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The Uses American Jews Make of Three “Myths”

Patrick O'Brien

In the late 1940s. . . the available evidence doesn't suggest that, overall, American Jews. . . were traumatized by the Holocaust, in any worthwhile sense of that term.

Peter Novick¹

For some American Jews, the Holocaust became central to their own image of themselves as Jews. With often only a tenuous relationship to Judaism, they clung to the Holocaust as the core element in their Jewish identity.

Edward S. Shapiro²

The [Israeli] generals knew that they could sweep in and smash the Egyptians whenever they wanted. . . Israel's supporters in the U.S. . . . feared that the little state would be crushed by the mighty Arab armies. Lyndon Johnson knew better. The CIA had made it clear to him in briefings that Israel was not in any mortal danger.

Andrew and Leslie Cockburn³

. . . an explanation is possible for the revival of interest in the Holocaust only in the 1970s. That was the point when antisemitism in America had become negligible.

Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg⁴

In many ways, anti-Semitism helps me dramatically. The more anti-Semitism, the more strong these people [Eastern European Jews] become. You want to destroy a Jewish community? California-ize it, have no anti-Semitism.

Ronald Lauder⁵

The belief that American Jews are subjected to bigotry, that they remain victims, must be designated a delusion.

Stephen J. Whitfield⁶

The paradox of the introduction of the Holocaust into American Jewish political thought is that it is through identification with the most powerless Jews in all of history that American Jews have asserted their collective power: they have turned the experience of powerlessness in Europe into a potent political weapon.

David Biale⁷

Introduction

In the first half of the nineteenth century, many newly emancipated European Jews rebelled against “both the hostile [Christian] society in which they were implanted. . . and the suffocating embrace of ghetto Judaism,” a rebellion which continued for over a century.⁸ By the 1930s so many Jews had become secular that founder of Reconstructionism Mordecai Kaplan could make the argument that the Jewish people were primary and Judaism secondary, there to serve the people: “the Jewish religion existed for the Jewish people and not the Jewish people for the Jewish religion.”⁹

This “Copernican revolution” fits what was happening to American Jews in the post-World War II period. American Jews experienced new ways of being Jewish in America. With a withering attachment to Judaism proper and expanding social exposure to and acceptance by Gentiles, it became increasingly difficult for American Jews to construct a coherent Jewish identity. The *Yiddishkeit* of large urban Jewish neighborhoods was waning as second and third-generation American Jews acculturated and moved to the suburbs, and Jewish secular organizations such as the Workmen’s Circle, the United Hebrew Trades, and the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union were also declining in importance.¹⁰ How, then, were American Jews to construct a Jewish identity without organized religion, without inti-

mately Jewish neighborhoods, and without secular Jewish organizations?

As American Jews acculturated and assimilated, there emerged a concern for "Jewish continuity." Some feared that Jews would disappear as a distinct group in America, so Jews cast about for ways to strengthen Jewish identity and for ways to construct a plausible rationale for continued Jewish peoplehood. Thus began a fertile effort at rebuilding a narrative of being Jewish. The construction of this narrative took the form of three "myths": a vulnerable Israel, the Holocaust, and anti-Semitism in America. All three of these myths were constructed for internal Jewish purposes, but their unintended consequences have shaped important aspects of the overall American narrative since the 1960s. In addition, they have also provided the Jewish community in America as a whole with, as David Biale has noted, "a potent political weapon."¹¹

"Myth," Narrative and "Retrospective Construction"

Novick discusses at length how the Holocaust as we know it is a "retrospective construction" created many years after the actual event. This reconstruction serves various purposes. First, it aids in the construction of "collective memory." The problem with this role however, is that "collective memory simplifies; sees events from a single, committed perspective; is impatient with ambiguities of any kind; reduces events to mythic archetypes."¹² Second, it helps modern American Jews develop a sense of group identity under greatly changed circumstances — for instance, the near disappearance of anti-Semitism in American life. Finally, through the narratives constructed regarding the Holocaust (and threats to Israel, and anti-Semitism), Jews

collectively — and often quite unintentionally — provide themselves with “a potent political weapon” to be wielded in encounters with non-Jews.

In other essays I have already discussed at some length how Jews use the myths of a vulnerable Israel and of anti-Semitism to create Jewish identity and cohesiveness in America,¹³ so this paper will pay greater attention to how American Jews have used the Holocaust. I will pay special attention to University of Chicago historian Peter Novick’s important book on the subject, *The Holocaust in American Life*.

Leading up to the Six-Day War

So far as most of the world was concerned [regarding the 1967 Arab-Israeli War]... the legend of David turning on Goliath took hold and lives on until this day.

Andrew and Leslie Cockburn¹⁴

Israel has provided the stage for American Jews to exercise collectively the power they have achieved in American society.

David Biale¹⁵

Contrary to the current narrative regarding the establishment of the Jewish state following the Holocaust, American Jews may not have been that interested in the fledgling nation. As if that were not enough, there was a roughly two-decade gap between the end of the Holocaust and the beginning of intense interest in Israel among American Jews. “As late as 1957, Nathan Glazer, the sociologist, pondered why American Jews seemed so relatively uninterested in the two most cataclysmic events of Judaism in the twentieth century — the Holo-

caust and the creation of the state of Israel." Judith Miller explores this gap between the liberation of the death camps and the end of American Jewish "hesitation" regarding the Holocaust and finds that the Holocaust "had two decades later activated and enhanced a sense of identity among Jews in America."

Why the long "hesitation"? Miller employs the "repressed trauma" formula to explain it:

Immediately after the war, the survivors who came to America wanted to forget their experiences and build new lives. The communities in which they lived encouraged little else. . . . The 1950s were years of public assimilation and private pain. . . . What happened inside survivor homes depended on what individual survivors had endured in the camps and on their personalities. Some could talk of little else with their children. Others could not discuss it at all.

Outside their homes, there was little support for these victims. Their pain was not recognized by organized American Jewry.¹⁶

Novick finds a somewhat different interpretation, noting that "there is something of a tacit consensus on the answer" as to why American Jews were not at first overly interested in the Holocaust.

This answer — sometimes explicitly, always implicitly, Freudian — treats the current centrality of the Holocaust as an inevitable development. "Trauma," according to the standard dictionary of psychoanalysis, is "an event in the subject's life defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organization." For a time the trauma can be repressed, but "repressed

material... has a permanent tendency to re-emerge into consciousness." Indeed, in the Freudian canon, "trauma" and "repression" define each other. Trauma is that which is so unbearable that it has to be repressed; repression is the consequence of something too traumatic to be borne; together they inevitably give rise to "the return of the repressed." The Holocaust, according to this influential explanation, had been a traumatic event, certainly for American Jews, more diffusely for all Americans. Earlier silence was a manifestation of repression; the explosion of talk in recent years has been "the return of the repressed."

For all of its elegance, I don't find this schema persuasive in explaining the evolution of Holocaust consciousness in the United States.... In the United States, in the special case of Holocaust survivors, the succession of trauma, repression, a return of the repressed often seems plausible.... But the available evidence doesn't suggest that, overall, American Jews... were traumatized by the Holocaust, in any worthwhile sense of that term. They were often shocked, dismayed, saddened, but that's not the same thing, certainly not for purposes of setting in train the inexorable progression of repression and the return of the repressed. Characteristically, it is simply assumed that the Holocaust *must* have been traumatic. And if it wasn't talked about, this *must* have been repression.¹⁷

The lack of interest in the Holocaust in America showed signs of abating in 1961 due to the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Israel.¹⁸ This soon passed, however, and no major Jewish identity movement, or, for that matter, idea of a "crisis in Jewish continuity" materialized.

All this changed in the spring of 1967, when Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser massed 100,000 troops on the border with Israel

and proclaimed that his goal was the destruction of Israel.¹⁹ What happened next in the Middle East is immortalized in the name of the ensuing conflict: The Six-Day War. Israel roundly defeated Arab forces, took control of Jerusalem, and gained other strategic objectives.

On June 5, 1967, one observer of the war writes,

Israel finally reacted to Nasser's provocations with devastating surprise attacks launched simultaneously throughout the Arab countries. Arab airplanes and Russian-built Tupolev bombers burned and exploded everywhere. Superb intelligence allowed the Israeli pilots to leave untouched the many dummy airplanes intended to draw their fire while they destroyed literally hundreds of airplanes on the ground in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq. Having secured control of the air, Israel attacked the now helpless Arab desert forces. Success seemed assured as Israel pressed her advantage.²⁰

In the reigning narrative, American Jews responded to a dire threat to the survival of fellow Jews, many of whom had barely survived the not-so-distant nightmare of the Nazi extermination campaign. The depth of emotion and concern among American Jews stunned even many seasoned Jewish observers. Arthur Hertzberg, doyen of American Jewry, wrote at the time:

Many Jews would never have believed that grave danger to Israel... could dominate their thoughts and emotions to the exclusion of all else.... Almost every observer said, then and later, that American Jews had never behaved this way before. The magnitude of the response was without precedent.... What seemed to be happening to them was that a dormant loyalty had suddenly been stirred, and that it had become at

that moment an overriding passion. The Six-Day War thus united the Jews of America...²¹

While this narrative about an embattled Israel has survived for over thirty years, a competing account may be given, at least with respect to American Jews at the time. Faced with a threat to continuing peoplehood in the American Diaspora, American Jews were in dire need of a rationale for solidarity, and it was readily apparent that it was not going to be a wholesale return to observant Judaism (nor was it going to be some form of socialism, though social activism had an outside chance). The rationale fortuitously came in 1967, when much-superior Israeli forces easily and predictably defeated disorganized Arab forces.²²

There is strong evidence that in fact the Israelis, Arabs, and informed Americans knew about Israeli superiority. After all, "Arab forces were slaughtered in huge numbers while largely Soviet-supplied equipment was destroyed and captured with embarrassing ease by overwhelmingly superior Israeli forces."²³

Two writers critical of Israel argue that there was a concerted Israeli effort to deceive others — especially politically powerful American Jews — about the nature of the threats during the Six-Day War:

The [Israeli] generals knew that they could sweep in and smash the Egyptians whenever they wanted... Israel's supporters in the U.S., like indeed much of the Israeli population itself, were highly alarmed by the bellicose rhetoric and blood-curdling threats coming out of Arab capitals. They feared that the little state would be crushed by the mighty Arab armies. Lyndon Johnson knew better. The CIA had made it clear to him in briefings that Israel was not in any mortal

danger. The CIA also knew that Nasser had no intention of going to war. . . . Foreign Minister Abba Eban. . . was sent off to Washington. On the way he stopped in Paris, where President de Gaulle, knowing from his own intelligence reports that Israel was in no danger, told him that Israel would lose French support if it attacked first. . . .

The U.S. administration, like the Israelis, knew that no such attack was pending. On the other hand, the Israelis had been careful not to share this appreciation of the situation with their influential supporters in the U.S., who were paying more attention than was wanted to the windy rhetoric coming out of Cairo. . . . Arthur Goldberg, whom Johnson had moved from the Supreme Court to the UN ambassadorship to make room for his crony Abe Fortas (another key lobbyist for Israel), had earlier painted Israel's vulnerability to the president in heart-breaking terms. Johnson responded by flourishing a CIA estimate that Israel would win any war with the Arabs in two weeks. Goldberg had refused to believe it, so Johnson commissioned another estimate. "We sat down on the evening of the 25th," one of the analysts charged with this duty later recalled, "licked our thumbs, and set to work. By the next morning we had the paper ready for the white House. . . ." Now the agency concluded that Israel would win in six days.²⁴

In any case, what actually happened in the Middle East was not the most important issue. Just as Kaplan had reversed the order of primacy regarding Judaism and the Jewish people, American Jews had made themselves the primary actor in the 1967 drama, reducing the Israelis to a secondary role. In other words, if the Six-Day War had not occurred, American Jews would have had to invent it, or, at a minimum, heavily reconstruct the narrative, which, in reality, is what they did.

This activism on the part of an Israel perceived to be in danger served as a powerful uniting force among American Jews, as is attested to almost universally by observers of the American Jewish scene. What is most critical about this enhanced Jewish solidarity was its symbolic role in announcing (to the Jewish community, mainly) that American Jews could, in fact, maintain their peoplehood in America beyond the atrophying of their religion and a diminution of *Yiddishkeit*. What this represented for Jewish participation in the construction of American culture was breathtaking, for now American Jews could openly act as Jews even as their ability to act as major contributors to American culture increased dramatically. In this regard, America has become more “Jewish” since the 1967 Middle East War than it ever had been in the past.

The Social Construction of the Holocaust Among American Jews

[T] here is a difference between remembrance and constructing a collective identity around an event and an experience alien to the realities of American Jewish life.

David Biale²⁵

. . . many Jews don't know who they are, except insofar as they have a “unique” victim identity, and because the uniqueness of the Holocaust is the sole guarantor of their uniqueness.

Peter Novick²⁶

What of the argument that the “rediscovery of Jewish particularism” was a “belated” response to the Holocaust? Lipset and Raab argue that at the time of the Six-Day War there was

a surge of fear for the survival of the new state, refuge for the remnant of Hitler's victims. But it coincided with the Holocaust's belated emergence into world consciousness. The term "Holocaust" had not been in evidence before the 1960s; the public mind had seemed unable, unwilling to grapple with the ineffable horror of the death camps. Suddenly, a searing literature of the Holocaust began to appear. The Six-Day War raised in American Jewish minds the fear of another Holocaust, this time for Israelis.²⁷

Obviously, there is a complex equation for determining how much the response in 1967 was related directly to the Holocaust and how much it was related to contemporary Israel — and how all of this fed into ambivalence over Jewish identity in America. Clearly, events in the Middle East in 1967 were mixed with internal concerns of American Jews involving identity, and the Holocaust issue was very belatedly "rediscovered" to play a role in the Jewish American identity drama. Was this an example of Jewish groups using the Holocaust for purposes other than merely remembrance or prevention of future holocausts?

Possibly. "For American Jews, the Holocaust became central to their own image of themselves as Jews. With often only a tenuous relationship to Judaism, they clung to the Holocaust as the core element in their Jewish identity."²⁸ As sociologist Chaim Waxman phrased it, Jews with such an identity needed the Holocaust to be unique, for if it were not, it "would be to deprive them of what they perceive to be their uniqueness as Jews.... While for other Jews, the Holocaust was another confirmation of Jewish uniqueness, for these Jews the Holocaust is the source of Jewish uniqueness."²⁹

The issues surrounding American Jews' rediscovery of the Holocaust after the Six-Day War in the Middle East prompted Peter Novick

to examine the issues from new angles, resulting in his provocative work *The Holocaust in American Life*. He begins the book by asking why American Jews were so slow in recognizing the Holocaust (his answers mirror those explored above) and why the Holocaust is now so recognized on American shores. This “why now?” and “why here?” pairing becomes especially problematic for Novick when he considers the relative lack of attention given to great tragedies that have taken place within the United States.³⁰

Echoing others cited earlier, Novick attributes the belated focus on the Holocaust to American Jews’ search for a usable group identity. “The Holocaust,” he writes, “as virtually the only common denominator of American Jewish identity in the late twentieth century, has filled a need for a consensual symbol. And it was a symbol,” he continues, “well designed to confront increasing communal anxiety about ‘Jewish continuity’ in the face of declining religiosity, together with increasing assimilation and a sharp rise in intermarriage, all of which threatened demographic catastrophe.”³¹

Asking why modern Jews have been so reluctant to abandon the “uniqueness” aspect of the attempted genocide against them, he answers that in part “it may be because many Jews *don’t* know who they are, except insofar as they have a ‘unique’ victim identity, and because the uniqueness of the Holocaust is the sole guarantor of *their* uniqueness.”³² Construction of identity and group solidarity, then, are the chief uses Jews make of the Holocaust.

In three chapters collected under the heading “The War Years,” Novick makes an excellent case for the lack of centrality of the Holocaust to American Jews at the time of the slaughter and for some years after. While what we have seen from Miller, Silberman and others about the belated response of American Jews to the Holocaust

is intriguing, Novick makes a longer and more compelling case, cemented by arresting observations of what Jews outside Europe were thinking and doing.

For American Jews at the time, the Holocaust "barely existed as a singular event in its own right." As real as the deaths were, for Novick "the Holocaust," as we understand it today, "was largely a retrospective construction, something that would not have been recognizable to most people at the time. To speak of 'the Holocaust' as a distinct entity. . . is to introduce an anachronism that stands in the way of understanding contemporary responses."³³

Social science findings supported this absence of concern. For example, one sociology graduate student's project "led him to conclude that 'the murder of Europe's Jews has not strongly affected the basic pattern of thought and feeling of Jews in the United States.'" This was hardly the only evidence found by Novick:

Three published symposia offer indirect evidence of how much of a role the Holocaust played in the thought of young American Jews. In 1957 *The New Leader* ran a series of eighteen personal essays to see "what's going on in the minds of the five million Americans who have graduated college since Hiroshima." At least two thirds of the respondents were Jewish. In writing of what had shaped their thinking they mentioned a variety of historical events, from the Great Depression to the cold war. Not a single contributor mentioned the Holocaust. Two other symposia, this time restricted to Jews, were published in 1961, just after the period with which we are concerned. Appearing at a time when there was a great upsurge in discussion of the Holocaust, occasioned by the capture of Adolf Eichmann, it's likely that they present an inflated index of how salient the Holocaust was in the fifties. Thirty-one people

participated in a symposium in *Commentary*, “Jewishness and the Younger Intellectuals.” A few referred to the Holocaust in passing, but in only two cases did contributors speak of it in a way that indicated it loomed large in their sense of their Jewish identity. Later that year the quarterly *Judaism* presented a symposium on “My Jewish Affirmation,” with twenty-one participants — most a bit older and less secular in outlook than the *Commentary* contributors. Only one, who had fled Austria after the Anschluss, mentioned the Holocaust.³⁴

A chief reason for lack of identification with dying European Jewry, Novick finds, was that American Jews of that era did not have recourse to “ethnic” social constructions. “Racial groups” or “race feelings” might have been current then, but identity “was properly based not on ‘blood’ but on the values, habits and animating vision of the culture in which you were raised. And that, for most American Jews... was American culture.” Even so, Novick finds that the response of those Jews who explicitly *did* think more in terms of “blood” relations was also problematic. “The difficulty is that the same marginalization of the Holocaust in consciousness took place in the Yishuv — the Jewish community of Palestine — more than half of whose members had left Europe since 1933.” One leading Israeli Holocaust scholar, for example, writes that during the war, the Jewish press in Palestine would “go into ecstasies about some local party-political affair, while the murder of the Jews of Europe is reported only in the inside pages.”³⁵

In an intriguing 1995 essay Hertzberg asks why American Jews waited for over two decades for an overt reaction to the Holocaust. While admitting that few “wanted to hear accounts by the survivors of

The Uses American Jews Make of Three “Myths” (Patrick O’Brien)

the death camps or the horrors they had experienced,” he finds a more provocative reason for it: “an explanation is possible for the revival of interest in the Holocaust only in the 1970s. That was the point when antisemitism in America had become negligible.”³⁶

The Construction of Anti-Semitism in America

In the early seventies there was a good deal of talk about the rampant “new anti-Semitism” in America, of the need to remind both Jews and gentiles of the Holocaust in order to combat it. I’ve argued that at the time claims about a new anti-Semitism were nonsense; certainly they’re nonsense today.

Peter Novick³⁷

I cannot help remembering the ironic witticism of my father that when fundraising is in decline, the organizations pray for a small and, hopefully, not too murderous pogrom.

Arthur Hertzberg³⁸

Being Jewish was easier when it was hard to be a Jew.

Nathan Perlmutter and Ruth Ann
Perlmutter³⁹

As long as fighting antisemitism is at the center of the agenda, the Jewish community needs to exaggerate the power of the enemy, even to the state of paranoia.

Arthur Hertzberg⁴⁰

If anti-Semitism did not exist, it would have to be invented

Kevin MacDonald⁴¹

Novick attacks the growing view among leading Jewish spokespersons that anti-Semitism began an increase in the 1970s. After all, while these dire warnings were being made, “anti-Semitism in the United States was, by every measure, continuing its long-term decline, diminishing to the point that it presented no significant barriers or disadvantages to American Jews. What was going on?”⁴²

What was going on, of course, was that sometime in the 1960s, American Jews had collectively felt the need to shore up group solidarity — only partially to support Israel — by painting a picture of a plausible threat to American Jews. Because, as Novick notes, there was no credible evidence of a threat from American Gentiles (such charges were, in Novick’s words, “almost laughably trivial”⁴³), Jews simply constructed such a threat. Thus, to paraphrase evolutionary psychologist Kevin MacDonald, since anti-Semitism didn’t exist, it had to be invented. And now that collectively Jewish power in America had reached a point where the Jewish community could more or less safely launch a campaign of Gentile vilification without real threat of retaliation, the level of charges against a wide range of Gentiles was continually ratcheted up. The “war on Gentiles” had taken a new turn.⁴⁴

When, for example, observers note that American Jews might be using charges of anti-Semitism for current purposes of group solidarity, they are reflecting upon a sociological theme, that “in the private realm antisemitism is likely to reinforce Jewish particularism, ethnocentrism, and ritualism.”⁴⁵ This idea that anti-Semitism has kept Jews Jews has a long pedigree. Medieval Jewish philosopher Spinoza, for one, believed anti-Semitism kept Jews together.⁴⁶

Theodor Herzl, architect of modern Zionism, based his argument in *The Jewish State* in 1896 “entirely on antisemitism. This was the

condition from which all who were born Jews suffered; regardless of what they tried to become, the inescapable pain inflicted on all of them by their enemies forced Jews together." For Herzl, antisemitism was the chief unifying factor for the post-Emancipation Jewish community.⁴⁷ "Until the beginning of the nineteenth century," British chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes, "Jews defined themselves as the people loved by God. Since then most Jews, wittingly or unwittingly, have defined themselves as the people hated by Gentiles."⁴⁸

What, then, would happen if Jews were to be tested by a society largely without anti-Semitism? The results — at least partially — are already known in America. Silberman considers these results: "Consciously or unconsciously, Jews suspect that it has been anti-Semitism that has kept them a people and that the relative absence of anti-Semitism in the United States will dissolve their will to survive as a distinct group." "Although American Jews are keenly aware of anti-Semitism, there no longer is enough of it to hold the community together..."⁴⁹

Leonard Fein, then editor and publisher of *Moment* magazine, noted in a 1980 speech, "Deep down — and sometimes not so very deep — we still believe that we depended on the pogroms and persecutions to keep us a people, that we have not the fiber to withstand the lures of a genuinely open society. It is seduction, not rape, that we fear the most, and nowhere is the seducer more blatant, less devious, than here in America."⁵⁰

More recently, the Jewish philanthropist and former American Ambassador to Austria Ronald Lauder remarked that the strong showing of Austrian nationalist politician Joerg Haider might be good for the Jewish community. In comments given during a trip to Europe, Lauder said, "I started off as a three-day-a-year Jew. I became Jewish

because I was attacked every day in the papers for Being a Jew. . . . In many ways, anti-Semitism helps me dramatically. The more anti-Semitism, the more strong these people [Eastern European Jews] become. You want to destroy a Jewish community? California-ize it, have no anti-Semitism.”⁵¹

As long as there is a “demand” for anti-Semitism among Jews, a “supply will surely emerge, which is exactly what the major Jewish defense agencies have seen to. On American shores, organizations created to combat anti-Semitism have been a “growth industry” for nearly a century, and they show no signs of slowing. “As long as fighting antisemitism is at the center of the agenda, the Jewish community needs to exaggerate the power of the enemy, even to the state of paranoia.”⁵² While Jewish organizations with agendas other than combatting anti-Semitism declined,

The Anti-Defamation League, together with the enormously successful Simon Wiesenthal Center, bombarded Jews with mailings announcing new anti-Semitic threats. (The ADL was especially assiduous in giving wide circulation to anti-Semitic remarks by obscure black hustlers and demagogues, thus vastly increasing their audiences.) Of the dozens of local Jewish newspapers in the United States, all but a handful were organs of local Jewish Federations, whose success in fundraising was directly proportional to the level of anxiety among potential contributors.⁵³

This organizational need for anti-Semitism, whether the anti-Semitism really exists or not, prompted Hertzberg to muse at one point:

Some twenty years ago, in the immediate memory of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, I dealt with the same theme in a short essay that was published in *Ha-Aretz* entitled "I Have a Nightmare." The purported contents of that "bad dream" were that the Arabs made peace, Brezhnev published a decree letting all the Jews out of the Soviet Union, and Israel struck oil in quantities to rival the reserves of Saudi Arabia. I then asked the plaintive question: "What will the American Jewish organizations do with themselves?"⁵⁴

One unfortunate answer might be that these Jewish defense organizations will succeed in creating a volatile rift between American Jews and Gentiles, leading to conflict of the sort Jews have encountered elsewhere in their turbulent history. Perhaps this is an aspect of MacDonald's observation about Jewish-created clashes in society:

Historically, ethnic separatism, as seen in the history of Judaism, has been a divisive force within societies. It has on several occasions unleashed enormous intra-societal hatred and distrust, ethnically based warfare, expulsions, pogroms, and attempts at genocide. Moreover, there is little reason to suppose that the future will be much different.⁵⁵

Hertzberg, in a new book, says much the same thing:

In this book we dare to say that Jew-hatred is not some irrational prejudice that affects the non-Jewish world. It has a cause. At its root, anti-Semitism is an angry reaction to the Jews, who have been among the most persistent dissenters in every society in which they have lived. . . .

We reject the conventional modern argument that those who hate Jews are satisfying their own need for a scapegoat upon which to heap their anger. . . .

All these explanations avoid the critical question: Do the Jews make any contribution to anti-Semitism? The answer is, fundamentally and unavoidably, yes. Their contribution to Jew-hatred is that they insist on being Jews; by definition they challenge the dominant dogmas. . . . So long as Jews cling to their own faith and their own values, they call into question the majority faith and culture. Even Jewish unbelievers, such as Franz Kafka in Prague or Sigmund Freud in Vienna, challenged the seemingly self-evident beliefs and values of conventional society. So, what is anti-Semitism about? It is the fierce and often murderous anger of majorities against a people whose very existence keeps calling their verities into question. . . .

We understand why Jews have preferred explanations of anti-Semitism that focus on the moral imperfections of non-Jewish majorities. It is more comforting to believe that the Jew-haters, in all their wickedness, have no shred of a reason — even a bad one — for their angers. It is far more difficult for Jews to accept the idea that anti-Semitism may be, fundamentally, the heat of a cultural clash.⁵⁶

Political Uses of Socially Constructed Myths

It may be that the preoccupation of American Jews with the Holocaust and the state of Israel represents a “vicarious identity,” based on the experience of Jews in other places and other times. But it is an identity that has produced considerable if unintended political dividends.

David Biale⁵⁷

As previously mentioned, a key argument Novick uses concerning how American Jews “retroactively construct” the Holocaust is that it allows Jews to organize internal support for Israel, while at the same

time creating the machinery for gaining wider American financial, military, and political support for the Jewish state. The extent of that support is well known, so we need not examine it here.

Novick, however, is unsure of the extent to which invocation of the Holocaust is used to support Israel: "It's relatively easy to find instances of the purposive introduction of the Holocaust into discussions of the Middle East, harder to say how often the latent function of Holocaust discourse was to firm up support for Israel." In any case, Novick shows that "Holocaust programming" by Jewish organizations was consciously pursued for political ends. The Anti-Defamation League, for example, "decided to embark on an ambitious venture in Holocaust programming. Its public relations consultant submitted a memorandum on the shape the program should take." The memo stated that everything done should be "against the background of a powerful *J'Accuse* that is now submitting its bill 'for Sufferings Rendered.'" As we shall see, this bill keeps growing.

In addition to the understandable desire to use whatever means possible to support Israel, American Jews also use the victim status they gain as a result of the Holocaust in domestic competition with other groups, particularly blacks. To illustrate this point, Novick quotes African American author James Baldwin:

One does not wish. . . to be told by an American Jew that his suffering is as great as the American Negro's suffering. It isn't, and one knows that it isn't from the very tone in which he assures you that it is. . . .

It is not here, and not now, that the Jew is being slaughtered, and he is never despised, here, as the Negro is *because* he is an American. The Jewish travail occurred across the sea and America rescued him from the house of bondage. But Amer-

ica is the house of bondage for the Negro, and no country can rescue him.⁵⁸

This “cold war at the top,” to use John Murray Cuddihy phrase,⁵⁹ bestows on the collective victors of the victim status competition (a “competition for primacy” in Novick’s words⁶⁰) certain rights, rights which many American Jews — as vicarious victims — have been eager to use. Chief among these is the right to establish as a central narrative of American life the story of Jewish suffering under the Nazis in Europe over fifty years ago. “Since the 1970s,” Novick writes,

the Holocaust has come to be presented — come to be thought of — as not just a Jewish memory but an American memory. In a growing number of states the teaching of the Holocaust in public schools is legislatively mandated. Instructions for conducting “Days of Remembrance” are distributed throughout the American military establishment, and commemorative ceremonies are held annually in the Capitol Rotunda. Over the past twenty years every president has urged Americans to preserve the memory of the Holocaust. The operating expenses of the Washington Holocaust Museum — originally to have been raised by private contributions — have been largely taken over by the federal government. In Boston, the New England Holocaust Memorial is located on the Freedom Trail, along with Paul Revere’s house and the Bunker Hill Monument. Public officials across the country told Americans that seeing *Schindler’s List* was their civic duty. How did this European event come to loom so large in American consciousness?⁶¹

Novick skillfully explores how Jewish groups and individual Jews successfully sought to marginalize others who had suffered. These Jews struggled to make the American remembrance of the Holocaust

a uniquely Jewish event, a "distasteful secular version of chosenness," according to one distinguished Jewish theologian.⁶² Originally, organizers planned to include in the Holocaust Memorial eleven million victims of Nazi crimes, five million of whom were non-Jews. This upset many Jews, in particular Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. "Though Jewish survivors of the Holocaust had no role in the initiative that created the museum, they came, under the leadership of Wiesel, to dominate the council — morally, if not numerically."

Wiesel and his allies no doubt feared that the logic of the museum's "eleven million" mandate foreshadowed "other victims" receiving five elevenths of the space. In the end, largely as a result of the influence of the survivors on the council, "other victims" wound up receiving little more than perfunctory mention in the museum's permanent exhibition.⁶³

Novick wavers when trying to decide the degree of deliberateness and coordination by Jewish groups in "Holocaust programming." At one point he writes:

No central decision-making body of American Jewry concluded that it was the absence of Holocaust consciousness that explained the declining Jewish commitment of the young, that the way to keep straying sheep in the fold was through Holocaust programming. There has never been any such body; that's not the way things work. Rather, it was a matter of market forces. Young Jews did indeed seem to be "indifferent to and 'turned off' by" synagogue attendance, learning Hebrew or Yiddish, immersing themselves in Jewish culture, or participating in mainstream Jewish organizations. The Holocaust looked like the one item in stock with consumer appeal.⁶⁴

“Market forces” may indeed play a role. By the 1970s, according to Novick, Jewish organizations abandoned their assimilationist programs in favor of “themes and programs that could promote Jewish solidarity and stem the hemorrhage of assimilation and intermarriage.” Using the myth of the “new anti-Semitism,” Jewish groups began “changing their priorities and their posture. . . toward an emphasis on the defense of distinctive Jewish interests, a kind of circling of the wagons.”⁶⁵ In competition with more aggressive Jewish groups willing to inspire fear among Jews by repeatedly referring to the Holocaust and the threat to Jews, the overall tone of Jewish defense groups became more anxiety producing.⁶⁶

In seeming contradiction to this idea of organic growth of Holocaust programming, Novick elsewhere writes that “while the Holocaust has proved ‘popular’ with American Jews, its rise to the top of the Jewish agenda was by no means a spontaneous development.” Novick claims that though “the end result of these decisions would be to put the Holocaust at the center of how Jews understood themselves,” it was “neither foreseen nor intended,” but judging from the many examples given by Novick, it seems Jewish groups knew exactly what they were doing.⁶⁷

For example, when anti-Semitic leaflets were distributed during a conflict between black advocates of community control of schools and Jewish teachers, the “largely Jewish United Federation of Teachers. . . promptly printed a half-million copies of the leaflets to win support for its cause,” allowing the ADL to issue a report “announcing that anti-Semitism in the New York school system was at a ‘crisis level.’ ”⁶⁸ In addition, “considerable investment of communal resources” has accompanied efforts to reach out to Christian churches and to schools.⁶⁹

Perhaps the biggest campaign came with NBC’s 1978 airing of the

The Uses American Jews Make of Three “Myths” (Patrick O’Brien)

four-part miniseries *Holocaust*, seen by up to 100 million Americans. The organized efforts here bring into question Novick’s claims about the spontaneous nature of “Holocaust programming”:

The Anti-Defamation League distributed ten million copies of its sixteen-page tabloid *The Record* to promote the drama. Jewish organizations successfully lobbied major newspapers to serialize Gerald Green’s novelization of his television play, or to publish special inserts on the Holocaust. (*The Chicago Sun-Times* distributed hundreds of thousands of copies of its insert to local schools.) The American Jewish Committee, in cooperation with NBC, distributed millions of copies of a study guide for viewers; teachers’ magazines carried other curricular material tied to the program. Jewish organizations worked with the National Council of Churches to prepare other promotional and educational materials, and organized advance viewings for religious leaders. The day the series began was designated “Holocaust Sunday”; various activities were scheduled in cities across the country; the National Conference of Christians and Jews distributed yellow stars to be worn on that day.⁷⁰

The series was shown a year later in Germany and “became the turning point in Germany’s long-delayed confrontation with the Holocaust, which . . . has continued ever since.”⁷¹ One might be tempted to see such efforts as coordinated attempts to sway Gentile audiences. An editor of *Tikkun* noted with satisfaction the power it took American Jews to get the Holocaust Museum built. For him at least, the Museum is “a statement of raw power, and that’s the only thing I like about it. . . . It’s not Jewish tragedy that’s remembered on the Mall. . . ; it’s Jewish power to which homage is paid.”⁷²

The range of cases where Jews have invoked the lessons of the Holocaust or of anti-Semitism are no doubt familiar to modern readers of any major newspaper. Novick ticks off a partial list: President Reagan's 1985 visit to Bitburg cemetery in West Germany to honor fallen SS men, the Kurt Waldheim affair and the Pope's reception of him, the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations' efforts to find and deport former Nazis living in the U.S, with the John Demjanjuk case being the most prominent, and the issue of dormant Jewish accounts in Swiss banks.⁷³

Others which might be mentioned in passing are the decades-long attacks on alleged anti-Semites Pat Buchanan and Pat Robertson, the recovery of art stolen by the Nazis, the issue of deportation of an alleged war criminal from Britain and Australia, and now, as this paper goes to the publisher, the inclusion of Austrian nationalist Joerg Haider's party in a coalition government.

What is noteworthy is that in all of the above discussions about a vulnerable Israel, the Holocaust, and anti-Semitism in America, American Gentiles have been passive recipients of narratives constructed by Jews. Of course, this is not surprising, given that, in Novick's words, American Jews are not just "the people of the book," but also "the people of Hollywood film and the television miniseries, of the magazine article and the newspaper column, of the comic book and the academic symposium." "How American Jews understand and represent themselves" — i.e., the narratives they construct — need not show fealty to any objective reality about the world at large, nor need it take Gentiles into consideration as active agents in their own right. Just as "American gentiles aren't called upon to make any choices concerning Holocaust memory,"⁷⁴ they are not called upon to make choices concerning the social construction of anti-Semitism, nor are they called upon to

vigorously discuss American attitudes and policies toward Israel. This suggests that perhaps American Gentiles are no longer full participants in the greater construction of American culture.

Notes

- 1 *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), p.3.
- 2 *A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p.216.
- 3 *Dangerous Liaison: The Inside Story of the U.S.-Israeli Covert Relationship*, (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992), pp.140-141.
- 4 "How Jews Use Antisemitism," in *Antisemitism in America Today: Outspoken Experts Explode the Myths*, ed. Jerome A. Chanes, (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1995), p.341.
- 5 Quoted in Ira Stoll, "Haider Seen as Wake-Up Call," *Forward*, October 15, 1999, pp.1, 6. The article mentions that Lauder's comments approach the view "that set off a furor a few years ago by a Washington lawyer, Jay Lefkowitz: that a little anti-Semitism is good for the Jews, reminding Jews of their heritage and preventing assimilation." National director of the Anti-Defamation League, Abraham Foxman, said, "Sadly and unfortunately, it is partially true that frequently anti-Semitism has stimulated Jews to be more Jewish. But that's only part of it. Other people run further away. There are some people that don't want to be Jews because of anti-Semitism."
- 6 *In Search of American Jewish Culture* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1999), p.235.
- 7 *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), p.202.
- 8 Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p.340.
- 9 Mordecai Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization* (Philadelphia and New York: Jewish Publication Society of America/Reconstructionist Press, 1981;

- originally published 1934), p. xiv, quoted in Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today* (New York: Summit Books, 1985), p.181.
- 10 See Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880-1920* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp.117-135.
- 11 Biale, p.202.
- 12 Novick, p.4.
- 13 "Jewish American Confrontations with Anti-Semitism: Identity and Worldview," and "Who Am I? Jacob's (Post) Modern Identity Crisis," *Studies in Culture*, Hokkai Gakuen University, No.12 (March 1999) and No.14 (November 1999), respectively.
- 14 Cockburn and Cockburn, p.153.
- 15 Biale, p.188.
- 16 Judith Miller, *One, by One, by One: Facing the Holocaust*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp.221-223. See also Silberman: "Whatever the reasons, the Holocaust was rarely mentioned; nor did American Jews display any interest in reading or teaching their children about the dread events. . . . When *Commentary* conducted a symposium on 'the condition of Jewish belief' in 1966, for example, its editors did not so much as mention the Holocaust in the five long questions it sent to the participating rabbis and theologians, nor did more than a handful of the thirty-eight respondents raise the question on their own" (pp.182-183).
- 17 Novick, pp.2-3.
- 18 See Miller, pp.221-222; Silberman, p.183.
- 19 Some of this text appeared in the essay mentioned above, "Who Am I? Jacob's (Post)Modern Identity Crisis."
- 20 James M. Ennes, Jr., *Assault on the Liberty: The True Story of the Israeli Attack on an American Intelligence Ship* (New York: Random House, 1979), p.37.
- 21 *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), pp.371-373. As recounted by Charles Silberman, the individual responses to tensions in the Middle East in May 1967 told an important story about Jewish identity in America:
- Jews were emotionally involved [in the Six-Day War] in a way they

The Uses American Jews Make of Three "Myths" (Patrick O'Brien)

would not have thought possible a few months earlier. "In those days many of us felt that our own lives were in the balance," the late Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote shortly after the war had ended. . . . The anxiety was grueling, the isolation was dreadful. . . . *I had not known how deeply Jewish I was*" (emphasis is Silberman's).

"I had not known how deeply Jewish I was!" This was the response, not of some newcomer to Judaism or casual devotee but of the man whom many, myself included, consider the greatest Jewish spiritual leader of our time. (pp.183-184).

Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab add that while fear for Israel's survival was certainly a factor in American Jews' reaction to news of the war, guilt may also have played a role, in that American Jews may not have done enough to prevent the Holocaust. See *Jews and the New American Scene* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p.118.

22 J.J. Goldberg writes that what happened "was that Israel won the war handily. Though the public was astounded by the speed and decisiveness of the Israeli victory, intelligence analysts in Israel and America were not. They knew Israel's strength, and its enemies' weakness." *Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment* (Reading, MA: Addison, Wesley, 1996), p.136. Novick also notes that "In fact, Israel was hardly in peril," citing former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara (p.148).

Recently, works from Israeli "new historians" have also suggested that Israeli nation-building narratives have engaged in "deception" with respect to Israeli power vis-a-vis her Arab neighbors. See Ethan Bronner's review of Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World Since 1948* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999) and Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999) in the *New York Times Book Review*, Nov. 14, 1999, pp.6-8.

23 Ennes, p.210. Ennes, who was an officer aboard the United States Navy intelligence-gathering ship the U.S.S. *Liberty*, further argues that Syria deliberately attacked his ship in order to launch a surprise attack on the Syrian-held Golan Heights, "a major objective of the war" (pp.209-213).

- 24 Cockburn and Cockburn, pp.140-142. The Cockburns describe what they believe happened:

There is a body of opinion within the American intelligence community that Angleton had played a leading part in orchestrating the events leading up to the June 1967 war. One long-serving official at the CIA's ancient rival, the codebreaking National Security Agency, states flatly that "Jim Angleton and the Israelis spent a year cooking up the '67 war. It was a CIA operation, designed to get Nasser." Such a verdict, from a source inside an agency that had the inclination and the facilities to monitor both the CIA and the Israelis, must carry some weight. . . .

Angleton, in the opinion of many who knew him, was a figure of some considerable intellectual vanity. To 'do the job' on Nasser and at the same time present Israel as the threatened underdog fighting for its life involved, as we shall see, a psychological operation of enormous sophistication and subtlety. It would be a disservice to the Israeli planners in Mossad, Military Intelligence, and the General Staff to presume that they were incapable of constructing the plan on their own. But if it was indeed a solo effort, they would have lost little by letting Angleton presume that he had played a crucial role, even *the* leading role (pp.146-147).

The Cockburns find later statements which support their views on the war:

In Israel itself, however, a little of the truth about the June war has seeped out over the years. In 1982, for example, Prime Minister Menachem Begin. . . declared, "In June 1967 we. . . had a choice. The Egyptian army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him. . . ."

Ezer Weizman, who as commander of the air force and then deputy head of the Israeli General Staff did much of the operational planning for the war, said in 1972 that there was "no threat of destruction" in June 1967. . .

Gen. Matityahu Peled, who before his metamorphosis into a dove

The Uses American Jews Make of Three "Myths" (Patrick O'Brien)

had been a hawk among hawks on the General Staff, stated, "To claim that the Egyptian forces concentrated on our border were capable of threatening Israel's existence not only insults the intelligence of anyone capable of analyzing this kind of situation, but is an insult to Zahal [the Israeli army]."

Yitzhak Rabin, chief of staff before and during the war, echoed the military consensus when he stated, "I do not believe that Nasser wanted war. The two divisions he sent into Sinai on May 14 would not have been enough to unleash an offensive against Israel. He knew it and we knew it."

The facts seemed obvious to these cold professionals. Although their remarks caused something of a furor in Israel when first expressed in the early 1970s, the matter is not considered a subject of dispute in their country today (pp.153-154).

25 Biale, p.203.

26 Novick, p.198.

27 Lipset and Raab, p.118.

28 Shapiro, p.216.

29 Quoted in Shapiro, p.216.

30 Novick argues that a focus on a European tragedy allows Americans "a few cheap tears" because for Americans the Holocaust is "virtually cost-free." Contemplation of the Holocaust "promotes *evasion* of moral and historical responsibility. The repeated assertion that whatever the United States has done to blacks, Native Americans, Vietnamese, or others pales in comparison to the Holocaust is true — and evasive" (p. 15).

31 Novick, p.7.

32 Novick, p.198.

33 Novick, pp.19-20.

34 Novick, pp.105-106. Novick also notes that William Shirer, in his "record-breaking 1960 bestseller *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*... devoted 2 or 3 percent of his 1,200-page book to the murder of European Jewry, a proportion that, to the best of my knowledge, no critic commented on" (p.128).

- 35 Novick, pp.34-36. In one long paragraph, which I will quote at length, Novick highlights this shocking lack of concern:

The *Palestine Post*, on November 25, 1942, carried a report from the Polish government-in-exile of an alleged order by Heinrich Himmler to kill all Polish Jews by the end of 1942. It got four brief paragraphs, with much more space and more prominence given to "Soviet Army Scores Smashing Victory" (at Stalingrad) and "Allies Advance on Tunis, Bizerta." Even the Pacific war news got bigger play than the Himmler order. On March 30 of the following year, "Premier of Bengal Dismissed" was given more space in the *Post* than the bottom-corner story "Half Million Jews Killed in Warsaw," which reported — falsely as of this date — that all of Warsaw's Jews had been killed. . . . Dina Porat, in her study of the Yishuv and the Holocaust, observes that "the extermination ceased to command special attention once the details had become familiar." A month of mourning proclaimed when the scale of the ongoing catastrophe became clear in late 1942 "proved to be too great a burden on the public": only the first of weekly days of prayer was observed; movie houses that were to be closed for the month were reopened after their owners protested that their livelihoods were threatened. Overall, she concludes, "in Palestine daily life continued scarcely affected by the war," except for increased prosperity as a result of purchases by the British army, and spending by its soldiers (pp.35-36).

Novick also notes that in Israel prior to the Six-Day War "Yom Hashoah — Holocaust Remembrance Day — was largely ignored, and school textbooks paid little attention to the Holocaust" (p.148).

- 36 Hertzberg, "How Jews Use Antisemitism," pp.338-341.

- 37 Novick, p.269.

- 38 "How Jews Use Antisemitism," pp.345-6.

- 39 *The Real Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Arbor House, 1982), p. 286.

- 40 "How Jews Use Antisemitism," p.341.

- 41 *Separation and Its Discontents: Toward an Evolutionary Theory of Anti-Semitism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), p.181.

- 42 Novick, p.172.
- 43 Novick, p.172.
- 44 At the risk of being too self-referential, I would like to suggest another of my own works, "Poor Esau: Reflections on Jewish Hostility Toward Gentiles," *Journal of Hokkai Gakuen University*, No.100, June 1999. This essay is a useful synopsis of MacDonald's work on Jewish hostility toward Gentiles. For arguments that anti-Semitism is a minor, if not trivial, force in post-war America, see my "Jewish American Confrontations with Anti-Semitism," which also offers a rationale for false Jewish charges of anti-Semitism, including the likelihood that what most Jews see as Gentile anti-Semitism is actually a projection of Jewish hostility toward Gentiles onto those very Gentiles.
- 45 Charles S. Liebman, "Jewish Survival, Antisemitism, and Negotiation with the Traditional," in *The Americanization of the Jews*, ed. Robert M. Seltzer and Norman J. Cohen, (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p.442.
- 46 Stephen Whitfield, *American Space, Jewish Time: Essays in Modern Culture and Politics* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 1988), p.30.
- 47 Hertzberg, "How Jews Use Anti-Semitism," 338-340.
- 48 "Love, Hate, and Jewish Identity," *First Things*, 77 (November 1997), p. 29.
- 49 Silberman, pp.24, 160.
- 50 Quoted in Silberman, p.165.
- 51 Quoted in "Haider Seen as Wake-Up Call." The article mentions that Lauder's comments approach the view "that set off a furor a few years ago by a Washington lawyer, Jay Lefkowitz: that a little anti-Semitism is good for the Jews, reminding Jews of their heritage and preventing assimilation." National director of the Anti-Defamation League, Abraham Foxman, said, "Sadly and unfortunately, it is partially true that frequently anti-Semitism has stimulated Jews to be more Jewish. But that's only part of it. Other people run further away. There are some people that don't want to be Jews because of anti-Semitism."
- 52 Hertzberg, "How Jews Use Antisemitism," p.341.
- 53 Novick, p.176. See also Miller, pp.244-245; Leonard Wilcox, *Crying*

Wolf: Hate Crime Hoaxes in America (Olathe, KS: Editorial Research Service, 1995), ch.1; and Leonard Wilcox, *The Watchdogs: A close look at Anti-Racist "Watchdog" Groups* (Olathe, KS: Editorial Research Service, 1998), ch. 1.

- 54 Hertzberg, "How Jews Use Antisemitism," pp.343-344.
- 55 Kevin B. MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique: An Evolutionary Analysis of Jewish Involvement in Twentieth-Century Intellectual and Political Movements* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), p.306.
- 56 Arthur Hertzberg and Aron Hirt-Manheimer, *Jews: The Essence and Character of a People* (Harper: San Francisco, 1998), pp.5-7.
- 57 Biale, p.202.
- 58 Novick, p.155 and p.194, respectively.
- 59 John Murray Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987, 1974), ch. 22.
- 60 Novick, p.9.
- 61 Novick, p.207.
- 62 Jacob Neusner, quoted in Novick, p.198.
- 63 Novick, pp.216-220. Novick gives examples of this "secular version of chosenness" regarding Jewish primacy in the planning of the Holocaust Museum Memorial:

When one survivor, Sigmund Strochlitz, was sworn in as a council member, he announced that it was "unreasonable and inappropriate to ask survivors to share the term Holocaust... to equate our suffering...with others." At one council meeting, another survivor, Kalman Sultanik, was asked whether Daniel Trocme, murdered at Maidanek for rescuing Jews and honored at Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile, could be remembered in the museum's Hall of Remembrance. "No," said Sultanik, because "he didn't die as a Jew... The six million Jews... died differently."

There were also attempts to mobilize Jewish opinion at large against blurring the distinction between the victimhood of Jews and that of others. Survivor Henry Grynberg even objected to the ancillary role accorded to gentiles in Wiesel's phrase about others being,

The Uses American Jews Make of Three "Myths" (Patrick O'Brien)

"as night descended... swept into this net of death." This was, Grynberg said, "absolutely false": "Those millions of others would have perished in the war even if the Holocaust had never taken place." Children of survivors were often among those who insisted on the distinction between the deaths of gentiles and of Jews. Gentiles, said one, "died a death invented for the Jews... victims of a 'solution' designed for others." For another child of survivors, dismayed by what he saw as the museum's blurring of the issue, the deaths of gentile victims "were of a different, non-theological order, untouched by the mysteries that reign at the heart of... the 'Tremendum.'" Yehuda Bauer enlisted in the battle against what he called the "Wiesenthal-Carter definition." It reflected, he wrote, gentile "envy" of the Jews' experience in the Holocaust, which "would seem to be an unconscious reflection of anti-Semitic attitudes" (pp.219-220).

64 Novick, p.187. As the wealthy Canadian Jew who provided start-up funding for the Simon Wiesenthal Center noted, it was "a sad fact that Israel and Jewish education and all the other familiar buzzwords no longer seem to rally Jews behind the community. The Holocaust, though, works every time." Quoted in Novick, p.188.

65 Novick, pp.171, 178.

66 Novick notes the emergence of Meir Kahane's Jewish Defense League. More moderate Jewish groups, in order to "block this takeover by the usurper," began to mimic these scare tactics (p.174).

67 Novick, pp.202-203.

68 Novick. p.172.

69 Novick, p.208.

70 Novick, p.210. In addition, Novick notes that Jewish agencies separately targeted Gentile and Jewish audiences, and in the case of the ADL, they appear to have engaged in deliberate deception, where the study guides for Jewish children emphasized Christian anti-Semitism and denigrated assimilated Jews.

71 Novick, p.213.

72 Quoted in Novick, p.330 n104.

73 Novick, pp.226-230. Regarding U.S. government efforts which

implicitly or explicitly help American Jews, Novick writes, "What were, de jure, government initiatives were often, de facto, those of Jewish aides, simultaneously promoting projects in which they believed and helping their employers score points with Jewish constituents" (p.208); Judith Miller agrees that Jews often initiate government programs that serve Jewish purposes. In 1979, for example, the U.S. Congress, at the urging of former Representative Elizabeth Holtzman, a Jewish Democrat from a heavily Jewish section of New York, created "a special office in the Justice Department in 1979 to hunt down Nazi war criminals in the United States, strip them of their citizenship, and deport them" (p.300, n5).

74 Novick, p.12 and p.279, respectively.