ALL OF US? MARGINALIZING DISSENT IN TORONTO'S
JEWISH COMMUNITY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

April, 2015

ABSTRACT

Mainstream Jewish institutions like the Canadian Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs and B'nai Brith Canada largely communicate the impression of community-wide support for Israeli government policies and actions to the broader society. When Jewish individuals and groups in Toronto who do not uniformly support Israeli government policy and actions attempt to make their voices heard as Jews they can encounter discursive techniques used by institutions and more broadly to marginalize their points of view. These discursive techniques are not limited to Jewish institutions or to the Jewish community, but, rather, can be characteristic of some processes that serve to 'naturalize' specific ideas and marginalize others. I use elements of Critical Discourse Analysis to explore recent public communications reflecting responses to dissenting Toronto Jews and narratives to identify some of these discursive techniques. I also explore how aspects of selected mainstream Jewish Canadian histories can serve to marginalize present-day dissent.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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"Many pro-Palestinian students at York are Jewish," Kaye said. "They're beyond the pale for us Jews and it can be quite frustrating."

-Hillel representative as quoted by Daniel Freeman-Maloy (2006)

Narrative affects us the way dreams affect us. They share the same insubstantiality. They both have the hidden capacity to alter reality.

-Ben Okri, A Way of Being Free*, 1997.*

And I forgot the element of chance introduced by circumstances, calm or haste, sun or cold, dawn or dusk, the taste of strawberries or abandonment, the half-understood message, the front page of newspapers, the voice on the telephone ...

-Jacques Sojcher (in de Certeau, 1984)

PREFACE: FRUIT TREES

If posters of the fruit trees of Israel had appeared on the walls of my family's synagogue when I was five or 15 or even 20 I might not have noticed them. They — along with the former Israeli soldier who was our Hebrew school teacher, the Israeli flags hanging at the Jewish community centre, the issues of the *Canadian Jewish News* stacked up in the front hallway and the Israel bond drives at synagogue during the high holidays — would have faded into the nationalist white noise of my suburban Jewish Toronto childhood. In my world, the signs and symbols of Israel were so omnipresent—and the support for all of Israel's actions so pervasive — that the entire phenomenon was invisible to me. At eighteen, I went to university. During a discussion after class about the first US invasion of Iraq, someone called me a Zionist. I didn't know what they meant.

The fruit trees of Israel, however, showed up on the walls of my family's synagogue only a few years ago. At that point, I had been away long enough to make some of the phenomena of my upbringing strange to myself (Garkfinkel, 1984). [1] In other words: it struck me as odd that, in a small synagogue in suburban Toronto, a group of Eastern European Jews chose to hang up images of grape vines and pomegranates. I did not feel that a synagogue should tell me what to think about Israel, or my place in relation to it. I felt that my religion should offer me a space to

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[1] Howard Garfinkel's (1984) concept of strange refers to the process of exposing and de-naturalizing the constructs that give form to everyday life through 'breaching experiments.' These experiments introduce non-codified or 'off book' behaviour into an everyday interaction. For example: someone asks unexpected questions during a routine conversation. By breaking the rules of everyday interactions, the experiments help to demonstrate that these rules — which socialization can render invisible to some — actually exist.

contemplate the question. For the first time, I saw the fruit trees, the flags, the maps, not as something written into the fabric of the world, but as part of a complex set of signals designed to tell me — and the rest of the world — who I am.

For many reasons — personal, communal and political — I feel that who we are as Toronto Jews should be an open question. This thesis project is an attempt to crack open additional space for alternative Jewish narratives by exploring the discursive techniques deployed by mainstream institutions to shut them down. I note that it is one attempt among many—as partially documented in this thesis, I join an increasing number Toronto Jews in the project to see a political diversity of voices included in what is commonly understood as 'the Jewish community.'

Introduction and methods: narratability and the pathologization of dissent

Why start?

When I began this thesis project in 2003, I believed it was important to prove that Toronto had Jewish individuals and groups who stood in opposition to mainstream institutional positions on Israel and Palestine. At this time, many such groups existed in Toronto, facing marginalization within the community and receiving relatively little attention from the mainstream media. In 2005, some of these groups held a 'counter-conference' across the street from a United Jewish Communities of North America meeting in Toronto, an event which offers a glimpse into the world I felt needed to be recorded as a legitimate part of the city's Jewish community:

> How many Jews does it take to hold a conference on Diversity, Democracy And Dissent In The Jewish Community? The answer, as it turns out, is 90. That's how many showed up at Metro Hall on Sunday, November 13, for a counter-event to the 4,000-strong General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities (UJC) of North America meeting across the street at the Metro Convention Centre. While the mammoth gathering discussed delivering social services and defending Israel, the tiny 3-Ds confab – hosted by the Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation, Yosher Jewish Network for Social Justice and the Morris Winchevsky Centre – aimed to "see Jewish life through a different lens," one that included a critical view of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. (Fine, 2005)

At the time, I was concerned with seeing the existence of these groups and conversations

registered in mainstream narratives. I also wanted to offer evidence of the continuous history of

political dissent within Toronto's Jewish community. I believed that, by uncovering this

continuity, I could begin to undermine the meta-narrative that tasks Jews with speaking with one

voice, and implies that Jews who break from mainstream Jewish sub-narratives are somehow

alien to the community. In particular, I was, and continue to be, interested in calling into question

the sub-narrative requiring the representation of unanimous support for Israel in all of its

actions.[2]

Since I began writing, things have changed. Jewish political dissent related to Israel and

Palestine is no longer relatively invisible to the mainstream Jewish community or to the City of

Toronto in general. Over the past ten years, questioners and dissenters within the community

have written books, produced plays, created new organizations, become media spokespeople,

and staged powerful actions. Examples range from books and plays exploring, often very gently,

mainstream Canadian Jewish educations and assumptions — Rachel Deutsch's short film *Against

Silence: Conversations with Young Canadian Jews about Zionism and Israe*l (2014), Jonathan

Garfinkel's book *Ambivalence: Crossing the Israel/Palestine Divide* (2007), Niki Landau's play

Territories (first performed in 2005), Daniel Thau-Eleff's play *Three Ring Circus* (2004) — to

more clearly dissenting actions, ones that often draw recriminations from the mainstream

institutional community. Examples of these actions include the decision of the United Jewish

People's Order (UJPO) to sponsor a talk featuring an anti-Zionist speaker, the Auschwitz

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[2] This thesis does not explore the many currents in the mainstream Jewish community that could be
defined as 'progressive.' While mainstream institutions express strong resistance to dissent related to
Israel and Palestine, this does not mean there are not progressive activities in progress. For example, some
synagogues, Jewish organizations and prominent Jewish leaders have taken up issues from cuts to refugee
health care to economic justice to LGBTQ rights. In this project, I focus explicitly on the suppression of
dissent related to mainstream positions on Israel and Palestine.

survivor Hajo Meyer (2011); *The Victimhood of the Powerful: White Jews, Zionism and the Racism of Hegemonic Holocaust Education*, a Master's thesis by Toronto student Jenny Peto (Peto, 2010); the occupation of the Israeli consulate in Toronto by Jewish women during the 2009 Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip (Siddiqui, 2009); and the creation of the group Independent Jewish Voices (2008, www.ijvcanada.org).

While open dissent has increased, the methods used by what I will call the 'new institutional matrix'[3] (in contrast to the left institutions that dominated much of the history of Toronto's Jewish community) to silence these dissenters have intensified. In 2009, Toronto artist Reena Katz (no relation) saw partial support for an art installation withdrawn after funders discovered a link to 'Israeli Apartheid Week' on her Facebook page (Lu, 2009). Following the talk by Hajo Meyer[4], the Canadian Jewish Congress severed its ties to the United Jewish People's Order for the second time (the first time was in 1951, during the Cold War), and Independent Jewish Voices was denied membership completely. Jenny Peto was lambasted in the *National Post* (Kaye, 2010) and sanctioned in the Ontario legislature (Dale, 2010).

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[3] The make-up of this 'new institutional matrix' is not static and has shifted over the course of this project. I use it to refer to largely secular, national and well-resourced organizations past and present including the (now defunct) Canadian Jewish Congress, the United Jewish Appeal, B'nai Brith and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. Depending on the context, it can also be seen to include synagogues, media outlets like the *Canadian Jewish News*, the Jewish Community Centres in Toronto, the Koffler Centre, Jewish day schools, etc.

[4] According to one of the event's organizers, it should be noted that although UJPO decided that open discussion was important, Meyer was not expressing UJPO's views.

What this study examines, and what it does not

These developments — increasingly visible efforts to tell new stories about what Jews think, concurrent efforts by the new institutional matrix to discredit these new stories — have significantly influenced the content of this project, and shifted it from a documentation of dissent to an exploration of the discursive techniques I contend are central to its marginalization. To explore these techniques, I attempt to isolate and examine a very particular dynamic. On the one hand, I look briefly at public actions by individuals and organizations who are 'dissenters' in relationship to institutional opinions on Israel and Palestine. I have chosen dissenters who, whether they are religious or not, root their dissent in political as opposed to religious arguments. For example, I do not explore institutional reactions to the non-Zionism espoused by some groups of Orthodox Jews. On the other hand, I look at the public, recorded reactions to these dissenters on the part of Canadian, mainstream, established, resourced, and often national institutions (for example, B'nai Brith) and selected mainstream, established voices (major newspaper columnists and editors, authors of canonical community history books, etc.). I do not trace institutional narratives from other places—for example, Israel—in order to assess their impact on institutional narratives here, although no doubt this relationship exists.

In addition, I do not examine—and risk eclipsing—the vast messiness of individual and group opinion that exists between the publicly expressed polarity of dissenter and institution as described. I do contend, however, that institutional voices and narratives hold some sway over collective opinion, and that these messages can be followed 'downstream' to some of the more grassroots reactions to dissent documented in the section 'barriers to dissent' (pg. 10). At the same time, and importantly, it can be hard to know where those who don't take a public stand

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position themselves in relation to mainstream narratives. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau (1984) writes about a gap in the scholarly examination of media images, arguing that the analysis ends with the images themselves, leaving out, "what the cultural consumer "makes" or "does" during this time and with these images." The nuances of collective Jewish opinion on Israel and Palestine, and dissent related to Israel and Palestine—what Jewish people in Toronto are privately, maybe even silently, 'making' of mainstream narratives—is an important subject for future study.

It should also be noted that this study risks eclipsing the demographic diversity of Toronto's Jewish community. As documented in detail in Part 2, the Jewish community is diverse from many perspectives, and made up of people born inside and outside of Canada. The voices in this thesis, however, are largely—although by no means exclusively—those of white Jews who, to my knowledge, were born in Canada or who have been in Canada for a long time. This is, in part, due to the fact that I am examining my own experiences growing up in the context of a particular confluence of what I will label as 'history,' 'Yiddishkeit,' 'institutional culture' and 'place,' one that many of the dissenters I reference in this thesis are reacting to and from when they, for example, write books unpacking their Jewish educations. Explored at various junctures in this thesis, the elements listed above cohere to create a specific atmosphere that grounds the particular dynamic of dissent and marginalization under examination.

Study context (the elements)

Here, I list some of the elements that contribute to the context of this study, using my own story as a proxy. While everyone who shares my background, or aspects of my background, will have had different experiences, and will have made different meaning of those experiences, I believe some of these elements had at least partially generalizable effects, effects I attempt to explore throughout this project. It should also be noted that in terms of the elements of 'institutional culture' and 'place,' there has always been diversity in terms of race, class, ethnicity and country of origin in my experiences of North York Jewish Toronto. That said, I am wary of going too far in generalizing my experiences as a white, middle class, Canadian-born Jewish woman interacting with what were, in many cases, institutions defined and led by people from the same demographic as my family. In this section, I share aspects of my story that are part of the situation I am attempting to describe, and that inform my interpretations of this same situation.

History

I am descended from Jews who came largely from the Russian Pale of Settlement—an area of the Russian Empire into which Jews were corralled from 1791 to 1917, and which included parts of Russia and part or all of present-day Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus and Moldova (Green, 2012). Most if not all Jews from the Pale of Settlement would have arrived here having lived with a range of official sanctions limiting their access to education, choice of work, ability to travel freely, and ability to choose where to live (see details about the 'May Laws' in Appendix A). Many would also have experienced or lived with the fear of what were called 'pogroms'— spasms of collective violence directed against Jews.

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As detailed in Appendix A, many Jews from the 'Pale of Settlement' came to Toronto with left political ideas and organizations that defined early Jewish institutional life in the city. While this institutional matrix has shifted dramatically since the end of the Second World War, it can be argued that the echoes of these institutions have influenced many of us, including through organizations like the United Jewish People's Order that continue to thrive, and strands of progressive politics (if not always as related to Israel and Palestine) that remain among many of our families.

Although less explored in this study, it can also be argued that echoes of the multiple layers of trauma—including intergenerational trauma—experienced by the generations that include my grandparents and parents have deeply influenced their sense of existential safety, and in turn reactions to dissent evinced by institutions led by members of their demographic.

Yiddishkeit

Parts of my family did and do have a 'Yiddish' identity: speaking the language; sharing jokes, stories and songs; sharing ethical precepts and practical wisdom; preserving and cooking food in a certain way; growing up living inter-generationally; observing specific rituals; pursuing specific leisure activities, etc. This identity, however, is largely inaccessible to younger generations of Jews. The Eastern European and Russian villages where it developed are gone — there is no 'fount' of Yiddish identity. As we wait for re-inventions to bloom—ones that are alive and adapted to the urgency of the present — Yiddish identity is, for me, a beautiful and painful

history, whispers of ways of doing and seeing that inflect my daily life. It is, if not a concrete element of the confluence I am attempting to describe, an undercurrent, with particular modes of humour, strength, lyricism, practicality and perhaps subversion running through it.

Religion also played a large, if not necessarily central, part of my Jewish identity when I was growing up. While we went to synagogue and Hebrew school, kept a kosher home, had Shabbat dinner and observed major Jewish holidays with our extended family, my mother characterized these practices as 'ancestor worship' rather than as an expression of faith. It was difficult to discern where the religion ended and *Yiddishkeit* and connection to extended family began, and the distinction, if there was one to be made, did not feel relevant.

Institutional culture

Growing up, my everyday life was defined in part by a specific group of Jewish institutions. This matrix included my family's synagogue, founded by Holocaust survivors in a small house in North York; the synagogue Hebrew school; and, the North York Jewish Community Centre. The influence of some of the institutions and narratives referred to throughout this thesis extended into our home, where we received the *Canadian Jewish News*, and mailings from the United Jewish Appeal, and where many of the Jewish histories cited lined my parents' bookshelves.

I have warm memories of different aspects of this institutional culture. Modern dance classes and hot knishes at the Jewish Community Centre in North York. Jam cookies at the monthly Oneg Shabbats at our synagogue. Aspects of the synagogue service that I miss to this day. Woven

throughout all of it were messages about Israel, often vague in terms of content, but clear in terms of intention: to be Jewish was to support Israel.

It should be noted that there were elements of the institutional matrix that I did not experience, but that many of my contemporaries did. Although my sister and I were not sent to Israel as teenagers, this was a rite of passage for many people I knew. Some also attended Jewish summer camps, and Jewish day schools. At each of these sites, as far as I understand, loyalty to Israel was communicated as a fundamental aspect of Jewish identity.

Place

I attempt to grapple with the issue of place throughout this study without reaching what I consider an adequate conclusion. Growing up in North York, my world was highly defined by class, and, I realized as I got older, race. I was educated (through weekend Hebrew school, Jewish institutional narratives, etc.) to believe that anti-Semitism could potentially be found anywhere, and to fear it. I was not educated, however, to understand the distinction between racism and anti-Semitism as it played out in Toronto.

While most white Jewish people born in Canada in my generation have been exposed to negative and often deeply hurtful experiences as Jews, we do not experience racism, which is characterized by its pervasive, systemic nature. Aspects of systemic racism include but are not limited to sustained barriers to employment, education, housing, justice, public space and other social determinants of health. Reports about inequality related to income and employment

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(Ornstein, 2006), health (Levy, Ansara & Stover, 2013; Allan & Smylie, 2015), and access to health care (Allan & Smylie, 2015) illustrate the nature and magnitude of systemic racism experienced by racialized and Indigenous peoples in Toronto and in Canada. It is essential that our community's mainstream spokespeople begin to make this distinction between anti-Semitism and racism in Canada strongly and clearly, which I believe they have often, damagingly, failed to do.

Finally, in Part 2, I discuss the question of 'homeland,' a question that remains unresolved. I am the citizen of a country established based on colonial rule over Indigenous territory, much of which is unceded or covered by treaties negotiated in bad faith by colonial authorities and/or treaties that continue to be dishonoured by the Canadian state. I have not yet come to understand what it means to be who I am with integrity here in this place, and certainly the reality of colonialism was not discussed in the context of my Jewish or public school education. At the same time, the reality of colonialism underpins the everyday, and is an integral aspect of the place that has produced the situation I examine in this thesis.

Discursive space and barriers to dissent

Within the context I describe above (and beyond it), I have been interested in opening up discursive space in which people are able to explore alternative narratives in relationship to Jewish opinion on Israel and Palestine. This project of cracking open discursive space is, I believe, essential to the wider project of giving individual Jews the opportunity to inhabit their actual realities and opinions, and to seeing the expression of aggregated Jewish opinion reflect

the diversity that exists. At present, significant barriers are in place for Jews in Toronto who wish to express objections to Israeli government policy or the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. On the level of discourse, these Jews, who I will call 'dissenters,' are commonly characterized as 'self-hating Jews' or even as anti-Semites. An extreme manifestation of this phenomenon is a list of 'self-hating' Jews from around the world posted on the internet by a group calling itself 'Masada 2000' (www.masada200.org).

More recently, we have seen an outpouring of anger towards Jews who have spoken out against the 2014 Israeli invasion of Gaza. Examples in Toronto include reactions to deli owner Zane Caplansky's decision to sponsor the Toronto Palestinian Film Festival during the summer of 2014, about which Caplansky wrote, "I've also been personally wounded and disappointed by accusations of being a 'self-hating Jew' and other horrible accusations "(Caplansky, 2014). As an another example, a young woman involved in a group formed in 2013 called the Critical Jew Network of Toronto spoke to the *Canadian Jewish News*:

> "There is little space for challenging or even questioning absolute support for Israel. I don't necessarily feel physically unsafe, but that my ability to hold a place of dignity and respect in Toronto's Jewish community is challenged." (Shupac, 2014)

Another example illustrative of Jewish reaction to dissent outside of Israel is the case of Joshua Broomberg, a South African Jewish student and deputy head boy at his Jewish day school, who, while with his debating club at a competition in Thailand, posted a picture on social media of himself and his team in Keffiyehs in the summer of 2014, "...to show our opposition to human rights violations carried out against the people of Palestine." The post was met by intense social media opposition from Jews, including threats of violence, and an online petition demanding

Broomberg be stripped of his deputy head boy posting, which he was not (Loewenstein, 2014). (It should be noted that Broomberg also received considerable support from within and outside the Jewish community, including a competing online petition.)

A May 2013 online survey of largely Reform and Conservative American rabbis demonstrates the same phenomenon— sanction from within the community for expressing dissenting views on Israel and Palestine. The survey found that 74 per cent of rabbis classifying themselves as 'doves' compared to 45 per cent of those classifying themselves as 'hawks' were somewhat or very fearful of facing professional repercussions for voicing "honest opinions about Israel or particular government policies" (Cohen & Giltin, 2013, p. 9). The report concludes:

> For communal leaders and policy makers, the survey's results point to the need to advocate increasing civility in the conduct of discourse and debate around Israel. Repression of such debate and the free expression of views by people – such as rabbis – who are deeply committed to Israel means the loss of an opportunity to engage members of the Jewish public with a full variety of views about Israel and the conflict. A stifled debate means a less healthy discourse and missed educational opportunities, to say nothing of leadership and rabbinic careers that are injured as a consequence. (p. 13)

It is telling that even this call for open discourse pre-circumscribes the terms of that open discourse by referencing the 'deep commitment to Israel' felt by those who might wish to express dissenting views. It speaks directly, however, to the issue of 'repression of debate,' and, I believe, helps to illustrate the depth of the phenomenon of silencing and self-silencing within Jewish communities outside of Israel.

While—often by definition—not publicly documented, Jews who do not self-silence, who are seen by other Jews to be actively protesting Israeli policies, are subject to a variety of sanctions that go beyond name-calling, but that are manifestly related to discourses accusing dissenters of 'self-hate' and anti-Semitism. W. M. L. Finlay describes the international nature of these sanctions:

> There is a more sinister side to this type of identity politics. Jews who publicly criticize Israeli policies regularly report receiving death threats and hate mail accusing them of being self-hating Jews (for examples see Engel, 2000; Klaushofer, 2002; Kuttab, 2000; Lerner, 2002). A recent article in the Jewish Chronicle (UK) has labelled this and other tactics which serve to stifle debate, as 'Jewish McCarthyism' (Brass, 2002). Internet sites of extremist organizations such as the Jewish Defence Organization, Jewish Watch Dog, and Masada2000 post lists of the addresses and phone numbers of so-called 'self-hating Jews' who have spoken out against Israel. On these websites, in addition to being charged with self-hate, critics of Israel are described as 'anti-Jewish Jews', 'traitors', a 'fifth column', 'enemies of the Jewish people', and of 'siding with the enemies of the Jewish people.' (Finlay, 2005, p. 215-216)

This process of name-calling and sanction serves to illustrate the ongoing characterization of diaspora dissenters as somehow alien to the community in relation to 'representative' Jews. Writing in 2003, Finlay argues that the Jewish community has been seized in part by a 'monopolization of patriotism' that has resulted in the pathologization of dissent. "The accusation of self-hatred is an example of this process, since it suggests that critics of Israel are pathological

and unrepresentative of Jewish identity" (p. 214). Part of the reason contemporary dissenters can

be positioned as 'pathological' and 'unrepresentative' in Canada is their absence from mainstream

Jewish narratives — an absence I explore later in this thesis. As Arthur Frank (2002) writes in,

'Why study people's stories? The dialogical ethics of narrative analysis': "Narratability means

that events and lives are affirmed as being worth telling and thus worth living. Being narratable

implies value and attributes reality" (p. 5). [5] The phenomenon or human being that/who is not

narratable thereby stands to lose the attribution of reality, despite its/her material existence. As

Sheryl Nestel and Emma Jo Aiken (2004) state in, 'Mapping Jewish dissent: Jewish anti-

occupation activism in Toronto,' when one is absent from the narrative, the 'authenticity' of both

one's identity and political position drain away:

> The ubiquitous perception of Diaspora Jewry as unquestioningly loyal to Israel affords
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> the critical but 'invested' Jew little discursive space in which to constitute him or herself
>
> as a legitimate political subject. (n.p.)

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[5] While I felt I had to include this reference—the passage quoted helped frame for me what happens when
a phenomenon goes unnarrated—I deeply disagree with arguments expressed in the same paragraph:
> As might be expected of southern stories of that generation, many were racist. But—and this is a
> crucial point in my thinking about stories—what counted for me as a child, and what continues to
> count, is not the specific message of a certain story's content, but rather the sense of the world as
> a narratable place; that is, a place that stories can make sense of. Michael Bérubé (1996) writes
> that he tells stories about his family because for his son Jamie, who lives with Down syndrome, to
> be considered valuable as a human being, Jamie's actions must be just as "narratable" as those of
> his brother Nick (p. 127). (Frank, 2002, pg. 5)

Jamie wasn't affirmed simply by being included in the narration, but through stories that mirrored his
value as a human being. Stories that dehumanized Jamie, and that ignored his reality—that ignored
reality, period—would not have contributed to his feeling that life was 'worth living.' The same is true for
the racist stories of Frank's childhood. As they did not threaten Frank with personal and structural
violence—rather, encouraged white children to carry on violence aimed at racialized communities—he
was free to experience them as an affirmation of the narratability of life. When these stories reached
racialized children, they would have had a very different effect. I would argue that being absented from
the narrative completely, and being absented from the narrative *as who you really are* can be seen as
related processes that render you invisible as a human being.

In other words, as a result of the current story surrounding Toronto's Jewish community, the 'critical but invested Jew' finds herself off the narrative grid.[6] While the politically 'un-narrated' Jew is rarely (if increasingly) captured in mainstream Canadian and Canadian Jewish media, there are many sites at which to capture fragments of her voice. There are sites at which, for example, the un-narrated Jew reacts to stories and images put forward by mainstream Jewish institutions, or comments on their positions. Writing in 1984, Michel de Certeau argues that the system of image production and consumption "no longer leaves 'consumers' any *place* they can indicate what they *make* or *do* with the products of these systems" (xii). Instead, they inscribe 'wandering lines' on the landscape:

> In the technocratically constructed, written, functionalized space in which the consumers move about, their trajectories form unforeseeable sentences, partly unreadable paths across a space ... [These] trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop. (xviii)

De Certeau (1984) writes that these trajectories are characterized by an 'artisan-like inventiveness,' one required by actors who do not have access to stable, resourced, institutional-like locations. He draws a distinction between 'strategies' used to generate relations between distinct institutions or institutionally defined groups (e.g., researchers and objects of research; political parties and voters; competitors) and 'tactics' used by those with no 'spatial or institutionalized' location. Dissenting individuals in Toronto's Jewish community have tried to

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[6] An October 2014 Toronto conference organized by United Jewish People's Order and Independent Jewish Voices with the goal of bringing, 'together Jews whose politics, identities and spiritualities challenge the beliefs and practices of mainstream Jewish organizations,' called itself 'Doing Jewish off the Grid,' explicitly gesturing to the issue of narrative absence. (www.eventbrite.ca/e/doing-jewish-off-the-grid-politics-identity-and-spirituality-tickets-13411804067?aff=efbevent)

evolve 'strategies' — creating formal groups, becoming media spokespeople, and attempting to be recognized by the new institutional matrix. They have also used tactics which are more difficult to document but, I believe, indicative of a more generalized subversive reaction to mainstream narratives. These tactics could be as subtle as avoiding a particular dinner table conversation, or as (quietly) dramatic as walking away from the community itself.

Methods

Critical Discourse Analysis

To examine the discursive techniques used by mainstream institutions and voices to marginalize dissent within the context I have described, I use elements from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as defined by socio-linguist Norman Fairclough. Fairclough writes that what he calls ideological discursive formations (IDFs) compete for dominance in the context of social institutions and that, "...the dominance of one IDF over others within an order of discourse results in the naturalization of its (ideological) meanings and practices" (Fairclough, 1995, Section A, Introduction). [7] Fairclough proposes CDA, in part, as a response to the naturalization of specific IDFs, a process he argues is accompanied by "their opacity to participants in interactions" (Fairclough, 1995, ch. 1). My goal is to 'de-naturalize' and chip away at the opacity of the meta-narrative of unanimity and the closely-linked sub-narrative of unanimous support for Israeli government policy and/or Israel as a Jewish state by examining, in part, how they are

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[7] Fairclough attributes the concept of 'naturalization' to Stuart Hall's 1982 essay, 'The rediscovery of "ideology": Return of the repressed in media studies.'

constructed, but with a greater focus on how they defend themselves against competing narratives within the community.

To do this, I attempt to make use of CDA, defined by Fairclough as an inherently transdisciplinary enterprise which includes: the transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process; systematic analysis of texts; and, addressing 'social wrongs in their discursive aspects' and suggesting ways of mitigating them (Fairclough, 1995, General Introduction). I attempt to examine the discursive relationship between dissenting Jews/narratives and mainstream institutions/narratives as they are related to processes of exclusion. Put another way, I look at how words and stories serve to exclude people from a community, and how a specific political position becomes constructed as the only possibility. To do this, I choose moments and conversations from the past 10 years I have found to be emblematic of key discursive techniques deployed to silence dissent related to Israel and Palestine. Finally, in keeping with CDA's exhortation to action, this project was undertaken specifically to crack open additional discursive space.

Selection of material

This project attempts to capture the discursive relationship between dissenters and mainstream organizations in Toronto with a focus on how these discourses play out in the public realm. I began by examining selected moments of 'breach' between Jews and Jewish institutions over an approximately two-year period that were captured in the public dialogue. Examples include the dissolution of the Canadian Jewish Congress (2010), Jenny Peto's thesis project (Peto, 2010), the

Koffler Centre's withdrawal of support from an exhibit by artist Reena Katz (2009) and the

evolution of the group Independent Jewish Voices (2008)[8]. To explore these incidents, I used

publicly accessible websites, press releases and newspaper articles.

In keeping with the aim of this thesis, my exploration of the above texts focused on discursive

techniques used by institutions and mainstream narratives to marginalize or foreclose dissent, or

make it seem irrelevant or impossible. Three broad themes were identified through an

examination of these incidents of breach and their related public texts: subjectivity, non-

existence and temporal-spatial focus. I then attempted to further examine these themes through

the communications of both dissenters and institutions, largely from the past 10 years.

To do this, I traced some of De Certeau's (1984) 'wandering lines' left by less formally-affiliated

dissenters through blogs, comments on blogs, open letters, newspaper interviews, a short film

and many aspects of my own story. I also used sections from a limited number of qualitative

interviews (five interviews in total, three cited here) conducted with Toronto Jews about my age,

which received research ethics approval from York University. Three interviews were conducted

in 2004 for inclusion in an essay that prefigured this project, and explored the relationships

between Toronto Jews in their early 30s and institutional Jewish narratives. Two additional

interviews were conducted with Toronto writers in their 30s who had written texts taking up

these same issues. Interviews were loosely-structured, qualitative, and informed by the method

of Institutional Ethnography (Smith, 2006), which explores the ways in which institutional

processes can serve to organize people, their actions and beliefs. Interview fragments used in this

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[8] Once themes were identified, one earlier 'breach' was explored, the case of Rabbi Reuben Slonim, which
took place in the 1980s.

thesis were selected based on their relevance to the themes identified above. Finally, I examined additional newspaper articles, mainstream Jewish history books and other secondary sources to further explore the communication of institutional narratives in the context of the identified themes.

A brief, partial, early history of Toronto's Jewish community is included as an appendix to offer context for present-day dynamics.

Part 1: Charges of subjectivity and non-existence

"The Jews who claim to be authentic Jews have too often taken an oppressive role toward those Jews who define themselves otherwise." *Stuart Charme (2000)*

Subjectivity

The un-narrated state is an uncanny one, as, while one is pretty sure one exists, in the absence of a story, one is not always sure. As Stuart Hall describes, individuals are compelled to operate within narratives, including narratives of nationhood:

> First, there is the narrative of the nation, as it is told and retold in national histories, literatures, the media, and popular culture. These provide a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols, and rituals which stand for, or represent, the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation. As members of such an "imagined community"' we see ourselves in our mind's eye sharing in this narrative. It lends significance and importance to our humdrum existence, connecting our lives with a national destiny that pre-existed us and will outlive us. (Hall, 1996, p. 613)

While, as Hall points out, people carry multiple identities (what he calls the 'pluralization of identities') and interests that are determined by a complex interplay between the 'real' self, objective circumstances (the way people are treated by the society), and elements of narrative

listed above, I would argue that for many Jews in Canada, 'Jewish,' is a prime or at least

significant marker of our personal identities. The question of whether Jews outside of Israel

constitute part of a 'nation,' is certainly a contested one. I would argue that secular or modestly

religious Jews (Jews whose identification with Judaism is not expressed by means of strict

religious observance), are, rather than a nation, a heterogeneous group, each of us with multiple

subject positions within the community (for example: class differences, difference in experiences

between recent immigrants and established Jewish communities, differences related to country of

origin, differences in experience between racialized and white Jews) and outside of it. In and

among our multiple subjectivities, when it comes to our identification of ourselves as Jews, as

Hall outlines, many of us will be compelled to drift towards the available stories, longing to find

ourselves in a collective narrative, longing to be narrated, if not as we are, then as we determine

to become. For the hold-outs who refuse to accrue to the present stories, who affirm their

realities as dissenting Jews even in the absence of all narrative evidence, they have one choice:

create stories of their own.

Accusation of ideological subjectivity

When people do try and generate their own stories, they can be confronted by the accusation that

their stories are too subjective. The accusation of subjectivity, in this case, is two-fold. First, it

implies that the authors are not objective enough to be considered accurate. They are too caught

up in their own passions, they fail to provide balance, they are simply too marinated in ideology

to have anything meaningful to say. Explaining the illegitimacy of Jenny Peto's (2010) Master's

thesis for the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto, 'The

Victimhood of the Powerful: White Jews, Zionism and the Racism of Hegemonic Holocaust Education,[9] York University Professor Irving Abella told the *Toronto Star*, "It's not scholarship, it's ideology." He went on to say that the thesis was "totally ahistorical" and "full of untruths and distortions."(Dale, 2010) There are, of course, reasonable criteria to use when exploring the merits of a Master's thesis. 'Untruths,' for example, might be one of them. Abella, however, cannot credibly question Peto's scholarship by accusing it of 'ideology,' or by suggesting that ideology and scholarship stand somehow in opposition to each other. In their 'politics of health' glossary, Clare Bambra et al provide a widely shared definition of the concept of ideology, explaining it as, "...a system of inter-related ideas and concepts that reflect and promote the political, economic and cultural values and interests of a particular societal group"[10] (Bambra, 2007, p. 574). Fairclough (1995) asserts that any communication will be grounded in such a system of inter-related ideas and concepts and goes on to emphasize that the most ideological texts are those that do not reveal themselves to be so: "ideologies are primarily located in the 'unsaid' (implicit propositions)" (Introduction, Section A). Fairclough further explains that the process of naturalization (Hall, 1982) gives mainstream ideologies the 'status of common sense' rendering them 'no longer visible as ideologies' (ch. 1).

Put another way, stories that are un-nestled in mainstream discourses will have no choice but to leave their ideology showing. Much as de Certeau's (1984) institutions, inserted into this context,

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[9] I have read Peto's thesis, and am consciously not commenting on its content here. My focus is on the discourse surrounding the thesis —an attempt to offer an alternative narrative, whatever its merits or problems—rather than the thesis itself.

[10] I would choose to trouble this definition of ideology as reflecting the interests of a 'particular societal group,' as it fails to incorporate the 'pluralization' of identities and interests explored by Stuart Hall. It also does not take up the question of what different people might apprehend as best for the group or groups to which they belong. I choose it, however, based on its assertion of the existence of systems of 'inter-related ideas and concepts...' which in some cases are naturalized to the point of becoming invisible.

would deploy strategies that go unmarked as strategies (for example, a history book), his 'consumers' are required to engage in the nakedly ideological—and clearly tactical—tactic of protest. Similarly, while any number of assumptions are embedded in, for example, the mainstream Jewish histories I explore in this paper, assumptions that shape choices made around which stories to share, and where those stories leave off, these same assumptions have become so 'naturalized' that they can remain unsaid, and, therefore, as Fairclough would term it, 'opaque.' Peto, however, is working with a different set of underlying assumptions, ones which are not implicit, and around which shared knowledge cannot be assumed. She is required, then, to demonstrate these assumptions, which leaves her —and anyone attempting to outline an alternative narrative, whether this narrative is unimpeachable or not—open to the accusation of committing ideology.

Rabbi Reuben Slonim is another Toronto Jew whose views and actions were dismissed by mainstream institutions on the basis of ideological subjectivity—he was accused of saying what some had decided a Jew shouldn't say, and feeling what some had decided a Jew shouldn't feel.[11] Rabbi Slonim was the rabbi of Beth Habonim, a small synagogue located in a converted house at Bathurst and Glencairn, from 1960 to 1983. My family attended Beth Habonim. While I have very warm memories of Rabbi Slonim as a person, I was young when he left, and don't remember the content of his sermons or lectures.[12] I do, however, remember moments of

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[11] I am uncomfortable including the cases of both Rabbi Slonim and Jenny Peto in this section. I mention them both not to equate their work, views, methods, writing, or relationship to the community, but rather to demonstrate common strands in discursive techniques used to marginalize dissenters in Toronto.

[12] While Rabbi Slonim brought dissenting views into the synagogue, the Hebrew school, which I attended, was, to my memory, unquestioningly supportive of Israel and its actions. After Rabbi Slonim left, Beth Habonim moved towards the Jewish political mainstream with relationship to Israel and Palestine. As mentioned, I was young when he left, and Rabbi Slonim's views were not shared by my

controversy, congregants walking out during sermons and tensions in the synagogue. Rabbi Slonim, I later found out, objected to the policies of the Israeli state, and would include these sentiments in his sermons, public writings, and political activities. He brought his views into the synagogue and into the Jewish community, and for this he was punished with social isolation and death threats. As Ted Schmidt (2009), former editor of the *Catholic New Times* writes in a web article about Rabbi Slonim:

> Hate calls and poison pen letters were his daily portion. Invitations, which logically should have come to a wise elder, were withdrawn. The pages of Jewish newspapers were closed to him. Bookstores would not carry his writings and he was regularly condemned from the pulpit. Reuben Slonim had become your classical pariah, a prophet exiled from his own community. As one senior Toronto rabbi said to me, "He is our Job."

In the mid-1980s, Rabbi Slonim wrote a memoir called *To Kill a Rabbi* (1987). According to a 1987 article by Morris Wolfe in *Books in Canada*, Slonim's book was turned down by Lester & Orpen Dennys on the grounds that it was 'highly subjective.' Wolfe writes:

> Twenty publishers, made nervous one has to assume by his criticisms of Canada's Jewish community, rejected this important and courageous book. Can anyone imagine a publisher turning down a politician's memoir on the grounds that it's "highly subjective"? Yet that's precisely what Lester & Orpen Dennys told Slonim. (Wolfe, 1987)

In the case of Rabbi Slonim, the charge of subjectivity implies inaccuracy — something that is 'highly subjective' does not provide a balanced view. But *To Kill a Rabbi* is a memoir. It is, by

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parents (although they supported his right to bring them to the congregation, and admired him as a spiritual leader), and did not permeate my understanding of Israel and Palestine growing up.

definition, 'highly subjective' — one person's experience of the world. By deeming Slonim too subjective to tell his own story, the publishers questioned the validity of both his experience and his existence as a radical Toronto Jew, placing him in the impossible space of existing and not-existing at once. The book was published by ECW press in 1987.

Accusation of demographic subjectivity

As stated earlier, I believe the accusation of subjectivity in this context can be described as having two components. The first, as illustrated by Abella's comment that Peto's thesis is 'ideology,' charges that the person or project in question is unable to accurately discern or describe a particular phenomenon as they are too political (in essence, an accusation of political subjectivity—Peto is 'being ideological' as opposed to objective). The charge of subjectivity can also imply that those communicating alternative narratives embody positions so highly personal as to be ungeneralizable: they are not part of any conceivable broader collective, they are 'special interests,' they stand apart. In November 2010, Jonathan Kay wrote in the *National Post* that, "Peto's thesis — which can best be described as a confessional essay with footnotes — tells the story of her transformation from religious Jewish Zionist running dog to out-and-proud pro-Palestinian activist" (Kay, 2010). He goes on to write that, "Many leftist Jews have gone this route, of course." This makes Kay, ironically, one of the loudest voices in the mainstream declaring that Canadian Jewish dissent is alive and well if, as he puts it 'self-hating.' Kay appends a number of further descriptors to Jews who have gone 'this route,' including his impression that they are young, 'mostly female' and 'heavily gay.' I believe readers can interpret two of these descriptors — female and gay — as suggestions that dissenting Jews are *even further* alien to the

mainstream community and even less worth listening to. I also believe these two descriptors, which Kay does not support with data, can be interpreted as a suggestion that perhaps these Jews have gone 'this route' because they are apart to begin with, aligned with groups too caught up in their own narrow interests to walk with the pack, too subjective by their very nature to take a valid position. A far cry, he writes, from Woody Allen and Larry David, the traditional, and implicitly acceptable, self-haters he cites at the beginning of the article.[13] Kay goes on to say that Peto, who is Jewish, is not Jewish. "A person may have many beliefs — but only one faith. Jenny Peto has found hers. And no-one should confuse it with Judaism." Kay accuses Peto of subjectivity outright — she has written a confessional essay. He then implies she inhabits what could be interpreted as a demographic subjectivity — she is female and, he suggests, perhaps gay. Finally, he accuses her, when it comes to the Jewish community, of being illegitimate as a subject — by the end of the column, she is not even Jewish.

Construction of subjectivity

I have proposed that the charge of subjectivity can be broken down into two components: ideological and demographic. While these categories are, I believe, capable containers for aspects of the accusations of subjectivity mentioned above, they are not up to describing the construction of the notion of subjectivity itself. Specifically, they are not up to describing the imagined ideal of objectivity, the invisible foil for all that is subjective. In her essay, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspectives,'

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[13] I can't assume Kay's intent in sharing the descriptors he does. I can assume, however, that Kay is aware that women and LGBTQ women in particular face marginalization in our society, and that some readers will pick up on and make meaning from the opposition of Larry David and Woody Allen (older heterosexual men) to young gay women.

Donna Haraway (1986) outlines the some of the problems attached to received notions of objectivity, while proposing a new and consciously contingent way of approaching versions of the truth. The essay is baroquely written and elliptical, full of switchbacks, false starts and extended metaphors perhaps intended to shadow through form her argument for partial, incomplete, cacophonous and sometimes inscrutable knowledge that is always in production. I'm not sure I understood it all. If I am reading the parts I do think I understand correctly, it can, however, be mined for some concrete insights into the process of constructing objectivity and subjectivity. In particular, Haraway details one of the fundamental issues with received notions of objectivity: the idea that a phenomenon can be apprehended from outside of a person's situation, through, as she terms it, 'a conquering gaze from nowhere' (p. 581).

Put another way, for objectivity to exist, there must be a point of view dispassionate enough to discern a fundamental and fixable truth, and common or 'valid' enough to warrant generalization. As Julian Henriques et al. (1998, ix) write in 'Changing the subject: psychology, social regulation, and subjectivity,' "Discourses rooted in the notion of a unitary, rational subject still predominate in the social sciences..." Jean-Paul Sartre (1948) provides an example of how the 'unitary rational subject' was constructed in France circa 1947:

> At the same time he [the Jew] tries to lose himself in the crowd of Christians. We have seen that the latter have the art and the audacity to pretend before the Jew that they are not *another race*, but purely and simply *men*; if the Jew is fascinated by Christians it is not because of their virtues, which he values little, but because they represent anonymity, humanity without race. (p. 391)

In the context of contemporary mainstream Western discourse, this 'unitary, rational subject' continues to be a demographically specific one, as described by Aileen Moreton-Robinson in her essay, 'Whiteness, epistemology and Indigenous representation':

> Since the Enlightenment, the dominant epistemological position within the Western world has been the white Cartesian male subject whose disembodied way of knowing has been positioned in opposition to white women's and Indigenous people's production of knowledge. Feminist and Indigenous scholars argue that their way of knowing is connected to their positioning as subjects/knowers of inquiry who are socially situated and related to others in the actualities of their own living. They acknowledge that not all knowledge is chosen or actively acquired. Knowledge can be acquired outside of experience but knowing is also connected to experience and understood in relation to situated acts of interpretation and representation. However, within whiteness's regime of power, all representations are not of equal value: some are deemed truthful while others are classified fictitious, some are contested while others form part of our common sense taken-for-granted knowledge of the world. Imbued by a power that normalizes their existence, these latter representations are invisible, unnamed and unmarked. (Moreton-Robison, 2004, p. 76-77)

The expressions of the subject position of the 'white Cartesian male' have come to be represented as 'objectivities' or generic points of view, and the knowledge they produce represented as divorced from their social situations and 'actualities of their own living.' As both Moreton-Robinson and Fairclough point out, the primacy of these subjectivities is enabled by the fact that the ability to determine what is considered truthful, relevant, or even what constitutes 'adequate

information' is tied to status (Fairclough, 1995, ch. 1; Moreton-Robison, 2004, p. 77). When other people tell their stories — in particular stories that threaten the power and/or undermine the legitimacy of dominant groups — they are met with enormous resistance which can include the charge of subjectivity and rely on the critic's implicit authority to mediate the question of merit.

Key to the construction of objectivity is Moreton-Robinson's (2004) concept of the 'invisible, unnamed and unmarked'—any gesture to the embodiedness of the authors and, therefore, the constructed nature of normalized narratives risks unmasking their 'objective' status. In her essay, I understand Moreton-Robinson to be in large part exploring the constructed invisibility of whiteness broadly, and in the context of colonialism in Australia, although she points out that, "Indigenous people are extremely knowledgeable about whites and whiteness" (p. 85) and that whiteness is not invisible to, "...the subjects of other humanisms, to whom whiteness has never been invisible or unknown" (p. 88). I do not wish to conflate here the inter-related construction and effects of white supremacy, colonialism and patriarchy with the construction and effects of political marginalization within Toronto's Jewish community. I do believe, however, that the invisibility of the narrative of unanimous Jewish support for Israel *as a narrative* is key to understanding its hegemonic status inside and outside the community. As a result, Moreton-Robinson's descriptions of the mechanics of invisibility—of the relationship between invisibility and hegemony—offer important insights into the process of knowledge construction and the potential for making the generic visible.

Put another way, the positioning of people who hold dissenting views as 'highly subjective,' is helped by the fact that mainstream institutions in Toronto's Jewish community have constructed

support for Israeli government policy and for Israel as a Jewish state as generic political

positions in relation to which other positions are highly visible and open to attack. Going one

step further, these institutions have effectively removed support for Israel as a Jewish state

and/or Israeli government policy from the category of political position completely, endowing it

with the 'naturalized' status that renders it 'opaque' as a phenomenon (Fairclough, 1995),

'common sense taken-for-granted knowledge' (Moreton-Robison, 2004). As a panelist put it

during an April 2014 panel at McGill University in Montreal on diverse Jewish opinions on

'Israel and Zionism':

> [Sam] Bick said his 12 years at Solomon Schechter Academy and Bialik High School did
>
> not prepare him for critical thought. "Political Zionism was not questioned. *We were not*
>
> *even aware it was a choice*, but it is a choice, and that has to be recognized…" [Italics
>
> mine] (Arnold, 2014)

I also grew up unaware that it was a choice, as did many of my peers. In an interview conducted

in 2004, a 30-something member of Toronto's Jewish community I'll call Deborah describes the

sites at which she accumulated her ideas about Israel, sites common to my own childhood:

> Where did I get it? Sunday school ... My own personal reading - newspapers, essays. You
>
> went around parading the Israeli flag ... at Sunday school. Didn't the UJA [United Jewish
>
> Appeal] have a walk? When I was a kid I did that. Even when we were at the JCC
>
> [Jewish Community Centre] doing ballet - you just were sort of part of it.

Another 30-something Jewish woman, also interviewed in 2004, who I'll call Naomi:

... the slips for your donations were always there in synagogue ... For the UJA. Every

year. And you bend down the tab to imply, to promise how much you're gonna give. And

that was always there. That was part of going to synagogue. That was part of the new

year. That was part of being a good Jew.

Deborah goes on to outline the degree to which an unexamined sense of loyalty (one that I don't

judge, but very much relate to) has been naturalized for members of my generation who grew up

in a similar institutional and narrative matrix:

No. I have no concept of Israel. I've never been. I separate it from 'I'm an Israeli'

because I'm not. To me it's a Jewish flag. That's the thing. It's not a state flag to me ... It

has collapsed into just sort of being Jewish. I feel I have a connection with [Israel] yet

I've never been. It's very important to me. I can't really tell you why.

An interview with a man I'll call Josh offers a snapshot of the process that transforms the

'generic' into a knowable position:

The kind of school I was brought up in, the mythology that we were taught was huge and

it's taken me a long time to comes to terms with that, and we're not even talking about

getting rid of the mythology, I'm talking about understanding what is actually in my

brain, and a lot of other brains of children who grew up with that. And like we were

talking before about that struggle with narrative, that argument with narrative, that's sort

of where I come from with the whole thing...

In her 2014 short film, *Against Silence: Conversations with Young Canadian Jews about Zionism and Israel*, Rachel Deutsch takes up many of the same themes, including the invisibility of dominant narratives, and the process by which they become visible. One participant says, "I didn't question it as a kid because at home it was talked about in such commonplace ways." Other participants talked about the pervasiveness of what they characterize as dominant narratives in their families, at Jewish schools and on organized trips to Israel. Most talk about the many factors that contributed to the process one participant calls 'unlearning'—leaving Jewish neighbourhoods/contexts to go to university and encountering alternative points of view; learning about settler colonialism in Canada and connecting this to processes in Israel and Palestine; participating in progressive movements. The film is split into three parts—how we learned about Zionism and Israel, changing, still being Jewish and moving forward—and powerfully demonstrates the interplay between narrative and identity, and the long and iterative process by which the invisible can become visible.

In a May 2009 letter to the editor of the *Toronto Star*, Lori Starr, Executive Director of Koffler Centre of the Arts, explained a decision to withdraw support from an exhibit by artist Reena Katz after finding a link to 'Israeli Apartheid Week' on Katz's Facebook page: "...our centre, *like our community*, is committed to Israel's well-being and existence as a Jewish state." [Italics mine] Starr does not take up the complexity of what Israel's well-being might mean to different people from different points of view. She does not take up the arguments made by Israeli Apartheid Week. She does, however, pack a lot of unstated assumptions into that innocuous-seeming line, including the substance of the 'commitment' that Katz has failed to uphold: uncritical support for Israeli government policy. The fact that this can remain unstated is a testament to the degree to

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which this specific point of view has been rendered, as Moreton-Robinson and Fairclough put it, 'common sense,' as an interviewee in Deutsch's film puts it, 'commonplace,' as Bick put it, 'not a choice,' without even the designation of a phenomenon — the invisible and fabricated 'normal' against which everything else is measured.

I have tried to describe in this section some ways in which the constructed invisibility of specific subjectivities and political positions produces, of necessity, subjectivities and political positions that are 'visible' and, therefore, open to scrutiny. As stated earlier, it is not my intention, however, to collapse or conflate the construction and effects of colonization, white supremacy and patriarchy with the construction and effects of political marginalization within the Jewish community. Instead, in this section, I am attempting to uncover some aspects of processes that lead to the 'subjectification' of people and political positions in order to undermine the accusation of subjectivity.

My hope is not to give alternative narratives the status of invisibility currently enjoyed by the political positions of support for Israeli government policy and/or Israel as a Jewish state, nor is it to remove the label of 'subjective' from those alternative narratives or the people working to construct them. Instead, I would hope to demonstrate that all political positions are grounded in some type of ideology, and all those espousing political positions are doing so from within their own, often multiple, subjectivities. As Stuart Hall writes, "We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context', *positioned*" (Hall, 1990, p. 222).

Non-existence

Sometimes, it is not even individual writings or statements that come under sanction. An artist's politics alone can be enough to set them outside of the community, whether these politics are expressed through their work or not. As referenced earlier, in 2009, artist Reena Katz (no relation, although we know each other), attempted to stage an exhibit drawing links between historical and contemporary Jewish life in Toronto, only to be sanctioned by the funder, not for the quality or content of her art, but for her political views. Katz's exhibit entitled 'Each Hand as They are Called' was funded by the United Jewish Appeal-affiliated Koffler Centre for the Arts and scheduled to run in the summer of 2009. A few weeks before the show was slated to open, Koffler Centre staff discovered links to 'Israeli Apartheid Week' on Katz's Facebook page, and pulled out of the exhibit. While Koffler left the funding in place, they refused to promote the exhibit and, by falsely characterizing Katz's views (Koffler alleged that Katz supported the extinction of the state of Israel, which she does not), compelled key stakeholders to pull out of the process, ensuring the exhibit would not go on (Whyte, 2009).

In a May 2009 letter to the editor of the *Toronto Star*, Koffler Executive Director Lori Starr explained the decision by writing that "...our centre*, like our community,* is committed to Israel's well-being and existence as a Jewish state. No organizations could partner with any individual who works against one of their core values" [Italics mine] (Starr, 2009). I cite this letter twice in this paper because I think it's illustrative of the degree to which the new institutional matrix feels entitled to define the terms of engagement according to what it sees as 'natural.' Starr placed Katz

— who is manifestly part of Toronto's Jewish community — outside of the community itself. Like Slonim, Katz was put in the position of existing but not existing.

A 2011 editorial in the *Canadian Jewish News* provides another example of the degree to which mainstream institutions represent themselves as the natural arbiters of who can exist as legitimately Jewish, and who cannot.

> Our tradition offers a model of forbearance that we should try to adopt. It is the Passover table, to which we invite even the "wicked child." But what are the parameters that define the "wicked child" today? Is every opinion tolerable at the table? Clearly not. People who advocate the elimination of the Jewish state, for example, are well past the status of the "wicked child." For, to deny the right of the Jews to have their own state is to deny Jewish faith and Jewish history. And we must also have no doubt that those who accuse Israel of being an apartheid state, to name just one tactic of delegitimization, are advocating the elimination of the Jewish state. (*Canadian Jewish News*, August 25th 2011 edition, p. 4)

This statement literally serves to designate who belongs at the Jewish table, and who does not. It is notable for its blithe and ahistorical disposal of the many Jews claimed by the mainstream (in the sense that they, or parts of them, are included in institutional Jewish narratives) who objected to realities produced by the pursuit of Israel as a Jewish state—for example, Hannah Arendt, Israel Zangwill and Albert Einstein.[14] Further, it disposes of those who would choose to label

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[14] Arendt warned that maintaining a Jewish state in the presence of a Palestinian majority would necessitate an increasingly insular regime focused on defense above all else and advocated for a federated, democratic state (Arendt, 'To save the Jewish homeland,' 2007). Zangwill, who initially propagated the myth of a 'land without people for a people without land,' eventually came to resist the project of a Jewish state in Palestine (Faris, 1975). Einstein demonstrated ambivalence towards Zionism, writing in 1930 that, "Oppressive nationalism must be conquered...I can see a future for Palestine only on

some of Israel's practices as apartheid practices, without necessarily advocating for the elimination of a Jewish state. It is also notable that the author (who I assume was the paper's 2011 editor, as it is labeled 'from the editor's desk') does not feel the need to make claim to Jewish authenticity to underpin his arguments. While I have seeded this thesis with what could be seen as essentialist cues about my own Jewish authenticity (Charme, 2000), in part to offer a quiet counterweight to my 'un-Jewish' views—I went to Hebrew school, synagogue, the Jewish community centre, have connections to Yiddishkeit, etc.—the many institutional arbiters of legitimate Jewish existence often include no such tactic in the texts they produce. I see this as a marker of the gulf between the assumptive political legitimacy of the author (his assumptive political objectivity), and my lack thereof (my assumptive political subjectivity). Put another way, we both know the terms of the discourse: I have something to prove, he does not.

Most importantly, the author does not attempt to substantiate his authority to serve as arbiter of who deserves to exist at the Jewish table. He does not explain how his experiences might have led him to arrive at his positions. He does not elucidate the process by which he has arrived at his judgements, why we 'should not doubt,' for example, the intentions he ascribes to those who use the word 'apartheid.' By failing to situate himself or substantiate in any way what he is saying— much like Jonathan Kay in his article dedicated to Jenny Peto—the author claims Haraway's (1986) 'gaze from nowhere.' In fact, it is, in part, the invisibility of these arbiters of Jewish existence as people who are sharing specific opinions, and who are situated socially and politically, that gives their judgements their power (Moreton-Robinson, 2004; Fairclough 1995).

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the basis of peaceful cooperation between the two peoples who are at home in the country..." (Simon, 2005)

In his 2006 essay, AIPAC[15] North, Dan Freeman-Maloy describes some direct attempts of both institutional and individual arbiters to evict Jews from their Jewishness and cut them out of the story:

> The notion was bluntly expressed in a letter to the *Jewish Tribune* which denounced Naomi Klein's position regarding Israel-Palestine: "Isn't it time for the Jewish community to excommunicate her or at least have her cease to be a member of the Jewish community in good standing?" UIAFC operatives toed a similar line. On April 22nd, 2004, for example, a *Canadian Jewish News* story quoted Zac Kaye, executive director of Hillel of Greater Toronto, regarding the situation at York University. Kaye highlighted some of the stresses faced by Hillel@York. "*Many pro-Palestinian students at York are Jewish," Kaye said. "They're beyond the pale for us Jews and it can be quite frustrating."* The category "us Jews" thus required not so much Jewishness as support for Israel. The confidence with which this definition has been applied is remarkable. Consider, in light of Kay's remarks, the fact that a news story in the very next issue of the same paper began by declaring that York University's "Jewish students are putting up a united and organized front in promoting Israel." [Italics mine]

This argument for the almost literal non-existence of Jewish dissenters is eerily preceded in a speech by Theodor Herzel quoted by Finlay (2005):

> 'Hence, if all or any of the French Jews protest against this scheme on account of their own "assimilation", my answer is simple: The whole thing does not concern them at all.

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[15] AIPAC stands for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and has the stated aim of empowering 'pro-Israel activists across all ages, religions and races to be politically engaged and build relationships with members of Congress from both sides of the aisle to promote the U.S.-Israel relationship.' (www.aipac.org)

They are Jewish Frenchmen, well and good! This is a private affair for the Jews alone'

(1896/1988, p. 80). In these arguments, the authentic voice of the Jews is the separatist.

(p. 213)

Just as the Hillel director dismisses 'pro-Palestinian' Jews from the category of 'us Jews,' Herzel

dismisses potentially protesting Jewish Frenchmen from the 'private affairs of Jews.' At what

exact point do these Jews become not-Jewish, and by what alchemical process? Hannah Arendt,

who came under intense criticism from the organized Jewish community for her essay,

'Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil,' [16] offers a glimpse at this process,

attributing attempts to evict her from Judaism to the meta-narrative of unanimity, her insistence

on what she termed independent thought, and the interests of those propagating the narrative she

had challenged:

However, the violence and, especially, the unanimity of public opinion among organized

Jews (there are very few exceptions) has surprised me indeed. I conclude that I hurt not

merely 'sensitivities' but vested interests, and this I did not know before. (p. 514)

In her 1963 response to questions from Samuel Grafton, a writer for *Look Magazine*, Arendt

goes on to describe some of the discursive mechanisms used to render her non-existent as a Jew:

Pseudo-opinions are those of interest groups, and if such groups, for whatever reasons,

right or wrong ones, feel threatened, they will try to rule out of their community

"independent" people, who belong to no organization, in order to be able to say: these

people, far from being independent, speak only in the name of other interests. The many

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[16] Critics were offended by Arendt's essay on a number of counts, including her characterization of Nazi
evil as 'banal' as opposed to exceptional. Further, they took exception to her characterization of the
behaviour of some Jews living under the Nazi totalitarian state (Butler, 2007).

canards now being spread in Jewish circles—that I am on the point of converting to Catholicism... or that I am now a member of the American Council for Judaism, or that I am a "self-hating anti-Semite," and so on—are well-known devices in such political campaigns." (Arendt, 2007, Part 4, the 1960s, Section 2)

While I do not share Arendt's prizing of independence (or even believe in its possibility), I recognize the identification of a key discursive building block used to delegitimate particular opinions: the positioning of the 'legitimate' independent person and the 'illegitimate' person who speaks on behalf of 'special interests' (ie. a group other than the dominant group). In Toronto, we are very familiar with this charge in the context of municipal policy debates, whereby speakers are constructed as illegitimate if they represent 'special interests,' while those who are deemed to represent only themselves, the 'taxpayer,' are accorded a much greater level of respect (Blatchford, 2013). Arendt recognized that her classification as 'speaking in the name of other interests,' was a key component in the campaign to undermine her legitimacy as a speaker. In the context of current discourses, Jewish dissenters have been characterized simultaneously as outliers, too independent to represent anyone (Farber quoted in Laidlaw, 2008) *and* as representing 'special interests' (Kay, 2010) or simply interests that are not Jewish interests (Kay, 2010) (Farber quoted in Laidlaw, 2008).

These attempts to evict Arendt from her Jewish identity struck her as absurd, and at no point did she concede her own non-existence, or consider herself anything but Jewish (as I would argue, at no point did Rabbi Reuben Slonim, Reena Katz, or any number of Jewish dissenters, a point that is made poignantly clear by the title of the third section of Deutsch's (2014) film about young

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Jewish dissenters in Canada, 'still being Jewish and moving forward'). Arendt takes this up in her response to a letter from Gershom Sholem criticizing her essay on the banality of evil:

> I found it puzzling that you should write "I regard you wholly as a daughter of our people, and in no other way." The truth is I have never pretended to be anything else or to be in any way other than I am, and I have never even felt tempted in that direction. It would have been like saying that I was a man and not a woman—that is to say, kind of insane... To be a Jew belongs for me to the indisputable facts of my life, and I have never had the wish to change or disclaim facts of this kind. (Arendt, 2007, Part 4, the 1960s, Section 1)

The charge of non-existence is applied not just to individuals, but also to organizations, as can be seen in the concerted attempts to position dissenting Jewish groups as somehow outside of the community they too represent. Over the past ten years, deliberate attempts have been made to re-insert dissent into the institutional matrix and dialogue, and speak directly to the question of non-existence. Independent Jewish Voices—formerly the Alliance of Concerned Jewish Canadians, ACJC—is one such attempt. ACJC was formed in 2005 to explicitly demonstrate to the mainstream media and to the community itself that, "the broad spectrum of opinion among the Jewish population of this country is not reflected by those institutions which claim authority to represent the Jewish community as a whole." (www.independentjewishvoices.ca) The project was founded as a specific intervention into institutional processes, and began by setting out to prove its own existence, aiming itself squarely at both the mainstream Canadian and mainstream Jewish Canadian media. One of the group's first public actions in March 2006 was to send out a

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press release in reaction to Prime Minister Stephen Harper's policies on Israel and Palestine. The press release pointed out that:

> Progressive Jewish voices have not been consulted on these matters by either the Canadian government or the national media. Shimon Fogel of the Canada-Israel Committee told the *Globe and Mail* on March 11 that his organization was "very pleased" by Canada's change in foreign Israel policy. The ACJC, however, asserts that neither Fogel nor groups such as the Canada-Israel Committee have the authority to speak on behalf of the Canadian Jewish communities. (ACJC press release, 2006)

Later that same month, the ACJC released an open letter that read, in part:

> It is surely time for those of us who have a different vision to come forward publicly to present our view to the Canadian Jewish community and to the people of Canada. We also need to explain to the Government of Canada that Jewish Canadians do not speak as one voice with respect to current Israeli policies, and that thousands have grave doubts which until now have been muted. We have joined together to create a cross-Canada alliance of Jewish anti-occupation forces prepared to present our position both within the Jewish community of Canada and before the general public. In short, the Alliance proposes to serve as a Canada-wide, umbrella organization for Jewish dissenting individuals and groups. (ACJC, 2006)

The ACJC also applied for membership in the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), which was designed to be a democratic umbrella organization for Canada's different Jewish groups. The

ACJC's stated aim was to make its contribution from within the structure of the organized Jewish community (Block, 2006). The ACJC's application was rejected on the grounds that its aims conflicted with those of the CJC. In the *Montreal Gazette*, Josh Rotblatt, CJC's Director of Operations, stated that "no member organization of CJC can support an economic boycott of the state of Israel, not to mention approving wording which describes the nature of the Israeli state as 'apartheid'" (Block, 2006).

In March 2008, the ACJC held a conference that led to its re-naming as Independent Jewish Voices (IJV). The United Church donated $900 to the conference, an act condemned by both the CJC and the B'nai Brith. According to the *Toronto Star*, CJC CEO Bernie Farber described IJV as, 'A rump on the edge of Jewish society' (Laidlaw, 2008). According to the *Jewish Tribune*, B'nai Brith Canada, "...denounced the UCC for funding an event that led to the founding of Independent Jewish Voices, a reputed fringe anti-Israel and anti-Jewish organization" (*Jewish Tribune*, 2009).

The B'nai Brith accuses IJV — an organization made up of Jews — of being not just anti-Israel but also, and separately, of being anti-Jewish. Both mainstream organizations also complain that the UCC is helping the IJV criticize mainstream organizations. Frank Dimant, CEO of B'nai Brith Canada stated, "The United Church has been caught red-handed funding organizations that create division and strife within the Jewish community" (*Jewish Tribune*, 2009). Farber added, "Imagine if the shoe was on the other foot and the Canadian Jewish Congress or another mainstream Jewish organization were to have funded a Christian group to be critical of the UCC" (*Jewish Tribune*, 2009). The B'nai Brith and the CJC are not just negating the right of the IJV to

be critical of Israeli government policy, they are negating the right of the IJV to be critical of their own organizations. In effect, they are negating the validity of the very act of dissent.

In July 2008, in a column for the *Canadian Jewish News*, Lawrence Hart condemned the fact that a synagogue even considered giving the ACJC a platform to speak:

> Given what's known about the ACJC, it comes as no surprise that its following remains small and that it hasn't made any inroads into constructive debate on the Israel-Palestinian conflict... It is, therefore, puzzling that any Jewish institution, particularly one that is assumed to be Zionist, would provide a platform for the likes of the ACJC. And yet that is exactly what almost happened recently in Hamilton, where local ACJC representatives were to be the featured, and only, speakers at a program hosted by one of the city's synagogues that was advertised as "a conversation about Israel and Palestine." Although the event was subsequently cancelled because of protests from across the local Jewish community, there remains a lingering aftertaste. Why, some are asking, is there a need to validate groups such as the ACJC by providing them with a forum, while knowing full well they hold opinions that are seen to be so obviously antithetical to the best interests of *our community* and to the State of Israel? [Italics mine] (Hart, 2008)

According to mainstream institutions, the IJV cannot exist for any number of reasons: it's wrong about Israel; it's 'antithetical' to the Jewish community; it's anti-Jewish; it's invalid; it's a 'rump end.' IJV cannot exist, and yet it does.

As I write this, I am highly aware of these charges: self-hate, subjectivity, invalidity, and non-existence. The charge of subjectivity, of course, is warranted in countless ways. First, it is the stated aim of this thesis project to capture what the mainstream institutional discourse will classify as subjectivities. As argued, some of the voices I document (although I am largely documenting the reaction to these voices, providing, in effect, the negative of a photograph) have been accused of subjectivity both because of who they are, and the opinions they express. The form in which these opinions are expressed could also draw charges of subjectivity. As de Certeau (1984) points out, those without institutional standing must employ 'tactics' to express themselves — inscribe 'wandering lines.' As a result, some of the sources I use and many of the voices that draw anger from mainstream institutions express themselves in the form of open letters, personal narratives and 'counter' events (conferences, protests). Conversely, those with institutional power have many opportunities to 'unsubjectivize' their points of view through form — they publish books, write academic articles, are quoted in mainstream media, and speak in institutionally-sanctioned contexts within and outside the Jewish community.

In terms of my personal subjectivities related to the topic of this dissertation, Rabbi Slonim was my family's Rabbi when I was very young, Reena Katz has become a personal acquaintance, I have attended events documented in this thesis project and grew up spending a considerable amount of time at many of the sites discussed, in particular in the interviews: synagogue, Hebrew school, the Jewish Community Centre, etc. I am descended from Eastern European and Russian Jews, and the history, institutions, and voices I focus on here are largely — though by no means exclusively — those of the descendents of Eastern European and Russian Jews. There are also subjectivities less easily documented, but just as real: how my hope, for example, has influenced

this text. In fact, I began this project motivated by hope: I wanted to see legitimized spaces in which members of the Jewish community could engage in vibrant explorations of identities and opinions without ceasing to be considered members of the Jewish community. I was also (and continue to be) motivated by my longing to pray in a synagogue on the question of Israel and Palestine without signs, symbols and messages from the pulpit instructing me as to where my prayers should land. I would contend, however, that when Bernie Farber calls Independent Jewish Voices a 'rump edge,' or Irving Abella dismisses Jenny Peto's thesis in part because he considers it to be 'ideology,' they are being just as subjective, expressing points of view they have developed as a result of their experiences and longings, and just as ideological, as these points of view will inevitably be embedded in and expressed using, "...a system of inter-related ideas and concepts" (Bambra et al, 2007). A key difference between their political subjectivity and mine, as outlined by Fairclough's theory of the ideological 'opaqueness' of dominant narratives, is the rendering of their points of view and related ideological frameworks as 'generic' and mine as 'alien.' As a result, I imagine that I am more vulnerable to — and actually scared of — the accusation of subjectivity.

One reason I dare to explore the political subjectivities exemplified, perhaps, by Farber and others quoted here is that I was raised by a formidable Jewish father of my own. There is nothing — literally nothing — I have read from Farber, Fogel, Hart, Dimant, Rotblatt and others in response to dissenting views on Israel and Palestine that I have not heard in some form at my parents' dinner table, articulated with anger and frustration at my ostensible lack of comprehension and, I would argue, underpinned by the deep trauma experienced by many Eastern European Jews of their generation.

My father, as an example, was raised by Polish-born parents who arrived in Canada before the

Second World War. As was typical, his mother lived through anti-Semitic violence in her

childhood. During the Second World War, his father was involved in attempts to bring Eastern

European Jews to Canada, attempts which apparently failed. The villages both his parents grew

up in were emptied of Jews—my sister and I have visited them, it seems that virtually no-one

survived (Katz, 2008). (Most of our relatives, however, were already in Canada). My father's

parents, both of whom worked in garment factories, would have been barred from certain jobs

and spaces in Ontario on the basis of being Jewish, and my father recalls being beaten up by non-

Jewish boys on the way to school, going to university in an era when there were quotas for

Jewish students, and experiencing anti-Semitism in the workplace. In the case of men my father's

age who were born to survivors—or who are child survivors themselves—this trauma must in

many cases be exponentially more severe.

While it is extremely disorienting, and, to many, offensive, to listen to middle- and upper-class

white men born in Canada speak of prejudice[17], these are people whose families have

experienced extreme trauma and dispossession in the recent past. As dramatically as things have

turned around for men like my father, I understand why he does not feel this in his bones. I also

understand where my father's attachment to the State of Israel comes from, and I understand and

empathize (whether this empathy is wanted or not) with his will to believe that the project it

constitutes is not only good, but unimpeachable. Not everyone in my father's generation,

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[17] I am not suggesting that all men in Toronto's Jewish community are white, Canadian-born and/or upper-
or middle class. These men, however, have often been the spokespeople for mainstream organizations.
And it is men who fit into these categories who would produce the most confusion and, potentially,
offense, by taking up space in societal conversations related to discrimination.

however, came to the same conclusions based on their experiences, or maintained the same set of conclusions over time. My father himself has expressed a range of sometimes conflicting views. And certainly, in relation to present realities in Israel and Palestine, there are a multiplicity of Jewish responses, of Jewish subjectivities, one of which is, of course, mine.

Stating the above as, in effect, a disclaimer, does not lessen my concern about what might happen in reaction to the tone and content of this project. Particularly in light of what happened to Jenny Peto, I have been reluctant to include my own story in this thesis project or even to finish it. I have decided, however, that I have to transparently infuse this work with my own experiences and point of view. Whatever potential detractors might say, I — like them — am part of the story. In fact, I am 'evidence' of a certain situation produced by the position and strategies of the mainstream Jewish community. I am someone, like Jenny Peto, who has broken with aspects of my early education. And I am someone, like Rabbi Slonim, who disagrees with the stance of mainstream Jewish institutions. But unlike Peto, Slonim, and members of the IJV, I have not engaged these institutions. Instead, I have avoided them. From the point of view of the new institutional matrix, I don't exist.

I am not the only one. In fact, I am part of a cohort of young (at least I was young when I started writing this) Jews that has quietly walked away from the mainstream institutional community, in large part because of its stance on Israel. As Peter Beinhart writes in his article for the *New York Review of Books*, 'The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment' (June, 2010):

> Particularly in the younger generations, fewer and fewer American Jewish liberals are
> Zionists; fewer and fewer American Jewish Zionists are liberal. One reason is that the

leading institutions of American Jewry have refused to foster—indeed, have actively

opposed—a Zionism that challenges Israel's behavior in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

and toward its own Arab citizens. For several decades, the Jewish establishment has

asked American Jews to check their liberalism at Zionism's door, and now, to their

horror, they are finding that many young Jews have checked their Zionism instead.

The above is also true of Canada's mainstream secular Jewish institutions, where the focus on

support for all actions of the Israeli government has created an atmosphere in which those of us

who hold dissenting views feel we must literally disengage. This focus leaves little room for

Toronto's Jewish community to develop an identity of its own, extending aspects of the

phenomenon of non-existence from individual dissenters to the complex, diverse, and messy

reality of an entire community. As the focus of mainstream institutions on Israel-related

advocacy continues to intensify, a broad group of voices has begun to express concerns that the

Canadian Jewish community will see a United States-style exodus of younger generations.

In 2011, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Canada Israel Committee, the University Outreach

Committee, and the Quebec-Israel Committee merged to create the Centre for Israel and Jewish

Affairs (CIJA) to be funded (at least in part) by the United Jewish Appeal. The group behind the

merger, the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (also, confusingly, CIJA), was

folded into the new organization. In a 2011 article written shortly before the merger in the on-

line magazine *The Mark*, Mira Sucharov (an associate professor of political science at Carleton

University) and Mira Oreck (the former Director of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Pacific

Region) note:

This amalgamation would not only be a symbolic loss for the Canadian Jewish community, but would be a strategic error that could cost the community its most important support base: the next generation of critically engaged citizens. This merger would create the impression that the Jewish community stands unified on all issues, and that it has a singular focus on Israel, when, in fact, neither statement is true. By diluting its domestic agenda and sidelining the variety of voices that exist among Canadian Jews – and particularly among the younger generation – the organized Jewish community would be further narrowing its base.

Orek and Sucharov go on to draw direct parallels between the situation in Canada and that in the US:

One has to imagine that the leaders of CIJA have been closely following the Jewish political developments south of the border, where Abe Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League is losing his stature as a tireless civil-rights hero and gaining a reputation as a hardline supporter of Israel's most stubborn and controversial actions, while, at the same time, organizations such as J Street that are offering a clear alternative are rapidly gaining supporters. If this experience has taught us anything, it is that domestic issues of concern to the Jewish community and uncritical advocacy efforts on behalf of Israel do not belong together.

The new institutional matrix has chosen to weigh 'uncritical advocacy efforts on behalf of Israel' over 'domestic issues of concern.' By doing so, they send two clear messages. The first, to dissenting Jews: we do not exist. The second, to the entire community: your daily reality as Jews living in Toronto is secondary to our collective support for Israeli government policy and actions.

Part 2: Here and now vs. there and then

Mainstream narratives and temporal/spatial focus

In this project, I attempt to demonstrate the way in which mainstream Jewish narratives that bind an authentic Jewish identity to unconditional support for Israel defend themselves against alternative narratives. Underlying this attempt is the belief that Jewish identities are not static, but forever in production, and that the site of production is the site at which political positions that exceed, evade or contradict mainstream positions will find the carapace of narrative for themselves. Stuart Hall writes:

> Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact... we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (Hall, 1989, p. 222)

As a result, the way we tell our stories—who tells them, what's left out, what's in the foreground—can powerfully delimit the boundaries of our identities, explaining the intense tension produced by attempts to construct and disseminate dissenting narratives. In this section, I attempt to explore how mainstream narratives construct themselves from a temporal/spatial perspective, and what this means for the shapes of our identities.

Canadian Jewish historian Tulchinsky (2008) writes of programs meant to foster Jewish identities in young Canadian Jews, and in particular of the March of the Living program, "Israel and the Holocaust are posited as the touchstones of a Jewish identity that are supposed to inspire

youth to continue as Jews and marry Jewish spouses" (Epilogue). I have come back to this quote many times, as I think it crystalizes first a condition — the focus on another time and another place — and next, the implied consequences — the divorce of our collective identity and actions from the here and now. I would like to emphasize that I think it is vitally important that the Holocaust is taught and remembered in the Jewish community. I do not wish to trouble the project of Holocaust remembrance, nor does Tulchinsky. Instead, I believe Tulchinsky is saying that teaching secular Jewish youth about 'Israel and the Holocaust' might not be enough to bind them to a Jewish identity, and that more is needed (he suggests Jewish education as a possible antidote). I argue that this 'more' includes linking continued teaching about the Holocaust to a robust focus on our realities in the here and now and a bracing exploration of our collective relationship to social justice.

Looking at recent messages from the new institutional matrix, there is often little that speaks to the lives of Jews in Toronto today. Examples include the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) campaigns from 2010 and 2011 (UJA is the fundraising arm of the institutional Canadian Jewish community). In the summer of 2011, a number of signs from the UJA lined Toronto streets from approximately Bathurst and Eglinton north to Steeles and likely beyond.[18] One featured a large Israeli flag and read 'tolerance and democracy spoken here.' Not one of the signs spoke to the community in Toronto — its needs, its realities, its hopes, or aspirations for itself and for our city.

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[18] These signs were observed directly during daily commutes along Bathurst between Bloor and Drewry (close to Steeles) over the period in question.

In 2010, there was a different round of signs from the UJA. These signs spoke directly to Holocaust memory, to the fear of anti-Semitism and to the 'war' of stories over Israel. One sign featured a photograph of Anne Frank and read, 'Let's make sure our children never ask, who is that?' Another displayed a keyboard over which was printed the words, 'Hate is very tech-savvy.' Another showed a young woman, and read, 'Let's teach her about her roots, before someone else does.' And, yet another, 'In the war of ideas, are we sending our children in unarmed?' Once again, there was no mention of the needs and aspirations of the Toronto Jewish community in the present, beyond the desire to be protected from hate. This focus on anti-Semitism, like the focus on Israel, like the focus on the Holocaust, continues to define our community *from another place* (the past, Israel, what others think of us) as opposed to from the inside (what are our lives like, who are we now, and who do we want to be?). While it is understandable that Jewish organizations, as part of their mandates, would take up anti-Semitism, Israel, and the Holocaust, what does it mean when messages on these subjects eclipse everything else, particularly in the context of the secular community? Exploring the meaning of these ads on the website 'Jewesses with Attitude,' Leora Jackson writes:

> Since all of the ads focus on anti-Semitism (even if the link is sometimes implicit), they suggest that the core trait that unites Jews is a desire to break free of anti-Semitism, or perhaps that we are united solely in our history as victims of persecution... Yes, I care about addressing anti-Semitism. But my Jewish identity is about so much more than that: it's about ritual practice, building community, celebrating holidays, learning our languages, reading our texts, and more. There is so much more to being Jewish and living Jewish lives than thinking about what other people have done to us. *I'd rather focus on the things that we can do for ourselves, here, at home and in our local communities* (both

virtual and tangible), and I'd like to see ad campaigns that reflect that focus. [Italics mine]

Another Toronto Jewish blogger, who makes it clear that she is supportive of the UJA, takes exception to the fact that the organization's 2011 campaign refused to focus on the community itself. Renee Ghert-Zand writes:

For the sake of our younger generations, it would be more helpful to focus on celebrating and strengthening Jewish communal life for the good things it can bring to us and the world, instead of solely as a countermeasure against those who would seek to destroy us. As burned out as I am on all those "We Are The World"-inspired feel-good anthems, I can still basically deal with them... But please, stop pairing them with the "They hate our guts" videos. While the older people who commission these fundraising pitches may think that this stark juxtaposition will make people reach for their checkbooks, I am quite sure that younger Jews will be turned off. And people are wondering why Jews in their 20s and 30s, and even 40s, are not affiliating with established Jewish institutions…Go figure.

Commenting on Ghert-Zand's article, a young Jewish woman writes, "What does the Federation actually DO? If you make a video explaining how a donation might go to feeding a hungry family, helping victims of genocide happening NOW, etc, I might be interested in donating."

In 2011, the creation of CIJA prompted one of the most public and mainstream displays of internal dissent in the community's history, much of it focused on the tension between the 'there

and then' and the 'here and now.' Sucharov and Oreck write, "Now is the time to rethink

Canadian Jewish advocacy and engagement with Israel. Is it going to be reactionary or

reflective? Will it gain inspiration from a backward-looking siege mentality or a more expansive

possible future?" A *Toronto Star* article from August 2011 quotes Keith Landy, former Canadian

Jewish Congress president, as saying, "There needs to be a voice that speaks for local issues and

the local community without tying it to Israel" (Kidd, 2011). In an editorial in the same edition of

the *Toronto Star*, former CJC Ontario region communications director Ron Csillag writes,

"Already, there are rumblings that the new name is notable for its lack of any reference to

'Canada' or 'Canadian" (Csillag, 2011).

What is the appropriate stance in the face of the here and now? What would the Jewish

community look like if our mainstream institutions were not in the grips of a 'backward-looking

siege mentality'? Who is the 'authentic' Toronto Jew? In *Anti-Semitism and Jew*, Sartre (1948)

writes that an authentic human being is one who accurately assesses his or her situation and acts

accordingly:

> Authenticity, it is almost needless to say, consists in having a true and lucid
>
> consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibility and risks that it involves, in
>
> accepting it with pride or humiliation, sometimes with horror or hate. There is no doubt
>
> that authenticity demands much courage and more than courage... And the Jew does not
>
> escape this rule: authenticity for him is to live to the full his condition as Jew;
>
> inauthenticity is to deny or attempt to escape from it. (p. 102)

Sartre's definition of authenticity as 'a true a lucid consciousness of the situation' is too narrow, in my opinion, to encompass the many factors such as culture that could be defined as 'authentic' expressions of a human being's reality. However, if 'lucid consciousness of the situation' is a key — if not exclusive — aspect of authenticity, then what is the situation of Toronto's Jews? Moreover, what is an authentic reaction to this situation?

I don't pretend I can fully address these questions in this thesis. There are as many Jewish realities as there are Jews, and it would be impossible to speak accurately to the challenges and pleasures faced by each one of us. Institutions, however, are bound to respond to the broad realities of a community, and I would like to examine some of those realities here. Community members — the people who fall by default under the umbrella term 'Jewish community' — are, obviously, ethnically, politically, and socio-economically diverse. While the popular image of the community is of white, Canadian-born, Eastern Europeans — in part as a result of the fact that these are generally the people with the most status in the community, ourselves playing into the broader dynamic of white supremacy in Canada — Canada's Jewish community is also comprised of Jews of African, South European, and Middle Eastern decent and Jews of various ethnic backgrounds who arrived in Canada from areas including Israel, India, the Caucasus, Latin America, the former Soviet Union and the Caribbean (I have had difficulty in determining the exact ethnic breakdown of Toronto Jews, in part, I imagine, because the census data does not explore this).

The community is also made up of people who arrived in Canada at various times, from various countries, and who continue to arrive. As of 2001, approximately 35 per cent of Toronto's Jewish

population was born outside of Canada, with top regions of origin being the former Soviet

Union, Eastern Europe (excluding the former Soviet Union), and Israel. Differences in

experience between Canadian-born Jews and new immigrants can be vast, and are also

dependent on country of origin. In addition, the high population of seniors — in 2011, 16.4 per

cent in the Toronto Jewish population versus 12.1 percent in all of Toronto — have their own

layer of experiences, which often sit in contrast to stereotypical views of the Jewish community.

In 2011, 16.3 per cent of Jewish seniors in Toronto and 37.4 per cent of unattached Jewish

female seniors had incomes that fell below the poverty line as defined by Statistics Canada. In

2001 the poverty level for recent Jewish immigrants to Toronto was 30 per cent compared to

11.1 per cent for Toronto's total Jewish population, and 16.7 per cent for Toronto as a whole.[19]

As evidenced above, Toronto's Jewish community is socio-economically, ethnically and

culturally diverse, and made up of a significant number of new immigrants and elders. In

addition, as referenced throughout this paper, the community is politically diverse on the subject

of Israel and Palestine. The Jewish community is also split in terms of how it votes in Canada: in

2011, an exit poll showed that 52 per cent of Jews voted for the Conservative government (a

significant shift from previous elections, in which Jews tended to vote Liberal), 24 per cent

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[19] Data for 2001 taken from the *2001 Census Analysis Series, the Jewish Community of Toronto*, by
Charles Shahar and Tina Rosenbaum in November, 2003. Available at:
www.feduja.org/jewishtoronto/census/2001_Census_Jewish_Demographics.pdf.

Data for 2011 taken from *The Jewish Community of Toronto, 2011 - Jewish Seniors and The Jewish Poor*,
by Charles Shahar, Robin Gofine and Sandi Pelly. Available at:
http://www.jewishdatabank.org/Studies/downloadFile.cfm?FileID=3166. As far as I could see, the 2011
analysis did not explore the income of new immigrants in the public documents online associated with the
census data.

Liberal, and 16 per cent NDP. (Simpson, 2011)[20] Community members also display varying

levels and types of religiosity. Given these facts, what would be the authentic response of

Toronto's Jewish institutions to the realities present in our communities?

The creation of CIJA has generated considerable discussion on these questions, some of which

attributes the increasing focus on the 'there and then' — and the consequent exclusion of Jewish

realities in the here and now — to an institutional break with the community's grassroots. In

August 2011, Ron Csillag wrote:

> CIJA ... was born in 2003 when about a dozen Jewish millionaires in Toronto and
>
> Montreal, apparently fed up with growing anti-Semitism in Canada, especially on
>
> university campuses, effectively seized control of the community's major agencies and
>
> their funding. CIJA eventually brought both the CJC and the Canada-Israel Committee ...
>
> under its control. Its stated aim was to boost funding for Israel advocacy in Canada and
>
> make it more proactive. But many observers saw CIJA as nothing more than a hostile
>
> takeover by plutocrats.

In an article that same day in the *National Post*, a CJC regional chair is quoted as saying that

CIJA's national executive, "does not reflect the socio-economic diversity of the Canadian Jewry"

or the "political spectrum of the community" (Blaze Carlson, 2011). In a 2011 article in the

Canadian Jewish News, Frank Bialylstock, the CJC's Ontario Region Chair, speaks specifically

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[20] These election results cannot be interpreted outside of the question of Israel and Palestine. Simpson's
article argues that the Harper government's unwavering support for the Netanyahu government produced
the 2011 results. In other words, these results cannot be read as a test of the Jewish's community's
opinions on domestic issues. They can, however, be seen as to be in interaction with the dominant
narratives put forward by mainstream Jewish institutions.

to some of the needs of the community in the here and now, and how the new, consolidated organization might cause these needs to go unmet:

> What CIJA either didn't want to understand or didn't care about, was all the things Congress did behind the scenes, such as responding to all the small needs of the community. When a Shabbos elevator was no longer a Shabbos elevator, Congress acted. If a child was bullied at school [for being Jewish]. Who's going to do this work now? Maybe there will be replacements, but we have not seen this yet. (Levy-Ajzenkopf, 2011)

The stated aim of this thesis is to uncover and describe the discursive mechanisms used to marginalize dissent related to mainstream political positions on Israel and Palestine. While a focus on the 'there and then' vs. the 'here and now' clearly has implications beyond my thesis question, I include it here due to its discursive contributions to the marginalization of dissent. I believe that this displacement of attention away from the community as it is here and now is coupled by a narrative quiet around our messy and complex realities, and in particular the complex realities of internal political dissent. Put another way, this focus on the 'there and then' forecloses discussion and stories related to the messiness of who we might be, what we might think, and where we might disagree, bolstering both the meta-narrative of speaking with one voice, and the closely linked sub-narrative of unanimous support for Israeli government actions/Israel as a Jewish state. So apparent is this foreclosure of the messiness of the here and now that a recent conference in Toronto (October 25th, 2014) aiming to, 'generate alternative discussion around issues that do not currently hold enough space in the mainstream' is calling itself 'Doing Jewish off the Grid: Politics, Identity and Spirituality.' This is not an environmentally-focused gathering. The 'grid' the event is identifying itself as being off of is the

grid of mainstream narrative. This same, currently off-the-grid messiness, however, is readily

admitted into the narrative when it is long past, and it is left there, without the subversive ability

to interrupt the present.

Neutralizing with nostalgia

Most mainstream Canadian Jewish histories document both the influence of left political

organizing and the various conflicts within the Jewish community between the beginning of the

twentieth century and 1939. Put another way, the meta-narrative of 'we speak with one voice'—

and in particular related to political leanings and Israel and Palestine—is not imposed on

Toronto's historical community, but, as illustrated below, is generally imposed when histories

examined here reach the present tense.

Some of the conflicts discussed were political, marking differences between committed Jewish

communists, bundists, socialists, left and right labour Zionists, territorialists, and anarchists,

many of whom had their own, often overlapping organizations (for additional detail, please see

Appendix A). Gerald Tulchinsky (1998) describes political divisions on the Jewish left in

dizzying detail:

> The UJPO on the far left sometimes attempted to mask its thoroughgoing Communist
>
> affiliation[21], despite its strict adherence to the Kremlin's policies and pronouncements.

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[21] This characterization of UJPO is nuanced by Ester Reiter and Ros Usiskin (2004), who write about the organizations that came together to form UJPO: "Politically, these organizations were pro Soviet and

The Arbeiter Ring (Workmen's Circle) was a fraternal order with socialist ideas and

programs that were dedicated to the promotion of progressive Yiddish culture. Because

the Arbeiter Ring members were influenced by East European Bundists, which

emphasized Jewish cultural autonomy in the Diaspora and were therefore non-Zionist,

some wags called them "Zionists with sea sickness." Some of its members were inclined

to be more radical politically in smaller offshoot or affiliated wints, or in anarchist or

territorialist groups in some cities. (p. 275)

Ethnic divisions also split Toronto's Jewish community at the beginning of the twentieth century.

As Stephen Speisman (1979) explains in the *Jews of Toronto: a history to 1937*, ethnic

factionalism affected the formation of Jewish educational institutions in Toronto. (It should be

noted that Speisman's history ends in 1937, and therefore we do not know how he would have

approached the present tense.) The Galician Rabbi at the Simcoe Street Talmud Torah wanted

students instructed in Yiddish, not Hebrew. Polish Jews also wanted their children educated in

Yiddish as opposed to Hebrew and were rankled by the domination of the "Litvaks"

(Lithuanians) at Simcoe Street. Speisman (1979) writes that, "Simcoe Street [Talmud Torah] was

intended to serve the entire East European community regardless of ethnic background...

Unhappily, the symbiosis was less than successful..." (p. 173)

In *A Coat of Many Colours*, Irving Abella (1990) also references divisions between established

Jewish immigrants, largely of Anglo and German descent, and the new Eastern European

immigrants arriving in the early to mid-twentieth century:

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internationalist in outook but at its core, they were concerned with maintaining and strengthening their
identity as Jews, as radicals and as secularists." (n.p.)

They [the new immigrants] were "too conspicuous," complained the rabbi of Toronto's

Holy Blossom. How could they successfully integrate into Canadian society, he worried.

From the point of view of the established community, the new arrivals were not moving

quickly enough to rid themselves of their European habits. (p. 177)

Speisman (1979) references this same tension:

But although the Jewish community in Toronto accepted the new arrivals and did not

panic when large numbers of East Europeans refused to be shipped off to the West, they

did fear that the newcomers' exotic appearance and practices might produce anti-Semitic

sentiment which had, thus far, largely been absent in Toronto. Consequently, while

attempting to assure the public of the industriousness of the immigrants, they tried to

accelerate the process of acculturation... (p. 97)

Class divisions are also discussed in mainstream Jewish histories, which refer to conflicts

between Jewish employers and employees in the Canadian garment industry. Abella (1990)

writes that Jewish garment workers often found "their strongest opposition in the fellow Jews

who owned the shops" (p. 140). Tulchinsky (1998) writes that by the early twentieth century

"vicious class warfare had broken out in a community that was also under attack from without"

(p. 105).

The Jewish women's consumer boycotts of Jewish butchers and bakers in Toronto and Montreal

in the early twentieth century are also documented by both Speisman and Tulchinsky. Abella

writes that:

... Jewish women in Montreal and Toronto led what were probably the first consumer boycotts in the country. Upset by the high price of meat and bread, as early as 1908 the women organized the Jewish community not to buy these foods until the prices came down... [In Montreal] Some agreed to bake bread themselves and set up a co-operative bakery. During Toronto's notorious 1917 "Bread Strike," vigilante groups of women actually stormed into restaurants and removed bread that had been bought from the offending bakeries. In both cities the prices came down. (p. 138)

Prior to 1939, political, religious, and ethnic and class divisions as well as conflicts between established and arriving immigrants in the Canadian Jewish community are well-documented in mainstream Jewish histories, as is the pervasiveness of left organizing and institutions. In *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey*, Tulchinsky (2008) does document some intracommunal conflict after 1945—for example, between different religious movements, or between Sephardic Jews and the Ashkenazi establishment in Montreal. There is also a brief reference to left leaning Jews who are frustrated with the Canadian Jewish establishment and who are trying to organize outside of it (ch. 13), and two paragraphs describing intra-communal conflict related to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 (ch. 13). But the character and substance of left organizing in the present tense—and dissent related to Israel and Palestine—goes undescribed. Instead, in his concluding pages, Tulchinsky treats both Yiddishkeit and the left in an elegiac tone, writing that,"...the general use of Yiddish has virtually disappeared... The daily newspapers have folded... The Jewish-dominated trade unions... are now bereft of Jews... Most of the downtown spicy smelling delicatessens... have disappeared..." (Epilogue). In place of this complex, layered Jewish world, in the context of programs designed to solidify a sense of identity in community

youth, Tulchinsky writes, "Israel and the Holocaust are posited as the touchstones of a Jewish identity that is supposed to inspire youth to continue as Jews and marry Jewish spouses" (Epilogue). [22]

In the concluding pages of his Canadian Jewish history, Abella (1990) briefly references some initial conflict between the Anglophone Jewish community and newly arriving, French-speaking Sephardic Jews in Montreal (p. 232). He also makes references to post-war left Jewish politicians Joe Salsberg and Fred Rose, and writes that, "…some Canadian Jews may disagree with specific policies or activities of the Israeli government over the past few years" (p. 230). His closing pages, however, are largely elegiac and conclusive:

> Lost in the rise up the socio-economic ladder has been the world of the Jewish worker, small-town shopkeeper, farmer and radical. Their children, like those of other Canadians, have become doctors, lawyers, academics, accountants, civil servants, merchants and managers. They had no time for the old ideological battles and the Jewish Communist became a relic of the Cold War. In any case, the old divisions within the community had largely disappeared, as downtown Jews have moved uptown and taken over leadership positions. Lost as well were the raucous dynamism and feistiness that marked an earlier phase of Jewish life in Canada, stilled by the trauma of the Holocaust and the fragility of the tiny new Jewish state in the Middle East. The world had become too dangerous a place for Jews to allow themselves the luxury of internal dissent and divisiveness. (pg. 226)

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[22] Tulchinsky suggests that Jewish education could constitute an important antidote to what I read as the draining of present tense meaning from a secular Canadian Jewish identity.

Abella goes on to write that, "Only in the 1970s and 1980s—once Jews had successfully achieved a new status, once anti-Semitism had receded, once Israel seemed relatively secure— was the community again more tolerant of the dissent and pluralism that had been the hallmarks of an earlier period" (p. 226). No examples are offered of this dissent, leaving potential dissenters with no 'discursive space' in which to constitute themselves as legitimate subjects (Nestel & Aiken, 2004).

Even a labour history like *Sweatshop Strife* gives us nowhere to go, explaining the end of Toronto's Jewish labour movement in one sentence: "Assimilation and upward mobility have meant that the militant Jewish working class culture of the immigrant activities has been left behind" (p. 216).

Mainstream Jewish sources that are not histories can also take the position that internal dissent and the left are gone. In a 2006 article for the *Canadian Jewish News*, columnist Avrum Rosensweig (2006) [23] asks:

> Where have our Jewish activists gone? What happened to the days of the Communist, socialist and conservative Jewish community members who courageously stepped out of their safe zone to protect and enhance the lives of our people and the community we live in? ...Where is our Jewish creativity? What happened to the many left-wing and right-wing journals, magazines and newspapers one could pick up at a Jewish or other bookstore in days not so long ago? What happened to our Jewish writers? There are

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[23] Avrum Rosensweig is my cousin. Although I did not know him when I began writing this thesis, I have since met him in the context of organizing around federal policies related to refugees, and have enormous respect for him and his work. I have shared with him my views about this column.

thousands of them, yet we mostly read the same content, style and writers that we did 20 years ago. Are we not sophisticated and strong enough to be challenged?

Abella, Tulchinsky and Rosensweig do not explore the very real and present dissent and non-Zionist oriented secular culture that carried on in Jewish Toronto after the 1950s and that continues today. Even those addressing the present, like Rosensweig, simultaneously ignore it. I understand that Rosensweig (2006) is sincerely looking for Jews who will, as he says, present 'challenges,' when he asks "Where have our Jewish activists gone?" and "Where is our Jewish creativity?" But instead of helping to bolster these voices, Rosensweig's queries achieve the opposite effect: by asking these questions in the way he does, he renders actual activists invisible.

Rosensweig would have done well to list some of the communists, subversive artists, and others who *do exist*. Alternatively, he could have reframed his questions. Why are we allowing our institutions to squeeze genuine inquiry out of our community? Why are we waxing nostalgic for the radicals of the past ("...where are the Jewish students of old, the thousands who participated in university movements, the "radical" young men and women who thought nothing of challenging the organizations funding them ...?") when we could be offering support to the radicals of the present?

Historians, too, injure both the present and the past by treating the story of the Jewish left as a colourful episode in our past, quickly eclipsed by a long list of conventional accomplishments by

doctors, lawyers, athletes, businessmen, and politicians[24]. In this context, a celebration of

historical Jewish radicalism serves to neutralize its potent influence on and existence in the

present, a development not lost on the older Jewish radicals themselves.

In a 1955 May Day celebration described by Ben Lappin in an article that same year for

Commentary (the article was reproduced in a recent issue of *Labour/La Travail* with an

introduction by Gerald Tulchinsky), an unnamed speaker, "a short, heavy-set man in his middle

sixties with an aura of white fluff around his shining bald head," takes up the insult of nostalgia

in a speech, excerpted here. The speaker starts by describing the "studies and creative writings of

second-generation American Jews [which] occupy important places on the shelves of America's

cultural institutions...":

> And do you know what I find there? ... That we are the simple-minded papas and blintze-
>
> frying mamas who cannot begin to fathom the Weltschmerz of our fine-cut intellectual
>
> offspring. Our children have become anthropologists and sociologists and all kinds of
>
> 'ologists.' They study us endlessly to see if they can find out *vos far min bashefenishn mir*
>
> *zeinen* (what sort of creatures we are). Tell them about the lonely years we spent for our
>
> ideals in Siberia or in the prisons of Poland, tell them about our revolt against a
>
> reactionary world with no more than a few torn pamphlets, talk to them about our revolt
>
> against the might of the Czar and against our very own parents, and they will nod politely
>
> and tell you that they know all about it; we are the 'radicals of the East European shtetl.'
>
> A specific type indexed along with other types such as the Hasidim and the Misnagdim.

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[24] Given our history, it is clear why Jewish historians would choose to celebrate Jews who have achieved conventional success in Canadian society. These successes are often framed, however, as 'the end of the story' for secular or modestly religious Jews in Canada, save for thorny questions related to inter-marriage, Jewish education, resurgences of anti-Semitism and foreign policy related to Israel.

The revolutionaries of other peoples have been accorded a place of honor in the histories

of their nations. This is true of the United States, of France, of Britain, of all the others.

But we will be remembered as peculiar Old Country types. (Lappin, 1955, p. 219)

In the *Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym (2001) defines modern nostalgia as, "... a mourning

for the impossibility of mythical return ..." (p. 8) Nostalgia is applied to states which are by

definition unreachable in the present time, or even in the current dimension. Boym (2001)

defines the particular phenomenon of 'romantic nostalgia':

The romantic nostalgic insisted upon the otherness of his object of nostalgia from his

present life and kept it at a safe distance. The object of romantic nostalgia must be

beyond the present of space experience, somewhere in the twilight of the past or on the

island of utopia where time has happily stopped, as on an antique clock. (p. 13)

Reflecting fondly on the rich Jewish secular culture he describes so beautifully in his books and

articles, Tulchinsky (2002) writes that by 1955, "Much of that Jewish labour culture in the 1920s

and 1930s that was so politically vibrant and culturally rich, had already slipped away." (p. 212)

(He underlines the fact that Spadina's synagogues were still in use at that time.) In the concluding

chapters of his book-length history of Canada's Jewish people, Tulchinsky (2008) writes that:

Krushchev's revelations of Stalin's crimes at the 20th All-Union Party Congress in 1956

was the last straw. All that remained were a few cultural expressions of the movement's

one-time fervour—the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir, for example, performed to full houses

for years to come—and memories of the heyday of the Jewish left. (ch. 12)

While it is essential to document this history, it is also essential to demonstrate the links between past and present. As Stuart Charme (2000) writes, "...claims about historical continuity with particular traditions of the past [are used as] a source of authority for the present" (p. 134). By leaving the story of Jewish left organizing, and of dissent, in the distant past, historians cut off possibilities in the present, powerfully bolstering the discursive project to marginalize dissent.

I am not arguing that a real contraction of left organizing, a significant (but notably, not universal) upward mobility, and an increased imperative to 'speak with one voice' were not all experienced by Toronto's Jewish community in the years following the Second World War (see Appendix A for details). I do contend, however, that the fact that the two mainstream histories explored here conclude without substantial reference to the left-organizing that remained or to internal dissent related to Israel and Palestine powerfully forecloses the possibility of readers locating themselves in related narratives. Put another way, when prominent mainstream histories, in their concluding pages, fail to substantially address, for example, Canadian Jewish dissent related to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982[25], or the occupied territories (Goldberg, 1990) (Taras & Weinfeld, 1990), we can ask if, perhaps, there is a 'chicken and egg' phenomenon at play. While, despite enormous barriers, internal dissent related to Israel and Palestine exists, what would it look like if Jews glimpsed the possibility in mainstream histories or, indeed, at any of the sites explored here: synagogues, summer camps, Hebrew schools, community centres, organized trips to Israel, etc.? If locating ourselves in narratives is key to our sense of ourselves in the world (Hall, 1996), how have these mainstream histories shaped our current realities, and what would my generation look like if we had not grown up with the meta-narrative of 'speaking

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[25] As noted earlier, Tulchinsky (2008), does devote two paragraphs to Jewish dissent related to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in Chapter 13 of *Canada's Jews: A people's journey*.

with one voice,' and the closely-linked sub-narrative of universal support for Israeli government policy and actions? What if mainstream historians and institutions had left a window open for Jewish left-organizing and internal disagreement related to Israel and Palestine?

Jewish identity here, where we are

Fortunately, the story hasn't ended. Nothing is done, and nothing has been decided. Stuart Hall writes that any iteration of cultural identity is only a 'cut' chosen at a moment in time, 'not an essence but a positioning' (p. 226). For Jews in Canada, and in particular for secular Jews (and likely for cultural groups everywhere), the iterative question of cultural identit(ies) will be a deeply layered one, very much concerned with the way discourses, dynamics and experiences from other times and places intersect with discourses, dynamics and experiences from this land, and from now. As Tulchinsky points out, mainstream Canadian Jewish narratives posit Israel and the Holocaust as 'touchtones' of secular Jewish identity. As I've argued here, that narrative does not simply include an engagement with Israel, but requires 'real' Jews to demonstrate unconditional support for Israeli government policy and Israel as a Jewish state. There is a vacuum left in relationship to us here, and us now. This gap could be seen to correspond to Sartre's definition of authenticity: a clear-eyed reckoning with our current realities—'authentic' narratives will take up the question of us, here and, by extension, the difficult question of 'home.'

In terms of my own experience, I am the granddaughter of Polish Jews. My father's mother, like so many Polish Jews, lived through anti-Semitic violence before World War Two. Had they stayed, both my grandparents would likely not have survived, as most of the Jews in both their

villages were killed.[26] They did not claim a Polish identity, or view Poland as their homeland. I was born a citizen of Canada, a state established based on colonial rule over Indigenous territory, much of which is unceded or covered by treaties negotiated in bad faith by colonial authorities and/or treaties that continue to be dishonoured by the Canadian state. I was born here, and it is home, but right now I do not view this place, Turtle Island, as my homeland. There is a third homeland proposed to me by my community, a place I have never been, and from which no-one in my family originated. It is also a nation, like Canada, predicated on ongoing colonial dispossession. I don't feel, at this point, that any of these places — the place where my family's from, the place where I'm from, the place where no-one I know is from — is my homeland.

In her exhibit for the 2011 Venice Biennale, Israeli artist Yael Bartana took up the question of 'homeland' as it relates to Ashkenazi Jews, and specifically to Ashkenazi Jews who have settled in colonial contexts.[27] Instead of representing Israel at the Biennale, Bartana represented Poland, and created a fictional campaign for Jewish return to Eastern Europe, complete with membership cards and tote bags. Bartana posited Poland as a lost homeland for the descendents of Polish Jews, and suggested that the Polish imagination longs for our return. As Carol Zemel (2011) writes, Bartana's exhibit speaks to the suppression and absences we experience, and the suppressions and absences we are complicit in creating:

> But if Poland is a haunted space — haunted for Poles by Jews whose lives are
> nostalgically represented at souvenir shops, music festivals and museum displays;
> haunted for Jews by the mixed memory of familiarity and oppression — so, too, may

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[26] In a visit to Poland in 2008, my sister and I were told by the deputy Mayor in my grandmother's village that all the Jews there were taken to the Treblinka concentration camp, and that none of them came back.

[27] I have not seen the exhibit, my understanding of it is based on conversations and newspapers articles (Zemel, 2011; Cumming, 2012; Smith, 2013).

modern Israel, in its history and its silences, be haunted by its Arab population and the traces of its Palestinian past.

Zemel's characterization of Israel's 'Palestinian past' is, to my mind, part of the problem, as nothing is yet resolved, or past, in terms of Palestine or Palestinians. Easy to mourn the absences of 'Jews whose lives are nostalgically represented at souvenir shops.' Harder to mourn Jews who are asking to return to their villages and homes. As my sister and I were told through a translator by the deputy Mayor in my grandmother's Polish village, "The Jews are very nice. They only come here asking questions. They never ask for the property back" (2008). In Poland, we threatened no-one, we conceded our own absence. But were we to 'ask for the property back,' we would have been perceived as radioactive in our present tense demands, in our continued existences, in our not-yet-goneness. Bartana, I believe, is challenging us to view our absences, our demands and our colonialism in the present tense. Her approach is perhaps too elliptical, too ironic, to evoke radioactivity, to provoke rage, fear and perhaps transformation. It does, however, capture the confusion, sadness, and impossibility associated for me with the idea of homeland.

While none of my putative homelands (Poland, Canada, Israel) fits, in my imagination, as a 'homeland,' even the identity of 'immigrant,' which remains a touchstone in my family after two to three generations on this land, is a problematic one. Many white, non-Anglo Canadians have benefited from the Canadian brand of multiculturalism, which has allowed us to hold onto some aspects of our own identities (whatever that turned out to mean) and to establish ourselves as our own mini-polities, if ones subordinate to the Anglo narrative. At the same time, multiculturalism as a policy has served the function of erasing the story of the structural racism faced by

racialized and Indigenous people. As Matthew Frye Jacobson (2006) writes about the American version of multiculturalism in *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America*:

> The ethnic contributions model of American nationality may have been a significant departure from the homogenizing model of the melting pot, but it did share with the waning paradigm an almost absolute erasure of power relations that made for a fairly sanitized and happy national narrative: diversity as feast, the nation as smorgasbord. (p. 56)

The myths of multiculturalism are compounded by the stories of many white immigrants — "I worked hard, I prospered here" — which serve the triple function of obscuring the reality of people who face continued systemic discrimination, muting the history and present realities of colonialism and influencing social policy:

> Though clearly a political resource for progressives... the net effect of the Ellis Island epic has pitched decisively toward the right; appeals to the romantic icon of yesterday's European immigrant—down-trodden, hard-working, self-reliant, triumphant—have shaped policy debates about everything from affirmative action and the welfare state to slavery reparations and contemporary immigration. (p. 8)

Jacobson (2006) goes on to write that, "Ellis Island remembrance… has perhaps entailed an even more portentous forgetting of the gradual and violent history of this settler democracy..." (p. 9).

These same dynamics are clearly visible in mainstream Canadian, and Canadian Jewish narratives. For example, some mainstream Canadian Jewish histories end by heralding Canada as

a just or relatively just society, seemingly conflating the fate of white, Jewish, middle class men with people who are racialized, Indigenous, working class, poor and/or women. Irving Abella's (1990) *Coat of Many Colours* shares a list of Canadian Jewish accomplishments in government and in the professions in its concluding chapters. Abella writes that the trajectory of Canadian Jewish judge Bora Laskin, "…symbolizes Canada's revolutionary transformation from a benighted, prejudice-ridden society to the progressive, open, multicultural nation it is today" (p. 219). Writing about the Canadian brand of state-sponsored multiculturalism, Tamara Vukov (2002) considers the discourse around the inauguration of Halifax's Pier 21 as a memorial in 1999. Vukov points out that the memorial, its opening ceremonies and the publicity surrounding it, focuses largely on white immigrants, and the Canadian 'fairytale' of immigrant success. She outlines the way in which this narrative obscures Canada's many exclusionary and racist immigration policies. Like Jacobson, Vukov also points out the ways in which immigration-related national myths can obscure the fact of colonialism:

> Such strategies demand interrogation regarding the function and circulation of these celebratory founding myths of immigration, by locating the specific and critical role they play in national narratives of settler nations—nations borne of settler colonialism and the dispossession of native peoples. In the so-called "new world," any retrospective mythology of a primordial or pastoral rootedness in the land is foreclosed or "interrupted" by colonial settlement... Instead, settler nations anchor their mythical origins in the romance of immigration as a historical euphemism for settler colonialism. (p. 5)

More generally, scholars have pointed out the obscuring function of Canadian narratives of multiculturalism, an argument succinctly summarized by Himani Bannerji (2000):

The multi-ethnic, multi-national state, with its history of racialized class formation and

political ideology, discovering *multiculturalism as a way of both hiding and enshrining*

power relations, provided a naturalized political language even to the rest of Canadian

society. (p. 545, italics mine)

As problematic as attempts by white Canadian born Jews to establish an identity can be—they

can seem self-indulgent, as they do not speak to immediate material needs; they are often shaped

by the requirements of Canadian institutions (which tend to require one voice, and one voice

only, per each 'ethnic'—ie. non-Anglo—community); they have contributed to narratives that

obscure present-day systemic racism; they have contributed to narratives that bolster settler

projects on Turtle Island and in Palestine; they have contributed to narratives of self-reliance that

bolster domestic austerity policies—they are real. Jacobson is correct in asserting that white Jews

and other white ethnic minorities have responsibility for and profit from white supremacy, and

that this should be interrogated, inventoried and exposed. At the same time, white Jews are not

Anglos, and our insistence on this point is not solely a product of the shame of white supremacy

on one hand and attempts to both obscure and buttress white supremacy on the other. Stuart Hall

(1989) argues that cultural identity, "...is not a mere phantasm either. It is something—not a mere

trick of the imagination" (p. 226). With respect to Jewish identity, I believe there is an identity

there worth exploring and perpetually constructing, and Jacobson's failure to grasp (or maybe to

feel) this leaves us with an intellectual argument in lieu of a model for action and change.

On the question of who we are, I am aware I have failed to answer it, although I don't believe

any one (or thousand) answers would be sufficient. My argument is not that the narrative about

Toronto Jews should shift from story A to story B, or that the power to determine who 'we' are should move from one group: mainstream organizations to another: dissenters. Rather, I contend that identity is something that, as Hall (1989) argues, is always in production, and that the best we can do towards achieving any kind of authenticity is to invite ourselves to apprehend the range of our individual and collective realities in the here and now (Sartre, 1948), in reflexive interaction with our personal reactions to these realities, and in the context of the continuous and open conversation called for by the young Jews interviewed by Deutsch (2014). It is in this spirit that I have offered some details about my own history and location as they interact with my point of view, which is shaped by this history and location, but which also contains, perhaps, an element of the personal, a ghost in the machine. As Stuart Charme (2000) writes, in exploring Sartre's views on authenticity:

> Any critical sense of authenticity must simultaneously hold in balance two interconnected facts: the life of every human being is situated in a specific history and culture that shapes his or her thought and identity, and the ultimate meaning and character of that history and culture is determined in slightly different ways by each person. (p. 142)

As a dissenting Jew, I do not claim that I inhabit a particular, authentic Jewish identity. Rather, I claim the right to participate in the iterative and never-ending process of creating the identities recognized by our own communities and the broader world as falling under the umbrella of authentically Jewish. What dissenting Jews have been denied is not our place in a constellation of fixed Jewish identities, but a role in participating in the generation of meaning around the public category of Jewish, the right to help define the ever-slipping narrative. Stuart Charme (2000) writes:

The process of positioning ourselves within particular personal, family, cultural,

historical narratives inevitably selects, condenses, and possibly even distorts the meaning

of the situation we are born into. It is always a creative process yet also an unsettling one,

since the stories we tell are open to revision and change. The result is that identity is

expressed in narratives that position us in relation to the past, but these narratives are

open to change. This is true on both collective and individual levels. Narratives

constructed in different historical periods differ, as do narratives at different moments in

an individual's life. An authentic identity, therefore, is never an entity or substance that

we possess but rather a project situated in time and space. (p. 143)

This non-participation of dissenting Jews in the production of mainstream narratives around

Jewish identity has a concrete political dimension spoken to by the young Jews interviewed by

Deutsch (2014), some of whom identify as activists, others of whom share that they are

committed to opening up conversation and/or locating their Jewish lives outside of narratives

related to Israel. One interview participant draws a straight line between the narrative of

unanimous Canadian Jewish support for Israel to policy on the ground in Israel and Palestine. He

talks about a recent article from former Israeli Defence and Foreign Minister Moshe Arens that

cites the unwavering support of nations like Canada and the Netherlands as a reason for Israel to

stay its current course, and avoid doing things like making, "...far-reaching concessions to

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas," to placate the international community

(Arens, 2012). "What's desperately required," concludes the interview participant, "is a different

sort of message to be sent." Another interview participant puts it even more plainly, saying he

wants to communicate that, "...you cannot occupy an entire people for generations based on my identity, on our identity." (Deutsch's film is available at: http://vimeo.com/108546160)

I believe that most if not all of us are aware that these are, in part, the stakes when we talk about Jewish identity in Canada. Wherever we sit politically, we understand that our identities as Canadian Jews are being deployed, at this stage, to support the policies and actions of the Netanyahu government. Many of us also believe that this harnessing of Canadian Jewish identity to the Israeli government has led, in turn, to Jewish community support for the federal government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Simpson, 2011), who offers the Israeli government uncritical and enthusiastic support. For many of us, these are powerful motivators to see Canadian Jewish identity uncoupled from Israeli government policy.

They are not, however, the only ones. As Beinhart (2010) argues, young American Jews are walking away from the community as a result of the hard line of mainstream Jewish institutions with respect to supporting all actions of the Israeli government. I would argue that similar currents are occurring in Canada, and certainly there has been concern expressed by the Canadian Jewish establishment about the degree to which young Jews are affiliating to the community, a concern they are trying to address, in part, by encouraging a relationship between Canadian Jews and Israel. Ironically, if this same establishment would simply open up spaces for Jews, and particularly young Jews, to have open and authentic conversations about what it means to them to be Jewish in the here and now, they would find there are more committed Jews than they might imagine. In fact, many of the voices documented here are fighting to inhabit their own realities and 'still be Jewish' as Deutsch (2014) puts it. Opening up spaces for dissenting

Jews might also introduce some of the dynamism and character Abella (1990), Tulchinsky (2008) and Rosensweig (2006) seem to me to be elegizing in some of their writings. Admitting ex-communicated critical thinkers, artists, musicians, writers, rebels, organizers and dreamers—a multi-generational cohort that includes some brilliant, principled and incredibly brave people— back into the fold of the mainstream Jewish imagination might also answer Tulchinsky's (2008) concerns about what in the here and now could serve to round out a secular Jewish Canadian identity. Put another way, dissenters might be a pivotal element in the recipe for secular Jewish continuity in Canada.

My investment in the question of Jewish identity is, in part, a political one. But I am also invested in the importance of contestability itself, and in the right of all of us to participate in the creative, ongoing and very alive process of creating community. I believe there can be meaningful content—content we should all have a hand in creating—to the experience of being a secular or moderately religious Jew. That content, however, is not static or monolithic, and can only find its authentic expression in open, courageous, and continuous dialogue with our history and with the here and the now.

Conclusion

As I write, various groups in Toronto are fostering dialogue and living alternative expressions of Jewish identity. A group calling itself 'Youngish and Jewish' describes itself on Facebook as a "... critical network of Jews that gather monthly to discuss issues of Jewish identity, solidarity and community. Welcoming of anti-Zionist and questioning positions." The Morris Winchevsky Centre, which has been around for more than 80 years, currently houses the still-operational United Jewish People's Order (UJPO), Camp Naivelt (which is now summer cottages for UJPO members), a secular Jewish day school and the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir. Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) is still in operation (when Stephen Harper made his first visit to Israel in January of 2014, there were three Jewish groups quoted: the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, B'nai Brith and IJV). There are many more Jewish groups and individuals in Toronto who are explicitly anti-Zionist or anti-occupation or both. There are others who are simply asking for the opportunity to dialogue. An event in Toronto in March 2014 at Beit Zatoun called 'Talking about Israel and Palestine, Creating more inclusive-progressive conversations,' drew many Jews who talked about their desire to speak honestly about Israel and Palestine with friends and family. In April 2014, more than ten years after I started this project, a *Canadian Jewish News* headline describing a panel organized by Rachel Deutsch read, "Young Jews want open discussion on Israel":

> A small group of Jewish students and other young people gathered at the McGill University law faculty on April 2 in the hope of setting an example for a new openness in the community toward diverse opinions on Israel and Zionism. The panel discussion was organized and moderated by Rachel Deutsch, a McGill graduate and social worker, who

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believes Jews, especially the young, should be able to publicly express their critical or simply questioning views on Israel, as well as the relationship between the Diaspora and the Jewish state, or their own Jewish identity. (Arnold, 2014)

And these young Jews, so much wiser than I have been, are not waiting for the new institutional matrix to crack open space for them to speak openly about Israel and Palestine. They are not cowering in the face of accusations of self-hate (as I have), they do not feel the need to unpack discursive techniques related to the marginalization of dissent before weighing in. In fact, not one of the efforts described above waited for the blessing of mainstream organizations or takes up their terms. These efforts are employing de Certeau's 'tactics,' and working with what they have. They've taken matters into their own hands, and they are working off the mainstream narrative 'grid.'

I, however, wanted to see change happen from within. When I began writing this thesis, my primary and intended audience was the institutional Jewish community itself. I wanted them to change. I believed that the rise of alternative narratives might compel them to represent the community in all its demographic, socio-economic, and political diversity. Then, they would no longer throw support behind the federal Conservative government. Then, they would no longer unquestioningly support all policies and actions of the State of Israel. And, on the most personal level, then, they would no longer exclude me. It was difficult, and remains difficult, to stand apart from almost every institutional space in my community. There is almost no synagogue or large-scale community space that does not require me to absent some of who I am. The spaces that do welcome me — like the Winchevsky Centre — are largely secular. I am not able to pray using the language and the melodies I know. I am not able to go somewhere to communally

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express my awe at the universe, or explore my relationship to the divine. This sense of having to leave extends beyond institutions. Even some of the restaurants that serve the food of my childhood have had posters up advertising speakers and causes that make me feel I'm not in the right place. Part of me is a stranger in the places I grew up in, and I want back in.

But I no longer expect to get back in, except for the few occasions I decide to brook the dissonance, to turn a part of myself off because I want to hear Hebrew prayer, or be in a bustling North York restaurant with rhythms that feel familiar to me, and where I can eat something my mother makes. And I no longer have hope for the institutional Jewish community. Strategically, they have made a mistake. They should have tried to 'engage' people like me. They should have exploited my very real longing to come back in order to siphon off some of my energy — and anger — and keep me talking to them. Instead, the line was drawn so clearly, there is not an inch of even fake space left for someone like me. I have seen the degree to which institutional positions have calcified, I understand I am not welcome, and I am no longer waiting for them to change. Increasingly, I don't think it matters if they do. In my mind, the voices and tactics documented here will begin to coalesce into broader strategies and accepted narratives— they are the whispers of the 'new new institutional matrix' and the multiplicity of stories of the not so distant future. One that honours where we come from and recognizes all of our subjectivities. One that is rooted in the realities, responsibilities, complexities, and dynamism of the here and now. I am putting my hope there.

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Appendix A

Historical context (1880 - 1951)

Although I will not attempt to examine the histories of specific institutions, I'd like to offer some limited historical context, in particular for the founding and growth of Toronto's complex Jewish institutional structure, and its relationship to the (broadly defined) political left.

Today's institutional Jewish community was largely determined by a flood of immigration from the Russian Pale of Settlement in the early twentieth century. In 1882, Tsar Alexander III introduced a new set of rules—the May Laws—in the Russian Pale of Settlement, ushering in what Nora Levin (1977) refers to in *While the Messiah Tarried* as, "a permanent administrative and legal pogrom" (p. 18). In his history of the Canadian Jewish community, *A Coat of Many Colours*, Irving Abella (1990) writes that, as a result, Canada was flooded with a "mass migration between 1880 and 1914" that "drastically changed the face of Jewish Canada" which had previously been characterized by a small group of Jews of largely Anglo and German descent (p. 115). In the years between World War One and World War Two, new laws and both state and civilian-led massacres were perpetrated against Jews across Eastern Europe, prompting additional immigration and attempts by Jews in Canada to get their families out of Europe.

Many of the new Jewish immigrants arriving in the early 20th century were influenced by emerging ideas and groups in the Pale of Settlement. In *Jewish Radicalism in Winnipeg*, Arthur Ross (2003) describes the emergence of secular definitions of Jewish identities, many rooted in

left political ideals. This secular definition of Jewish identity came, according to Jonathan

Frankel (1984) in his book *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews,*

1862 - 1917, during the last of three discrete periods in the history of European Jewry over the

past 200 years. The first was medieval. The next was the period of Enlightenment—experienced

in Jewish communities as the 'Haskala'—during which many Jews anticipated their total

emancipation in Europe and adopted ideas of "liberalism in politics, individualism in thought and

as a way of life, laissez-faire and industrialization in economics..." (p. 1). In the early 1880s,

after an extended period of pogroms followed by the institution of the May Laws, this period

ended abruptly, ushering in what Frankel calls an era of post-liberalism, and engendering the

ideas and organizations that many Jews would bring with them to Canada:

> The sudden and drastic reversal of attitudes that marked the emergence of the new
>
> ethos was summed up brilliantly by Lev Pinsker in 1882 with the slogan "self-
>
> emancipation." Contained in this term was the conviction that the Jewish question
>
> could not—and would not—be solved by the grant of equal rights from above nor by a
>
> return to the status quo ante of traditional Judaism, but had to be won by total
>
> change, collective action... (p. 2)

Many immigrants from the Pale of Settlement were influenced by 'third period' thinking. They

brought with them a bouquet of political ideologies and their attendant organizational structures.

According to Tulchinsky (2008), there were bundists, communists, left and right labour Zionists

(both of which were left in orientation), territorialists (people who believed in a homeland for the

Jews but did not think it should be in Palestine) and anarchists, most of whom had their own,

overlapping, organizations. Some supported the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, some did

not (p. 275). As Dan Freeman-Maloy (2006) writes in his article, 'AIPAC North,' "Many Canadian Jews rejected Zionism as unfeasible, in favor of class solidarity, or out of loyalty to a project of internationalist struggle for progressive social change."

Political organizations and labour groups sponsored or intersected with mutual aid societies that attended to the basic needs of the community, avoiding Christian charity and upper class Jewish charity which did not systemically challenge the conditions faced by the new immigrants. In her essay, 'Camp Naivelt and the Daughters of the Jewish Left,' Ester Reiter (2004) quotes an article from the Yiddish newspaper *Der Kampf* (the struggle) written by a group of Jewish women who founded the summer camp Kindervelt:

> We will explore all avenues in order to create a summer home for workers' children so that they don't have to go to the rich charity institutions who with one hand take the skin from our bodies, and with the other throw us a bone and humiliate. But we, the class conscious working women, must not and will not take their charity offerings, we throw them back; we will not kiss the whip that lashes us; we will not send our children to them, where they will be trained to be faithful and obedient slaves of capitalism and exploitation. We must raise our children in a free atmosphere. They must know who are their friends and who are their foes. Creating a summer home for children must be the work of the women workers. (p. 369)

The socialist Arbeiter Ring (Workmen's Circle) and the communist Jewish Labour League, two prominent organizations in Jewish Toronto had complex and overlapping roles in the provision of community support. (In 1945, the Toronto Labour League merged with similar organizations

in other Canadian cities to form one organization, the United Jewish People's Order—UJPO—

which is still in existence.) (Reiter, 2002, p. 128) From summer camps to credit unions to health

benefits, both worked to meet community needs in the absence of a government-sponsored social

safety net. Other mutual aid societies, called by the Yiddish *landsmanshaftn*, were tied to region

of origin. For example, my father's father was from Ilze, a Polish village near the city of Radom.

According to my father, my grandfather belonged to a mutual aid society called the Radomer

Mutual Benefit Society. A walk through any older Jewish cemetery in Toronto will reveal the

names of many such groups. One of the oldest Jewish cemeteries in Toronto, the Dawes Road

Cemetery, lists several regionally-based mutual aid societies as members including the Keltzer

Sick Benefit Society (Kielce, Poland), Linitzer Sick Benefit Society (Linitz, Ukraine), Lubliner

Society (Lublin, Poland) and the Radomer Mutual Benefit Society (Radom, Poland)

(www.jewishinto.com/Dawes-Road-Cemetery.html).

Trade union organizing was also deeply bound up in the matrix of Jewish activities. As Ruth

Frager (1992) writes in *Sweatshop Strife*, "A deep pro-labour current flowed through the

immigrant Jewish community and led to much more than 'trade unionism pure and simple.' The

Jewish unions served as social and cultural centres and were explicitly socialist in orientation"

(p. 54). The garment trade, in particular, saw a high concentration of Jewish workers. In 1931, 27

per cent of Toronto's Jewish workers participated in the garment industry (Tulchinsky, 2002, p.

211). Jewish union participation in this sector was so high that some union locals conducted their

business in Yiddish (Tulchinsky, 2002, p. 212). At the same time, there was clear class tension

within the Jewish community, much of it concentrated in the garment industry:

    Even though the common ethnic tie sometimes dampened class conflict within the

Jewish community, sharp conflict did erupt frequently between Jewish workers and

Jewish manufacturers. One Jewish garment worker declared rhetorically: "Why should I

feel better if I am exploited by a Jew?"... For others, the issue was not so

straightforward. Some felt that if a boss was to make a profit from their labour in any

case, it would be better if the boss were a Jew who might donate money to the

landsmanshaft, the synagogue, or to other local Jewish community institutions—or might

donate funds to aid Jews who were desperately trapped in Europe. (Frager, 1992, p. 66)

Mutual aid associations, labour organizations and unions sponsored or were joined by cultural

activities, summer camps and schools to form what Ester Reiter (2004) characterizes as a

'mosaic' of left Jewish cultural, political and social life:

The camps in New York State, Ontario and Quebec, were one piece of a mosaic. They

were part of a wider political and cultural organization that organized mutual assistance

providing credit, health care and cemetery plots. This network included clubs where

members met for political and cultural activities, a chorus, a mandolin orchestra, a

Yiddish *shule* (school) where the children were taught language and culture, a dance

troupe and sports leagues. (n.p.)

Gerald Tulchinsky (2005) describes this same mosaic:

.... the Canadian Jewish radical Left until at least the early 1950s, therefore, was much

more than just a political persuasion. It was a people's movement that expressed itself in a

rich cultural and social life... The Jewish Folk Choir since 1927 held concerts — in

several of which the celebrated Paul Robeson participated — mainly of Hebrew and

Yiddish music, drawing packed houses and even selling records of its renditions. There were cultural evenings at the UJPO building where poetry and literature were read aloud and then discussed at length. Such evenings sometimes included dance and dramatic presentations as well as many speakers... In florid Yiddish, occasionally in Russian, and, later, often in English, speakers held forth on the issues of the day... (p. 150)

One summer camp served the children of Jewish workers over this period: Kinderland (originally Kindervelt). For adults and families there was Naivelt (still in operation), a series of small summer dwellings, many without running water, described by Reiter as, "a place where children played, their parents relaxed and enjoyed being outside the city in a community where Yiddishkait, radical politics, socialist values and visions mixed comfortably with the pleasures of being in the country" (Reiter, 2004). Kindervelt was set up in 1925 by the Jewish Women's Labour League which had, "...both a vision of an alternate society and a practical problem—how to keep their children off the streets during the summer. People were poor, many of the women as well as the men were working, and there was nowhere to leave the children..." Reiter (2004) describes the motivations of the women who started Kindervelt:

For these women, like many of my parents' generation who arrived in the new world in the early 20th century, the experiences of bloody pogroms in Eastern Europe and the contemptuous treatment meted out to "greenhorns" in the new world taught them that to be a Jew with dignity and with hope meant also to be a socialist and a communist. They were people who dreamed (in Yiddish) of a better world for Jews, and for all the world's downtrodden as well. Many had been radicalized in the old country in the dying days of the czarist empire. The socialists or social democrats were convinced that a

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"*nayer frayer velt*"—a new freer world—was not just an idle dream and so they worked

hard to build this new society in their lifetime. (n.p.)

Both my parents went to these summer camps, but both were only vaguely aware of the fact that they were participating in a political project. According to my mother, the same was true of her parents. "They sent us there because it was where people sent their children," she said. "They were not political at all." "But Mom," I said, "they sent you to a communist camp." "No," she said, "they sent us to a *Jewish* camp." My aunt describes getting picked up after school to go leaflet garment workers. "We didn't think about it," she says. "We went to meet boys." In the early to mid-twentieth century, left organizing was the default position of a large part of the community, so much so that, to my family, it was largely invisible, a part of being Jewish, the natural background of their lives.

After 1945, the Jewish organizational matrix changed, moving rapidly towards increased centralization and the presentation of a unified voice. Several factors contributed to these institutional shifts. First, the Holocaust had a delayed but permanent effect on Canadian Jews from Eastern Europe. In Canada, in addition to watching helplessly as their relatives were killed in Europe, Jews saw Canada's borders close to Jewish refugees. In *None Is Too Many*, Irving Abella and Harold Troper (1983) write about Canada's exceptional indifference to the fate of Europe's Jews, explaining that between 1933 and 1945 Canada admitted only 5,000 Jewish refugees compared to 15,000 admitted to Australia, 50,000 to Argentina, 27,000 to Brazil and 125,000 to Palestine (p. xx).

At the same time, Jewish leaders remained reluctant to pressure the Canadian government to admit more refugees. Abella and Troper write:

> Their sense of being outsiders in the their own home... left them uneasy in dealings with government... Thus, the general timidity of Jewish leaders, even under pressure from their own rank-and-file, and their obsequiousness in the face of government authority led in the end only to friction within the Jewish community (p. 66).

As documented by Franklin Bialystock (2000), it took Canadian Jewish institutions some time to discuss the Holocaust, in part because of their preoccupation with the process of assimilation. At the same time, the Jewish institutional community had received a clear message from the Canadian mainstream. They could not afford to argue over politics, or ethnicity, or class or anything else. They needed to present Canadian society with one voice.

A number of other factors contributed to both some real contraction in the Canadian Jewish left and the—I would argue, significantly disproportionate—shift of Canadian Jewish institutions to the right. Some upward mobility in the Jewish community helped to erode many of the established Jewish labour organizations. The advent of the Cold War in Canada put pressure on left organizing across the country and on the new Jewish institutional matrix in particular, which was in the process of trying to prove that Jews were, in fact, 'Canadian' (Reiter, 2004). As the use of Yiddish diminished, "...Winchevsky and other Jewish Communist theoreticians were no longer easily accessible" (Tulchinsky, 2008, p. 265). In the mid-twentieth century, several events impacted the relationship between Canadian Jews and Soviet Communism. Joseph Stalin's non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany in 1939 was compounded by revelations about Stalin's

regime made in a speech by Nikita Krushchev during the 20th Congress of the Community Party

of the USSR in February, 1956 (Tulchinsky, 2002, p. 159). In August that same year, Canadian

members of the Communist Party travelled to the Soviet Union. British and French delegations

followed in subsequent years. After these visits:

> Disillusioned and embittered, Jewish Communists in Canada, the United States and
>
> Britain... deserted their parties in large numbers. (Goldhagen, 1960, p. 41)

Leader of the Canadian Communist Party J.B. Salsberg returned from the 1956 visit to the Soviet

Union only to resign from the Party soon after, along with a "large number of Jews and non-

Jews." (Goldhagen, 1960, p. 42)

As the institutional matrix shifted, it began to apply its own pressures on the left sentiment and

organizing that remained. The second half of the 20th century saw the reliance on large donors

for the support of communal life and advocacy followed by the increasing centralization of

Canadian Jewish organizations. Harold M. Waller (2001) writes that this centralization helped

somewhat to mitigate the control of large donors over community affairs, although, "…the

reality that a relatively small proportion of donors contribute the lion's share of the annual

budget does give those people greater access and influence in the decision-making process" (p.

160). Zionist organization in the US and around the world also had a profound effect on

Toronto's Jewish institutional matrix, as documented in detail by Dan Freeman-Maloy (2006),

who describes the general development of the Canadian Jewish institutions over the past 60 years

as, "...the weakening of working class organization within Canada's Jewish community, the

expanding power of the community's corporate establishment, and the deepening institutional

influence of both Zionism and US structures over mainstream Jewish organizations." It is worth noting that many developments described above parallel processes happening across Canadian society: the left's growing disenchantment with Soviet Communism; the stigma placed on Communist and left organizing during the Cold War; the 'weakening of working class organization'; the 'expanding power of corporate establishment.' While Toronto's Jewish community faced its own particular conditions, broader societal factors played a pivotal role in the changing institutional matrix.

At the same time as Canadian Jewish institutions began their shift to the right, the United People's Order (UJPO) was at the height of its strength. In the 1940s and 50s, UJPO boasted 2,500 members nation-wide, and was a member of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), an organization designed to democratically represent Jewish organizations across Canada (www.winchevskycentre.org). UJPO was admitted into the CJC in the 1940s, just as Cold War politics took hold in Canada, with implications for the general left and labour movement across the country. As mentioned above, this pressure was felt even more acutely by mainstream Jewish organizations, who feared that Jews were still viewed as strangers to Canadian society. As Ester Reiter and Roz Usiskin (2004) write in their article, 'Jewish Dissent in Canada, the United Jewish People's Order':

> ...in their insecurity as new Canadians, they were anxious to prove that Jews were good Canadians. Militant activity challenging the government was therefore unacceptable. Only polite representation by the few Jewish elected politicians was acceptable. Critics referred to this as the "sha shtil" (hush hush) policy of Congress. (n.p.)

Reiter and Usiskin (2004) go on to explain that, in 1951, UJPO—at the time the largest Jewish

fraternal organization in Canada—was expelled from the CJC. The minutes of the meeting where

that decision was made read, in part:

> "....views and actions of the left-wing oriented group (UJPO) stem out of an
>
> ideology rooted outside of Canadian Jewish life" and "no constructive purpose can be
>
> served by left-wing elements in their further association with Congress."

Although the CJC re-admitted UJPO in 1995 (while effectively expelling it again in 2011), this

fiction that the left is alien to the community continues to be perpetuated by mainstream leaders.

As just one example, almost 60 years after the above statement was made, the B'nai Brith called

Independent Jewish Voices—an organization made up of Jews—'an anti-Israel *and* anti-Jewish

organization.' [Italics mine.] (*Jewish Tribune*, 2009)

I choose to leave off this history with the expulsion of UJPO from the CJC in 1951, as my goal

was to offer a brief history of the growth of Toronto's Jewish community and of left organizing

to provide context for the body of the thesis project. It is worth noting, however, that, while

largely untouched in mainstream community histories, significant dissent related to Israel and

Palestine took place within the community long before the actions documented in this thesis,

which largely begin in 2003. David Howard Goldberg (1990) writes about some of the internal

dissent that took place over the last 30 years:

> To be sure, some individuals within the Jewish community, including notable rabbis and
>
> academics, have been critical of either the behavior of the government of Israel or the
>
> way in which the organized Jewish community operated in support of Israel. These

critical voices were most pronounced during Israel's 1982 misadventure in Lebanon... (p. 34-35)

Goldberg goes on to say that these voices, which included the Ad Hoc Committee of Concerned Jews, temporarily undermined the Canada Israel Committee's 'credibility in the eyes of Canadian foreign policy-makers' (p. 141). Golberg argues that the Palestinian uprising (what he calls 'the disturbances') in 1987-88 caused additional, and more generalized, disagreement within the community:

Controversies produced by the disturbances, including the active debate in Israel about the future of the occupied territories, affected the mainstream of Canadian Jewry. Articulate elements within the community were divided by the issues. (p. 35)

Taras and Weinstein (1990) document some of these same currents:

Beginning with the Israeli military action in Lebanon in the early 1980s, expressions of skepticism began increasingly to be heard within the community, though they were still generally voiced internally. (p. 676)

They go on to write that a survey of 'scholars, rabbis and young communal leaders' conducted in 1987, found that "56 per cent believed that Canadian Jews could express public disagreement with Israeli policies and actions" (p. 676). Taras and Weinstein also note the challenges of ascertaining the degree of dissent related to Israel and Palestine within the Canadian Jewish community given the relative monopoly mainstream organizations maintained on the narrative and the absence of 'reliable survey evidence' (p. 675). Dissent in Toronto's Jewish community

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related to Israel and Palestine from 1939 to the present is, arguably, an important area for further study.