.1143; letter to the editor by Tim Mason, ibid., pp.1143–4; and Abraham's explanations, ibid., pp.1145–9. Mason wrote the review of Abraham's book that provoked Turner's reaction. Cf. *American Historical Review*, 87, 4 (October 1982), pp.1122–3.
54. Gerald D. Feldman, 'A Collapse in Weimar Scholarship', *Central European History*, 17 (1984), pp.159–77.
55. *Radical History Review*, 32 (1985), pp.75–93.
56. Natalie Zemon Davis, 'About Dedications', ibid., pp.94–6.
57. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream – The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp.612–21.
58. Michael Bellesiles, *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2000); 'How the Bellesiles Story Developed' at http://hnn.us/articles/1072.html.
59. For a good summary of the Abraham affair, cf. Richard Evans, *In Defense of History* (New York: Norton, 1999), pp.116–22; for the arguments of Katz's defenders, cf. Avner Gil'adi in *Haaretz*, 5 January 2001, Kais Firro's letter to the University of Haifa's committee in Censor's website, and Ilan Pappé, 'The Tantura Case in Israel: The Katz Research and Trial', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 30, 3 (2001), pp.19–39.
60. Ilan Pappé, 'Parashat Katz ve-Tantura' [The Katz and Tantura Affairs], *Teoria u-Bikoret*, 20 (Spring 2002), p.204.
61. Silberstein, *Postzionist Debates*, pp.8–10.
62. Sami Smoocha, 'Tmurot ba-Hevra ha-Yisraelit aharei Hamishim Shana [Transformations in Israeli Society after Fifty Years]', *Alpayim*, 17 (1999), p.249.
63. Silberstein, *Postzionist Debates*, pp.2–3.
64. Ibid., p.5.
65. Anita Shapira, 'Politika ve-Zikaron Kolektivi' [Politics and Collective Memory], in Yechiam Weitz (ed.), *Bein Hazon Le-Revizia* [Between Vision and Revision] (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 1996), p.391.
66. For this appreciation, cf. Ohana and Wistrich (eds), *Mitos ve-Zikaron*, pp.20–32.
67. Jacob Shavit, 'Leumiut, Historiografia ve-Revizia' [Nationalism, Historiography and Revision], in Pinchas Genossar and Avi Bareli (eds), *Zionut: Pulmos ben Zmanenu – Gishot Mehkariot ve-Ideologiot* [Zionism: A Contemporary Polemic – Scholarly and Ideological Approaches] (Sde Boker: Institute of Ben Gurion's Heritage, 1996), pp.264–5.
68. Jacob Katz, 'Ha-Zionut ki-Tnu'ah Leumit' [Zionism as a National Movement], in Weitz (ed.), *Bein Hazon Le-Revizia*, p.34.
69. Michael Shalev, 'Et le-Teoria' [Time for Theory], *Teoria u-Bikoret*, 8 (1996), pp.225–37. Cf. also Silberstein, *Postzionist Debates*, pp.120–2.
70. Daniel Gutwein 'Historiografia Hadasha o Hafratat ha-Zikaron' [A New Historiography or Privatization of Memory], in Weitz (ed.), *Bein Hazon Le-Revizia*, pp.311–43, especially pp.338–43.
71. Ephraim Nimni (ed.), *The Challenge of Post-Zionism: Alternatives to Israeli Fundamentalist Politics* (London: Zed Books, 2003), pp.7–9.
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