A QUEER WAY OUT

THE POLITICS OF QUEER EMIGRATION FROM ISRAEL

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On the cover, *A Piece of Land* (2010), by Naomi Safran-Hon

For Julia

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Introduction

I n 2003, when I graduated from high school, I decided not to join the Israeli Army. In order to be exempt from service, I decided to feign clinical depression. This was an easier task than appealing to a conscientious-objection committee or pretending I was an Orthodox Jew, two other ways one can be exempt from service. A psychiatric exemption was the simplest and quickest method, one chosen by most Israeli youngsters who do not wish to do military service.

Upon my release from army service I joined a left-wing education NGO and spent three years working in the social margins of Israel. At the end of the first year, a good friend of mine, who also did not join the army, left to study in Boston. A year later, one of my best friends, Michal, moved to Paris. Michal was the first person I had "come out" to, and she was the one to introduce me to my first girlfriend and to the queer scene in Tel Aviv. In the years to follow, two other close friends left for New York. As the number of violent events was rising, the acceleration in the number of queer left-wing activists emigrating was undeniable. The implication of this movement abroad was starting to be felt in the (even then) very small community of Tel Aviv left-wing queers.

The political situation in the early 2000s was nowhere near a solution, and the area was again and again inflamed by violent events. From 2000 to the present, Israelis and Palestinians suffered from nonstop terror attacks in Israel, side-by-side with the ever-occurring sieges on Palestinian villages, check-points built in the West Bank, the building of the Separation Wall, the blockade of Gaza beginning in 2007, and so on. Five wars took place: Operation Defensive Shield in 2002, the Second Lebanon War in 2006, Operation Cast Lead in 2008–2009, Operation Pillar of Defence in 2012, and Operation Tzuk Eitan in 2014. It is not surprising then that in those years emigration became a constant theme, and leaving

became a visible and significant discourse. The people departing were declaring that they would not return until the situation improved. People were either applying to study abroad or finding other ways to settle down somewhere in Europe or North America. When I left for the UK in the summer of 2012, after several disappointing years of working in the field of human rights in Israel/Palestine, it was more than obvious to me that the emigration of queers was no longer confined to sporadic cases, but an actual phenomenon: a queer Israeli departure.

This observation was reinforced by the establishment of a few cyber forums. The most obvious one was the Facebook group the New Hebrew Diaspora (NHD), which was opened in August 2011. This group, established by two queer individuals, one living in Berlin and one in Paris, was formulated as a queer left-wing space for Israeli emigrants in various locations. In addition, the blog *The Land of the Amorites* (*Eretz Ha-emori*) was founded in February 2010 by two queer individuals, one based in Israel, and one based in New York. The blog, whose establishers later joined the NHD Facebook group, invited its readers to write about the departure from Israel, as one of many themes. The third one was a group of Israeli migrants in the United States who established on November 2012 the Israeli Opposition Network (ION), aiming to impact the situation in Israel/Palestine from the diaspora. These forums became an integral part of the phenomenon of emigration itself. Michal, who was at the time celebrating six years in Paris, sent me an invitation to join the Facebook group of the NHD, a group I had no idea even existed. I was invited once I had my mind set on leaving, and even before my plan was executed. When I joined the group, I realized that many of the left-wing queers of Tel Aviv were already there, in the cyberspace, but also in the diasporic space, outside of Israel.

My departure process is entangled with queer Israeli emigration in various complicated ways. Queer Israeli emigrants were a community that was alive and active before I left, and in a way, the existence of this community enabled my own departure, my own path into becoming a member of it. I was looking for a way to leave Israel, and the easiest option was to receive a student visa somewhere. I wrote a research proposal for the dissertation this book is based upon; its topic was queer Israeli emigration. I knew that if my proposal was to be accepted, I would officially become a member of what I was to explore. In a way, in order to depart, I had to make the most of queer Israeli emigration. I had to justify the need to investigate this community, gathering only a few hundred individuals. However, after starting the research process, it was clear to me

that even though the number of queer Israeli emigrants is rather small, this phenomenon certainly deserves an academic investigation. This book will explain why, despite being a marginal phenomenon, so marginal that it can be considered almost politically irrelevant, queer Israeli emigration deserves to be explored especially in regard to questions of political success and failure.

Whether or not I will be able to demonstrate the "success" of the political project of queer Israeli emigrants, this book is the result of *my* successful process of departing. It was formulated as an idea in Tel Aviv, it became a reality in London, and it was sealed in Berlin. My departure process, as for many of the individuals interviewed for this research, included not just one departure, but an ongoing movement, the search for a final destination, a place to inhabit, a place to belong.

The foremost objective of this project is to analyze the social structures that constitute the lives of queer Israelis, before, during, and after the process of departure. At the juncture of sexuality, politics, and national belonging, this book investigates the connections between the Israeli collective and its outcasts and between social exclusion and departure. In formulating a framework through which emigration is considered a political activity, it suggests that the move from the political periphery of the state of Israel to a territorial periphery—the Israeli diaspora—is an alternative way of dealing with the present situation in Israel/Palestine, an alternative path which may constitute a different political horizon for the region.

My argument here is that queer Israeli emigrants, in their decision to depart, undermine Zionist ideology, as well as change the obvious paths of resistance to Zionism. In stepping out of the territory of Israel, they avoid the Zionist demand to perform as strong, masculine sabras (term used for Jews born in the territory of Israel). Likewise, the left-wing resistance to the regime demands similar strength—to take part in violent demonstrations and risk imprisonment or getting physically hurt. The subversive significance of departure is that it symbolises a refusal to answer Zionism in the currency of heroism and active resistance. I demonstrate here that the decision to emigrate stems from recognizing the vulnerability of the emigrants, who no longer could take the hardship of the life offered to them in Israel. The very act of announcing their vulnerability weakens the system, which demands strength of the citizens of Israel, whether obedience to the regime, or not. The potential they offer, found in passivity and unheroic conduct, is what might undermine the Zionist project. By announcing their weakness and vulnerability, by

choosing not to be heroes—*not to be there*—they are in fact resisting the Zionist project in its essence.

Research Participants

My research project is based on interviews with Israeli queers who have left Israel since 2000 and are determined not to return to Israel. I investigated this decision to depart from the territory of Israel, rather than a specific movement toward a specific destination. My intention was to explore how queer Israeli emigrants negotiate their national identity and sexual identity in this process of departing from their homeland. This research was limited to three cities: London, New York, and Berlin. I identified these three cities based on the visibility of these locations on the Facebook group of the NHD. There are, of course, more individuals who could have been relevant to my research in many other cities in the world.

Over the course of three years of research I interviewed 42 queer Israeli emigrants. Among the 42 interviewees, 19 identified as women; 22 identified as men; and 1 identified as a transitioning female to male (FTM), had undergone a mastectomy, and received several testosterone shots. The average age of the participants was 34. The youngest participant was 22 at the time of the interview, and the oldest was 48. Twelve participants were interviewed in New York (29%); 12 participants were interviewed in London (29%); and 18 participants were interviewed in Berlin (42%).

Most of the participants were of Ashkenazi descent. I did not ask to meet strictly with Mizrahi or Ashkenazi emigrants, nor was the aim to have 50% Mizrahi participants. Rather, I searched for queer individuals who stated they had no intention to return to Israel. Unfortunately, my research is no different in this aspect than many other research projects on Israeli emigrants. Ethnic origin in this literature and in this study as well was not designated as a prominent identity factor. As a Mizrahi lesbian myself, I am aware that this might pose a drawback in the research, but I do believe that ethnic origin is not the main factor in creating the opportunity for emigration nor in motivating queer individuals to emigrate.

Most of the participants of this study had lived in Tel Aviv some time before emigration, as many of the Israeli queers. Most of them belonged to the middle to upper class. It should be stated here at the beginning that the participants of this study can be categorized as privileged migrants. They are all full citizens of Israel; thus, they possess a passport and the right

to travel freely (in contrast to Palestinians in the occupied territories, and to Palestinian citizens of Israel, who also differ from the Jewish citizens in the matter of citizenship rights). All of them gained the social capital that allows them easy access to emigration, such as knowledge of English, education, and previous travel abroad. All of them had the economic capabilities to pay for legal travel and for accommodations in their first days after emigration. There are major differences between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Israelis, however, in relation to the participants of this study. It is not their ethnic background that puts them in a privileged position relative to other Jewish Israelis, but more their social capital. Almost all of the participants had a high school diploma and some kind of higher education. These elements are important when attempting to emigrate. Mizrahi Jews who had the opportunity to attend good educational institutions are to be assumed to have had the same opportunities as Ashkenazi Jews in receiving a work or study visa in other countries. It is clear that there is a correspondence between ethnic descent, class, and place of residence in Israel. Nonetheless, regarding emigration, class becomes a more significant element than ethnic descent, as Mizrahi Jews who had the financial opportunity to live in the center of Israel could offer their children access to better education and other forms of social capital. Though Mizrahi Jews suffer discrimination in Israel, based on name, skin color, city of origin, and so on, the individuals interviewed for this study came from central cities and had educated parents and economic capabilities. While it is common to believe that many of the Israeli emigrants to the United States were in fact Mizrahis who left Israel due to this ethnic discrimination, I could not find even a single academic reference to support this assumption. I am but one example of this, as my mother immigrated to Israel from Iran, and my father's family came from Syria. Though both of my parents grew up in the periphery of Israeli society, my siblings and I were born many years after my parents left the Mizrahi neighborhoods where they were raised, and we had the opportunity to be educated in a central city in Israel, where we went to top-level high schools, and we all attended universities.

The only real privileged position Ashkenazi Jews might have when it comes to emigration is the possession of a foreign passport, which can pave a quicker way to emigration, and prevent the need for getting an entry permit or a visa. However, only 12 out of the 42 participants (28%) had a foreign passport (American or European) prior to emigration, and one of those 12 was of Mizrahi descent (originally from Libya, her family emigrated to Italy). Thus, the remaining 72% had to acquire an entry visa

or resident permit or find a way to stay in their preferred destination, and their ethnic origin had no impact on the opportunity to do so.

Seventeen (40%) of the participants were students at the time of the interview. Almost all of them received student visas, which enabled a temporary stay in the United States, the United Kingdom, or in Germany. Nine of them received residence permits (and later, citizenship) upon marriage to local citizens. Only three of these marriage contracts were between partners involved in a romantic relationship. Two of these relationships ended before the Israeli was entitled to citizenship, but in both cases, they let the authorities believe that they were still together. After gaining citizenship, they had a formal divorce. One of them remarried and enabled his new partner to receive a resident permit.

Many participants were contacted through Facebook, due to their visibility in the online forums mentioned above. I was introduced to many participants through friends of mine, and I asked these participants to introduce me to their friends, to explore a more diverse group of people. I specifically avoided interviewing my close friends, so personal issues would not interfere in my analysis. Most of the people I contacted agreed to be interviewed and were keen on reading the result of the study. I was especially interested in reaching out to people who did not identify as political, individuals who had not taken part in political left-wing activism in Israel, or those who did not identify necessarily as queers. This was important to see if the experience of departure varied in relation to political identification. Only one woman, whom I met through mutual friends, refused to be interviewed. She explained her reluctance to take part in the study by saying she did not want to share her personal emigration story, which was connected to her recent breakup from a partner, who was a friend of mine. This was the only case where my personal connections with potential participants arose as an issue. At least three of the interviewees were people I met through my own emigration process and at social events when I was living in London.

In this book, the artist Tamar Glazerman is mentioned by her real name, as are the establishers of the blog *The Land of the Amorites*, Ofri Ilani and Gal Katz. I also refer to participants who wrote texts on this blog by their real names, as presented on the website. The writer Mati Shemoelof and the activist Tal Hever-Chybowski agreed for me to use their real names. All other participants of this study, including participants of the NHD Facebook group, received pseudonyms.

Methodology

In this project, I used two different methods for collecting data. The first and the main one is in-depth interviews which allowed me as a researcher access to the cultural context of the participants' behavior, and thereby, understand the meaning of that behaviour. The open part of the interview allowed participants to present their narrative freely. The structured part of the interview included a set of open-ended questions that created a systemized knowledge base concerning the main themes of the research. The purpose of my research was to hear a story that was never told in its various aspects: living the life of a queer Israeli emigrant. Thus, investigation of this kind of experience stands as a framework for making a phenomenon visible. Interviews enable a better understanding of the reasons and factors behind the practices of migration, community building, identification, and belonging, as the participants understand them.

I chose the in-depth interview method to gain further understanding of the "historical and cultural experiences that shape personal and interpersonal relationships" (Naples, 2003:42). This method is valuable for exploring the development of and shifts in political consciousness and diverse political practices over time without artificially foregrounding any one dimension or influence (ibid.). In-depth interviews generate a focused history of key events in each individual's life through a reconstruction of early childhood experiences, community involvement, political activities, and family and other significant relationships. In Chandra Mohanty's words, this approach offers a "context in which to examine the development of political consciousness" (1991:33), as well as an opportunity to explore conflicts and tensions in self-definitions.

Apart from the interviews I conducted participant observation in three online forums. Qualitative approaches to computer-meditated communities (CMC) have focused on the linguistics and the sources that participants create and use. Drawing on perspectives from discourse analysis, I studied the practices through which meanings are made in context, through the interaction of participants in online settings (Baym, 1995a; McLaughlin Osborne, & Smith, 1995). A discursive and practice-oriented approach to online community offers the possibility of seeing how an online phenomenon functions in a social sense. I looked at linguistic devices such as in-jokes and local codes and abbreviations as contributing to the formation of a queer Israeli migrants community with

shared practices, shared knowledge, shared language, and collective goods (Baym, 1995b; Fernback, 1997; Kollock, 1999).

Furthermore, I took part in many events in which queer Israeli migrants were participants, such as weddings, birthday celebrations, demonstrations, literary events, cultural events, and Jewish festivals. I also examined texts and writings by the respondents or queer activists, such as political pamphlets, poems, and Facebook statuses. These enriched my understanding of the investigated questions and contributed to the analysis of the interviews. As Purvis (1994) points out, cultural artefacts allow one as a researcher to immerse oneself in the sources, get a "feel" for the time and place, and then engage in a better descriptive analysis. For Reinhartz (1992), "cultural artefacts" can be anything that individuals produce, such as notes, documents, "high" culture, popular culture, and organizational life.

This study does not purport to give a complete picture, nor is it pretending to present all Israeli queer migrants' experiences in all times and spaces. As in an ethnographic project, the views and ideas are always partial and highly specific. Based on the fieldwork and interviews, this work addresses the life narratives of Israeli queer migrants who create a sense of self, belonging, and citizenship amid the exigencies of migration in the face of the ongoing violent conflict in their homeland.

Outline

This book should be read like a journey, and the arrangement of material in the chapters is intended to take the reader through the various stages of this journey. Thus, the early chapters (1, 2, 3) describe the place of origin (Israel), the discontent and frustration with life there that generate a desire to leave. The middle chapter (4) describes the process of leaving: the practices—pragmatic and symbolic—that constitute preparation for and the very act of leaving. The final chapters (5, 6, 7) describe the aftermath and the effects of leaving. In each chapter, I describe the corresponding life stages of the subjects of this research.

This book begins in the territory of Israel, by setting out the historical ground for the topic. First, it focuses on the unique discourse Zionism has developed to deal with immigration and emigration of Jews: *aliyah* (going up), the Zionist term for inbound migration and *yerida* (going down), the term for outbound migration. Chapter 1 shows the connection between this discourse and the national narrative of the Jewish state. The

first section of this chapter offers a chronological analysis of how this discourse is manifested in literary texts and popular media, reflecting widespread assumptions regarding emigration. It focuses mainly on the discourse constructing the image of the emigrants, as well as constructing emigration as a national problem. This description is followed by an investigation of how this discourse is expressed in academia. The examination centers on the way academics choose to frame their subjects of study. I claim here that Israeli academics work within a set of Zionist assumptions, similar to state policy, Israeli media, and public figures. This chapter introduces the institutional acts and academic and popular texts that manufacture a public discourse of emigration within Israeli society. This cultural background and battleground are important and provide the point of departure for this research.

Following the articulation of the *aliyah/yerida* discourse, chapter 2 investigates the collective assumptions regarding why Israelis emigrate, as well as how these assumptions are maintained. It does so by articulating the way in which Israeli popular texts have portrayed the image of the Israeli emigrant. After examining how the image of the emigrant appears both in cultural texts, academic texts, and general public discourse, the second part of this chapter then presents the narratives of five queer Israeli emigrants. This chapter shows how the nation-state depends upon normality and conventional modes of being and alienates its queer subjects in the process. The data presented here shows that the motivation behind the emigration of queer subjects is often very different than that of other migrants, and their relation to Israel from their diasporic locations is often critical rather than nostalgic. Exploring these narratives, I aim at undermining the standard emigration story, showing how a queer approach to emigration can destabilize collective conceptions regarding motivations for departure. The first and second chapters, therefore, provide the context and basis for the following chapters, in which the empirical data collected is introduced to support and develop the argument of this book.

Chapter 3 focuses on questions of belonging and exclusion in contemporary Israel. The respondents of this study are positioned as an "other from within," not because of their sexuality, but precisely because of the queer ways in which they position themselves in relation to the nation. The narratives in this chapter introduce queer left-wing activities in Israel/Palestine and describe a small fraction of Israeli society that suffers from the results of being in constant resistance to the Israeli social order. Their failed attempt to create a change within a system in which

they are perceived as traitors, in a continuous struggle with no solution on the horizon, has been transformed, I argue, into a politics of departure.

Chapter 4 shifts our journey from the territory of Israel to the symbolic cyber space and the formulation of a community of the departed. This chapter investigates how these individuals interact with one another before emigration and once they have already left Israel and describes the formation of a diasporic community of queer Israelis. The chapter focuses on the NHD. It describes the process of founding a specific online community that gathers Israeli emigrants who deviate from the Israeli collective by means of sexuality, gender identity, and political affiliation. This Facebook group has become a platform on which these individuals share their thoughts and ideas regarding the departure from the territory of Israel. At the same time, the members are creating their own discourse and norms, using the Hebrew language to subvert Zionism, Israeli national identity, and heteronormativity in the Israeli context. This chapter presents the very first conceptualization of queer Israeli emigration as a social phenomenon (2011–2013). The NHD Facebook group was the first place where the notion of emigration as a political activity was introduced.

The following three chapters describe the effect of departure and are told from the territory of the diaspora. Chapter 5 examines the temporal character of the Zionist regime in Israel. Here the book conceptualizes emigration from Israel as an act that has the potential to break the national timeline. Using queer theory and the notion of temporality enables discussing in a similar way other topics, apart from emigration, as acts that can symbolize a subversion of the heteronormative Israeli timeline, such as negation of army service, relationships and marriage, reproduction, settling down, and more. Using a body of work in queer theory on temporality and spatiality, this chapter proposes that queer Israeli emigrants both participate in the straight time of reproduction and depart from the life schedules that are rendered coherent and inevitable within heteronationalist frameworks. This chapter ends with the notion of reproduction and the structure of relations between the future of the Zionist project and the future citizens of the state. In light of Zionist policy, which encourages reproduction, as well as encourages bringing Israeli emigrants back to the state, the chapter investigates the ways emigration enables dismantling the direct connection between the citizens and the future of the homeland. It considers, particularly in relation to a politics of reproduction, how queer Israeli emigrants situate themselves in relation to social normativity, family, and futurity.

Introducing the concept of passivity and vulnerability as radical political positions, chapter 6 suggests viewing emigration as a political activity similar to avoiding mandatory army service. Noting that Zionism demands a particularly masculinist and heroic model of citizenship (not limited to, but mainly due to the mandatory army service), I identify a passive mode of activism that is neither nihilistic nor compliant but that finds in the acts of avoidance and withdrawal a different idiom for protest. This chapter provides a wide range of perspectives on the act of withdrawal and compares oppositional editorial pieces in *Haaretz,* signaling distress and disappointment over what Israel has become, to anti-Zionist movements calling for Israelis to leave the country. It also analyzes a blog dedicated to debating whether it is ethically right to leave Israel, as opposed to staying to sustain a critique of the Israeli government. In a close reading of an article by Ilana Hamerman, I not only provide undiluted Zionist critiques of emigration but also consider left-wing critiques.

The argument standing at the heart of this chapter, and more generally at the heart of the book, is that the decision to emigrate stems from the vulnerability of queer Israelis. The very act of announcing their vulnerability undermines the entire system: they avoid the Zionist demand to perform as strong, masculine sabras. Likewise, the left-wing resistance to the Israeli regime demands similar strength—taking part in violent demonstrations. In a reality that values courage, heroism, total obedience, and masculinity on both sides of the political spectrum, acts of weakness, desertion, evasion, and vulnerability will be read here as politically significant. Queer forms of departure, this chapter argues, symbolize a refusal to answer Zionism in the currency of heroism and active resistance.

Chapter 7 seeks to explore Jewish and Jewish-Israeli critiques of statehood-Zionism and argues that queer Israeli emigrants transform different critiques of statehood-Zionism into contemporary political activity. Building on the theme of political passivity introduced in the previous chapter, this final section of the book follows different Jewish writers who addressed Jewish ethics and the concept of exile in Jewish tradition throughout history. It offers a historical account of Jewish criticism of statehood-Zionism, in the prestate stages and in the early years of the Jewish state. It visits the works of Simon Rawidowitcz, Mordecai Kaplan, Hans Kohn, Martin Buber, Simon Dubnow, Gershom Scholem, and Hannah Arendt to explore the ways in which these thinkers perceived Zionism in general, and the place of Zion specifically, in their writing.

The second part of this chapter explores two contemporary critiques of political Zionism. It investigates the work of Judith Butler and Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, both of whom ground their critiques in the texts of Jewish writers, such as Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin. This section offers a different political solution to the contemporary Zionist regime, based on Jewish ethics and the revisiting of the concept of exile in Jewish thought and history. The third section of this chapter explores contemporary activities of queer Israeli emigrants in light of Jewish writing. The chapter argues that queer Israeli emigrants have formed a community that poses a critique of Zionism by reviving Hebrew culture in the diaspora. Looking at different activists working on the revival of Hebrew in Europe, and especially in Berlin, this chapter examines these activities as continuing the act of emigration and as offering another alternative to the anti-Zionist movement from the diaspora. The argument here suggests that the revival of diasporic Hebrew manifest itself as a radical act of deterritorializing Hebrew, thus disconnecting it from the Zionist territory and ideology.

1

Israel, Zionism, and Emigration Anxiety

Every Intelligent Israeli understands that the Yerida of Jews from the land of Israel is a national disaster. Almost Holocaust without murder.

—Margalit, 2012

In 2012 poet Irit Katz was interviewed in *Haaretz* upon publication of her first book, *Hibernation*, which was written in the United Kingdom. She had left Israel five years earlier. In the interview, the journalist asks Katz how she explains the large number of Israeli emigrants. Katz replies: "I guess they can. It is easier; the discourse of *Yordim* is no longer there, not as it used to be" (Sela, 2012:14). The journalist then asks Katz if the fact that so many young people are leaving Israel mean Zionism has failed? Katz gives a very interesting answer: "Maybe it's the success of Zionism. Maybe we became *normal* and it is *allowed* to emigrate" (ibid.).

In what follows, I wish to explain the cultural context in which this interview takes place. This chapter explores the relationship between Zionism and immigration, as well as the meaning of emigration in the Jewish-Israeli world. Investigating notions of migration under a discourse of failure and success would enable a better understanding of the critique Katz attributes to Zionism. It is not just a simple choice of words, and the question of *normality* within this context is meaningful.

Zionism expressed a dialectical tension between the desire to be *normal* in the face of anti-Semitism and the desire to retain difference in the face of assimilation (Boyarin, 1997). The question of *normality* in the Zionist context is not just about the notions of immigration and emigration, *aliyah* and *yerida*. Normality stands at the base of political Zionist thought, as the goal of Zionism was to normalize the Jews, to become normal, a nation like all other nations (Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993:23).

Here, I wish to focus on the *abnormality* of the Israeli discourse regarding emigration. What are the social implications of emigration, and how do the Israeli society and state perceive it? Most importantly: What are the institutional acts and popular texts that manufacture a public discourse of emigration within Israeli society, and how, if at all, has this discourse changed over the years of Israel's existence? In this chapter, I attempt to articulate the gaps and tensions structuring a discourse of anxiety regarding migration.

The first section of this chapter focuses on the unique discourse Zionism has developed to deal with immigration and emigration of Jews (*aliyah* and *yerida*) and shows the connection between this discourse and the national narrative of Israel. The second section of the chapter offers a chronological analysis of how this discourse is manifested in literary texts and popular media, reflecting widespread assumptions regarding emigration. I focus mainly on the discourse constructing the image of the emigrants, as well as constructing emigration as a national problem. This description is followed in the third section by an investigation of how this discourse is expressed in academia. The examination centers on the way academics choose to frame their subjects of study. I claim here that Israeli academics work within a set of Zionist assumptions similar to state policy, Israeli media, and public figures. This chapter introduces the institutional acts and academic and popular texts that manufacture a public discourse of emigration within Israeli society.

Zionism, Migration, and State Policy

Zionism

From Theodor Herzl's El-Arish plan, to Joseph Chamberlain's Uganda plan, and later the British concept of a national "home" for the Jewish people in Palestine, the state of Israel was finally established in 1948 (Heymann, 1977; Vital, 1982). With the assistance of the British Empire, and after almost two years of violent battles between the Jewish inhabitants and the indigenous population, the Palestinians, the borders of the new state were marked for at least 20 years, grasping much more than the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, and much less than the biblical promised Jewish land (Galnoor, 1995).

Apart from striving for the establishment of Jewish political autonomy in the biblical land of Israel, Zionist ideology also constructed and

desired a new type of Jew, a character imagined contradicting the image of the diasporic Jew. Statehood Zionism was accompanied by the transformation of the image of the effeminate (and to some extent, queer) Jew, into a powerful, dominant, masculine (and of course sexually normative) Jew (Boyarin, 1997; Glozman, 2007; Mosse, 1993; Kadish, 2001). As Boyarin has concisely put it, Zionism can be constructed as a male "return to Phallustine, not Palestine" (Boyarin, 1997:22). The Zionists were aiming to normalize not just the image of the Jew, but also the image of the nation. Normality stands at the basis of political Zionist thought, as the goal of Zionism was to become normal, "a nation like all other nations" (Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993:23).

The Zionist settlement in Palestine was set to present the Jewish nation as the emblem of democratic modernity, as well as to create a sense of a strong national collectivity. A socialist rhetoric was deployed in the service of a nationalistic collectivism, for which the kibbutzim were the propagandistic image: the state's essential means of social organization, promoting ideals of self-sacrifice, voluntarism, camaraderie, and patriotism (Strenhell, 1998). Ze'ev Strenhell rightly argues that this image was misleading, as the kibbutzim gathered only 6% of the population and that the members of the founding Labor Party were bourgeois autocrats not committed to socialist values.

Also used as a propaganda tool was the myth of gender equality, featuring women soldiers. The pictures of girls with guns consumed abroad served two nationalistic purposes. They suggested that Israel was under such severe existential threat that it must train women as combat fighters. In addition, they advertised a view of Israel as an enlightened democracy, as opposed to the surrounding Arab countries, where women were veiled and suppressed (Sharoni, 1995).

Zionism's major tenet in Palestine was the settlement of a magnitude of Jews, and this was addressed both in the declaration of Independence and by various Israeli officials. In the early days of Israel, the government promulgated the Law of Return, securing the right of each Jew to immigrate to Israel and to receive full citizenship (Carmi, 2003). In addition to immigration, Zionist ideology has always been invested in Jewish demography. Orna Donat identifies Israel as a Western country with a pronatalist ideology: a complex of beliefs, attitudes, and practices that encourages reproduction. According to Sigal Goldin (2008), traditional family notions and the expectancy of parenthood in Jewish-Israeli society stem from three collectivist narratives that exist simultaneously: the national-religious-demographic narrative that centers on the right to

Jewish existence in the context of the Palestinian-Jewish conflict; a discourse of rights and emotions that creates a hegemonic narrative in which children are a source of personal happiness; and a biological narrative that assumes an inherent need to start a family. The Jewish family has been "among the material and ideological cornerstones of the Zionist nation-building project" (Bat Ami, 1992:235). In general, women's citizenship and their civic functions are strongly tied to motherhood (Berkovich, 1999). The Israeli government is greatly invested in fertility: it offers the highest support and subsidy rates for citizens' fertility treatments in the Western world, and citizens even see it as the state's responsibility to assist them in this area (Goldin, 2008; Solomon, 1993). In the mid-1990s, Israel had the highest rate of fertility clinics per capita in the world. In 2004 it was also the only state that offered subsidized fertility services to all female citizens who wanted biological offspring, even those who were unmarried or were not heterosexual (Hashiloni-Dolev, 2004). Israel's "birth rate is by far the highest in a comparison of twenty-one post industrial countries," Fogiel-Bizaoui argues (2010:44–45). The connection between the military service and women's national service cannot be better articulated than in David Ben-Gurion's words from the early days of the state: "Any Jewish woman, so far as it depends on her, who does not bring into the world at least four healthy children is like a soldier who evades military service" (Solomon, 2003:161). His words reflect the militarism that can be identified as a main characteristic of Israeli society. This militarism is based on the construction of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a routine reality. A state of emergency, which was declared in 1948, was never canceled and still allows the government and army to act upon security reasons, promoting national needs while neglecting human rights (Kimerling, 1993:137). Most of the state's Jewish population performs obligatory army service (two years for women, three for men), and major parts of the experience of being an Israeli are formulated during active army service, and later on as part of the reserve forces (which men are obligated to do a few weeks a year until they are 40).

The centrality of army service and high birth rate still characterize contemporary Israel. However, other aspects of Israeli collectivism have been fractured, and questions regarding Israeli ethos and institutions are starting to appear. Yaron Ezrahi claims that Israel's national consensus is moving away from the "elevating spiritual and moral significance of the collective narrative" (1997:83). Religious, nationalist, and socialist Zionism is now infected with rifts between religious and secular communities, Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, rich and poor, men and women, Jews and

Arabs. Ezrahi tracks the fracture of the national collective to the year 1982. According to him, the First Lebanon War was the first Israeli war to lack widespread public support. It was the first time Jewish citizens did not accept the loss of life of their children (Israeli soldiers) as they did not perceive this to be a defensive war (Ezrahi, 1997). He also argues that the first *intifada* and the opening of classified documents have produced a new historiography demystifying the heroic myth of Israeli military leaders. "Jewish Israelis are increasingly regarding themselves not primarily as actors in the Zionist drama of Return but as distinct citizens deserving of privacy and liberal rights" (Solomon, 2003:155).

Uri Ram suggests that the 1970s were the decisive years when social and political undercurrents transformed Israeli society, which "resembled more of a boiling pot than an melting pot" (1995:9). Ram refers to the dissolving of the Labor Party's hegemony and the rise of widespread skepticism toward conventions and "sacred cows" (ibid.). He claims that 1973 and the Yom Kippur War led to the rise of different political powers, such as militant religious nationalism and the Mizrahi uprising (ibid.:11–12). In his later book, *The Globalization of Israel—McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem* (Ram, 2008), he describes the impact of globalization on the development of two opposite camps in contemporary Israel, symbolized by Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. While Tel-Aviv, termed "McWorld," is identified with capitalism, postmodernity, high-tech industry, and an atmosphere of no solidarity, Jerusalem, or what he termed "Jihad" is identified with "tribalism, Neofundamentalism and sacred sites of veneration" (Ram, 2008: vi–viii). Ram continues to argue that globalization bifurcates the "Jewish and democratic" union of the state of Israel and splits the "Jewish" and the "democratic" dimensions into a Jewish-Jihad trend, which he terms "Neo-Zionism," and an Israeli-McWorld trend which he terms "Post-Zionism" (ibid.:7).

The transformation of the Israeli society follows these two extreme oppositions. Neo-Zionism is to be found in the continuing settler colonialism in the West Bank, apartheid mechanisms, Jewish terrorism, and the emergence of the radical right wing as a significant political power. The McWorld model, on the other hand signifies the transformation from nation–building and collective responsibility to a theology of consumerist individualism, and a general decline from a collective ethos of solidarity to an "every-man-for-himself" notion of society. This terminology can explain a wider acceptance on the part of civil society (in the McWorld/ Tel-Aviv model) of young Israelis who end up not serving in the army. These changes are also apparent in the official attitude of the state, which

now recognizes the need/possibility for national civil service for both boys and girls, thus fracturing the myth of the People's Army. The change in the collective understanding regarding civil responsibility is also manifested in a change regarding the attitude toward emigration.

Aliyah

Aliyah is a Jewish term appropriated by Zionism for inbound migration. People migrating to Israel are called *olim* (ascenders), akin to pilgrims. The term *aliyah* symbolizes the progress toward Jerusalem, which, relative to the rest of Israel, is at a higher altitude. Reaching Jerusalem, the holy city, signifies closeness to God. Hence, *aliyah* is conceptualized as "going up" both geographically and metaphysically.

When Zionist immigration to Ottoman Palestine began in 1882, there were in the area barely 25,000 Jews (Aliav, 1978). In 1947 the Jews were already 33% of the population of Palestine with approximately 650,000 people (Cohen, 2003:36). In the first decade of the new state, 900,000 Jews immigrated to Israel; most of them were either Holocaust survivors or Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries. By 1964 this number rose to 1,213,555 (Samooha, 2008:2). In total, by the year 2000, Israel had absorbed 2.8 million immigrants, including the mass immigration wave in the early 1990s from the former Soviet Union (Cohen, 36). A variety of literature regarding inbound migration to Israel was written over the years, considering the effect of being a migration state on the economics, culture, and politics of Israel (Bachi, 1977; Ben-Rafael et al., 2009; Schmelz et al., 1991).

Upon the establishment of Israel, *kibbutz ha'galuyot* (the gathering of the exiles) became the institutionalized raison d'être of the country to establish a Jewish majority in Palestine. The new state had to legislate, construct, and improve its practices in encouraging Jewish immigration to Palestine. This was manifested in the Declaration of Independence (1948), the Law of Return (1950), Nationality Law (1952), and the Entry into Israel Law (1954), which secured the right of every Jew (every person with Jewish ancestry or any person who converted to Judaism) to immigrate to Israel and receive full citizenship (Carmi, 2003). The state of Israel also created the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption (*hamisrad leklitat Aliyah*), a governmental office to deal with immigrants, which still exists today.

Before the establishment of the state, the Jewish Agency was one of the main factors facilitating Jewish immigration to Palestine. Established in 1929, the Jewish Agency's website declares it to have brought

more than 3 million Jews to Palestine/Israel from 1929 until today.[1] The Agency's role in encouraging *aliyah* remains crucial even in today's Israel. It plays a fundamental role in Israel's unusual constitutional makeup, as a nongovernmental agency that sustains and promotes the Jewish character of the state (Yiftachel, 1999).

The Jewish Agency encourages *aliyah* through various education programs in Israel. The most famous of them is Birthright (established in 1998), which allows youngsters to experience "Israel's ancient history, its modern development, its people and places" (Saxe et al., 2008:3). From 1998 to 2000 Birthright had approximately 6,000 participants and is estimated to have brought 150,000 young Jews to this pilgrimage by the 2007.[2] In terms of world Jewry, it is considered the "largest educational experiment ever attempted" (Aliyah ambassadors, 2010). Birthright trips offer a free tour in Israel, where the youngsters are presented with only a partial view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are met with Israeli soldiers encouraging them to join the Israeli army as volunteers, and are later pursued to immigrate to Israel (do *aliyah*) and receive the full benefits *olim* are entitled to, benefits that (ironically) Israeli-born Jews are not entitled to (see figures 1.1–1.5).

Figure 1.1. Birthright offers Jews all over the world free tours in Israel. Birthright Israel. Retrieved from http://www.algemeiner.com/2013/08/29/looking-back-on-13-years-of-birthright-israel/.

Figure 1.2. Birthright trips land at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport. Retrieved from https://www.ujs.org.uk/current/events/ujstrips/birthright/.

Figure 1.3. Jewish Americans encouraged to serve in the Israeli Army. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUEtrXo

Figure 1.4. Benefits and financial support offered to Returning Citizens and American Jews. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUEtrXoFXAE.

Figure 1.5. "Come Study with Us": Israel to convince American Jews to Study in Israeli Universities, and receive financial support. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w33hut3PY-w.

It's important to mention programs like Birthright due to their potential involvement in the institutionalization of *aliyah*. The chairman of the Jewish Agency, Natan Sharansky, discussed the connection between strengthening Jewish identity in the diaspora and *aliyah* in a Knesset committee for *aliyah* and absorption: "If there are no Jews, and they are not proud of their Jewish identity—we won't have *Aliyah*" (ibid.). In the same Knesset discussion, Alan Hoffmann, the CEO of the Jewish Agency, said that programs like Birthright are securing the future of the Jewish people. He declared that the Jewish Agency is "obligated to increase the numbers of Jewish youngsters in those programs and to increase the number of *Olim* among them" (ibid.).

In contradiction to these declarations, sociologist Shaul Kelner describes Birthright as a "diaspora-building enterprise" whose raison d'être is to ensure the continued existence of vibrant, Israel-oriented Jewish communities abroad (Kelner, 2012). However, even alumni of the program share the widespread misconception "that Birthright's main purpose is to encourage participants to do *Aliyah*" (Getz, 2011).

Yerida

Outbound migration also has a specific term in Zionist discourse. Emigration is called *yerida*, and the emigrants are called *yordim*. Just like *aliyah*, the concept of emigration is not neutral: its connotations are negative. Literature regarding emigration from Israel is easy to find. Much of it is quantitative research (Lev-Ari, 2008; Alroey, 2003; Cohen, 2003, 2011), and a minority of the literature is more ethnographic and qualitative (Mayers, 2001; Sabar, 2000; Shokeid, 1988; Urieli, 1994; Sobel, 1986). Massive numbers of emigrants are considered to be more of a contemporary phenomenon (since the 1970s onward), but Jews were emigrating out of Zion even at the pioneer stage of the Jewish state. Gur Alroey argues that emigration from Palestine during the first years of the twentieth century (1900–1914) reached as much as 80 percent of the immigration levels (2003:114). He also shows documentation of early Zionist leaders of the Yishuv (the Zionist settlement in Palestine) who were trying to minimize the immigration of Jews lacking capital and advising people attempting to immigrate not to do so (ibid.:113).

During World War I the Jewish population in Palestine declined from about 80,000 to 56,000 (Bachi, 1977).[3] Emigration declined from the establishment of the state in 1948 until the 1960s. Moshe Shokeid suggests

that Israelis emigrated more freely and in larger numbers following the 1967 Six-Day War because "the victory of 1967, which eased the sense of danger to Israel's survival, might also have freed inner forces and social pressures of obligation and solidarity which had hitherto inhibited individuals from emigration" 1988:5). However, the rise in emigration rates in the 1960s might be due to another important factor—regulations of the new state, which had restricted emigration until 1961.

Orit Rozin (2010) reveals that between 1948 and 1961, those wishing to travel abroad needed an exit permit. Although between 1948 and 1951 more than 800,000 new immigrants had arrived, in 1953 departures were exceeding arrivals, which caused anxiety in government offices (Rozin, 2010:152). Exit permits were not granted easily. For example, in 1948 only 38% of requests to exit were approved (ibid.:7). Rozin suggests that security and financial considerations were the causes for the restrictions, which lasted 13 years. Security considerations mainly meant making sure that soldiers-to-be and men on reserve duty were not allowed to leave for fear they might not return (ibid.:8). However, Jewish citizens were also denied permission to travel merely for already having spent enough time abroad or for fear that they might not want to come back. Rozin quotes the response of the Ministry of Immigration Absorption to an appeal by a woman denied an exit permit in October 1950:

> The applicant had already spent time abroad this year in England and France. . . And we may suspect that the applicant is sick with the infamous Jewish illness known as "Travelitis." (2010:148)

The allegation that easing exit permit restrictions would encourage emigration was an "oft-repeated mantra" (ibid.:164). The association of illness with the wish to leave Israel would recur in the years to come.

Another interesting piece of research reveals that, during the 1950s, small numbers of Jews in Israel were so eager to leave that some even chose to convert to Christianity. The Catholic Church was assisting converted Jews to receive permits to exit Israel and receive visas to settle in other destinations, such as Brazil or Italy (Yehudai, 2014).

The fear of losing manpower in case of a war kept the limitations on the travel opportunities of men much later than 1961. Until 1986, every Jewish Israeli had to request permission from his army unit before every trip abroad. However, today this is not the case. Restrictions do not exist,

and Israeli citizens no longer need to apply for a permit to exit. This is important especially in regard to emigration anxiety, and it shows the gap between the state's declarations and state policies. If Israel was truly worried about losing its Jewish majority, or feared it might not have enough manpower to sustain an army, it could easily maintain its restrictions on the movements of its citizens.

The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) estimates that in 1999, 480,000 Israelis were emigrants, and by the end of 2006 this number rose to 544,000. According to the CBS, the highest numbers of emigrants were from 2001 through 2002 (19,000 people per year), which coincides with the second *intifada* (CBS, 2014). In 2009 and 2010 there was a sharp decline in the number of emigrants, with only 4,900 and 5,400 emigrants per year, respectively (ibid.). Since 2011, the numbers have increased by about 1,000 emigrants each year.

This information is the result of calculating the numbers of Israelis leaving the country per year, minus the number of Israelis entering the country per year. However, we have no idea what the true numbers of emigrants are. The mechanism of data collection used by the CBS, informed by Israel's border control, cannot calculate new forms of mobility. In this respect, I mentioned the numbers above not to present accurate statistics of contemporary emigration rates, but to pose a question about the ways in which the CBS calculates the numbers of emigrants, as well as to critique the almost taken-for-granted apprehension of these forms of data collection by Israeli academia.

Yinnon Cohen (2009) claims that it is hard to estimate the true number of Jewish Israeli emigrants because of the difficulty of calculating mortality rates in the diaspora, as well as the percentage of Arab-Israeli emigrants within that number (ibid.). He critically indicates that ideology was always (and still is) part of the data regarding the numbers of emigrants presented to the public. Organizations that advocate for the Zionist demographic mission, Cohen shows, tend to offer higher numbers of emigrants than other research sources (ibid.:120). Presenting a higher emigration rate can legitimize state policy for bringing people back and create a discourse that can mobilize Israeli citizens (convincing individuals not to emigrate/convincing individuals who have emigrated to return). This was the case with the number presented by the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption in 2003 (750,000). The Zionist anxiety regarding the numbers of emigrants is not a recent phenomenon, and Cohen shows similar examples of exaggeration in numbers as early as the 1970s

(ibid.). Debates about the size of the Israeli emigrant population tend to be more pervasive and heated than those linked with other national migrant groups, due to the involvement of Zionist ideology (Gold, 2002:23). Several studies have shown that academics, journalists, and activists affiliated with Israel commonly claim that the numbers of Israeli emigrants are three to four times larger than the data indicated by census or survey-based tabulations (Herman et al., 1983).

I am far less interested in the "accurate" number of contemporary Israeli emigrants than in the discourse that surrounds and structures the conceptualization of "accuracy" regarding numbers, as well as the meaning attributed to higher/lower emigration rates within this discourse. It is important to clarify that the ideological aspect of calculating the numbers of Israeli outbound migration may sometimes contradict itself. As I show in detail in what follows, public discourse regarding emigration tends to downplay the numbers—as if to dismiss any "public anxiety" about emigration becoming a national problem. However, when organizations or government offices wish to enlarge their budget or financial support from the state of Israel or Jewish philanthropists, the numbers will be exaggerated. This is what I term "emigration anxiety"—a social discourse that has schizophrenic characteristics.

The Case of Cuba: A Comparison

Israel is, of course, not unique in having a complicated attitude toward emigration, and it is not the only state that has had restrictive travel policies. In his dissertation, Patrick O'Shea discusses the complex relationship between Cubans who stayed in the homeland and their family members who left, in light of a public discourse loaded against the emigrants (O'Shea, 2013). Following the 1959 revolution in Cuba and the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, Fidel Castro officially suspended any transport between Cuba and the United States, which effectively ended legal Cuban emigration to the United States (O'Shea, 2013:32). In 1965, Castro announced that anyone who wished to leave the island was free to do so. From 1959 to 1973, approximately 630,000 Cubans emigrated in special flights jointly organized by Cuba and the United States. However, until 1978 these emigrants were not allowed to return to Cuba (ibid.:32–34). Thus, emigration meant losing Cuban citizenship and being prevented from returning even for a visit. While in Israel, citizens who wished to emigrate had to apply for a permit, appeal to court, or change their

religion, Cubans had to try to leave Cuba illegally by sea, risking their lives. Finally, in January 2013 the Cuban government approved a reform to the country's migration laws that eliminated the need for permission to leave Cuba for those who wished to travel abroad.

The case of Cuba is similar in the negative beliefs structured around the image of the emigrant. Since the revolution in 1959, those leaving Cuba suffered greatly from denigration both from civil society and from the government. From 1959 until the early 1980s, strong social codes of ideological rejection toward emigration and those who emigrated prevailed in Cuba (ibid.:34).

In Israel, though emigration was perceived as a national problem, emigrants were (and still are) constantly pursued by the government to return by various means. Now they are promised financial benefits upon their return, which include, mainly, tax-free electronic products, unemployment benefits in the first months, and scholarships for studying in higher education institutions. In addition, Israeli citizens are encouraged to pressure their family members abroad to return. A campaign by the Israeli Ministry of Absorption (Ministry of Absorption, 2011), which is directed at families in Israel who are encouraged to convince their family members who have left the county to return, shows this well. In one video, an Israeli emigrant is watching an Israeli memorial service on her computer, and her American partner does not understand what she is doing. The subtitles say: "They will always remain Israelis. Their partners may not understand what it means. Help us bring them home" (see figures 1.6 and 1.7).

In Cuba, on the other hand, the ones who left were forever doomed as traitors of the revolution. They were not allowed to return to their homeland, and their citizenship was denied.[4] In Israel, emigration was not viewed by the state as a political act, but a mere economic decision. In Cuba, in contrast, emigration was considered highly political until very recently. Unlike in Israel, the Cuban families who stayed were supposed to terminate their relationships with their family members who left.

The case of Cuba is interesting in relation to the Israeli case, as both states are founded on new ideological projects. In Israel, it was the establishment of a completely new state based on Zionist ideology, and in Cuba it was the refounding of a new society, a socialist Cuba. These two new regimes had to insure constantly the success of their ideological projects and the satisfaction of their people. Protecting and showcasing the ideology require demonstrating that "the people" are happy, which in turn is necessary to demonstrate the legitimacy of the state. This implies

Figure 1.6. "They will Always Remain Israelis. Their Partners May Not Always Understand What It Means." Israeli campaign to convince Israeli migrants to return to Israel. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwXpkYQZHlo.

Figure 1.7. "They will Always Remain Israelis. Their Partners May Not Always Understand What It Means." Israeli campaign to convince Israeli migrants to return to Israel. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwXpkYQZHlo.

that the state must demonstrate that it is indeed providing a "meaningful life" to its citizens, in order to legitimate its existence and the restrictions and burdens that it imposes on those citizens (the new economic order in Cuba, and in Israel, economic hardships, along with security threats and wars). Emigration, which can suggest unhappiness or dissatisfaction with the state, can undermine these efforts and therefore must be controlled or stopped. In this sense, Israel and Cuba are not particularly exceptional: many new states do this, but perhaps new states founded or refounded on the basis of new ideologies are particularly prone to doing so.

The cases of Cuba and Israel also suggest that, while Cuba had cut off any connection with its emigrants, Israel continued to improve ways to maintain a connection between the emigrants and the homeland. This, again, can point to emigration anxiety. Israel's revolutionary project was inherently connected to the number of Jewish citizens within the territory. Cuba was not trying to attract new immigrants during the years of the revolution, but Israel did (and still does). This ideological difference can explain the Israeli need to preserve its image as a country that offers its citizens not only well-being but also the meaning of being part of a bigger project—the Jewish state. Thus, even though people were (and are) constantly emigrating, the state preserves constant immigration. With this, the image created is of a modern democratic state that allows emigration without consequences (unlike the Cuban regime) and promotes itself as a good immigration destination, for new arrivals and for return migration as well.

Emigration Anxiety in Public Discourse

> The Yordim reaffirm the survival of the "virus" and "neurosis" of Jewish diaspora existence.
>
> —Yehoshua, 1980

Gur Alroey's work from 2003 on early 20th-century Jewish emigration from Palestine is concluded by the simple observation that he failed to find any moral significance to the emigration: "They were not judged and doomed traitors who were abandoning the *Yishuv* in its time of trouble. The word *Yerida* was not there, but *ozvim* (leaving) or *yotzim* (going out)" (Alroey, 2003:129–30).

Interestingly, I found traces of this discourse in a novel published in 1920 in Palestine, describing the lives of a young European immigrant

to the Yishuv. *Shkhol vekishalon* (Bereavement and failure) was written by Josef Hayyim Brenner, a Jew who immigrated to Palestine in 1909. The novel tells the story of Yechezkel Chefetz, a young European Jew who immigrated to Palestine. Early in the novel, the protagonist is hospitalized in a mental institution. Upon his release, he returns to Europe, but after a few years, he immigrates to Israel again, doing his second *aliyah*. His second pilgrimage is unsuccessful, and as the name of the novel suggests, the ending marks not only the failure of Chefetz's individual journey, but also the failure of the Jewish settlement in Palestine in general. The novel itself is filled with characters who criticize not only the Yishuv and the economic situation, but also the phenomenon of Jewish inhabitants who are leaving Palestine. As early as the fourth page of the novel, the narrator tells the readers about Chefetz's feelings regarding his return to Europe:

> His sense of respect had started as well to affect him, as he, in great shame, is exiting the country. Even though then, as always, there were more of those departing than those who were arriving and staying, people would still resent those who were "embezzling the national mission," abandoning the ship. (Brenner, 1920 [2006: 3–5])[5]

While some of the characters see emigration from Israel in a negative light, the narrator reflects differently on the topic:

> One must be truly happy of this wonderful vision, of the youngsters, those still with power and energy, will finally stop doing nothing in this pit of trash and laziness, called Jerusalem, let them be free and become of benefit to themselves and their society. (Ibid.:76–77)

Already in the early 1910s, those who departed were considered to be abandoning the national mission. In this respect, Brenner's novel offers a very interesting and somewhat radical criticism of the Zionist project. Staying in Zion, the novel suggests, is actually the weak, lazy, meaningless act. While Alroey did not find evidence of negative perception of the emigrants during the period of the Yishuv, Brenner's novel reflects that it did exist.[6]

In 1951, Ben-Gurion declared that increasing the Jewish population in Israel was an important national goal. From this year onward we can

detail a persistent discouragement of Jewish emigration, done primarily by exerting moral and ideological pressure (Cohen, 2011:45). One of the most obvious aspects of these moral judgments can be seen in the value-laden Hebrew terms given to immigration and emigration, which were starting to appear. The emigrants, the *yordim*, suffered from derogatory descriptions, and emigration, referred to as *yerida,* was perceived as a national problem that threatened the existence of the Jewish state (Mayers, 2001:75–76). What follows are a few interesting examples of this discourse chosen from Israeli newspapers, mentioned in chronological order. More recent manifestations of the discourse, from the 1990s, will be examined at the last part of this chapter.

In 1959, we learn from an article in *Herut*, a daily right-wing newspaper, that a heated discussion about emigration was held in the Knesset (the Israeli parliament). The article, titled "Every Yored Frightens 10 Jews," discussed around 110,000 emigrants who had left Israel since the establishment of the state, a problem identified as "shocking" (Every yored, 1959). At the end of the Knesset discussion, the government was encouraged to establish a committee to deal with this problem (a suggestion that would be repeated again even as late as 2011). Emigration, according to the writer, was regarded as a "faulty and criminal phenomenon made possible by the public atmosphere—an atmosphere of moral decay, renunciation of ideals, and renunciation of Zionism."

In an article from January 1967, six months before the Six Day War, a journalist who interviewed emigrants to the United States, wrote: "There is a kind of *yerida* which has a little bit of logic into it: the lack of abilities to find a job in Israel, or the persistent pleading of family members to reunite with them overseas." However, he continued and addressed some of the emigrants he interviewed as infected with a certain psychosis: "But there are Israelis here that the *dybbuk*[7] of *yerida* caught them one sunny day in the tufts of their heads, confused their brains, affected their discretion and swung them to America, without any need, without a practical motive, simply against any reasonable thought" (*The Dybbuk*, 1967).

In an article titled "The Yerida," published in 1976 in *Ma'araiv*, a popular daily newspaper, Shlomo Avineri, a highly respected academic, wrote these sentences while he was the chief executive of the Israeli Office of Foreign Affairs: "The great majority of the *yordim* went to New York during 1967–1973 in search for the American dream. They went there because they were haunted by the greedy dream of a quick fortune to be made, a dream nourished in Israel during the years of prosperity" (Avi-

neri, 1976). The accusation of materialism returns in another article by a known and respected journalist, Yehoshua Bar-Yosef, in the notable literary journal *Maznaim*: "The *yored* is a miserable figure, a one-dimensional man or even less, uprooted from everything that binds a human being to his geographical, social, and cultural environment" (Bar-Yosef, 1976:84).

An even more striking accusation appeared in the same year in *Davar,* a daily newspaper affiliated with the liberal party. The editor, Yehuda Gothalf, a Zionist pioneer who had immigrated to Israel, wrote: "*Yerida* is not much different from the cowardly flight from the battlefield. If *yordim* are not completely deprived of human and national feeling they will suffer for the rest of their life from a sense of guilt and from inferiority complex. They shall be cast out by their children and friends" (1976:19). The homeland in this quote is referred to as a battlefield, and the entire population of Israel is conceived to be soldiers of an imagined Jewish army, which is supposed to protect the Jewish state. Those who emigrate simply desert the battlefield.

It is important to notice how this negative sentiment toward emigration is widely shared across the political spectrum; this can be understood by the writers themselves, as well as the platforms for which they write. While *Ma'ariv* was a daily newspaper, not connected with any party, *Davar* and *Herut* belonged to two oppositional political camps, and *Maznaim* is a literary magazine, whose readers belong to a very specific community, upper-class academics.

The institutionalization of this discourse in its most widespread national form can be credited to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who in a television interview in 1976 on Israeli Independence Day called *yordim* "the leftovers of weaklings" (*nefolet shel nemushot*) (Shokeid, 1988:6). A slightly later condemnation of the *yordim* was made by A.B Yehoshua, one of the best known Israeli writers today and then, who wrote in 1980 that "the *yordim* reaffirm the survival of the virus and neurosis of Jewish diaspora existence" (Yehoshua, 1980:72). More than 30 years later, Yehoshua is still obsessed with the phenomenon of *yerida*: "There are 500,000 Israelis in the diaspora [. . .] there is almost no house there without a Cabriolet outside, I know these houses. They sit there pretty easily, why? They don't have a job here? The Swiss also don't have the High-Tech jobs like they want, but you won't see that many Swiss sitting in the US" (Yehoshua, 2012). He also criticizes diasporic Jews for not making *aliyah*: "They are incomplete Jews while I am a complete Jew. . .We are total and they are partial, we're Israelis and they are Jewish" (ibid.).

The discourse of *yerida* in contemporary Israel is certainly differ-
ent than it used to be in 1976. Israel, since 1961, is no different than
any other country with an unexceptional flow of inbound and outbound
migration, a "normal" entity that is taking part in globalization and geo-
graphical mobility processes. Israel wishes to portray itself as a modern
democratic state with an emigration rate that is not exceptional in com-
parison with any Western country (DellaPergola, 2012; Cohen, 2011).
Policy, however, suggests that the state of Israel is still as obsessed with
the numbers of emigrants and immigrants as it was in the 1950s and
the 1970s. The discourse that sees emigrants in a negative light has not
disappeared but was transformed in a way that serves the ideology of the
contemporary Zionist project. Mainly, the emigrants started to be invited
to take part in presenting the good sides of Israel. If in 1976 they were
conceived as those who abandoned ship, in the 2000s they are invited
to return to their position as "soldiers" under the Zionist regime, only
now their reserve service is performed abroad, as ambassadors of the
state.

More and more Zionists and public figures see the importance of
keeping emigrants in good relations with Israel.[8] Daniel Taub, the Israeli
ambassador in the UK said in an interview in 2013: "If they are already
there we might as well use them" (Chodrov, 2013). He was referring to
the Israeli *hasbara* (propaganda), which asks Israelis abroad to represent
Israeli and Zionist ideas.[9]

In an article published in *Globes*, one of the two leading economic
newspapers, Lyon Roth, who used to be the rector of the Hebrew Uni-
versity, called to put an end to the stigmatizing of the *yordim* in order to
"harness their potential":

> Many see this as a net-loss to Israel. I see it as an incred-
> ibly *fertile ambassadorial corps* that should be cultivated and
> nourished. I see it as a means for Israelis to perform voluntary,
> constructive *reserve duty while living abroad*. Moreover, someone
> else is paying their salaries. Without a doubt, the closer our
> diaspora colleagues feel to Israel, the more enthusiastic and
> effective they'll be in representing the country. (Roth, 2010,
> emphsis mine)

The militaristic Zionist discourse is well apparent in this text, suggest-
ing using those who are no longer serving in the actual reserve force as

reserve soldiers performing ambassadorial duties. Roth suggests stretch-ing the arms of Israel and the Israeli Army overseas, using the manpower Israel has "lost" to the *yerida* phenomenon. One of the examples to do so that Roth mentioned is the Friends of the Israel Defence Forces (FIDF), a nonprofit organization set up to ensure the well-being of Israeli soldiers and the families of fallen soldiers. According to Roth, an initiative such as the FIDF manages to create a win-win situation: both philanthropic gain to Israeli and Zionist causes and enabling "Israeli emigrants, most of whom served in the army, to feel like heroes rather than traitors."

Although Roth and Taub call to improve the image of the emigrate in public opinion, a discourse that criticizes emigration still exists today—even if it might be classified as a cliché—especially when being expressed by figures from the pioneering generation. This approach, degrading emi-gration, often changes according to popular opinions, and the same pub-lic figures can be found expressing contradicting approaches at different moments. This is another manifestation of emigration anxiety—the fact that public opinion on the topic is actually relevant to political affairs. When it comes to academia, as I show in the next section, it is much more difficult to argue that the discourse is just a cliché.

In 2012, one of the most well-known figures on Israeli television, Dan Margalit, published the editorial "Returning to the Conception of 'The Leftovers of Weaklings.'" The title implies that the writer believes that the conceptions prevailing in 1976 no longer exist, thus dictating a call to return to those conceptions. This editorial was published in *Israel Hayum,* a freely distributed popular newspaper in Israel connected with the right-wing government.

> Every Intelligent Israeli understands that the *yerida* of Jews from the land of Israel is a national disaster. Almost Holo-caust without murder. . .. It is the main Anti-Zionist dramatic change. (Margalit, 2012)

The *yordim*, according to Margalit,

> fulfill Ahmadinejad's and radical Palestinians' wet dream—that the Jews would disappear, get away from here. They don't need an atomic bomb, or murder [. . .] Only purchase a large amount of flying tickets and working Visas in the US. (2012)

In September 2013, a year later, one of the leading channels on Israeli TV broadcasted four episodes of what was called *Hayordim Hachadashim* (The New Emigrants). The broadcast, filmed in Berlin, London, and New Jersey, claimed that Israeli emigrants leave mainly for economic reasons and wish to return to Israel only if they were promised financial comfort. Not only the individuals who were interviewed for the show declare their loyalty to Israel by mentioning their longer army service ("You can't say I don't love the country; I was an army major for 12 years"); in two out of the four chapters the reporter states, "We do not intend here to encourage leaving the country, but to reflect on the reality which could affect the policy makers in a way that will prevent this emigration wave" (Chodrov, 2013). It seems that without this disclaimer, Chodrov might be accused of encouraging *yerida*. Or he might think that emigration should be stopped. In addition, screen time is given to Dan Margalit, who says in the third episode of the broadcasts:

> The mutual responsibility of the Jews requires that people would consider *yerida* as the boundary that must not be crossed. The fact that work places need to be found, and that the housing problem needs to be solved does not allow these people, *morally speaking*, to exit the country. (Chodrov, 2013)

A few days after the broadcast, the minister of finance, Yair Lapid, responded on his Facebook page:

> A word for all of those who had enough and are leaving for Europe. You are catching me by accident in Budapest. I came here to speak in the Parliament against anti-Semitism and remind them how people here tried to murder my father just because Jews didn't have their own state, how my grandfather died in a concentration camp, how my uncles were starved, how grandma was saved in the final moments from the death march. So please excuse me if I'm a little impatient with people who are willing to throw to the garbage the only land Jewish people have because it is more comfortable to live in Berlin. (Lapid against the *Yordim*, 2013)

This text was posted next to a picture of a ship full of Jewish immigrants to Palestine.

A year later, Lapid completely changed his attitude toward the young Israelis moving to Berlin, and, in light of an ongoing public debate regarding the high cost of living, which is pushing young Israelis to emigrate, he declared: "I understand those who are moving to Berlin and I even agree with them" (Lapid: "I Understand," 2014). Lapid is a great example of how the topic of emigration has become but a populist matter, an issue that needs to be addressed according to the public opinion in a certain moment. But it is not only the topic itself, in general, that changes with regard to public opinion. The numbers of emigrants may also change.

In July 2011, the article "The Million Missing Israelis," published in *Foreign Policy*, suggested that between 750,000 and 1 million Israelis, around 10% to 13% of the population of Israel live abroad (Chamie & Mirkin, 2011). The writers, Joseph Chaime and Barry Mirkin, were prominent researchers on the topic of international migration and population. Two weeks later, *Foreign Policy* published "What Million 'Missing' Israelis?" a response written by two Israelis (Karasenty & Rosner, 2011). The original article and the response to it demonstrate the Zionist tension with regards to emigration. The writers of the response accused the writers of the first article of "far-fetched doomsday conclusions" and claimed that "their demography is driven by a political *agenda rather than science*," apparently completely oblivious of their own Zionist agenda (ibid.). The falsification of the numbers in the original article, the two argued, was due to a calculation including Palestinians with an Israeli ID, an estimated 100,000 Israelis who died abroad, and many Russian immigrants who left Israel. Neither the Palestinians nor the Russians, interestingly, are considered Israelis according to Karasenty and Rosner. The two authors are fellows of the think tank the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI), originally established by the Jewish Agency, and located in Jerusalem.

Another example that portrays emigration anxiety is the assumption that many Israelis of European descent are now applying for foreign passports in order to emigrate. One academic project investigated the matter and argued that these assumptions are both empirically and theoretically wrong (Harpaz, 2013:172). Harpaz refers to several sources showing the Israeli leadership and society's response to this phenomenon: "some denounced applicants' decision to obtain a second passport as disloyal, immoral or just shameful" (ibid.:171). Harpaz states that emigration from Israel did not increase in conjunction with the surge in demand for European passports, and actually "the net number of Israelis who

left Israel exhibits a downward trend since 2002, and in 2009–2010 this figure reached its lowest levels since the 1970s" (ibid.:172). Based on 30 interviews conducted with Israeli residents with dual citizenship, Harpaz claims that having European citizenship is considered to enhance economic opportunities and to be an elitist status symbol. Another reason for holding an EU passport was as an "insurance policy," significant for its "use-value conditioned by a diasporic habitus and reinforced by the grandparent's generation's experience as refugees" (ibid.:192). Harpaz notes that the respondents in his research stated they were all "100 per cent Israelis" and did not intend to emigrate, and some even considered themselves to be Israeli patriots (ibid.:193–95).

Emigration Anxiety in Academic Discourse

While the previous section indicated how the image of the emigrant is discussed in public discourse, as well as how the anxiety regarding high emigration rates is manifested in these texts, what follows here focuses on the academic framing of emigration as an economically motivated phenomenon. As my interviewees portray a wide range of motivations for emigration, it is important to critique an entire academic repertoire that provides but a single explanation for emigration. While an economic motivation is nothing but political, and those who leave with a wish to achieve a higher living standard may indicate social dissatisfaction with a political and economic system, the research projects I explore here portray the economic motivation as something that is *not* political. A separation is created, I show, between what is termed in these texts *political*, and what is termed *economical*. My argument here is that this is not a simple semantic issue. By promoting a discourse that frames emigration as an economic question, other political issues (and most visibly, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the security consequences of it), are deemed irrelevant to the decision to leave. Neglecting to explore other political motivations, I claim, is not stemming from misunderstanding the data collected on the research project, but reflects that the academics themselves work within a set of Zionist assumptions.

Most ethnographic projects tend to imply that Israeli emigrants feel a strong connection to Israel, left mainly for economic reasons, are sad to have left, and wish to return to their homeland. In addition, the literature on the topic addressed a very narrow group of participants, which

seem to repeat in most studies. The focus is usually on emigrants to the United States, mostly married couples, all of whom served in the Israeli Army (army service is, sometimes, even a mandatory criterion for participation in the study), and all of whom are heterosexuals. Most of this literature is quantitative and based on questionnaires filled out by Israeli emigrants contacted through embassies and consulates, which suggest an already-existing and positive connection between the emigrants and the homeland. Most of the results support the assumption that people left in order to improve their economic status (Urieli, 1994).

Lilach Lev Ari's study (2006), which was supported and published by the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, found that a third of its participants emigrated for instrumental reasons such as professional advancement, improved standard of living and for higher education. That study argues that less than 10% of the respondents left because of the security situation in Israel. Moore (1987) found that those who tend to remain abroad express a preference for material reward and the fulfillment of economic aspiration. Those who migrated for higher education purposes tend to return to Israel and wish to bring up their children in an Israeli and Jewish atmosphere. Gold (2002) also found that the main motive for returning to Israel was the emigrants' desire to bring up their children in Israel, as well as a concern about their elderly parents.

Yinon Cohen published an interesting article, attempting to investigate the relation between the Arab-Israeli conflict and Jewish-Israeli emigration. His conclusions were that the salience of the conflict did not affect emigration rates but that the increase in reserve duty in the Israeli Army did (Cohen, 1988). This quantitative research is interesting because it questions one aspect of submissiveness of the Israeli citizens to Zionist ideology and links it to a possible reason for emigration. Though this link can suggest or call for an investigation of the moral and ideological motivations behind the decision to emigrate, Cohen remained interested in the economic aspects of this pattern. He simply assumed that the increase in reserve duty caused a rise in emigration numbers because of the economic implications that reserve duty might have on young men's careers. While this is certainly true, other implications of reserve duty on a person's life are not even considered. These may include, for instance, the personal risk one is taking (in combat units); lack of support of policy makers and leadership; and the wish to be close to one's family. Cohen's later work seems to continue this tendency to focus on economic notions related to Israeli emigration (Cohen & Tyree, 1994; Cohen & Haberfeld, 2001;

Cohen, 1996), as well as looking at patterns of migration from Israel to different destinations (Cohen, 1997; 2009; 2011).

It is important to mention here that the academic literature did not discuss different motivations for emigration other than the economic one, even though it is most likely that Israelis had other reasons pushing them to leave. Any criticism of a rather un-Zionist character is missing in this literature. It is surprising to find any criticism toward Israel at all, and when it is there, it is pushed to the edges of chapters and books. As I mentioned briefly before, it is probable that Mizrahi Jews were leaving in greater numbers than Ashkenazi Jews due to institutionalized discrimination against them. It is also likely that left-wing activists tended to emigrate due to their political views. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that many Israelis left after the Yom Kippur War, which was devastating in various aspects. None of these assumptions was ever questioned in academic research.

Israelis have always left for political motivations, and as I mentioned above, economic motivations must be read as political. However, the literature and media did not perceive Israeli emigration under a political framework. Academics, as I demonstrate shortly, have neglected to deal with Israeli emigrants expressing critiques of the Israeli regime or discussing the political or social situation in Israel as the reason why they chose to emigrate.

My aim here is to investigate the use and appropriation of the *aliyah/yerida* discourse in the Israeli academic world and to pose a critique of Israeli scholars working on the topic.[10] The connection between government and academia in Israel demands separate research; however, as I demonstrate here, there is a close relationship between academics and policy makers. Government offices sometimes fund academic projects. However, some academics feel it is important to suggest policies to the leadership. When it comes to migration, these academics not only support the Zionist assumption, which constructs emigration as a national problem, but they also offer the leadership practical ways to tackle the problem. The feedback they offer preserves and enhances already existing beliefs.

In a 2012 article, Sergio DellaPergola discusses statistics of contemporary Israeli immigration and emigration. What is interesting about this academic article is the way DellaPergola portrays and discusses his finding. First, the word "emigrants" appears in quotation marks, almost as a denial of the sociological phenomena of emigration, putting *yordim* as the "correct" definition. DellaPergola states that the "percentage of *Yerida*

out of 1000 people was significantly reduced in the population that has greatly increased over time" (2012:25). An important subjective assurance is added to the end of this section: after comparing numbers of emigrants with European countries with a similar economic situation, he finds that emigration from Israel is within a "normal" range and claims that there is nothing "exceptional" about this level of emigration (ibid.:25). In addition, only one page deals with outbound migration.

In the closing remarks to this article, DellaPergola addresses policy makers in Israel, advising them that the aims of state policy should be "minimizing *Yerida,* assisting Israelis upon their return from abroad, strengthening the connections of Israelis abroad with their homeland, and assisting in increasing the participation of Israelis in the Jewish lives of local communities abroad" (ibid.:26). This article, opening the first issue of a new online journal founded with the help of the Israeli Sociology Society, is an academic peer-reviewed journal, not an official Zionist publication.

Lev-Ari's 2008 book, which examines gender roles among Israelis living in the United States, also addresses policy makers. Lev-Ari's conclusions support other studies as they reinforce the economic motivation for migration. Economic factors, according to Lev-Ari, also determine the wish to return to Israel. Though most of the data was collected through a survey, Lev-Ari left an open-ended question in each questionnaire. In general, half of the participants in her study express a desire to return (2008:160). Based on the open-ended part of the survey, she concludes: "[T]heir answers [...] display their longing for Israel and other pull factors, in particular those related to their families, as opposed to factors pushing them from Israel, like the type of regime, military service in the reserve, and lesser opportunities for social mobility" (ibid.:161). It is unclear if participants mentioned the last set of factors, and Lev-Ari just did not account for that in the book, or if she simply pointed to these factors as possible reasons that were not mentioned in the open-ended section of the surveys.

Lev-Ari draws the following implications in the final pages of her book:

> It is desirable for the authorities to become acquainted with findings like those of this study [. . .] Policy toward Israelis living in the USA should become more aware of the factors involved as it formulates new policy.

[. . .] There are two groups that may be *difficult to persuade*
to return, successful women who feel they achieved greater
level of living standard, and men who did not achieve their
goals via emigration. (Ibid.:164, emphasis mine)

Unlike the former study of Lev-Ari, which was conducted under the super-
vision and support of the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption (Lev-Ari,
2006), this was an independent study. Still, Lev-Ari sees her findings as a
tool to be used by Israeli policy makers to "persuade" emigrants to return.
Lev-Ari herself, it seems, believes that Israelis should return to Israel, and
the state of Israel should be better at convincing them to come back.

Even when the research was not an empirical examination of data,
and the writer had the opportunity to develop a more meaningful and
in-depth examination of the reasons why Israelis choose to emigrate, the
political implications (that are not economical) of life in Israel seem to
be overlooked. Sabar's interesting anthropological project (2000) looked at
Israelis from kibbutzim who reside in Los Angeles. Choosing kibbutzniks
as a specific group of subjects enables addressing a specific group of Israe-
lis, united by a specific lifestyle prior to emigration. Sabar aimed to under-
stand whether their common unique upbringing (life in a socialist-Zionist
environment with distinct characteristics), influenced their decision to
emigrate or to stay abroad.

Sabar addresses the emigrants with the value-laden word *yordim*
from the beginning of the book. She admits she "was somewhat saddened"
(ibid.:x) by the interviews (as they all seem unhappy to her, being away
from Israel), though she acknowledges her emotional involvement (ibid.).
Sabar perceives emigration as a hard decision: "deciding to live outside
of Israel, *abandoning the Zionist dream*, is not an easy step for an Israeli
to take" (ibid.:1, emphasis mine). In this opening, she takes for granted
that every Jewish-Israeli is a Zionist and that the negative connotations
of *yerida* are not just a discursive cultural construction, but that every
emigrant actually feels that he or she is abandoning ship. Sabar's personal
attitude to *yerida* is entwined through the book:

It was hard to come to terms with the idea that these young
people sitting before me, baring their hearts, their pasts, and
their secret longings, were living in an environment that seemed
to me foreign and alienated, in which I thought they would
never belong and which would always reject them. (ibid.:18)

Sabar also determined army service as an indicator for choosing the interviewees, apart from their kibbutznik origin (ibid.:20). Using army service as a criterion for selection, again, creates a blind spot, since it eliminates exactly those who might not be part of the normative-hegemonic group in Israeli society.

The picture outlined in the interviews in Sabar's book is somewhat like this: most participants mentioned the importance of army service in their lives. None of them left Israel with the clear intention to emigrate, and they perceived their stay in LA as temporary (ibid.:87). The main reason for staying abroad is economic and the fear of not having the same lifestyle and financial profit they have in the United States. The main reason to return is their children's upbringing. Sabar's participants want their children to serve in the army. The political and security situation is barely mentioned. One woman (Ella, 27), said that her husband left because of the reserve duty service, but then she contradicted herself: "[T]he main reason is his attraction to money" (ibid.:56). Sabar did not dwell on this contradiction and did not ask Ella to elaborate on the topic of reserve duty.

Many of the participants also expressed their Zionist beliefs, usually connected to fighting for the country. For instance, Ze'ev (male, 40) says he would like his "children to serve in the Israeli army [. . .] I fought there. And when the situation is bad, I'm ready to go back" (ibid.:40–41). As a rule, Sabar concludes that the "parents view military service as an expression of a very strong link to Israel" (ibid.:113). Many of the participants felt satisfied, even happy, with their army service and served more than the obligatorytime.

In a section called "Israel and the Jewish Heritage," in the last chapter in the book, Sabar mentions for the first time participants who discussed the security situation and right-wing leadership as a reason for migration:

> Some of the things the interviewees said also had a political slant to them. For example, Naomi remarked, "In Israel people are extreme in their views. The right wing and the religious are taking over [...] Yoni was critical about Israeli leaders who send soldiers to "unnecessary wars" and Gal also argues that many young men including himself had left Israel to go abroad because of the Lebanon War. (Ibid.:136).

These examples appear in a paragraph at the end of the book, and none of the respondents received a full transcription of his or her interview (in

contrast to interviews with 10 other participants, which make up most of the book). After mentioning these three unique voices, Sabar argues that it would be taking a "narrow view to assert that *kibbutzniks* emigrate only because of their *ideological paucity and the lack of Jewish culture in their education*" *(*ibid., emphasis mine). Apparently, for Sabar, only one ideology exists, the Zionist ideology. Other ideologies, like pacifism or objection to the occupation, which can be traced in these examples, are just not there, and these thoughts are narrated by the respondents only due to lack of proper Jewish education.

Moshe Shokeid´s earlier research conducted among Israeli couples in New York City (1988) manages to be more open to conflicting views, and his writing expresses a greater willingness to represent views that contradict Zionism. The main reasons for emigration Shokeid found were economic temptations, an inner drive to "see the world," a wish to pursue higher education and pressure to join relatives in the United States (ibid.:31–32). "[V]ery few left because they were fed up or worried by Israeli security problems and the duty of service with the reserve forces" (ibid.). Shokeid mentions that most of his respondents looked back "nostalgically and many regretted the circumstances that led to their leaving" (ibid.:33).

Like Sabar´s participants, here too participants regard their army service in very positive terms. Some participants regard themselves as Zionist—"[W]e never considered ourselves yordim, we were always Zionists" (ibid.:203)—and some discuss their plans of having their children serve in the Israeli Army after graduating from American colleges (ibid.:174).

One profile, though, is interesting and needs to be mentioned. Nira (female, age not given) is a widow who left Israel in 1972. A single parent, she wanted to raise her daughter to be free from the "brainwashing which we went through in Israel when told so many times 'it's good to die for our country'" (ibid.: 185). Nira's criticism of the Israeli regime and her use of the very powerful and negative term "brainwash" did not receive further attention from Shokeid, who goes on, in the following line, to mention Nira's participation in the Israeli club in Queens.

Going back chronologically, Sobel's study (1986) managed to put the factors Lev-Ari, Sabar, and Shokeid point to in one or two sentences at the center of his argument. With the grave picture of Israeli society in his eyes in the mid-1980s he argued:

Our findings indicate that while the economic motive is strong, a no less significant stimulus to emigration is the widespread

> dissatisfaction with a host of factors associated with Israeli
> society [. . .] such as the threat and reality of constant war, a
> high level of associated tension [. . .], the relative absence of
> civility in everyday life, and more. (Sobel, 1986:2)

Sobel is a bit of an outlier among the Israeli academics to investigate
Israeli emigration. His perspective and the narratives that he chose to
show in his book are very different than all the other studies. As early
as the introduction, Sobel criticizes the militarism of Israeli society and
offers voices of resentment against the Zionist assumption that the state
has the prerogative to make demands on the individual. However, though
Sobel seems to allow more space for critical voices than other academics,
he himself seems to be content with the Zionist ideology and the patrio-
tism it demands: "Evoking less sympathy were the aggressive ones who
pugnaciously (and unasked) announced that they 'owe Israel nothing,'
and 'where I choose to live is my business'" (ibid.:10). Sobel apparently
was more sympathetic to respondents who portrayed a sense of obliga-
tion toward Israel.

The years in which this research was conducted might be the rea-
son. While this book was written after the 1982 invasion of Lebanon,
and after two right-wing prime ministers (Menachem Begin and Izchak
Shamir), the critical narratives that can be found in his study are mostly
striking because they were written before the first *intifada* in 1987, the
assassination of a prime minister by a Jewish citizen in 1995, the failure
of the peace process, the breakout of a second *intifada* in 2000, and the
Second Lebanon War in 2006. The economic situation was also very dif-
ferent from today. Though neoliberalism had hit the Israeli economy in
the 1980s, Israel in the 1980s still had a supportive welfare system, before
the massive processes of privatization and neoliberal of the 1990s.

In addition, Sobel mentioned that Israelis sometimes would use fic-
tive marriage as way to get a visa or resident permission (ibid.:55). I find
this very interesting, as no other study has discussed this option, which
basically means that some Israelis wished to stay abroad so badly that they
were willing to endanger themselves by breaking the local law.

Another interesting thing that appears in Sobel's study and is not
evident in others is a respondent who identified as a lesbian and a feminist
(ibid.:78), and stated that she left Israel because of her inability to create
a feminist community and to practice in women's studies, a field that was
not available in the Israeli academic world in the 1980s. Sobel's method of
writing makes it impossible to know if, and how, her sexual orientation is
relevant to the decision to emigrate. Her sexual orientation did not receive

any attention, and Sobel focused on her professional academic needs, thus displaying her motivation as a technical, rather than a political, issue.

An additional factor that received more attention in Sobel's study compared with the others is the Israelis' "mentality," or "behavior." Some of the respondents mentioned that they left partly because of the "noise and aggressiveness" that are part of daily life in Israel (ibid.:90). Emigrants said they realized that abroad they could get a better quality of life, in a more polite living environment. This can be related to the broader political culture and militarism in Israeli society. Though Sobel does not draw a clear connection between the aggressiveness and hostility the interviewees described and the political climate itself, the participants in my research did discuss the political aspect of Israel's aggressive culture.

Like other studies, Sobel gives a meaningful account of army service and its importance in Israelis' lives. In contrast with other studies, Sobel manages to describe, side-by-side, narratives of people who enjoyed their service and narratives of people who criticized the service and the institution itself. Sobel portrays a more complex picture, which was not visible in other studies. For example, one person recounts: "During army service I discovered that I was very much against all the militarism, and suddenly I met another nation I didn't know (ibid.:102). Sobel also manages to show two different perspectives regarding reserve service. He says, "[S]ome respondents indicated that reserve duty played no role at all in their decision. Others suggested that, in fact, reserve duty could be seen in a positive light, as a change of pace, a reliever of boredom, or a bit of time away from the pressure of marriage, family, or the market place" (ibid.:105).

Sobel provides more space for narratives of parents who did not want their children to serve in the army. "To tell you the truth I worry about my son (age 10). This is a country which kills its young men. Any mother who tells you she doesn't have this worry is lying" (ibid.:11). Another one says: "I will stay here (in Israel) until my son is 16 and if by that time the cycle of war after war has not ended I will take him and leave—with or without my husband. I am not going to offer him up as a human sacrifice" (ibid.:110).

The most recent study, Steven J. Gold's book *The Israeli Diaspora* (2002), offers a wider exploration of Israeli emigrants and proves to be more open to conflicting views regarding the Zionist project. This ethnographic project's main source was a collection of 194 interviews with Israeli emigrants, conducted in the United States between 1991 in 1996, and 30 interviews with Israeli emigrants who have returned to Israel conducted in 1996, 1997, and 2000 (Gold, 2002:27). Gold's research was

mainly conducted in the United States, but his sample includes interviews and fieldwork conducted in Argentina, Australia, Canada, Holland, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, the Philippines, and South Africa. This is, by far, the most extensive research on Israeli emigrants, both in the numbers of emigrants that were interviewed, and in the large number of locations in which data was collected. Like the above-mentioned studies, Gold claims that Israeli emigrants "refused to identify with the country of settlement, and express a longing for Israel, which they often visit and sometimes return to" (ibid.: viii). According to Gold, a significant fraction of Israeli immigrants eventually return (ibid.:25).

Like Sobel, Gold also attempts to portray critical voices side-by-side with the more "standard" emigration story. For example, an LA-based Israeli psychotherapist with many Israeli clients told Gold in 1992 that many of his clients were complaining about the reserve service and the hardship of Israel's tense atmosphere. Another example is an interviewee who shared his pessimism regarding the peace process in Israel and mentioned the inability to create a social change as one of his motivations for departure:

> Look, I've gone to demonstrations, I've written to politicians, I debated. I've done it all. It's going nowhere [. . .] I left Israel in 1972, 10 months before the 1973 war. I knew there was going to be another war. I saw no one trying to do anything to prevent it. I'm not going to die for a war that other people are not trying to prevent. (ibid.:39)

Though some of the voices Gold found were criticizing Israeli militarism, he too encountered a majority of emigrants who feared their children would lose their Jewish and Israeli identity, and for that reason wished to return to Israel: "I felt it was important that he had some sense of belonging. It sounds terrible maybe, but I want him to go to the army. As a mother, I'm afraid of this like all of us are, but I want him to feel attached to Israel, and it deepens the sense of being part of Israel" (ibid.:111).

These five main studies are representative of most of the studies in the field.[11] The participants, locations, and conclusions are similar, except for Sobel's study, which offers a more complex picture. All studies were conducted in the United States, except for Gold's study. In all of them, economic motivations were assumed by the writers, and data was found to support the initial assumptions. All participants were heterosexuals (apart from one respondent in Sobel's study), and all of them served in

the army. The question of sexual identity did not seem to be something worth addressing in general, or even highlighted for further investigation. Some of the respondents in Sobel's research offer, throughout the book, a very critical approach to Israel and Zionism. Sabar is completely oblivious to criticism, unlike Shokeid and Levi-Ari, who give slight glimpses of critical opinions, but barely discuss topics that were brought up. Criticism of the Israeli regime is mentioned in (some of) the literature but does not receive attention, is left as a few lines at the end of the books, or is said to have only a limited impact on the decision to emigrate. Many of the emigrants expressed a wish that their children, born and raised in the diaspora, would return to Israel, at least to serve in the Israeli Army.

Sobel, though the earliest among these studies, establishes a more complex picture of the different relationships Israelis have with the state. He is the only one to find (or give voice to) emigrants who mention the act of emigration or the decision to stay in the diaspora as motivated by a wish to guarantee their children would not join the Israeli Army. Gold's research also provides more diverse views on the relationship between emigrants and Israel, but he continues to display a generally positive observation of the relationship between Israeli emigrants and their homeland.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to focus on the relationship between Zionism and immigration. I have provided just a few of the institutional acts and academic and popular texts that manufacture a public discourse of emigration within Israeli society. This chapter argued that the discourse of anxiety and the obsession with numbers persists and that policy makers still attempt to act upon these anxieties. Although obsession and anxiety are to be found in various elements of Israeli society (government, popular culture, academia), if the state of Israel truly feared a change in the demographic of the state, it could establish a mechanism to restrict travel and emigration. However, Israel is caught in a double bind of wanting to discourage emigration while seeming democratic. Thus, the way it has reconciled these tensions is to put a positive gloss on emigration by finding new uses for the diaspora. The gap between declarations and policy and between the cliché and the more serious manifestation of this phenomenon suggests a mechanism that seeks to preserve the social structure that without doubt prefers the Jewish population over Palestin-

ians. This cultural background and battleground is important and will provide the point of departure for this book. A project dealing with any kind of emigration from Israel cannot be investigated without taking into consideration the *aliyah/yerida* discourse in Zionist and Israeli thought.

2

Points of Departure

The Standard Emigration Story and
Queer Israeli Emigrants

As indicated in the previous chapter, constant anxiety regarding emigration is a prominent part of the character of Israeli society. This anxiety also structures a common understanding of the reasons for emigration and the characteristics of the emigrant. This chapter complements the information presented so far by articulating the way in which Israeli popular texts have portrayed the image of the Israeli emigrant. Exploring popular texts is important as these texts were not produced by official state agencies, public figures, or academic figures. In this respect, looking at texts produced as literary works or TV shows may offer an emigration narrative that is told without any relation to state policy. These texts are also important because they might expose subversive trends and narratives, which cannot be shared elsewhere. Short stories, novels, and reality-shows can enable a glimpse into emigration narratives not facilitated through the assumptions of academia and state ideology.

Moving on from popular texts and their potential in portraying a nonstandard image of the emigrant, the second part of this chapter is dedicated to portraying the narratives of the subjects of this study. Here I provide room for the voices of queer Israeli emigrants who reveal a complicated relationship with Israel, a very different relationship than the one portrayed in the existing academic literature. Drawing from these narratives I point to the main thematic motivations for departure among queer Israelis. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to challenge the standard emigration story that has appeared in most academic texts, as well as in the public discourse in Israeli culture. The data presented here show that the motivation behind the emigration of queer subjects is often very

different than those of other migrants, and their relation to Israel from their diasporic locations is often critical rather than nostalgic. Exploring these narratives, I aim at undermining the standard emigration story, showing how a queer approach to emigration can destabilize collective conceptions regarding motivations for departure.

The Standard Story?—Israeli Emigrants in Popular Texts

> Nohi Fridman, the manager of the Returning Residents Department, called Alva, the European-states' referent, to say he sees a lot of hope in the British exile [. . .] He asked her to stop everything else and concentrate in the coming weeks on the United Kingdom. She can even arrange some kind of a modest fair, an event with a representative from a high-tech company and reasonable refreshments, and maybe even someone from a northern village, to talk a little about loving the homeland, [. . .] For him a success is taking advantage of the momentum, and to pull even one man from the city and bring him to the Galilee, to a start-up bee hive, to build a house with a wooden fireplace and sesame floor, and make him feel that he returned home. (Baron, 2014)

This is the opening scene of the first story in the 2014 collection *Araznu Levad* (We Packed Alone), which assembles five short stories about Israeli emigrants. This picture of the two employees of the "Returning Residents Department" enables a glimpse of what the author imagines happens behind the secret doors of the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption. The manager is portrayed as a man dedicated to the patriotic mission of bringing Israeli emigrants back. His job is to map out the destinations the office should focus on, based on economic analysis of the next place in the Western world to enter an economic crisis. This story faithfully epitomizes the commonly understood reason behind emigration—economics. Therefore, this momentum in countries where the economic situation is not stable anymore, the readers know, makes the "seduction" of Israeli emigrants easier. This beautifully articulated scene constructs a reality in which emigration is a national problem, like the way Lev-Ari constructs the argument in her book, which is concluded by encouraging policy makers to understand where and when, and by what means, Israelis could be persuaded to go home.

While in the scene above, economic motivations remain the most understandable reason for Israeli emigration, as well as the means to persuade Israelis to return, the texts that follow enable a wider framework for understanding the motivations leading to emigration, as well as focus on the perspective of the emigrants, and not the state.' Unlike the academic texts and the media coverage, popular culture brings to light, among other things, individuals who criticize the state of Israel, individuals who did not serve in the army, and, in recent texts, individuals whose sexual orientation is presented as contributing to the decision to emigrate.

The study of popular texts has been noted as important to the study of cultures. The media has a complex and significant role in the construction of social and political consensus (Hall, 1977). However, the value of popular texts is that imaginative texts, like fiction, cinema, and television shows, can often create a distortion of that consensus. Fictive characters can sometimes explore feelings and emotions more intensively and more sensitively than political theory or anthropology. For instance, these texts may enable the readers/viewers to inhabit subject positions that they do not fully share.

In his article "Encoding/Decoding," Hall (1980) argues that although a "message" was sent, by a TV show or any other medium, it does not guarantee that the "message" will arrive. Every moment in the process of communication (sending/receiving), Hall explains, has its own determinants and "conditions of existence" (ibid.:129). Hall emphasizes that the production and the consumption of the text are overdetermined by a range of influences, including the discourses of the media and the context in which the composition takes place, factors which, among others, can produce misunderstandings or "distortions" (ibid.:130). Although Hall notes that this potential is limited, this is the potential I am looking for in the texts I analyze shortly. In this respect, Brenner's novel discussed previously offers this potential, creating a misunderstanding regarding *aliyah* and *yerida*. It also distorts the Zionist consensus regarding the importance of the Yishuv to the pioneers themselves, as well as to the goal of establishing a state.

I have chosen to address three different texts, published in three different platforms. I have selected a short story, quoted above, "Leyad Habanim" (Next to the Boys) (Baron, 2014). In addition, I discuss the novel *Hamsin Vetziporim Meshugaot* (Heatwave and Crazy Birds) (Avigur-Rotem, 2008) and the 24-episode docu-reality TV show *Mishpahut* (Families) (Hayman, 2013). There are, of course, many other texts that can be analyzed in this context.[1] I selected only three contemporary

examples, aiming to present both texts composed for a variety of media sources and texts composed recently, and after most of the academic texts analyzed above.

Early Hebrew literature, written from the establishment of Israel and during the 1950s and 1960s, was connected to Zionist ideology and myths. However, although the correspondence between literary texts and writers and the hegemonic Zionist ideology existed, it was never complete (Gertz, 1988). I wish to focus here on recent popular texts produced in years in which hegemonic narratives were not as strong as in the early days of Israel.

In *Hamsin Vetziporim Meshugaot* (Avigur-Rotem, 2008), an Israeli emigrant returns to Israel after 27 years abroad, only to realize how Israeli society is pushing her away again. Avigur-Rotem, who is considered to be one of Israel's postmodernist women writers, published a novel that attempts to shed light on the impact of crisis and war on the private sphere in general, and on women's lives specifically (Goren, 2011). The novel's protagonist, Loya, born in 1946 to Holocaust survivors, arrives with her family in Israel in 1950. Her mother decides to return alone to Czechoslovakia after a few years, declaring in a letter to her husband that she believes political Zionism is wrong and that Jews should return to Europe:

> I could not stay in your country, which is, sadly, the only possible option you see right now. I don't blame you. If it wasn't for the war you too would have seen that the Zionist country serves the interests of American imperialism [. . .] I hope that in a few years one of you, at least, will sober up from the Zionist intoxication and will return to Czechoslovakia. (Avigur-Rotem, 2008:365)

Growing up, Loya is told that her mother is dead, and her husband and friends in Israel disrespect her decision to emigrate to the extent of cutting off all relationship with her. As an adult, Loya starts working as a flight attendant, ending up spending 27 years outside of Israel without returning to visit even once. When she does return, it is only temporarily, to sell the house of a relative who has recently died. When it seems she might decide to lengthen her stay to more than the planned temporary visit, one incident shuffles the cards, and Loya realizes why she had escaped. When a young Palestinian boy from the occupied Palestinian territories, staying in Israel illegally, is found in Loya's backyard, she is taken to a police station for an investigation. She describes the insane

scene at the police station: "If I was abducted by aliens it would not have been crazier" (ibid.:158). During the investigation, she is asked when she moved to Israel, about her service in the Israeli Army, and other questions about the distant past. When she asks why these issues are relevant, she receives a mysterious answer: "We have our reasons" (ibid.., 159). When asked the whereabouts of her mother, we hear her inner voice: "I shrug my shoulders, if they are trying to confuse me or break me they don't know who they're dealing with [. . .] I hear my voice telling my friends in the US—it is a crazy state, a police state" (ibid.:161). The last part of the interview is very interesting for our discussion. When the investigator asks her if she has been to Palestine, she replies:

> I haven't set a foot in the Palestinian territories, I promise him, and you know what? I also haven't been to Tel Aviv or Jerusalem, 27 years I only visited the airport! And apparently that was a smart decision [. . .] He takes a form out of his bag—you will not leave the country, you will come to questioning the moment you will be asked to, you will stay in the same address—I'm not signing this! Be careful, I'm saying to myself, they have lost it here [. . .] Are you supporting the idea of a Palestinian state, the interrogator asks me suddenly—I support a Canaanite Empire from the Euphrates River to the port of Cartago. (Avigur-Rotem, 2008:162–63)

Upon interrogation Loya refuses to cooperate with the representatives of the state, to the extent of revoking the existence of the state of Israel. Loya goes as far as to suggest supporting a Canaanite empire, evoking a biblical Middle East, a time before the land of Israel/Palestine was promised to the Jews. Avigur-Rotem's novel from 2008 portrays a more critical image of Israel, as well as of Israeli emigrants. The heroine in Avigur-Rotam's novel even feels in the interrogation completely alienated from the people who represent her homeland, the police, who are supposedly there to protect the Jewish citizens of the state.

Loya shares a sense of error, isolation, and confusion, offering a narrative of uncertainty and dislocation as a context for reading contemporary Israel and contemporary Israeli emigrants. Loya's experience at the police station shows the acute dissonance of cultural messages, caught in the contradiction of Zionist myths and contemporary reality. These dissonances and dislocations can exemplify what Anthony Giddens terms "the condition of postmodernity," which is "distinguished by an evaporating

of the 'grand narratives'—the overarching 'story line' by means of which we are placed in history as beings having a definite past and a predictable future" (Giddens, 1991a:2). Loya was supposed to be part of this national narrative outlined by territory and time. However, just like 'her mother, who left as early as the 1950s, Loya disconnected herself from the Zionist "grand narrative." She reacts with more understanding to the Palestinian boy than to the Jewish police interrogator. The fact that Loya returns to Israel after so many years away even positions her as a potential suspect, an enemy of the state.

Moving to a different medium, the docu-reality from 2013, *Mishpahut* (Families) followed the stories of five families for one year. Two of these families each had a gay son who left Israel. The show did not discuss emigration in general, and none of the other three families had an emigration story; thus, the only emigration stories the viewers received were two very queer emigration stories, completely deviating from the standard story. Sexual orientation, according to *Mishpahut*, is a significant factor in a decision to depart.

The famous gay porn star Jonathan Agasi is the first character we encounter. We hear of his emigration to Berlin and follow him on his work tours, to filming sites of porn movies or when offering escort services for men. For him, emigrating was like the exodus of the Israelites leaving Egypt, and he compares this Jewish metaphor to his coming out process and to his childhood questioning of gender roles: "My biggest exodus was leaving the country, how many exoduses I had? Boom! Exodus! Jonathan becomes gay, Boom! Exodus, Jonathan does not know if he is a boy or a girl." Jonathan's words express what Maurice Blanchot once wrote: "The words exodus and exile indicate a positive relation with exteriority, whose exigency invites us not to be content with what is proper to us" (Blanchot, 1993:124). Jonathan experiences exteriority as positive. Leaving Israel, for him, was the long-awaited redemption from his life in Israel, just as "coming out" was the redemption from the "proper" way of life, heterosexuality, and sex work provided a way out from "proper" occupations.

His career as a porn actor and as a sex worker, he says, could not develop in Israel, which led him to emigrate, but he also declares that he does not like living in Israel in general. However, his strong relationship with his family, and especially his mother, results in frequent visits to Israel. "I have a great career and I hate the country I live in, so I emigrate to another state, but then I'm lonely, so I come back to Israel and then my career stops." Jonathan's emigration story, and personal narrative as a whole, is very unique in that queer sexual practices led him out of Israel.

Though it can be argued that economic motivations are at the basis of this emigration, as his occupation would not allow him to make a living in Israel, the occupation and the financial future that await him abroad are certainly different than any standard Israeli emigrant.

In his essay "Being Jewish," Blanchot suggests conceptualizing Judaism in relation to the concepts of exile and exodus. The Jewish experience, he argues, exists "through exile and through the initiative that is exodus, so that the experience of strangeness may affirm itself close at hand as in an irreducible relation" (1993:125). Jonathan himself, the unique and exceptional character, the product of the porn industry, with his queer way of living, experiences "strangeness" every day. The emigration, what he terms as "his biggest exodus" enables redemption from past troubles. For him, Berlin is what the desert was for the Israelites, the long process of freeing oneself. The destination, or Zion, is yet to be seen, but it is also, according to Jonathan, not something he is in search of now.

Thirty-eight-year-old Sa'ar Maoz left for London when he was 21, immediately after finishing his army service. The opening scene of Sa'ar's story is a gay choir rehearsal in London, where he is dancing and singing among 200 other gay men. Sa'ar's emigration story slowly reveals that he left because his family could not accept his sexual orientation. In London, Sa'ar was infected with HIV, a fact that causes an even greater distance between Sa'ar and his six siblings, who are afraid their young children might be infected playing with their sick uncle: "[H]e is responsible for this, this could have been prevented, and he should face the consequences," two of his sisters say. The father of the family is an army major, a very patriotic Zionist. In the first episode, Sa'ar reads from a letter he received from his father after he left: " '[I]t's crazy, a whole page about why a Jew should not leave Israel, instead of writing 'I miss you.' " On top of that, Sa'ar shows the camera, the letter was written on an official army form. Sa'ar says the purpose of this letter was to say, "[S]top being gay, go back to being straight, go back to Israel, because anyhow you won't have a future abroad." The letter, we hear, is what terminated Sa'ar's early relationship with his father, a relationship that takes years to restore.

Sa'ar went to the same combat army unit as his father and the rest of his siblings, although he wanted to join the army choir. "I knew that if I was to have any relationship with my father, it would only happen if I will also join the *Tzanhanim*" (the parachutes unit). In the 10th episode, Sa'ar compares the strong relationships he has with the members of his gay choir with the strong relationship he was supposed to have had with fellow soldiers in his unit:

You walk into a room with 150–200 men, and all that is con-
necting you and them is that we are all gay and we all love
music. My father spoke of this kind of comradeship as existing
only in the army. He took us to *Giva'at Hatahmoshet* (a famous
military site) and talked on and on about the comradeship that
can be built only when you experience a strong experience
together. But this is what I feel here, because you go through
a very meaningful experience together that gets to the level
of that comradeship."

Sa'ar not only negates one of the strongest Israeli ethos—the strong and
meaningful relationship created between men who fought together in the
same army units—he also queers this set of beliefs completely, compar-
ing that feeling to the meaningful relationship created between men in
a gay choir.

What I find interesting in these two very touching characters is
their complicated relationship with what Israel symbolizes. If, for Sa'ar,
the family was what drove him out and what is keeping him away, his
sexual orientation and his very gay-related disease are preventing him
from returning. For Jonathan, on the other hand, though his family fully
accepts his provocative sexual lifestyle, he is driven out because he does
not like Israel and cannot make a proper living there. Though these are
unique stories, almost too unique and exotic, as if only there to raise the
rating of the series, it is almost certain that without having Heyman, a gay
film director, in a position of choosing the characters and somehow nar-
rating the story (Heyman asks Jonathan and Sa'ar questions from behind
the camera, unseen but always there), *Families* would probably not have
queer characters at all. Interestingly, the two queers Heyman found are
also the ones to emigrate, and those who share their emigration story
with the audience.

As I have shown here and in the previous chapter, both academic
texts and formal TV news broadcasts portray a very standard emigration
story, one that does not threaten the Zionist state or narrative. Criticism
of the Israeli regime is barely mentioned. Sexuality as a motivation for
emigration remains an undiscussed topic, appearing only in the recent
docu-reality *Families*, a TV show with a gay man as the director and
producer. It is, of course, possible that the academics did not stumble
upon individuals who criticized Israel as a main reason for emigration
or individuals who did not serve in the army. This can be explained
by the ways participants were contacted in some of the studies, such as

reaching out only to Israelis registered in Israeli institutions or associations abroad. This, of course, limits the study to individuals who seek to sustain a constant link to Israel. It is also possible they did not meet queer-identified Israelis in their locations of study. Writers and film directors, obviously, have a broader spectrum of finding or creating characters. However, though these texts express a far more radical narration of the Zionist narrative, questions of sexuality as motivation for departure appeared only in the work of a queer filmmaker.

The following section will explore the emigration story as narrated by queer Israelis. As the academic literature and most popular texts have neglected to discuss different emigration stories, in the selection of participants for this study I looked at these blind spots in the literature. A research project that focuses on nonheterosexual emigrants who do not want to return to Israel, can bring to the surface different emigration narratives, stories yet to be told.

Unspoken Subjects: Queer Israeli Emigration and Motivations for Departure

In what follows I will discuss narratives of five queer Israeli emigrants. I will flag the themes which can be drawn out of these narratives regarding the decision to emigrate. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to challenge the standard story of Israeli emigrants that appeared in most academic texts. The themes I will address will be related to three topics commonly shared as the standard story behind Israeli emigration: that the emigrants leave to improve their economic situation, that they wish to return to Israel, and that they feel a great connection to Israeli society and the state.

A decision to emigrate is the result of several factors. The question of motivation for leaving is both very central to the topic of this book and very difficult to articulate with precision. Many of the narratives shared a main reason for emigration in the early stages of the interviews; however, as the interviews developed, more and more different motivations for departure penetrated the narrative the participants were telling themselves and others. This section, therefore, is written with the awareness of my inability to pinpoint one main motivation in each narrative and the difficulty of separating and isolating different notions in the narratives. While returning again and again to the transcribed interviews, it became clear that the motivation is often obscure to the interviewees themselves. It is

important to keep in mind that motivations may change, as the circumstances of life change. For instance, sometimes participants acknowledged that they were not political people before they left, and they became more politically engaged in the diaspora, thus adding a different set of motivations to the decision to stay abroad. Due to this difficulty, I present here five narratives that touch upon as many aspects as possible. In addition, I provide long quotes and keep to the minimum my analysis or interference so that the complexity of the decision, and the various motivations, can be presented without disruptions.

Rotem, 29 years old, in Berlin for Four Years

Rotem, originally from a small town near Tel Aviv, used to be a DJ in the Tel Aviv clubbing scene. Her body is covered in large tattoos, and she has a few piercings and a rather unique-looking haircut. Rotem was always a very political person and had worked and volunteered in many different organizations in Israel. She did not serve in the army, as her application to the conscientious objectors committee was approved. She also did not graduate from high school and had not studied at a university. As a starting point, Rotem's lack of professional skills or education limited her possibilities in applying for a work visa or student visa. However, it cannot be denied that she possessed a different kind of capital. Bourdieu has accounted for what he called "cultural capital" or "social capital" (Bourdieu, 1986). Though Rotem might not have had her family's financial support before emigration, she grew up in the center of Israel, attended good schools throughout her primary and secondary education, and had a good knowledge of English. Her participation in various left-wing activities both within Israel and abroad also contributed to positioning her where emigration is a possible path. Rotem exemplifies Bourdieu's understanding of social capital—"External wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus" (Bourdieu, 1986:83).

Rotem was not planning on emigrating; she simply went on a backpacking trip in Europe. However, after spending a few weeks in Berlin, she was convinced that she wanted to spend her life there:

> When I got to Berlin the backpacking was over, because I completely fell in love with the city. I didn't want to leave. I was supposed to stay here for two weeks, and I stayed here for four months [...] I was moving around, staying with friends. I did a lot of couch surfing; I stayed in squats; I never got stuck without a place to stay. I wasn't working all that time. Berlin

was very cheap. The only reason I went back to Israel eventually after those four months is that I got this very concrete job offer, and because my money was about to run out [. . .] so I went back to Tel Aviv, working in restaurants and bars again. But the body is in Tel Aviv and the mind is in Berlin, yes? Or my heart is in Berlin. I fell in love with this city. It was clear that I'm going to come back; the question was when, and how to do it legally [. . .] I needed to save money, something I could survive on in the first few months. So I come back for a whole year, and in the middle of the year I went to visit again, to be reminded, do I really want this? Before I make drastic steps of cutting off. I said to myself I'm giving up on the apartment; I'm moving between friends' flats to save rent money and that's it. I sold all my stuff. It was possible for me because I wasn't in any relationship, I didn't have a steady job, [and] I didn't have property or profession that would keep me in Israel. [. . .] If you talk about sustaining oneself, I come from a poor family, which means that if I'm stuck without money, I'm screwed. There is no situation of calling them and then they will send me some money, which made me very responsible, because I knew I had to take care of myself. And the starting point was employment—what can I do illegally and that doesn't require the German language, because you can't work with the visa you get for studying German.

At first Rotem worked as a DJ at night and cooked and sold Israeli food. But it was obvious that she needed to find a legal way to stay in Berlin and a way to survive financially. Rotem tried to find out if she was eligible for a European passport, as both sides of her family came from Eastern Europe, but her grandmother refused to help.

It was a Tuesday night, the lesbian night at the Möbel Olfe, a gay bar in the center of Kreuzberg. We were having our interview in the smoky bar where Rotem knew about half of the women. She ordered her third beer at the bar, giving a kiss to the bartender, and when she next sat down she told me with a smile how she felt in Berlin, her utterly different experience of inhabiting the public space there compared to inhabiting public space in Israel:

My last year in Israel, in respect of my tattoos, was a nightmare. Every day an average of 15 people would start talking to me on the street, grab a hold of my hand and ask me—"Say, what

do have there? What is that?" It's something I . . . I mean it is
obvious that if they see something that they're interested in, and
I'm right in front of them, there is no personal space, everything
is public. And I'm a kind person, at least I think so. I usually
like people. But I felt I was becoming very aggressive. You
know, I wake up, just wanting to get to the coffee place, leave
me alone, and on the way over there so many people are just
harassing me on every step I take, just because I look different,
and everyone has something to say about it, and everyone has
the right to say what they want . . . it's so comfortable for me
here in the land of the freaks. It's an amazing experience. It's
a different perspective of life. I don't have to prepare myself
to the responses of people, what they would say to me, what
they won't say to me. I'm a nice person here.

Spending only a few weeks in Berlin convinced Rotem that she wanted to
be there so much that she took upon herself all the difficulties connected
to emigration to a country in which she does not speak the language, to
the extent of risking her permit to stay by working illegally. She found a
city that accepted her appearance, a city that offers, at least in the future,
a more comfortable life where she can sustain herself with much less
money than she needed in Tel Aviv. She also met a woman she fell in love
with in her very first days there. Eventually, after the two years she spent
in Berlin on a student visa, she married her current partner, a German
citizen, and received a residency permit.

Kobi, 42 Years Old, in London for 12 Years

Kobi and I met in his art studio in Camden, a neighborhood in north
London. Kobi graduated from the prestigious Bezalel Academy of Art
and Design in Jerusalem. After spending two months in the United States
during his undergraduate studies in Jerusalem, he felt he wanted to live
for a longer period outside of Israel. The way he described it was that his
appetite for life abroad had started in those two months. He then started
searching for a 'master's program abroad:

I wanted to get out. I think the main attraction was leaving.
Not Japan or the Netherlands or England, the place was not
the significant matter. When I wanted to leave, the political
situation was terrible; every day there were explosions in Tel
Aviv. I left in 2001, so all those years were a very unpleasant

time. I remember that while living in Tel Aviv I would think
every morning whether I will come back in the evening, if I
won't die in a terror attack. And I think that was a crucial
factor, I mean—running away. Also, professionally I felt I
don't really know how to develop. I was in contact with a
few galleries, but it wasn't going anywhere. And I felt that if
I went away for studying maybe something new would open
up for me. I think I also wanted to go, maybe, to escape my
parents, because I didn't know how to tell them. I went to see
a therapist at that time to try and resolve this with myself. I
just couldn't tell them, and I think that running away, even
though I was already living with my ex-partner, that running
away was like running away from that too. On top of all that
the army kept bothering me every few months. 'It's not like I
did something really annoying in the reserve service. It was
like five days a year, not a big deal, but the emotional burden
was just too much.

Kobi's personal explanation for the reasons pushing him to leave com-
bines some of the most common motivations that I found in just a few
sentences. Kobi mentions fear of the unsafe political situation and the
burden of service in the reserve forces, but he continues to mention his
inability to "come out" to his parents, as well as a feeling that his profes-
sional career cannot develop in Israel. The overall feeling of a need to get
out of Israel is prominent in Kobi's story.

Kobi understood that to emigrate he had to get a student visa some-
where. Eventually, the easiest way he found was to sign up for a language
course in England, which meant a student visa for a year. During this
year he searched for ways to stay. Luckily, he obtained a full scholarship
from an art school and received a student visa for an additional four
years. His Israeli partner at the time decided to join him, and because
neither of them had a European passport, his partner had to sign up for
studies as well. By the time he graduated and was facing troubles with
his visa again, his partner was able to find a job in the United Kingdom,
and Kobi received a partner visa. Six months later, they broke up, which
meant, according to the law, that Kobi was no longer eligible for that
visa. They decided to keep declaring that they lived together, though Kobi
had already moved out, an act that if revealed to the authorities would
jeopardize an application for a visa in any state in the European Union
in the future. Kobi said that if his ex-partner had not agreed to this
arrangement, or if he had not met his current partner, he might have

returned to Israel. He also mentioned that professionally he was failing in the United Kingdom as an artist, and eventually most of his exhibitions were in Israel, and he sold most of his artwork in Israel. This can reflect the difficulties of emigrating, not just in Kobi's field, but in any profession in general. However, although he was more financially successful in Israel, he did not wish to go back:

> I can't say that it's not difficult, as an immigrant you have language difficulties, you need to learn different social codes, and I am not a very social person in general. I also know more people in the art scene in Israel than here. So, about returning to Israel, I can't say I would be happy to go back, but it's like a natural path. I mean, if it would happen, it would happen, but I'm very happy that I don't live in Israel. And it's the culture, politics, personal life. You know, I live here 15 minutes away from the National Gallery, the Tate Modern, the Tate Britain. Every three months there is a new exhibition in these museums. And the opera—I really enjoy going to the opera. These are things that you can't find in Israel. Yes of course there's the Tel Aviv Museum, but it's nothing like what we have here. So that is the first thing. And politics is the second thing. I don't see myself as a political person, but my opinions do tend to be more on the left side of the political spectrum, and I don't see how Israel pulls itself from the mess it puts itself into. So yes, I'm happy not to live in a place like that.

Five years after he and his ex-partner broke up, he received "leave to remain" status and no longer needed to pretend he was still living with him, which allowed him much more freedom.

Shani, 36 Years Old, 6 Years in London, Talia, 40 Years Old, 19 Years in London

I interviewed Shani and her partner, Talia, at their big two-story house in south London. It was a bright, sunny day, and the weather was warm enough to sit outside in their garden. It was morning, their four-year-old son was at nursery school, and they were taking care of their newborn son. When I was talking with Talia, Shani was taking care of the baby, and then they switched. When he fell asleep, Shani went upstairs to their joint home office, where Talia works on her graphic design projects and

Shani manages theater productions. The interview continued with me joining Talia to do some household tasks—laundry and cooking. Talia had been living in England for 19 years, and the two had met six years earlier when Shani traveled to London on a work-related trip. After a tempestuous weekend together, they started a long-distance relationship. Six months later, Shani moved to London. Since both of them possessed European passports, emigration was a much easier process than it was for other Israelis. For Shani, even though the immediate factor pushing her to move was her relationship with Talia, she shared with me her strong negative feelings toward Israel. Just as we have seen in Kobi and Rotem's narratives, Shani expressed a strong desire to get out of Israel:

> The most obvious reason why I'm here is Talia, because I came for her, which is very concrete. But there are many other factors to support this. I don't like to live in Israel. I mean I never felt that Israel is suitable for me, for my character; it's too aggressive; the mentality is hard for me. London wasn't the issue, if I have to think of it under the equation of getting out of Israel or entering London, I can say that it was 80% getting out of Israel, and only 20% entering London . . . I wasn't trying actively to do that [emigrate] . . . but when it happened it was like an opportunity and I was really happy that I could get out.

Throughout the interview, Shani expressed a feeling of constantly being sexually harassed in Israel. These feelings and memories from Israel, among other things, keep her from wanting to go back:

> There are moments that you see the difference really strongly. For example, one day I was working in Camden, and I was going up some stairs, and on the stairs three construction workers were sitting, and I had that Israeli instinct. I mean, it was obvious to me that when I will pass them they would say something to me. It was in my body. I wasn't thinking of it, I was feeling it. My whole body was ready to shrink and not listen. When I passed them, they didn't even look at me! They kept talking, minding their own businesses. And I suddenly realized that this is how it should be, and how insane is the situation in Israel. Because in Israel, it's obvious that they would do something. When you live somewhere else, you see how things work differently, that people don't need to harass

other people on the street. These are the moments that made me feel that I don't want to be there. Here people are nice; people smile at me on the street; people say, " 'Thank you' " and " 'I'm sorry.' " It feels great. No one shouts at me at the supermarket or on the bus or anywhere, and I don't want people to tell me that it's okay that the Israeli Army is killing children. I don't want to be there. I don't want to hear that . . . When I say these things to you now, I suddenly remember how I felt that almost 80% of my energy on daily basis l was wasted on dealing with all of that, facing that aggressiveness in Israel . . . I think the political situation is really connected to that. I think if there was peace, it would affect masculinity and chauvinism and the aggressiveness. If all of that went away I might return, you know?

Holding a German passport, she was not applying for a British passport, as in Germany one cannot hold two different citizenships. She explained this by saying that keeping her German passport is part of this feeling that London is not necessarily where she and her family would want to live forever. Keeping the German passport would enable them, if the UK would ever pull out of the EU, to keep the possibilities open to move to another country in the EU in the future. Our interview took place four years before the UK citizens voted for Brexit, and her fears became a reality. Shani says that if she had not met Talia, she would probably not have attempted to emigrate, but the words she chooses to describe her emigration are very emotionally loaded: "*until I escaped,* I didn't think about leaving, but when it happened, I was so happy that I could get out."

   Shani's partner, Talia, was 40 years old. Though she had left Israel almost 20 years earlier, and although I interviewed them separately, it seems that their experiences of being in Israel were similar. The two, as well as other participants, kept connecting the political situation with generally aggressive Israeli social behavior. Just like Shani, Talia mentioned that she did not feel that she could live in Israel because she felt she was too delicate and was being pushed around by other Israelis. Having spent most of her adult life in England, she said that technological development and social media played a big part in the way she now understands and experiences Israeli society:

Facebook was one of the things that made me feel the worst because when Facebook started you suddenly knew what other

people think. Suddenly you see Tal Levi, who went to school with you, publish a status saying "death to Arabs," and you think, are you crazy? Have you lost your mind? I never knew what people who went to school with me think, but with Facebook all of that shit comes up. I remember one of those things that made me think I'm never coming back to this country is when a bus with Palestinian children crashed, and five kids were killed. The comments I saw on Facebook that day were absolutely terrible: 'Let's send more buses to crash," or, "What good news to start your day with." I mean how can a person say that? And you know what? Even public officials say these kinds of things. There is no concept of violent incitement in Israel. Nobody would ever get arrested for saying, "Death to all Arabs."

Up until their relationship started, Talia never felt like she had to decide if she would stay in England or go back to Israel. She said she never considered herself to be an emigrant, and she used the Zionist term *yoredet*. Starting a relationship with another Israeli, however, changed her personal situation. From this indecisive position regarding Israel, she felt that she had to make that clear to her new girlfriend so that she would not develop any expectations about moving back to Israel. However, as she later understood, Shani was very happy to stay away. Both of them started questioning that decision when their children were born. England seemed, for both of them, a better path for their children, who would not have to go to the army or grow up as men in what they see as a chauvinistic, aggressive, and racist society.

Elad, 33 Years Old, New York (Three Years) and Berlin (One Year)

I met Elad in 2013 at his university campus, a prestigious institution in New York City where he was working on his PhD in Germanic history with a full scholarship. He was 33 years old when we held the first interview, and I met him twice more, a year later, again in New York, just a month before he planned to move indefinitely to Berlin, and a year later in Berlin. He received a scholarship and a visa to spend a year in Berlin working on his dissertation. In the three consecutive years I met with him, Elad's appearance completely changed, his haircuts, the clothes he wore, and sometimes even the way he spoke becoming "campier" with time. In a way, his looks changed in sync with the way he was rethink-

ing and changing his sexuality, or the definition he prescribed to his
sexuality.

Elad left Israel three years before we held the first interview. At that
time, he had just ended an open, long-term relationship with an Israeli
woman, Shira. During the five years of the relationship, Elad had traveled
to Paris and Berlin for short periods of time for his studies. In Paris and
Berlin, a few years before he left for New York, he had sex with several
men. Shira was accepting of this. Elad reflects that it was easier for him
to experiment the homosexual side of his sexuality outside of Israel, an
aspect he says he was aware of from an early age, but had not acted upon
before. At this time, he started identifying as a bisexual man.

When he was about to move to New York for his PhD, he and
Shira had a civil marriage in Cyprus, so she could join him in New York,
although he was about to spend the first year there on his own. Elad
pointed out that choosing to study abroad was motivated also by a wish
to explore his sexuality, something he felt he was unable to do in Israel.

> Going abroad for me was—I wanted to do a PhD in the field
> of studies that wasn't developed in Israel, but I think the sexual
> issue, if I think retrospectively, I think the sexual thing was a
> big factor in that decision. I think I wasn't aware of that when
> it started happening, but it's like, I mean, it's like only abroad
> I can really change somehow.

When he tried to explain to me why he was not able to explore his sexual-
ity in Israel he started to express a lot of criticism of the mainstream gay
community in Israel. In a similar way that he was expressing criticism of
the behavior of Israelis in general, he prescribed the same aggressiveness
to the behavior of LGBTs in Israel, even in respect to members of their
community:

> At that time, I defined myself as a bisexual. But my perfor-
> mance hasn't really changed. It stayed very straight. And I felt
> that something had to change. I experienced Israel as a very
> problematic place in that respect, for straight people as well as
> for gay people, some kind of "*describe your loyalties, are you
> with us or against us*" . . . *Some kind of violence in relation
> to my performance*. Am I gay the way a gay man should be?
> Am I campy enough? Someone once told me, "You're not a

bisexual, because you don't do this and that," like looking at women's breasts on the street. It was unbelievable. Who are you to tell me who I am and what I am. I recognize this kind of violence with Israel, with the country. And for me, being here is like I finally have some breathing space out of this thing, where people tell me who I am, or people tell me how to live my own life, demand my loyalty, and it doesn't matter if it's a straight collective or the gay collective . . . it just is really good for me to be far away from there.

In the beginning, Elad said that he enjoyed the gap that he created, in which people were thinking of him as a straight man with a girlfriend, "but I actually just fucked a man. It was exciting." However, later he felt he wanted people to understand what he was going through. But that meant, for him, that people were conceptualizing his position as someone who just "came out of the closet," and he was objecting to that discourse.

After Shira and I broke up, people in Israel started gossip-ing that I came out of the closet. You know Tel Aviv is very small, a lot of people know me, so I am sitting in a café, and somebody walks in, somebody I don't know. I mean we were Facebook friends, but we never spoke. So the friend I am with introduced me to this guy, and then this guy says, "You look really great," and I said, "Thank you." And then he said, "Yes, suddenly you have light in your eyes!" And this man has never seen me before, he just assumed, I mean he told himself this banal story of how I went from darkness to light! This will never happen here in New York—that somebody I don't know will suddenly approach me and decide if I have light in my eyes or don't have light in my eyes, or decided I used to be miserable and now I'm happy—what the fuck do you know about me at all??

Just like Shani, Talia, Rotem, and others, Elad felt that part of the Israeli aggressiveness was this Israeli norm, by which everyone is allowed to say anything to anyone, even people they have never met before. Elad said that he does not know if he would go back to Israel or not, but he says it is definitely much harder to be 33 years old in Israel and not be in a monogamous relationship:

It doesn't matter if you're straight or gay, here in New York or
in Berlin you can do what you want, but in Israel, there is this
pressure to start a family, normative relationship. It's also an
ageist society. I mean, in Israel even gay people fuck people
at the same age. Here and in Berlin I feel there is much less
importance on how old is the person you are fucking.

Challenging the "Standard Story": Main Themes in the Motivations for Emigration in the Narratives of Queer Israeli Emigrants

Using the five narratives above, I challenge the three main conceptions
regarding Israeli emigration that I have addressed so far. First, I illus-
trate the ways in which queer Israeli emigration portrays an emigration
story that differs greatly from the standard story, which presents Israeli
emigration as a strictly economic-motivated movement. Later, I chal-
lenge the perceived story according to which Israelis desire to return to
their homeland. Finally, I challenge the commonly perceived strong link
Israeli emigrants have with Israeli society, or with "Israeliness." These three
assumptions not only challenge conceptions about Israeli emigration, but
they also pose a unique case study in the literature regarding emigration
in general. The Israeli case study depicts privileged migrants, individuals
who are part of the hegemony, in a country that, though situated in the
Middle East, is conceptualized as Western, "the only democracy in the
Middle East," or as the "villa in the Jungle" (Bar-Yosef, 2014). This is in
striking contradiction to most academic work on transnational migration
so far, which usually deals with the movement of unprivileged migrants
seeking social and economic opportunities. The main destination exam-
ined is usually the United States: for instance, the imigration of Mexicans
(Cantú, 2009; Massy et al., 1994; Munshi, 2003) and Asians (Yang, 2011).
Another common destination investigated is the United Kingdom, with
transnational migrants arriving from eastern Europe (Burrel, 2009) or
from African countries (Bloch, 2006). Minorities tend to move within
the east and south as well, such as mass movement of national minori-
ties within the Middle East (Van Hear, 1998), or movements of Africans
within the African continent (Bloch, 2006).

In general, the notion of privileged migration, of mainly white indi-
viduals from Western countries to other Western countries has not been
investigated in detail. Catrin Lundström's book *White Migration* (2014)

has examined different notions of privileged white migrants in Spain and Singapore. However, this book, as well as the rest of the literature on the topic, still seeks to examine emigration in relation to questions of economic status and mobility. The type of migration presented in this study can be most appropriately identified as "lifestyle migration" (O'Reilly et al., 2012). Social transformations such as globalization, individualization, increased mobility, ease of movement, and a relative increase of global wealth resulted in a new kind of migration movement (Giddens, 1991b; Bauman, 2000; Amit, 2007; Urry, 2007). Lifestyle migration is the "spatial mobility of relatively affluent individuals of all ages, moving [. . .] to places that are meaningful because, for various reasons, they offer the potential of a better quality of life" (O'Reilly et al., 2012:2). Queer Israeli emigrants fit well under this category, as they are priviledged individuals who search for better living opportunities. This can be the search for a cheap and affordable lifestyle in Berlin, the wish to escape the security situation in Israel, and, of course, the search for a metropolis that can offer better possibilities for queer subjects.

Having the concept of "lifestyle" migration as a prominent idea that explains the movement of queer Israelis, I claim that this study differs greatly from the literature available, both in relation to Israeli emigration, and to a general understanding of queer emigration. Even if, as the narrative shows, financial considerations were part of the motivation to depart, they were not emigrating to make "easy money" in America, as commonly described in the literature. This study varies also from the literature that describes the transnational migration of queer subjects from their homelands to more "queer friendly' Western societies (Eng, 1997; Fortier, 2004; Gopinath, 2005; La Fountain-Stokes, 2009; Lionel Cantú, 2009; Luibhéid, 2008; Manalansan, 2003; Sinfield, 2000; Watney, 1995), where LGBTs do not face formal persecution as they do in Israel (Gross, 2013b). Though the narratives do reflect that the participants' sexual orientation or gender performance motivated the departure, the stories of queer Israelis differ greatly from what can be found in most academic works regarding queer migrants.

Literature also exhibits a lack in dealing with a general wish to abandon the homeland as motivating an emigration movement. It is much more common to find literature dealing with a longing for the homeland, for instance, in the case of the Armenian diaspora (Pattie, 1999) or in the case of Romanians in Ireland (Macr, 2011). Much has been written on the wish to integrate properly within the host society (K. Burrel, 2009; Castles and Miller, 2003; Fortier, 2000, 2004; Herman et al., 1983; Skel-

don, 1996; Yang, 2011). The motivations behind queer Israeli emigration reflect a critical engagement with the homeland, which leads to departure, although this critical engagement is formulated among privileged members of the society. The case of Cuba, presented in the previous chapter, is the closest I have found so far. However, O'Shea (2013) did not investigate the motivations of the emigrants themselves, but reflected more on the social context in which that emigration took place. Another case study that could provide a good comparison is that of white South Africans emigrating due to apartheid (Ellis, 1992; Van Rooyen, 2000). However, even this case cannot be investigated in direct relation to contemporary Israeli emigration, since many South Africans had to flee their homeland in order to avoid army conscription or had to flee prison sentences as they were persecuted by the government, a condition certainly does not apply in the Israeli case (at least not yet). Nonetheless, Van Royan chose to term the departure of white South Africans as an "exodus," terminology that was also attached to the movement of LGBTs out of Israel, but not to Israeli emigration in general.[2]

A few more words must be said regarding the notion of queer mobility and queer diasporas. Queer migration and diaspora scholarship, which explores the multiple connections between sexuality and migration, has drawn from and enriched these and other bodies of research, including feminist, racial, ethnic, postcolonial, public health, and globalization (Luibhéid, 2008:169). Queer migration scholarship continually examines how overlapping regimes of power and knowledge generate and transform identity categories.

Gayatri Gopinath claims that feminist scholars of nationalism's literature have not been successful in fully addressing the ways in which dominant nationalism institutes heterosexuality as a key disciplinary regime (Gopinath, 2005:4). In addition, little attention has been paid to the ways in which nationalist framings of sexuality are translated into the diaspora and how these renderings of diasporic sexualities are in turn central to the production of nationalism in the home nation (ibid.:9). Suturing "queer" to "diaspora" captures the desires, practices, and subjectivities that are rendered "impossible and unimaginable within conventional diasporic and nationalist imaginaries" (ibid.:11). When we address a question using a queer diasporic framework, we seek both the utilization of the relations between a nation and diaspora and the relations between heterosexuality and queerness. And as Gopinath informs us, "[Q]ueerness is to heterosexuality as the diaspora is to the nation" (ibid.).

This book concerns the challenge that a heterosexual nationalism poses for queers, to the extent of pushing them to emigrate, or as Alan Sinfield beautifully writes, "We leave when we are no longer at home" (2000:103). It is clear, however, that a complete departure from national identification, from the social and historical context of their homeland, is almost impossible. As Gopinath has put it: "Queer desire does not transcend or remain peripheral to these histories, but instead it becomes central to their telling and remembering: there is no queer desire without these histories, nor can these histories be told or remembered without simultaneously revealing an erotic of power" (Gopinath, 2005:2). This new collective formed specifically outside of Israel, connecting those who have been connected by other means of identification in the homeland, is emerging exactly from the historical and national context, with a desire to reimagine these memories while constructing a home in a different space.

Stuart Hall has discussed the diasporic imaginary's investment in the past. He articulates a relationship in which the experience of displacement recreates an endless desire to return to lost origins (Hall, 2003:245), what Gopinath terms as a "conventional diasporic discourse" (Gopinath, 2005:4). To Gopinath, queer diaspora scholarship expands the spectrum of questions of the past, memory and nostalgia, but for a radically different purpose:

> Queer diasporic culture forms and practices points to submerged histories of racist and colonial violence that continue to resonate in the present and that is being felt through bodily desire. It is through the queer diasporic body that their legacies are imaginatively contested and transformed [. . .] queer diasporic cultural forms work against the violent effacement that produce the fictions of purity that lie at the heart of dominant nationalist and diasporic ideologies. (Ibid.)

This book develops Gopinath's and Hall's ideas that shift the concept of diaspora away from its traditional and conventional orientation toward homeland, exile and return, and rather strive for a "conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity" (Hall, 2003:17). Gopinath's project suggests the range of oppositional practices, subjectivities, and alternative visions of collectivities that fall outside the developmental narratives of colonialism, bourgeois nationalism, mainstream liberal feminism, and mainstream gay and lesbian

politics and theory. Her project dares to "envision other possibilities of existence exterior to dominant systems of logic," as she attempts "to read the traces of 'impossible subjects' as they travel within and away from 'home'" (ibid.:20). Her respondents, queer migrants of South Asia, articulate new modes of collectivity and kinship that reject the ethnic and religious absolutism of nationalism, while simultaneously resisting Euro-American, homonormative models of sexuality.

While Gopinath was focusing on impossible subjects and impossible desires, Anna-Marie Fortier suggests reading narratives of queer migrants as constituting different versions of "homing desires"—desires to feel at home achieved by physically or symbolically reconstituting spaces that provide some kind of ontological security in the context of migration (Fortier, 2000:163). Though the concept of home was frequently dismissed in the queer literature, David Eng states it would be a mistake to underestimate enduring queer affiliation to this concept (1997:32). In this respect, in her article "Making Home: Queer Migration and Motion of Attachment," Fortier explores how "home" is produced differently through different movements of the queer outside or inside home space (Fortier, 2004:115). Fortier thinks of the decentering of the heterosexual family "home" as "the emblematic model of comfort, care and belonging" (ibid.). Continuing this thread of thought, I wish to decenter the heterosexual "homeland" as the emblematic model of comfort, care, and belonging. This is done here specifically in relation to Israeli attempts to stabilize Israel, and especially Tel Aviv, as a gay haven. While Fortier addresses the "coming out" of one's childhood home as signified by migration movement, I address the "coming out" of the nation. In doing so, I look at the various ways in which emigration from Israel is constituted as the "coming out" of the collective. Queerness, in this respect, functions as another step outside of the collective, a step most drastically represented in the decision to depart.

Fortier, who takes the important path of refusing the ontology of "home" as a necessary function of heterosexuality, wishes to find ways to think of queer belonging within this "home" (Fortier, 2004:116). Gopinath, in a similar way, discussed LGBT subjects who do not have the luxury of leaving, thus, making themselves at home within an uncomfortable home. This project is different from both Gopinath and Fortier's approaches. I address the nation under the fundamental conception of the nation as a heterosexual regime. Within that nation, while exploring modes of belonging available to queer subjects in Israel, I show how a different mode of belonging was developed: belonging to those who wish

to depart. I ask, then, as Gopinath had suggested, what kind of a notion of diasporic culture is developed in relation to Israel, in a culture in which Israelis suggest alternative forms of collectivity and communal belonging that redefine "home" outside of the logic of blood, authenticity, patrilineal descent, and conflict? This book aims, as Fortier suggested, to think of "home" not as the origin, but rather as a destination, not as a "return," but as an arrival (Fortier, 2000, 2004).

Challenging the Economic Motivations

When discussing economic motivations, it is important to clarify that I do not mean that emigration from Israel so far was strictly economically motivated, rather that this was the story that was told, by academics and by the popular media. There is no study that argues that Mizrahi Jews left because of ethnic discrimination or that left-wing activists left due to political views. However, it can be assumed that Israelis emigrated in the past for political reasons that were not strictly economical. What is unclear is why these reasons were never properly discussed. I am also not about to argue here that the participants of this study were not motivated economically to emigrate. They were, especially in the case of Berlin. However, it is clear that economic motivations according to the participants of this study are not the same economic motivations described in other studies. That is, their goal was finding a destination where they could sustain themselves easily, rather than a destination in which they could make a lot of money quickly. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it is very difficult to pinpoint which motivation was the main one in the narratives I heard. Nonetheless, the story these individuals tell has not been told in the literature so far.

Rotem's story is a good example. She had not planned to emigrate or to improve her economic situation. She arrived in Berlin for vacation, decided she wanted to stay, returned to Israel to save money to make the move, and landed in Berlin without a job or planned education program. As a starting point, this kind of emigration, without preparation, is very different than the standard story of Israeli emigration, which is aimed at acquiring a higher living standard by means of employment or higher education.

While Talia and Elad left, at first, to pursue higher education, and Shani left to join her partner, Kobi was the only one who left with an economic motivation—to succeed in the art world. Interestingly enough, he admitted that most of his artwork was actually being sold in Israel.

Personal motivations became stronger than professional and economic rationality, and he preferred to stay in London. Most of the participants in the study said that being abroad for a short time pushed them to search for opportunities to emigrate, just like Kobi and Rotem. What motivated them to leave was the option of a different living experience outside of Israel. Many of them admitted that they knew it would be hard to establish a profession or a career in their new destinations.

Challenging the "Wish to Return" Conception

The second theme that recurred in every one of the interviews was this notion of the need to depart from the territory of Israel. In a way, the emigration pattern I have recognized centers on the wish to get out of Israel, rather than to arrive somewhere else. Of course, individuals have their own reasons and preferences leading them to a specific destination. However, the movement of queer Israeli emigrants centers mostly on the notion *of departing*, far more than on *arriving*. The emigrants' detachment from the territory of Israel is the important matter, not their new places of residence. The new localities may also change, or become temporary places of residence for my respondents, who travel onwards based on opportunities to obtain permits to stay or foreign passports. Thus, queer Israeli emigration is not oriented toward one specific place but is constructed as an ongoing departing process, in which its destination is not designated prior to the motivation to depart. What forms the basis of this movement is not where to relocate oneself, rather where *not* to stay, where not to be present.

This can explain how respondents with no university degree or profession found themselves in Berlin, where they could sustain themselves financially quite easily. This also explains why those who had American citizenship found themselves in New York, and those more financially stable found themselves in London. I have also met with three individuals who chose Paris as their destination. They had learned French in high school, which enables free entrance to French universities. This notion of departure can also be suggested by the movement of these individuals from place to place based on preferences, but also on opportunities open to them. For instance, I met with two women and a man who initially emigrated to Berlin, which they found as an easy starting point, and then found different opportunities and moved to London, which was actually their first preference. Two other men started with studentships in the United Kingdom (London and Oxford), applied to PhD programs in several cities, and found themselves in New York.

This kind of movement can challenge two main claims in the perceived standard story. Israeli emigration is almost always considered to be aimed at the United States, mainly because of the commonly imagined perception of the United States as enabling an easy pathway for making a lot of money quickly. This "American Dream" is, of course, not particularly unique to Israelis. Israeli emigration to European countries has mostly been neglected in research, and popular texts also reflect this, as most of the novels I found that had emigrant characters took place in the United States. In addition, as I showed, the perceived standard story is of Israelis who move to the United States temporarily but wish to return to Israel. The narratives presented above share the common wish to leave Israel, or the wish to stay out of Israel. Kobi is the perfect example for this, as it did not matter to him where he would study. He also chose to stay abroad even though professionally that made no sense. Though Shani left mainly to join her partner, Talia, once in London she realized that she did not want to go back to Israel. However, London is only a temporary refuge. This notion of the irrelevancy of the destination is also apparent in their decision to keep Shani's German passport, just in case they might want to change locations in the future. Rotem was not even thinking about emigration when she flew to Europe for a short trip. Berlin was so accommodating to her, she immediately felt at home in the city where her appearance did not attract attention. It is not a coincidence that queer Israelis found themselves in cities where queer life is available and visible. Berlin, London, New York, San Francisco, or Paris would have been accommodating to Rotem in the same way. The fact that she is in Berlin is mainly economical: "Why Berlin? Because I couldn't afford to live in London."

Elad's narrative is also a good example that shows that the movement of the queer Israeli migrants is mainly based on opportunities and wishes, prescribed by an initial decision to leave Israel, and continued by the possibilities open to each individual based on preferences and desires. Elad said that he applied for a PhD program in New York because his topic of studies was not that developed in Israeli academia. However, mentioning the sexual freedom he experienced on the brief trips he had to Paris and Berlin prior to the decision to emigrate, he narrated a desire to be outside of Israel also to explore his sexuality, something he felt he could not do in Tel Aviv. Although New York enabled this exploration, to the extent of being openly bisexual in his visits back in Israel, Berlin had the potential to offer him an even better arena for his sexual preferences. This is why he searched and applied for a scholarship that enabled his stay in Berlin, without leaving the course of his studies in New York, where

he also lived on a full scholarship. Elad's narrative articulates exactly how sexual desire prescribes the movement between different locations and how Israel is not being considered as part of the future possibilities for these individuals

Challenging the "Love of the Homeland" Conception

Another factor affecting the decision to emigrate was how the participants in this study experienced their day-to-day life in Israel. The image of Israel, as it appears in the narratives, is of a violent, aggressive, and racist society, an atmosphere that affects all walks of life. As I described in the introduction, Israel's society and collective behavior are significantly affected by the occupation regime and Israeli militarism. The narratives above, as well as many of the other narratives, reflected a similar experience of the difficulty of inhabiting public space in Israel. I wish to highlight here different aspects of this experience—the discomfort and risk taken by queer subjects with nonnormative appearance; the difficulty of being a woman in a public environment in which sexual harassment is common and almost "accepted" as an inherent part of the culture; and the exposure on a daily basis to racist and violent discourse, a discourse in which Israelis are supposed to participate. The purpose here is to challenge the conception that Israelis are sad to have left and feel very much connected to Israel.

Rotem's and Shani's narratives show not just the discomfort with and wish to get out of the Israeli environment, but also the freedom they achieve in their new destinations. The different experience of living in a welcoming environment changed Rotem's behavior toward others in the space she occupies. Shani's narrative resembled Rotem's in various ways, especially in describing how she now occupies a female body in public space in a more relaxed way. Talia emphasized greatly her experience of violence and racism in Israeli society. Reading comments posted on Facebook by people she knew in Israel about the situation in Israel/Palestine pushed her to decide she does not want to go back to Israel. Shani and Talia's narratives also added another aspect. While all of the researchers on the topic gave voice to Israeli emigrants who want their children to grow up in Israel and join the Israeli Army, Talia and Shani both mentioned the fear of raising two boys in Israel mainly because of the army.

Elad's narrative is interesting because it articulates the ways queers cannot even feel at home among the LGBT community in Israel. Apart from the general criticism of Israeli society, and apart from a decision to

leave to New York also in order to explore his sexuality, Elad connects the political situation and the general militaristic discourse in the Israeli society with the way the LGBT community behaves. When he wanted to explore his sexuality individually, the atmosphere in the LGBT community in Israel was not open to different forms of identification. "Describe your loyalties. Are you with us or against us?" he was asked, and he said he felt "some kind of violence in relation to my performance." Elad concluded that he felt positive about being away from Israel. Another participant who moved to New York mentioned something similar to what Elad shared. Omri felt a general close-minded atmosphere even within the gay community in Israel, regarding age or even the kind of subculture one belongs to. He mentioned that in New York he could be a "daddy" one day and a "bear" the following day or have sex with people much older or much younger than him, things that he felt he could not do in the more conservative and heteronormative Israeli gay scene.

In general, many of the participants criticized Israeli aggressiveness. Some prescribed this as a consequence of the political situation and politicized the public atmosphere in Israel in relation to the occupation of Palestine and to the militarism. Others spoke about their personal feelings of being too fragile or sensitive, being individuals who cannot deal with the public atmosphere. Many people mentioned that the way they experience homophobia was connected, for them, with the general atmosphere in which people feel they have the right to tell other people how to behave. Elad's story expressed how this even happens within the circle of LGBTs. Most of the women talked about being sexually harassed, and many talked about the freedom and liberation they felt when walking in other cities in the world compared with walking down a street in Tel Aviv. This was often very much connected to the physical feeling of their bodies. It is not just that they experienced more freedom in their lives, but they also described the way their movements and posture embodied a sense of liberation.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the motivations for emigration narrated by queer Israeli emigrants. The narratives presented here reflect, I believe, the array of motivations queer Israeli emigrants share as a collective. Each one of these four narratives, like those of the rest of the participants in this study, demonstrates a very different emigration story than the standard

emigration story which was constructed in the literature so far. These
narratives show that the motivations behind the emigration of queer
subjects are often very different than those of other migrants, and their
relation to Israel from their diasporic locations is often critical rather
than nostalgic. Exploring these narratives, I aimed at undermining the
standard emigration story, showing how a queer approach to emigration
can destabilize collective conceptions regarding motivations for departure.
The next chapter focuses on the last theme investigated above, the feelings
of alienation and exclusion of queer Israelis prior to their departure. It
centers on political motivations, shared among the participants who con-
sidered themselves to be political activists prior to their departure. Their
feeling of not belonging to the Israeli collective is explored as another
significant motivation for departure.

3

The Israeli Collective and Emigration

Left-Wing Queers and Unbelonging

This chapter seeks to explore the connection between alienation from the Israeli nation and the decision to leave Israel. Feelings of alienation from the Israeli nation were in many interviews connected to the decision to emigrate. One of the most noticeable affective statements repeated in the participants' narratives was the articulation of a feeling of unbelonging to Israeli society. Most importantly, they said that they were tired of being attacked in Israel, whether it is due to their political views and political affiliations, their gender performance and sexuality, or the activities they take part in. In what follows I discuss a specific group among the participants of this research. Not all of those I met with considered themselves political or identified as queers. More than half identified themselves as positioned on the left of the Israeli political spectrum (63%), while the rest did not mention any kind of political affiliation. Here I wish to discuss the narratives of nineteen (46%) individuals who identified as queer left-wing activists. Many of these nineteen narratives share a similar trajectory. I bring here the stories of only a few of them, which reflect the rest of this group.

In the interviews I conducted with these nineteen individuals, queer identification and political identification were narrated as two parallel experiences that could not be separated and that motivated the departure simultaneously. Not only did the separation between political activism and queer life seem blurred, but participants were also sometimes unable to distinguish between the two spheres. Challenging the Israeli nation, both on the question of Palestine and the occupation and on the question of gender identity and sexual orientation, was for some a turning point in their lives. They describe the moments of understanding that their very being as queer activists had made them redundant, abandoned by the state

and the nation, even to the extent of becoming endangered, enemies of the
state and the collective. The respondents of this study are positioned as an
Other from within, not because of their sexuality, but because of the queer
ways in which they position themselves in relation to the nation. The
Otherness I discuss in this chapter is the position taken by Israeli Jews,
who publicly oppose the Israeli regime, to the extent of taking part in
radical public protests, sometimes standing side by side with Palestinians.

The politics of belonging involves not only the maintenance and
reproduction of the boundaries of the community by the hegemonic
political power, such as the negative attitudes toward the Palestinians, but
also the production of resistance by other political agents (Yuval-Davis,
2011:20). In the introduction to her book *The Politics of Belonging,* Nira
Yuval-Davis (2011) states that belonging is about emotional attachment,
about feeling "at home."

> Belonging tends to be naturalized and to be part of the everyday
> practices [. . .] [I]t becomes articulated, formally structured
> and politicized only when it is threatened in some way. The
> politics of belonging comprise specific political projects aimed
> at constructing belonging to particular collectivity/ies which are
> themselves being constructed in these projects in very specific
> ways and in very specific boundaries. (Yuval-Davis, 2011:10)

The Israeli nation, like other nations, has specific cultural traditions
and a collective historical narrative in which the image of the Other
is constructed, as well as an understanding of the rules of how these
Others should be handled. The Palestinians (referred to by Israelis in the
generalized category of "the Arabs"), much more than Orthodox Jews,
Mizrahi Jews, Russian or Ethiopian immigrants, women, or queers, are
the most salient Other in Israel. Their position as the ultimate Other is
indisputable, and this position is relevant both to the Palestinians within
the 1948 borders of Israel and to those in the occupied territories.[1] The
construction of a collective is a dynamic process that usually includes
many contradictions, as well as the construction of Otherness. Israel's
nationalism has created a collective strongly united against the Arabs. Any
social ills, such as the extreme economic gaps between the upper class and
the lower class or the ongoing Mizrahi-Ashkenazi tension, are forgotten
during times of war and terror caused by the Arabs. A national state of
emergency, constituted in 1948 and never abolished, allows the Israeli
government to keep targeting the Arabs as a constant treat, preventing

any possibility for a socioeconomic reform (Jamal, 2000; Tzfadia, 2010). Therefore, anyone who is not taking part in this unity of Jews against the Arabs does not share the same goals and moral values as the Israeli nation and can be considered a threat to the security of the state, just like the Arabs themselves. The nation demands loyalty and solidarity based on common values and a projected myth of common destiny (Yuval-Davis, 2011:21).

For Yoav Peled, a strong community is constituted on the grounds of shared moral values. In a strong community, "ongoing existence is an important value in and of itself" (Peled, 1992:433). What will become of members of the civil society who cannot or will not become full members of the strong community? In a way, queer left-wing activists are in fact what David Evans called sexual minorities—"moral aliens," those who are to be found in the "marginal matrix of citizenship" (Evans, 1993:8). They live, Evans claims, "between the boundaries of immorality and illegality" (ibid.:8). Though Evans refers to sexual minorities, and Peled refers to racial minorities, the notion of the location of these minorities, in or out of the national moral community, remains relevant. The question of shared moral values describes well the specific community of queer left-wing activists. Some LGBT Israelis do not identify as left-wing, and some left-wing activists are, in their sexual preferences, heterosexuals. Thus, queer here is regarded as a deviant minority who share moral values that contradict the moral values of the national hegemonic community or the strong community.

In addition, revealing one's political affiliation to members of the Israeli nation can be articulated by the act of "coming out of the closet." Sedgwick (1990) has shown the distinctively indicative relation of "homosexuality to a wider mapping of secrecy and disclosure" (Sedgwick, 1990:71). "The closet" and "coming out," she claims, are "verging on all-purpose phrases for the potent crossing and recrossing of almost any politically charged lines of representation" (ibid.). Exiting "the closet" can be productively understood here as the violent reality of "coming out" to the streets of Israel or to the occupied territories, and expressing political opinions publicly. To these forms of coming out, we can add emigration, the absolute act of coming out of the territory and, in some ways, the nation.

As Diana Fuss argues, the position of the outsider is where "the complicated process by which sexual borders are constructed, sexual identities assigned, and sexual politics formulated" (1991:2). To be out, she argues, is to be "outside of exteriority and all the exclusion and

deprivation such outsiderness imposes" (ibid.:4). The terminology of sexual minorities works well in articulating the feeling of exteriority of queer left-wing activists. The narratives in this chapter illustrate the feelings of unbelonging of members of the collective, who do not share the central values shared by the majority of the population and constructed as social axiom. These contradicting moral values are what the collective sees as a threat to their very ongoing existence, which is why queer left-wing activists are excluded, hated, and encouraged to leave.

The respondents of this study positioned themselves as separated from the nation; they experience Israeliness as outside viewers. In this respect, the Other in this study is an uncommon Other. The respondents of the study are not an ethnic minority, a religious minority, or even a group gathered based on socioeconomic disadvantages. Their sexuality is not the issue either, as LGBT members who obey the social norms (such as fighting in the army or living in heteronormative kinship models, which includes the reproduction of Jewish babies) are embraced by the heterosexual collective (Kadish, 2005; Solomon, 2003). This kind of embrace by the society is what Lisa Duggan terms homonormativity (Duggan, 2004).

The overall embracing division in the state of Israel is, of course, between the Jews and non-Jews. Extreme left-wing activism is considered a threat to the nation. The most basic right a Jewish member of the nation has—the right to be in Israel—is exactly what these activists are denied. The nation publicly renounces left-wing activists' right to stay in the territory of Israel, because they identify with the enemy. The phrase "Go live in Gaza," which became a common expression shouted at activists and even Parliament members, marks the nonacceptance of left-wing beliefs, to the extent of having no right to live in Israel.[2] Even the un-provocative silent standing of Women in Black (a feminist antiwar movement) attracts responses like "you should be fucked by an Arab" (Solomon, 2003:160). Comments and remarks like "go to Gaza," "you traitor" and "Arab's whore" are the perfect illustration of the shared collective feelings regarding these Others from within.[3] In general, they are not wanted in Israel, a feeling that was apparent in many interviews.

The narratives in this chapter describe a small fraction of Israeli society that suffers from the results of being in constant resistance to the Israeli social order. Their failed attempt to create a change within a system in which they are perceived as traitors, in a continuous struggle with no solution on the horizon, has been transformed into a politics of departure. As we will see, departure becomes the only possible option for

the individuals introduced in this chapter. Suffering from the "uncommon degree of state violence [. . .] and the resultant pervasiveness of post-traumatic stress," Uri Gordon writes, these activists ended up with "a feeling of alienation and isolation" (2008:149).

The Location of Hatred and Unbelonging

I met David in 2009, when I stayed at his flat in Berlin. I interviewed him in 2013, a few months before he received his German passport, after having married a German woman he met during his activism in Palestine. David was 27 at the time, his boyfriend then was an American citizen. Once David became a German citizen he got a divorce and married his boyfriend, so he could stay in Berlin. On the day of the interview he ordered drinks for us in fluent German in the café he had picked. After a short chat, we decided to start the official interview, and I asked him, as I asked each of the participants, to tell me a little bit about himself and about leaving Israel. When I started recording, David opened his narrative in Arabic: "Ana Ismi David" (My name is David), he said. David knew I spoke Arabic, as we had gotten to know each other over the years. "Asli min Kalonia" (I'm originally from Kalonia). Not only did he pick Arabic to introduce himself, but he also referred to his hometown not by its current Jewish name, but by the name of the destroyed Palestinian village, which stood there until 1948. I teased him, saying that if he started with Arabic, he would have to continue in Arabic throughout the whole interview. He then answered in Arabic, started telling me the story of the village of Kalonia, but by the end of his first sentence we both laughed, and he switched to Hebrew. Later, I asked David how he introduced himself in Germany. He said that he often said that he was from Palestine, "I think it's an important political statement here, because everybody here more or less is a Zionist, so I like to say I'm from Palestine."

David said he was a very political person from an early age and mentioned that he joined Kvisa Shkhora (Black Laundry) even before he "came out of the closet." He also mentioned that he was arrested many times for participating in political activities. Kvisa Shkhora gathered around 250 radical queers in the days of the second *intifada* (Gordon, 2008: 145). Their first public appearance was at the pride events of 2001 in Tel Aviv, when they marched as a black block of people carrying the sign "No pride in the occupation" (Ziv, 2010; Baum, 2006). Members of Kvisa Shkhora expanded the call for social justice in Israel, bringing

together resistance to the occupation of Palestine, anticapitalist agendas, and criticism of the mainstream LGBT community and politics (Gordon, 2008). David said that as early as 15 he knew he was not going to join the army. At the age of 17, he received a subpoena for an interrogation by the Shin-Beit, Israel's special intelligence. His parents went with him to the interrogation, where they were told that their son was doing dangerous things and that they (the Shin-Beit) were worried he might get hurt. Many left-wing activists have been called to similar meetings, which are used to threaten and scare Jewish activists, aiming to prevent them from going to demonstrations in the occupied Palestinian territories in the future.

David left Israel in 2006, just a month after the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War. He said it was his "goodbye party." Regarding his arrival in Berlin, he referred to himself as part of "the second *aliyah*," using the Zionist discourse in reverse. The first wave of queer left-wing activists had arrived in Berlin a few years earlier, and he was assisted by what he called the "Berlin branch of Kvisa Shkhora," three queer Israelis who were living together in a commune. He was 19 when he left, just after high school, when members of his age group were joining the army. To be exempted from service, he claimed to be mentally unstable, even though he was one of the authors of a 2001 letter written by high school seniors who declared that they refused to serve in the army due to the occupation (Mihtav Hashministim).[4] David chose this option because he did not want to be sent to prison, like five other political refusniks, who spent two to five years in prison at that time.[5] On the day of recruitment, David said he refused to answer questions until he was sent to the psychiatrist, and he sabotaged his urine test by putting soap into his sample.[6] Due to his political activity, he was invited by international activists to go to a Jewish-Palestinian seminar in Germany, and he jumped at that opportunity in order to get a free flight to Europe:

> The first thing I knew was that I want[ed] to leave Israel. This is happening more or less from the age of 18 to 20—a very clear understanding that I cannot live in Israel. *First of all as a gay man, I* hate the gay scene in Israel. I don't get along well with gay Israelis. And the queer scene, as much as it is very nice and all that, I know everybody there. In Berlin, on the other hand, everybody here is so much more free. *It's easier to fuck. There is much more sexual freedom here.* So yes, that is one thing. The second thing is that as a political activist, life in Israel is stressful. Here in Berlin I can do political work as well

as rest. In Israel it's all too heavy. Especially in the period I was there, 2004 to 2006, it was exactly when the popular uprisings in the [Palestinian] territories were taking place. People were dying; it was important to go to demonstrations; lots of tear gas and a lot of the violence... no hope that the situation in Israel would change in some way... The total feeling in Israeli society at that time was alienation. Terror attacks and all of that. I wasn't feeling compassion or understanding for the rest of the Israelis. In general Israelis were kind of the enemy. It's not healthy to live in a country in which you hate most of the people on the street.

In David's narrative, sex and politics are tangled with each other, almost inseparable. In the same breath that he mentioned sexual freedom in Berlin and how easy it is to have casual sex there, he mentioned the difficulty of being an activist in the violent atmosphere of demonstrations.

Eran, 32 years old, left for Berlin in 2009, three years after David had left. Operation Cast Lead in Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009 pushed Eran to emigrate. In what was the most horrific attack on Gaza until the later events of the summer of 2014, Cast Lead violence on the Gaza Strip lasted for three weeks, causing the deaths of approximately 1,172 Palestinian civilians and 3 Israeli civilians.[7] While the attacks were criticized by the international community, leading to the Goldstone Report, which accused Israel of committing war crimes, most of Israeli civil society supported the attacks.[8] Israelis were encouraged to go to peripheral cities that were suffering from Hamas attacks and support the citizens and local businesses (Zarktzi, 2014). International media were perplexed by what was documented as happening in Israel during the attacks—people in the city of Sderot would gather on a small hillside to watch the Israeli Army's attack on the Gaza Strip and cheer on every explosion (Sderot Cinema, 2014, see figures 3.1 and 3.2 on page 74).

Eran studied in a college in Sderot and was a witness to this atmosphere. His words reflect the feeling of alienation from the discourse and behavior of other Israelis, which, to him, spread like a plague:

In Sderot, it was very easy to be exposed to the Israeli discourse. I don't think I need to clarify. Militarism, patriotism, racism— all of this was much more present in Sderot. And I really felt alienated from everything. Everything. I felt everything was contaminated with this, even my friends. And the period

Figure 3.1. Cinema Sderot–Israelis with popcorn and chairs cheering as missiles strike Palestinian targets. *The Independent,* July 13, 2014.

Figure 3.2. Cinema Sderot–Israelis with popcorn and chairs cheering as missiles strike Palestinian targets. *The Independent,* July 13, 2014.

> of Cast Lead was the most meaningful period of time. Let's say that is when I decided that this is it; I'm getting out of here; it's Cast Lead. It was a period of a month, which was really traumatic for me. First of all, there were these crazy celebrations in Sderot. People came to Sderot from all over Israel to celebrate. They were hanging Israeli flags; they came with trumpets, something completely. . . like a hallucination. I mean a patriotic celebration, a religious ritual. Not to mention the media that was completely supportive, you know "Israel has the right to defend itself," comments were all over Facebook, completely unrelated to reality, lies and all of that, you know, "they started it," "it's their fault," "they are all terrorists," bullshit.

Eran describes what Yuval-Davis terms as "Jewish fundamentalism" (1997:62). Fundamentalisms, she argues, are "political movements which have a religious or ethnic imperative and seek in various ways and in widely differing circumstances to harness modern state and media powers to the service of their gospel" (ibid.:61). Though Yuval-Davis differentiates between religious fundamentalist and liberation theologies, in the case of Israel these two become almost one, as nonreligious members of the collective can take part in what Eran describes as the "patriotic celebration, religious rituals." Eran, who criticized Israel for its brutal attacks on the population of Gaza, had participated in several demonstrations against the war:

> I went to a demonstration against the war in Tel Aviv. We were such a small number of people, and people there shouted at us that we are *traitors* and that we should go to Sderot, and I said, "I'm from Sderot." There was just no chance of changing that. *The hatred is so rooted*, it is never going to change; it's only going to get worse. And I understood that I can't live with this anymore. I mean, I can't. In general, I wasn't enjoying living in a place where I sit on a train, and I see soldiers sleeping with rifles. I don't like seeing guns. In times of war it was all very condensed, and I felt how the place is so strange to me, I wanted another place.

Just as David described the hatred he felt toward other Israelis, Eran described the hatred he felt was directed at him. Israel felt strange to him, so strange he wanted to look for another place to live.

Sivan, a 40-year-old woman who emigrated to Berlin 11 years before our interview, also mentioned the feeling of estrangement from Israel, although unlike David and Eran, she referred more to the place than to the people. Like David, Sivan referred to the Palestinian historical narrative and the memory of the Nakba (catastrophe) in her narrative. She spoke of her parents' house, what she was supposed to call home, and her narrative transcends the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to a feeling of not belonging to Israel, of not being in the right place, not even in her so-called home:

> It's everywhere, this understanding, that it's all someone else's. Take my parents' home, for example. They moved to this village near Jerusalem, and my mother shows me the plan for the house they're going to build. And she said: "Look how pretty. The architects planned that. There is this old house, and it can stay. We are not ruining it. We will build the house around it. It would be like the patio. And you can put plants there on the original stones of the house." Now, this is a Palestinian house! I mean, it's obvious. The house doesn't belong to . . . The people who built it and lived in it are not there. And this feeling is everywhere. It just doesn't feel right. Nothing there fits me. First of all, this idea that this is my country, I never felt it's mine, it's not mine! I feel even a little repulsed by that idea, that it is mine. I don't feel comfortable feeling belonging to this place. Something about this Zionist idea just doesn't work for me.

Unlike David, who perceives his connection to Israel and its territory through identification with its absentee Palestinian inhabitants, Sivan experienced a very different feeling. While David, who learned Arabic and investigated the history of where his parents chose to live, taking the political position of saying that he is actually from Kalonia, Sivan simply cannot find any sense of belonging. The Palestinian absentees haunt her "home," in ways that cannot allow her to feel at home. While David's political awareness has enabled him to transform his feelings toward the past that haunts his hometown into a political form of belonging, Sivan experienced a complete disconnection from the territory and what symbolizes the erasure of the Palestinian past. The different affects Israelis experience in their *home* suggests experiencing belonging in different forms. These forms of belonging relate to different ways of understanding a historical narrative, different ways of explaining the present state of the territory, of the homeland.

Queer Israelis and the Army

One Israeli institution must be discussed in relation to the notion of belonging to the Israeli nation—the army. Many participants, even those who did not identify as political, said that army service was a defining moment in the feeling of not being part of the Israeli nation. Participants like David and Rotem, who had the ability to be exempt from service, are already positioned at some distance from other members of their age group, and from the society in general. The army's role in the formation of Israeli society and its place as one of the most central social institutions in Israel cannot be questioned (Ben Eliezer, 2002; Ben-Ari et-al., 2002). Ronit Chacham writes that "being an Israeli citizen and a man means being a soldier [. . .] [T]he army seals the relationship between citizen and the state" (2003:8).

Literature regarding the Israeli Army has discussed its centrality to Israeli society and the civil militaristic structure that affects many aspects of society, such as gender relations and the construction and preservation of gender roles (Berkovich, 1999; Ssason-Levi, 2006); the education system (Gor-Ziv, 2005); the fertility discourse and parental roles (Hashiloni-Dolev, 2004; Melamed, 2004); and more. The militaristic formulation of Israeli society has been constantly visible in the national discourse, from the first days of the state;, and one might say that it existed even prior to the official establishment of the state. Meir Amor (2010) goes as far as to claim that army service itself has become a "cultural fetish."

> Army service is regarded so highly in society, that ostensibly there is no need to discuss the meaning of this normative commitment. The norm of serving is so important, that army service has become a mute discursive point. Army service has become an obvious value, an accepted concept and reality. It is a grounded reality that does not require nor demands explanations or reasoning. A social, political and cultural situation was constructed, that the lack of explaining it, is precisely what needs be explained. (Amor, 2010: 34–35)

Participation in the "people's army," as the Israeli Army is commonly termed, is both a collective and an individual act and can be defined as a condition that totally controls all aspects of life. The army service, Kimerling claims, is the only sociological experience all Jewish members of society have in common—women and men, the religious and the secular, immigrants and natives, right-wing and left-wing—which makes Israeli

society significantly militaristic (Kimerling, 1993:124). The militaristic
social atmosphere is constantly reinforced through the education system
and in songs, poems, films, literature, memorial days, industry, and
technological development. The geographic space is filled with memorials
and military monuments. Both citizens and political leaders accept the
constant state of war, institutionally as well as in one's mental state
(ibid.:127). Meira Weiss sees in this collectivism of the Israeli society
"the civil religion of Israel," the larger frame through which everything
is defined and "connected to the military threat Israel faces on a daily
basis" (2002:6).

As many of the individuals in the literature mentioned previously
expressed a strong link to Israel because of their army service, and saw
the army service as a way to preserve the "Israeliness" of their children
(see chapter 1), what kind of link to the Israeli nation is experienced by
those who have a negative relationship with the institution of the army,
the most important Israeli institution? The army, for the participants of
this study, functions not only as a symbol of the occupation, or of the
aggressive militaristic society, but also as a place where their queerness
becomes another element of alienation. Even though the state of Israel
portrays an accepting image of gays in the army, literature on the topic
shows a variety of experiences, many of them negative (Kaplan, 1999;
Kaplan et al., 2000; Gross, 2000; Shilo et al., 2006).

Out of 42 participants, only two women reported having a positive
experience in their army service, and only these two women thought that
if they were 18 again, they would still join the army. Ten participants (25%)
did not serve at all (9 were released by an army psychiatrist, and 1 by
the conscientious-objector committee). Three other participants had also
turned to the army psychiatrist and were released from service after serving
less than half of their mandatory service time. Most of the men described
the service as a time of depression and anxiety, and many of them described
joining the army as going back "into the closet," as they were afraid of how
soldiers and commanders in their units might react to their sexuality. I
discuss here two different kinds of experiences: individuals who did not
join the army at all, with the social consequences of that act, and individuals
who did join but articulate a very negative experience of service.

I met Efrat in uptown Manhattan, in the lobby of the laboratory
building, where she was doing her PhD in science. Efrat, 30 years old,
reflecting on her army service, said: "I hated every minute of it. The
whole thing was really abusive for women, in really extreme ways. In
retrospective, maybe being a lesbian was part of it, because I didn't take

part in the social construction of the boys and girls." When I asked Efrat if she thought about terminating the service in the middle, she said: "No, it wasn't an option. I could go see a psychiatrist and get exempt, but I've *preferred to suffer for another year* and finished like everybody else." Efrat preferred to suffer for a whole year, just so she would not be looked at as someone who did not finish a full army service. For her, as for many of the other participants, there was not really an option of not joining the army. Kobi said, "It was obvious that you go to the army. When I said to my big brother that I was thinking of maybe not going to the army, he got really stressed out. He thought it might affect *his* army career, so it was obvious that I don't have any other option."

The sexual orientation of the participants became crucial when the topic of army service was mentioned in the interviews. Refael, 35 years old (New York), recalled:

> It was obvious I'm going to the army. There wasn't any question about it. And it was sad that there wasn't any question about it, because the army was dreadful. I joined the intelligence force because I studied Arabic in high school, and I was proud of myself. At that time I already had a boyfriend. I told my parents and my sisters, and they were okay with it. And I told people in my high school, and they didn't die. Everybody was okay with it. But at the age of 18 and a half, I joined the army, and I went back into the closet. It was a conscious ceremony of returning to the closet. I broke up with my boyfriend. Completely artificially, I said, "I can't be in a relationship because I'm joining the army." *Because you can't be gay in the army*. I was completely terrified that I was not going to be okay socially in the army because I'm gay.[. . .] I was going through boot camp for a month and then I was in a six-month course in a closed army base, and that was just terrible, terrible. It recreated all my childhood experiences with boys. It was just intolerable. I was terrified they would find out I am gay, so I just told more and more lies . . . and during the course I started being really depressed, and at some point I was diagnosed with clinical depression.

While Refael mentioned that joining the army meant giving up on his gay identity, Oren felt that because of his gay identity he had to join the army, just to prove that he is "just like anyone else":

> I joined the army at the age of 18. Even though I didn't want to join, somehow I was sorted into the pilot training. I passed all the stages, and it was like a dream that I had as a little boy, to be a pilot, and of *course I went back into the closet. Why do I say "of course"? Because the army is a symbol of normativity,* and if you are there and you want to survive it, specially being one of those things that the army is proud of, a pilot, then you have to be what they expect of you. (29 years old, Berlin)

Oren's narrative illustrates well how the army itself is a symbol of normative behavior in Israel. In a way, the army, as a symbol of the state, demands that queers give up their sexual identity. Oren tried to do the impossible. Although he went back "into the closet," he tried to serve in the elite unit of the air force as a pilot, undoubtedly the position considered to be the most desired of all. His aim, taking this very difficult and challenging path, was to show that even gay men can be part of the best:

> I was there for a year, and after a year there is a mission, a training in which you are outside for a week, like in an enemy territory, and you're running away, and there's no food, and you're supposed to hide all the time. It's terrible, really. So I'm sitting there in the desert, and I'm asking myself, "What am I doing here really? This is not what I was aiming for." So I survive the first night and then I told my commander that I wanted out of the program. You see, all this idea of being in that pilot training, it was a really strong thing for me, to *show everybody that even though I'm gay, I can do this.*

For Oren, being a pilot meant that he would have something that could make his parents proud of him, even though he was gay. Eventually, after leaving that position, he was put in a different army unit, which also made him feel terrible. After two years of service, Oren asked to see an army psychiatrist and said he was thinking about committing suicide. He was then released from the remaining year of mandatory service. Not long after that, he left for Germany.

Although usually questions of race and immigration, which challenge the identity and the boundaries of the community, are considered to be what may threaten the collective, other differences can acquire the character of a pathological deviation that can threaten the community. These can be cultural, political, or sexual diversities (Yuval-Davis, 1997:73). This is

the case in regard to queer left-wing activists in Israel. The narratives of Refael and Oren, as well as those of many other participants, link the embodiment of their sexual deviation with their feeling of deviation from within a system like the Israeli Army. The army is the most prominent social institution, symbolizing the nation and the grouping of morals, values, and future destiny. The wish to belong is so strong that they suffer (physically and mentally) in trying to prove that queers *do* belong within it, and the harsh reality Oren faced, understanding that they do not belong there, was another step toward a total departure from this collective, another step toward emigration.

Pinkwashing, Black Laundry, and Other Occupational Hazards

Great achievements have been made in legislation regarding LGBT rights in Israel in the past three decades. In 1988, sodomy was decriminalized (Solomon, 2003:152). In 1993, the military asserted that gay men and lesbians would be recruited and promoted without regard to their sexual orientation (ibid.). In 1994, the Supreme Court of Israel ruled that El Al, the national airline, must grant the same privileges to employees' same-sex domestic partners as it did to their lawful spouses (ibid.). While these positive changes cannot be overlooked, Gross (2013b) suggests that these achievements are not an unequivocal proof of a progress centering LGBT rights per se. He highlights the irony of the present situation where Israel is boasting about the achievements won by the LGBT community with great effort, mostly through judicial proceedings against state representatives who were objecting to these very changes in legislation (Gross, 2013b:106, 109).

Whatever was the decisive element behind the different legal changes and achievements, it cannot be denied that a large-scale transformation in Israeli public opinion is apparent, and a more welcoming and accepting atmosphere prevails in Israel today. Notwithstanding these progressive developments, public figures continued to express homophobic attitudes. Several events from the 2000s onward included public figures in the government and Knesset openly expressing homophobic attitudes, and many acts of violence towards members of the community occurred and keep occurring.[9] Among these are a stabbing incident in the Jerusalem 2005 pride event, the shooting and killing of gay youth in Tel Aviv in 2009, and the stabbing and killing in the Jerusalem pride march of 2015.[10] The events in 2009 and 2015 exposed, again, horrible homophobia, but

at the same time led to huge national rallies condemning the killing and embracing LGBTs. The 2009 event signifies a new phase in Israel's politic, since for the first time Israeli right-wing parties took part in organizing events for the LGBT community, such as the main rally after the killing, and in the following years, right-wing parties have also started establishing gay forums (Stern Hoffman, 2012). These transformations later enabled Israel's "homonationalism" (Puar, 2007), when Israeli authorities started using LGBT rights to promote a nationalist agenda.

In addition, Israel, and Tel Aviv specifically, is praised for being a "gay haven," both by the LGBT mainstream community and by heterosexual government officials. Much has been written about Israel's "pinkwashing" propaganda (Morgensen, 2012; Puar, 2013; Schulman, 2011). Since the end of the 1990s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Israeli consulates around the world have used gay rights for public relations, to improve the image of Israel at the international level, especially in relation to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (Gross, 2013a:107). Israel also highlights human rights violations against Palestinian LGBTs in the West Bank, concealing its own human rights violations against the Palestinians.

The participants of this study narrate belonging to a different collective, not the Israeli one, but a queer collective, a radical activist community. They have established this collective or joined it in its early stages, forming and creating a space they can call their own in a state they do not feel they belong to, neither to the territory, nor to the society. In a way, they did not form this community, but were pushed to become it. In the following three sections, I describe the narratives of three queer left-wing activists who experience belonging in Israel in a different way. As the narratives below show, they speak of a mutual understanding of their redundancy in the eyes of the state and civil society. Violence is an important element in their gathering together, violence directed at them specifically and at other minorities in general. And, in a way, violence was also the final push out of the territory of Israel into the diaspora, the transformation of the queer Israeli community into a diasporic community.

Foreplay

My first ever direct action was in the South Hebron hills.[11] On one of my first times there, we went to help some Palestinian farmers. When we finished, we were suddenly attacked by Noar ha'gvaot (hilltop youth).[12] They were throwing giant rocks at

> us. I was really scared. That was the moment, I think, I was
> the most afraid in my life. I thought they wanted to kill me.
> The scary part was that I understood that they *did* want to
> kill me. And the same goes for demonstrations against the
> Separation Wall in Bil'in [a Palestinian village in the West
> Bank]. *This is where you understand the state doesn't want you
> there*. And that's a moment that drives you into action. Look,
> the experience of swallowing for the first time tear gas in a
> demonstration is a moment of inauguration for any Jewish
> activist. I remember my first time. Soldiers threw tear-gas, and
> I couldn't see anything, I was running away in a cloud of white
> smoke, coughing, barely breathing. And the person who saved
> me, who showed me where to go, was a Palestinian woman.
> *These are the moments you know who is with you and who is
> against you.* (Omri, 40 years old, New York)

What Omri describes above sheds light on the affective consequences of
being a left-wing activist in Israel/Palestine. Gordon writes that Israeli
activists suffer from an "uncommon degree of state violence" and that many
of them experienced PTSD as a result (Gordon, 2008:148). The violence
directed at them by the Israeli regime includes exposure to tear gas, sound
grenades, rubber-coated metal bullets, and even live ammunition. Israelis
who take part in activism in Israel/Palestine experience "anxiety, guilt,
depression, irritability and a feeling of alienation and isolation" (ibid.:149).

    After his army service, Omri moved to Jerusalem to study at the
prestigious Bezalel Academy of Art and Design. "Jerusalem is what brings
all the contradiction of Zionism and the Israeli-Palestinian experience
to the extreme," he said, describing the city that made him look for
explanations and drove him to become more and more politically aware.
One day he read, in the only Israeli gay magazine, *Hazman Havarod* (no
longer in print) about Kvisa Shkhora, and said he thought it meant gays
against the occupation, and it seemed to him an accurate connection of
the two issues:

> I was given a book about feminism from one of the women
> there, and I understood that it was a feminist direct-action
> group. I had to go from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv to get to these
> meetings. They gave me a community to belong to. This is
> basically the community that I was part of from that moment
> and until I left Israel. I'm talking about a decade, maybe even

11 years. Many of the people I met then, which were actually
the first weeks *of Kvisa Shkhora, they* are my friends until this
very day.

Adi, two years younger than Omri, also talked about the period of the
first *intifada* and joining Kvisa Shkhora and Anarchists against the Wall[13]
as formative events in her life, moments she understood where she and
her friends, her community, are positioned in relation to the state:

The first Intifada, I mean the first days of Kvisa Shkhora *and
Anarchists against the Wall* were really formative events for
me. One time, in 2002, before Anarchists against the Wall and
Kvisa Shkhora were established, we went to a demonstration
against Efi Aitam, who was inciting Jews to kill Arabs.[14] He was
talking to high school children in this religious yeshiva. And
we were standing there, and the police arrived, and also the
special police units (*yasam*). They said, "You have 30 seconds to
leave the premises." We were 50 people I think, and they lied.
They didn't wait even one second. They were just racing at us,
beating everybody, and I was standing there thinking, "What
the fuck are you doing?" And because I was so shocked, this
girl I was dating, she ran out and then she saw I wasn't there,
so she came back into this mess of fighting and grabbed me by
the hands and took me out. And they completely tore to pieces
one of my friends who was carrying a camera and then arrested
him. We filed a complaint to the Department of Interrogating
Police Officers. We came with 15 other people to testify, but
they closed it out of "lack of public interest." We also had a
video of the police beating him up, and we tried to send it to
channel 10 or 2, but nobody was interested. I was shocked.
Really. *It was like this moral crisis.* And then demonstrations
against the wall started, about a month after that, and I was
arrested. It was crazy. It was as if there were no laws, and the
police could do whatever they want. We were demonstrating
in Israel, *and they brought four buses of soldiers armed from
head to toe, against 20 lesbians.* I was 22 years old, and four
soldiers were carrying me to a bus, I mean—what is going
on here?! It does not make sense. It's not okay. And when we
were arrested, and I was really scared, this policewoman told
us, "*You know, we can shoot you and say that you were trying*

to assault us, and nobody would know." So this is the moment you understand what it means to be under the influence of sovereignty and power.

At the time of the interview, Adi had been living in Berlin for three years. We met in the second week of the 2014 war between Israel and the Gaza Strip, Operation Protective Edge. It was also the day of the World Cup final and, on that night, Germany was playing against Brazil. The score was 7:1 to Germany, and people on the streets of Berlin were shooting fireworks. Both Adi and I shivered every time the sound of an explosion was heard. There was something surreal about the situation, and the violent events in Israel/Palestine were shadowing the interview, as well as embodied within us, with the way we sat in the room, jumped each time a firework was being fired outside. We were both physically present in that room, but our minds were somewhere else. The recording of the interview reflects this well. The narrative is constantly interrupted, the attempts to go back to where we stopped, to be coherent, failed. The fireworks are heard as well.

Adi joined the army, but unlike Omri, after a year, she got an exemption based on mental health reasons. Leaving the army, as well as being a lesbian, had really devastated her relationship with her family:

> These were very extreme years for me, I left the army, and I was a lesbian. They didn't take it very well. My mom basically threw me out of the house, and exactly then the second intifada started. Basically, all throughout the period of the intifada we weren't in touch. She really terrorized me.

In Adi's narrative, similar to David's, sexuality and political activism are almost inseparable. The process of coming out to her family is parallel to the process of becoming politically active. Sexuality and political views are deemed equally deviant in the eyes of her mother, who kicks her out of the house. Adi was attending demonstrations with her partner and was even describing one of the demonstrations as "20 lesbians" in front of four buses of policemen and soldiers. Her identity as a lesbian and a feminist also influenced her activism with the Palestinians she was acting in solidarity with:

> When you get to Bil'in, the stuff you have to deal with, I mean, the only people from the village that communicate with you are

men. So it becomes a very gendered experience. We are sitting with the men, and their wives are serving us. How exactly are we supposed to contain that? But you know, they are being shot at, so are you going to start educating them now? And you know that if you are there (Jewish activists) these people are not getting killed, and when we were not there, people were getting killed. You basically go insane. And this is why I can honestly say that the people I met in that period have become my soul mates, you know, you develop very brave friendships under fire.

Adi connects some of the experiences she had with homophobia and discrimination with Israeli men who have been affected by militarism. When she worked in a newspaper as a reporter, and they had to let some people go because of budget problems, she said, "I was the only woman, the only nonstraight person, out of ten. It was very obvious to anyone involved that if somebody would get fired, it would be me."

Similar to Omri and Adi, Noga described the process of becoming politically active as a formative experience, as well as of criticizing Israeli men and Israeli military machismo. She even spoke of her departure as motivated by a constant feeling that she would not be able to have a relationship with an Israeli man. Noga, 37 years old, was born in Israel to a left-wing family, who decided to leave for the United States when she was 11 years old. Her father, she said, was an anti-Zionist who did not want to perform reserve army service. At the age of 23 she returned to Israel without her family. In her thoughts, Israel was a place in which she felt she could form a community. She landed in Israel in 2000, exactly at the outbreak of the second *intifada*.

I didn't know anything, didn't know what the occupation is, what settlements are, nothing. And when I got there, I really tried to find out who are these Palestinians, why do they hate us so much? I wanted to go to the territories to speak to people there and understand what was so bad that made them want to murder us. I became politicized because of what I saw in the territories. It was a very fast process. It wasn't sitting and reading stuff; it was being in the middle of it, taking a position. And once you interfere, you're being treated in a different way, the same way soldiers treat Palestinians. And it was a very heavy clash. I was establishing Anarchist against the Wall, and I was

very involved in that, and at the same time I was studying at Tel Aviv University, I was taking Middle Eastern studies, and you can only imagine . . . I mean, it was intolerable—you're in the territories and you see something very very harsh, this crazy reality, and then you go in the afternoon to Tel Aviv University, and the only time the history of the Palestinian people is mentioned is in one line in one book, and you think, "Fuck you. Who are you kidding?" In the beginning, I really thought the course would teach the history and the political history of the Middle East, I didn't think it would all be directed at security needs. I was naïve of course.

In her first year in Israel, Noga was arrested eight times for taking part in political demonstrations, which shaped her political understanding and a sense of solidarity with the people she was fighting with. Just like Adi and Omri reflected, Noga said, "When you see your friends being shot, and people you know being killed, it drives you to action." At a certain point, Noga said, she left Anarchist against the Wall and became more involved in queer activism. Going queer meant, for Noga, finally becoming part of a group where all her personal identifications could fit well. Noga was a sex worker, and she felt the heterosexual left-wing groups could not understand that, not to mention the rest of the Israeli collective.

> The queer community is critical against chauvinism and sexism, and it combines criticism and radical political activism from many angles, not just the Palestinian minority, but also gender issues and other minorities. So I think it was a framework that I could be protected better in, and I could also work on my activism in relation to sex workers and whores. See, I was maybe the only person doing anything about it in Israel. There was no community that did anything about it. *I was always on an outsider level because it was hard for Israelis to identify or even understand what I do*, and the queer frameworks were the only places that I could combine things from that political direction.

Queer politics, as Noga narrated it, is what enabled her to widen her political engagements with various topics, as well as feel protected within the political community she became part of. Her words illustrate the way Leela Gandhi connects "the experience and condition of homosexuality"

as a source for "ethical and political capacity" (Gandhi, 2006:35). Reading into Edward Carpenter's work, Gandhi traces in the condition of homosexuality the ground for solidarity with foreigners, outcasts, and outsiders. Noga's queer politics, even though her sexual practices are conducted with men, can be explained in the way Gandhi reads Carpenter's thoughts, "homosexual politics whose distinctiveness accrues less from dissident "sex acts" and more from a radical reconfiguration of association, alliance, rationality, community" (ibid.:36).

Going queer meant taking part in different groups, created by Noga and her queer activist friends, most of whom have also left, she said. They organized cultural events for the members of their community, as well as public events. I can remember one specific event in which Noga was riding a pink, penis-like installation, which was constructed to look like the shank of a military tank. This installation was carried by bikes on a main street in Tel Aviv, before it was destroyed by police officers. While the performance/installation was taking place, Noga and the activists were shouting slogans like "Saluting the national erection," while the pink, penis-like shank was shooting blue and white ribbons, the colors of the Israeli flag (see figures 3.3–3.4).

Parties were organized to fill the void of queer culture in Israel, but also as the place to socialize at the end of demonstrations and direct actions. Omri described the connection between political activism and the queer nightlife: "You go to demonstrations in the daytime, and you fight, and then at night you wear glitters and go party. The energies at the demonstrations are very masculine and violent, so it's important to put some fun into that schedule." Adi shared a similar story: "It was very extreme, you go from one setting in which you are being shot at, to a party." But even these parties were not allowed to happen without the interference of the state. One of these parties in 2004 was even named Queerfada, an event that all three mentioned in their narratives:

> It's an historical event. It was the alternative pride's week party. It was in a loft in South Tel Aviv, and it was distinctly a queer party. We were fundraising for Anarchist against the Wall. It was very diverse. The people who came to these events were not just gays, but also heterosexuals who could identify with the contents and objectives. And then a few police officers arrived because somebody complained about the noise. And when they came in they saw men in dresses and Keffiyehs,[15] [and] they saw flyers of Anarchist against the Wall, so they called

Figure 3.3. Saluting the National Erection, queer demonstration in Tel Aviv. Retrieved from https://liadland.wordpress.com/performances-and-projects/saluting-the-national-erection/.

Figure 3.4. Saluting the National Erection, queer demonstration in Tel Aviv. Retrieved from https://liadland.wordpress.com/performances-and-projects/saluting-the-national-erection/.

> for backup. Around 50 to 100 more police officers arrived, and
> they entered the party really violently, started throwing speakers,
> rolling people down the stairs. It was crazy, like a riot. It was
> the Stonewall of Israeli queers. So many people ended up in
> the hospital, that's why it was called the Queerfada. I mean,
> the name says it all. (Adi)

The queer parties and festivals almost always included drug performances.
Noga performed many times, and her political drug performances were
very memorable. Once, in an event marking 40 years of Israeli occupation,
she performed in a public garden in Tel Aviv, a place previously known
for gay cruising. She wore a traditional Palestinian head cover and dress
and lip-synched the song "War is Good," one of the songs in a political
rock opera called *Mami,* which deals with the occupation. As she lip-
synced the lyrics: "The country is measured by length in kilometers and
not its numbers of graves [. . .] death doesn't scare me, death is nothing
but a corridor to Jewish essence [. . .] God will take us to him [...] War
is good," she uncovered her body, wearing a bra and underwear with the
Palestinian flag on them. She then completely undressed, sat on a chair,
opened her legs in front of the audience, and pulled out of her vagina
a small Israeli flag smeared with blood. The performance transcended
the originally provocative lyrics of the song, outside of the theaters to
the public space of south Tel Aviv. The lyrics emphasize the criticism of
Jewish-Israeli society, which supposedly sanctifies wars and sees death in
the name of protection of the homeland as a pathway to God and Jewish
essence.

In her book, *Affective Communities,* Gandhi inquiries into the
politics of "betrayal," "departure," "flight" and "treason" taken by various
individuals in what she terms "radical anti-imperialist activities" (Gandhi,
2006:2). She investigates the ethical imperative and the precise energies
that separated some from the empire's "strict observance of the ideological
thresholds," creating subcultures of innovative border crossings, "visible in
small defiant flights from the fetters of belonging towards the unknown
destinations of radical alterity" (ibid.:3). For Gandhi, a "departure from
the self-confirming orderliness of imperial habitation" was an "experience
of profound psychic disengagement," shared by a conjunction of various
forms of disobeying subjects: sexual dissidents, animal rights activists,
and prosuffrage activism and socialism. The abandonment of the imperial
project, she claims, carried with it the promise of ideal community and
a utopian order of things. Weaving together energies of anarchism,
Marxism, and utopian experimentation, individuals and movements

facilitated a series of countercultural revolutionary practices that she
terms "the politics of friendship" (2006:5–7).

Gandhi articulates the coalition created by queer left-wing activists,
who are in solidarity with "an emerging and unpredictable assemblage
of positions" (ibid.:33), such as Palestinians and Jews, sex workers and
anarchists, queers and animal rights activists, in what Donna Haraway
describes as the "monstrous" and "illegitimate community" (Haraway,
2003:33). Among the participants of this study, and specifically among
the group of left-wing activists, many were vegan, some had participated
in animal rights activism when they were in Israel, two of them were
sex workers, and some of them identified as anarchists. The concept of
friendship, which was mentioned frequently in Noga, Adi, and Omri's
narratives, is articulated both as the motivation for action and what
created a community with which they could carry on a political struggle.
It is this form of the "politics of friendship" that enables the creation of
a community and the feeling of belonging.

Second Base

Omri, Adi, and Noga describe similarly their politicization process in the
period of the first *intifada*, and they share a feeling of unbelonging to the
Israeli collective, both as political activists, but also as queer subjects and
as women. The decision to emigrate, to leave Israel, surrounds them, as
a question that constantly haunts the queer left-wing community they
are part of:

> Talking about leaving Israel was heard in my social circle
> since I can remember myself. I'm not talking about me alone.
> Everybody talked about leaving all the time. All the time.
> It was always there. One of the affects of activism and of a
> community based on activism is the feeling of guilt, endless
> feeling of guilt. That you say—if I leave Israel and I won't fight
> against the occupation nobody will, and the occupation will
> win. We have to be here. We have to fight. The idea of leaving
> Israel was never strange to me. This is also a community of
> people that has the privilege to do it. some of them have
> foreign citizenship. ome of them studied abroad or they have
> some kind of connections abroad. (Omri)

Omri was 36 years old when he left for the United States in 2011, first
going to San Francisco and then, after a year, moving to New York. His

American citizenship and the money he got from his father were what enabled his departure, after years of talking and thinking about it. When I asked him what pushed him to leave, he said that the money he finally had in his hand, along with a realization that, as he said, "the project of Tel Aviv has come to an end." In his mind, when he left in 2011, he understood that the form of activism and queer life he used to have were no longer available in Tel Aviv:

> I was doing less and less activism because the queer activism had changed. The [Israeli] activism in relation to freeing Palestine became more and more violent, masculine, dogmatic. What used to be dangerous and sexy activism, where I learned many things, activism that could actually break frameworks, this was all gone. The queer activist community when I left consisted of white lesbians who were reproducing the most annoying discourses of white Protestants in the US, all that shit about safe words and triggers. I had nothing to learn there anymore. Anything that was interesting became rotten and boring. Things in Israel are going in a bad direction. And I think I escaped on time. Back then I didn't realize exactly what was happening. Back then all I thought is that I have my privilege of having an American citizenship, and I have this 15,000 shekels ($4,200) that others don't have, and I did what I had to do with it. I moved.

For Adi, the moment she understood she had to leave was the killing of gay youth in Tel Aviv in the summer of 2009. In one of the most horrifying days for the LGBT community in Israel, a masked man entered a gay youth center in Tel Aviv, and started shooting youngsters who had arrived for a Saturday night activity (Heller, 2009). A 16-year-old girl and one of the counselors, a 24-year-old man, were killed, and 12 others, all younger than 18, were hurt. Two of the injured remain in wheelchairs. The event shocked Israeli society, even though religious and political leaders expressed homophobic beliefs publicly. Just a year earlier, MK Nisim Ze'ev from the religious party Shas said that gays should be treated as the Avian influenza is treated, practically saying gays should be killed (Bender, 2008). To this day no one has been convicted for the killing. The killing exposed homophobia in Israeli society, which appeared on the Internet, and in the reaction of the families of some of the victims, a few of whom refused to go to the hospital where they were being treated,

and prevented them from returning to their homes after being discharged (Kushrak, 2009). At the same time, the events in 2009 led to huge national rallies condemning the killing and embracing LGBTs.

Moreover, the most significant reaction was a general attempt to negate the connection between the killing and homophobia. People suggested that the murder might have been the act of one person, due to personal reasons, a claim that was criticized by Aeyal Gross as expressing what he termed "liberal homophobia." Gross argues that a shooting targeting LGBT youth, even if done by an individual whose hate is part of his personal history, could not be separated from the social structures of heterosexism and homophobia (Gross, 2013b:110). For Adi, the killing at the gay youth center was a decisive moment:

> I was there a few seconds after the killing. We heard the shooting and screaming, because we were so close, and it was crazy. We arrived even before the police was there. We saw the bodies, the blood, the people that were screaming. And then somebody said . . . there was this rumor that the shooting continued in the Evita [a gay bar], but nobody knew anything. It was fucking terrifying. And I called my friends, two gay men who were my flat mates. They also left actually. They live now in Belgium. *We all left, gone with the wind.* So I called and told them not to leave the house, because they look so gay. We heard that somebody's walking with a gun on Rothschild Avenue and shooting gays. Anyways, from this moment, *I really felt that we have been forsaken. We were abandoned! I mean, me and my friends—we had no one to protect us.* Because of all that I decided I had to leave. I was already very exhausted. So then I made the decision, I'm doing it, I'm doing it! And really, like a sociopath, I searched for a job in the high-tech industry, which I knew was a way to save money for the move.

It was interesting to hear how all three felt in several different incidents that they were forsaken by the state, abandoned, their safety neglected. Remarkably, it shows that they had *some* sense of belonging. They really believed, in the first stages of their activism, that the state should secure their safety, even while protesting against forms of oppression the state had created. Whether it was in the territories or in Israel itself, Omri, Adi, and Noga learned at the very beginning of their political becoming that they were not wanted there, that the security authorities could hurt

them without being put on trial, that nobody in Israel, not even the media, cares about violence against activists. The fact that the police have not arrested anyone for the killing in the gay center, Adi said, strengthened what she had felt immediately after the killing. And when she said, "We were forsaken," the "we" she speaks of is a different collective—the Other's collective—be it Jewish queers, left-wing activists, Palestinians, sex workers, all of those minorities whose lives are not protected.

The Morning After

When we met in Berlin, four years after Noga had emigrated, she said she finally had the opportunity to work on performances not just related to the Palestinian occupation. In a sex workers' festival in 2014, she staged a performance about her work as a sex worker, something she said she had no time to develop when she was in Israel. Her work and her beliefs, she said, also prevented her from developing a relationship with an Israeli man: "One of the things that I wanted to do and I couldn't was to develop a relationship. I really believe that I can't do that in Israel, definitely not with Israeli men, and here, where you can find different kinds of people from different kinds of places and cultures, this became a possibility." Noga experienced Israeli men as militaristic, aggressive, and on top of it all, unaccepting of her occupation as a sex worker. A few months after I met her for the interview, Noga started a relationship with Hamed, a Lebanese man. A year later, we celebrated the Jewish New Year in Berlin. They had been a couple for more than a year, and Hamed, whom I met for the first time that night, had a queer spark in his appearance, wearing eye makeup and nail polish. Noga's unique appearance, one that drew a lot of attention in Israel, was free to be stretched to the extreme. She changed her hair color frequently, but it was always bright and different. At this New Year's party, it was red, decorated with a plastic flower-shaped hairpin. Long glittery earrings were dangling from her ears, and sparkling bracelets and necklaces announced her arrival with their sounds. She wore high leather boots exposing lace leggings, an extremely short mini skirt, and a flashy top. Noga and Hamed were kissing and making out, starting the New Year in a very happy mood.

Noga was not the only one who described a positive transformation regarding her sex life or relationship status, as well as a general improvement in her emotional stability in her new destination. Omri, who also mentioned at the beginning of my interview with him that his emigration "took place in order to achieve sexual freedom," associated a

general improvement in his mood and in his life with the sex he could finally have outside of Israel:

> It was good for me there, because I was fucking. And I really emphasize this thing—I was happy, and I was fucking. Two things I didn't have in Tel Aviv, you know what I mean? And *I was happy because I was fucking, and I was fucking because I was happy*. When you take yourself out of a situation of an ongoing gang rape, I mean a situation that you're being shot at, you've been beaten up, you can't breathe! And when I got to San Francisco—you know, in Tel Aviv I was a bitch, but in San Francisco I was a very nice man. I was a very nice person there, and people really picked up on it, they really wanted my company, and those people were men and those men were gay, so when I say they wanted my company it usually meant that they wanted my dick in their mouth, you know? It was the happy arrangement between equals, really. The sex was fantastic.

While Omri seems to be completely detached from Israel and his activist past, Adi shared surprisingly nostalgic feelings for the violent events that pushed her away:

> I miss it, you know? Berlin is like a sanatorium. There's nothing real here. I mean there's no death. Nobody is dying. I remember in 2003, or 2006, our very extreme way of living, you know, the concept of going to a demonstration, and people shoot at you, and you run and then you go dancing in a party, even though you are exhausted. Here? There's nothing like that inside the European Union. Here you come back from a demonstration, you take a shower, and then you go watch *The Sopranos* in bed. No one ends up in a hospital. Some people are poor but that's it.

Adi reflects that she might be "addicted" to wars; however, she has no second thoughts about Israel. She found her place in the activist scene in Berlin. She is part of a group of Middle Eastern exiles who meet every few weeks. This group, among others, organized a few of the demonstrations that gathered Jewish Israelis and Arabs against the war on Gaza in 2014 (Reichburg, 2014). She was also part of a group of Israeli and Iranian exiles who met in 2011 and had a few demonstrations in Berlin against

the escalation of the security situation between Israel and Iran (Chiki-Arad, 2012). When I asked her why she chose Berlin, she said that it was mainly due to the left-wing scene which had emigrated from Tel Aviv, a group she called in the interview "the pioneers," using words drawn from the Zionist discourse of *aliyah* to Israel.

Noga continued to be an activist as well, and, along with Adi, David, Natan, and many of the other queer Israelis in Berlin, she organizes and takes part in political events connected to Israel/Palestine, events she can combine with the rest of her political interests. Her activism in relation to Israel/Palestine is not grounded in the territory of Berlin only. In November 2011, she flew to Israel for the elections and performed in drag near election booths in Tel Aviv and Be'er Sheva. The performance was filmed and made into the movie *Ain't No Democracy Here* (see figures 3.5 and 3.6).

In the film, she appears wearing leather clothing as a BDSM queen, while she is holding by a leash her "slave," a male actor. After humiliating and slapping her slave, she convinces him, against his initial wish, to vote for Binyamin Netanyahu and the right-wing government. The

Figure 3.5. Activist's video art project *No Democracy Here*. Retrieved from https://liadland.wordpress.com/performances-and-projects/no-democracy-here/.

Figure 3.6. Activist's video art project *No Democracy Here*. Retrieved from https://liadland.wordpress.com/performances-and-projects/no-democracy-here/.

performance, she explained, was an allegory for the Israeli public, who are tortured and held captive by a right-wing government, which they keep voting for, election after election.

Conclusion

To think through the notion of identifying oneself with a collective, or departing from a collective, I wish to use Muňoz's notion of "collective potentiality":

> To disidentify is to read oneself and one's own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to "connect" with the disidentifying subject. It is not to pick and choose what one takes out of the identification . . . not to wilfully evacuate the politically dubious or shameful components within an identificatory locus. Rather, it is the reworking of those energies that do not elide the "harmful" or contradictory components of any identity. (2009:24)

The stories I presented here reflect the narratives of nearly half of the people I met and interviewed. They reflect the ways they "disidentify," to use Muñoz's term, with Israel's army, government, political situation, the occupation, and the macho society in Israel. This specific group of emigrants, queer left-wing activists, portray a different notion of belonging. Their shared common sense and values, as well as future goals, as articulated by Yuval-Davis, do not conform to those of the nation. Instead of belonging emotionally, morally, and physically (i.e. serving in the army) to the Israeli nation, they created a different collective and formed a different set of affective connections to this new community. The loyalty and solidarity that Yuval-Davis identifies as required by the nation from each individual, in order to be entitled to belonging, are directed by queer left-wing activists in a different direction. Instead of solidarity with the Jewish citizens of Israel, they formulate various ways of expressing their solidarity with the Palestinians. Instead of being loyal to the country, the homeland, they are loyal to their friends and allies, those who take, with them, the dangerous position of demonstrating in Israel and in the Palestinian occupied territories. This collective enabled a feeling of belonging, to the extent of constructing a community in which the activists could live according to their shared moral values. A framework in which all aspects of life are entangled with each other, thus political activity, parties, and sex all happen in the same social space.

It is the dismantling of this community, by the departure of its members, one after the other into the diaspora, that has contributed to the emigration of more and more activists. This community, while they were still in the territory of Israel/Palestine, provided for its members the space they needed to survive socially and mentally. However, emigration meant the slow process of taking apart this very community. Omri had no friends still living in Tel Aviv, and he criticized what has become of the queer community that was created by new members, perhaps the second generation of queer Israeli activists.

The emotional attachments I discussed earlier are part of the way these emigrants experienced their life in Israel, and the way they experience Israel from the diaspora. Emigration certainly does not mean emotional detachment. This is articulated, for instance, in the way Adi perceives Berlin as a kind of sanatorium. On the one hand, the sanatorium is a metaphor for a place of healing and relaxation. On the other hand, this metaphor demonstrates precisely the ways in which Adi misses the risky and difficult time she spent in Israel. The time of risk meant friendship, community, life, and even youth, while the sanatorium can be associated with aging, decline, and even death.

The fact that so many members of this community have found themselves in the same locations is not a force of circumstances, but the recreation of this community outside the borders of Israel. They do not depart completely from Israel, though they retain their disidentification with Israeliness. In emigrating, becoming self-exiles, *golim*, their movement offers the potential of experiencing belonging in ways that transcend territories, that enables the gathering of queer Israeli activists as a community in the diaspora. I suggest reading their emigration as a reworking of these components of identities and energies and creating a new collective, which can offer them a contemporary solution to their situation in Israel. These acts of disidentification (emigration) may suggest, following Muňoz, that the national ideology's time and place are mutually exclusive from the time and place of "queer futurity" or "collective potentiality" (ibid.:189). It is precisely this collective that I wish to describe in the coming chapter.

4

The New Hebrew Diaspora

Queer Israeli Emigrants in Cyber Space

Share with us as well reflections on exile, refuge, despair of the Homeland, disappointment of local lefty scenes, the inflation of cruising in foreign universities, or any demonstrations and gatherings of the New Hebrew Diasporas. May we have more of them.

—From the description of the
Facebook group the New Hebrew Diaspora[1]

This chapter focuses on the New Hebrew Diaspora (NHD), a Facebook group that gathers Israeli emigrants who deviate from the Israeli collective, by means of sexuality, gender identity, and political affiliation. It offers an investigation of a community that developed in cyber space, under the framework of a Facebook group, established by two queer Israeli emigrants. The online space assembled these deviant emigrants, who took this opportunity to negotiate their identity vis-à-vis the state of Israel. The NHD has become a platform on which these individuals form a space to share their thoughts and ideas regarding the departure from the territory of Israel. At the same time, the members are creating their own discourse and norms, using the Hebrew language to subvert Zionism, Israeli national identity, and heteronormativity in the Israeli context.

    The first part of this chapter is dedicated to a close investigation of the NHD and describes first the establishment of the group. This section also shows how the members of the group formulate a collective identity of a specific community with specific sexual identities and political affiliations. I do so by presenting the ways the collective identity is defined simultaneously by the members and by others, who posit themselves

outside this community. The second section of this chapter examines the ways in which the members of the NHD engage in a practice of deconstructing Israel's grand narratives. They do so by reversing the meaning of known concepts in the Israeli narrative or by introducing new meanings to idioms, categories, and historical events, which are of significance in the Israeli context.

In this chapter, I introduce the first formation of queer Israeli emigrants on an internet-based platform. The NHD, as presented here, is the very first gathering of queer Israeli emigrants as a contemporary phenomenon. While it was very active in the early years (2011–2013), in subsequent years, other platforms have become more interesting with respect to the topic of this book. However, the establishment of the NHD is a meaningful step in the creation of this diasporic collective, and therefore I have dedicated to it a chapter of its own.

It is important to mention here that a growing literature concerning practices of internet-related ethnography has emerged in recent years, alongside a corpus of anthropological studies of social media sites (Burrell, 2009; Juris, 2012; Miller, 2011; Miller & Slater, 2000; Pink, 2012; Postill, 2010). Recent studies discuss the role of the internet in political organizing and activism (Igancio, 2005; Miller & Slater, 2000). In her book *Digital Diaspora,* Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff discusses the role of internet-organized diasporas in international affairs. Brinkerhoff sees in digital diasporas the potential to "foster democratic values, support integration in the host societies, and contribute to security and socio-economic development in the homelands" (Brinkerhoff, 2009:2). She argues that cyberspace can cultivate online communities that offer solidarity and a feeling of belonging (ibid.:11). In her wide-scale exploration of internet-based diaspora organizations from Afghanistan, Somalia, Egypt, Nepal, and Tibet, she examines how digital diasporas contemplate and pursue interventions to assist the homeland. While the NHD portrays Brinkerhoff's description of an online space that formulates solidarity and belonging, the over-all purpose and goals she identifies in these forms of virtual communication vary greatly from those found in the NHD platform. As I show here, the members of the NHD distance themselves from the homeland. They do not view their activism as "assisting the homeland," but as resistance against the homeland and what it represents. Their aspirations for a change might even result in the abolishment of the homeland (defined as the Jewish state). While some do take part in activities that seek to transform the homeland (for example, voting in the

national elections), it can be argued that the departure itself is motivated, among other things, by a wish to dismantle the regime. More accurately, the NHD offers its members "opportunities to voice views that would otherwise jeopardize individuals' quality of life and political safety" (ibid.: 35) if they were to be expressed in the homeland.

One research project that must be mentioned in relation to the NHD and queer Israeli emigrants' participation in internet-based platforms is Adi Kuntsman's *Figurations of Violence and Belonging: Queerness, Migranthood and Nationalism in Cyberspace* (2009). Kuntsman's project explores the connections between sexual deviancy, emigration, and nationality. However, while the queers in Kuntsman's research take part in a national "homecoming" project (Kuntsman, 2009:5), the queers in this research are participating in (and calling for) a departure from that very nation. Looking at cyber participation of queer Jews who immigrated to Israel from the Soviet Union, Kuntsman seeks to understand the ways in which queer emigrants experience and formulate belonging and the ways in which violence can actually function as enabling belonging (Ibid.:4). In both projects, queers experience an additional element of Otherness and estrangement from the nation. In the case of Soviet Jews who emigrated to Israel, this Otherness is ethnic, as Russian-Israelis experience different forms of racism and alienation (ibid.:9). In the case of left-wing Israeli Jews, this Otherness is constituted along the lines of political affiliation, as we saw in the previous chapter. Kuntsman's subjects use virtual space to formulate a community, creating a space where hegemonic cultural projects are undermined, and a Russian-Israeli identity is formed without the anchor of the hegemonic language, Hebrew. As I will show in this chapter, the participants of the NHD use virtual space in similar ways. However, they use the very hegemonic Hebrew to undermine the national project as whole, while creating a new identity, and a new political project—a departure from the homeland. In a way, the name of the online platform can hint at this project of deviation, as the establishers of the group chose to emphasize their connection to the Hebrew language, rather than to the Israeli state. Acknowledging that the members of the group did speak the language of the Zionist project, they chose to highlight their connection to the Hebrew culture rather than to the Jewish collective (the Jewish diaspora) or the national collective (the Israeli diaspora). This emphasis can be traced as part of their political project as a whole, and I discuss the significance of a Hebrew culture that is disconnected from the territory of Israel in the last chapter.

The Establishment of the NHD Facebook Group

The New Hebrew Diaspora Facebook group was established August 23, 2011, by Sagi, a gay man who had been living in Paris for a while, and Adi, whom I introduced in the previous chapter. The first members to be added to the group by the administrators were also queers, who at the time were living in London, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Barcelona. Among them were David, Natan, Noga, Omri, and many of the participants of this study. In a few days, the group had expanded to nearly 100 participants. By January 2014, the group had 323 members. On the day of the establishment, Sagi wrote the description of the group: "Jewish existence is now more than ever possible (and fun) beyond the borders of Israel! Spread the word and invite your Israeli friends living abroad." The uniqueness of this group can be seen in two main aspects.[2] The first is the (still) unspoken but palpable context of the sexual identity of the two establishers and of most of the founding members of the group. The second aspect is the establishment of this group by two individuals who had emigrated to different cities in Europe. In comparison to other groups for Israelis abroad, this group was neither designated for emigrants in one location (Berlin/New-York/London) nor designated by a common pursuit shared by the members (musicians/artists/students). In a way, the group itself is a *queer* element in the context of Facebook groups dedicated to Israeli emigrants.

The comments on the description of the group were not late in coming. One of the first comments was: "The protocols of the Elders of Zion 2.0 are starting here and now. World domination here we come!" referring to the anti-Semitic publication of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* published in Russia in 1903 (Ben-Itto, 2000). *The Protocols* were a forgery based on Jewish conferences that took place in Europe as early as the end of the 19th century. The conferences were held to configure a solution to the Jewish question (Berkowitz, 1993). The establishment of the NHD suggests a new form of a Jewish diasporic congress searching for a solution to the Jewish question. This connotation was suggested before the online forum of the NHD had even started to discuss having an agenda. Ironic slip of the tongue as this might have been, the political context of this gathering became clearer soon, as the group started running.

Indeed, two days later, a post calling for the drafting of some sort of agenda was published: "If there won't be a formulation of something that unites us apart of being outside the borders of Israel, I will start

to be annoyed." This post had many comments, among which was written: "The group was established yesterday and already you want a manifesto?" Though the political agenda of the group was not articulated in that discussion, and the person who posted the call probably did not receive the answer he was looking for, something else took place in that discussion: the identification of the political affiliation of the members, as well as their sexual identity.

One of the comments in that discussion was in response to a question asked regarding the identity of the members of the group. It said: "Left-wing people, those who call for the destruction of Israel, and lickers of gentiles' asses" (*smolanim, ochrim, vemelakekay takhat lagoyim*). This answer demands some attention. The first word, *smolanim,* is the pejorative given in recent years to those who belong to the political Left and was adopted by left-wing people themselves. *Ochrim* refers again to left-wing people and has a much more striking meaning. It usually appears as the phrase *ocher Israel*, which is of biblical provenance, literally meaning "the enemy of the Israeli nation." The final description, *melakekay tahat lagoyim*, can be read in two different ways. In the political context, licking ass means, again, those who betrayed the Jewish nation, by assimilation into the Gentiles, or in the contemporary context, those who take up a Gentile opinion against the state of Israel. The other context is, of course, the connotation of homoerotic practices. In just five words this comment identifies the members as part of a very specific community: left-wing queers. This comment was made by a member of the group, who positioned herself and the rest of the members under these categories. None of the members objected to this description.

As I have shown in the previous chapter, the connection between left-wing activism and queer identification in Israel is strong. Connecting homosexuality and left-wing political activism is not a foreign concept in Israeli society's discourse. One good example of these beliefs came from the deputy to the Israeli ambassador in Ireland, who said in June 2012 that left-wing Israeli activists who act against Israel do so "not necessarily for ideological reasons, but are actually driven from psychological reasons, usually disappointment from their parents and sexual identity problems" (Vardi, 2012).

Interestingly, in another discussion, a few days later, the members of the group were identified as having the same kind of identity by an outsider, an individual who was added to the group, and after realizing who the other members were, decided to exit the group. A post published

on September 8, 2011, said, "By the way, how the hell do I erase myself from this deviant (*neloza*) mailing list?" The writer accused the group itself of *neloza*, a word, also derived from a biblical source, that means someone who is deviant from society sexually. In the discussion that developed in the comments to this post, someone wrote:

> If this group is designated for anarchists+queers+radical left-wing people and *Kvisa Shkhora* veterans, my place is indeed not here, and the salvation for the problem has arrived (*Uba Letzion Go'el*) . . . have fun.

Though an agenda or a precise purpose for the group's establishment was not set up in the first few days, it was obvious to the members of the group *who belonged* in it and who did not. This claim is strengthened by the decision of outsiders to exit the group. The first days of this group's activity also formulated a set of understandings regarding the way the group works, the way discussions should be held, and a framework for the group's agenda. On September 12, a few days after a heated "belonging" discussion, the administrator, Sagi, posted the following announcement:

> A clarification regarding the nature of this Facebook group: it's not exclusive, and the "management" is not responsible for the content which is said in it. Regarding the "management," managing begins and ends with adding new members. I don't screen anyone and I don't check. Anyone who is interested (and that his profile picture is not Eim Tirtzu logo or something of that sort) can join, and every member is allowed to add other members.[3]
>
> The initial thought was to create a group for a growing population of Israelis living abroad. I find myself keeping in touch with more and more Israeli friends who left Israel. During the demonstrations in Tel Aviv I felt stupid, and for the first time since I moved to Paris I wanted to be in Israel.[4] I shared that feeling with Adi from Berlin when we talked that day, and this is the feeling which made us open this group. Of course, apart from the wish to create a new communication platform, we had an idea of creating a group with a political character. I believe that the fact that more and more Israelis are emigrating [*yordim*] has a meaning. Sometimes a political exile [*golah*] can play an important part.

In this post, Sagi expressed for the first time on the group's page a thought regarding the political significance of an exilic community in the context of Israeli emigrants (the members) and the political situation in Israel. The response by Adi, the other administrator, to this post continued to set the framework for a discussion:

> Thank you. Bonsouar Paris. I strongly support what Sagi said. Unlike him, I don't have a problem taking the title "The head of Kreuzberg, Fridrichshein-Neukölln community[5]" [. . . .] There is an unspoken expectation of the members of this group, as people who have proven themselves to have chosen a mature choice in their lives [= emigration], to take responsibility for what they come across here. Meanwhile, in every discussion I've seen here, were those who took upon themselves to protect, correct, and explain things that the "managers" so-to-speak could/should do. Which is good. I don't wish to be a preschool teacher . . . I also don't want to be a member of a virtual community that constructs policing [*shitor*] as part of it. Therefore this place will not be "managed.". . . The second Israeli exile [third actually] is created here [and in many other places]. It is only at its diapers, but we have 2000 more years, as it seems.

The framework to be set up by Adi and Sagi is of a group with an anarchist character, which has no manager, administrator, or policing element. This is different than the way other Facebook groups of Israeli emigrants work. In those, usually the administrator (the person who opened the group) stands as the gatekeeper, who can approve or reject requests of individuals to join the group. The NHD works in a completely different way. First of all, no random Israeli would search for a group called the New Hebrew Diaspora, as the name was invented by Adi and Sagi and has no meaning other than the context and meaning given to it by the members of the group. Second, the only way to join the group is to be added by another member. This means that there is no process of acceptance by gatekeepers and that a member who is added is already thought to be related to the groups' agenda, or to the other members of the group. This is how the NHD is assembled as a community with shared beliefs and identifications. In that respect, when in April 8, 2012, a member of the group posted an ad regarding an offer of a sublet in Paris, Natan responded: "We are not interested, and this is not a bulletin board."

In addition to setting up a framework for the group's activity, both Adi and Sagi suggested seeing the group as political platform of an exilic community in relation to the state of Israel. Adi even conceptualized their exilic condition under Jewish terminology and history, as the third exile (*galut*) from Zion. In this she opens a space for thinking of the community in a reverse way to the first two Jewish exiles from Zion. As both of those movements were forced, and the Jews had to leave their homeland unwillingly, the NHD have chosen independently to set themselves in exile. However, in that context, Adi's words may also suggest that she and the NHD, just like their ancestors, were also forced to leave Zion. This is especially apparent when she discusses their exilic condition under the temporal timeline of Jewish history, as she discusses the possibility of returning to Israel/Zion in 2,000 years.

The question of exile as part of the political meaning of the NHD will be discussed in a chapter dedicated to this topic specifically, so I will not develop this notion here. But it is important to pay attention to the fact that the political position of the NHD was manifested at the first days of the groups' activity.

Deconstructing Israel's Grand Narratives: The Discursive Acts of the NHD

Stuart Hall has argued that deconstructing embedded stereotypes and grand narratives is a major goal of postcolonial writers (Hall, 1996). I suggest here that the members of the NHD, who perceive Zionism as a colonial project engage in deconstructing Israel's grand narratives. They do so by reversing the meaning of known concepts in the Israeli narrative or by introducing new meanings to idioms, categories, and historical events, which are of significance in the Israeli context. The NHD addresses the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, Zionism, the Israeli Army, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israeli law and legislation, the Israel-Iran relationship, Judaism, and Israeli citizenship. This is done through remarks and expressions regarding queer sexual practices and by playing with the gender identity of the participants, using language to do so. These practices are adopted and used by all participants and are never questioned or criticized by other members. I suggest reading the NHD as a community with specific cultural assumptions, linguistics, and symbolic communication. This can explain, among other things, why some individuals have chosen to exit the group.

It must be mentioned here that the discourse it created builds on and arises out of the Zionist discourse. Thus, while being ironic and critical, it can be argued that these discursive practices also reflect an inability to exit Zionist thought. Their political engagement is deeply entangled with Zionist ideology, and it is clear that they cannot detach themselves from Zionist discourse or from the Israeli conscious in general. While I ask that their acts be read as critical, it can be argued that their discourse reaffirms the Zionist logic. Having said this, I do not think that Israeli emigrants who managed to completely disconnect from Israeli thought and Zionist logic are by any means more critical than the members of the NHD, because complete detachment can be criticized as political apathy and indifference. It is important to clarify, thus, that I believe that a complete departure from the Zionist discourse is almost impossible and that I see in the discursive acts of the members of the NHD the best possible option to target this logic and call for its destruction by means of subverting elements and ideas of that very logic and discourse.

The archives of three years of activity of the NHD consist of hundreds of utterances, which formulate dozens of comments and discussions. Any kind of selection is a compromise, given the inability to bring forth each significant utterance. I have chosen to focus my discussion on three main themes: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the Israeli gay community; and Israeli citizenship. Any theme I address here has many other examples and manifestations apart from those I discuss here in detail.

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The topic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was addressed in many discussions, and the discourse and concepts stemming from the semantic field of the conflict were linked to the context of migration, Jewish diaspora, and the Holocaust. For instance, when a lesbian who emigrated to London added her younger sister to the group, Adi, who also has a sister living outside of Israel, wrote:

> Congratulations. My sister and I have also managed to escape to the land of Europe, in the form of family reunification [*Ehod mishpahot*]. B'tselem classifies it as family reunification; we would like to call it the right of return (*zhut hashiva*).

As if they themselves were refugees, Adi referrers to leaving Israel as an escape and arriving in Europe as an achievement. This is, of course, the

reverse journey to the one that Holocaust survivors did in the 1940s. The reunion of the two sisters can refer to the reunions of Holocaust survivors after the war, but Adi uses a very specific term. *Ehod mishpahot* is a term reintroduced in Hebrew in the Palestinian-Israeli context. It describes a formal request submitted by Palestinians from the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, who are seeking a permit to stay in Israel, to reunite with family members. *B'tselem*, a 20-year-old left-wing NGO dealing with these kinds of requests (as most of them are denied based on security reasons) is mentioned in order to contextualize her sentence in regard to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and not to the context of the Holocaust. She continues and calls their arrival in Europe the "right of return" (*zhut hashiva*), another concept stemming from the political context, of Palestinians demanding the right of return to the land of Palestine, from which they escaped/were expelled in the 1948 Nakba. Referring to Europe in the context of the right of return suggests a demand regarding the offspring of the Holocaust survivors, to be allowed back to the European countries from which their grandparents escaped in the 1940s, and to receive full citizenship rights, a demand that completely contradicts Zionist goals. In addition, any kind of comparison between Holocaust survivors and Palestinians can be considered provocative in the eyes of Zionists and most Israelis.

Another example of this kind of discourse occurred when a member of the NHD who is living in Berlin called the two neighborhoods that many Israeli emigrants inhabit—Kreuzberg and Neukölln—by the name "Kreuzkölln outpost" (*Hehahzot*), which refers to the small illegal settlements of Israeli Jews in the heart of the West Bank. This suggests looking at Israeli emigration to Europe under the terminology of Jewish-Zionist colonialism, while criticizing the illegitimate settler colonialism in Palestine. I have also discussed how both Adi and David used the discourse of *aliyah* in reference to the waves of Israelis who emigrated to Berlin.

In September 2011, close to the vote in the UN regarding upgrading the status of Palestine from an observer entity that is not a state, to the status of a state that is not a member (decision 67/19), a call for solidarity protests with the Palestinians was posted:

> In relations to the world domination, what are we doing with the 20th of September which is coming up? The Palestinians were never good at scheming and taking over the world. They are even having difficulties with their own country. Maybe

we can express exilic solidarity or something? Anyone on the Berlin branch who is interested—let me know. In the London diaspora, please share the plans. Those of you in the US—May God help you. I just saw the Republican candidates for the presidency. Your continent is lost.

This is a call for a political gathering of Israelis in the diaspora in support of the Palestinian claim for statehood. The call identifies the members of the NHD as exiles, which equates them, as if the situation was similar, with Palestinian exiles. The writer, living in Berlin, does not seek to stimulate a solidarity protest just in her place of residence, but attempts to stimulate wider political action in different locations, the whereabouts of the members of the group.

All the verbs in this post were conjugated in the feminine-plural form, a common speech act, which undermines the norm in the Hebrew language of conjugating in the masculine form when addressing a group of people. Using female-plural conjugations was adopted as a political speech act by feminists and lesbians, which then spread in queer and left-wing circles. A similar method is practiced by gay and queer men, who conjugate verbs and sentences in the feminine form. Some of the queer men in the NHD use that form of speech, especially Natan and David.

In response to the call, Natan suggests this unique activity: "We can organize a foreskin parade under the slogan 'One Foreskin for Two People.'" As a take-off on the political slogan "One state for two people," Natan raises ritual circumcision, a practice shared by Muslim Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. Criticizing this religious practice in both religions, Natan suggests uniting the two nations under this cause, inherently tied to masculine genitalia. He concludes that "she" is open to new ideas, again conjugating in the female form, and adds "and open in general," a suggestion that shifts the association from the political context to sexual practices, putting himself in the passive position in regard to penetration.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is apparent in almost any discussion held in the group, but other contemporary political issues receive attention from the members of the NHD. Discussion of the Iran-Israel crisis attracted much criticism of the Israeli government's threats to attack Iran. Just like the initiative of solidarity protests with the Palestinian cause, members of the NHD initiated a joint action in Berlin by Iranians and Israelis in exile.

Natan mentioned in his interview how he had come up with the idea of a joint Iranian-Israeli protest:

I have started the Israeli-Iranian group in meetings here in my house. They started talking about bombing Iran, and the Israeli prime minister came here to sign an agreement with the Germans about getting another nuclear submarine, and then I got really upset. So we started the group, and at a certain point we even organized a demonstration, a march, and like 500 people arrived. It was very impressive. We even had international media very interested in what we did. At a certain point, somebody called me from Galatz [Israel's army radio station] and asked for an interview. A day later my dad called me. Apparently, he started receiving phone calls from people asking about his son interviewing on the radio. He was so upset, he said to me: "What are you giving interviews for? Why are you saying this nonsense about Persians in the radio?" You know, it was a hard time for him. When I left the country, I stopped with all the political activism I used to do, and they finally had some peace, my parents. I was arrested many times for my activism. The Israeli secret service [Shin-Beit] even called my dad once, asking if he knew what his son was doing in the [occupied Palestinian] territories. Today I'm no longer on the black list. They already understood that now I'm just a bourgeois homosexual, harmful, you know, one that his protest years are behind him.

Apart for Natan's story about the Israeli security forces harassing his family for his left-wing activities, it is interesting to see how Natan links his sexuality with political activism. Although he is referring to himself as a bourgeois homosexual, one that his political activism is in his past, he was still the one to initiate this joint action, and even hosted the first meetings in his home.

On May 7, 2012, Adi reflected on the Facebook group on the first joint action of Israelis and Iranians:

The first joint action of Israelis and Iranians was a tremendous success, mainly because it actually happened. In the demonstration, under the title "Iranians and Israelis against war, sanctions, occupation, and oppression by the regime," took part 500 protestors. It was a first step, an important and exciting one.

Adi posted links to media coverage of the event and concluded her posts wishing: "For the next year in the divided Jerusalem." Supporting a divided Jerusalem is a very radical left-wing opinion, as a united and Jewish Jerusalem stands at the heart of Zionist and religious claims. Jerusalem itself stands at the heart of Jewish diasporic historiography, as the city to which the Jews long to return from their exile in Babylon. Adi's greeting subverts the common phrase "For the next year in the built Jerusalem'" (leshana haba'a beyerushalayim habnuya), which refers to the diasporic longing for a rebuilt Jerusalem, after the destruction of the city and the Jewish temple on two separate occasions, leading to a Jewish exile. This greeting is part of the closing prayer of Yom Kippur, an important day in the Jewish calendar. While the phrase has become a known idiom in Hebrew, said not just in a religious context, the wish for a divided Jerusalem deconstructs more than 2,000 years of wishful thinking for Jewish sovereignty in the holy city. This call can also reveal Adi's desire to return to Israel and Jerusalem, but to return to a changed Israel, one that stands as a neighboring country to a free Palestine, with their free capital, Jerusalem.

Another topic repeated in many posts was the way the Israeli government treats African asylum seekers who arrive in Israel through Egypt after escaping Eritrea and Sudan. In one of the cynical attempts of the Israeli government to clear the state of African refugees, asylum seekers were offered money to leave the borders of Israel. Bypassing international laws that forbid returning refugees to the countries from which they have escaped, the Israeli government signed secret contracts with an unknown third country, to which the asylum seekers were to be transferred. Trying to encourage asylum seekers to leave independently, and not by force, the state offered a sum of $3,500 (Lior, 2013). Many of the posts criticized these Israeli practices, and compared the situation of the African asylum seekers to that of the Jews in the 1930s and 1940s in Europe. One of the members of the group posted what she had written to Dani Danon, the Knesset member who initiated this campaign: "Dear Mr. Danon, I would be happy to receive assistance in relation to the expulsion. If I was to be ready to leave Israel would I receive the amount mentioned in several sources—€2000 departure grant?" She concluded her post by saying that everyone in the group should join her request, so that maybe "finally we would see something from the tax money they have sucked from us all these years." In addition to this another member wrote: "I wish they would take me and my parents back to the hole we

came from, at least then I would have a passport and wouldn't need to carry this shame around the world."

The criticism of the practices enforced by the Israeli government is proclaimed by mentioning the basis on which the state of Israel was established: thousands of Jewish refugees who had nowhere to go. The members ask the government to enforce the same set of rules on them, as they are as well refugees who must be sent back to their home countries. The illegal practice of the government becomes a platform for the members to play with the idea of receiving funding for their own independent departure or arranging for the regaining of passports from the home countries from which their families arrived 60 years earlier.

Israeli Homonormative Gay Community

As I have shown in several instances, the discourse of the group constantly integrates queer notions, but queer practices are also part of the way the members use verbs, pronouns, and full sentences. When I asked David how I should translate the linguistic practice taken by a biological man when he uses female forms of speech, he suggested that I say: "Fag up the verb." Being politically aware and engaged with queering the discourse itself by using language, the members of the group also published, on several occasions, posts that dealt specifically with queer sexuality in relation to Israel and the local gay community. For instance, Natan referred to the gay community of central Tel Aviv as the "Ghetto" inhabited by "homosexuals who vote for the right-wing." In the discussion, Natan describes his objection to the pinkwashing campaign: "I really object to bringing tourists to the country, not for the Jesus Trail in occupied Jerusalem, and not for one-night stands in Tel Aviv. Just like I wouldn't want to bring tourists to Germany in the 30s and the same thing goes for South Africa."

In April 2012, Natan posted a link to an Israeli article published online about a young queer man from Israel who supported the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS). The title was "I Support Boycotting Israel—Even If that Means Boycotting Israelis Who Happen to Be Gay." In a comment to the link he posted, Natan wrote: "I'm in love." Apart from the support Natan expressed for the opinions of the man who was interviewed, it was interesting to find out that the interview was held with Oren, who emigrated to Berlin a year later. Oren was not part of the NHD Facebook group, and he had no idea how his interview

was received by members of the NHD. Some of the things Oren said in the article express the thoughts he shared with me in the face-to-face interview, and they share a resemblance to Natan's words, expressed both in the interview and in his posts on the group:

> As a queer person in Israeli society, who experienced oppression on that basis, I am very sensitive to other forms of oppression which I am able to notice around me. It's very easy to repress, ignore, and not deal with these things. The way I see it, you can't support the LGBT community in Israel and support the occupation at the same time. No matter how you look at it, Israelis in general are taking part, actively or passively, in the occupation, or pay taxes to the occupation [. . .] Yes, I support the boycotting of Israel, even if that includes gay Israelis. There is a need to impose sanctions on Israel, in order to create pressure on the government to stop the occupation.

Citizenship

Every year, several hundred Israelis request to renounce their citizenship. In 2005, 808 Israelis applied to waive their citizenship, and in 2014, 785 Israelis did so (Sa'ar, 2005). This information, and the phenomenon as a whole, appears to be interesting not just for Israeli citizens, as it reached the international media as well (Sa'ar, 2005). Several articles also attended to the motivations behind this decision. For instance, in an article on the popular media channel YNET, some of the motivations mentioned were "money, ideology and corruption." One of the individuals interviewed for the story, 41-year-old Sharon, said that he renounced his citizenship due to a "lack of desire to do reserve duty and lack of desire to contribute to Israel" (Margalit, 2015). Similar stories were also published in international media ("Israelis Renouncing," 2014). However, several countries, like Germany, do not allow dual citizenship, and Israelis who wish to obtain a German passport must renounce their Israeli citizenship.

Looking at how this topic is approached in the group of the NHD, and in the interviews, can shed light on the actions and declarations of queer Israeli emigrants. The topic of Israeli citizenship has been part of several discussions, mainly with respect to how they can renounce their Israeli citizenship. In a post from August 26, 2011, three days after the establishment of the group, which was framed like a Bazooka Joe "future

telling" comic strip, a member wrote: "Did you know? If you wish to officially waive your Israeli citizenship, you will need to say goodbye to €60 as a parting gift to the beloved state."

Having this kind of post on the group's page only a few days after the group had started its activity indicates the complex relationship these individuals had with Israel. The fact that no one in the group reacted in astonishment to the proposition implies that the thought of waiving their citizenship crossed other members' minds. While much of the literature on diasporic communities deals with the ways communities imagine their nation, citizenship, national identity, and so forth (Ignasio, 2005; Mitra, 1997, Manalansan, 2003), this post signifies the fact that the members of the NHD were actually focused on dismantling the notion of their national identity and citizenship altogether. The first response to this post by Adi was as follows:

> The last contribution to the funding of settlements, the military junta [. . .] and some other injustices and malicious activities. In general, a reasonable and affordable price for anyone (if, by chance, Besiyata Dishmaya, or thanks to your fathers/mothers, you have a foreign passport).[6] With the help of my sister, a lawyer who specializes in crimes against humanity (talking about third-generation), we should, as a form of *Ma'ase Avot siman lebanim,*[7] demand compensation.[8] I hereby volunteer to create a viral campaign under the title "Third Generation Demand Renta.[9]

This comment deserves proper attention for its richness, in terms both of language and of cultural and historical references. Adi refers to her Israeli citizenship as a financial burden, something that will cost money to get rid of. She perceives this amount as her last contribution to the regime she supported financially when she was living in Israel. When she mentions the demand for financial compensation, her sentence splits into two different semantic fields. The first one is the legal field, with the term "crimes against humanity." When the state of Israel was accused of "crimes against humanity," it was, of course, in relation to the Palestinian population in Gaza, not the Jewish one. Adi suggests using her sister, a lawyer who specializes in that field of law, to request financial compensation for what Israel has done to them, the NHD.

The second semantic field is that of the Holocaust. Speaking from the position of being a third generation of Holocaust survivors, she terms

the financial compensation to be demanded from Israel as Shilomim, the name of the reparation agreement between Israel and Germany. In the agreement, Germany transferred 3 million German marks between the years 1953 and 1965, as compensation for the suffering and the material damage caused to the Jews during the Holocaust. In addition, the German government agreed to transfer money for the survivors themselves, a monthly "renta," for financing medical expenses (Honig, 1954).

The discussion continues to detail a list of the implications of waiving Israeli citizenship, as well as how to find a bride/groom with a European passport for a convenient marriage. A lesbian who lived for a few years in Berlin and then moved to London, wrote: "When we give the Israeli citizenship back, do we receive some kind of a refund (*zikoy*)? Compensation for the aggravation (*ogmat nefesh*)." Just like Adi, the writer continues the idea of receiving financial compensation from Israel, and conceptualises Israeli citizenship as a product which may be returned and refunded, similar to a customer who is unhappy with a purchase. She later asks for advice on how she might find a European bride. When she is told that she should try J-Date, an international Jewish dating website, she says: "J-Date? This is what I have escaped the ghetto for?" analogizing Israel to a ghetto. This concept is then taken up by two other participants, who wrote: "Maidele [Yiddish for young lady], only death can release you from the ghetto."

It must be pointed out that the statements and declarations on the Facebook group of the NHD did not reflect what was said in the interviews. While in the online forum, it seemed as if any member would gladly give up on their Israeli citizenship, in the personal narratives, the decision to renounce Israeli citizenship was not a joyful procedure. Itamar, 40 years old, who had been in Berlin for 12 years, shared in his interview the uncanny feeling of giving up his Israeli citizenship. He described the moment after giving up the Israeli citizenship, and just before receiving the German one, and said, "for a period of time, I had some kind of passenger document issued by Germany and I didn't have any citizenship. It was very strange. It was a very unsettling feeling." Itamar had no doubt that even if he gave up his Israeli citizenship, he could always return and live in Israel. "Because of the discriminatory legislation of the Jewish state, because I'm Jewish I could probably even get it back really quickly, whenever I just want to come back."[10] Though he had no doubts regarding losing his rights in Israel, the actual moment of becoming a German citizen was not a simple moment, which might reflect Itamar's affective connection to his homeland:

The actual day I got the citizenship was truly crazy. They have a formal ceremony here, conducted by the mayor twice a month. He comes all dressed up with [a] big giant necklace with the key on it, and he is very fat. He does this weird thing with his hair [. . .] Then they play all the national anthems of all the countries from which the citizens receiving a German passport that day arrived from. And there's this really weird looking violin musician, tall and skinny, who looks so tired, as if he has done this like a million times, and there's another one, a short chubby one playing another instrument, it was really weird, and they played the "Hatikva" [Israel's national anthem], and like the Chechnyan anthem, I don't know, there were millions of them, 18 to 20 anthems one after the other. It was crazy! And then the mayor starts talking, giving a speech, and he says: "I'm really happy to say, that we [are] all part of the same family," that we [are] all part of the Deutschland family or something like that. "Welcome to the family." And at some point, when he was saying this welcome to the family part, I started feeling that something with me is very wrong. And when I went back home I had this terrible stomach virus. A crazy one. I had diarrhea, and I was vomiting for a whole week.

Itamar's story cannot but remind us how dramatic and emotional the connection some of the queer Israeli emigrants have to their homeland is, even if they might publicly declare something different. The declarations and comments on the NHD Facebook group regarding the joyful anticipation of renouncing Israeli citizenship can be seen in a different light when hearing the narrative of Itamar, who actually did it. Most of the Berlin emigrants, those who needed to renounce their Israeli citizenship to get a foreign one, actually stayed with a permanent residence permit and decided not to apply for German citizenship.

The Facebook group offers not only the hopes and aspirations of the members, but also practical suggestions on why renouncing Israeli citizenship is actually an important step for queer left-wing Israelis. One member posted a link to an official government website, explaining the procedures involved in waiving Israeli citizenship, adding this remark:

Notice that in some of the countries (the UK for example), if your first country of citizenship is suing you, you are not entitled for protection from the state in which you live in, even

> if you are already a citizen. This is a matter to be remembered, because it means that on the day that persecution of left-wing people reaches a certain level (and it's possible that that day will come in the next few years), it's worthwhile for activists/radical public figures with double citizenship to give up the Israeli citizenship.

This post links left-wing activism and the need to waive one's Israeli citizenship to a future possibility of legal persecution of political activists. To this Adi replies with a question: "[I]s there an extradition agreement?" dealing again with a future situation of Israeli left-wing activists who face imprisonment and deportation back to Israel under international agreements. The future that the members of the NHD articulate here is one in which an escalation of the political situation in Israel has reached the extreme. In this imagined future, only left-wing people who managed to waive their Israeli citizenship will be saved from legal prosecution. Receiving new citizenship by marriage or by other means becomes not just a tool to fulfill the dream of a life lived not in Israel, but actually a lifejacket for the uncertainty and the risks the future holds for queer Israeli emigrants.

Queer Interruptions

The Temporal Regime of Israel and
Queer Israeli Emigrants

This chapter examines the temporal character of the Zionist regime in Israel. Here I conceptualize emigration from Israel as an act that has the potential to break the national Israeli timeline. Using queer theory and the notion of temporality enables discussing in a similar way other topics, apart from emigration, as acts that can symbolize a subversion of the heteronormative Israeli timeline, such as negation of army service, relationships and marriage, reproduction, settling down, and more. Using a body of work in queer theory on temporality and spatiality, this chapter proposes that queer Israeli emigrants both participate in the straight time of reproduction and depart from the life schedules that are rendered coherent and inevitable within heteronationalist frameworks. This chapter ends with the notion of reproduction and the structure of relations between the future of the Zionist project and the future citizens of the state. In light of Zionist policy, which encourages reproduction, as well as encourages bringing Israeli emigrants back to the state, I investigate in this chapter the ways emigration enables dismantling the direct connection between the citizens and the future of the homeland. I consider, particularly in relation to a politics of reproduction, how queer Israeli emigrants situate themselves in relation to social normativity, family, and futurity.

Choosing to emigrate necessarily entails the hope for a better and improved tomorrow: creating a home in a new place. The question of future, therefore, is a significant question regarding queer Israeli emigrants. It is significant both in the ways they imagine their own personal futures in their new destinations and in the ways they imagine the future of Israel, the national collective they decided to leave behind.

These two imagined futures share a reciprocal relationship. The future of Israel, as they view it, is connected to the decision to depart. Israel's future, not the imagined one, the *real* future, is also what could lead to a decision to return.

At the end of each interview, I asked the participants two questions. The first one was how they envisioned Israel's future. The second one was how they envisioned their personal future. While some could not describe where they saw themselves in five or ten years, all of them had a very similar description of the future of Israel. It was a very pessimistic description, horrifying, apocalyptic: there is no future for Israel, they said. If things were different, would you go back? I asked them. Some said, confidently that if there was peace, if the occupation of Palestine was finished, they would return. For others, a change in the political situation would not be enough.

This chapter is devoted, therefore, to the question of futures, but also to pasts and presents, and temporality in general, as it appeared in the variety of sources I encountered through this research. I discuss the multiple timelines entangled in the story of queer Israeli emigrants, of Israel and of Zionism. Zionism itself is a temporal project, initiated at the end of the 19th century, becoming an official political movement at the First Zionist Congress in 1897. Driven by a desire to return to the biblical territory of the Israelites, Zionism promoted the creation of a nation-state in 1948. I will demonstrate that Israel is itself what might be described as a temporal regime, in which the national collective is constantly engaged with different moments in time, and its national identity is constructed, among other things, through using and manipulating collective time.

Queerness in this chapter, as well as in the rest of the book, will be examined in its wider implications. I do not discuss only the sexual practices of the subjects of this research, and I use "queer" as a signifier holding the potential to undermine national and social conventions. Choosing to focus on queer subjects enables an exploration of an extreme case of resistance and antagonism in relation to social conventions, such as reproduction, monogamous kinship, and gender performance. The queers who were interviewed for this research undermine additional conventions, which are unique to Israeli nationality, for example avoiding army service, resistance to the occupation of Palestine, and of course emigration, as *yerida* is conceptualized in Israel as a national issue. Emigration, I claim here, can symbolize the dismantling of Zionist ideology through dismantling the national timeline, by exiting the territory of Israel, out of desire for different spaces and different times.

Zionism and Temporality

Temporality and the Nation-State

Nationalism in general, it was previously observed, has temporal manifestations. It has been argued that the nation-state is a bounded entity in time and space (Berenskoetter, 2014). Felix Berenskoetter conceptualizes the nation state as a bounded community constituted by a biographical narrative that gives meaning to its collective spatiotemporal situatedness (ibid.: 264). This national narrative defined by spatiotemporal parameters provides an understanding of how to act as a community, as well as a "basic discourse" on a social level, which is embedded in the "national consciousness" (ibid.:270). In this sense, every nation or national movement has a timeline, which is perceived as progressing in a linear and chronological order. This timeline, as in other temporal structures I will discuss shortly, is filled with collective temporal moments. In this respect, Berenskoetter has argued that war is a profoundly radical and significant collective experience (ibid.:272). Indeed, wars become a significant factor in creating many nation-states, and their existence is built in the national consciousness as meaningful markers on the nation's timeline. It is not only wars that become temporal elements, but also their commemoration in collective moments, such as memorial days, which become significant elements repeating themselves every year.

Homi Bhabha (1991) refers to different constructs within which time becomes a significant factor in nationalism. Bhabha makes a distinction between two different notions of time, the linear-historical time of the nation and the cyclic monumental performative time of nationalism. In his notion of *performative time,* he refers to the moments in which a people are simultaneously engaging in the same activity. This creates a feeling of national belonging, as shared emotions can be the consequences of these cyclic performative activities, such as singing the national anthem.

In the same way that wars function as temporal elements, other mechanisms, which the state uses to defend itself, have a temporal character. In this way, for instance, an army is one of the main institutions in which temporality has a significant role in its existence and in the preservation of it as a social institution. Army life is full of chronological markers such as the time of enlistment, time of service, time to be discharged from service, and of course day-to-day practices, like mealtimes and bedtime. The army is an example of an institution structured by what Elizabeth Freeman refers to as "chromonormativity"—"the use of time to organise

individual human bodies toward maximum productivity" (Freeman, 2010:3). Freeman follows Dana Luciano's concept of "chronobiopolitics," which she uses to define the ways in which people are bound to each other to feel like a collective, through particular orchestrations of time. "Chronobiopolitics" is "the sexual arrangement of the time of life" of entire populations (Luciano, 2007:9).

Just like temporality, space is a significant factor, as strong emotional connections embed in a specific place, one that is meaningful in the national narrative. It is place that can ground a narrative, not simply a mental construct but actually tied to experiences associated with a particular territory, landscape, or city. It is reflected in the way nation states claim legal statehood not just anywhere but in "a particular territorial location which means something to them and which centres their national biography in both past and future" (Berenskoetter, 2014:275). As Bhabha's performative times can stimulate a feeling of belonging to a specific national collective, the space those actions inhabit can stimulate a feeling of being at home.

Queer Theory and Temporality

In the book *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, Jack Halberstam frames different social constructions as temporal regimes. For example, the time of reproduction is ruled by "a biological clock for women entered by strict bourgeois rules of respectability and scheduling for married couples" (ibid.:5). "Family time" refers to the normative scheduling of daily life, which accompanies the practice of child-rearing and is governed by a set of beliefs regarding children's needs and children's health. "Inheritance time" is another example, referring to an overview of generational time within which

> values, wealth, goods, and morals are passed through family
> ties from one generation to the next. It also connects the
> family to the historical past of the nation and glances ahead to
> connect the family to the future of both familial and national
> stability. (Ibid.)

In Freeman's words: "inheritance becomes the familial and collective legacy from which a group will draw a properly political future" (Freeman, 2010:4). Other temporal constructions include industrial time, time

of progress, austerity, and so on. Most of these temporal frameworks, and especially reproductive time and family time, are heteronormative constructs.

Halberstam argues that there is a "queer time" and "queer space," and that queer uses of time and space developed, among other things, in opposition to the institution of the family, heterosexuality, and reproduction. Queerness, in this respect, is an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices. Halberstam describes a queer way of life that encompasses subcultural practices and alternative methods of alliance (Halberstam, 2005: 1). Queers, Halberstam argues, are subjects who live outside the hegemonic logic of time/space. They are not only those who engage in queer sexual practices, but also "ravers, club kids, HIV-positive barebackers, rent boys, sex workers, homeless people, drug dealers and the unemployed" (ibid.:10). In addition, regression from linear normative time is what allows a unique potential, an arena that enables the creation of new hopes and expectations of the future, or even new and different ways of thinking and enabling expectation or longing.

The State of Israel, Zionism, and the National Timeline

Israel's contemporary political situation can be productively understood as a "normative temporal regime" with its own linear and chronological timeline. With the Bible, the Holocaust, and the establishment of the state as its past, present time holds the contemporary battle for securing a future for the Jews in their own sovereign Jewish state. Like the way individuals in Israel may follow what Halberstam describes as heteronormative and homonormative timelines, there is a collective timeline of the Israeli nation. Some would see it go back 2,000 years to the Israelites in biblical Israel, while others would designate its beginning in the First Zionist Conference in 1897.

Zionist ideology has been continuously preoccupied with creating a national mythology that would link its present project of nation-building with the remote Jewish history in the Land of Israel. "Perhaps the primary goal of Israeli political culture," Myron Aronoff argues, "has been to make the continuity of the ancient past with the contemporary context a taken-for-granted reality" (1993:48). Even the Zionist creation of the sabra, the Israeli Jew, can be read within a temporal framework, a process on a linear timeline that portrays a development from the diaspora, a regressive past

occupied by weak feminine Jews, to the future, the image of the sabra, the strong masculine Jew who takes part in the physical project of building the state of Israel (Boyarin, 1997; Glozman, 2007; Almog, 2000).

Israel's national timeline is full of collective moments, the most important of which are two national memorial days, one to commemorate the Israeli soldiers who have died in duty, the second one to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. These collective moments resemble what Bhabha terms as *performative time.* The ceremonies held on both memorial days are dominated by military and religious elements that

> appear baldly in the ceremonies' formats defining the event as a parade assembly; having the audience snap to attention and then move to parade rest; employing trumpet calls; and raising and then lowering the flag to half-mast. The army, of course, is a central element, and continually crops up throughout the performances. (Ben-Amos, 1999: 276)

Even the ceremonies themselves have a specific temporal structure, opening with a siren at a specific hour on the morning of Holocaust Memorial Day and a siren in the morning and evening of Memorial Day. "Simultaneous observance of ceremonies also coincided with the modern concept of national time, based on the imaginary unity of the community synchronically commemorating the same historical event in like form" (ibid.:275). This is very true regarding the two memorial days, as these ceremonies are appropriated by the collectivity and reproduced in public life to sustain not just national belonging, but also collective boundaries, an ethos of sacrifice, and a standardization of commemorative practices (Weiss, 1997).

The most significant moment in the life of every young Jewish Israeli is the time to join the army (or the time to decide not to join the army) at the age of 18. There is the time of service, two years for women and three years for men, followed by the moment of release. In addition, Israeli men are called on specific dates to return to reserve duty. Baruch Kimerling (1985), in his study on reserve service during the Yom Kippur War and the First Lebanon War, attributed to this system another temporal concept: the performance of *routine* activities.

Apart from the army, Israel's nationalism produces an additional temporal element whose significance cannot be denied: the connection between each individual and the future of the state. Just as Israeli youngsters serve in the army that claims to be defending the state, adult

citizens of Israel are required to defend the state in a different way: by producing more babies. The existence of the state and its future are completely dependent upon the preservation of a Jewish majority within the territory of the state.

Queerness in Israel and Exiting the National Temporality

What are the practices, therefore, that symbolize in the Israeli context the queer potential, the breaking of the national timeline? In what way can the citizens of Israel undermine the temporality, which is inseparable from Israeli nationalism, and through that undermine Zionism in itself? This chapter argues that avoiding significant temporal structures of Israeli society can be read as subverting the Zionist project itself.

Not being physically in the territory of Israel is significant in creating the possibility for disengagement from the powerful forces sustaining and reproducing collective identities through the temporal moments I have described, such as the memorial days, but also through space itself, the physical territory of Israel. In this respect, emigration not only breaks Israel's temporal regime, but it can also symbolize moving away from the space that has constructed a sense of home. Life outside of Israel can be conceptualized as a political practice: the refusal to be *counted* in the demography of the Jewish population in the state of Israel, as one of the most meaningful tools of Zionism to sustain a Jewish state is via the maintenance of a Jewish majority. This can symbolically mean exiting the Zionist project itself.

In the same way, subjects who do not take part in central social projects that take place within the territory of the state can also mark a subversion of the Zionist project and its future. This way, for instance, subjects who do not live in a heterosexual kinship model and do not contribute to the national reproduction project can symbolize a fracture of Zionist ideology, which is similar in character to emigration. One clear example of the breaking of the Zionist timeline is avoiding army service, one of the most central social institutions in Israel.

Before moving to the next section, where I discuss in detail the notion of future as it is expressed in Zionist ideology, I wish to bring here as an example the narrative of Asaf, who describes his first moments after receiving an army exemption. Asaf's narrative is helpful in developing the discussion to follow, since we may conceptualize emigration as a natural and direct continuation of not serving in the army, an additional act that extracts the individual from the national timeline.

> When you are 18 years old, and you get the army exemption,
> you know, for years they tell you that this is it. That you won't
> be able to work at anything now, maybe only as a cleaning
> person. So on the one hand I felt like I was completely exiting
> the society. And God forbid, what would my family say? I
> remember I got the exemption, but I wasn't happy, what was
> I going to do now? All my friends went to the army. (29 years
> old, Berlin)

Selecting a different path than his friends felt for Asaf as if he was
choosing a path leading outside of society itself. This is the moment in
which young Israelis see themselves as exiting the collective and fear the
implications this departure could have on their future. This is due to the
story told by the collective, in which, without serving in the army, they
might not be able to find a normative occupation. Asaf even compares
telling his family about his exemption to another "coming out" process,
describing his sexual orientation and not joining the army as two other
dimensions of his nonnormative social behavior, like not graduating from
high school or not going to college:

> In the beginning, there were a lot of fights, especially with my
> father, and at some point we had to tell the grandmothers, "Asaf
> isn't joining the army,'" like coming out of the closet again.
> It was just another aspect of how I was damaging what my
> parents had. You know, I didn't even graduate from high school,
> and then no army, gay, no university degree, basically nothing.

The set of norms Asaf breaks is exactly the framework of the normative
timeline of society: there is a time to graduate from high school, a time
to join the army, a time to go to university, and of course a time to get
married to a woman and have children. It is possible to say, therefore, that
the queer practice regarding sexual practices is parallel in this narrative
to queer practices regarding national practices. Not serving in the army,
as with other examples I will demonstrate shortly, can be conceptualized
as undermining one of the main social institutions in Israel, whether or
not this avoidance is done politically (refusing to serve) or supposedly
as an apolitical act (avoiding service). Meir Amor's wonderful text *The
Silent History of Social Refusal* (2010), emphasizes the ways in which
avoiding service and being exempt from service for health reasons still
mean undermining the centrality of the army in Israeli society and must
be understood as political acts.

It is not surprising that Asaf describes the moment of telling his family that he will not serve in the army with the words "coming out of the closet." His non-normative sexual orientation is parallel in his narrative to other subversions of social conventions. The last convention he broke was emigration, since *yerida* can be conceptualized as the actual exiting of the Israeli collective, and even betrayal and avoidance of social obligations like reserve army service.

I want to emphasize here that I wish to present avoidance of army service, nonreproductive lifestyles, and emigration as practices with a political dimension. James Scott (1985) sees a political significance even in the acts of individuals who resist without confrontation and without an organized resistance movement. He refers to soldiers avoiding service in the American Civil War (ibid.:29). Hannah Arendt, on the other hand, locates political significance in the acts of a group of people gathering to discuss what is common to them, and who, through their words and actions, change the political horizon: "[T]he political realm rises directly out of acting together, the sharing of words and deeds" (Arendt, 1988:198).

If we focus on the phenomenon at the center of this book, Israeli emigration, this practice is accompanied by a unique discourse, which connects the emigrants and conceptualizes emigration itself as political. This discourse is developed in online forums as well as in texts and events. Emigration, in this respect, becomes political when it is the center of the becoming of a community with a political horizon. I emphasize again that heterosexual subjects can take part in activities that subvert Zionist ideology, whether as emigrants or still in the territory of the state, like not serving in the army, not having children, or educating children not to be Zionists. It is possible to say, thus, that the queerness the emigrants symbolize is not only in relation to sexual practices or gender performance, but is related to many other elements that function to undermine national and social conventions.

The Zionist Project and the Future

Creating an Individual Future

As I have shown, queer subcultures create alternatives by creating the possibility of a future that is not structured by paradigmatic markers of life, especially birth, marriage, reproduction, and death (Halberstam, 2005:2).[1] The queer emigrants who participated in this study criticized the way Israeli society cherishes these paradigmatic markers. Their narratives

expressed a desire for an alternative life, outside of heteronormative conventions, which are taken for granted by the Israeli collective. For these individuals, heteronormative markers can be seen in reproduction; monogamous relationships (in a social atmosphere in which singlehood is a failure); settling down in one permanent location; buying a house; and even death. The variety of narratives and their alternative approaches to Israeli heteronormative markers reflect the way Halberstam recalls her indoctrination into the normative timeline of a young girl in 1970s England:

> In the assembly hall the headmistress wants to let the girls know that it is our responsibility to dress appropriately so as not to "incite" the male teachers to regrettable actions. This, she says will be good training for us, since we are here to prepare ourselves for marriage and family. I hear a loud voice in my head saying fuck family, fuck marriage, fuck the male teachers, this is not of my life, that will not be my timeline. (Halberstam in Dinshaw et al., 2007:182)

Natan expressed similar criticism of the way Israeli society encourages people to get married and have children. Drawing from the general criticism of Israeli society as a whole, he also expressed specific criticism of the way the LGBT community in Israel incorporates these norms:

> I couldn't deal with the gay guys there. Everybody is looking for a relationship. Why are you running and looking for a relationship? What are you, stupid? Looking for a relationship at the age of 20. Live a little, see the world. Fuck, have fun. You know, *they run directly from their parent's prison, to the army, to a relationship. It's completely perverse.* My parents still call me, even today, asking "So, what about a boyfriend?" I tell them, "Listen, I have a boyfriend every day! Every day I have a new boyfriend." And then the question is of course, "Do you want to be alone?" And this is another reason why it is better to live in this country [Germany], that being alone is not the Mark of Cain. In Israel, you see the women as well, like hens, running around to find a guy. . . Here the atmosphere is completely different. For example, the fact that everybody in Israel keeps asking people, "So, when are you getting married/ have babies?" (*matay etzlech?*), and it's a completely legitimate question! Here no one would even dare to ask that. No one

would even think about asking that. And no one would think that "I wish you [would]get married/have babies soon as well" (*Bekarov etzlech*) is a blessing.

Just as Natan criticized heteronormative models of kinship, David criticized the normative assumptions of buying a house and settling down in one specific location. When I asked him how he envisioned his future in 15 years, he could not think of an answer. In his mind, staying in Berlin was necessary for gaining a German passport, but once he had the passport, he said, he would be able to be anywhere in the world. He said he was tired of Berlin, so he did not imagine himself living there much longer, but he could not imagine where he would live in the future: "I don't have dreams about settling down. It's like thinking of a pension," he said. As I could not understand the connection he drew between settling down and pension, I asked him to explain what he meant. This is how our conversation continued:

> DAVID: I mean settling down. What is settling down? It is like thinking of a pension. It's like thinking where I want to die.
>
> HILA: Where do you want to die?
>
> DAVID: I don't want to die.

For David "settling down" meant retirement and death, and he was imagining something else. In not following normative logics of time and space, David was living in a queer temporality, producing "imaginative life schedules and eccentric economic practices" that break linear timelines, to the extent of the logic of life and death (Halberstam, 2005:1). As Halberstam suggests elsewhere:

> Queer time for me is the dark nightclub, the perverse turn away from the narrative coherence of adolescence—early adulthood— marriage—reproduction—child rearing—retirement—death, the embrace of late childhood in place of early adulthood or immaturity in place of responsibility. It is a theory of queerness as a way of being in the world in a critique of the careful social scripts that usher even the most queers among us through major markers of individual development and into normativity. (2007:182)

Following this line of thought, queerness challenges conventional logics of development, maturity, adulthood, and responsibility, concepts tied with parenting and childrearing. When I asked Asaf about the possibility of having children, his first response was a decisive "Never." A moment later he added "for now." His words made me go back to Halberstam's notion of embracing late childhood. Asaf said:

> Honestly, I don't want to procreate. It seems grotesques to me. I don't love myself enough to procreate... Of course things could change, but meanwhile I'm too much of an egoist to take care of a child. I can barely take care of myself. I would want to be a cool uncle, but I don't want to be a father. I will be a failure as a father.

David's, Natan's, and Asaf's narratives articulate the ways in which emigration enables exiting the social structure that demands that they settle down, get married, have children, and so on. In deciding to emigrate, Israelis create an alternative life, one free of constant social criticism. Emigration allows them to be released not just from heteronormative structures, which restrict them as individuals, but also from a larger social regime—the Zionist project. This means exiting a wide social structure that has implications for every Israeli individual, a collective that fully accepts the militarism that is forced by the leadership, fully accepts a violent present and, mainly, a future that does not hold any possibility for ending the conflict, or a change in the Israeli lifestyle. Choosing to depart, therefore, can symbolize the desire to create an alternative future for the emigrants.

Eran, 35 years old, who had lived in Berlin for a decade, said he did not know where he would be in 10 years, but added: "I hope somewhere around here, in this neighborhood, in a nice apartment, five-room apartment, two kids, making a film. This is the fantasy." While he could imagine a nice pink future for himself, his thoughts about the future of Israel were very pessimistic:

> I think that most of the Jews will leave. Everyone who has money to do so will leave to the United States or to Europe. I believe that slowly the Jewish minority in the area will become more of a minority, and the ruling authority will become more radical, more right wing, more anti. There will be an actual apartheid, I mean a really crazy apartheid, even more than today,

3333

article in *Haaretz* titled "No Country Can Eliminate Romantic Expectations as Quickly as Palestina." In one of the comments in the discussion, when somebody asks what exactly the topic of the conversation is, Adi replies: "[T]he themes are: 'exile,' 'home country,' 'detachment,' 'refuge,' 'loneliness,' 'the shattered dream,' 'existential despair,' 'lost,' 'grief,' 'reality.' "

Thinking about the terrible future awaiting the citizens of the state of Israel means making a claim regarding the individual future of the emigrants, a future that can take place in another space, outside the national territory. When I asked Natan what he saw on the horizon for Israel, and if he was hopeful in regard to Israel, he said: "No. For Israel? There is no hope for Israel." When I asked him what he saw on his horizon, he answered: "Who thinks of the horizon when the present is so great? Who needs a horizon? Who needs to think about how the future would look like, when the present is excellent?" In a way, Natan articulates Clara Freccero's (2006) demands for the present. Freccero suggests viewing queerness as a form of living and existence that is not based on a past or a future, a way of acting and communicating that has not yet arrived and which may never arrive. She suggests using a terminology of passion that arises in different times, that does not rely on the past or the future.

In 2012, a member of the Facebook group posted a link to an article from *Ha'aretz* newspaper, describing the request of the writer Yoram Kanyok to register on his Israeli identification card as lacking religion. Next to the article, a question was posted "Is there a future?" seemingly implying that Kanyok's act would symbolize a hope for a change in the situation of Israel, as the Jewishness of the state and its citizens is one of the major obstacles preventing an actual democracy and a peace agreement. In a comment that appeared in response to the post, David wrote: "No." Afterward, in a second comment, Adi wrote: "[T]here is a future, but it is in the Diaspora." While David had no hope for the future in Israel, and in a way, no future for Israelis, Adi's comment suggested a future envisaged in other ways—in the diaspora.

It's important to clarify here that the queer aspect is expressed in the pessimism regarding Israel's future. Lee Edelman (2004) calls queers to refuse political regimes that require citizens to make sacrifices in the present to achieve a liberated future. Edelman, in his antisocial polemic *No Future,* rejects the future as a queer stand. Similar to Edelman's suggestion, queer Israeli emigrants do not succumb to the collective narrative, which is based on a hope for a better future, and they undermine the social convention that advocates hope for a change in the future. Pessimism is

what drives them out, what pushes them to search for an alternative future for themselves. They are not trying to secure Israel's future, nor are they relying on memories of persecution in the places in which they choose to settle. Instead of adhering to the fixity of ideas, ideologies, and places, they are queering the Zionist timeline. They possess no expectations for a better Israel, as they subvert and move away, both physically from Israel's territory and symbolically, as they shed their parents' hopes of them and Israeli society's investment in them.

This lack of hope found in their narratives is what Edelman terms as "embracing queer negativity" (Edelman, 2004:6). Leaving Israel is a queer act, which breaks the constructs of Zionist ideology, as the politics of Israel and of Zionism stems from this investment in the future and from staying in Israel. This refusal to take part in the Zionist project, the completely pessimistic view that leads to departure, is the radical act that I view as subverting the present condition in Israel and the future of what might become of it. In Edelman's words, the departure, the emigration, marks taking the "other" side of politics, "the side outside all political sides" (ibid.:7). Edelman demands that we negate the future and refuse the insistence of hope itself as affirmation. The queer dimension in the identity of the emigrants not only is related to sexual practices and gender performance but also is a marker for undermining many social conventions, one of which is the demand to stay in Israel.

Although leaving the territory can symbolize a disconnection, the emigrants continue to have affective connections with the homeland even after their departure. They take part in demonstrations and events related to Israel, and a few even flew to Israel just to vote in the 2012 and 2015 elections, which makes it impossible to say that they are completely pessimistic regarding the future of Israel. Even if they declare it to be completely hopeless, their acts reflect a more complex and ambivalent picture.

Reproduction, Emigration, and the Future of the Zionist Project

There is an inseparable connection between the national ideology in Israel, Zionism, and the idea of a future. This relationship is expressed by encouraging reproduction for the preservation of the future of the Zionist project. This is done by maintaining a Jewish majority in the territory and by reproducing babies who will grow up to be soldiers who protect the state. Israel's government is greatly invested in reproduction, and both state officials and society encourage reproduction (Donat, 2011; Goldin, 2008;

Bat Ami, 1992; Kadish, 2001; Berkovich, 1999; Solomon, 1993; Hashiloni-Dolev, 2004; Fogiel-Bizaoui, 2010). Zionist ideology demands that every Jewish citizen take part in the project of reproduction—including single women, lesbians, and even gay men with the economic ability to use surrogacy. Taking part in this national project, in a similar way to taking part in army service, facilitates a simple and easy acceptance of LGBTs by the Israeli collective. This process works the same way for the LGBTs themselves, who may feel like normative members of the collective by having children and joining the army. Ruth Kadish claims that even though lesbians occupy a liminal and potentially subversive position vis-á-vis what she terms the "cult of fertility," since the late 1990s the Israeli lesbian community has been experiencing a "baby boom." By bearing children, women "escape their sexual identity as lesbians and enter the most desirable and respectable role for Israeli women—that of mothers" (Kadish, 2001:236).

In this respect, it is important to differentiate between queers and LGBTs who adopt heteronormative practices (such as army service and monogamous relationships leading to marriage and reproduction). The Israeli queer community offers alternatives with respect to the social demand to have children, a demand that is almost inherently connected to marriage. These alternatives can be expressed in a decision not to have children at all, to have them outside of a monogamous relationship, to educate them against Zionism, and various other possibilities. The queer potential, as I have mentioned throughout this book, exists as well for subjects who engage in heterosexual sex practices, but whose lifestyles represent an option that is inherently queer, such as being single, nonmonogamous relationships, and not having children.

These alternatives are sometimes inherently connected to the decision to emigrate. Natan's narrative portrayed this when he described his life as a single man in Israel as "the mark of Cain." The notion of marriage, for instance, appeared in the narratives not as an act driven by a wish to participate in heteronormative patterns, but actually as a way to acquire foreign passports, sometimes not even connected to sharing a home or any kind of romantic/sexual relationship. One of the interviewees called this practice "the politics of papers." In addition, emigrants who eventually chose to have children described parenting outside of Israel as a form of resistance to the Zionist project, because their children are not counted in the Jewish demography of the state of Israel, besides not being required to serve in the army.

It is important to mention that the pronatalist policy is valid not only within the territory of Israel. Due to the threat that emigration entails, Zionist ideology uses its power even over Israelis who are located outside of the territory. This can be seen in many activities by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Israeli consulates around the world. Among these activities are campaigns that seek to encourage Israeli emigrants to return. This ideology is expressed, for instance, in a campaign by the Israeli government attempting to bring back emigrants. One of the videos, titled *Before Aba Becomes Daddy, Bring Them Home*, was uploaded on the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption YouTube channel on September 22, 2011, as part of a larger campaign, which included other videos with similar content. The video portrays a father and son spending an afternoon at home. The child, who is drawing, calls his father "Daddy" several times, as the father, who falls asleep in front of the TV, does not wake up. The child then approaches the father and whispers "Aba," which means Daddy in Hebrew. At the sound of the Hebrew word, the father immediately awakes. Following that, a message appears on the screen, saying: "They will always be Israelis, their children will not. Help us bring them home" (see figures 5.1–5.3).

Figure 5.1. *Before* Aba *Becomes* Daddy, *It's Time to Return to Israel*. Israeli campaign to convince Israeli migrants to return to Israel. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glQDf8vXvkQ.

Figure 5.2. *Before* Aba *Becomes* Daddy*, Its Time to Return to Israel*. Israeli campaign to convince Israeli migrants to return to Israel. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glQDf8vXvkQ.

הם תמיד יישארו ישראלים.
הילדים שלהם לא.

Figure 5.3. *Before* Aba *Becomes* Daddy*, Its Time to Return to Israel*. Israeli campaign to convince Israeli migrants to return to Israel. YouTube, Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption official channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glQDf8vXvkQ.

The video itself constructs a timeline in which Israeli identity fades away in the generations who are brought up abroad. The campaign, which is aimed at the families of the emigrants still based in Israel, seeks to mobilize these families to put pressure on their sons and daughters to return to Israel, mainly to make sure that their children, the next generation, will grow up in Israel. It also constructs the emigrant as a parent who does not fulfill his parenting obligations, as it visually represents "sleeping on duty," and illustrates the ways in which failing to take part in the national collective can stand for other failures. A queer perspective enables us to criticize the ways in which Zionist ideology functions, as well as the direct demand at the center of the Zionist project—staying in Israel. Examples for undermining this ideology can be found in texts created by the emigrants themselves.

In a parody, which was posted on the NHD Facebook group by Adi, a father and son are replaced by a woman and her dog. In the video, a woman is sitting on a bench in a park, reading the *New York Times*, while her dog barks at her, trying to get her attention. The dog barks, "Woof-woof," three times, unsuccessfully. When the dog shifts and barks: "Hav-hav," which is the expression for a dog bark in Hebrew, the woman immediately looks at the dog and pets him. The message appearing on the screen at the end of the video follows the original source, with a slight change: "They will always be Israelis, their pets will not. Help us bring them home." The video was titled: *Before* Hav-Hav *Becomes* Woof-Woof. The description of the video says: "Not just people forget their Jewish heart in exile. Help them come back home. The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption Campaign for returning citizens" (see figures 5.4 and 5.5 on page 140).

In a second video, similar in conception to the dog parody, the concluding title says: "Their children are no longer Israelis. Your children can be that as well. Leave today. For a better future, call today the embassies of Canada, Germany and Australia." The logo of the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption then appears, and an X is marked on the word "Absorption" (see figures 5.6 and 5.7 on page 141).

Tamar Glazerman, who created the dog parody, is a 32-year-old lesbian who emigrated to New York in 2011. She said that when she saw the campaign, she immediately knew she wanted to do something in response to it. When a friend from Berlin visited her, she told him about the idea, and he volunteered to be the cameraman:

It just seemed to me the most pathetic, crazy, and funny thing. The problem with the Ministry of Absorption campaigns is that

Figure 5.4. Parody on the Israeli campaign for returning Israeli emigrants, *Before* Hav-Hav *Becomes* Woof-Woof. Retrieved from Tamar Glazerman's YouTube channel, on August 22, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-8EABsAEo8.

הם תמיד ישארו ישראלים.
חיות המחמד שלהם לא.

Figure 5.5. Parody on the Israeli campaign for returning Israeli emigrants, *Before* Hav Hav *Becomes* Woof Woof. Retrieved from Tamar Glazerman's YouTube channel, on August 22, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-8EABsAEo8.

Figure 5.6. Parody on the Israeli campaign for returning Israeli emigrants, *Before Chanukah Becomes Christmas—Leave Today*. Anonymous YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzQViZJDPRU.

Figure 5.7. Parody on the Israeli campaign for returning Israeli Emigrants, *Before Chanukah Becomes Christmas—Leave Today*. Anonymous YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzQViZJDPRU.

> they are making something that is funnier than any parody
> that you can think of. They really challenge me as a writer.
> Take for example the video about the Memorial Day.[2] It's the
> 30 seconds you need to explain to non-Israelis what is so
> perverse about Israeli identity. You don't need anything more.
> The whole purpose of the film is to show how the goy [non-
> Jew] is stupid, because it's obvious that we are grieving now
> about the deaths of Israelis. This video clip is just hysterical, I
> mean I don't know how to make it better because it's so funny.

The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, as a Zionist institution, is
excessively invested in the future. The future the campaign envisions
is one in which the children of Israelis will not speak Hebrew, will not
celebrate Jewish holidays, and will not be part of the Israeli collective
identity. For Glazerman, the parody is a way to express her criticism
of the "abnormality" of Zionist ideology and the insane demand not to
emigrate, as well as criticism of the negative results Zionism attributes
to raising children outside of Israel.

Edelman argues that political regimes use the image of the Child
to affirm the structure of social order, and that the image of the Child
is the image of the future: "The Child remains the perpetual horizon of
every acknowledged politics, the fantasmic beneficiary of every political
intervention" (Edelman, 2004:3). The image of the Child serves to regulate
political discourse, and Edelman argues that "the figural Child alone
embodies the citizen as an ideal, entitled to claim full rights to its future
share in the nation's good" (ibid.:11). This figure functions as a disciplinary
mechanism, in which any liberty of the present must be curtailed in the
interest of this mythical child. The example of the Ministry of Immigrant
Absorption's campaign proves that the image of the Child is an inseparable
part of the temporal regime of the Israeli nation. That symbolic image
of the Child is very much embedded in Zionist ideology and practices.

What, then, are the attitudes of queer emigrants regarding bringing
up children outside of Israel? Six of the nine children born in Europe
were not registered as Israeli citizens. This is in comparison to six
children born in the United States, whose parents narrated that it was a
necessity required by the Israeli authorities.[3] The legislation requires all
Jewish Israeli citizens who visit Israel with their children born abroad
to register the children and obtain Israeli passports. The enforcement
of this rule, however, depends on the clerk working at the border. The
legislation, and whether it is enforced or not, is less important than the

wish of the "European" parents to disconnect ties between their children and the homeland. Most of the European parents who did not register their children in Israel did so to allow their children to make up their own minds regarding future army service. The parents who identified themselves as having left-wing political views also said that there was a political reason behind their decision not to register the children as Israelis. Parents who did not identify as having left-wing political views, emigrants who had a positive experience of army service, also chose not to register their children for the same reason. This is how, for example, 40-year-old Na'ama, who lived in London with a Jewish partner and their two daughters, described her decision:

> We didn't register them. It was mainly due to advice from an Israeli relative who also lived here many years. She said that her children receive induction orders since they spent more than three months in Israel, and were registered as citizens, even though they were brought up in England. I don't feel that this is suitable for me, so I didn't register them. If they decide that they want to be registered, when they are old enough to have an opinion, I would happily register them. I did so specifically so that they could stay in Israel for a longer period and without this matter of recruitment. If they would want to be in the army, they could always volunteer. I wanted it to be their choice. I want them to have the freedom to choose . . . be the ones making the decision, and not the state, which is not responsible for them at the end of the day.

While Na'ama did not register her daughters so that they could spend more time in Israel, Ruthi did not register her children mainly because she did not want them to be part of Israeli culture:

> We made a very conscious decision to start a family somewhere else. I don't want my children to be part of that culture. I don't want my children to join the army; I don't want them to be part of the Israeli ethos.

Having children, but not in Israel, meant, for some of the participants, undermining the Zionist goal of a Jewish majority. While she said she was mainly concerned about her children's upbringing in Israeli culture, Ruthi also described her decision as a political act:

The decision is on the personal level, but the reasons and the circumstances and the motivations leading to it are political, but it is a personal decision. It also does not create a political change [. . .] I made a decision, which was improving the quality of my life. Not economically, not on any level a materialist improvement, but definitely in the deepest levels of improving a quality of life. So again it's not that I . . . look, *my children don't have Israeli passports, and I don't want them to have. That is a political decision. What I mean is that I don't want them to be counted as part of the Israeli collective.* I couldn't care less what other people think, but I feel that this is a political act. It's a very, very minor decision, but this is where I feel that there is something I can do. That if I say, "Not in my name," I really mean, "Not in my name."

While Ruthi did not have any second thoughts regarding where to have children, Talia's narrative portrays the internal struggle of a parent raising her children away from her wider family:

The more political I become, the more I don't see myself returning. I mean, before I had children, it was clear to me that I'm not going back. And then you have children. And you go for a visit, and suddenly there is no politics; there isn't the aggressiveness of people on the streets, nothing. All you do is spend Friday afternoon with your mum and dad and all your cousins, and somebody takes care of your children, babysits them for a whole day. And your child is happy. Everybody's happy. And then you sit down and think, "Why am I not living in the same country as my family?" Suddenly you really need the family. If it was me alone, I could really be fine here. But my child, what they give him—no one else can give him. I'm very sad he doesn't have that. When he was very little, and we came for a visit, it was the first time I had a hard time returning to England. I felt like I was hurting my son. But then you justify it, when you think what Israeli education will give him, and how he would be brainwashed, just as I was brainwashed, how he would go to Masada and think of people killing themselves as heroes. Of course, only people from our side.[4] And it could be even worse. God forbid, he could become one of those people who say, "death to the Arabs," or

the worse, he can go to the army and die. And that's when I say, okay, let's stay here. But it's very, very difficult [. . .] Here you remind yourself that if they will be there, they might die in the wars of Israel. And the wars of Israel are unjust wars. If they die in justified Israeli wars, that would be terrible, but at least. . . 0h, I don't know what I'm saying, it would be terrible! It doesn't matter justified or unjustified. I don't want them dying on me [. . .] If I will bring him up here I feel there is a larger chance that I will bring up a pacifist child. If I bring him up in Israel, it won't matter what I think. In school, they will inject into his brain how good it is to die for our country,[5] and how the Jewish people return to their homeland, and nobody was here, nobody lived here, we came, they sold us their lands, everything was great.

Talia's words reflect a very honest picture of the ambivalence related to bringing up children in the Israeli diaspora. She lists the advantages and disadvantages of having her son away from Israel and from her extended family, something that she perceived to be completely different than her own decision to live far away from her homeland.

    While the decision made by the mothers in this research was to have children in the diaspora, it did not prevent one of them from using, in the process of becoming pregnant, the same Zionist resources she was critical of. When I met Lital, she was 38 years old and the single mother of an 18-month-old son. At that time, she had been living in London for more than 10 years. Lital told me that from the age of 30 she had really wanted a child and that at the age of 34 she had decided to start fertility treatments in Israel. In the beginning, Lital did not see traveling back and forth as a problem. The main reason she had her medical procedures in Israel and not in England was financial. Israel is one of the easiest places to get fertility treatments for free and without much bureaucracy, even as a single mother or as someone in a lesbian relationship. When Lital initially sought fertility treatments in 2011 from Britain's National Health Service, she was denied treatment, since she did not have a male partner.

    During the three years of fertility treatments, Lital felt very frustrated, as more and more medical problems were found. Her doctor referred her to IVF treatment, but she was rejected. "It cost them a lot of money, so they wanted to try the regular treatment first, for at least nine times." After meeting a new partner, Lital underwent, for the first time, a private medical procedure in London. She paid £2,000 for the procedure, which

failed, treatment that she had already had seven times in Israel, for free. In general, her experience with British doctors was terrible. At one point, one of the doctors told her that there was absolutely no chance that she could get pregnant: "He was really rude to me. I started crying. He said that he won't try again, because it would be like trying to bake a cake with rotten eggs." Her doctor in Israel, on the other hand, was very kind and supportive. "In England, they look at this financially, but in Israel, he said, they put financial issues aside, and you try and try until you succeed." Eventually, using IVF, she succeeded, and four of the five eggs that were drawn from her were fertilized. She mentioned that she has two embryos waiting for her in a freezer in Israel, and she is certain she would like to get pregnant again. Even though her son was conceived in Israel, he too is not registered in Israel:

> He is not Israeli. He is only British, because I don't want him to go to the army. If he would want Israeli identity, and he would tell me, at the age of 15 or 16, we will acquire an Israeli passport for him. But there is absolutely no rush.

Lital sees Israel as a very dark place, especially regarding her sexual identity. When I confronted her, saying that as a lesbian, she could receive fertility treatments that she was not able to receive in England, she said:

> You're right, but it has nothing to do with being a lesbian. It's all about being a woman and about Jewish reproduction. It is very political in Israel. And it's racist. I participated in Israeli racism. It's all about demography. It's not because they think about the woman, or the woman's feelings. Not at all. All they think about are the numbers, how many Jewish people are there in Israel.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the temporal character of the Zionist regime in Israel. The Israeli regime is filled with various moments and elements that organize the nation on a national timeline. These collective moments recur at specific moments in every individual citizen's time and connect the individual to the nation. Here the book conceptualizes emigration from Israel as an act that has the potential to break the national Israeli timeline. Using queer theory and the notion of temporality enables discussing, in a

similar way, other topics, apart from emigration, as acts that can symbolize a subversion of the heteronormative Israeli timeline, such as negation of army service, relationships and marriage, reproduction, settling down, and more.

Using a body of work in queer theory on temporality and spatiality, this chapter proposes that queer Israeli emigrants both participate in the straight time of reproduction and depart from the life schedules that are rendered coherent and inevitable within heteronationalist frameworks. This chapter ends with the notion of reproduction and the structure of relations between the future of the Zionist project and the future citizens of the state. Considering Zionist policy, which encourages reproduction, as well as encourages bringing Israeli emigrants back to the state, the chapter investigates the ways emigration enables dismantling the direct connection between the citizens and the future of the homeland. It considers, particularly in relation to a politics of reproduction, how queer Israeli emigrants situate themselves in relation to social normativity, family, and futurity.

Israeli emigration, *yerida*, is a unique and interesting practice to investigate in respect to the topic of temporality in the Israeli context. Most of the queer Israeli emigrants interviewed for this research conceptualize their departure as a complete disconnection, not just from the territory of Israel and the contemporary political regime, but also from the future of the homeland. Not being in Israel enables not being part of the timeline that constructs national Israeli identity. When exiting the Israeli territory and timeline, the emigrants invest in a future in different places and different times. The most extreme examples of this are the Israeli mothers who disconnect their offspring from the homeland by taking the symbolic act (but also, a very much material act) of not registering them as Israeli citizens.

For the government of Israel, the Child symbolizes the future of the state of Israel. The Child also functions as a tool for reaching the goal: the future of the state of Israel is promised only by a Jewish majority in the territory of the state. The decision to bring children up in a different space stems from a wish to protect them and from a wish not to contribute to Zionist goals, not to continue the temporal regime offered by Israel. The future, as it appears in the narratives of the emigrants, signifies the unique connection between the emigrants and the homeland and the possibility of breaking those ties.

The actual potential for this kind of disconnection is questioned considering the strong relationship the emigrants have with their families and friends in Israel. Even the decision not to register children as Israeli

citizens is a temporal and reversible decision that cannot mark a definite departure from the collective, for as long as the Israeli Law of Return exists, it is possible for emigrants who waived their citizenship and their children to return to Israel in the future. It is possible to say, thus, that emigration marks the continual process of investigating mechanisms of belonging and of disconnecting from Zionist ideology and the homeland and that it is difficult to fulfill a complete departure from it.

The Queer Act of Emigration

Avoidance and Unheroic Political Activism

Now that I have established that different forms of breaking the national timeline can constitute a political activity, I focus this chapter on emigration and suggest viewing emigration as a political activity similar to that of avoiding mandatory army service. I suggest in this chapter seeing emigration as a passive political act. Noting that Zionism demands a particularly masculinist and heroic model of citizenship (army service and aggressive form of action as mundane activities), I identify here in emigration a passive mode of activism that is neither nihilistic nor compliant but that finds in the acts of avoidance and withdrawal a different idiom for resisting the Zionist regime. I compare oppositional editorial pieces in *Haaretz,* signaling distress and disappointment over what Israel has become to anti-Zionist movements calling for Israelis to leave the country. In a sustained reading of an article by Ilana Hamerman, I not only provide undiluted Zionist critiques of emigration but also consider left-wing critiques.

The argument at the heart of this chapter, and more so generally at the heart of the book, is that the decision to emigrate stems from the vulnerability of queer Israelis. The very act of announcing their vulnerability undermines the entire system: they avoid the Zionist demand to perform as strong, masculine sabras. Likewise, the left-wing resistance to the Israeli regime demands similar strength—taking part in violent demonstrations. In a reality that values courage, heroism, total obedience, and masculinity on both sides of the political spectrum, acts of weakness, desertion, evasion, and vulnerability are read here as politically significant. Queer forms of departure, this chapter argues, symbolize a refusal to answer Zionism in the currency of heroism and active resistance.

Emigration and the Question of Political Passivity

In February 2010, two queer Israelis, Ofri Ilani and Gal Katz, established the blog *The Land of the Amorites*. The opening announcement of the blog describes it as a platform to discuss politics, philosophy, history, sociology, ecology, theology, and sexuality. "*The Land of the Amorites* is this land, but also a completely other land. It is unclear where exactly it is, did it really exist, will it exist in the future, and what needs to be done for that to happen," Ilani and Katz wrote, in what seems to be a longing for a different past and a new future in Israel/Palestine. The blog attracted attention, mainly among left-wing Ashkenazi intellectuals, and guest writers were invited to publish articles on it. In July 2012, Katz and Ilani published a call on the blog, inviting people to write about the question of departure from Israel through different perspectives. Following the title of the NHD, established a year earlier by Adi and Sagi, the blog titled its new project with the same name:

> The last depressing decade had made more and more people like us—let's call it the left liberal camp—to pack their stuff and leave. [. . .] Leaving the country is of course not a new issue. But with this new departure movement we have a special intimacy. [. . .] Options and possibilities need to be open because it's difficult here, because it's going to become even more difficult. In the coming weeks we would like to publish here texts which investigate this new constellation, the New Hebrew Diaspora, from different angles. Why leaving, why staying, why one should not leave, why there is no other option other than leaving. Is there a chance for a Hebrew existence in the diaspora, and if there is, what does it say about the existence in Israel? Can there be a political role for the exiles, are they political exiles or just opportunists? Can time spent abroad formulate a new political consciousness, a new identity?

Apart from the texts Katz and Ilani published (Katz writing from New York and Ilani from Tel Aviv), seven other texts appeared on the blog in relation to the project. One of them was written by a woman in Berlin, three by people in New York, one by a woman in China, and two by people in Israel, one of whom said he would never emigrate and one who had returned after seven years in the United States.

In a post titled "I Want to Be There," Yair Lipshitz wrote that the question of emigration "does not just concern me, but haunts me." Even though he knows he will not emigrate, Lipshitz says he cannot stop pondering the question of emigration. In his post, he raised the question of morality: "[I]s it moral to stay here? Is it moral to leave? [. . .] Do I betray my position as a father if I stay here with my children?" (Lipshitz, 2012). While Lipshitz does not wish to emigrate, his text does not touch upon his personal motivations to stay, but on the "ghostly presence" of the question of emigration in Israel.

Each of the texts that appeared on the blog under the project of the NHD attempted to touch upon personal motivations for leaving or staying, but all of them referred to the broader question of the specificity of contemporary Israeli emigration. In his post "The Life in Ellis Island," Oded Naaman, an author and a PhD student in Harvard, wrote that he was surprised to discover that he was part of a phenomenon:

> I suddenly understood that people envy us and hold grudges against us. But as much as I was surprised of the jealousy and grudge holding, I was surprised about the "*us.*" I was surprised that I am part of this group, that *there is such a group*—that my absence from Israel is part of a bigger absence, of many people, and that our general absence is noticed. I was surprised that we are present in the country as those who are not in the country, those who made it out. (Naaman, 2012)

This quote reflects the emergence of a new "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991), only here this is a nation outside of the nation, imagined by Naaman and others by virtue of its absence. For Naaman, leaving Israel is not a departure but an escape. However, he argued, those who escape inherently remain. According to Naaman, the disconnection that may result from escaping is not so different from the emotional disconnection that may result from the life lived within Israel. He said, "One of the most severe Israeli problems is the complete disconnection of most of its Jewish inhabitants from the political situation which enables their life."

The notion of disconnection as a significant affect of the political situation in Israel has been addressed before. Katherine Natanel has attempted to explore the state of normalcy that developed among the Israeli civilian population, in light of the violent ongoing conflict, or what she terms "active (dis)engagement" (2013). Normalcy, she argues,

"arises as if against or in spite of violence" (ibid.:229). The state of political affects in contemporary Israel, Natanel claims, is the conveying of emotions of despair, helplessness and disappointment, thus enabling the population to subscribe to "letting go," to living everyday life with apathy as a "particular type of compromise" (ibid.:231). Running away from this state of continuing emotional disconnection can have a political value. According to Naaman, a Hebrew-speaking community, a community of Israelis outside of Israel, can contribute to Israeli life in general and repair the political situation in Israel/Palestine. Namman was not the first one on the project attempting to ascribe a political meaning to the departure of Israelis. In his post, Katz wrote:

> I'm searching for a meaning to this departure, which is not reduced to the personal reasons of the ones who depart. In my case for instance, you may say, simply, that I travelled to America because I wanted to learn philosophy. This is the story I have told myself. In this respect I am a rational individual in the supermarket. I thought to myself: where is it better to study philosophy? And the answer was clear. One might also attribute to my action hidden psychological motives that are not part of the story I told myself when I left, but that were revealed as time passed. For example, a need to be released from a conservative gender regime. But even in this case, it is still an individual story (even if it is possible—and even desirable—to narrate the story in a political way).
>
> I'm looking for a meaning, one may say, a collective meaning—reasons that aren't reduced to individual calculation of interests, reasons that can reflect on my community. I suggest asking the question this way: can there be a political role for the New Hebrew Diaspora? A role that would justify the departure, make it good not just for the individual who is leaving but also for others? (Katz, 2012)

According to Katz, the political role of the NHD should focus on consciousness rather than action. "The diasporic situation—and it's not important in which country—invites a transformation of consciousness, which could have a positive effect on the homeland." Katz called for thinking about the advantages of *inaction,* a state of passivity, which according to him is derived from the diasporic situation. He welcomes "passivity,'" the position of not taking any action, and calls for a different

"doing"—for writing about the experience of the exilic community. "Writing can become the centre of a new community consciousness."

For Katz, writing is a form of inaction, though he thinks this inaction can formulate a community consciousness, which could lead to action. However, transforming individual thoughts into an open public discourse is in fact nothing but a political action. It was Arendt who clarified that the political rests in the action of pluralities that come together to discuss and deliberate on what is common to them: "[T]he political realm arises directly out of acting together, the 'sharing of words and deeds' " (Arendt, 1988:198). Politics for Arendt is a plurality in action—"a hub of duality that through speech and deeds shapes the world together" (Loizidou, 2013:112).

In her post, "I am Not Here," Liron Mor returned to the question of passivity and nonaction that Katz discussed. In departing, she identifies the action of "making room." The experience of being a minority in the diaspora, she argues, might enable Israelis to transform these feelings into solidarity between Israelis and Palestinians, "[T]his making room is not a non-doing. On the contrary—it is inherently active" (Mor, 2012). To make her argument clearer, Mor quoted a poem by Dalia Rabikovich, a famous Jewish Israeli poet. In the poem with the same title as the article, the poet tries to identify with and understand a Palestinian girl who was raped and murdered. "I am not here," the poet wrote, describing the setting in which the crime took place, "I am not here, I am floating low in the air." According to Mor, this poem criticizes Israeli escapism—being very close physically to the crimes of the occupation, and yet not being able to see it. This escapism, or disconnection from reality, is exactly how Naaman articulates the two possible paths available to Israelis: physically escaping abroad, or mentally escaping the situation within the territory of Israel. The poem holds a more complex meaning, Mor argues: "[I]n order to say 'I am not here,' I need to be here, I need to be able to point with my own finger on this specific thing in which I am not. This active 'making room' is what allows the poet to try and understand that Palestinian girl."

The notion of activity and passivity rising from these texts needs to be explored more carefully. Can we frame what Katz and Mor are discussing—stepping back, making room, evacuating, withdrawing to writing—as political activity? M. K. Gandhi sets a profound example of the ways passivity can be political. In his principle of *satyagraha*, translated in English as "passive resistance," he addresses forms of nonviolent resistance as a political activity (Gandhi, 2001). This passive resistance was performed in India in 1930 in mass defiance of the British

salt tax. The protesters, who walked 220 miles to gather salt against the law, sat on the ground in groups of 25 near the salt pans. When the police began savagely beating them, they engaged in nonviolent resistance (Gandhi, 2001:315). The protesters' silence in the face of extreme pain and provocation tore open a space "within the colonial imaginary, the space of silence that permanently altered the political horizon" (Leung, 2013:44). Emigration cannot be compared to protesters withdrawing from violence who nonetheless suffer violent repression for doing so. However, I am interested in the ways an act of passivity can be read as a political activity and in the ways this can contribute to an alteration of the political horizon. The act of remaining silent and doing nothing is where Slavoj Žižek finds a revolutionary significance:

> In a situation like today's, the only way to remain open to a revolutionary opportunity is to renounce facile calls to direct action, which necessarily involves us in an activity where things change so that the totality remains the same. Today's predicament is that, if we succumb to the origin of directly "doing something" (engage in the anti-globalist struggle, helping the poor. . .), we will certainly and undoubtedly contribute to the reproduction of the existing order. The only way to lay the foundation for a true, radical change is to withdraw from the compulsion to act, to "do nothing"—thus opening up a space for a different kind of activity. (Žižek, 2004:74)

For Žižek, this is *passive aggressivity*—the true means to transform a social structure, a totality, since any other option, according to him, will just contribute to the reproduction of the existing order. Doing nothing, thus, can be political. For Naaman, an Israeli within the territory of Israel might do nothing simply from political and ethical indifference. For Mor, as in the poem she quotes, the very act of pointing out their absence, being able to know and understand what is happening in that territory from which they are absent, already prevents political and ethical indifference.

The discussion on the blog became a public debate on the pages of *Haaretz* a few years later. In July and August 2014, during the most violent Israeli attacks on Gaza at that point (*Operation Protective Edge*), *Haaretz* published two columns by two Israeli citizens, one Jewish and one Palestinian, calling for a departure from Israel.[1] The two men, known *Haaretz* journalists for many years, expressed their disappointment with the current political situation in Israel. The Palestinian, author Sayed

Kashua, wrote on July 4, a few days before the war started, that after years of believing in the peace solution, his hopes had been shattered by the current situation, that he saw no future for his children in what Israel had become, and that he was moving to the United States with his family (Kashua, 2014). The Jewish writer Rogel Alper, a journalist and editor, wrote on August 31, almost two months after Kashua published his column and after the war had ended, of a similar disappointment, outlining the better future awaiting every Israeli outside the territory of Israel and basically calling for emigration out of the loss of hope in Israel, its government, and its society (Alper, 2014). The two columns attracted a lot of attention, both from the political Left and the Right, reviving the public dispute about emigration. Their texts also attracted some international attention (Kashua, 2014).

"I need to leave the country," Rogel Alper wrote on August 31, 2014, a few days after the war ended. "I hold a foreign passport. Not just technically, but psychologically. Israel is my home, but it is not correct to say I don't have any other home" (Alper, 2014). Israel, he said, offers a "bad deal." As if speaking to the Israeli public, which can understand, it seems, only economic reasoning, Alper speaks of choosing a place to live as if it were just a consumer decision. "I'm not talking about morality," he writes, "I don't want this article to be yet another empty debate about the occupation." The politics pushes him out. The decision, however, is the realistic solution every Israeli should make:

> I am talking in a practical and sober language. I am trying to be realistic, like the minister Uri Orbach. He claims that we must concede that in our lifetime and that of our children, every few years we will have to wage a war in which civilians will be killed too. He is right. These are the facts of our lives. Missiles will continue to fall on us, because of settlers like him and because of extremist Arab groups like Hamas, Hezbollah and the Islamic State.
>
> [. . .] I belong to a dying breed in Israel. *I can't influence the situation. I have no interest in devoting myself to the struggle against the occupation.* I believe that it is useless. There will be no compromise. No Palestinian state will be established, and a binational state will be hell.
>
> I *feel like I don't belong*; that there's nothing for me here, not even in the Tel Aviv bubble. I don't want to live in a bubble, certainly not one that is protected by an Iron Dome.

> If you identify with me you will certainly admit that you will
> encourage your children to seek their future elsewhere in the
> world, for the sake of their personal security, psychological
> and economic wellbeing. Israel is not worth the price it is
> exacting from us.
>
> [. . .] I cannot justify to my children continuing to live
> here. Israel is a dangerous place, which takes much more than
> it gives, for reasons that I do not accept. From my perspective,
> what goes for Tel Aviv goes for the communities on the Gaza
> border: You cannot live a good life here. You can die here, you
> can take shelter, or you can simply leave.

Alper, just like the respondents of this study, thinks Israelis should seek
a better future outside of Israel. Unlike the declarations on the NHD
Facebook page and on the blog *The Land of the Amorites*, Alper sees no
political aspect to this decision. It is a selfish decision, his words signify,
aimed at saving the private lives of the individuals making the decision.
The only moral value of this move would be securing the safety of one's
children, as the future of Israel will be more wars and bloodshed. What
he is requested to sacrifice for the sake of Israel, he concludes, is just not
worth it. Alper's article attracted a series of responses in *Haaretz*, from
both the political Right and Left. I will not dwell on the responses from
the Right, as they can be summed up in one sentence—those who are not
conforming to Zionist ideology can simply leave the country, as they are
not wanted anymore.[2] The responses from the Left are far more interesting.

On September 4, the left-wing figure Shlomo Avineri published a
response, titled "We Need You, Rogel Alper." Avineri agreed with Alper
that the situation was very bad: "Alper had lost his hope, he sees the
situation gets worse and worse, he sees the black future, he does not
believe that he can prevent the approaching disaster." However, Avineri's
response seems to be taking a very Zionist approach to why Israelis must
not emigrate, representing nicely the perception of left-wing Zionism:

> Just like you I understand that if our ship continues to sail on
> its current path, it will be shattered. The state will become an
> apartheid state, repulsive and ugly, not democratic, not secular,
> not liberal. The best of its sons and daughters will abandon it,
> just as you are attempting to do right now. But we can't face
> losing the good citizens [. . .]. We need you, Rogel, our war
> over the state of Israel is not over yet [. . .] This is the war on

the home. We truly have no other home. Anywhere else you
will be a foreigner, detached, uninvolved, rootless [. . .]. This
is the call for the battle. This is an emergency command (*zav
8*) in the struggle for the home, for our lives, for our future.
(Avineri, 2014)

Setting aside the debate as to whether Israel is already an apartheid state,
a nondemocratic entity, the language Avineri chooses is fundamentally
militaristic. He believed that every Israeli is needed for the fight for a
better future in Israel. Just as I showed in the first chapter, the Israelis
are indeed soldiers who need to be recruited for the most important war
of all wars—the war for the homeland. His language reshuffles Zionists'
discursive elements—an Israeli living outside of Israel is inherently
rootless, the same terminology A. B. Yehoshua uses to classify emigrants.
Avineri, like anthropologist Naama Sabar cannot accept that Israelis can
have a happy fulfilling life outside the territory of Israel (see chapter 1).
In his article, Avineri calls on the citizens of Israel to unite in response to
this emergency command (*zav 8*). This is the command soldiers receive
in states of emergency, instructing them to report for reserve service duty.
This emergency command was sent to thousands of Israeli men a little
more than a month prior to the publication of Avineri's text, ordering
them to report for duty in the Gaza battlefield. Avineri calls for the most
patriotic act of obedience, of truly performing civic duty, a metaphorical
left-wing "army." Avineri is interested in securing the safety and existence
of the homeland. According to him, staying and fighting for the homeland
is the political action required. The departure of Israelis is what is risking
the future of Israel, and not the regime itself.

Two days after Avineri published his article, another left-wing
figure, Ilana Hamerman, responded to Alper's article, offering a different
framework for conceptualizing the politics of departure. According to her,
emigrating is the privilege of only approximately 10% of the population
of Israel, thus, leaving is politically immoral:

Unlike you, Rogel Alper, [. . .] I have no foreign passport, don't
have other homes, I don't speak fluent English and I don't have
many countries to settle in [. . .]. For even if I did have all
these things, I would know that millions living in this land's
Arab and Jewish cities and villages have nowhere to go—be it
Hebron or Halhul, Haifa or Yokneam, Gaza or Tel Aviv, Khan
Yunis or Nir Oz. (Hamerman, 2014)

Instead of leaving, Hamerman invites Alper to join her and other Israelis in acts of civil disobedience to the Israeli regime, which will inherently make his life and the lives of others (those who could not leave, specifically, Palestinians) worth living in Israel:

> I discovered the freedom to break my country's laws that forcefully try to separate us. I kept smuggling them [Palestinians] out for medical treatments or family meetings or just to have a good time. Dozens and perhaps hundreds of Israelis do what I do [...] If thousands would do this, it would be a real political coup.
>
> Indeed, this hasn't happened yet. We've been roundly defeated. Yet despite it all, it's my existential and not just political answer to Alper's closing remarks, "you can simply leave." It is impossible for many, and it is certainly not so simple, but someone who cannot leave still has meaningful ways to rebel and live a life that is a hundred times more meaningful, rich and interesting than a life in fluent English in a single-family home in an American suburb. (Ibid.)

Hamerman's political offer brings us back to the question of passivity versus activity. Leaving and staying in Israel without rebelling are the passive immoral acts. The political actions Hamerman talks about are acts of civil disobedience. Since 2010, Hamerman and a few other Israeli women have been illegally taking Palestinian women and children from the West Bank to Israel. However, these acts, a matter she does not discuss in this article, can lead to being brought to trial and sentences of up to two years' imprisonment (Bluemental, 2010).

According to Judith Butler, any political activity that involves some kind of public assembly "is haunted by the police and the prison" (2014:9). When people gather in public to express radical and critical views, "there is always an anxious or certain anticipation that imprisonment will follow" (ibid.). Hamerman herself has been interrogated by the police, and charges have been pressed against her (Hamerman, 2010). Many of the emigrants participating in this study used to be activists, were arrested many times, and used to practice different forms of civil disobedience. However, not every left-wing Israeli can practice civil disobedience for various personal reasons, and even of those who can, not all are able (mentally and physically) to do so for many years. Alper felt that it was his moral duty to make sure his children were safe, and he could not

promise their safety if they lived in Israel. Hamerman felt it was her moral duty to object to the occupation, even if it meant going to prison, thus being unable to perform other duties, for instance, the duties of being a parent. In Hamerman's case, as a single mother to a blind child, this decision raised moral questions as well.[3]

Hamerman acts in what she believes to be the only possible form of political activity that remains available for citizens who have lost trust in the state:

> Civil disobedience arises when a significant number of citizens have become convinced either that the normal channels of change no longer function, and grievances will not be heard or acted upon, or that, on the contrary, the government is about to change and has embarked upon and persists in modes of action whose legality and constitutionality are open to grave doubt. (Arendt, 1972:74)

Emigration is not a crime, and those who emigrate do not break the law. In that respect, it is not civil disobedience per se. However, the emigration of queer Israelis and the departure offered by Alper do follow the conceptualization Arendt proposes. The very fact that a significant number of individuals believe that "the normal channels for change no longer function" and decide to act in a different way, one that lies beyond the normal channels for change, is political. The very fact that they gather in platforms like the NHD and *The Land of the Amorites* and discuss the situation, or write about it, constructing a different "channel" to change, is political. This is Arendt's notion of "sharing words and deeds," which can lead to reshaping the world, to altering the political horizon.

Hamerman offers Alper a suggestion concerning how to behave as a moral citizen in contemporary Israel—choosing not to obey the laws and dismantling the segregated reality prescribed by the regime. While Hamerman invites Alper to join her and other Jewish citizens of the state in acts of disobedience, which she hopes will lead to a revolution, and if not, would at least be the moral thing to do, Avineri calls for the exact opposite—staying and "fighting" for the homeland. While Hamerman calls to secure the safety of Palestinians, Avineri calls to secure the safety and existence of the state of Israel. Hamerman suggests to Alper that if he chooses to leave, he should do it "quietly," not showing off his privileged ability to do so. Avineri, on the other hand, insisted that Alper not leave. According to him, staying and fighting for his homeland is the political

action required. Emigrating is not even considered immoral; it is simply what one cannot do. He requests fighting for the future, and Hamerman requests fighting for the present—the present time of Palestinian women and children.

So far, I have tried to establish the theoretical grounds on which I argue that the statements of queer Israeli emigrants, according to which their emigration is political, are not empty declarations. I claimed that the political dimension they mention cannot be stripped off the act of emigration, an act that can seem to be an individual escape, a complete passivity in relation to the political situation in their homeland. Looking at Hamerman's proposal, especially in contrast to Avineri's command, sets up a space in which one can investigate the political possibilities available to Israelis who object to the Zionist regime. In the next section, I consider a different angle on how to conceptualize emigration as an "active" political act. Returning to the debate between passivity and activity, the next section is dedicated to questioning the similarities between emigration and not joining the Israeli Army. I use this comparison to focus on the notion of passivity, vulnerability, and avoidance in a political framework.

The Queer Act of Emigration: Avoidance and Unheroic Political Activism

During the summer of 2014, while the Israeli attack on Gaza was at its peak, an event for Israeli emigrants took place in Berlin. The evening program suggested an interesting framework for conceptualizing forms of avoidance as political activity.

The Tribute Night for the Slackers (*mishtamtim*) of the First World War in Hebrew Literature was held on August 1, 2014, in a small café in Berlin. The organizer, Tal Hever-Chybowski, a PhD student in history, had collected texts written in Hebrew in the early 20th century, which deal with European Jews (real-life individuals as well as fictional characters) who wanted to avoid military service during World War I. Though he had thought about organizing this event before the beginning of the war, he created the Facebook invitation on July 18, the 10th day of the war and the day the government of Israel had decided to physically enter the Gaza Strip, a military act that meant that the war would not end soon and was about to become even more offensive (Israel military, 2014).

The event was interesting for several reasons. First, participants of this study took part in the organization of the event, and Ilani and Adi

were invited to read and present the texts Hever-Chybowski had selected. The texts themselves were interesting due to their correspondence with Hebrew culture in Europe, and especially in Berlin. Their significance increased in light of the events in Israel/Palestine. The texts mainly articulated stories and issues with which many of the audience were familiar. The following excerpt from Gershom Scholem's autobiography was read that evening:

> My time as a young soldier—in Anelshtein in East Prussia—was short and stormy and I don't wish to discuss it in length. I was against everything that was happening there and I behaved in a way that basically left them only two options: either to put me in for trial, or to release me as a madman. They have chosen the second option and I was released two months later, as, they told me, a "psychopath" [. . .] The truth is that I don't remember any other period in my whole life that I had such a "clear understanding" as in those weeks. (Scholem, 1982)

The situation in Israel/Palestine, of the enlistment of mass numbers of Israeli Jews to reserve service under an emergency order, as well as the rising number of civilian victims and destruction in the Gaza Strip, was present throughout the evening, via the texts that were read and via the general atmosphere in the café. However, Hever-Chybowski himself insisted that the evening should be read not as a contrast to what was happening in Israel at the same time, but as a mere reflection of the opportunities diasporic Hebrew enables. In his concluding remarks, he addressed the contemporary political context in which he selected the texts:

> This evening, marking 100 years since the breakout of the First World War, is not a memorial event to commemorate those who died in the war, those who were injured, or the heroes of the battles [. . .] There will be no heroes here today: no war heroes, nor national heroes, not even the heroes of the peaceful resistance of those who supported peace. This evening is a tribute to the slackers (*mishtamtim*) of the war in the Hebrew literature. A tribute to the cowards, to those with families, the sane and rational who pretended to be crazy, the healthy who pretended to be sick. It is a tribute for those who cut their fingers, pulled out their teeth, those who hid, who ran away,

the non-heroes, those who personally resisted, intuitively, the
slackers who weren't seeking fame.

[. . .] The texts read in this evening were mostly written
in diasporic Hebrew, in language that was not the language of
the state or the army, but of a minority scattered in different
countries and nations. It wasn't the language of one country,
but of many countries and many nations [. . .] This evening
was dedicated to an attempt to try and expose, here—in Berlin,
and in Hebrew that there were, and there are still, political
options in Hebrew which challenge the nationalist equation of
"one people—one language—one land," an equation that stands
again and again at the heart of wars. This evening tried to point
out, even if very generally, the existence of an non-heroic and
non-militaristic Hebrew, which stems from different places and
responds to organised violence and erupting militarism in a
way that avoids taking part, joining armies and militancy.[4]

Hever-Chybowski's closing remarks, as well as the texts he selected, did
criticize the Israeli regime directly. The challenge of the model of "one
people—one language—one land," for him, is not just a challenge to
Zionism, but to nationalism in general. Diasporic Hebrew, he argues, used
to unite Jews from various states in Europe, who objected to the war that
was devastating Europe. It was not a language of a state, and it was not
connected to a territory or a nation, but to a people living in many nations.
Thus, in the days of World War I, Hebrew had a radical potential, as it
had not aligned itself with nations and armies, and enabled a possibility
for radical political and cultural activities. However, Hever-Chybowski left
it up to the audience to imagine what could constitute "political options
in Hebrew," and many, as I did myself, could not separate this from the
criticism of the events in Israel/Palestine.

Though Hever-Chybowski's closing remarks, as well as the texts he
selected, did not discuss the notion of a departure from Israel specifically,
one may read this statement as a call for emigration and diasporic
existence for Israelis. Here I would like to dwell on a different notion
this evening and these closing remarks suggested.

One cannot ignore the parallel axes between the two different kinds
of *hishtamtut* (slacking). Even if the Israeli emigrant does not want to
admit it, emigration from contemporary Israel can be seen as an act of
avoiding/dodging/not taking part in the battle over the present and/or the
future of Israel. For the men, not being in Israel means not performing

reserve army service. Israelis who do not live in Israel continue to receive regular and emergency enlistment orders even when they are abroad. Their family members, if contacted, give the information that their relatives are currently outside of Israel—which prevents any action against them as "deserters" (*arikim*), a finding that can lead to trial and even a prison sentence. There is something very unheroic, just as Hever-Chybowski categorized it, in simply avoiding the demand of the state in ways that will not create a "problem." It is unheroic in comparison with a conscientious objector, "refusnik," who is willing to go to prison for the refusal to serve. Meir Amor argues that *hishtamtot*, the informal way out of army service (unlike conscientious objection) is a political act: "social disobedience, a mundane individual act of resistance, unheroic and anti-dramatic" (Amor, 2010).

As we have established that the army is one of the most central institutions in Israeli society (Amor, 2010; Chacham, 2008; Kimerling, 1993), a comparison of escaping army service and escaping the state of Israel may be productive. If many soldiers were to escape/slack/avoid/refuse army service, there would be fewer people to preserve the existence of the army. In a similar way, if many Jewish Israelis were to leave Israel, there would be fewer Jews to preserve the existence of the Jewish state.

Moreover, one of the basic elements of Zionist ideology is the creation of a new model of a Jew, the sabra, the strong, fearless Zionist pioneer, who goes against the image of the soft, weak, and feminine diasporic Jew (Boyarin, 1997; Glozman, 2007; Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993). Queer Israeli emigration offers an alternative to this image, which undermines the image of the sabra. This alternative, which goes against the essence of Zionist ideology, stems from recognizing individual weakness and declaring that they simply cannot cope with what is required of them in Israel.

Boyarin, in his study *Unheroic Conduct: the Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (1997), claims that the feminization of Jewish masculinity produces an oppositional discourse, radical in potential. For Jews living under the Roman Empire, Boyarin suggests, the "soft" rabbinic masculinity, as well as its focus on study, was a resistance point for Jewish self-affirmation against a "hard" Roman-ness. In the same way, I wish to suggest that queer Israeli emigrants may offer a similar radical potential: the escape, the weakness, the inability to perform the duties demanded of Israelis, is directed to the diaspora. This escape is in itself the most un-Zionist act one can perform.

In her essay "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance," Judith Butler argues against the idea that vulnerability is the opposite of resistance.

"Vulnerability, understood as a deliberative exposer power, is part of the very meaning of political resistance as an embodied enactment" (Butler, 2014:12). For Butler, admitting vulnerability does not discount the political agency of the subjugated. In this case, when queer Israeli emigrants declare themselves as too weak, those who cannot bear what is required of them as part of resistance movements within the territory of Palestine do not abandon this resistance, but rather find a different political possibility to target the Zionist system. Their weakness allows them to rethink what is demanded of Israeli citizens, as well as what is demanded of activists. Activists are supposed to be courageous and strong, to fight for their beliefs with their bodies, and to sacrifice their lives and wellbeing. Gordon has observed that the dynamic of activism in Israel/Palestine is "enhanced by the uncritical reproduction of an ethos of personal sacrifice, resilience and toughness, creating widespread reluctance to surface the psychological effects of regular exposure to repression for the fear of being considered 'weak'" (Gordon, 2008:149).

I would like to quote from Adi's narrative and her reflection on years of activism in Israel/Palestine: "I've been an activist for 10 years. I can't live there anymore. People come to Berlin to heal." By announcing their weakness and vulnerability, by choosing not to be heroes, to avoid the battle which requires their bodies to be hurt, which endangers their freedom, being always haunted by police oppression and imprisonment (Butler, 2012:9), they are in fact resisting the Zionist project in its essence. They refuse, avoid, and dodge the Zionist demand to perform as strong, masculine sabras, a demand that functions in similar ways within the space of left-wing resistance in Israel/Palestine. The Jewish state demands that its citizens cope with the hardship of wars and perform the Zionist ideal of the strong soldier (or the strong mother who sends her sons to the battlefield with no hesitation). Likewise, the left-wing resistance to the state demands similar strength. This is Hamerman's demand of radical left-wing activists—to take upon themselves the moral act of resistance, to the extent of being physically hurt or arrested.

We like to see ourselves as "agentic," Butler claims, which leads to opposing "vulnerability as a political term" (ibid.:14). But we must pay attention to agency that comes into being in passive resistance, in avoiding, dodging, and admitting weakness. "Vulnerability is neither fully passive nor fully active, but operating in a middle region" (ibid.:17). The very act of becoming vulnerable, which contradicts normative assumptions regarding activism in Israel/Palestine, undermines the system, which demands strength and courage on either side of the political spectrum.

Israeli emigrants have chosen the nonheroic path in contemporary Israel. In this respect, they are the exact opposite of the heroic image of Hamerman, although both of these resistant agents work against the same regime.

Returning to the question raised by the writers in the blog *The Land of the Amorites*, the diasporic option of existence sets off a discussion about activity and passivity and the political implications of *being* and *doing*. Slacking is a kind of nondoing, of passive activity. One may criticize my subjects for being passive, for not acting against the Israeli regime, slacking in their role in the resistance movement, failing to perform their duties as activists. But this *failure* needs to be explored using a different framework, a framework that conceptualizes this failure as a radical potential, as a unique alternative.

In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam (2011) attempts to offer a middle way between cynical resignation and naïve optimism, a political alternative that will stand between pessimism and optimism, an alternative that will mark a different kind of political project—a desire to live life otherwise (Halberstam, 2011: 1–2). Halberstam makes an argument regarding conventional understanding of success and failure and wishes to dismantle the logic of these oppositions that we currently live with. In certain circumstances, Halberstam claims, it is failing, losing, undoing, and unbecoming which may offer a radical potential, and more creative ways of being in the world (ibid.:2–3).

Halberstam connects failure to queer modes of living, suggesting that "failing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well" (ibid.:3). Thinking in this framework enables us to recognize the ways in which the Zionist regime has structured modes of failing and succeeding, which become salient even within the discourse of resistance to this regime. Both Avineri and Hamerman, in a way, see emigration as the potential failure of the resistance movement, as well as the individual failure of those who cannot cope with the modes of living (civil disobedience/fighting for the homeland) which are demanded of them.

Halberstam articulates this critique with a scene from the animated movie *Chicken Run*, which I find useful in understanding the political terrain of possibilities outlined by activists like Avineri and Hamerman. In the movie, a group of chickens locked in a cage attempt to rebel against their captivity. The main protagonist, Ginger, decides to inspire a revolution and says: "we either die free chickens, or we die trying" (ibid.:129). It is clear that Hamerman calls for something very similar—Israelis must act against the evils of the occupation, even if trying to do

so may lead to imprisonment. Mainly, she calls for action even if it is clear that the revolution will fail ("we have been roundly defeated"). While Hamerman can be represented by the chicken Ginger, another voice is heard, the voice of Babs, "who sometimes gives voice to feminine naivety and sometimes points to the absurdity of the political terrain as it has been outlined by the activist Ginger. Ginger says, for example, 'we either die free chickens, or we die trying.' Babs asks naïvely, 'are those the only choices?' " (ibid.:129).

Halberstam claims that "feminists refuse the choices as offered— freedom in liberal terms or death—in order to think about the shadow archetype of resistance, one that does not speak in the language of action and momentum, but instead articulates itself in terms of evacuation, refusal, passivity, unbecoming, unbeing" (ibid.). What I suggest here is that queer Israeli emigrants are doing exactly that—they refuse the political terrain which has been outlined by the Zionist regime and by the resistance movement. Instead, they recognize the defeat of the forms of resistance used so far, and they outline a different political terrain. Emigration—this "evacuation" (and I quote again Mor's call for "making room"), "refusal," and "passivity" are the queer alternatives to the existing options.

It is important to clarify that in the reading I offer here, I do not criticize Hamerman's activity and perception of resistance (though I certainly criticize Avineri's). Nor was criticism expressed in the interviews or in the different social platforms, regarding forms of activity and disobedience performed *in* the territory of Israel/Palestine. Those who have been activists in Israel/Palestine have themselves been part of this resistance movement, and suffered the consequences (imprisonment, *Shin-Beit* questioning, being physically hurt by army/police). It is not that they say these actions are not crucial. What they say is that *they* cannot cope, physically and mentally, with these forms of resistance anymore. On the one hand, their escape, evacuation, refusal leads to healing in the Berlin sanatorium, as Adi described it. On the other hand, their dodging, avoiding, escaping, their failure to cope with what is demanded of them, entail other possibilities for rebelling, forms of resistance which do not undermine Hamerman's actions, but add to it, from a different perspective. As Žižek argues, "The only way to lay the foundation for a true, radical change is to withdraw from the compulsion to act, to 'do nothing'—thus opening up a space for a different kind of activity" (Žižek, 2004:74). In "failure" or "refusal," Halberstam identifies the "production and circulation of another competing set of ideas which could join in an active struggle to

change society" (2011:17). If we conceptualize emigration as the unheroic act of slacking, if we think of this absence, this evacuation, as passive resistance, emigration might offer a revolutionary potential.

We might also think about the political meaning of slacking under the framework offered to us by James Scott in his book *Weapons of the Weak* (Scott, 1985). In his research about everyday forms of peasant resistance, Scott discusses forms of resistance that are available to powerless groups, such as foot dragging, desertion, false compliance, feigned ignorance and so on (1985:29). One of the examples Scott mentions is the desertion and evasion of conscription by white Americans during the US Civil War, which "gave rise to shirking and flight on a massive scale" (ibid.:31). Not romanticizing the "weapons of the weak," he claims that desertion, for instance, may "achieve something where mutiny may fail, precisely because it aims at self-help and withdrawal rather than institutional confrontation" (ibid.:32). To establish the above claims, I return to Žižek once again:

> The threat today is not passivity, but pseudo-activity, the urge to "be active," to "participate," to mask the nothingness of what goes on. . . The truly difficult thing is to step back, to withdraw. Those in power often prefer even a "critical participation," a dialogue, to silence—just to engage us in a dialogue, to make sure our passivity is broken. (Žižek, 2006:212; 2008:183)

Resistance, Žižek suggests here, can often stabilize the system it is resisting, merely by giving the system legitimacy by making it appear democratic. Stepping back, not participating at all, he claims, is the true radical possibility. Declaring that emigration is the right political answer to the Zionist regime is an argument only time will be able to prove wrong. It would be very hard to confront Hamerman's argument regarding whether privileged emigration is moral. Confronting Žižek's argument with that of Hamerman would also be a difficult theoretical debate. However, my aim here was not to suggest that emigration is the right political decision, the one and only act every Israeli must take, nor am I declaring that every Israeli attributes a political dimension to individual emigration.

Nonetheless, in this chapter I attempt to offer a conceptualization of the emigration of queer Israelis as political. Following Arendt, I suggest reading their acts as forming a community that gathers to discuss the notion of emigration in relation to sociopolitical change in Israel as political. I also suggest viewing their emigration as political activity, in light of the work of Scott and Amor, who argue that individual cases of

avoidance and withdrawl are political. I believe that the declarations of queer Israeli emigrants presented here (both the personal narratives and the various texts they produce online) cannot be taken at face value, but they also cannot simply be rejected.

In addition, recognizing a gap between the political declarations of the emigrants regarding their departure and their personal narratives, I claim that this gap is not relevant. It is not their intentions that matter, but the effect that is created. Though queer Israeli emigrants publicly declare that they left because they believe departure will have political consequences, and though those declarations are (sometimes) contradicted by the personal narratives (which suggest that they were just not strong enough to stay in Israel), their departure as vulnerable agents is what holds radical potential, thus bringing their actions in line with their declarations. The failure to become the sabra, recognizing bodily and mental weakness, the evacuation of Jewish bodies from the homeland—means the refusal to perform what is demanded by Zionism. The effect of their departure is the undoing of Zionism: in body, evacuating the territory; and in mind, not following the image of the sabra. Their departure is indeed, political.

Thinking again about Hever-Chybowski's challenge to contemporary Zionism, and drawing from the hope that he offers—that diasporic Hebrew can be a response to national violence—I wish to stretch his proposal to the next chapter. The discourse queer Israeli emigrants use today proposes an alteration of the political horizon. However, contemporary Zionism has been the political horizon for Jews in the past. Just as there is no *one* way of solving the current situation in Israel/Palestine (if there is a way at all), there was no *one* answer to the "Jewish question" in the prestate period. Zionism, at least until 1948, was not "one." Going back to texts offered by diasporic Jewish figures from the first half of the 20th century can shed light on the "thoughts and deed" of contemporary diasporic Jews—the queer Israeli diaspora.

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A Queer Way Out

Israeli Emigrants and Unheroic Resistance to Zionism

This closing chapter explores Jewish and Jewish-Israeli critiques of statehood-Zionism and argues that queer Israeli emigration is in fact a manifestation of contemporary critiques of statehood-Zionism. In this respect, this closing chapter attempts to weave the ideas and claims I have made so far into the argument that constitutes the basis of this book; that is, that queer Israeli emigrants are queering the Zionist narrative, ideology, and timeline and contributing to the various efforts of other political groups in the attempt to undo Zionism as institutionalized in the contemporary Israeli regime.

The first section of this chapter follows different Jewish writers who addressed Jewish ethics and the concept of exile in Jewish tradition throughout history. It offers a historical account of Jewish criticism of statehood Zionism, in the prestate stages and in the early years of the Jewish state. The concept of exile is examined here since activism that calls for a departure from the territory of Israel is in fact calling for a return to exile. The second part of this chapter explores two contemporary accounts of Jewish criticism of statehood-Zionism. It offers a different political solution to the contemporary Zionist regime, based on Jewish ethics and the revisiting of the concept of exile in Jewish thought and history.

The third section of this chapter explores the activities of queer Israeli emigrants in the diaspora. Here I argue that queer Israeli emigrants have formed a community that poses a critique of Zionism by reviving Hebrew culture in the diaspora. Looking at different activists working on the revival of Hebrew in Europe, and especially in Berlin, this chapter examines these activities as continuing the act of emigration and offering another alternative to the anti-Zionist movement, from the diaspora, the exile. The argument here suggests that the revival of diasporic

Hebrew manifest itself as a radical act of deterritorializing Hebrew, thus disconnecting it from the Zionist territory and ideology.

Side by side with this reading, the closing section of this chapter offers a different reading, leading, to some extent, to the same conclusion. I argue here that queer Israeli emigration can and must be read considering the Zionist project, that is—a political movement that started as a purely imaginary project, the aspiration of a small group of people. Whether we take at face value the declaration of the emigrants regarding the political aspect of their activity, or whether we discharge this political aspect as a mere imagined aspiration of a small group of individuals who decided to escape the situation in Israel, their departure proves to be nothing *but* political.

Jewish Critique of Prestate Zionism

Before the formation of the Jewish state, the Jewish diaspora was largely a religious concept, and the desire to return to Zion was more a spiritual than a geographic journey (Gold, 2002:4). For early Zionists, the term "diaspora" itself "acquired an utterly negative meaning and became synonymous with detested exile (Sheffer, 1998:xix). Zionism depicted the diaspora as a place of isolation, degradation, and suffering: "Jewish life in exile constituted a history of oppression, punctuated by periodic pogroms and expulsion, the fragile existence imbued with fear and humiliation (Zerubavel, 1995:18).

The concept of the diaspora has always been under examination in the writing of Jewish scholars who were critical of Zionism. Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin (1993) regard diasporic identification as preferable to Israel's nationalist aim, formulating a Jewish kinship that disavowed support for the state of Israel. They argue that Zionism is ethically flawed, as it promotes unequal treatment of Gentiles (Palestinians) and violates "rabbinic Judaism" (ibid.:719). Instead, they regard life in the diaspora as a means of sustaining Judaism and supporting tolerance in multicultural societies. Furthermore, while they denounce the creation of a Jewish nation-state, they claim that even if the Jews gave up hegemony on the land of Israel, their attachment to the land cannot be denied (ibid.:715).

The book *The New Jews: the End of the Jewish Diaspora* (2005) also destabilizes the Israel/diaspora binary. The editors, David Shneer and Caryn Aviv, criticize the link between nationalism and ethnic frames of sociability, proposing instead the notion of "global" Jewish people, "rooted

in and tied to particular places and ideas" (ibid.:19), thus questioning the centrality of Israel in Jewish identification. In what follows, I develop an investigation of the notions of Israeli emigration, diaspora, the centrality of Israel, exile, and questions of morality within the Jewish context.

The struggle for a Jewish sovereign state, statehood Zionism, was only one fragment of the Zionist movement in its early stages. In general, there is a master narrative in modern Jewish political thought, according to which there are only two avenues for normalizing Jewish identity in the modern world. The first is national sovereignty in the biblical homeland, Israel; and the second is integration of Jewish communities in various diasporic locations and affirming Jewish patriotic attachment based on local citizenship (Pianko, 2010:15).

However, Zionist thought, especially at the prestate stages, engaged with and theorized a wider spectrum of notions of Jewish identity, including the following: homeland versus diaspora and the importance of diaspora communities; political autonomy versus individual assimilation in the diaspora; collective solidarity; Judaism as culture and religion; and the role or significance of the Hebrew language. When Palestine became a prominent element within Zionism, the Arab question and questions of minorities in general were also subjects of consideration in Zionist thought. It wasn't until the 1940s that statehood became the official policy of the Zionist movement (ibid.).

In his book *Zionism—the Roads Not Taken*, Noam Pianko divides Zionist thought into different time periods. In what he classifies as "pre–World War I Zionism," he focuses on three figures who were central to Zionist thought and activism, and later became ideological outliers (2010:5). Though they were part of mainstream Zionist thought, Simon Rawidowicz, Hans Kohn, and Mordecai Kaplan developed over the years what have come to be considered marginal ideas. I introduce here briefly these three figures and their exceptional and unique possibilities for conceptualizing Zionism, or what Pianko terms as "the roads not taken."

Simon Rawidowicz, born in Poland in 1897, spent his formative years as a Zionist in Berlin, where he joined a circle of leading Hebrew authors and publishers, created the first international association of Hebrew speakers, and opened a Hebrew publishing house. His vision for the basis of national solidarity was structured around the Hebrew language, and his proposition for the future of the Jewish people in the first two decades of the 20th century was, as Pianko calls it, "global Hebraism" (ibid.:4). This expression reflects a model introduced by Rawidowicz centered on notions of deterritorialized and decentralized Jewish nationalism (ibid.:9).

Global Hebraism rejected the primacy of Palestine and envisioned instead
national life flourishing without relevance to location or political context.
According to his model, the Hebrew language and the culture of textual
interpretation "would generate fluid boundaries, creating a dynamic
equilibrium between integration and autonomy far more consistent with
centuries of Jewish life than state-framed definitions of Jewish nationality"
(ibid.:10). In his view, the Jewish nation was united by a language and
not by territory and citizenship.

   To challenge the centrality that Israel was gaining within the Zionist
movement, he developed an understanding of Jewish nationalism by
proposing the concept of Babylon and Jerusalem as symbolic alternatives
to constructing national myths around a territorial nation-state (ibid.:63).
Rawidowicz aimed to challenge mainstream understandings of Zionism by
changing the mainstream discourse. He searched for new terminology to
replace the binary either/or position of a homeland versus diaspora. This
led to fresh symbols, like "Babylon" and "Jerusalem," as well as new words
such as *beinartzit* (interland) in order to construct ties that bind people
outside of geographical markers (Rawidowicz, 1957:198). By introducing
Babylon and Jerusalem, Rawidowicz attempted to stop the centering of
Zion (Israel/Palestine) in Jewish thought and to offer Babylon as another
Jewish center, like Jerusalem, which could symbolize the centrality of
diasporic Jewish centers. The term *beinartzit* was invented to replace
standard *bein-le'umi* (international), which refers to relationships between
sovereign nation states. With his new term, referring to a politically
neutral land, Rawidowicz rejected political boundaries and depoliticized
the nature of transnational bonds (Pianko, 2010:74).

   Although recognizing the unique potential in Rawidowicz's effort
to formulate Hebrew as a nonspatial language that could exceed the
boundaries of Israel, Pianko claims that it is "highly unlikely the diaspora
communities could sustain the degree of language proficiency necessary to
create the bonds Rawidowicz advocated" (ibid.:80). Pianko, who published
his book in 2010, cannot imagine the spread of Hebrew outside the state of
Israel. For Pianko, these are but mere "romantic efforts to recapture a pre-
modern function of language as an instrument for creating hermeneutic
communities" (ibid.:81). Pianko dismisses Rawidowicz's "romantic" and
optimistic suggestion, and fails to see the contemporary potential of his
offer, the potential I identify in the revival of diasporic Hebrew in the
activities of queer Israeli emigrants.

   Rawidowicz was not the only Zionist scholar who wished to challenge
the mainstream understanding of the solution to the Jewish question by

constructing new terminology and political concepts. In 1934, American Jewish scholar Mordecai Kaplan published *Judaism as Civilization* in which he sought to blur the merging boundaries between religion, nationality, and race by constructing the political category of civilization. In this term, Kaplan defines membership on the grounds of shared social association, religious practices, cultural engagement, and connection to a homeland. Kaplan was interested in formulating a counterstate variation of Zionism, based on collective cohesion tied to shared values, and the replacement of territorial, racial and statist nationalistic frameworks (Pianko, 2010:127). The Arab riots of 1929, as well as other developments regarding the Jewish settlement in Palestine, extended the gap between Kaplan and mainstream Zionism: "The Balfour declaration has been like a foreign body in the system of Jewish revival, causing irritation and liable to set up a dangerous poison" (Kaplan, 2001:377).[1] Israel, he argued, should be the spiritual center of the Jewish people, and not a sovereign national state. He imagined membership grounded in "consent rather than descent, shared memories rather than shared territory, liberal values rather than exclusivist claims, and social interactions rather than religious creed" (Pianko, 2010:132).

Like Kaplan, Hans Kohn, a Zionist activist from Prague, had lost faith in the Zionist statehood framework after the 1929 riots between Arabs and Jews in Palestine. Kohn immigrated to Palestine in 1925 with the hope that Jewish nationalism would facilitate a transition from a world divided into nation-states, to a world organized by states of many nations. He rejected the concept of Palestine as a territorial homeland that the Jews had historical rights to reclaim and objected to the need to ensure a Jewish majority in Palestine. He believed that the Arabs had no inherent antipathy toward the Jewish settlers. He thought that if the Zionist leadership limited immigration and recognized Arab national claims, the Arabs would embrace their arrival, and Jews and Arabs would build a binational federation with cultural autonomy under British protection. For both Kohn and Kaplan, Palestine was an imagined spiritual homeland that would facilitate Zionism's role as the vanguard force spreading Jewish political ideals at the crucial meeting point between East and West (Pianko, 2010:142, 152).[2] Kohn advocated for a binational state in Palestine, which he believed represented the fulfilment of Zionism's aims (Lavsky, 2002:196). He explored the potential political structure of a binational state in a series of articles that appeared in the socialist Zionist paper *Hapo'el Hatza'ir* in 1926 (Kohn, 1926). However, with the Arab riots of 1929, Kohn decided to resign his official position as an executive

in the Zionist movement, and left Palestine for the United States. Upon his arrival in America, he met Hannah Arendt, who, he felt, shared his passionate connection to Zionism and frustration with the developments in Palestine. After spending a few years in America, he experienced the United States as the place where a new ideology could be successfully created, in opposition to Palestine, where he stopped having hope for a positive outcome (Pianko, 2010:158).

Just like Kohn, Hannah Arendt held a position within the Zionist movement, from which she later resigned due to ideological differences. Between 1933 and 1941, she was the chairperson of the French branch of Youth Aliyah and a special delegate of the Jewish Agency (Feldman, 1978:16). Arendt's Zionism also focused on the establishment of a Jewish cultural center in Palestine, rather than a Jewish state. She saw in a positive light the political aspects of the Zionist movement and thought the building of the Jewish homeland was the profoundly political act of the Jews taking control over their lives (ibid.:35). Arendt believed that the activities of the Yishuv, the Jewish settlement in pre-state Palestine, were responsible for great achievements, like the revival of the Hebrew language, the erection of the Hebrew University, the establishment of public health centers, and especially the new modes of human organization and cooperation found in the kibbutzim, which she saw as "exclusively the product of Jewish labor" (Arendt, 1978:206). The Yishuv embodied the aims of Zionism as she saw them: a human world created by conscious human effort where Jewish culture could come into being. For this, sovereignty and Jewish majority in Palestine were not needed. "The real goal of the Jews in Palestine is the building up of a Jewish homeland. This goal must never be sacrificed to the pseudo-sovereignty of the Jewish state" (Arendt, in Feldman, 1978:33). Arendt understood the demand for a sovereign Jewish state as the unrealistic political demand of the Zionist movement, a demand that ignored the reality of an Arab majority in Palestine and its surrounding countries. She wrote against the establishment of the Jewish state in the critical years of Zionist history and continued to criticize the state of Israel after its establishment. Arendt advocated for a binational solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict. She predicted what would become of the Jewish state immediately after the violent events of 1948:

> The land that would come into being would be something quite other than the dream of world Jewry, Zionist and non-Zionist. The "victorious" Jews would live surrounded by an entirely hostile Arab population, secluded inside ever-threatened

borders, absorbed with physical self-defence to a degree that would submerge all other interests and activities. The growth of a Jewish culture would cease to be the concern of the whole people; social experiments would have to be discarded as impractical luxuries; economic developments would be determined exactly by the needs of war. And all of this would be the fate of a nation that—no matter how many immigrants it could still absorb and how far it extended its boundaries (the whole of Palestine and Transjordan is the insane revisionist demand)—would still remain a very small people greatly outnumbered by hostile neighbours.

Under these circumstances [. . .] their relations with world Jewry would become problematical, since their defence interests might clash at any moment with those of other countries where large numbers of Jews lived. Palestine Jewry would eventually separate itself from the larger body of world Jewry and in its isolation develop into an entirely new people. It becomes plain that at this moment and under present circumstances a Jewish state can only be erected at the price of the Jewish homeland. (Arendt, 1978:187–88)

The only way to sustain an independent Palestine, she claimed, was a solid base of Jewish-Arab cooperation. She objected to the partition of a small country such as Palestine, as she figured that it would result in arrested development of both people, and at worst it would signify a temporary stage during which both parties would prepare for further war (Feldman, 1978:191). Arendt strongly supported the creation of a federated state, which would establish a common government for the two different peoples, resting on Jewish-Arab community councils: "The independence of Palestine can be achieved only on a solid base of Arab-Jew cooperation [. . .] Immigration to Palestine, [should be] limited in numbers and in time" (Arendt, 1978:192).

Arendt's close friend Gershom Scholem also objected to a mass immigration of Jews to Palestine. Scholem believed that the possession of the land should not be grounded in the religious claim and that the future of Palestine is a matter for political negotiation with the Arabs. In 1931, he wrote to Walter Benjamin, "I don't believe that there is such a thing as a 'solution to the Jewish question' in the sense of normalization of the Jews, and I certainly don't think this question can be solved in Palestine" (Scholem, in Rose, 2005:55).

Arendt and Scholem's insistence on the difference between a spiritual homeland and a sovereign state is also apparent in the writing of Martin Buber. In his article "Zionism and 'Zionism,'" published two weeks after the establishment of the state of Israel, he criticizes the Jewish attempts to become "a normal nation with a land, a language and independence," which he saw as "an internal contradiction that reaches to the depth of human existence" (Buber, 1948:220–21). What needed to happen, according to Buber, was the restoring of the Jewish spirit. Statehood Zionism, the normalization of the Jews as other nations, was in fact "dangerous" (Buber, 1967:185). Buber, like others mentioned here, objected to the injustice done to the Arab population of Palestine. He warned that the outcome of the injustice toward the Arabs would not only harm them, but have damaging consequences for the new nation. Not only would it not secure its future and safety, it would also threaten its inner cohesion and corrupt its inner life which would prevent it from surviving. The spirit of Israel, he claimed, would cease to exist (Rose, 2005:71–72). He too objected to the call for mass immigration of Jews to Palestine: "[W]e need for this land as many Jews as it is possible economically to absorb, but not in order to establish a majority against a minority" (Buber, 1946:182). The political status of the contemporary inhabitants of Palestine must not, he warned, deteriorate due to Jewish immigration (ibid.:183). Just like Arendt, Buber advocated for collaboration between the Jews and the Arabs. The failure to do so in 1948 meant a political and spiritual catastrophe: "[T]his sort of 'Zionism' blasphemes the name of Zion" (Buber, 1948:221). If the Jews in Palestine (the Yishuv) would ever acquire sovereignty as a Jewish state, he believed, it would be a catastrophe (Rose, 2005:13).

Not only philosophers and historical Jewish thinkers objected to statehood Zionism. Ultra-Orthodox Jews saw Zionism as a revolt against God. For members of groups such as Naturei Karta, Satmar Hasidim, and Edah Herudit of Jerusalem, Zionism "is demonic, an eruption of antimessianic force" (Rose, 2005:31–32).

Early and prestate Zionism is relevant here because of the radical potential it had, the aspiration for a different political horizon. Early Zionists optimistically believed that deterritorialized collective solidarity of the Jews could make stateless people the norm, by exemplifying the ethical and pragmatic attributes of Jewish national provision (Pianko, 2010:20). They envisioned Arab-Jewish coexistence in Palestine, cultural and linguistic bonds uniting Jewish population in the diaspora, and a stateless national group as the model for a new international order (ibid.:23). There was something radical and unique in the way of thought

offered by pre-state Zionists. It must be asked, then, what kind of radical potential can we find in contemporary critiques of Zionism?

Contemporary Jewish and Israeli Critiques of Zionism

In a book dedicated to Jewish critiques of the Israeli Zionist regime, Judith Butler seeks to show the ways ethical obligation in Jewish thought implies a need to oppose Israeli state violence, as well as colonial subjugation of populations, expulsion, and dispossession. She claims that "there are Jewish values of cohabitation with the non-Jew that are part of the very ethical substance of diasporic Jews" and that "commitment to social equality and social justice have been an integral part of Jewish secular, socialist, and religious tradition" (Butler, 2012:1). Like Arendt and other scholars mentioned above, Butler advocates as well for binational modes of living, and she reflects on early Zionist critiques of the claim to territorial sovereignty in the writing of Arendt, Buber, Kohn, Primo Levy, and others. For this to happen, she argues, the "violent hegemonic structure of political Zionism must cede its hold" on the Palestinian lands and population (ibid.:4). A new polity must take Zionism's place, one that would end settler colonialism and imply complex modes of living together.

Binationalism, Butler claims throughout the book, is purely and inherently the mode of Jewish existence, as Jewish existence has always been entangled in coexistence with non-Jews, for centuries of diasporic existence. In fact, she argues, "the ethical relation to the non-Jew has become definitive of what *is* Jewish" (ibid.:5). The relation to the Gentiles defines not only the diasporic Jewish situation, but it is one of the most fundamental ethical aspects of Judaism. Therefore, living in a Jewish state, and only among Jews, contradicts years of living in dispersion as a minority among non-Jews, a framework in which, as Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin have argued in their work, Jews have in fact survived throughout history (Boyarin, 2002).

The notion of the importance of "returning" to the ethical aspects of being a minority is discussed by Mor in her post "I'm Not Here," which reflects, in various ways, on Butler's insistence on this aspect of Jewish life. Mor referred to the experience of Israeli emigrants who become minorities in their new places of residence. The experience of being a minority in the diaspora, Mor argued, might enable Israelis to transform these feelings into solidarity between Israelis and Palestinians. Butler writes:

> The idea that dispersion is a threat to Jews that must be overcome often relies on the notion that "dispersion" is a form of exile from the homeland [. . .] If dispersion is thought not only as a geographical situation but also as an ethical modality, then dispersion is precisely the principle that must be "brought home" to Israel/Palestine in order to ground a polity where no one religion or nationality may claim sovereignty over another, where, in fact, sovereignty itself will be dispersed. (2012:6).

Butler believes a diasporic frame is crucial for the theorization of cohabitation and binationalism. To be effective, she claims, we must depart from the particular historical circumstances of contemporary Israel and prove that this Jewish tradition is applicable to new locations of time and space. This can help to create a remapping of "social bonds or indeed of geographical space itself" (ibid.:8). The exilic, or the diasporic, she argues, is built into the idea of the Jewish in the historical meaning of it. In this sense, "to 'be' a Jew is to be departing from oneself, cast out into a world of the non-Jew, bound to make one's way ethically and politically precisely there within a world of irreversible heterogeneity" (ibid.:15). The diasporic, in this regard, signifies cohabitation with the non-Jew, which eschews the Zionist linkage of nation to land (Boyarin, 2002). To conclude, Butler sees the importance of the diaspora as a Jewish value that can affectively lead to a transformation in Israel/Palestine. She does not suggest to "scatter geographically, but to derive a set of principles of scattered existence that can serve a new conception of political justice" (ibid.:117–18).

Raz-Krakotzkin (1993) investigates the ways in which Israel's Jewish collectivity is defined by the principle of "negating the exile" (*shlilat hagalut*). This principle, he claims, structures the discourse regarding fundamental questions in Israeli culture and functions as a mechanism, which enables a complete denial of the suffering of the Palestinian people. Re-conceptualizing the possibilities embodied in the concept of the exile has the potential to facilitate an ethical stand regarding the denied elements of the present.

According to Raz-Krakotzkin, the concept of "negation of the exile" is one of the basic aspects of Zionist ideology, and it refers to the complete denial of the exile as a place and as a historical period. The concept is a central axis in an all-embracing view, which defines the self-consciousness of the Jews in the state of Israel and structures their understanding of history and their collective memory (Raz-Krakotzkin,

1993:23). The term "negation of the exile" is attributed to a perspective that sees the contemporary Jewish settlement in the land of Israel, and the establishment of territorial Jewish sovereignty, as the return of the Jewish people to their "promised land."

"Negation of the exile" refers, as well, to the negation of the exilic Jew. The image of the new "Israeli" Jew represents the new and authentic national culture that developed in the land of Israel (Boyarin, 1997; Glozman, 2007; Almog, 2000). In addition, the term also structures a historical perspective according to which this new Jewish identity and the Palestinian question, which was provoked by the establishment and existence of a new national Jewish identity in the land of Israel, have been conceptualized as completely different topics (Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993:25).

Raz-Krakotzkin returns to the notion of normality and Zionism and refers to the canonical Hebrew author A. B. Yehoshua. For Raz-Krakotzkin, Yehoshua represents "the negation of exile." Yehoshua saw in exile a "neurotic solution" based on "a deep internal national distortion":

> This is an example that the expectation of what Yehoshua defines as a "total Jewish life" is based on a radical negation of anything that does not fit under this category, that is, countless human experiences which were conceptualized as Jewish in the eyes of those who experience them. According to Yehoshua, the only element of belonging to the collective remains serving in the army. Thus bloodletting and militarism becomes an inherent element of the collective identity. (Ibid.:32).

Raz-Krakotzkin argues that the ideology is so total that the individual must constantly demonstrate his belonging. In this sense, emigration represents the opposition to social norms, and the discourse creates a common sense of surprise towards anyone who does not share the same system of values and ideology, "[W]hy does he even continue to stay here?—the territory and the connection to it is defined according to the ideology" (ibid.:32). If in Israeli culture, he claims, the territory is a prominent element and the embodiment of its historical view, we must then search for a discourse that is a-territorial in its essence, and use it to structure an all-embracing moral-cultural view (ibid.:34).

In order to present the ethical possibilities embodied in the concept of the exile, Raz-Krakotzkin turns to Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1969). In this work, Benjamin criticizes the concept of positivist history, which sees history as a constant linear process leading

towards its end. This perception of history belongs to the winner, and is designed to serve the interests of the ruling and oppressing classes. Benjamin invokes the memory of the oppressed as what can lead, or should lead, to the transformation of the present. Raz-Krakotzkin concludes, using Benjamin's theory:

> This leads to a conclusion that redemption of the present is dependent upon the "redemption" of the oppressed voice of the past [. . .] Identification with the oppressed of the present becomes the basis to change the contemporary oppressive reality. (Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993:38)

The oppressive moments to which Raz-Krakotzkin refers are the past of oppressed Jews throughout history and mainly during the Holocaust, and the present oppression of Palestinians, which was a direct consequence of the Jewish genocide, functioning to this very day as legitimation for Israeli state violence. Reading the possibility for redemption in Benjamin's work, Raz-Krakotzkin emphasizes that redemption functions as a system of values for a world not yet redeemed. In that sense, the aspiration for the redemption *is* the redemption, and in the context of Israel, this aspiration is what the exile signifies (ibid.:38).

The concept of exile, he argues, can signify the negation of existing consciousness, the negation of "the negation of exile" to address the denied past and recognize the existence of another collective sharing the same territory. The concept of exile enables a definition of Jewish identity, which is based on the recognition of the potential embodied in a binational Israel. This means the creation of a political discourse departing from a basic recognition of the existence of the Palestinians as a collective with a historical consciousness (ibid.:49). This important recognition, of course, accepts the situation of an actual exile in the Palestinian context, represented mostly in the Palestinian refugee camps. This, however, is almost impossible as "it is as if the reconstructed Jewish collective experience, as represented by Israel and modern Zionism, cannot tolerate another story of dispossession and loss to exist alongside it" (Said, 2000:142). Said points to this situation when he says that the fate of the Palestinians "is the most extraordinary of exile's fates: to have been exiled by exiles" (ibid.:141). Thus, the exile consciousness can lead to a common ground between the two people, which could be a starting point for the two collectives inhabiting the land (Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993:52).

Both Butler and Raz-Krakotzkin address Jewish thought and values, as well as the historical reality of the Jews as a minority, to offer a different way to conceptualize contemporary conflict in Israel/Palestine. Butler wishes to remind us that Jewish values and tradition are inherently connected to cohabitation with non-Jews. She calls for bringing back "home" to Israel/Palestine these ethical notions derived from diasporic Jewish existence. Similarly, Raz-Krakotzkin also focuses on the exilic or diasporic aspects of Jewish identity and history, suggesting a conceptualization of the exile as offering an ethical standpoint, which will enable the recognition of the suffering of both collectives living in Israel/Palestine. However, although these two suggestions offer an alternative to the political horizon of the region, one must ask how they see the ethical in the everyday acts of the members of the Jewish-Israeli collective. In other words: what form of political engagement will lead to a binational state? What activities are required to dismantle "the negation of the exile"?

Butler and Raz-Krakotzkin focused on bringing diasporic ethics back to Israel/Palestine. Queer Israeli emigrants obey this demand, but by physically returning to the mode of an exilic minority. The ethical model reflected in diasporic existence, they suggest, is what might enable a change of consciousness, one that may affect the situation in Israel/Palestine in various ways. Reluctant to be part of the Jewish majority in its present formulation as the Zionist regime, unwilling to cooperate with mechanisms of Israeli state violence as implied in the everyday life of Israelis, the Jewish-Israeli departure to the diaspora might be exactly what is needed to alter hegemonic perceptions and practices.

A Queer Way Out: Israeli Emigrants and Unheroic Resistance to Zionism

The Revival of Diasporic Hebrew

I opened this chapter by discussing the work of Simon Rawidowicz, whose vision for the basis of national solidarity was structured on the Hebrew language in a deterritorialized Jewish nationalism, one that is not centered on Zion (Rawidowicz, 1957:198). I wish to return to his proposal for an alternative discourse to mainstream Zionism, to reflect on queer Israeli emigration and its subversion of the Zionist project. As I have shown in chapter 4, queer Israeli emigrants use the NHD Facebook group as a

platform to reverse the meaning of known concepts in the Israeli narrative or to introduce new meanings to idioms, categories, and historical events that are of significance in the Israeli context, and especially in the Palestinian-Israeli context. For instance, using "family reunification" and "the right of return," terms originating in the Holocaust, then attributed to Palestinians, and now reintroduced in cyber space to discuss their situation as Israeli emigrants. Just as Rawidowicz suggested Babylon as another center for the Jewish people, to undermine the centrality of Palestine and Jerusalem, Adi suggests a divided Jerusalem, in order to undermine the narrative of Jerusalem belonging entirely to the Jews ("For the next year in the divided Jerusalem").

Transforming and subverting common meanings are not the only linguistic practices queer Israeli emigrants offer. As diasporic Hebrew was a significant element in the writing and thought of many prestate Zionists, the participants of this study promote a diasporic Hebrew that works and develops separately from Israel. This disconnection undermines the inherent relationship between Israel and Hebrew, a relationship that has not been questioned since the establishment of the state. Some of the emigrants even directly refer to Rawidowicz's ideas and values, and they mention him as part of their activities. As Rawidowicz advocated the preservation of Hebrew as the language of the Jewish diaspora, a deterritorialized language, this notion becomes relevant in Berlin in the second decade of the 21st century.

Tal Hever-Chybowski, who organized the event I mentioned in the previous chapter—The Tribute Night for the Slackers of the First World War in the Hebrew Literature—is also responsible for the establishment of the first literary journal to be published in Hebrew in Europe since 1944. In 2012, Hever-Chybowski advertised the establishment of a new literary journal, *Mikan Ve'eylakh* (*From Here and Onwards*). Hever described the journal as follows:

> *Mikan Ve'eylakh* is a Hebrew diasporic Journal established in Berlin. The goal of the journal is to become a literary cultural platform for non-hegemonic and non-sovereign Hebrew, a Hebrew that is free from the shackles of nationality and territory. The return of Hebrew to Berlin is accompanied with recognition of the historical position of the city as the centre for diasporic Hebrew in the previous century. The name of the journal signifies the intention to create an intellectual cultural discussion in Hebrew that stems from here, from Berlin,

while also reaching out to other places in which Hebrew is a minority language.

Choosing Berlin as the place to establish a journal in Hebrew expresses, Hever-Chybowski explains, the aspiration to bring back diasporic Hebrew to the place its existence was denied during the Holocaust and also the place in which Hebrew thrived and flourished. In a lecture Hever-Chybowski gave in Berlin in February 2015, he expressed the political motivations he sees in the emergence of Hebrew in the diaspora. In the lecture, Hever-Chybowski referred specifically to the ideas and work of Rawidowicz and explained the principle of the "denial of the exile," about Raz-Krakotzkin's work. According to Hever-Chybowski, the establishment of Israel has transformed the fluid nature of diasporic Hebrew which used to express different people in different locations, into a national language that now expresses only one collective in one location, the point of view of the Jews living in Israel.

One of the interesting examples he offers is in regard to the use of the name "Haaretz" (the country). He argues that if a story was written in Hebrew in the past in Russia, and "Haaretz" appeared in it, it was obvious that the writer was referring to the country in which the story was written. The meaning of Haaretz would function in a similar way whether in Berlin, Warsaw, or London. However, since the establishment of Israel, when Haaretz appears in Hebrew (either in a literary text, but also as part of a conversation), it no longer matters *where* the text was written or where the conversation was happening, since Haaretz can only mean one country, Israel. Hever-Chybowski is not criticizing the fact that Haaretz appears nowadays as referring to "the land of Israel." His critique is centering on the loss of all the other possibilities Haaretz used to have.

In an interview for a website dedicated to Jewish-Israeli culture and arts, Hever-Chybowski explains what it means to deterritorialize the language and to "free" Hebrew from certain expressions that anchor the language to a certain territory (Levertov, 2013). Just like the example of Haaretz, Hever-Chybowski shows how the "Israel" used to always mean "Jewish" or "Jews," while today its only meaning is the "state of Israel." In another interview about the journal, Hever-Chybowski refers to the long history of literary journals published in Hebrew, including the first modern Hebrew literary journal, *Kohelet Mosar*, which was published in Berlin in 1755. Hever-Chybowski explains that he sees the position of Hebrew as a minority language connected with languages such as Yiddish or Ladino. He wishes to see if Israelis can write Hebrew that does not

need the center in which Hebrew is the hegemonic language. "I want to create a Hebrew which eradicates its nationality and returns to a position it once had, before a state was attached to it" (Ben-Itzhak, 2012).

Hever-Chybowski mentions that he is referring to a change in the language, which for him means a change of consciousness, "the starting point of reality." Hever-Chybowski believes that the significance of his project lies in what it may enable. The topic of changing perception or consciousness recurs in the interviews, the blog, and the Facebook group, as I have discussed in the previous chapters. It is fascinating, though, that the journal, "established in 2012" was only published in 2016. When we met in 2014, and I asked him when the first issue was to be published, he replied that he was "still collecting texts for the first issue." For four full years it seemed as if the journal would never be published. This notion of discussing in public things that are not yet there, as if they *are* there, is what I want to focus on regarding queer Israeli emigration.

The Imaginary Political Project of Queer Israeli Emigration

While Mor, Katz, and Hever-Chybowski truly believe that what they are doing actually promotes a change that will impact the homeland, some emigrants understand that although they cannot do something that will change the reality, they believe that promoting a yet-to-happen imaginary project as if it is already happening can also stimulate political activity and change people's consciousness. In other words, imaginative activities, which are articulated or performed on the right platform, become other forms of queer Israeli emigrants' political activity.

Mati Shemuelof, a well-known poet and author, has been living in Berlin since 2013. From there, he writes weekly columns for the newspaper *Haaretz* regarding his experiences in Berlin, among other topics. I asked to meet him after he published in one of his columns a description of a Hebrew library in Berlin and literary events conducted in Hebrew in Berlin. The article was titled "A Glimpse of the Day in Which Zionism Will No Longer Control Hebrew Culture" (Shemuelof, 2015). The provocative title seemed at first unrelated to the topic of the article. The library was described as having more than "3000 books for children and adults" and "more than 800 members." The manager of the library, an Israeli emigrant, had also organized a public reading of Hebrew poetry in the Jewish Museum, and hosted leading Israeli authors for book launches and talks. Shemuelof defines the activities of the Hebrew library as part of a larger Hebrew culture taking place currently in Berlin, involving,

among other things, the Hebrew newspaper *Spitz*, Hebrew lectures and discussions in a gallery in Mitte, and Hever-Chybowski's (then not yet published) journal *Mikan Ve'eylakh*.

However, there is an interesting and quite provocative statement regarding Zionism and Hebrew literature in the last section of the article. Shemuelof talks about the day in which there will be a diasporic "independent Hebrew centre, one that is not submissive to the territorial borders the state has structured within the culture." Not only does Shemuelof use the same language as Hever-Chybowski and talk about deterrorization of the Hebrew language, but he also refers to a specific event in the prestate Hebrew literature world that sheds an interesting light on the contemporary Hebrew world.

Shemuelof describes the "Brenner events" that changed the face of the Hebrew literary community in prestate Palestine. In short, in 1910 when the first Hebrew literature started to appear in Palestine, it was fully funded by diasporic Jewish centers. A committee based in Odessa, Ukraine (one of the largest Jewish centers in the 19th century), decided to stop funding a journal after Brenner, one of the authors in Palestine (whom I discussed previously), wrote a provocative article calling for a disconnection between nationality and religion. This act of the then hegemonic Jewish diaspora regarding the minority Jewish community in Palestine, which seemed like censorship, gathered the literary community in Palestine and transformed it into an independent community, able to fund its literary journals without the support of the strong diasporic economic and cultural centers. After describing this event, Shemuelof writes how he envisions a future in which a similar event will happen, "the day that a large enough Hebrew community will settle outside the boundaries of the Zionist nationality and will start thinking independently." He concludes his article with this provocative description:

> At these very moments the variety of Hebrew creation, including the Hebrew library in Berlin, contains subversive elements, since the contemporary Zionist trend in Israel does not see in a positive light the possibility for sovereign, Jewish, Hebrew independent life outside of Israel. And one day things will turn, and maybe the Hebrew library in Berlin will send Hebrew authors to Israel.

Shemuelof wishes to dismantle the Israeli hegemony over Hebrew literary creation, and he sees this as a challenge to Zionism itself. The connection between his offer and the language he uses is directly connected to Hever-

Chybowski's goal upon establishing the journal. Shemuelof and Hever-Chybowski's activities can be linked to Rawidowicz's proposal for a collective united by language and culture and not by territory and nationality. While Hever-Chybowski is calling for creating a model of diasporic Hebrew that is separated from the Israeli state and language, Shemoeluf calls for destabilizing the contemporary Zionist regime itself. A regime, he claims, not only has devastating consequences on the Hebrew language itself, but on Hebrew culture in general. Yet the most interesting aspect of the article Shemuelof published is not the developments in Hebrew culture occurring in contemporary Berlin, but the fact that what he is describing is not the reality of contemporary Hebrew culture in Berlin.

The criticism of Shemuelof's article, which appeared both on Facebook and in the comments section in *Haaretz*, was not directed at his suggestions; it mostly addressed the facts on the ground. The "library" was someone's living room bookcases. Although this living room was filled with books, and although these books were available for free public use, it could hardly be described as a library. Michal Zamir, who initiated the idea and hosts the "library" in her own private family home, opens her house to the "members of the library" approximately once a month, for two hours only. Her house is in a neighborhood in West Berlin, far from the center of the city or the neighborhoods most Israelis inhabit. And although people can check out or donate books, the inventory is unknown to the public, and maybe even to Zamir herself, as the library's reference system, a simple notebook, is so disorganized that when I went to return a book I had checked out a month earlier, I could not locate the book in the register.

The number of people Shemuelof mentioned can also be challenged, as the 800 "members" he talks of are simply 800 "likes" on the Facebook page of the Hebrew Library in Berlin. At most, and I have attended three of these open house library events, a group of 10 to 20 people, usually the same 10 to 20 people, arrive, check books in and out, and stay for a short coffee and chat with the others. Though poetry and cultural events do happen from time to time, they attract a small number of participants (again usually from the same social circles), and do not materialize into events that engage even a substantial number of the Israelis in Berlin.

Shemuelof was happy to elaborate and explain to me in his interview this gap between what he described in his article and the local reality in Berlin:

It is imaginary. This is what I wish would be here, the wish of my heart. And yes, it is possible that nothing of what I've

described actually exists in reality. It is possible that it is completely ungrounded in facts, absurd, but let's change that, let's make it real. I believe we need to create these imaginary thoughts. This is what I dream of. I'll go to the extent and say that I want an exilic government to be established. We need to re-think the structure of Israel. It is rotten from its very basic elements.

Shemuelof, who wrote and published his fifth book in Berlin, and, in collaboration with the Hebrew library, organized a book launch party, is mindful that there is a big difference between how he described things and how they really are. However, he is also aware of the limits of what he can personally do to change the reality. Therefore, he truly believes that in writing this imaginary wish, he is promoting this change. Shemuelof thinks that if he manages to create the appearance that this Hebrew cultural revival is happening, people might actually believe this is true, and thus initiate events and activities, real events and activities, which eventually, if added to the several things that already exist in Berlin, can lead to what he imagines. For him, the "white lies" in his article are politically motivated.

Shemuelof takes to another level what I have described in the previous chapter regarding the activities of queer Israeli emigrants. I have discussed at length the tricky definition of political activism when the activity is the mere writing in different platforms online, writing that was deemed passive, not an activity, and thus cannot be considered as an actual political doing. In my exploration of the topic, I have attempted to show that this writing cannot simply be dismissed as not being a political activity. Shemuelof attempts to have an impact on a larger public discourse, not only the community of emigrants in Berlin, which is why he chose to publish this imaginary vision in a printed newspaper, published in Israel, under the façade, at least, of actual journalism, a "true" impression of events happening in Berlin. Unlike anything posted on the NHD Facebook group or the blog *The Land of the Amorites*, Shemuelof aims for a larger audience (though still restricted by the specific circle of *Haaretz* readers). Shemuelof's political activism is the creation of a fake reality using nothing but his words. Not only what he does (writing in the diaspora) can be criticized as not being a political activity, he also writes about fictional things.

The gap that exists between Shemuelof's article and the reality cannot be separated from other gaps that are to be found in the story of queer Israeli emigration. Throughout this book, I have flagged discrepancies

between the declarations made on public platforms such as Facebook and blogs and personal choices and decisions as portrayed in the interviews. One of these gaps concerned children. Most of the parents interviewed for this research mentioned a wish to disconnect their children from Israeli society in general and/or from army service specifically. However, these parents were well aware of the inability to control the future relationship between their children and the state of Israel. In addition, all of these parents maintained strong relationships with friends and family in the homeland, took their children for vacations there, spoke Hebrew with them, and shared Israeli cultural products (such as songs and books) with them. The formally expressed desire for "disconnection" with the homeland can be easily dismissed, as their children, when they grow up, might feel a strong connection to Israel, might wish to join the Israeli Army, and in general, could easily obtain Israeli citizenship.

Another gap between declaration and actions can be found on the issue of citizenship. As I have shown in chapter 4, according to the NHD, renouncing Israeli citizenship was encouraged. While it seemed that all of the Facebook responders were willing to give up their Israeli citizenship, the interviews told a different story. :" Itamar's narrative reflected that the connection of some of the emigrants to their homeland is indeed dramatic and emotional, even if they might publicly declare something different. The sickness he developed on the day he received his German passport was the perfect articulation of this gap.

The most important gap is between the symbolic significance of the acts of the emigrants and the material significance that can be attributed to their practices. This gap is the most obvious and direct criticism that can be made of these queer Israeli emigrants. While they see themselves as representing political departure motivated by political pessimism, they understand that even though it may feel that more and more people are leaving, these numbers are still very limited and might have absolutely no significance to Israeli society as a whole. Thus, their project is basically irrelevant, barely present, lacking, or—if we return to Halberstam—a clear *failure*. In this respect, the most common criticism that can be directed at them is that they are not political beings, but that they are the weak Israelis who have basically *escaped* and now attempt to camouflage this escape as political. According to this line of critique, their emigration is not a political act, but a passive running away, a way to avoid the hard life Israel entails.

This criticism is what leads me to the potential I recognize in the offer that emigration enables—the potential to reconfigure the Zionist

discourse of weakness, passivity, or the inability to perform Zionism. One of the basic elements of Zionist ideology was the creation of a new model of a Jew, the sabra, the strong, fearless Zionist pioneer (Boyarin, 1997; Glozman, 2007; Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993). The Israeli Jew was the antithesis of the diasporic Jew, a "proud, healthy man, cured from diasporic existence" (Almog, 2000:6). The sabra was a "'gentile' Jew—secular, a skilled farmer and heroic fighter, 'worthy of being counted,' finally, among the family of nations" (ibid.: 18). Queer Israeli emigrants, who articulate the return to a model of the weak, passive diasporic Jew, go against the essence of Zionist ideology.

Not only was the image of the new Jew imagined and constructed as part of the political project of Zionism, but the political movement of Zionism itself was once an imaginary project, the dream of a small group of people, whose political aspiration led them to portray for world Jewry, as well as for European countries, the wonderful and successful story of the Jewish settlement in Palestine. Not only was Zionism imagined to solve "the Jewish question," but it was also to serve as a light to the nations, "an outpost of civilization against barbarism" (Herzl, 1959:222) The queer departure project today looks naïve, utopian, unrealistic, and hopeless—but this was true of Zionism in its origins. The creation of the imagined utopian society, as structured by early Zionism, resembles in many aspects the way Shemuelof, Hever-Chybowski, and others portray the utopian possibilities of emigration.

In this respect, I wish to return to Brenner, whose book *Skhul Vekishalon* was discussed at several points throughout this book as an example of a failed Zionist-pioneer narrative. Brenner, who can easily be identified with the protagonist of his novel, was himself one of the European Jews who settled in Palestine in the beginning of the 20th century. In 1914, in an article titled "Self-Criticism," Brenner expresses his critique of Zionist propaganda, articulating it as nothing but another form of storytelling, an imaginary dream: "We have no colonist, no workers, no laborers; all we have are pipe dreams of speculation worthy of the heirs of Reb Leib the Melamed" (Brenner, 1914:309). Reb Melamed is not a real Rabbi, but a fictional character, a hero of a well-known short story written in 1892 by the famous Jewish author Mendele (Sholem Yankev Abramovich). The story was written as a satirical reaction to the early days of the Zionist movement. While the Zionist leadership was describing in rosy tales the joys awaiting those who moved to Palestine, many European Jews rushed to offer themselves as would-be settlers. In his story, Mendele describes Reb Leib the Melamed as one of the Jews who

failed to succeed in the Jewish ghettos of Eastern Europe, thus dreaming of the glory awaiting him in Palestine.

Brenner, himself a Zionist, criticized the status of the Zionist movement in his time. In his view, although the Zionist leadership attempted to articulate the Zionist movement as a great colonial territorial movement, there were only a "handful of young men that can be found among 12 million to give their sweat" to the building of the Jewish state in Palestine (ibid.). In this article Brenner attempts to motivate the establishment of the true Zionist dream—a solution to "the Jewish question" in the form of a Jewish state in Palestine:

> We live now without an environment, utterly outside any environment. We have to start all over again, to lay down a new cornerstone [. . .] In order to create such an environment ourselves—our character must be radically changed.
>
> We are at an impasse, but the pen is still at hand. Our literature lives with Mendele and with all of who have succeeded him, and it continues to seek the way, with a true self-criticism for a guide. Our literature cries out. A true outcry—it feels—it is to some extent a liberation.
>
> Our literature also evaluates. True evaluation—it feels— even a negative one, bears a positive potential. True self-realisation and acceptance of even a harsh verdict will somehow help us transcend ourselves. (Ibid.:311–12)

It is almost impossible to avoid seeing the similarities between Brenner's call for action and the declarations made by the emigrants. Brenner identifies the ways the Zionist movement is basically selling those who adhere to it lies about the glory awaiting those who go to Palestine. While the protagonist of Mendele's story believes the rosy descriptions of the Zionist leadership in Eastern Europe, Brenner calls for an end to imaginary tales instead of a "realistic" movement aimed at achieving the dream of the Jewish state. He asks his readers to start something new, to create a new cornerstone for a different vision, to change people's characters with the force of writing—"the pen is still at hand."

In a similar way, queer Israeli emigrants call for a departure from the rosy tales of the Israeli regime (for example, promises for a better future) and ask to start something new—the settlement of Israelis in the diaspora. Like Brenner, Hever-Chybowski, Katz, Mor, Ilani, Shemuelof, and others turn to literature and the written text to promote their aspirations. Shemuelof even recognizes the need to use "his pen" as praxis promoting

his political aspiration: to describe things that are not yet there, to glorify things out of proportion, to tell rosy tales about the Hebrew settlement in the diaspora.

Whether the attempt is to draw other Israelis to the diaspora or to create a threat for the Israeli regime, queer Israeli emigrants are mirroring the same practices of the Zionist movement in its early days. As Brenner seems ridiculous in his time, we can say the same of the contemporary project of the Hebrew diaspora. However, as Brenner's vision eventually became a reality, only time will tell if the Hebrew diaspora will become a serious threat to the Israeli regime. Shemuelof, as the prophet of this movement, just like Brenner, writes a fictional "story," aimed at motivating others to real actions. One is left to ask but one question, Will this project succeed as well as Zionism succeeded, or will it fail as well as Zionism failed?

Conclusion

The Zionist endeavor sought to "create a new land and a new culture [. . .] Something out of nothing [. . .] To criticize the past and to replace it with an alternative reality" (Ohana, 2012:15). The queer Israeli emigration endeavor is similar to the utopian aspiration of Zionism. Though not aspiring to create "a new culture in a new land" per se, queer Israeli emigrants are definitely aspiring to create a new function for Hebrew culture in a different new-old land, that of the diaspora.

Statehood-Zionism, by all measures, was a successful endeavor, which resulted in the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel in Palestine. Israel, on the other hand, is, by all measures, the failure of Zionism. Not only does the state of Israel not function as "an outpost of civilization against barbarism," with recent accusations by the international community of war crimes committed by Israel, but reality might suggest exactly the opposite ("UN Accuses," 2015). If Israel was imagined as "moral and spiritual perfection," it is now questionable if anyone, even the most radical right-wing Zionist, can describe Israel using this terminology. Israel did not establish a better place for humanity, but merely became another example of settler colonialism. In this, one might cynically recognize the success of Zionism in its attempt to "normalize" the Jewish people, to become a "nation like all other nations."

Questions of the success and/or failure of the Zionist project are inherently connected to queer Israeli emigrants and their political project. Their aspiration for a creation of a new Hebrew culture in the diaspora,

one that will affect and transform the "old" culture of the Israelis, can be seen, today, as a complete failure: massive numbers of Israelis are not flocking to foreign embassies, and the rate of emigration remains stable and unthreatening to the Israeli regime. However, was this not the case in 1914, when Brenner wrote his "Self-Criticism" article? Is it not possible to see Hever-Chybowski and Shemuelof considering Herzl's prophecies of the end of the 19th century? If the failure of assimilation among the Gentiles motivated the Zionist project, we can perceive the failure of the Jewish state to reflect Jewish ethics as motivating queer Israeli emigration. The horrible failure of the Jews in Europe, the Holocaust, was the decisive push for the success of Zionism. What will turn out to be, if at all, the decisive push for the success of the departure project of queer Israelis? These two imaginary projects are feeding each other, both in the ways they are conceptualized and engage with each other politically and in the high stakes they attribute to failure and success. The success of the contemporary project, which begins with the failure of the Jewish state to adhere to ethical moral standards, is described in the interviews, the blog, and the NHD Facebook posts as what will push a true social transformation of the Jewish state of Israel. Their success is the failure of Zionism, but this is the potential for a newly defined concept of success in relation to the state of Israel.

In this respect I turn to Heather Love, whose work on instances of ruined or failed sociality, concerns more "the experience of failure rather than negativity itself" (Love, 2009:23). Love argues that for groups constituted by historical injury, "the challenge is to engage with the past without being destroyed by it" (ibid.:1). Her discussion regarding the experience of loss and the task of memorializing it reflects the relationship between the state of Israel and the Holocaust. In attributing to the Holocaust such an immense place in the creation and preservation of Israel, the diasporic past stands between the Zionist dream of the Jewish state and the reality of the state of Israel. By failing to comprehend the "devastating consequences" of living a Jewish life in the diaspora, by failing to obey the demand to stay in Israel, queer Israeli emigrants engage with the past in a different way. Their experiences of failure and negative perceptions of contemporary Israeli society lead them forward, in a quest to transform their future. In doing so they hope to (and may actually) transform the future of the homeland.

The narratives of the participants of this study emphasize the connection between damaged and queer existence (ibid.:3). The participants' experience of Israeli society as damaged, as well as their experience as

damaged Israelis (avoiding army service and heteronormative conventions) can be described as the "archive of feeling" (ibid.:4) explored in the work of Halberstam, Butler, Love, Edelman, and others. This archive includes affects such as regret, shame, passivity, withdrawal, pessimism, escapism, failure, etc. These feelings are tied to the experience "of social exclusion and to the historical 'impossibility' of same-sex desire" (ibid.). Love observes that it is "hard to see how these feelings [. . .] might contribute to any recognizable political praxis" (ibid.). However, the narratives of the emigrants call for an exploration of how these feelings, the experiences of the failure of queer existence in Israel, can be recognized as the fuel for political praxis. Their embrace of queer negativity and lack of hope is the motivation for their imaginary and failed political endeavor. At the same time, however, their endeavor cannot be denied as a very real and successful emigration story.

Conclusion

At the juncture of sexuality, politics, and national belonging, this book is an investigation of the connections between the Israeli nation and its outcasts, and between social exclusion and departure. As I mention in the introduction, the book itself is structured like a journey. The arrangement of material in the chapters is intended to take the reader through the various stages of this journey. Thus, the early chapters (1, 2, 3) describe the place of origin (Israel), the dissatisfactions, discontents and frustrations of life there that generate a desire to leave. The middle chapter (4) describes the process of leaving: the practices—pragmatic and symbolic—that constituted preparation for as well as the very act of leaving. The final chapters (5, 6, 7) describe the aftermath and the effects of leaving. In each chapter, I depict the corresponding life stages of the subjects of this research.

The first chapter discusses the historical grounds for the topic, as it explores Zionist attitudes toward immigration and emigration. The second chapter describes what I term the "standard emigration story," besides also exploring the narratives of five queer Israeli emigrants. These narratives were the starting point for exploring different motivations for Israeli emigration that have not yet been investigated in the literature. I then focus in chapter 3 on notions of belonging and exclusion in contemporary Israel and demonstrate how left-wing queers are positioned outside of the Israeli collective. In chapter 4, I examine the New Hebrew Diaspora Facebook group. I describe the process of establishing this online community and portray the ways in which online interactions attempt to subvert the grand narratives of Israeli society and of Zionism. The following chapter describes the Zionist regime as a temporal national structure that emigration has the potential to interrupt. Chapter 6 then suggests viewing emigration as a political act. Here I investigate notions of activity and passivity in respect to political doing. Chapter 7 suggests a new

framework for understanding political activity and political alternatives about the struggle against the Zionist state. My main argument here is that the departure of queer Israelis is in fact political.

This argument can lead to two different critiques. This emigration can be criticized as not being a political project, having no material significance or concrete impact. Though the emigrants like to present their departure as a political movement, it may be claimed that they clearly have not succeeded in promoting a massive emigration wave. In addition, the political dimension that I attribute to their activities can be criticized as absurd, since many of the examples are not political activities but merely empty aspirational statements, describing things that do not really exist.

This critique is accurate if we are in search of statistical proof of higher rates of emigration. However, the material significance of the emigrants' activity is not the only important issue. As I argued earlier, the subversive significance lies in their refusal to answer Zionism in the currency of heroism and active resistance. The very act of becoming vulnerable, which contradicts normative assumptions regarding activism in Israel/Palestine, undermines the system, which demands strength and courage on either side of the political spectrum. The potential they offer, found in passivity and unheroic conduct, is what might undermine the Zionist project. It is not a question, therefore, of how many queers are leaving Israel. It is the alternative discourse that they have developed and their performative acts that have the potential to dismantle Zionism.

Not only is the project of queer Israeli emigrants venerable to criticism, but the participants of this study themselves can be criticized. Critics may argue that my framing of these individuals as activists is completely misleading, ungrounded in facts, contradicting the individual narratives that I present. The readers of this book may claim that there is no truth in participants' disclaimers of emigrating to create a political change, and, as I myself indicated, they contradict these disclaimers. They narrate a different story of escape and running away, trying to secure their own lives without any intention to create a political change.

Challenging this criticism requires first reminding the reader how the narratives are indeed complex and contradicting. They almost always offer accounts of mixed motivations: they are neither purely tales of political disclaimers, nor purely self-interested, but both. However, and most important, we must return to queer theory, which has made it possible to conceptualize differently notions we may take for granted, such as activity, passivity, heroism, vulnerability, pessimism and hope, and progress and regression. Understanding why I argue that my participants

are indeed political agents requires questioning our normative assumptions about political activity. I have argued here that acts that may seem passive, such as slacking, escaping, dodging, evading, failing, admitting personal weakness, and withdrawal, are in fact nothing but political.

In a reality that values courage, heroism, total obedience, and masculinity, thinking through and performing acts of weakness, failure, slackness, evasion, and vulnerability must be read as political. Giving in to different forms of political practice not yet performed in the Israeli context has radical potential and opens a space for different political possibilities. The participants in this study, I have shown, chose not to obey the demand to enlist in the army. Instead, they typically said that they were sick, depressed, queer, or weak. Choosing a form of activism that is different from what is conceptualized as the normative path of resistance (going to prison/applying to the conscientious objector committee) is still a form of resistance and cannot be framed as not political (Amor, 2010; Scott, 1985).

This book poses another potential critique. It is important to mention here why I did not pay more attention to the possible connections between the participants of this study and Palestinians who live at the same emigration destinations, mainly as the emigration is motivated by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The main reason this issue was not discussed here is because it did not come up in the interviews conducted. While participants discussed the conflict and the "situation" in Israel/ Palestine, they did not discuss their personal relations with Palestinians in Israel/Palestine or abroad. The only participant who mentioned a personal interaction with a Palestinian (except for the context of direct actions and demonstrations side by side with Palestinians) was Ruth, who said in her interview that it was difficult for her to tell a Palestinian colleague of hers that she decided to emigrate, because she knew this colleague would criticize her decision. According to my findings, those who were in touch with Palestinians before emigration kept in touch or created new relationships with Palestinians in their new destinations. I do not think emigration had opened new possibilities for individuals who were not in contact with Palestinians before. If anything, emigration enabled these individuals to be in contact with other individuals coming from the Middle East and Asia, like Syrians and Iranians, and not necessarily Palestinians. It would be interesting to explore, in a research dedicated to this topic, what kind of relationships, if at all, are to be found between Israelis and Palestinians outside of the territory of Israel/Palestine.

This book offers a new framework to explore and investigate notions of Israeli emigration. In it, I criticize academic work written so far on

the topic. I show how academics in the field are working under a set of Zionist assumptions, thus neglecting the larger aspect of Israel's political situation and its relationship with the topic of emigration. Former studies deliberately avoided issues which might reflect a different emigration story than the standard one. This work shows a very one-dimensional aspect of Israeli society, of national belonging and of the Israeli emigrant. It reflects a society in which citizens completely obey the demands of the state, feel a strong collective belonging to the nation and its future, and regret their separation from both. I offer here an investigation of Israeli emigration in a framework that questions and seeks to dismantle the obvious positive forms of belonging of Jewish citizens to the Jewish-Israeli collective.

The project of queer Israeli emigrants suggests further questions that should be addressed in future projects. Most importantly, the relationship between the Hebrew "settlements" in the diaspora and between Israel and Zionism should be further investigated. Hever-Chybowski and Shemoelof's suggestions (and desires) are inherently connected and directed at a complete separation from the territory and the nation. The call for a diasporic Hebrew culture (or the diasporic Hebrew revival) must be examined with respect to contemporary responses by the Israeli regime. In May 2015, after this research was completed, Reuven Namdar, an Israeli author living in New York, won the prestigious Sapir prize for Hebrew literature. Not long after the announcement of the winner, an outrageous response to the location of residence of the author culminated in a formal decision by the prize committee to disqualify future nominations of Israeli authors who are not living in Israel (Izikovich, 2015). A former nominee living abroad said, "[T]his is empowering, the Hebrew authors living abroad have become an important presence that require an act of defence" (ibid.). The response of the prize committee and the responses of some of the authors suggest that the future of this relationship must be examined.

As the topic of gender performance and bodily practices is discussed here as motivating the departure (especially in the narratives of women), it would be fascinating to further investigate body performance of Israelis within the space of the homeland and of the diaspora. I address the different body images Zionist ideology prescribes for the diasporic Jew and "Israeli Jew," the sabra (Almog, 2000; Boyarin, 2000; Glozman, 2007). The contradiction between the masculine and strong body of the sabra and the weak feminine body of the diasporic Jew needs to be addressed in relation to the movement of sabras into diasporic spaces. Though members of the NHD mentioned how liberating it was to occupy public space that is not aggressive and masculine, they also mentioned how they

felt that their Israeliness enabled them to occupy a position that differs from the bodies surrounding them in the diaspora. For example, Talia said that her Israeliness is what enabled her to grab a drunk British man who was harassing a young woman and throw him out of a bus. It was the same Talia who declared herself to be too "weak and gentle" in the public space of Israel, describing herself as repeatedly being pushed, stepped on and yelled at within Israel. I believe a study that focused on Israelis in the diaspora and on questions of body performance in public space would prove to be interesting and could shed more light on the relationship between Israelis in the diaspora and the Israeli nation.

My relationship with queer Israeli emigration does not end here, at the closing point of this book. I am part of it, and I will remain part of it until I choose to return to Israel, something I cannot see happening soon. Since I left in 2012, the political situation in Israel has become worse. When I left, I feared the day on which Tel Aviv would be bombed with missiles and left-wing activists stopped from protesting. In the years since I have been away, Israel launched two severe attacks on the Gaza Strip, which led to increased missile attacks on Israel, including Tel Aviv. In addition, when left-wing activists protested in the summer war of 2014, they were violently attacked by right-wing activists, and the police did little to protect them (Skoop, 2014). My previous fears regarding the future of Israel have become all too close to the present condition. I did not leave because I believed that politically that is what Israeli activists should do. I left because I could no longer cope with the life Israel offered me.

For three years before my departure, I worked in Physicians for Human Rights, an Israeli-Palestinian nonprofit organization. My position was to facilitate the movement of Gaza residents to hospitals in Israel and the West Bank. I spent most of my day talking on the phone with soldiers in the so-called "humanitarian center" of the Israeli Army. Every day I faced the deadly bureaucracy of Israeli militarism. Stepping out of the office, I could not share my criticism of what I was exposed to every day with anyone, because people around me justified this bureaucratic system as a necessary "security need." I did not leave because I thought my departure would dismantle that system. I left because I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The people working in my office were exposed to what is termed secondary trauma, I was told once by one of the volunteers in the organization, a psychiatrist. Our secondary trauma, of course, was the result of human rights work with people who were being traumatized daily, such as Palestinians, migrant workers, and African asylum seekers.

There was something very promising in what queer Israeli emigration offered, and it was easy and comforting to think of my departure not as an escape, but as a form of activism, a way of addressing the wrongs happening in Israel/Palestine, without actually being in Israel/Palestine. From the first moment I was exposed to political declarations by emigrants on the NHD Facebook page, I decided to be convinced that what they claim to be doing is real, that is, can have an impact on the reality.

It was very hard to try to let go of that promising, comfortable position of viewing my departure as a political act. At some point during my research, after listening to many of the personal narratives, I had to start admitting to myself that my departure was actually an escape, a very personally motivated project. With this process of letting go of the political aspect of my departure, I became more attentive to what was hiding within the narratives of my participants. I became more aware of the contradictions, noticing how my participants preferred to share a narrative that entailed the position of an active political agent and how hard it was for some of them to identify the weakness and failure that pushed them to depart.

It was this letting go, giving in to this very unheroic narrative, that was the decisive moment when I started to question the "heroism" that I attributed to activism. I remembered then a moment, a few years earlier, when I decided I was no longer going to go to demonstrations in Palestinian villages in the West Bank. During one of these demonstrations, I was terrified, tear gas prevented me from breathing, I could not see anything, I ran, alone, in the fields of the village until I found familiar faces. I did not want to take the risk anymore or experience the fear. So, I positioned myself in the "secure" office in Tel Aviv and did my activism from there, only to be exposed to a different kind of risk. However, I remember that I felt ashamed to admit to my activist friends that I could not continue to take part in demonstrations. I felt that I had to make excuses. I was ashamed because I failed to occupy the position of the heroic activist. And in this process of giving in to the weak, damaged unheroic narrative of my departure, I suddenly realized how difficult it was to give in to this weakness when I was still in Israel.

These are the contradictions between different conceptions of success or failure, of heroic activism or weak passivity, and these contradictions haunt not only my own personal narrative and the narratives of the participants of this study, but also the narrative of the Zionist movement and maybe the Jewish narrative as a whole.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. Information is taken from the Jewish Agency homepage, http://www.jewishagency.org/.

2. Following the success of Birthright, other opportunities are being offered to young Jews, such as a Gay Birthright trip for LGBTs (www.freejourney-toisrael.org/trips-2/specialty-trips/lgbtq-the-rainbow-trip) and the Chetz Vakeset program, which run in conjunction with the Israel Defence Forces. The children spend four days like true Israeli soldiers as they learn to pitch tents, navigate, hike, and even shoot guns (www.israelscouts.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=242&Itemid=300).

3. Specific reasons for the decline in the numbers in those years are not given by the writer; however, it is commonly understood that the low standard of living, the hot weather, and diseases caused many European Jews to return to their countries.

4. It is also interesting to explore the Cuban revolutionary discourse in relation to the Zionist revolutionary discourse: both consist of historical redemption with the narrative of continuous struggle for national liberation that dates back to the 19th century (O'Shea, 2013:52–59).

5. All the quotes from Hebrew literature in this chapter and in the following chapters were translated from Hebrew to English by the author.

6. Brenner's *Shkhol vekishalon* is considered a canonical novel, which was discussed in academic literature in various ways. Brenner himself is mentioned in various texts that deal with the Yishuv from a historical perspective. While the novel was read in respect to the Zionist project in general, I did not find literature that investigated the presentation of emigration from Israel in the novel.

7. In Jewish mythology, a *dybbuk* is a malicious possessing spirit believed to be the dislocated soul of a dead person.

8. Using a similar discourse, India held in 2003 for the first time the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (the day of Indians abroad). It is interesting to compare the relationship of Israel and India to their diaspora. Both Israel and India were

established in the same postcolonial era and acquired independence around the same time. At the time of independence in 1947, the Indian state deliberately adopted a policy of distancing itself from the emigrant communities (Varadarajan, 2013:15). India of the 2000s reflects a great transformation from the initial relationship between the state and the Indian diaspora. This is due to the desire to harness the economic and investment potential of the diaspora. In Israel, on the contrary, no such transformation had occurred, and a strong and ongoing connection to its (Jewish, and later Israeli) diaspora prevailed from even before its independence.

9. *Hasbara* (explanation) was always used as a tool for building a good image of the Israeli state. For discussion of the Israeli *hasbara*, please see http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/02/israel-palestine-pr-spin. More information is available on the *Hasbara* webpage: http://www.hasbara.com/.

10. Some of the literature, of course, was not written within Israeli academic institutions, and one academic I discuss is not Israeli. However, the Zionist assumptions of the writers sometimes interfere with their analysis.

11. See similar work by Ben Ami, 1992; Cohen, 1996; Friedman, 1986; Linn, 1996; Ritterband, 1986; and Urieli, 1994.

Chapter 2

1. For instance, some of the known texts include a comic skit by Hagashas Hahkiver, a famous comedy group, and the feature film *Tel Aviv-Los Angeles* from 1988, both of which present Israelis in the United States and the never-ending dilemma of whether or not to return to Israel. In this respect, though Brenner's novel, mentioned earlier, is very famous, it is mostly read by academics, and it is definitely not a book an ordinary customer would pick up in an ordinary bookstore, mainly for its 1910s language and style. It should also be mentioned here that the comic skit also portrays an Ashkenazi agent of the state trying to convince a Mizrahi emigrant to return to Israel. The characteristics of the emigrant as portrayed in this skit support the assumption of many Mizrahi emigrants.

2. For instance, I took part in a panel Aljazeera held on its online channel the Stream on June 17, 2014, titled *Israel's Gay Exodus?* http://stream.aljazeera.com/story/201406170004-0023844.

Chapter 3

1. For literature regarding the Palestinian as the Israeli Other, see Peled, 1992; Samooha, 1984; For literature dealing with aspects of the Russian minority in Israel, see Kuntsman, 2005, 2008; For literature discussing the position of Mizrahi men and women in Israel, see Dahan-Kalev, 1999; Rabinovitch, 1993; Shalom-Shitrit, 2004; Shanhav, 2002; Shohat, 1999.

2. A good example of this is a Knesset discussion held in June 2014, in which a Palestinian parliament member was attacked verbally by a Jewish parliament member, who yelled at her, "Go to Gaza you traitor!" See "The Zoabi Storm: Screams at the Knesset and Calling for Investigation," June 6, 2014, *Ynet*, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4531332,00.html. Several incidents regarding right-wing protesters telling left-wing activists to "go to Gaza" have reached the Israeli media. See "250 Protesters against the Escalation, Right Wing Protesters in Response Are Calling 'Go to Gaza,' " July 7, 2014, *Ynet*, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4538210,00.html; "Right Wing Activists Riots in Tel Aviv: 'Go to Gaza,' " July 17, 2014, *Walla News*, http://news.walla.co.il/item/2766503.

3. Most of these calls are gendered. Jewish Israeli women suffer from not just the common expression "go to Gaza," but also specific comments such as "Arab's whore." One good example of this is the famous performer Rona Keinan, who dared to publicly criticize the Israeli bombing of Gaza during the war of 2014: "Rona Keinan: I received life threats," July 31, 2014, *Walla News*, http://e.walla.co.il/item/2771136.

4. Since 2001, every year, a few high school students write a petition where they declare that they refuse to join the army due to the occupation: "We will refuse to serve in the occupation army," September 17, 2001, *Ynet*, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/1,7340,L-2122235,00.html.

5. *The Refusniks' Trials* (Hanin et al., 2004) discusses in detail the trials of five refusniks from the second *intifada* and describes the history of the activity of the Israeli refusniks.

6. At the age of 17 Israeli teenagers must go to a recruitment center, where they undergo a medical examination. Boys also go through psychological testing, aiming to determine where they should be positioned and if they are mentally stable enough for a combat unit.

7. Palestinian human rights organization report on the attacks, http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/gaza/252-operation-cast-lead-a-statistical-analysis; Israeli human rights organization report, http://www.btselem.org/statistics/fatalities/during-cast-lead/by-date-of-event.

8. "Israeli Polls Show Overwhelming Support of Gaza Campaign," July 31, 2014, *The Guardian*, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/31/israeli-polls-support-gaza-campaign-media; "Thousand Demonstrating against Israel across Europe," January 10, 2009, *Haaretz*, http://www.haaretz.co.il/1.1240170; "UN Human Rights Committee to Investigate Claims of Israeli Violation in Gaza," July 23, 2014, *The Guardian*, http://www.theguardian.com/global/2014/jul/23/un-high-commissioner-navi-pillay-war-crimes-israel.

9. A few examples for homophobic expressions in the Knesset: "Parliament Member Michaeli: Gays Are Sexually Molested at an Early Age, Miserable, Committing Suicide at the Age of 40," June 6, 2012, *Ynet*, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4242347,00.html; "Minister of Education Piron: Same-Sex Couples—Not a Real Family," June 29, 2014, *Israel Today*, http://www.israel-hayom.co.il/article/194585; "Bennett: No Secret That the *Bayit Yehudi* Oppose

Gay Marriage," January 1, *The Jerusalem Post*, http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Bennett-No-secret-Bayit-Yehudi-opposes-gay-marriage-387166. A few examples for violence against LGBTs in Israel: "Tel Aviv: Trans Woman Attacked, Fear of Losing Eyesight," August 15, 2005, *GoGay*, http://gogay.co.il/item.php?id=5128; "Wave of Homophobia towards Trans and Gays," January 16, 2014, Mynet, http://www.mynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4477279,00.html; "Gays Attacked after Jerusalem Pride," August 8, 2010, *Haaretz*, http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/law/1.1214847.

10. "Violence Erupts at Gay Pride Parade," June 6, 2005, *Ynet*, http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3106491,00.html; "Israel Gay's Safe Space Turns Deadly," August 2, 2009, *Reuters*, http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/08/02/us-israel-shooting-idUSTRE5701V520090802; "Jerusalem Gay Pride: Israel Teenage Stabbing Victim Dies," August 2, 2015, *BBC*, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33752111.

11. "Direct action" is an umbrella term for various activities performed by Israeli and international activists since the beginning of the second *intifada*, both in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territories (Gordon, 2008:140).

12. "Hilltop youth" is the term commonly used to refer to extreme right-wing settler youth.

13. Anarchists against the Wall is a direct-action group composed of Israeli anarchists established in 2003 (Gordon, 2008). Several of the members of the group have been severely injured over the years by Israeli Army soldiers. In one incident in 2006 a 17-year-old member was hit by a rubber bullet shot by Israeli soldiers during a demonstration. He later said in an interview: "My feeling is that the blood of left-wing activists and the Palestinians is cheap," February 26, 2006, *Ynet*, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3220877,00.html.

14. A parliament member of a right-wing party, the National Union. For his incitement against Arabs, see "Simply—just kill them," September 15, 2009, *NRG*, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3220877,00.html.

15. A *keffiyeh* is a traditional Arab head cover, politically recognized as associated with the Palestinian struggle.

Chapter 4

1. All quotes from the New Hebrew Diaspora were translated from Hebrew by the author.

2. Israeli emigrants, just like other expatriate communities, have established local support groups in their new places of residence. A quick search on Facebook reveals, for example, the group Israelis in Berlin (7955 members); Israelis in New York (4574 members); Israelis in San Francisco (693 members), and many more. The groups are there mainly to exchange information regarding the settling-down process, events, assistance with local bureaucracy, advertisement of private businesses, and the search for accommodation. Following the division

I made in the second chapter, I suggest reading these groups as the "standard" Israeli emigrant groups, whose members belong to the normative Israeli collective, and their emigration is part of the "standard story." Correspondingly, its members are usually heterosexual and normative Israeli citizens who served in the army. The Israeli flag, blue-and-white, appears on some of the groups' profile pages, as proof of normativity and mainstream national identity.

    3. Eim Tirtzu is a right-wing movement that became very popular among university students and has succeeded in promoting legislation against left-wing activists and organizations and racist legislations against the Palestinian citizens of Israel.

    4. In July 14, 2011, a month and a half before the establishment of the group, a social movement, similar to the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States, erupted in Tel Aviv. The Tent Protest, as it was called, motivated hundreds of thousands of Israelis, who called for the reinstatement of the welfare state and for social justice. In September 2011, when this discussion was held, a march of half a million Israelis took place in Tel Aviv, becoming without a doubt, the biggest demonstration ever to take place in Israel.

    5. The three neighborhoods in Berlin that many of the Israeli immigrants inhabit.

    6. An Aramaic phrase meaning "with the help of heaven."

    7. "Fathers Made White Mark"—A biblical expression from Genesis, meaning, what the fathers of the nation have done is a sign of what their descendant will do.

    8. Originally, *shilumim*, the compensation money given by the German government to the Israeli government after the Holocaust.

    9. *Dor Shlishi doresh Renta*: A take-off on a familiar center-left campaign slogan from the 90s: *Dor Shalem Doresh Shalom* (A whole generation demands peace).

    10. This is of course as part of the privilege of a Jewish citizen in Israel. While he might be able to receive his citizenship back, a Palestinian citizen of Israel who chooses to give up his Israeli citizenship will never be able to regain it.

Chapter 5

    1. A few words must be said here about the concept of future in queer theory. Sexual minorities have been often perceived as lacking a future (Freeman, 2010:165). This is why, Freeman suggests, queer activists started pursuing ways of promising a better future. However, securing a future for LGBTs has been criticized by queer scholars as promoting a progressive doctrine (Puar, 2007:xii). In that respect, Lisa Duggan's concept of homonormativity (2002) became a way of offering a narrative with a future orientation in which members of the LGBT community can also contribute to society and the future of the nation. Lauren Berlant claims that the values of the nation are represented not in the images of

adult citizens who are working and contributing to society, but in those of babies and fetuses as symbols of the "future American" (Berlant, 1997:6).

2. In this short video, mentioned also in the first chapter, we see a man entering his home to find the lights in his apartment dim, candles lit, and quiet music playing. The man approaches his girlfriend, thinking she had planned a romantic evening for them. The girlfriend, however, is sitting in front of the computer watching the Israeli Memorial Day official website. A formal male then says, with the dialogue appearing on the screen: "They will always be Israelis. Their partners won't always understand what it means. Help us bring them home." Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwXpkYQZHlo.

3. There is no legal difference between the requirements regarding Israeli emigrants in the United States and Israelis in Europe. The "American" parents interviewed for this study claimed they knew they had to obtain Israeli passports to allow their children to enter Israel. The European parents did not mention a requirement of this sort in the interviews and mentioned that they had visited Israel a few times with their children and passed border control with a European passport without any difficulties. It is possible that the "American" parents are more cautious, because they are embedded in a more right-wing diaspora dominated by organizations such as AIPAC. However, this is only an assumption.

4. According to the myth, Masada was under siege by troops of the Roman Empire, ending in the mass suicide of the 960 Jewish rebels and their families hiding there.

5. *Tov lamot bead artzeno* (It's good to die for our country), is one of the most famous and commonly used idioms in Zionist education, said (supposedly) by Yosef Trompeldor on his death bed, after a 1920 battle in a Jewish settlement in the north of Israel.

Chapter 6

1. Operation Protective Edge was the result of a few consecutive events. First, three young Jews were kidnapped by Palestinians, which resulted in the Israeli Operation Brothers' Keeper in the West Bank. Four hundred Palestinians were arrested and a few were injured or killed. Palestinians responded with missiles shot from Gaza. Later, a young Palestinian was kidnapped and murdered by Jews. As a response to the continuous missile attacks on the civilian population, the Israeli government initiated massive attacks on Gaza.

2. See, for example, Alexander Yaakobson, "Go, Honey, Go in Peace," September 9, 2014, *Haaretz*: http://www.haaretz.co.il/opinions/.premium-1.2429134.

3. Personal correspondence with Hamerman, December 2014.

4. The text Hever-Chybowski read on the event's Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/events/340886716062543/348482401969641/?notif_t=plan_mall_activity.

Chapter 7

1. The Balfour declaration of 1917 was a public expression of the support of the British Empire in the Jewish settlement in Palestine.

2. Kohn's understanding of the situation in Palestine was not lacking in orientalist beliefs, for instance, that the Arabs constituted a "primitive Oriental" society with tribal organizational structure and economic development that requires Europeanization (Pianko, 2010:153).

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Index

LESBIAN/GAY STUDIES

The very language of Zionism prizes the concept of immigration to Israel (*aliyah*, literally ascending) while stigmatizing emigration from Israel (*yerida*, descending). In *A Queer Way Out*, Hila Amit explores the as-yet-untold story of queer Israeli emigrants. Drawing on extensive fieldwork in Berlin, London, and New York, she examines motivations for departure and feelings of unbelonging to the Israeli national collective. Amit shows that sexual orientation and left-wing political affiliation play significant roles in decisions to leave. Queer Israeli emigrants question national and heterosexual norms such as army service, monogamy, and reproduction. Amit argues that emigration itself is not only a political act, but one that pioneers a deliberately unheroic form of resistance to Zionist ideology. This fascinating study enriches our understandings of migration, political activism, and queer forms of living in Israel and beyond.

Hila Amit received her PhD in gender studies from SOAS University of London.