

https://dspace.org/

To a Golden Land

Greenblatt, Samuel Shlomo

2006-11-16T08:24:42Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/1769

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

“To a Golden Land”

The circle of immigration of South African Jews

History, Film Proposal, and Film Scenes
including visuals and music on accompanying compact disks

By Samuel Shlomo Greenblatt
Student Number: 8238599

Department of History
Supervisor: Dr Clive Glaser

Submitted in part fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts

December 2004

Introduction

The story of the Jewish community in South Africa is a long and colourful one. The population is based entirely on immigrants who first began arriving in the late 1860s. Their presence in the country is characterised by a disproportionate visibility and as being distinct from other "Diaspora" communities. The community has shrunk by a third in the last thirty years, in a mirror image of the initial waves of immigrants to the country a century before. This sense of movement spanning a long period of time in the context of the historical phenomenon that is South African Jewry suggests itself to a documentary film.

A cinematic treatment of the phenomenon of waves of Jewish immigration to and from South Africa requires approaching the subject matter from a number of directions simultaneously. The film genre "historical documentary" requires equal emphasis on the techniques of cinema as well as an historical approach. This document addresses each in turn, with Section 1 dealing with the historical framework underlying the film. Section 2 addresses the theory and practice of documentary film inasmuch as it pertains to the proposed film. This section also contains a review of existing film documentary approaches to the subject matter. Section 3 contains a scene by scene breakdown of the film. The appendix contains a literature review and supplemental notes.

Overall Aim

The starting point for the construction of the film is an attempt to develop an approach that deliberately eschews the conventional documentary technique used in the making of similar films. By ignoring the fact that film is a predominantly visual medium, films often fall into a trap of "over-textualising" i.e. their visual or metaphorical essence becomes subordinate to the text of the film. Since the text drives the narrative, this can result in a sapping of visual interest in favour of what is often a tedious voice-over. This film wishes to take advantage of film as a rich visual and symbolic medium. I aim to show that this approach need not lead to a loss of overall transmitted content, historical or otherwise. The maxim "less is more", though seemingly cliché, applies in large part to the making of a historical documentary.

Section 1 - History of South African and Lithuanian Jewish Communities

Overview

"To a Golden Land" takes the point of view that the story of the South African Jewish community is unique not only because of waves of immigration/emigration separated by 50 years, but also due to its unique character. The fact that the majority of the Jewish population in South Africa emanated from Lithuania is a singular phenomenon in the light of the subsequent destruction of that community in the Second World War. While Lithuanian Jews did indeed emigrate to other Western countries, they soon integrated with other Jewish émigrés from the Pale of Settlement and beyond. As a result, their special character became diluted in those countries. In the insularity of the developing

South Africa of the early twentieth century, Lithuanian Jewry was able to propagate itself in a way that owed much to its own earlier insularity from other Eastern European Jewry. Its ability to prosper in South Africa was further attributable to the peculiarities of this country's racial policies prior and subsequent to the election of the National Party in 1948. While not exclusively of Lithuanian descent, South African Jews came to be heavily influenced by the traits of a delineable subset of world Jewry. While much has been made of the "Anglo-Litvak" hybrid of South African Jewry (see below), the latter component of this hyphenated construct overpowered the former in both numbers and nature.

Seen together, the unique nature of South African Jewry, its later (partial) dissolution and the extermination of its host communities suggest an interesting canvas for a historical documentary. The major historical components of such a film are the waves of migration that constituted the community and which ultimately led to its diminution. Equally important as background is the transmission of the understanding that the Lithuanian Jewish communities developed partially autonomously and had been resident in that part of the world for at least eight centuries. The historical outline presented below establishes a framework for understanding the migration of Jews to South Africa from 1880, but also an overview of the development of Lithuanian Jewry to that point.

Brief History of South African Jews

Background

Since the Dutch East India Company established a permanent settlement at the Cape, Jews have been part of the South African demographic infrastructure. Early Jews were only nominally Jewish, and tended to convert to Christianity. It has often been suggested that this was due to the lack of communal facilities, or because a "critical mass" of Jews had not been attained. With increasing tolerance of the Batavian government from 1804 facilitating an environment in which Jews could practice their religion, conversions become more rare. The above assertions are impossible to verify, and in any case have little to do with modern day South African Jewry, which was forged by waves of English, and crucially, Lithuanian emigration from the mid nineteenth century.

The first synagogue was established in Cape Town in 1849, followed by numerous others. The first rabbis were British and orthodox.. This was in contrast to American rabbis of Eastern European descent whose origins were more Yiddish in nature. Thus South African Jewry until 1880 was largely homogenous, English-speaking and not very distinct from the surrounding (English-speaking) population. This stability was shattered with the great influx of Jews from Eastern Europe from 1881 to about 1915.

This influx coincided with the two great wars of the time relevant to the Jewish community – the South African War and the First World War. The former precipitated an Exodus of Jews to the coast, where most remained until 1904. On returning, the Jewish community essentially picked up where it had left off. South African Jewish angst was more pronounced in the Great War due to the plight of Russian Jewry at the time. Money

was collected for the relief of Jews thought to be trapped in the front's crossfire. Loyalties towards these Russian Jews were possibly split along Anglo-Eastern European fault lines within the Jewish community. (Mendelsohn 2000:50-55). By the end of Great War, perspectives of the Jewish community as a whole had undergone an evolution through which a greater deal of communal cohesion was achieved (Mendelsohn 2000:59).

The cultural melting-pot that ensued differed from other emergent Diaspora communities of the time in that the Jewish population found themselves able to remain aloof from the surrounding culture. Gideon Shimoni (1980) has pointed out that this is because there had never been an inclusive South African identity, of the type adopted, say, by the British or the American Jewish communities. South Africa was essentially segregated along racial lines, and then further, in the white group, to English- and Afrikaans-speakers. This made the white sector essentially dualistic. Under such circumstances, more leeway existed for Jews to retain their cultural identity.

Later, as Jews integrated further into larger South African society, they maintained and indeed honed their sense of separateness. This in turn allowed them to incorporate orthodoxy in their general approach to life, since, as Hellig (1985) states, orthodoxy thrives under conditions of separateness. This state of separateness that characterised the community and which distinguished it from other, similar communities, manifested in higher degrees of organisation and representation. Indeed, South Africa has long been considered to be the most organised of Diaspora communities.

The unique character of the South African Jewish community may be said to be its opportune mingling of English and Eastern-European influences, often referred to as "Anglo-Litvak". This came about as the direct result of the confluence of a number of factors. Firstly, in the mid-nineteenth century Jewish immigration was predominantly from the British Empire, by virtue of the Cape having been a British colony at the time. Secondly, persecution of Eastern European Jews happened to coincide with the diamond- and gold-rush years of the late nineteenth century. Would-be immigrants, especially from the Russian-controlled region of Lithuania, identified South Africa as a destination of choice, partly because conditions in the sweatshops of America were rumoured to be relatively harsh, and partly because they at least wished to believe that South Africa was better suited to their vocations as peddlers and tradesmen. Word-of-mouth fostered by the advance scouting of the country by family members, soon cemented its reputation. Thus it was that while Central European Jewry (especially from Germany, Poland and Hungary) streamed to America (and to a lesser extent to Palestine and Argentina), Lithuanians set their sights firmly, and without much competition, on South Africa. Early immigration in the rush period understandably tended to be to Kimberly or the Witwatersrand and not the Cape. Shortly afterward, boom towns such as Oudtshoorn received their share of arriving Jews. (the relative independence of the Cape and Transvaal communities over time has more to do with politics of the respective Boards of Deputies than with early immigration patterns). The huge influx overturned the hitherto homogenous English nature of the Jewish population forever.

Two factors militated against continued immigration from Lithuania after 1919. Firstly, increased anti-Jewish feeling within South Africa had made some a little more reluctant to make the move. Secondly, the year 1919 saw the establishment of unprecedented autonomy for Lithuanian Jews following the post-war independence of that country. Thus the great wave of immigration that had lasted for more than thirty-five years slowed to a trickle. By the time European Jewry found itself desperately seeking more hospitable climes, the enacting of anti-immigration laws in prospective host countries, including South Africa, presented far more serious obstacles than had been previously encountered.

The infusion of Eastern European traditions and attitudes combined with the prevailing English attitudes to form a new individual and communal hybrid: the "Anglo-Litvak" South African Jew. This new distillation took some time to take hold, however. At first, divisions were common as the existing Anglo Jews viewed the arrival of hordes of new immigrants with some suspicion. These divisions played out in deliberate mutual avoidance, with each set of Jews maintaining their own synagogues and cultural institutions. In Oudtshoorn, for example, two synagogues existed side by side by 1896, with one having a distinctive anglicised nature, and the other entirely Yiddish-oriented, and decisively more orthodox in character. It is interesting to note that when divisions were finally breached (a process which may have taken at least a generation to unfold), and the synagogues did become more inclusive, it was the Anglo spirit of observance that prevailed, albeit with some distinctive Litvak characteristics. This is probably attributable to the way the governing bodies came to be set up, and to the approach and agenda of certain prominent individuals (such as the chief rabbi) in those organisations.

An important question presents itself at this point. Within the resolution of the dynamics just discussed, how did South African Jews become nominally orthodox, maintaining their affiliation to the orthodoxy, while at the same time displaying few outward signs or practices associated with that mode of Judaism? Hellig (1985) suggests that Jewish immigrants, bound by pragmatic concerns, were forced, despite their great love for traditional observance and a longing for their Lithuanian roots, to strike a balance between piety and practicality. On reflection, this fails to make sense. There is nothing unique in this formulation that does not apply to any other group of Jewish immigrants of the time, who nonetheless rapidly oriented themselves according to their existing (or modified) religious predispositions. An equally likely formulation is as follows: Finally free of the weight of centuries of small-village tradition in which unquestioned orthodoxy was taken for granted, Jewish immigrants wished to acculturate to and experience the new Promised Land of Africa. With the *Shtetl* mentality fast receding, (but with an underlying need to maintain their sense of Jewish identity), many Jews became drawn to a less prescribed, more ritual-free lifestyle. It was only a conscious decision on the part of an emerging rabbinate to remain tolerant to the lackadaisical approach of Jewish immigrants that allowed the latter to remain within the orthodox fold, thus preventing rampant fragmentation of the larger Jewish community. Affiliation to orthodoxy, however diluted, sated the guilt of those who had made such a break with their past. The memoir of Bernard Sachs (*Multitude of Dreams*, 1949) provides an illustration of this adaptation. While Sachs never relinquishes his childhood love for Judaism, he ceases to practice Judaism in any form, yet does not find the need to cement his identity within a

particular devotional or even cultural Jewish framework. There is no reason to suppose that Sachs' experience is markedly different from his co-immigrants, whose willingness to assent to the tolerance of the orthodox rabbinate characterises South African Jews to this day. Incidentally, the opportunity for South African Jews to refrain from the burden of observance and yet retain Jewish affiliation may have militated against the development of stronger reform or conservative movements, with the former exerting marginal influence and the latter failing to materialise. In short, the institutional character of South African Judaism has always been overwhelmingly orthodox, while its social character has been overwhelmingly secular. Coincidental with the first waves of Jewish emigration *out* of South Africa was an emergence of *Chasidic* orthodoxy entirely out of keeping with the orthodox roots of the Jewish community. This presence has begun to subtly transform the institutional if not intrinsic character of South African Jewry.

South African anti-Semitism & formation of the Board of Deputies

At the time of the gold-rush more Jews were involved in illicit activities such as liquor trading and prostitution than were in the management of the mines themselves. Most, however, made a living through subsidiary services such as canteens and concession stores. Owing to a variety of factors, including their general "foreignness" , involvement in the underworld, and being identifiable as scapegoats from the perspective of the "poor whites", Jews became the victims of widespread prejudice. Anti-Semitic propaganda began to emerge, identifying them as "Peruvians" (a malapropism), part of a groundswell of sentiment leading to a 1902 Act curtailing Jewish immigration. This led to the original formation of the Board of Deputies, whose primary function as a secular body was to lobby for Jewish Rights, in particular those concerning immigration. Two boards were formed, one in the Cape and one in Transvaal. (The fact that these were based on the Anglo model may have had much to do with the later entrenching of Anglo practices within the religious context). With the help of the newly formed Boards, immigration to South Africa from Lithuania in particular continued apace, until it was finally halted by a series of legislated curbs in the early 1930s. South African Jewry can be said to have developed its distinctive character in the 35 to 40 years to this point. During this time, the Board of Deputies continued to wield considerable influence, with its stated aim having been to further Jewish interests. The focus on Jewish interests as opposed to wider social justice subsequent to 1948 has long been considered a blind spot of the Board of Deputies during and after the community's formative period.

Since first arriving in South Africa, Jews have been exempt from discrimination, and have enjoyed full rights in the parliamentary system. Nevertheless, over time Jews were subjected to more discriminatory legislation than any other white group in the country. Most of this legislation threatened the rights of Jews to emigrate to the country, and indeed halted the influx of Jews from the early 1930s onwards. Specifically, this legislation was promulgated in the form of Immigration Quota Act of 1930, and the Aliens Act of 1937. Fears on the part of the community that such discriminatory tendencies would continue on the ascension of the National Party to power in 1948 proved to be unfounded.

Jewish religious observance came under the auspices of the Federation of Synagogues formed in 1933, which governed all but Cape Jewry. The Chief Rabbi (whose authority replaced that of the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain in 1915), officiated over South African Jewry as a whole, although the importance of the position varied from incumbent to incumbent, to some extent at his own discretion.

With a track record of identification with the ugliest tenets of National Socialism, the ascendancy of the National Party to power in 1948 must have given many South African Jews pause. With the recent spectre of the Holocaust all too present, it would be understandable if the Jews had begun leaving in large numbers. Instead, as fully-fledged members of the privileged white minority, the Jewish population of South Africa was left essentially to its own devices, enjoying tacit, if not outright, support for the State of Israel on the part of the Nationalist government, and almost no overt anti-Semitism. The twenty eight years between 1948-1976 could possibly be called the "golden age" of South African Judaism. Not only did the community not have to deal with the pressures of continuing immigration (or curtailment thereof), they were able to flourish in what was, for them, an almost problem-free environment. During this time the Federation of Synagogues and Board of Deputies were able to expand and consolidate their activities, with the latter in particular wielding developmental control over a burgeoning Jewish Day-School, and accompanying Youth Movement program. Quasi-orthodox Jewish observance predominated and little controversy was apparent within its governing bodies. This was also the time that Jewish communities were to be found in all parts of the country, with thriving centres in the remotest places. The "country communities", as they came to be called, lent a sense of diversity to the Jewish population, with second-generation Jews taking up their places within the small-town and farming infrastructures.

It is tempting, though fruitless, to speculate about what the immigration policies of the 1948 Nationalist Government may have been towards would-be Jewish refugees. It may well have facilitated additional waves of immigrating Jews if by this time the large Jewish population centres of Europe, including Lithuania, had not been entirely exterminated.

The circle of emigration

Individual Jews had always been at the forefront of activism against the government during the days of apartheid. A large proportion of the Rivonia trialists where in fact Jewish. At the height of apartheid, activists and others left the country, not necessarily for other Diaspora communities. A steady trickle of predominantly intellectuals imposed exile on themselves (especially in the 1960s) and departed mostly for other parts of the English-speaking world.

For the rest, the Soweto riots of 1976 constituted a catalyst to increasing perceptions among South African Jews that their security and prosperity were best pursued elsewhere in the Diaspora. Although some migration to Israel (*aliyah*) did take place, the vast majority of Jews headed for the United States and Australia. The latter destination, in particular, boasts large insular and homogenous sub-communities of expatriate South

African Jews. Meanwhile, the South African Jewish community diminished by about 40 per cent to an estimated 72 000 in 2004. Thus, about as many Jews left South Africa in the 1980's and 1990's as arrived in the country in the peak immigration years of 1880-1910. This symmetry is remarkable in many ways. In both cases, family members left their families for other parts of the Jewish world; in only very few cases did entire families migrate together. Just as in the early waves of Lithuanian emigration, families tended to keep close ties with those left behind, and international travel for the purpose of visits between South Africa and the destination country became common. Of course, this was much easier to effect in the modern case, especially on the part of affluent members of the South African Jewish community. For Lithuanian emigrants, such inter-family contact became impossible with the ultimate eradication of those not fortunate enough to have emigrated by 1939.

Immigration and formation of Jewish character: Perspectives

Immigration to South Africa occurred in waves at certain well-defined periods, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and continuing until the Second World War. The largest waves took place in the thirty-year period ending at the outbreak of the First World War. Most of the literature addresses one particular wave of immigration at a time, either in search of corroborative statistics or in support of some broader thesis, such as anti-Semitism (e.g. Shain 1994). Earliest histories begin their analysis of Jewry with identification of the some key or peripheral Jews in the early Cape Colony. This is of marginal interest here, since with the exception of one or two individuals they did not make very much impact. In the present context, immigration to South Africa is of interest to the extent that it influenced the way the Jewish community was constituted for the second part of the twentieth century. One common feature of the limited literature in this field is accounts of Jewry paying as much attention to the action of individuals (who merely happen to be Jewish) as to the issues pertaining to the community at large. This often takes place in accounts that Krut calls "celebratory", (Krut 1987:137) in which random Jews are named and their various achievements enumerated, but also in which divisions among Jewry are swept under the carpet. It can be assumed that Krut is referring primarily to the two seminal works of Jewish historiography by Herrman (1935) and Saron and Hotz (1955).

Most authors write under the implied or stated heading of the "making of the Jewish community". Herrman makes explicit an assumption that until the number of Jews reaches some critical mass, they can be expected to fully assimilate into the surrounding culture, with their "Jewishness" becoming only a footnote in their lives. It is this critical mass of "souls" (as the celebratory accounts would have it) that germinates the formation of Jewish institutions (especially the synagogue) and coordinating bodies. Individuals who somehow managed to be aware of their "Jewishness" before the advent of a community support structure are singled out as true pioneers. The businessman Joseph Mosenthal, who was a member of parliament in the 1860s, is a case in point. It is probable that all early Diaspora communities have their historiographical equivalents of Mosenthal.

The first two waves of Jewish immigration can be said to be those arriving in small numbers prior to 1800, and then from around the 1820s, during which time a number of professing Jews became notable achievers in commercial enterprises. Herrman's work focuses primarily on these two waves. He traces the involvement of Jews with the early explorers (such as Vasco da Gama) through the early Christians, and those associated with the Dutch East India Company. He chronicles in great detail the extent of Jewish religious observance, which in many cases amounted to simple avoidance of being baptised. It was not until 1849 that the first synagogue was consecrated in Cape Town. It took another ten years before systemised membership and the appointment of a minister were organised. Despite the emergence of this first cornerstone of organised Judaism, Herrman shows how the most influential Jews were still those who had abandoned their faith for Christianity. He also pays particular attention to other Jewish notables of the time, such as Benjamin Norden and Simon Marcus.

Herrman pays scant attention to this third wave of immigration, although it is to his credit that subsequent accounts have not attempted to revisit his treatment of the years to 1895. Even Shain (1983), in his book on Cape Jewry glosses over this earlier period and begins his work with events unfolding from about 1902 onwards.

Saron and Hotz delve further into issues surrounding the wave of immigration from 1881-1913. The chapter by Gershater (*From Lithuania to South Africa*) is illuminating, showing perceptions within the communities from which most immigrants to South Africa emanated. His account includes the impact of certain figures in popular consciousness (such as Sammy Marks), a more detailed sketch of the issues facing Jews at this time (pogroms, droughts, disease) as well as the procedure that needed to be followed to get to South Africa. This involved a sojourn in a London way station, often in defiance of local laws. Gershater illustrates the degree to which the emigrant was typically family-conscious, generally leaving with the intention of bringing out left-behind family members at a later date. This turns out to be significant in understanding the evolution of the South African community, which achieved a degree of stabilisation as a result. Emigrants tended to be focused and determined and, separated from immediate family obligations, all the more hard-working. Some intended returning to their Eastern European homeland, but the lure of emancipation from such places was very strong, Whatever their long-term intentions, for Lithuanian arrivals, the sight of Table Mountain after a three week journey was no less potent a symbol than was the Statue of Liberty for many of their countrymen.

The great wave of immigration ended in 1913 with the outbreak of the war in Europe. The literature does not always make clear on first reading that when the wave resumed (a further 30000 immigrants between 1914 and 1945), it was still very much due to the dynamics that had existed previously, namely political and economic hardship in the Lithuanian towns, which by that time all had significant representation in South Africa. The year 1930 is significant in representing the first enacting of a law restricting emigration of Jews from Eastern Europe. The former Chief Rabbi Bernard Casper (Casper 1992) points out that the 4000 Jews who were admitted as refugees from Nazi

Germany prior to 1939 brought with them a wealth of Jewish tradition which bolstered Jewish observance in the non Yiddish-speaking segment of the community.

At the same time, the internal South African political landscape was in flux. Anti-Semitic sentiment among Afrikaners created a force militating against continued Jewish immigration as well as advancement of the existing community. Shain (1994) explores at length the precursors of public South African anti-Semitism. Stereotypes that took root in the first decade of the twentieth century became bolstered by anti-Bolshevik sentiment in the subsequent decade. Increased immigration in the 1920s as a result of worsening conditions in Lithuania came at the height of the phenomena of "poor Whitism". A concomitant increase in anti-Semitic feeling was consolidated in the aftermath of the Rand Rebellion of 1922. Manifestations of this feeling were visible in calls for exclusion and restriction of immigration, leading to the introduction of the Quota Bill by D.F. Malan in January 1930. The 1930s were characterised by identification with German National Socialism by the Afrikaner far right. Despite this, widespread anti-Semitism was never part of South African mainstream culture.

Shain's work on anti-Semitism contributes to an understanding of the character of South African Jewry. Given the existence of deeply rooted anti-Jewish stereotypes from the 1890s, the Jews were made to feel wary of possible manifestations that could threaten their participation in South African social, commercial and even political life. Although these fears were assuaged after 1948 for several reasons, not least that the ruling Nationalists had other racial crises to contend with, the Jewish community has typically steered a middle course, perhaps not wishing to let the anti-Semitic genie out of the bottle, however well-sealed that bottle may appear to have been.

Krut goes further than Herrman, Saron & Hotz or Shain in drawing distinctions between the types of immigrants arriving from Lithuania, especially in contrasting those that arrived before and after the turn of the century. The latter immigrants were more politicised and, importantly, had been exposed to Zionism.

The internal dynamic of the country was to shift markedly with the discovery of gold and diamonds from 1870, during which individual Jews achieved notable commercial success. At the same time, conditions in the Pale of Jewish Settlement in the Russian Empire were becoming intolerable, and many Jews began to search for a way out. While the push of oppression accounts for the motivation to leave the Pale, the lure of South Africa and the apocryphal accounts of those who had made some success there had an impact too. Of the million who did leave Russia (although some accounts suggest much higher estimates), about 40000 found their way to South Africa between 1881 and 1914, the vast majority heading for America. South African immigrants associated themselves with the more progressive English society. Jewish traders became more Dutch in sentiment, especially in outlying districts. Within 20 years the majority of Jews in South Africa was Yiddish speaking, overturning the previous balance in favour of Anglo-South African Jews.

Unrestricted immigration from Russia continued, although anti-Jewish sentiment was not uncommon. Despite rapidly swelling numbers, by 1895 Jews were not united by any factor other than the existence of the synagogue. In January 1897, following the Jameson Raid, access to the Transvaal was restricted to "desirables", although this was repealed in May of that year. Saron's account of this period is quite detailed. By the turn of the century, Jewish coordinating bodies were beginning to emerge, and it is to this process that Shain (1983) devotes much of his work, beginning with the formation of the first Jewish newspaper in 1902 (the *Jewish Chronicle*). Shain examines the Immigration Restriction Act of 1902, which precipitated the need for Jewish organisations to counter defamatory charges and to perform other coordinating roles. Shain continues to trace expressions of anti-Semitism of this time, which in many cases manifested in a call to restrict emigration through one means or another. The 1902 act did just this, prohibiting entry to anyone unable to sign his name in European characters, thus excluding the Yiddish-speaking South African Jews. The chief preoccupation to 1907 thus became recognition of Yiddish, familiarity with which was not sufficient to guarantee entry to South Africa in terms of the 1902 act.

Shain focuses on the formation of the Jewish Board of Deputies for the Cape Colony in 1902, followed by a detailed analysis of the issues facing this organisation over the ensuing decade. Chief among these challenges was the need to attain perceived legitimate representation among all of Cape Jewry, to narrow emerging rifts within sometimes mutually hostile segments of the community and to provide coordinating services for the continual influx of Eastern European Jews. Among the primary roles of the Board of Deputies was to continue to counter anti-Jewish sentiment within a unified framework, and to maintain immigration quotas in a context of volatile legislation. Shain provides a detailed account of the progress of the Board in meeting these objectives.

Subsequent to union in 1910, the Jewish community was on the alert for a series of regulatory drafts ostensibly aimed at curbing the influx of Asiatics, and Jewish leaders' efforts paved the way for continued immigration until the outbreak of World War II.

Krut (1987) draws attention to conflict within the Jewish community, as exemplified by the class divisions catalysed by the arrival of so many new immigrants. She relies heavily on the Work of van Onselen (1982) to bolster her claim that such conflict has often been overlooked. She stresses that it seems unreasonable to suppose that ties of ethnicity remained static in the context of politically volatile conditions. Her discussion of the formation of the Jewish Board of Deputies of the Transvaal further reveals internal conflicts, in this case between the emerging Board and the more established Zionist body that had been headed by Samuel Goldreich since the 1890s. Krut emphasises strongly that the Board of Deputies was conceived as a means not just to achieve representation for the Jewish community, but to craft the very status and class of that community along Anglo-Jewish lines. The intention was to create a perception of Jewry (English speaking and middle class as opposed to the more radical and supposedly unassimilable Zionist group) that would be able to find a place in the emerging class and political dynamic of the post-war South Africa of 1902. Indeed she stresses that it was in this objective that they succeeded rather than in any practical representation of the community's interests.

Reflection on Krut's work leads one to the conclusion that to the extent that South African Jewry is unique, it appears to have owed much to the willingness and flexibility of Lithuanian Jews to accept the Anglo-Jewish model, and to participate in its formation. Krut's paper is interesting because she identifies the decade after the South African war as being definitive in the formation of the character of South African Jewry. By the time the Board of Deputies became a national body in 1912, the Jewish community had developed a class aspect modelled on the white, urban South Africa of the time.

The work of van Onselen (1982) is universally cited in the literature as being the first (however indirectly) to examine South African Jews from the "bottom up", rather than focusing on prominent and successful community members. Notable in his work is an explanation of antagonism towards the Eastern European "Peruvians". In the process he identifies exactly which group of Jews these were, namely dispossessed immigrants who became involved in illicit liquor dealings and prostitution. From this group, a number of Jewish figures carved out dubious careers in these fields.

If, as Krut observes, South African Jewry had found its niche by 1910, this may help to explain the relative paucity of literature about South African Jewry from 1914 onwards. Saron includes one brief chapter which serves as an "update" for the years to 1955, thereby implying that the character of the Jewish community was essentially formed by 1914. Shain's work on anti-Semitism is the only work concentrating heavily on the years to 1939, but with a very specific focus. The idea that the character of the Jewish community has remained reasonably static is borne out by perusal of the journal *Jewish Affairs* from the late 1930s onwards, despite obvious developments in demographics as well as some shift towards increased religious observance. In his chapter in Arkin's survey (1984), and drawing on the above-mentioned texts, Steven Cohen presents a synthesis of South Africa Jewish history, updating them in the aspects of South Africa-Israel relations until 1980 as well as an appraisal of the South African political situation of the time vis-à-vis local Jewry. Shimoni's book of the same time (1980) emphasises the role Zionism played in the sensibilities of South African Jewry, more so than in other Diaspora communities. He also chronicles in detail specific interactions between South African officialdom and the State of Israel subsequent to the latter's formation in 1948.

Development of ritual Jewish character

Most of the accounts referred to in this discussion assume the formation of a Jewish consciousness based on a hybrid of Anglo and Eastern European traditions. While this is true in large measure, the picture has generally been more complex. Hellig has suggested (in Prozesky 1995:165) that the key to understanding the South African Jewish community lies in recognising the existence of a majority of non-observant orthodox Jews ("conservative traditionalists"), a phenomenon unique in Diaspora Jewry. This can be variously attributed to a number of factors, such as deliberate manipulation on the part of the Board of Deputies at the beginning of the century, the pragmatic flexibility of the Lithuanian immigrants and the need to identify with the surrounding South African culture more than in other Diaspora communities. While these may be largely true (though unprovable), the actions of some key individuals also played a role in the

evolution of SA Jewish observance. Key among these influential people was (Chief) Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz who in the 1940s instituted the "Sepharadi" (North African) pronunciation and practices in synagogues, which was at odds with the Eastern European experience. Bernard Casper (1992) suggests that the 4000 German Jews who found refuge from Nazism until 1939 also had a profound effect on the practice of Judaism. At the same time, as Hellig points out elsewhere (1992), South African Jewry is by no means as religiously homogenous as is sometimes supposed and in fact is becoming less so.

Interestingly, the reform movement of South Africa is also unique in the world and differs markedly from its origins in Germany and various Diaspora equivalents (notably the conservative movement of North America). It would appear that the movement lost lost ground towards the end of the century, with those seeking alternatives to non-observant orthodoxy finding more of interest in enhanced, rather than reduced, levels of observance. However, an exploration of such a supposed swing towards orthodoxy remains to be presented, although Shimoni (2003) does tackle the issue to a limited extent.

A collection of articles (Shain & Mendelsohn, 2002), presents aspects of the South African Jewish experience including relationship to Judaism, and the destruction of Yiddish in South Africa.

Emigration from South Africa: figures

Details of South African Jewish emigration and overall population have generally been sketchy and unreliable. In Arkin's collection of articles, Dubb presents an overview of trends pertaining to Jewish demographics of the time, in part based on the (partial results of the) 1980 census. It is interesting to note that the predictions implied by Dubb's statistics have in many cases been actualised.

While it is generally known that South African Jews have emigrated to the English-speaking Diaspora and Israel, little is known about the relative expatriate population density in each of these countries. However, exact figures for Israel have always been kept by the Israel authorities. Dubb estimates that emigration to Israel constituted a third of all emigration for the period 1976 to 1980. This results in a net loss of 18 000 individuals from a population base of 118 200, or 15% in four years. Since this figure was as unsupportable then as it was now, a net surplus of Jews relative to underlying census data and other assumptions has often presented itself. Since later census data tended to place lesser emphasis on religious affiliation (or rather, fewer respondents chose to answer the relevant questions), any study of the demographics of South African Jewry with respect to emigration and other issues has remained an inexact science. This has been exacerbated by fundamental conceptual problems, such as the exact criteria used to determine who is and is not Jewish.

Migratory patterns of Jews within the country are also revealed by census data. By 1980 most of the small town populations of Jews had already disappeared, the culmination of a

trend begun in about 1936. In addition to this information, Dubb shows the areas of Jewish settlement within the major population centres of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban.

Dubb also presents a number of tables derived from census material going back as far as 1880, demonstrating the increase of the SA Jewish population over time, reaching its zenith in the 1970s. More interesting are Dubb's population projections for the period 1980-2000, based on perceived rates of fertility, mortality, immigration and assimilation. As things have turned out, the low end of these projections were accurate, although this has mostly been attributed to emigration alone. However, the effect of early emigrants (1975 onwards) having been drawn from the most fertile segment of the Jewish population may have produced an accelerating decline in numbers over two generations.

Writing in 2000, Dubb points out that estimates of Jews in South Africa are more imprecise than ever, and are now based on socio-demographic surveys, communal lists and application of assumed demographic indices. Distributions of age, gender and socio-economic circumstances are even less reliable. Current estimates put the overall population between 75000 and 85000 individuals.

"Diasporism"

The Jewish community resembles most other New World Jewish communities, notwithstanding a number of unique elements. The pattern of waves of immigration from so compact a region in Lithuania, coupled with the history of South Africa itself imparted these unique characteristics, as discussed above. What made the community unique was the fact that, especially after 1948, they became part of a ruling white elite, a state of affairs unprecedented in modern Jewish history. Much of the "celebratory" literature (e.g. Saron & Hotz 1955) tends to gloss over not only internal divisions within the community, but asserts that the Jewish community successfully charted a course between a need to assert their separateness, to aver constant support for Zionism, to be outspoken about human rights and racial issues and above all, to continue to function within a particular niche of South African society. More recently, Jews have more self-consciously reappraised their participation in these areas, especially their role in opposition to and eventual dismantling of apartheid. This is particularly relevant in the light of increased emigration in the last 25 years. Some of those leaving professed to be doing so on ethical grounds, whereas others have failed to express any such motivation. In this respect, emigrating Jews probably represent a cross section of the Jews throughout the community's history. Shimoni (1988) expends great effort in chronicling SA Jewry's interactions with apartheid issues. His latest book (Shimoni 2003) is an update on the interplay of Zionist Socialism and Radicalism in shaping the Jewish experience in South Africa, including a chapter on the transformation of the Jewish community to greater orthodoxy, which he contends has been occurring since the 1980s. A special issue of *Jewish Affairs* in1997 presented a retrospective from a number of Jewish points of view on the same topic. Shain and Gillman's (1999) compilation sheds further light on the commonalities and major differences in a wide variety of Diaspora communities.

As far as the issue of support for Israel is concerned, South African Jewry has been among the most unwavering. Other Diaspora communities have typically displayed a mixture of solidarity and autonomy, with support not always being as consistent or unequivocal as in the South African experience. Don Yehiya (1991) notes that a feature of Diaspora Judaism has been a difference between the ultra-Orthodox and secular-Liberal, including conflict over support for Israel. In the South African case, anti-Zionism on the right typically manifests itself simply as non-Zionism (Hellig 1995). Apart from the issue of support for Israel, the State's existence, through the institution of the "Law of Return" has caused debate in Diaspora communities over the question of "who is a Jew?" Given lower assimilation rates in South Africa than in other Diaspora communities as well as a more homogenous population, this issue has not engaged the South African Jewish community as much as in other parts of the world. Other areas of conflict evident between Israel and Diaspora communities, notably over the right of Israel to promote immigration to Israel within these communities has similarly not excited much debate in South African Jewish community circles. Don Yehiya's collection of articles (one of many such studies on this subject) is interesting when read in conjunction with Shimoni's book, as it becomes clear that Zionism takes on a number of different forms and is by no means a unitary concept. Arkin's article on Zionism in South Africa summarises the key points but does not reveal he complexity of the issues involved. It might be concluded that Diaspora Judaism in general is a multidimensional topic somewhat outside of the scope of this review.

Brief History of Lithuanian Jewry

The following discussion is generally based on accounts in: Saron & Hotz 1955, Greenbaum 1995, Levite, 2000, and Jacobson 1998.

Beginnings

Despite some disagreement on exact dates, the first Jews are thought to have arrived in Lithuania in the ninth and tenth centuries, subsequent to the decline of the Jewish communities in Babylonia and other parts of the Near East. From these earliest times, Jews belonged to a class of their own, and were welcomed by the emerging rulers as a positive element that would colonise, build and organise the country (Greenbaum 1995). The Jewish community there thus proceeded to develop without the anti-Jewish hostility so much in evidence in the rest of Europe.

Among the privileges afforded Jews from about 1200 onwards was the reservation of certain trades for them by royal decree. Included in these was moneylending, which was forbidden to Christians by the Church. The Jewish population gravitated to this profession and facilitated the emergence of a primitive banking system. The Jews' financial skills were used by the nobility to collect money and to take responsibility for the distribution and sale of commodities, including beer. In addition, the Jews were one of only three literate groups in the middle ages (the other two being the clergy and the upper classes), and their services were required as scribes. The Jews felt comparatively safe in these circumstances, convinced (wrongly, as it turned out) that they would remain

protected by a nobility dependant on their skills. Due to relative lack of persecution compared to Western Europe, Jews began settling in Lithuanian towns and villages from 1430. They were granted charters securing their rights, including exemptions from tax for synagogues, and guaranteed freedom of worship. These charters, and their sporadic cancellation and reinstatement became an important factor for Lithuanian Jewry until the 18th century. Despite the charters, Jews were restricted in terms of trade and residence from the mid 1600s. The first mention of a Jewish personality is Rabbi Moishe ben Jacob, a wealthy businessman and author who died in 1529. During this period, the region came increasingly within the ambit of the Catholic Church, resulting in some expulsions and later reincorporation of Jews. Ultimately the country was to re-coalesce to incorporate the various Jewish communities of the region. Later, while the Jews' rights to trade were entrenched in various ordinances (1644-1645), they were also concurrently restricted in other ways. which effectively led to their "ghettoization". For example, they were forbidden to buy or rent houses outside of their designated areas of residence. At the same time, the Ukrainian Cossacks began to stage revolts against the nobility. Jews were targeted in these revolts, since they occupied the unenviable role of collecting rent from mostly absentee nobility landlords. By 1667, at which point the situation was brought under control, over 400 Jewish localities had been destroyed, costing thousands of Jewish lives. At about the same time, the spiritual core of the Jewish community became greatly destabilised by the Shabbetai Zvi (false Messiah) affair, with internecine conflict rampant between those who had joined the cult and those who hadn't. This episode contributed to the strong "Mitnaged" tradition that later became dominant within Lithuanian Jewry.

(Note: Shabbetai Zvi proclaimed himself the Messiah in 1665, initiating a cult which split the Jewish community. Subsequent to his conversion to Islam in 1666, the apostasy shocked the Jewish world. Many continued to anticipate a second coming, and faith in false messiahs continued through the eighteenth century.

The "Mitnaged" sector of Judaism consisted of those who resisted the enlightenment wrought by the emancipatory principles of the "Haskalah" – see below).

The late 1600s saw a reinstitution of Jewish autonomy within Lithuania, but bestowed out of the authorities' self-interest. At the same time, Vilnius developed into an important and powerful centre of Jewish activity. European anti-Semitism continued to spread around this time, although the Lithuanian Jews remained comparatively insulated from its worst effects.

From 1581 onwards, the Jews of Lithuania formed governing bodies which not only became responsible for administration of Jewish affairs, but also for dealing with the authorities in a centralised way. The central body (or Synod) followed the framework of traditional rabbinical courts, and split its activities along religious and secular lines. The Synod convened twice a year in the five principal Lithuanian cities: Pinsk, Vilnius, Slutzk, Brisk and Grodno. Among the most pressing matters dealt with by the Synod around 1700, were the problems associated with the refugees of the 1648 Cossack pogroms as well as the economic problems presented by ongoing wars. Apart from promulgating ordinances and regulations concerning Lithuanian Jews (which had further

insulating and autonomising effects), the Synod was also able to place a Jew accused of wrongdoing in a state of *cherem* (excommunication), which, given the insularity of the community, amounted to a kind of civil death. The Synod and its councils was typically admired by Jews, who in any event displayed a remarkably homogenous attitude towards spiritual commitment and moral discipline along strictly traditional Jewish lines.

The early part of the 18th century was difficult for the Jewish community, with increased anti-Semitism (including blood libels), taxes, fires and concerted campaigns amongst missionaries to convert Jews to Catholicism. Despite these threats, the community continued to expand and consolidate its activities. Lithuania as a whole drifted under a state of neglect following the succession of Frederick Augustus III to the Commonwealth (the merging of Lithuania and Poland). This state of affairs led to a reign of terror perpetrated by organised bands of Ukranian serfs and peasants, who enlisted the help of local townsfolk. Spurred on by incitement on the part of the Church, Jews were targeted by these bands between 1734 and 1768. This was accompanied by loss of authority and rule of law throughout the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania, characterised by widespread corruption and continual violation of supposed Jewish privileges and autonomy. However, the Jews had re-secured many of their rights by 1784, by which time the Commonwealth ceased to exist. Instead, Poland and Lithuania were partitioned, with some measure of autonomy achieved by Lithuania itself. The head of the new administration did not put Jewish concerns at the top of his agenda, and the Jews lost many of their special privileges afforded them previously; from that time, only Christians were to be viewed as citizens.

In 1792, Czarina Catherine II saw fit to once again meddle in Lithuanian affairs and set out to nullify any constitutional reforms by force of arms. The Jews sided with local forces, calculating that Russian attitudes would result in even worse suffering than had been the case under the fledgling local administration. Hostilities ended with further partitioning, and finally, the end of the Commonwealth.

Emergence as a vibrant Diaspora community

Throughout the existence of the Poland-Lithuania Commonwealth, Lithuanian Jewry remained distinct in terms of dialect, community customs and general character. This *Litvak* character was a product of various migrant contributions over the years, especially from Germany, Palestine, Syria, Spain, Italy and Turkey. By the end of the Commonwealth in 1795, there were three major centres of Lithuanian Jewry: Brisk, Pinsk and Grodno. Until that point, Representative councils had been set up to administer Jewish affairs across the entire commonwealth along four principal dimensions: dealing with gentile authorities (mostly tax and legal defense matters), relations with other Jewish communities (dispute resolution, charity disbursement), internal community affairs (marriages, refugee absorption) and individual matters (synagogue, business and family affairs). General insulation meant that the Jews had fashioned their own economy, to which craftsmen, tradesmen and professionals contributed. Arranged marriages were widespread, with some children being married off as young as eleven, after which they would continue to live with the girl-wife's parents until the boy grew up and could

support a family. The representative Jewish bodies continued to function until 1844, at which point they were dissolved by order of Czar Nicholas I; but by that time, the power base had been considerably undermined by the rank-and-file who wished to assert their individuality to a greater extent, and who perceived the council as having failed in its chief function: security. As Lithuania coalesced to statehood, the Lithuanian Diaspora had already developed its own distinct character. This period was marked by a great flowering of Jewish spiritual leadership, the greatest figurehead of which was Rabbi Elija of Vilna (or the Vilna *Gaon*), whose personality dominated Jewish cultural life until his death in 1797, and whose legacy continued to exert a strong influence on the divisions wrought by the *Haskalah* (Jewish enlightenment). Renowned institutions of Jewish learning were established after the death of the Vilna *Gaon*, and the ensuing one hundred years may be considered the "golden age" of Lithuanian Jewish scholarship. Major centres of Jewish scholarship were set up, some of which still exist today (although transplanted to Israel or the USA).

The Jews under the Czars

From 1795, Lithuania (as well as the Ukraine and Belorussia) came under the Russian occupation. Upon the formation of the *cherta*, or Pale of Settlement in 1835, the Jews found themselves in the largest ghetto in history. Despite being so confined, the Lithuanian Jewish community maintained its identity, and indeed flourished culturally, as noted above. Under Russian rule, the Jews found themselves subject to inconsistent and capricious policies. The Czars wielded despotic and autocratic rule, and all those not affiliated to Russian orthodoxy came to be seen by the Russian rulers as minorities. In general, it was the Jews in particular who bore the brunt of a constant Russian need to find a scapegoat for their misrule. Around the 1830s, oppression towards Jews in the Russian territories aroused protests on the part of Jewish communities in the West; these failed to make any lasting impact. The Lithuanian serfs also fared badly under Russian rule, and their insurrections were routinely crushed. The Jews could not be expected to accomplish more than the serfs through organised revolt, given the additional baggage of Russian anti-Semitism with which they had to contend.

The turning point for Jewry under the Czars came in 1880, when a series of pogroms against the Jews were instigated by increased "scapegoatism" on the part of the Russian authorities. Suffering on a very large scale beset the Jews who in many cases were rendered homeless through expulsion and destruction of their towns. This was also a period of marked increase in the dissemination of anti-Semitic material through the fledgling print media of the time. Ignatiev, Interior Minister to Czar Alexander III, maintained that the pogroms were manifestations of popular indignation against the Jews. The effect of these events was the beginning of mass emigration out of the Pale of Settlement, with the United States and South Africa emerging as the two most favoured destinations, with some Jews also heading for other European centres such as Germany, the Netherlands and England. The so called "May Laws" of 1882, which forbade business on Sundays, purchase of property and freedom of movement within the Pale, further institutionalised discrimination against Jews. By 1891, following a spate of additional pogroms, at least one million Jews had emigrated from within the Pale of

Settlement and surrounding areas. As the century wore out, Russian society became increasingly riven with the seeds of the approaching revolution. Jews were now identified by the Czar (now Nicholas II) as being instigators of revolutionary activity, and pogroms continued apace, accompanied by the emergence of blood libels against the Jews. The worst of these pogroms took place in 1905, leading to the plunder of over 700 Jewish communities. In February 1917, the Russian revolution unleashed a wave of pogroms against the Jews, as unrest and riots swept the Empire.

World War I and beyond; Jewish autonomy; persecution

In Lithuania itself, Russian authorities had continued to vilify Jews during the war years from 1914. Suggesting (without due cause) that the Jewish community was likely to aid and abet advancing German forces, Russian authorities' strategies included the expulsion of Jews to areas that were likely to fall into enemy hands. Under the flimsiest of pretexts, plans to expel all 200 000 of Lithuania's Jews were set in motion in May 1915. Almost half a million Jews throughout the Northwest of the Russian Empire, including Lithuania, were refugees by the end of that year. Germany completed its occupation of Lithuania in September 1915, and a certain amount of hope was engendered in the local Jewish communities. Limited autonomy, especially around education was granted to the Jews during the time of German occupation. However, economic conditions worsened, and the Germans instituted forced labour for all Lithuanians. Even during this time, however, schools continued to function, charitable associations maintained some activities, and political consciousness became accentuated. This was largely due to the two great historical events that were unfolding at that time: the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and the Balfour Declaration of November of that year. By the end of the war, Lithuania had been integrated into the German economic orbit, and its ties to Russia were finally severed. The political status of Lithuania after the war became a topic of considerable international debate. The net result was the declaration of Lithuanian independence in 1918, in return for which Kaiser Wilhelm II extracted "everlasting alliance" with Germany. At the same time, Vilna, the ancient capital of Lithuania, was lost to Polish forces and evacuated of its citizens. By April 1919, Lithuania had achieved a far more stable political position than at any time in its recent past, notwithstanding continuing battles with a Soviet army bent on reoccupation.

The years 1919-1926 represent a period of Jewish autonomy in Lithuania, through which the Jewish community could participate politically within the country, and still maintain their cultural identity. This marked a period during which Jews felt far more optimistic about expressing themselves within the context of Lithuanian independence, despite the anti-Semitism that continued to pervade the surrounding communities. This period also saw a dramatic decrease in the number of Jews seeking to emigrate. In December 1926, a *coup d'etat* was carried out in Lithuania, marking the end of democratic Lithuania and the Jewish autonomy it helped to nurture. From 1927 onwards, discrimination against Jews in Lithuania worsened, leading to outright persecution by 1934, following the lead of the Nazi Party. Once again, the desire for emigration surged, although by this time, with war looming, fewer and fewer Jews found means of escape. Following the Molotov-

Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, Lithuania once again fell within the Soviet sphere of influence, with a full occupation in place by 1940.

Immediately following Operation Barbarossa in 1941, the Germans invaded Soviet-held Lithuania. The infamous *Einsatzgruppen* began the slaughter the 250 000 Jews that now inhabited Lithuania, their numbers swelled by the reincorporation of Vilna and Polish refugees. Even before the Germans arrived, Lithuanian partisans began to decimate the Jewish populations and continued to collaborate with the Germans throughout the war in this regard. Almost all the Jews living in villages were exterminated immediately, and were wiped out before the end of September 1941. In the cities, ghettos were established and became the hubs of continued killings, forced labour and deportation to Polish and German death camps until their final liquidation in 1944. By the end of the war, fewer than 3000 Lithuanian Jews remained alive.

Emigration from 1880

Earliest widespread emigration out of the Pale was influenced by the fact that Jews were not able to hold land, especially following promulgation of Tsar Alexander's "Temporary Laws" in 1882, which had been anticipated for some time. Subsequent to this Jews were confined to towns and villages, and did not participate in agriculture. Pogroms began in 1880, and reoccurred until 1884. By this time, the number of Jews attending any given secondary school or university was limited to 10 per cent within the Pale of Settlement, although the Jewish population constituted up to 80 per cent of the population.

A final spur to Jewish emigration was essentially the failure of the Enlightenment movement to secure equal rights for Jews within the expanded Russian Empire. This movement had asserted that it could be possible for Jews to enjoy equal rights as a minority. Faced with this failure, the Jewish community of Lithuania developed four responses. The first was Zionism, which solved the problem by promising Jews their own state. Zionist societies were formed, with full support from the religious leaders. Another response was using the development of the Bund to argue for integration into local society under the banner of the struggle for worker's liberation (The Bund was the non-Zionist Jewish socialist party founded in 1897, a product of the Jewish labour movement of the time; it later became very influential and spread to Poland, Ukraine and beyond). The third response was to retract into a ghetto mentality, and to focus on their own communities and issues. Since the Jews lived exclusively in towns, their presence in those towns was disproportionate to their population in the country as a whole, and so the world could be perceived as much more "Jewish" than it really was. Finally, a response that began to gain popularity was that of leaving Lithuania altogether and reaching for the West. During the period 1880-1910, 40 000 Lithuanian Jews left for South Africa, and about two-thirds that number for the United States.

The Litvak Character

The unique character of South African Jewry (other than its melding with Anglo-Jewish elements) is attributable to the fact that Lithuanian Jews had developed a distinct set of

characteristics, even compared to other Eastern European Jews. Structurally, at least, Lithuanian Jews took with them aspects of religious governance upon emigrating to Diaspora communities. For example, they always clearly differentiated between religious and lay leadership, and recognised the value in having these roles held by different groups or bodies. Religious scholarship was always central to the community, and many Talmudic institutes of learning or *yeshivas* were founded. The study of religious tracts was central to the expression of one's Jewish identity.

Lithuanian Jews were distinct from their Russian counterparts in that they resisted the impact of the *Haskalah* or Enlightenment Movement, which sought to establish secularism and productivity among Jewish Communities. This movement sought to steer a middle ground between assimilation and preservation of Jewish identity. Instead of adopting this approach, the religious Lithuanian mainstream responded by augmenting traditional learning with a study of moral and ethical instruction. This specifically Lithuanian response sought to better equip young Jewish scholars in dealing with the outside world and succeeded in utterly insulating the communities from the influences of the Haskalah. Other communities responded differently and became fertile ground for the growth of Hassidism, which emphasised mysticism and the formation of courts around charismatic personalities. Lithuanian Jewry's response to the Haskalah also helps explain the phenomenon of orthodox non-observance in South Africa – South African Jews have never been comfortable in allowing erosion of or change to their fundamental religious philosophy, and would rather adapt or augment it than allow it to be replaced by a new system.

The responses of Lithuanian Jewry to both persecution and developing Jewish influences synthesised into a collection of traits that ultimately manifested within the South African community. Foremost of these resulted in the continuation of the tradition of institutionalised learning within the Jewish day-school program; a non-Hasidic approach to Judaism (this has now been diluted with a strong infusion into the community of Hasidic rabbis and congregations from America), and finally, an extremely strong (though not invariable – see *Bund*, above) emphasis on Zionism. In addition, the strong public cohesiveness that was characteristic of life in small Lithuanian villages became very apparent in the South African community. Used to a small autonomous society ruled by Jewish law, the Lithuanian Jews were able to recreate aspects of such a life on the other side of the planet. So potent and so enduring was the Litvak character that it seems to have been capable of partially smothering the competing approach of Anglo Jewry which it encountered on arrival in South Africa.

The Lithuanians in South Africa

The South African community, despite the melding of Anglo and Eastern European influences, owes its character to the relative homogeneity resulting from the transplanting of entire communities from Lithuania. This character is therefore more understandable by gaining a better insight into the nature of the Lithuanian community from which it sprang.

Firstly, the Lithuanian Jews were very closely knit, and were in fact not overly inclined to emigrate or seek out better climes for themselves. The first Lithuanians to arrive in South Africa from the 1880s had little intention of remaining, and often returned home with whatever wealth they had accumulated in the short time they had strayed from their family units. Over time, the lure of South Africa prevailed over their sense of family obligation and many began to arrive in South Africa with a view to remaining permanently. It was the men, married or otherwise, who would always constitute an advance party. While many sent for their families a few years after their own arrival, some absconded and lost all trace with their immediate families. Single men would often return to Lithuania with the intention of finding a wife, and would then return. It is important in this context to realise that the ratio of men to women among Lithuanian immigrants between 1880 and 1910 was roughly 2 to1 (Saron & Hotz: 73). In addition, it was not uncommon for families to be reunited in South Africa after an absence of up to twenty five or thirty years. The fragile state of an entire community in transition has seldom been contemplated in film or print, and is often depicted as an uprooting and transplanting operation, rather than a drawn-out and tenuous undertaking.

In general, Lithuanian Jews were attracted to South Africa because it offered scope for them to ply their trades. Even so, this did not apply to all, since there did also exist entrenched echelons of wage earners, as well as more traditional Jewish scholars. Overall, if one were to plot a sequence of immigration to South Africa on a continuum of class, it was from this lower middle class that the first immigrants were drawn. Later, as word spread, the higher classes began to take notice and also began to emigrate. Nonetheless, the number of arriving tradesmen and later, farmers, was always disproportionate to their representation in the larger Lithuanian community, with many embarking on trades they had not pursued in their home country.

The process of leave-taking and preparation for emigration is described in Saron & Hotz (p.79). Soon-to-be emigrants would seek out the graves of distinguished relatives, accompanied by a close family member, and say a special prayer. This poignant moment would be followed by a visit to the local rabbi for a blessing, and another prayer on the Sabbath preceding their departure. On the day of departure, the entire community would assemble to witness the leave-taking of the emigrant on horse and cart, with many accompanying the cart to the railway station, amid much weeping. Almost all the emigrants made their way by ship to Cape Town via London. As the emigration movement gained momentum, this passage was aided by the setting up of organisations which facilitated the administration of shipping, way-stations and absorption at various points along the way. Interestingly, the last leg of the journey, usually aboard a Union-Castle mailship, was the time when immigrants were least likely to obtain kosher food, this then marking their introduction to the slippery slope of non-observance.

The greatest number of immigrants arrived in the thirty-four year period from 1881-1914. Prior to this time, there may have been up to 4,000 Jews in the country. By 1891 the numbers had swelled to about 10,000 and 24,000 by 1899. By 1914, the number may well have been as high as 50,000. From the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the issue of immigration in general became widely debated. The efforts of the

Board of Deputies, starting in 1902 were instrumental in ensuring a steady stream of Lithuanian (and British) Jews to South Africa until the outbreak of the First World War.

Section 2 - Film Treatment – Practical and Theoretical Perspectives

Introduction

The proposed film "To a Golden Land" may be said to fall within the genre of "historical documentary". The language of documentary film has evolved considerably in recent years, yet the historical sub-genre (to the extent that this can be defined) has lagged both technically and dramatically, still clinging to outdated techniques. This situation is perpetuated by the prevalence and ubiquity of (mostly pay-to-view) television, where the starting point for films is simply to inform and entertain most often through the use of exciting and involving visual aids. That they have admirably succeeded in doing so has had a detrimental effect on the development of a greater appreciation for documentary as a medium of expression i.e. art. As a result, modern audiences do not expect to be engaged at a level at which they need to develop a sensitivity for the nuances of subjectivity, which includes the search for *truth*. The power hierarchy that promotes the dissemination of information through conventional documentary media prefers to suppress exposure to more subjective material through the television companies under their control. Documentary films that do not conform to the expectations of general TV audiences typically find their way onto the "art" circuit and consequently enjoy little exposure. Since the same situation prevails in most genres of cinema, for example historical fiction, this is hardly reason to drum up support for a conspiracy theory that suggests deliberate suppression of information. Yet many seasoned film-goers remain ignorant of the extent to which recent documentaries (or to be more precise, non-fiction) films have advanced beyond traditional expectations. The situation is illustrated by the fact that despite the release of many innovative and boundary-extending documentary films each year, the winners of the "best documentary feature" at the annual Academy Awards tend to fall within the more traditional narrative or "investigative" paradigm.

"To a Golden Land" aims to inform but still approach the form with a "modern" sensibility. Its obvious distance from traditional forms could be seen as at best un-authoritative and possibly as subversive by those who associate traditional documentary with any given agenda of didacticism and pedagogy.

One question looms over the task of defining a particular film: What methodologies for research, editing, presentation and interviewing lie at the boundaries of what constitutes historical documentary? No authoritative taxonomy has been put forward which facilitates such an understanding. Almost all non-fiction films can be said to be historical, since they deal with true events that occurred in the past (with the possible exception of the "poetic" mode – see below). Indeed, none of the literature reviewed makes any distinction between historical and a-historical treatments of any subject matter. Rather, they tend to focus on specific techniques, such as narrative approach, structure and style. For the purposes of this discussion, it is convenient to continue to use the term "historical documentary" to refer to existing films embodying the tried-and-tested techniques of

voice-over, archive footage and interviews. The proposed film will then constitute an extension or supplanting of these techniques, none of which need require a re-categorisation of the film into another sub-genre. As Plantinga (1997) succinctly puts it:

> "… [nonfiction film] is a medium of truths and conceits, recordings and manipulation, biases and balance, art and mechanical technique, rhetoric and straightforward information. Nonfiction films are complex representations with an infinite diversity of possible uses." (p.222)

Nonetheless, if it transpires that one is stuck with traditional techniques (possibly because audiences will not tolerate any more or less) then perhaps all that remains is to develop them as far as possible. The film as proposed can thus be seen as vaguely experimental and exploratory, concerned with seeking out alternatives where possible. At the same time, none of the departures from the norm could possibly be construed as being overly radical, since there is a well established pattern of use of "modern" techniques in non-historical documentaries.

As a starting point then, it is worth stating that I am more than tangentially concerned with the historical content of the film; that is, I do not wish to obscure the element of research and scholarship from the final product. If the historical component is to be made explicit, audiences should come away from viewing the film having absorbed a certain amount of factual material. The extent of the historical research is represented in this paper, by providing some background into South African Jewish development since immigration began in earnest in about 1880. Since the film and accompanying study wish to assert that the SA Jewish community was mostly influenced by Lithuanian progenitors, a survey of that community has also been presented above.

This paper also offers an informal critique of existing films that have covered similar subject matter. The most fundamental techniques for documentary film (narration, genre, use of archive and scope) are addressed inasmuch as they relate to the envisioned approach for the film. Finally, some points of style which help to give an idea of the general "feel" of the film are considered.

A critique of existing films

I viewed a number of historical documentaries, some of them pertaining to the Jewish community of South Africa, and others to communities of other countries. One notable film is the series *Legacy* which is an eight-part made-for-TV documentary series made in the mid 1990s about various aspects of the Jewish Community of South Africa. This film exemplifies the model of what a historical documentary "should" look and sound like. Clips from this film will be submitted with this paper (*Clips: Legacy 1-6 – see technical note below*). The comments below relate to this series in particular and to the model from which it is derived in general.

Firstly, conventional historical documentaries tend to be rather dull, especially for those without a particular interest in the subject matter. Much of the tedium stems from purely

stylistic issues, with tried and tested techniques of archive, newsreel and voice-over being used almost exclusively. This film-as-didactic-vehicle tends to resemble a school project, with narrative, pictures (sometimes moving) and interviews interspersed with newly-shot footage of dubious relevance (such as shots of scenery, people praying, *lots* of waves breaking etc.), used as filler for the narrative.

The overuse of this antiquated style stems from a set of expectations about what documentaries are and should be. Key among these expectations is that it is ultimately the result of a dedicated research effort (which it often is). This research is presented as a collation of facts that are assumed to extend the knowledge of the audience. This leads to a certain paternalism and condescension through an expository mode which makes the following assumption: *because I have done the research (and because I have the necessary contacts and power), you have entrusted me to inform on this particular subject; when this is finished you will be closer to knowing what I know, but you will never attain my level of knowledge.* Seen this way, conventional documentaries may be seen as reinforcing the power vested in researchers, academics, filmmakers and of course their sponsors.

Another problem encountered within the framework of historical documentary, is the heavy-handedness with which the notion of *History* is adopted by the filmmaker. Central to the assumption of what history is and should represent is the notion of *story*. Indeed, many historical documentaries are often subtitled "*the story of..*" some country, people, movement or organization. This is problematic from an audience perspective because most of us expect stories to be reasonably exciting, entertaining, thought-provoking or all of the above. Instead, audiences encounter a presentation of a sequence of events, seemingly arbitrarily connected, much like real life. In these "stories", people make decisions based on the need to make a living, escape discomfort, care for their relatives or gain prominence in their communities. That this prosaic way of looking at the world mirrors our own daily actions and thoughts does not diminish the fact that we have been the victim of a misrepresentation – the "story" we subconsciously crave with promises of drama, revelations and plot twists fails to materialise. Instead we are offered a grainy, often plodding procession of people (in period costume) going about their daily business. Any *dramatic* content in such films is almost always entirely contrived, and is provided by music, panning across photographs or by professional nuances of the voice-artist. In short, the filmmakers try to make the films more interesting by using tricks of presentation, rather than revealing any inherent drama in the subject matter.

Defenders of these documentaries may well protest that the films are boring because the subject matter is limited: the story of the Jewish people in a particular culture is not fodder for action adventure, nor is it likely to culminate in any kind of revelatory denouement. One may then ask the question: of what value is a film version of what could just as well be expressed in the medium of print (including photographs), or electronic media such as the Internet? The intention ought to be to use the medium of film to deliver a result that is only possible in that medium. It would be wrong to assert that historical subject matter (such as the story of the Jewish community) lacks tension and interest, because it is replete with *human drama*. And not merely drama, but a

multiplicity of dramas, the protagonists of which are the individuals that constitute the community. Hence the object of a film about a community is to conspire with the audience in the extrapolation of individuals' stories to achieve a broader synthesis which embraces this larger human drama.

Another problem inherent in existing films is the seeming subordination of individual stories to the story of the community at large. But communal issues are rarely interesting, typically finding expression in the most banal and tedious forms: speeches, consecrations and staged, formal interviews. Typically, the only individuals evident in films made to date are those who managed to achieve success through their (mostly financial, artistic and philanthropic) endeavours . These films assume that such achievements are highly aspirational for the larger community, and that others would like to emulate these heroes. This approach falls into the "contributionist" category of presenting the history of the Jewish community.

When there are no obvious heroes or role models, the tendency is to single out anyone identifiable as Jewish (especially in earlier periods , say, prior to 1850) in an attempt to locate the first Jewish presence in the country. While interesting to some, this alternative form of contributionism is of dubious relevance to stories about the community, and can never be supported by any meaningful visuals. "To a Golden Land" aims to avoid including any material that does not further the argument of the film itself, namely the origins and nature of the community as it is currently constituted. Put another way, history need not begin at the very earliest discernible point; a story must begin where it makes sense to begin (in this case the surge of Eastern European emigration to South Africa, and its origins).

Driving this point a little further, and referring once again to *Legacy*, conventional documentary films are entrenched in a watered-down didacticism (for they are constructed to inform an audience assumed to know absolutely nothing), and opportunities to acknowledge the community as comprised of *individuals* are lost. No attempt is made to use the developing tropes of documentary film to approach revelation through art, or even to keep the viewer engaged through some deviation from the norms of presentation (e.g. lively editing, surprising music, female narrator). The techniques of documentary as "informative collage", and the assumption of a moral universe stripped of all uncertainty combine to portray what could be a diverse, enigmatic community as remarkably homogenous, represented by as conservative a group of functionaries as could ever be imagined.

Despite these criticisms, historical documentaries pertaining to developing communities suffer from problems that confront many films within the historical arm of the documentary genre: lack of useful visual material. Typically, the materials available to the filmmaker are old photographs, other mementos and the taped reminiscences of those able to shed some light on a bygone age. When combined with music and conventional editing, it is a natural progression to the point that the resultant film will suffer from the shortcomings lamented above. Perhaps the historical documentary as a film genre is thus condemned to plod along within an extremely rigid framework of expressive parameters.

The better films will thus be marked by the deftness with which they are able to combine the colours afforded by a limited palette.

As noted, the above general comments refer to *Legacy* and similar such films. Other films utilising more innovative approaches or that are noteworthy for some other reason are discussed below:

History of the SA Board of Deputies is a recent video commemorating the centenary of this organisation. It follows the same documentary format as *Legacy*, and as such suffers from many of the problems discussed above. Its problems are compounded by the inclusion of interviews of many people associated with the Board. However, each interviewee does not talk about his or her own role, but rather "takes up the story" and continues the narrative, thus supplementing the existing "omniscient" narrative. This doubling, or multiplying, of the narrative thread tends to dissipate all dramatic content from the film and leads to an undermining of the central argument. This renders the film as a whole outside of the realm of documentary proper. Instead, it functions as a commemorative souvenir which does not step outside the boundaries of self-congratulation (presumably consistent with its intention).

Uncle Chatzkel is an example of a film which explores similar subject matter in a relatively innovative way. The director (an expatriate South African living in Australia) seeks out a forgotten relative in Lithuania (Uncle Chatzkel), and in so doing recounts the life and times of this man, who also happens to be a linguist of some renown. This process takes in a period that includes Pre-war Lithuania, the Holocaust, Soviet occupation and finally, Lithuanian independence. This film differs from traditional films in a number of ways. Firstly, the narration is performed by the director himself, which lends a reflexivity to the film – it is as much about his own (real-time) journey as his uncle's (retrospective) story. Secondly, the narration is delivered in the present tense *("in the 1940s Chatzkel* finds *himself in a Russian university"*). Thirdly, the film is unashamedly sentimental, and allows this sentiment to function as an antidote for the tragedy depicted in its historical recounting. Finally, the use of archive material is used only in reference to the story of one particular individual, without attempting a greater historical sweep. In general, this is an interesting synthesis of remembered history and the reconciliation that takes place during the course of the film.

Die Boerejode is a made-for-television documentary that aims to explore the relationship between Afrikaners and Jews. The relationship is portrayed as amicable and characterised by mutual admiration and tolerance. Individuals are interviewed who recount anecdotes based on past and present interactions with Jews. The film does little to survey the feelings of antipathy towards Jews that existed in the pre-war era, and the ambivalence that prevailed for many years thereafter. Despite the lack of willingness to delve beneath the surface, the film is notable for its lack of narrative voice, making its point solely through the mode of interviews.

Return to a South African Shtetl recounts the early years of Jewish immigration, focusing on the urban area of Doornfontein, to which many immigrant Jews made their way. It is

not a professional production, and consists largely of an interview with the film's host, Aaron Mendelow, who reminisces and otherwise expostulates on Doornfontein's Jewish heyday. His narrative is interspersed with footage consisting of scenes depicting the Johannesburg of the era. This film is notable for its ability to engage the viewer, illustrating the point that a film need not be overly slick and professional to make an impact. In this case, the focus on a particular personality and the sliver of history around which he builds his story is enough to render the subject matter interesting.

A filmmaker embarking on a new project is thus faced with a simple choice: either accept the dominant genre and make the best of it, or openly eschew its conventions (in a way that could be construed as contrived or even mischievous). In this case, he will be forced to make assets of shortcomings, and to wear the lack of visual material on his sleeve. There is a middle ground to be charted, though, which is to take a story and try to be as truthful as possible in depicting it. Through such means, the flamboyance of modern documentaries as seen on television will be lacking, the overwhelming flood of information delivered in films like *Legacy* will not be forthcoming; but the heart of the story will hopefully be conveyed in a moving and honest way, without necessarily forsaking the pursuit of real history.

Since the above comments have been quite general, various technical aspects are presented in turn, along with a discussion of how each fits into a broader taxonomy of cinematic expression.

Discussion of various techniques

Various theorists have postulated frameworks for categorising documentaries. Synthesising Nichols (1998) and Plantinga (1997), a nonfiction film can be said to be *formal*, *open* or *poetic* from the points of view of voice, structure and style. This yields nine possible permutations. In theory, individual films can straddle one or more boundaries, yielding straightforward categorisation problematic. But it is in any case futile to expend too much effort on sterile discussions of formal strategies, since this involves the creation of a false ideological significance. Additionally, theorising about films implies that one must invent an average, phantom spectator who does not actually exist. A theme of this proposal is that audiences should be credited as groups of individuals in their own right, since they are not the homogenous, passive sponges they have sometimes been presumed to be.

The poetic mode is the most experimental within each dimension, and foregoes the function of the formal and open voices in favour of aesthetic representations (Plantinga 1997:175). The formal mode includes all common devices, such as voice-over narration, talking heads, animated maps, superimpositions, subtitles and nondiegetic music (i.e. whose source is neither visible on the screen nor has been implied to be present in the action).

While the formal mode disseminates ostensible knowledge, the open mode is more hesitant. It is more concerned with showing, provoking and exploring. *Uncle Chatzkel*, described above, is an example of open voice (some would also say it has a *performative* element – a style associated with Nick Broomfield), in which images and sounds are not presented only as symbolic pieces in a chain of signification, but on their own terms as objects of revelatory potential.

The following discussion addresses some related issues in more detail.

1. Narration

Part of the art of documentary film lies in allowing the material, as it is uncovered, to lead the direction of the film. The decision of what type of narration to be used precedes and dictates how this process unfolds, and it is thus a crucial starting point for any documentary project. The vast majority of historical documentary films make use of the omniscient narrator, who remains off screen for the duration of the film. So ubiquitous is this mode of narration that it is itself synonymous with the documentary genre in the minds of many people. Indeed, the disembodied narrator (often identifiable as a well-known actor or voice artist) occupies a central position in the telling of the story to such an extent that the visual material becomes subordinated to the power of the script. The measure of the "well-put-togetherness" of a film then becomes a function of the coherence of the narration together with the degree of seamlessness with which visuals have been chosen to match that narrative.

Documentary narration has developed a bad reputation, but still remains the most commonly used device in all non-fiction filmmaking. Detractors contend that the imposition of narration destroys the "purity" of the image, which in a visual medium should be allowed to reveal itself unfettered. Such a belief in the purity of image is somewhat romantic, informed by an attitude that values the descriptive power of photographs above any form of speech. As Drew (1996:271-263) has commented, "words supplied from outside cannot make a film soar, so narration is what you do when you fail". Less extreme views still take issue with the immobilising and distancing effect narration can have on the viewer. Historical documentaries in particular, through their inherent didacticism, have tended not to venture into more experimental territory, which is now becoming more mainstream in other documentary sub-genres. For the purposes of this discussion, and following Nichols (1991), typical narration-led films possess the following features: they address the spectator directly, they set out an argument (implying forethought), they possess a dominant and constant perspective on events; and they offer a solution and closure to the stories being told.

Historical films using omniscient narration as described above assume a mantle of neutrality in which the facts are allowed to "speak for themselves". Indeed, the simultaneous presentation of such facts with visuals that appear to verify them is such a powerful technique that it is not surprising to find it favoured by propagandists (consciously exploiting the "reality effect" of assumed authority). The effect is intensified by the absence of the actual author of the piece, whose contribution generally remains

opaque throughout, and whose presence would remind an audience that opinions, not only facts, may be at play. The cooption of this technique to further propagandist agenda has such a long history that an astute viewer, on first encountering a film using this form of narration, may well ask what the film's propagandist agenda might be. Of course, some films may very well have no agenda other than the desire to inform. Films that share a formal device need not share an attitude and ideological aim. Further, a film's discourse need not imitate the form of its projected world. For example, omniscient narration could be used to underscore a mysterious or ambiguous incident. However unfair the outright dismissal of formal narration might be, a filmmaker must be aware of its impact.

Mike Nichols (who is representative of traditional documentary film values) sees documentary as a proposal to its audience: an "invocation of, and promise to gratify, a desire to know" (Nichols 1981:205). In cases where this proposal has been honestly fulfilled, any scepticism around the use of the voice-over narrative as a screen for some propagandist (or at least, controversial) intention would be inappropriate. Nonetheless, since any film is the culmination of some act of authorship, there is little point in overtly hiding the fact behind a narrative "mastervoice" when at worst this could be misconstrued as wilful propaganda and at best as distancing (irrespective of the interest inhering in the material). In Kozloff's words (1988:21), narration is the resort of the "unimaginative and incompetent". At the same time, as expanded on below, the mere presence of a narrative voice does not in and of itself consign the film to any particular genre, either along an imagined continuum of omniscience, or any other metaphorical axis.

The intention for this film is not to entirely avoid conventional narrative devices, but to have the characters tell the story themselves. In this way, the inherent textual content is still expressed, but without the attendant problems of omniscience and distancing. The risk that is run is having characters speak somewhat less spontaneously than would otherwise be the case. However, the biggest obstacle presented by narration is solved, since the voices of the subjects themselves are not suppressed, and a co-existence of authorial voice and factual representation can be allowed to emerge (Youdleman 1982:454). At the same time, the use of narration to extend to areas not covered by the protagonists themselves need not be explicitly avoided.

If one were to wish to subvert the conventions surrounding the use of narration, then there are more options available than simple avoidance. Given that narrative is used, it is also possible to transgress the rules through an ironic detachment between image and sound (deliberately subverting the match), or supplanting the archetypal male narrator with a female (or even child's) voice. In any case, narration, explicit or otherwise, is always present. Documentary is a negotiation between the film and its subject, of which narration is a constituent part. Voice-over need not obliterate the "purity" of the factual image, but may offer an alternative or even contradictory view of it (Bruzzi 2000:65). What one wishes to avoid is the implied singularity of voice and image as implied by "voice of God" narration.

In order that "To a Golden Land" retains its historical thrust, the device of "illustrated letters" has been adopted. In this technique, letters are read by an actor taking on the part of a letter writer, who otherwise remains anonymous. The voice inhering in the letter takes the place of the "mastervoice". This makes clear the fact that there are many stories at play in the film and not just the arbitrary synthesis of the author's.

2. Genre

Having decided on a narrative mode (open, but with some formal elements), the issue of genre and categorisation emerges. One interesting and usable approach is that suggested by the distinction between the fact-based film (traditional documentary) and the *journey film*. The latter may be said to be an offshoot of direct cinema, which takes for granted the *power of observation* as the ultimate communicating device. Direct cinema implies a certain reflexivity, because it offers a critique within the films themselves of what is being observed (Plantinga 1997:30). Journey films are structured around encounters and meetings and hence embody far less of the staged interviews and pre-planned exposition of the more traditional documentary. Journey films (such as *Uncle Chatzkel*) have become more widespread within the framework of modern documentary, to the extent that films using this technique are by no means considered to be experimental in nature, even if they once were. The journey film may be seen as distinct from the travel film, with the latter being a journey through actual space and time – a chronicle of events linked by location, personality and theme. The journey film is an appropriate departure point for "To a Golden Land", since it wishes to traverse an arc between received historical fact and "observed discovery" of the protagonists. This suggests something of a hybrid approach to the journey film, with some facts taken as read, but not allowing all else within the film to become subservient to those facts. This approach acknowledges that any film about a community must either glibly refer to a large group of people, or it must admit that a community is made up of individuals, and then try to explore the reality of those particular individuals within a framework of discovery.

One precondition for journey films is that someone is present to undertake the journey. This may either take the form of a visibly intrusive presence, or the presence may be invisible. In the latter case, the film may still contain the clearly imposed presence of the author. *Shoah*, the 9-hour holocaust film by Claude Lanzmann, may be said to fall into the former category, while Patrick Keiler's *London*, which charts a shadowy journey through that city, is an example of the latter. A detailed comparison of the journey film as exemplified and contrasted by these two examples can be found in Bruzzi (2000:99-124). Most interesting about this comparison here is the observation that both challenge the (typical Hollywood) notions of certainty, predictability and transparency. So it should be with a film about South African Jews, which deliberately sets out to question preconceived expectations of certainty and narrative closure associated with documentary and more mainstream Hollywood films.

Given the adoption of the "journey" approach, it may be expected that the film should not have a hard and fast logic imposed on it; nor should the narrative thread be expected to culminate in a sense of closure or a destination having been reached. Instead, it could be

called a “focused chain” – which in the words of Kozloff (1988:102) renders the film “comprehensible without abiding by a monolithic narrative determinism”. This does, however, present problems for the historical narrative contained within the film, especially if one were to follow Hayden White’s dictum that for history to be structured, it must be cogent and complete. This aside, there are many more advantages than not in using this (hybrid, adapted, “journey”) form, in part because it allows the filmmaker, for once, the indulgence of assuming a certain amount of knowledge on the part of the audience, thus circumventing the paternalistic, expository narrative mode. Also, the filmmaker allows himself to arrive at an endpoint without purposefully dissipating any tension that may have been built up during the course of the film. This is a tension that has become a characteristic of modern documentary journeys, namely that a “belief in certainty and the desire to impose coherence on a potentially chaotic series of events are themselves being brought into question” (Renov 1993:71). The deliberate choice of eschewing traditional omniscient narration is an acknowledgement that any non-fiction film is the result of a negotiation between the filmmaker and his subject matter, and that this needs to be made visible.

3. Use of Archive Material (including newsreel)

Background

Archive material for histories that predate the early twentieth century are often rare (and inaccessible). This is certainly the case for the story of the Jewish community in South Africa, especially as regards moving footage. The photographs and other artefacts that are to be found in archives are all remarkably similar, and typically take the form of portraits, showing either individuals or groups photographed for the purposes of commemorating some special occasion. In short, the images are not very interesting in and of themselves, and a large amount of sifting through archives is required to turn up something usable for the medium of film. But images are not intrinsically interesting unless seen as illustrative of the story with which they become coupled. In any event, use of such images present a series of related problems. For example, since there are few images to choose from, and because filmmakers typically aim for a predetermined film length, most of the images that *are* found end up being used in the film (as opposed to a typically small percentage of newly shot footage) . This means that the images tend to drive the narrative, rather than being subservient to, or merely illustrative of that narrative. But then it has already been stated above that mutually reinforcing narrative and photographs fall into the “factual/didactic” narrative genre that I specifically wish to avoid. But if the reciprocity of narrative and “associated” archival images contains pitfalls even within the framework of techniques for which they are ideally and historically suited, then what place for these images within the “journey” expository mode discussed above?

In the use of old photographs there is a prevailing sense that the photos are essentially clues pointing to an ideal visual illustration of an overriding story, and that the resulting narrative will be successful to the extent that the individual visual pieces are meticulously assembled to corroborate an external reality. However, old photographs typically tell very personal stories, and it is in the interests of authenticity to avoid illustrating broad

assertions about communities with glimpses of the particular and intimate. For example, there exists a well-known photograph of a (presumably) Jewish man, dated 1920, sawing a plank of wood (See attached photos under section “Early Immigrants”). This photograph may be (and has been) used to illustrate the assertion that Eastern European Jews adopted practical means of making a living, which in many cases were in contrast to more professional vocations they may have held in Lithuania, or to lives of devout spirituality. Such a glib assertion undermines the intimacy of the photograph, of a moment that may or may not have been representative or characteristic of that man’s daily existence. The habit of extrapolating from the deeply personal to the broadly axiomatic has the effect of depersonalising the film as a whole, which is the opposite of my intention. Another technique to be avoided is the panning of the camera across larger photographs, which seems an attempt to impart the illusion of movement or drama to the still shot, but can succeed merely in acquiescing in a cliché (unless there really is some drama present, “manufacturing” it in this way does not add any value).

In the interests of furthering the aim of the ‘journey” documentary, old photographs are more profitably employed in imparting a sense of discovery, much as the filmmaker might experience when searching for such images. What might a face be suggesting? What clues exist in the photograph that may lead to certain inferences? Most valuably, how might a protagonist (perhaps better called *subject* or *participant*) in the film react to the photograph in question? If the participants in the film fail to respond to a photograph, it is perhaps disingenuous to suggest that someone watching the film somehow should do so, unless there is some underlying inference to be drawn from this. With this is mind, it is proposed that archive material be used more obliquely than usual, so that an audience is not manipulated into arriving at inappropriate conclusions.

In their zeal to illustrate their story, some filmmakers assiduously gather archive material, and use as much of it as possible within their chosen narrative framework. In this way, they fulfil the “completeness” requirement of Hayden White for the finished product to qualify as history. It is interesting to reflect on the role that *lack* of visuals may play in building tension within a personal story. The search for a lost youth, for example, is rendered more, not less, poignant within the context of *total* loss, including of whatever images remain. Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* did not contain any visuals of murder, persecution and other horrors, focusing instead exclusively on personal remembrances. This represents a focus on *lack* rather than *gratification*, since the images themselves serve as a conventional source of catharsis.

Use of Photographs

Having come this far, however, one must still deal with expectations of potential audiences who come to view a film that falls into the sub-genre of “historical documentary”. Documentary film in general is treated as a representational mode of filmmaking, and incorporates an assumed desire to be objective (notwithstanding its appropriation for entirely opposite ends). In this respect, “found” footage or photographs cannot be avoided, and they will exert a certain hold on the viewer, as a function of his

preconceptions. It is worth considering what the audience's likely internalisation of this material will be.

The question posed by theorists such as Bruzzi (2000), Comolli (1976) and Williams (1993) is what transformation takes place between the image and its use and interpretation. To assert that film is a proxy for the human eye is to deny that this transformation takes place. The assumption that the image is impartial and objective is to bypass the subtleties associated with the use of such images in an expository context such as the (historical) documentary. As mentioned, films such as *Shoah* entirely forego the use of archive footage. However, this then supposes that the search for a "final truth" becomes dislodged by a series of subjective truths (Bruzzi 2000:39). In short, archive or newsreel footage cannot speak for itself, but instead speaks with a voice entirely dependant on the context in which it is used. On one extreme (in the case of *Shoah*), it is excluded, and on the other, it is deliberately manipulated for the ends of propaganda. Between these extremes, a piece of archive material becomes mutable rather than a fixed point of reference.

As far as this film is concerned, it is obvious that the use of archive material should steer far from these extreme positions. Also to be avoided is the postmodern use of photographs, in which the distinction between authenticity and subjectivity is deliberately blurred. Rather, the implication is that each photograph does indeed embody a certain truth, and that where that truth is apparent, it is wholeheartedly shared with the viewer. In cases where the truth is hidden or merely suggestive, this needs to be acknowledged. In the latter case, however, the intention is to avoid having viewers impose their own truth on the material (following the post-modern tradition), but rather to evoke a sense of a story that is barely suggested, but can never be told. If a complete truth is not discernible in a photograph by examining it in isolation, then what use is that photo? The point is that it remains a valuable historical entity, which at the very least leads the viewer to create (fantasize, invent) a personal reconstruction of an underlying story.

Also interesting is the degree of neutrality inherent in a given photograph – a photo is typically taken with a view to achieving some particular aim (commemoration, fun, communication) and misrepresentation of this intention can significantly flaw the authorial incisiveness of a film. Much has been made in film theory about a mode of archive that may approach total neutrality. Iconic of this category is the "Zapruder film" (named for the man who inadvertently filmed Kennedy's assassination): shorthand for a film of low technical quality, the content of which is nevertheless of the utmost significance. A photograph or piece of film can thus be elevated to a mode of representation entirely outside the scope of original intention. The use of home film or family photographs is particularly significant in this context, because the meaning becomes transformed. A (rare) family snapshot used to illustrate the innate details of that family's life at a particular point in time represents a peculiar combination of the accidental, amateur and historically significant. Ill-considered or reckless use of the material can thus invalidate what could otherwise be thoughtful history.

Taking the point further, other clouding issues intrude when deciding on a sequence of photographs to be used. Why was one particular set of photos used? Did they make the point more effectively than some other configuration of photos, and if so what is that point from an authorial perspective? Does the set represent all photos found, or is it merely a subset culled from others that may have been less vivid, or perhaps aesthetically less appealing? If the documentary record as exemplified in a number of photographs is inherently patchy, an impulse to re-imagine history may emerge. Some may see this problem as extreme, starting with Hayden White whose dictum states that "any historical object can sustain a number of equally plausible descriptions or narratives" (White 1987:76). This could be extended to state that any *gap* in a documentary record can be interpreted across a wide spectrum of possibilities. Aesthetically, what is left out functions as the "negative space" around the documentary record.

Since this film is a documentary hybrid (partly historical exposition, partly "journey" or exploratory), and since the use of archive is typically different in each of these, a problem is created. For historical purposes, use of photos is straightforward, and does not ask much of the audience in terms of questioning the veracity of the images. Archive in this context is simply used to illustrate general or specific events. The alternative is "found footage", in which case there may be a suggestion of use of the image to advance a certain point. On reflection, however, this is not a cause for undue concern, since most use of photographs will fall into the former category, that is they will be concerned with supporting the film as far as it is concerned with communicating (albeit incomplete) historical facts. Even so, application of a hybrid documentary form does present problems as far as classification is concerned. Perhaps it could be classified as "democratic didacticism", a phrase used to describe a means of getting an audience to arrive at the same conclusion as he has (Waugh 1985, cited by Bruzzi 2000:24). This differs subtly from the normal expository mode, in that the intention is to reveal rather than to teach.

It is possible that the above discussion ends up painting the film into a corner. Yet the situation is not that complicated, and is best summarised by Bruzzi's three principles:

> ..All documentaries, because they are the product of individuals, will always display bias and be in some manner didactic; there is no such thing as incontrovertible truth, since each document or image, when made to conflict with another, finds its meaning irretrievably modified; history is perpetually modified by its re-enactment in the present. (Bruzzi 2000:165)

Once one realises that no use of archive is free from the effects of these principles, then it can also be accepted that, within reason, reusing or recontextualising material need not suppress or distort its innate value and meaning.

4. Scope

There is a documentary maxim stating that for a film to be captivating, a high degree of focus must be achieved. This should be done by identifying a possibly subtle, overlooked point and to concentrate exclusively on that. Required background and supporting

knowledge then emanates from this focus on the central issue, as if seen by peripheral vision. Thus a film about the Holocaust becomes a study of a single survivor returning to find traces of his childhood; a film about London becomes a story of someone retracing the origins and evolution of the board-game "Monopoly", and so on. Films deriving their impetus from an over-zealous desire to inform tend to ignore this maxim, and are often more cerebral and wordy than visual. The corollary to this maxim which is just as commonly overlooked is to use the visual medium of film to its full capacity. Historical documentaries are not exempt from these rules, unless they fall very squarely into the category of information dissemination such as Isaacs' *The World at War,* a film iconic of this genre.

For the proposed film "To a Golden Land", the overlooked point in question is a focus on *individuals* comprising the community. The film derives its narrative power from subtle comparisons of the stories of the two families taking part. The juxtaposition of this with the letters providing historical context separates the film from those attempting to tell much broader stories. As I have already mentioned, this approach constitutes a hybrid form, since it does want to disseminate information about Jewish migration to and from South Africa. At the same time, the focus on individuals narrows the scope somewhat. Judicious juggling of these two points of reference is key to producing a coherent and persuasive whole. The key to producing a flowing and emotionally impactful result lies predominantly in the editing.

Depicting South African Jews in Film

The written history of South African Jewish immigration has commonly been presented as a series of numbers, indicating when and how many Jews arrived. Most accounts have been written by people who are themselves Jewish, often under the auspices of a Jewish organisation. These accounts, as well as film treatments of this subject matter tend to place undue weight on "successful" Jews, such as mining magnates, and in particular emphasise homogeneity and communal practices. Films that attempt to cast light on the nature of South African Jews along other lines are rare. Demystification of South African Jews is not a new phenomenon, though. Charles van Onselen was the first to write extensively about the activities of Jews in the early years of the Witwatersrand, in the process examining all classes within the community, including underworld elements. Jews were thus shown to be a small part of a number of interacting elements within a complex and at times ruthless social dynamic.

It is the explicit intention of "To a Golden Land" to avoid such a contributionist approach to South African Jewish history. This approach places undue emphasis on those who are deemed to have been "prominent" Jewish South Africans, and who by extension are installed as in some sense representative of the community at large. This logic also seems to extend to singling out very early Jews, whose presence during the settlement of the Dutch East India Company from 1652 is implied to have some bearing on the formation of later communities of Jews. In an effort to make the point that "To a Golden Land" concerns a collection of individuals rather than iconic figures, no mention will be made of the prominent Jews mentioned in almost all studies, such as Mosenthal, Nelmapius, or

even Oppenheimer or Sammy Marks. Notwithstanding their achievements, their prominence is testimony only to their individual abilities, and obscures the diversity that obtained in the wider community.

Jews and Jewry

Films that have been made which attempt to characterise the Jewish community tend to assume the communal aspect as a given. This implies that a certain cohesiveness exists that somehow bonds that community together. Tacit in this implication is the perception of the community as *Jewry*. For a prospective director/writer given that starting point, all that remains to be done is to ensure that communal aspects are highlighted. This would typically involve including any amount of footage of Jews attending synagogue, interviewing functionaries in Jewish organisations or including footage of Jewish-sponsored events. In this process, the Jews themselves become lost, and their stories are never told. The aim of this proposal is to address the subject matter in a way that stresses Jews over (especially the communal aspects of) Jewry.

Highlighting Jews instead of Jewry presents a converse problem, however, because if only a handful of stories (however archetypal) are selected, how does the film amount to more than an insight into the lives of arbitrary people who just happen to be Jewish and (ex) South African? I believe this objection can be overcome through a realisation that it could never be possible to characterise a diverse community through the lens of a few lone subjects, but that this approach is essentially more honest than assuming that so-called community leaders speak for everybody. By deliberately avoiding the use of "experts" about the community (with the exception of those who have expert *historical* knowledge), the point can be driven home that the investigation of a few Jews in microcosm may be more revealing than the common "top-down" approach, and even if it is not, it places the film in a position to pose more questions than would otherwise be the case.

What makes a South African Jew?

Having asserted that it is a focus on the individual rather than a community at large that makes for an interesting film, there still exist patterns of religious observance that distinguish South African Jews from other Diaspora communities. An open question that the film may wish to pose is whether or not this makes any difference in understanding a community. Since this is a question within a broader implied question (is it possible to understand a community?), it does not require any definitive treatment.

Despite tacit suppositions in films depicting the SA Jewish community, there is good reason to believe that their Jewish lives have not revolved around the synagogue, even for early immigrants. Early accounts (e.g. Saron and Hotz 1955) have it that South Africa cannot even be deemed to have had a Jewish community until the first Synagogue was consecrated. Hellig (1995) has stated that the key to understanding the nature of South African Jewry is their nominal allegiance to an orthodox frame of reference, but without the practical constraints implied by an orthodox lifestyle. The supposition seems to be

that nominal adherence to a stricter orthodox code than was borne out by everyday practice may have been instrumental in breeding an orthodox, closely-knit, Jewish-aware community. However, this can be no more than supposition: there does not seem to be any evidence to suggest that allegiance to any code of worship, however tenuous, has led to the formation of the South African Jewish national character, if indeed any is to be discerned.

Elsewhere, Hellig (1992) has stated that another angle to understanding the development of SA Jewry is their privileged position in being able to function as minorities within the prevailing white elite. She suggests that separateness begets orthodoxy, leading to a situation where Jews sought a framework to indulge their need for conservatism. Another suggestion is that South African Jews have pronounced characteristics by virtue of all having hailed not only from Lithuania, but traceable to individual villages. The truth may be that it is easy to assert that one or another aspect predominates; but the filmmaker in search of a wider truth – historical truth perhaps – is soon faced with the choice of trying to portray this truth filmically or accepting the existing academic opinions as a *fait accompli,* thereby shutting down the "open" mode.

Even if one were to agree with the prevailing opinions about how one should approach Jewish orthodoxy in South Africa, there is no obvious means of transmitting these opinions within the context of a documentary film, short of the academics in question postulating them in an interview, or having a voice-over performing the same task. Instead, it would be preferable to allow the audience to draw its own conclusions through what they witness in terms of ritual observance on the part of the film's protagonists. This however, presents another problem, for when it comes to depicting South African Jews in the process of performing religious rituals, it is often a case of the exception proving the rule. The truth remains that the community at large, despite its nominal orthodoxy, does not attend synagogue outside of the high holy days, does not fully observe the dietary laws, and are generally ignorant of the implications of orthodoxy in its entirety. That there has always been a nucleus of devout Jews who defy this categorisation does not yield a privileged frame of reference. In any event, the challenge of how to depict this situation in the movie is one that has yet to be solved. For example. how to show that footage of a Jew attending synagogue may be his one and only attendance for the year?

Ultimately, the answer is that a film need not make all these sorts of issues explicit. The fact that there remain many unanswered questions is in keeping with the "journey" documentary mode and is not inconsistent with the historical thrust of the film. Indeed, in the interests of separation from more traditional films (in which many issues are deliberately glossed over), the leaving of gaps in the "narrative" is a preferable and more honest response which acknowledges the viewer as a truth-seeking individual in his or her own right..

Clash of Cultures

From the perspective of film, the collision of two Jewish cultures (Anglo vs. Litvak) around the turn of the century is extremely compelling, but presents challenges in terms of visual presentation. Focusing on both Lithuanian and European origins of South African Jewry merely transgresses the axiom of focusing as much as possible on a particular facet of the story. Perhaps a letter by an English Jew relating experiences and observations of arriving emigrants could help to breach this gap with out dissipating narrative tension. At this point I have chosen to ignore this aspect in the interests of maintaining focus.

Lithuania

There is a tacit focus within "To a Golden Land" on Jewish emigration from Lithuania. The infusion of so concentrated an ethnic stock from one corner of the Diaspora into a then remote outpost of civilisation is remarkable in itself. That the host nation was such a unique entity in its own right created a set of circumstances that could never have been foreseen or duplicated elsewhere. With this is mind, it is an important premise of the film to reveal as much as possible about the Jewish Lithuanian condition, especially inasmuch as it informed later development of Jewish character in South Africa. The particular world-view of a departing Lithuanian Jew embarking on a journey to South Africa especially lends itself to presentation on film.

Latter-day emigration

The film aims to highlight several issues associated with this flight of Jews out of South Africa. The primary intention is to draw attention to the steady dissolution of a unique community, which was in turn a transplantation of a subset of the equally unique Lithuanian Jews. This it aims to do through interviews and other techniques which reveal as much information as possible. Secondly, it asks what the future is likely to hold for the remaining community. Thirdly, it (tangentially) aims to determine what the likely outcome may be for Jews that have already emigrated, and what keeps them relatively separate from the existing communities there. Finally, it suggests a set of questions around what it may mean to a Jew to live in modern as opposed to pre-transformation South Africa.

Points of Style

There are more questions than answers suggested by the format for "To a Golden Land". Partial use of narration combined with a "journey" mode creates a set of challenges (which may indeed be out of the scope of the project to consider – these include technical considerations around the editing process).

Since this is a film about emigration, it is essentially one about people and a community in transition. One question that could be asked is: *what might the community have been had the cycle of emigration not occured*? This is a question that may be asked in both directions – what might the Lithuanian Jewish community have amounted to had not so many of them decided to make the long trek to Africa? Alas, the answer to this latter

question is all too obvious – the community would have been entirely extinguished. The fact that the South African Jewish community has largely consisted of those who would almost certainly been murdered lends a poignancy to their existence which can find expression through the tropes of modern filmmaking. The first question is not as easily answered, although techniques could be employed to show the rapid decline in numbers of the community.

Some techniques

All of the techniques listed below would have a place in the film. Using too many of them could be perceived as "gimmicky", and it is obviously a question of taste as to how they contribute to the film, rather than simply being used for their own sake.

- Simple juxtaposition: For example, the story of the Jews leaving Eastern Europe may be told by one protagonist or interviewee – the next shot would be a close-up of a photograph of a relative that may not have emigrated in time to avoid the Holocaust, with the interviewee saying a few words about them. This is more powerful an effect and makes the point more strongly than a narrated script that states that many Jews were killed.

- More complex juxtaposition: The power of an unexpected juxtaposition can be surprising. Following the dictum of "always ask what might have been", an interesting sequence could be the use of old photos juxtaposed with shots of Lithuanian villages. The viewer assumes that these are pictures of where Jews once lived, until the black & white pictures are shown in colour, revealing that these are modern-day pictures of the villages, but devoid of their previous inhabitants.

- Time-lapse: A shot of a synagogue on the high holy days could be used, showing it full to capacity; a sequence of shots would then follow suggesting subsequent years' decline in attendance, with each successive shot showing progressively less congregants. The final shot of just a few people would be a "live" shot, with some fragments of live movement and sound discernible. A similar shot showing the community aging would also be interesting, but probably more difficult to pull off! The envisioned film does contain some time-lapse scenes – see scene breakdown, below.

- Restaging: This is a more expensive (and controversial) technique, but is gaining in use and acceptance. Pseudo-dramatisations of historical events can be extremely believable and involving. For example, life on board ship crossing from Europe could be simulated using actors and props. In such cases, it is always clear that the scene has been staged. Film clips from existing (fictional) films could be similarly used, should such material (and licenses to use it) exist.

- "Found" archives: This is also a kind of staged effect, with the author of the film or a character in the film browsing through various photographs, and

"fortuitously" alighting on one in particular. The camera zooms in on the photograph which is then used as a departure point for the next part of the story.

- Fabricated photo scenes: Another controversial technique, in which a modern day family are purposely photographed in sepia tones, and framed using 90-year old conventions. This creates an interesting effect whereby reality is viewed as if from a future date, placing subjects within a pseudo-historical perspective.

- Collage – This is a more conventional technique of arranging photographs in rapid succession creating any number of effects. In this case, it could simply be used to indicate the sheer number of immigrants. Another obvious example is the depiction of a growing community by showing a collage of synagogues in a short burst, or overlaid over each other. This does not so much advance an argument as provide a cumulative (as opposed to dialectical) understanding. Interestingly, Documentarists who would never dream of restaging an event with actors do not hesitate to create collages that amount to metaphoric fabrications of reality. The guarantees of authenticity ostensibly secured by archival footage are largely a myth, when they can be used to produce various, and often conflicting, effects.

- Use of Music: One technique to avoid is the use of "ethnic" music which is supposed to be representative of a certain time, place and culture. This amounts to pandering and is equivalent to the worst kind of "voice-of-God" narrative. Otherwise, it is considered preferable to use music that supports the dramatic argument of the story. Copyright would dictate which music could be used given budget constraints of a project. The music used pending clarification of this last point is a newly-emerged "Klezmer-Jazz" idiom which synthesises elements of traditional Eastern-European melodies with modern-day jazz. The music in the film is central to the formation of its argument, and should not be seen merely as icing on the cake.

Interview Subjects

Other than the letter narrative discussed above, the film investigates the histories and perspectives of the following families:

The Light Family: Leah Light came to South Africa from Lithuania in 1937. She married twice, and is now widowed. All five of her children married, and later emigrated: two to Australia and three to the United Stated. None of her children express any interest in visiting South Africa, nor do they (with one exception) involve themselves in the Jewish community interests of their chosen countries. Their mother remains in South Africa, partly for financial reasons, but also to retain her connection to her friends, most of whom are in a similar situation.

The Miller family: Mike and Sybil Miller emigrated to the USA with their four children (two older girls, two younger boys) in 1977. While 25 years have passed, their character as distinctly South African Jews remains scarcely diluted. They are keenly aware of their

family heritage, and have long taken to investigating their respective family trees in much detail. They currently live in Rhode Island, USA where they run a business importing artwork from South Africa. The youngest, although only three on leaving, has a deep and (to him) irrational desire to leave New York in order to return to South Africa. While he exhibits a deep affinity for Judaism, his girlfriend is not Jewish and he is on the verge of assimilation, as is common in the USA. The two married girls exhibit similar conflicts, as do their husbands who, both Jewish and South African, consider themselves political exiles from the 1970s. They claim that their current integration into the US Jewish community lacks the flavour and cohesiveness of the South African context. The remaining son has become entirely "Americanised", much to the professed disapproval of the rest of the family.

The film will intercut interview and candid scenes of Leah Light and the Miller family to contrapuntally illustrate their relatively different experiences.

Section 3 – "To a Golden Land" – the film

Overview

The film consists of two distinct modes: historical, in which events leading to emigration to South Africa are revealed, and modern-day footage of the two families under consideration: Mike & Sybil Miller and Leah Light. The film progresses with each mode alternating with the other. The film thus unfolds with the two families being compared: one family has emigrated in its entirety to the USA, while the other has spread out, leaving Leah behind in South Africa.

The historical section of the film is based on a "letter" format. This involves letters being read by an (unseen) actor. Each letter is read by a different voice, giving an idea of a diversity of individuals. Against the narrative of the letter a number of still photographs will be seen. The intention is to create a certain detachment between the narrative and each photo. For example, if the letter contains the information "I bought a new horse and cart", a picture of a horse of cart will not be shown at exactly that point. This limits the predictability of the film and also helps to distance it from the classic narrative format. There is no reason to show only still photographs against each letter other than lack of availability of moving footage as dictated by the scope of this proposal. In some cases, once the letter is completed, the collage of still photographs will continue, normally accompanied with music.

The letters themselves are generally real letters found in various archives. Some are in Yiddish and some in English. The letters will often start with a shot of the letter so that the audience has a visual clue as to what is being read. In some cases, the letters are based on those found in books, but the text of the letter has remained unchanged. In one of the two cases, the letters are adapted from memoirs, in which case the original text was not addressed to anyone in particular. In these cases, some poetic license has been used to render the text into letter format. (See Photo Selection: *Postcards & Letters 1-4*)

The modern footage falls into two categories – formal interviews and candid scenes. The interviews are conventional, with the interviewees seated and facing the camera. From time to time, the interviewers voice can be heard. Once again, very few cutaway shots from each interview are planned, which means that each interview needs to be kept reasonably short. The candid scenes (most of which have not yet been shot) are a compilation of the family members going about their business, enjoying family reunions and interacting casually, but it is clear to the viewer that they know they are being filmed.

In addition to the modes described above, there will be interpolated into the film some compilations of early footage of South African scenes, accompanied by Jewish-oriented music. A clip of this technique will be supplied. An index to the appropriate clip will be given in the body of the film outline which follows this introduction. Another sequence that does not fall into the letter or interview mode is one that is a reconstruction of rituals associated with leaving Lithuania, and which depicts some of the images that might be associated with that process.

Note that the clips of Leah Light's interview do not match the text exactly, since splicing and rearrangement would take place as part of the editing process.

Also note that in some cases more than enough photos accompany the letters, while in other cases there may be too few. Once again this is revealed in the editing process, where a particularly interesting or complex photograph could be panned.

The Miller interviews have not yet been shot. However, close cooperation with the family has resulted in a strong sense of their viewpoints and how the interviews would most likely play out. The given text is indicative of what they are expected to say in these interviews.

There is no narrative voice as such. It also needs to be made clear to the viewer of the film that the letters that are read are merely suggestive of the implied images and stories. Each collage of photographs is thus intended to represent an "immigration fantasy". This concept is established at the outset by a short scene showing that the filmmaker has been presented with a large array of photographs, and that he indulges in something of a flight of fancy in order to weave them together in a way that fits the letters.

Focus: For the modern footage, the film focuses on the Miller and Light families. For the historical segments, the intention is to deliberately obscure the focus on any individual story, and to present a sort of "fantasy collage". This collage is not meant to be historically accurate, and tends to jump around in time somewhat. The impression should be one of a large sweep of humanity rather than individuals. In this way the film is a genuine hybrid between individual and collective, quasi-fantasy and reality.

Technical Notes: This scene breakdown is accompanied by two compact disks. One contains visual material, and the other music tracks. To view a visual clip, please insert the relevant disk and open the file named in the text. For music tracks, do the same. If a music track is inaudible, try track 6 for track 1, track 7 for track 2 and so on. Please refer

to the attached photographs to view stills accompanying a "letter" scene. For better resolution and to view colour, the photographs are also contained on the visual compact disk, in Microsoft Powerpoint format.

"To A GoldenLand" - Scene Breakdown

Preliminary Scene (1): Leah receives an email from her daughter in Australia

The camera is present in Leah's study where she is in the process of downloading email on her computer. Her children write to her regularly but once in a while the letters dry up. Today there are a number of messages (mostly junk) but only one email from her daughter in Sydney. She is excited and quite animated to receive it. She looks at the computer for a while and then turns to the camera to talk. "This is from my daughter Karyn in Sydney! A beautiful girl!" She moves to another room and returns with a photo album, and begins showing some photographs to the camera, meandering into a story as she does so. The image and sound fade into music as she talks. (*Clip: Parts of Leah 12*)

Music: Track 1 (or 6)
Yiddish Lyric: *May the spiritual influence of the commandments be extended on me so that I have a long life and a flow of holiness..*

Preliminary Scene (2): Introduction to Sybil & Mike Miller

The music of the previous scene continues as the scene begins to show a late-middle aged couple travelling in a car, talking to each other animatedly and pointing out the car window. The music fades a little to hear the conversation, during which they address the camera directly. Mike & Sybil have returned to South Africa after 25 years for a visit. The camera captures her reactions to changes that she notices. We arrive at the house in which she brought up her family (she notices the high walls in particular), and tour the general vicinity. Each new location visited spurs a number of anecdotes and reminiscences. The point of the scene is not so much to obtain the details of these anecdotes, but to record her emotional response to what she sees. She explains how she feels a great gulf between South Africa and her life in the USA, and yet a palpable nostalgia and sense of belonging. (In the course of the film it becomes more evident that her supposed acculturation to life in the USA is somewhat of a façade, and that she has never really reconciled with the decision to leave; the viewer comes to this conclusion despite Sybil's protestations to the contrary). The music picks up again at the fast section (timing 3:29 of Track 1) as we see speeded-up footage of Sybil & Mike looking at various parts of the city, before eventually fading to black and silence. Against the blackness, the main title of the film appears, with opening credits.

Opening Scene (Part 1): "Beyachad", headquarters of South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Johannesburg

Opening shot of the building, showing the name and the commemorative plaque at the entrance.

The Director of the film (Sam Greenblatt) is in conversation with Yehuda Kaye, director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. We are talking about the work done by his organization. He is focusing on the consolidation efforts underway to support the Jewish community. As he walks down the corridor, talking, pointing out the various departments, it becomes clear that the size of the Jewish community served by this organization has shrunk markedly in the last twenty-five years. Many operational areas have been merged, and he talks of rapidly shrinking budgets. At one point he alludes to the fact that the community may be disappearing *("As SA Jewry shrinks past a critical point"*), and that he is already making plans to respond. He says that nobody knows for sure exactly how many Jews are left in South Africa after peaking at about 120 000 in about 1976. In order to address this lack of knowledge, he is currently undertaking a survey of households in the Johannesburg area, in order to determine how many Jews remain, and how many intend to continue to do so.

Opening Scene (Part 2): Still at SAJBD headquarters (Photo Selection: *In Archives*)

Naomi Musiker is the librarian at the SAJBD archives. She is talking to me about the material that is to be found in the library archives. Most of them have been donated over the years, but there has never been an attempt to fully categorise and file them. We walk around the warehouse containing the evidence of the South African Jewish community and its origins. Eventually, we come to a filing cabinet full of partially sorted documents, mostly old photographs, but also letters and other printed matter in various languages. In passing she mentions that the Jewish community of South Africa consists largely of English (Anglo) and Lithuanian (Litvak) elements. Library material pertains mostly to Lithuanian Jewry with a large amount of unclassified photographs, letters and other documents.

Scene continued: This scene plays out to a jazz soundtrack based on Klezmer melodies (Track 2 or 7, 00:10). I am seen with a big pile of photographs and documents on the table. I begin to sort through the pile, creating sub-piles and random patterns of the documents as I go. Using a time-lapse method, the piles are shown in a rapid succession of shots getting more haphazard, with more being added on between shots. Eventually the table is strewn with photographs. The camera looks in a little closer to reveal some old images, and some slightly newer. The main impression is that of a great number of lives depicted in the photographs, which offer only a hint of the stories behind them.

Scene: Leaving Lithuania (Photo Selection: *Leaving Lithuania 1-4*)

For the emigrant preparing to leave Lithuania, it was generally the case that he or she would be leaving an extremely small town in which everyone was known to all. The ritual of leaving typically consisted of visits to the cemetery to request blessings from ancestors, a visit to the rabbi for same, and a special service in synagogue the Sabbath before departure.

The screen is black. A quavering voice begins intoning a prayer in Yiddish. Subtitles are given at the bottom of the screen: "*..may the Lord bless and keep you; may He keep you safe during your months on the waters; may He cause you to wax rich and fruitful in the Golden Land; may you never lack for anything in the land of strangers*.." As the prayer proceeds, a number of still photographs appear on the screen (see attached photos). These include pictures of an old Jewish cemetery in Lithuania, photos of a Rabbi and one of a horse and cart packed as if for a long journey. The photos continue to flash across the screen. As they do, the sound of the prayer fades into music – a strange mix of traditional Jewish melody and modern jazz (Track 3 or 8, 2:00). The photos begin to recur with increasing rapidity, as the music reaches something of an atonal frenzy. The photos combine as if to suggest a blur of memory and undifferentiated emotion, finally fading to black as the music ends.

Leah's Interview Segments

Note: The transcripts of Leah's interview given below do not match verbatim with the interview footage. A draft edit would reveal the rhythm and length of each interview segment.

Note 2: When viewing the clips, it should be borne in mind that a music soundtrack is part of the sound edit beneath all interview footage of Leah Light. The music will swirl at the end of each interview segment leading to the next scene.

Leah Interview 1: Leaving Lithuania (*Clip: Leah 1*)

Leah talks about her departure from Lithuania in the 1930s. "We left Ponevizh in Lithuania in 1932, leaving our family behind us. We always said to them before leaving that we would see them again, but we never did see them again. Even as we left the town for Berlin, traveling through Germany, we could see there were already Nazis on the streets. (Jump cut).We traveled on a British liner – I think it was a Castle Liner, took the train to Muizenberg, and we started a new life in Muizenberg. Of course, at the time, we spoke only Yiddish – this was our mother tongue – and we could speak a certain amount of Hebrew as a second language, but we couldn't speak any Lithuanian. Anyway, Muizenberg didn't really make us feel welcome."

Leah's sister Mattie is seen in the interview chiming in from time to time. She has two of her own children one of whom still lives in South Africa.

Linking Music: Track 4 (or 9) – this is the underlying soundtrack of the film, and forms part of the sound edit throughout.

Miller Interview 1

Mike & Sybil Miller are seen in a formal interview situation. They talk about their experience of having been born in Johannesburg, and growing up there. Both sets of parents arrived in South Africa in about the mid 1920s. After initially struggling to find

their feet, their parents were able to live out middle-class lives in various South African cities. By the time Sybil and Mike decided to emigrate to the USA in 1975, only one of the four parents still lived, and he remained behind in Johannesburg, only seeing them two or three times before finally passing away in 1982.

Scene: Early immigrants from Lithuania – Letter from Cape Town (Photo Selection: *Early Immigrants 1-3*)

March 1885
Most of our brethren who come here by the skin of their teeth, naked as on the day of their birth, are being shown mercy by the existing Jewish settlers the moment they put their foot on the shores of Africa. With the help of this generosity they acquire a few pounds' worth of goods and little trinkets and they begin to trudge round the towns and villages with their merchandise. The farmers who own the lands are by nature very human and love everybody. They are kind to these unfortunate people and buy their goods for the right price even if they do not require them.

After they save a little sum they turn from peddling on back to trading on a bigger scale, travelling in wagons drawn by ten oxen, from place to place and from village to village. They buy ostrich feathers, sheep and cattle, and earn big money, because our brethren who are gifted in business matters succeed in their dealings and find reward in their affairs.

It is therefore no wonder that the emigration movement has increased to such an extent and that young men, and even people advanced in age, leave their homes every day and go far across the sea. As each one of them succeeds he afterwards brings the entire family – his brothers, his sisters, his wife and children who remained at home – and they establish a peaceful dwelling and end their days in happiness and affluence..

Leah Interview 2: How Leah and her sisters got to go to South Africa (*Clip: Leah 2*)

In this segment, Leah talks about the circumstances that led her to emigrate to South Africa. " Our grandfather came to South Africa before the Boer War – he and his 3 brothers (sister chimes in – three of them – Leah replies – yes I said three). They sold mules to the British army. This was their primary means of travel. They went to live in Paarl, and they really did very well financially. Now one of one of the brothers died, and he left a legacy of a hundred pounds to each niece and nephew… One of these nieces was my mother… That was a very large amount of money in those days. And so with the money that she inherited in 1926 (*sister corrects – 1928*), my father came to South Africa with that hundred pounds."

Scene: Early Johannesburg (Clip: *Chiribim*)

This is a collage scene that shows scenes of early Johannesburg, set to the strains of Yiddish music. The incongruity of the visuals and music highlights the clash of cultures and the difficulties of being an immigrant. (Clip attached – music: *ChiriBim ChiriBom*).

Scene: Sybil & Mike talk about their decision to go to the USA

Sybil & Mike Miller are seen in close interview. They are responding to questions (not heard) about their life in South Africa before they decided to leave the country. The style of the interview is for lots of blank space to pervade, with close-ups of their faces as they continue to relate their story. They both seem to be fairly representative of the Jews of the decades of the sixties and seventies. Their four children imbibed Jewish traditional experience more from the older generation (i.e. their grandparents) than from their immediate family. Otherwise they attended the government schools of the time. Much of Mike & Sybil's attitudes towards their decision to leave seems to be rooted in a reliance on axiomatic remarks. For example, Mike says that he "didn't see much future for his family in the country". When pressed to elaborate, he says that things were getting "out of control". He also repeats very often that he was fifty at the time that he decided to emigrate to the USA. Despite these remarks, they talk of a real affection for the time they lived in Johannesburg bringing up their children, and being part of the Jewish community.

As they speak, still photographs of the young family from 1960 onwards are shown on the screen. The editing here is carefully constructed such that the photographs do not merely illustrate what is being said, but rather stand on their own.

Leah Interview 3: Leah's father's start in South Africa (*Clip: Leah 3*)

Leah talks about her father's early years in the Cape, and how he struggled to make enough money to eventually bring the rest of the family out. "My father started off buying fruit, packing it nicely in an arrangement, and knocking from door-to-door to take orders for fruit. He continued doing this until he had sufficient money to buy a horse and cart.. In '29, '30, he already had opened a fruit shop in Muizenberg... But he worked seven days a week from 8 in the morning to 12 at night – it was a very very hard business... He would work from 7am until midnight. Many days, he would have to get up at five to take the train to Cape Town to buy the fruit, and would have to then wait for it to be delivered. They would deliver it to him and he would have to unpack it. *Not in clip*: "In winter, the hours were easier, but he still had to work extremely hard. So by 1932 we were able to come out and join him. Unfortunately our mother died in 1937 at the age of 37. Living in Lithuania was an uphill battle – there was so much anti-Semitism. But our family was very good to us in South Africa Our other two uncles came from Paarl to meet our ship – they were very good to all who had inherited the money. Thank God, because the ones who remained never lived to tell the tale."

Scene: Letter (restriction of Jewish immigration, 1902: man separated from his wife – Photo Selection: *Weddings, Restrictions, Settling In 1-2*)

December 1903
My Dearest wife; I received your letter with great joy. Although we continue to be separated, I am sustained by the thought that we will be together again soon. I continue

to do all in my power to arrange for your safe passage to South Africa. Since the war ended, things here are more confused than before, with many souls clamouring to return to the Transvaal, from which they had taken refuge during the worst years. According to my cousin Shmuel, in order to enter the Cape you now need to be able to speak a European language. Since Yiddish is not included in this definition, this could create further problems for us. This is the first time in more than twenty five years that any kind of restriction has been imposed. Shmuel also tells me that a newly formed organisation is currently looking into the situation, with help from London, through which you will pass when I finally am able to send for you..

This reading of this letter is accompanied by a collage of photographs, including a photograph of the original Act that promulgated this restriction.

Leah Interview 4: Leah's own family – early years (No clip)

Leah gives a rundown of her marriage and children, and how everyone fits together. This has the potential to be a rather lengthy scene, and is not very interesting. However, it is important to establish the basic structure of Leah's family. Some judicious editing would be required to keep this segment as short as possible. "My husband was a kind and generous man. However, he was already 42 by the time we got married , and he loved children – so we did not waste any time. I had five children in seven years. Two of them – the third and fourth – were born in the same year. We lived in Linksfield, in Tregoning Street, but we never sent our children to King David, because it was very expensive and we were battling to make ends meet (sister chimes in: although by living in Linskfield everyone thought that you were rich! Leah: Well, that's the way it goes). My husband died in 1982".

Scene: Mike & Sybil return to South Africa 2

Mike Miller is a jazz pianist. He is sitting at the piano in the living room of his cousin who still lives in South Africa. He reminisces about the days very shortly before leaving for the USA. At that time, he was president of the South African Jazz society. He talks of the kind of gigs he used to play, and the good friends (also mostly Jewish) who played with him at the time. These friends have also emigrated, but to Canada and Australia. As he talks his eyes become a little dreamy, and he eventually trails off. After a few seconds, he begins to play a jazzy tune on the piano, recognizable as an old jazz standard. It is clear that this tune in particular brings back some set of particular memories of a certain time in South Africa, and the camera lingers on his face as he continues to play. Abruptly, he finishes and smiles, to sounds of unseen applause

Scene: Leah in her apartment on Friday night

This scene follows immediately from the previous,, with the sound of applause ending that scene culminating in silence. We see Leah light the ritual Friday night candles, and then going about preparing dinner for herself. As she does so, her sister arrives on camera

to help her. Cut to the two of them having dinner together with very few words spoken between them. No music.

Scene: The Millers back in the USA

The camera approaches a house, clearly not in South Africa as revealed by the wooden structure. Also, we see a foreign license plate on a car, an American flag and white wooden walls of a typically North American east coast house. The camera enters the house, navigates a door or two, and finds Sybil Miller is preparing for the Sabbath – lighting the Friday night candles. Next to the candles, photos adorn the tables of the dining room. After a few moments, the camera pans around to reveal the presence of several young adults in attendance.

Scene: Letter: The meeting of Eastern European and Anglo Jewry (Photo Selection: *Synagogues in South Africa 1-4*)

April 1925
My dear parents; There was a time I would walk the streets of Cape Town haunted by feelings of guilt; for the customs and ways of our beautiful tradition are so carelessly disregarded here once the memory of the Shtetl begins to recede. It is not uncommon for Jews to be seen plying their trades, however meagre, on the Sabbath. But lately I have become encouraged by the great many Synagogues that are springing up all over the city, and by all accounts in the rest of the country, too. Here will be places where the Jew will find a fortress to buttress himself from the forces that pull him in every direction…

As and after this letter is read, a collage of synagogues is shown, giving the impression of the flowering of traditional orthodox Judaism across the country.

Scene: Leah looks at pictures of her children and grandchildren (*Clip: Leah 12*)

The camera finds Leah paging through her photograph album, showing pictures of her various offspring, and commenting on each. She is clearly saddened by the gulf between herself and her children. As if to comfort herself she declares “I’m grateful for what I’ve got – no regrets – life goes on”. (Heaves big sigh).

Scene: Millers discuss South Africa (See photo: *Miller family in USA*).

This is an extended scene in which we view the entire Miller family interacting on the issue of their connection to South Africa. The intention is to elicit their responses, and also to demonstrate the inherent “South African-ness” of the family members, individually and as a unit. The scene takes place in the sitting room in Rhode Island. All four Miller children are present, accompanied by their spouses in the case of all but one, whose girlfriend is present. All but one partner of the Miller children are of South African descent. It transpires that all met and/or married after leaving South Africa. Mike and Sybil themselves do not talk during this scene, although the camera constantly closes in on their expressions, to give the effect of them “presiding” over proceedings. Other than

the fact that it is made clear that this is a family that has been in the USA for twenty-five years, there is a strong sense that it is a South African Jewish family to the core. Apparent in the conversation is an ambivalence and defensiveness about their attachment to SA. While making the point strongly that they love their new country, they become almost hostile when it is implied that they have forever buried their South African roots. When asked about returning to their home country (note that the questions themselves are never shown, but it is clear from the responses what was asked), there is a mixed reaction. The eldest children (two daughters) are emphatic about their life in the USA as permanent. The younger ones are somewhat more open about the idea. This scene is designed to be overlong so as to give a sense of the unity of the family, and its cohesiveness and warmth. The viewer should feel drawn into a cosy atmosphere and find the family likeable.

Scene: Letter describing trip over from Lithuania (Photo Selection: *Boat Trip 1-2*)

June 1912
My dear brother Shlomo: How well I remember the day when I took leave of our beloved Shtetl. Standing on the outskirts of the village, and gazing out on the field that I would never see again, with Africa in the opposite direction. The voyage through the Baltic was uninteresting, as was also the undeviating menu of potatoes and herring, against which even our plebeian appetites began to revolt by the second day. On arriving in London, we were quarantined in the immigrant's shelter. We all marched off to see the Alderman. We must have appeared as a procession of the damned in our motley assortment of clothes and colours as we tramped flat-footedly across one of the busiest of the Thames bridges.

Leah Interview 5: Children grow up, get married (*Clip: Leah 4, parts of Leah 5*)

Leah talks at length about her children. This scene will be edited down to contain the following salient points: Of her three sons, all did military service, two married South African girls (who they met overseas), and one (Barry) married a Catholic girl: "My third son Barry and his wife they got married in Cape Town – he married a Catholic girl from a wonderful family.. and I wasn't going to lose a son – I decided I would rather gain a daughter. But when they got married her grandparents.. refused to come to the wedding because she was marrying a Jew – You think its only the Jews that don't want their children to intermarry?"

Barry and his wife had a baby son Roscoe (who was known to say as a three-year-old "I'm a little bit Jewish but mostly Christmas"). After much moving around across the USA and Canada, all the boys wound up in Los Angeles, and then later in Phoenix, Arizona. Leah tells a story about how her youngest daughter met a South African in Sydney (whom she later married in 1984). The boy's father was well known to Leah. This anecdote is worth including for Leah's animated expression and general *joie de vivre*. The daughters, after a certain amount of traveling, ended up in Sydney. In response to the question of what made the children all so eager to leave South Africa, Leah replies "I had a wonderlust, and my husband and I encouraged our children to travel- they got the travel bug from us".

Scene: Same as previous letter, continued. (Photo Selection: *Boat Trip 2-3*)

After a few months we set sail from Southampton en route to Cape Town. The men and women were separated on the voyage. It was very hot and sultry crossing the equator, and many of those on board ship decided to divest themselves of the greater part of their apparel. My first sight of Cape Town filled me with mixed feelings and a good deal of apprehension and excitement. I have little doubt that our Berel and his family's trip to America was even more arduous and their feelings on arriving in New York must have been similar to mine. On disembarking, we were once again examined by doctors. But the examination was not as rigorous as in London or Libau. They are very easy-going in South Africa. It suits my temperament. The journey in the hot January month through the semi-desert Karoo was frightful. But all discomfort was shut out by the thought that I was approaching the end of a long and rather too eventful odyssey.

Leah Interview 6: Coping without the children (*Clip: Leah 7*)

Note: sequence different than in clip

Leah talks about what it is like to be separated from her children. "What my sister doesn't understand is how it is to be away from your children – to not see them for years at a time – and you become a stranger to them – they don't even know you are, although your children tell them – this is Granny… I haven't got that contact with them that I would have if I lived close to them and you miss out on such a lot. And the heartache of course – it comes to birthdays – anniversaries – you're not there. Although I've been very fortunate that I have traveled – eighteen times back and forth every year – but that also takes a hell of a lot of capital"

Clip: Leah 11

On being asked on why she never left South Africa to join the children, Leah delivers a long explanation of her failed efforts to get into Australia, because the majority of her children were not there (only 2 out of five) and that she could go to America, but doesn't want to. The editing process would reveal how much of this narration is included. She ends off as follows: "So I couldn't go – that was that – so I stayed here (long pause, wistful expression). Talks about grandchildren with gleam in eye: "they are all lovely bright children. Blaine has such a high IQ she has to go to a special school, from which people eventually go to Harvard and so on. Greg is in a very high-class school. All the children have had barmitzvahs (pause) except Roscoe whose mother is Catholic."

Scene: Sybil talks about her ancestors

Sybil has developed an avid interest in her family tree. In her house in Providence, she has meticulously assembled and identified a number of old photographs, and she has also had a professional artist draw up the family tree. She gives a guided tour of her collection of photographs, which is displayed across various rooms of the Providence house. It is

obvious that she has gone to great trouble to identify ancestors comprising her lineage. All three periods are represented – parents as young adults (as old as forty) still living in Lithuania, the same people and their young families after having made the transition to South Africa in the 1930s, as well as the new generations, many of them born in the USA. She then shows us the completed family tree chart, as displayed on the wall of her living room.

Scene: The heyday of South African Jewry (about 1970)

This is a collection of moving footage portraying the influence of South African Jews during the "golden years" of their presence in the country. Most of the footage is extracted from SABC and other newsreel footage. The musical track is "If I were a rich man" from *Fiddler on the Roof*, but sung by a (good) amateur, with piano accompaniment. The images show Jewish businesses, synagogues, headline clips from various Jewish newspapers, interactions of South African government officials with the State of Israel, and the establishment of Jewish Day Schools.

Scene: Letter to Lithuania from Johannesburg .(Photo Selection: *Early Businesses 1-5)*

July 1928

My dear brother Zvi; At last, I am finding my feet in South Africa. I have learned much by being on the farm for these last two years, but now I am ready to start a business of my own. Many of the older generation have not been able to tear themselves from the past, and in any case have very few skills or even English. In this country, it is easy to make a good living with even a little business knowledge and the willingness to take a small risk. There are still many peddlers and those eking out a living by selling trinkets and this and that on the street. At the same time, many of our countrymen have begun to enjoy prosperity in their businesses. I would like nothing more than for you to join me as a full partner in some business enterprise, perhaps in manufacturing, A friend of mine has become very successful building fire escapes! If only you could convince our dear parents to join you and Rivka in finding a new life for yourselves here in Johannesburg.

Some of the photos in this sequence are group shots. The camera pans across, finally coming to rest on the face of a particular individual. The next photo is that same individual in close-up. The idea is to create the effect of various people in the community being singled out.

Leah Interview 7: On Jewish Observance (Clip: Leah 9)

Our parents were religious – they kept a kosher home. Of course when they came to South Africa and worked seven days a week, twelve hours a day they didn't have time to go to shul except for the high holy days… But then I didn't keep a kosher home.. when I got married and I said to my husband do you want to keep kosher and he said 'it makes no difference to me' and I said 'it doesn't make any difference to me'.. so my children didn't have a kosher home.

Not in clip:

Now some of our children are staunch members of Shuls in the USA. Mind you, these are not like the shuls here: the rabbi is a woman, the cantor is a woman, and the rabbi plays guitar and sings. But although my children did not go to King David, they grew up like all other Jewish children – no different. (Sister chimes in – I always had a kosher home – it wasn't until I came to live with my sister that I wound up in a not-kosher place!)

Scene*:* Letter to Lithuania, describing conditions in South Africa around 1920 (Photo Selection: *Homesick 1-3*)

October 1920
My dearest aunts and uncles; I have by now partly recovered from the shock of my first months in South Africa. This is indeed a new world. Instead of Lithuanian cornfields, on all sides the sickly yellow of the mine dumps and headgears can be seen rising to the skies. The din that surrounds me is in extreme contrast to the tranquillity of Kaunas, even though it is not as melancholy.

What fills me with despondency is the manner in which the Jews have moved away from the traditions of Eastern Europe. The Sabbath is scarcely observed at all, except by the older generation, whose link to their past in any case stands out in their old-country garb and appearance. It seems that the absence of persecution has caused much of the religious and national fervour of Eastern Europe to evaporate.

My experience at "cheder" has been equally disconcerting. It is situated in a slum area of Johannesburg, and it caters for about a hundred children from some of the poorest and most undisciplined homes in the area.

Scene: Jazz in Rhode Island I

Mike Miller has formed a new jazz quartet in Rhode Island, and he is playing a concert. Three out of four of his children, their spouses and extended families have come to watch him play. A crowd has gathered inside the *Jazz Clinic* in downtown Providence, and an air of expectation pervades the atmosphere. The camera roams around obtaining remarks from the assembly of family present at stageside table, at which Mike is waiting to play. It is clear that Mike enjoys the loving support of his family, with whom he shares an easy and comfortable familiarity. A sense of warmth and togetherness permeates the room. Most apparent is the fact that there are a wide range of accents on offer. On a continuum of pure South African to total American, it is clear that all the youngest members of the gathering all represent the latter part of this spectrum.

Scene: Letter to Lithuania. (Photo Selection: *City Scenes 1-3*)

November 1922
What can I tell you of Commissioner Street, one of the arteries of Johannesburg and of

my life here in Johannesburg? It obtains its character from the cafes and penny drinkshops and kosher restaurants, through which there move by day and by night a colourful pageant made up by the denizens of the underworld – pimps, prostitutes, criminals, as well as "Alte Afrikaners", that is, the Jews who had arrived in South Africa a long time ago, and whose wives had remained behind in Lithuania. These are the people I have been consorting with..!

Scene: Leah cooks traditional Jewish confectionary

Despite the fact that her children now all live overseas, Leah still cooks big meals. She makes the same quantities as ever, and most of it never gets eaten. This scene is shot at her flat, where she explains the ingredients and baking secrets of the syrup-covered biscuits she has concocted. As she talks, the camera roves to some of the photographs of her family that are dotted around the room. One in particular (a girl) has a watchful aspect, as if chosen in her absence to bear witness to this side of Leah's life. A quick edit jumps from the preparation stages of the biscuits to the time they are ready to emerge. A beaming Leah removes the tray from the oven and places it on the table. "Try one!" she prompts the camera (presumably addressing the director and/or cameraman).

Scene: Letter to South Africa from Lithuania (Photo Selection: *Letters From Lithuania 1-3*)

March 1921

To my beloved son, may he live and be well; What is the reason you haven't written me for so long? It has been almost two years. I would like to know how you are doing, also the same of your wife and children. I, my dear son, am sick and weak. Hershel Paisach and Chaim Faivel are now running the factory. Mendel Adarsky has come from Russia and went to America with his wife, and Nissan is now in Berlin. Zelig may start to peddle again. Many here receive money from America, and they live on that. From you I have received in total the worth of two dollars. We only know what others are receiving. All this talk about me going to South Africa. Why should I when you yourself are not setting the world on fire, and many unemployed? For now I have no special news to write. I wish you and your wife and children good health several times over. I hope for a prompt reply.

Leah Interview 8: On South African Community (*Clip: Parts of Leah 8*)

Leah discusses the future of the South African Jewish Community. "I am amazed at how many South African Jews I find all over – In Los Angeles, even in Phoenix! In South Africa the ones that are left are either doing very well, or they are poor – or they are *frum*. Also the community has shrunk with old age, many are passing on. Those who haven't emigrated are busy dying. Every day I look in the newspaper someone else has died – and that's the story of our lives!" On religious people: "Every time I buy any kosher food, I see the women there – how they cover up their beauty – believe me, they don't look so good! (pause) But there is more to life than looks".

Scene: Letter from Lithuania (Photo Selection: *Letters From Lithuania 3-5*)

March 1930

My dear Parents, all my dear brothers, sisters and nephew; we have not had a letter from any of you for at least four weeks! God alone knows what has happened to you. We may be far away from each other but we all live in the same world and I believe many things in South Africa are the same as here. In the meantime it is taking us a long time to leave this country. We have no money for goods and we therefore have no income. Thank you all again for the wonderful presents. I wish you all a happy and healthy year. May all Jews be blessed for a good year ahead…

Mike & Sybil Miller Interview (continued)

Once again in a formal interview, the Millers discuss their views on the nature of SA Jewry. Sybil is eager to make the point that because Lithuanians placed much emphasis on good deeds and the development of personal morality, they were able to cultivate the kind of community that existed in South Africa. Mike agrees, pointing out that American Jewish communities are much less "aydel" (common Yiddish word for wise, gentle and moral). Despite the fact that the are pleased to have given their children a start in the USA, they continue to struggle to find a niche for themselves within the New England Jewish community

Scene: Letter to South Africa (Holocaust)

30 December 1941
My dear brother, I and my two babies are the only people still alive of all our family. today is the 30th December 1941 and we will be shot as well. the whole of Lithuanian Jewry has been wiped out – nobody remains alive here. My husband and two other children were killed in April 1941. I managed to survive with my two children, because a non-Jew has been hiding us; his name is Yukianus Stupelsnis. He really wanted to help us, but it is impossible.

If there is still a world after this holocaust and there are any of my possessions left, please repay him. When you should keep our Yarzeit, I'm not sure - I think it will be 15 days in Tamuz.

You must revenge this needless shedding of our blood.
Your unfortunate sister and two children send regards to all our relatives and friends abroad. Your sister, Chana

This letter is read against a blank screen. As it ends, a mournful prayer starts up (see clip), which becomes the starting point for the following scene..

Scene: The shrinking community (Clip: *cantorial – music sample only*)

This scene illustrates in abstract the flight of Jews out of South Africa. At the same time it depicts religious ritual within a synagogue. The inside of a synagogue is shown, with a service underway. The cantor intones a prayer. The synagogue is about one third full. The setting shifts to the parking lot of Oxford synagogue in Johannesburg. Cut to the congregants drifting out after the service. However, the prayer soundtrack continues. Most of them have come by car. A sequence of still photographs shows the parking lot progressively getting emptier and emptier, until there no cars left at all, and it is dark. The prayer ends, but the shot lingers to the ambient sounds of passing traffic and the distant echo of barking dogs.

Scene: Letter to Nobody (Journal Entry) – adapted from *Multitude of Dreams* by Bernard Sachs (Photo Selection: *Letters From Lithuania 1-2*)

March 1950
Although it is thirty five years since I left it, I can picture almost all the houses as they stood here in 1913. It is only a memory that remains of it, for the invading German armies have trampled it underfoot. One stamp from a jackboot must have been enough to shatter it, it was so tender. Physically and spiritually it is all dead for me. But I would give much to be able to return there, if only for a while. I would like to go back to Kamaai, and if I did I know that I would bury my head in the field near the cemetery for something like seven days. But I wouldn't probe what lay behind the shepherd's cottage – that must remain a mystery. And I would stand by that bridge where the one saintly moment of my life once came to me… But enough daydreaming. Kamaai now lies behind the iron curtain…

The pictures shown here are mostly abstract – paintings, drawings and caricatures. The pictures continue for a while, until, along with the music fading to nothingness.

Scene: Back at the SAJBD

No Music

The film director is joined once again by Yehuda Kaye, the director of the SAJBD. They meet over a cup of coffee. They begin talking, and YK shows a chart he has prepared showing the results of his population survey. It seems that the community has stabilized and that emigration has essentially leveled off. He is pleased about this because he can now begin to plan budgets for schools, hospitals and old-age homes. At the end of the interview he says: "*I can think of no better country or community in which to bring up my kids". Fade to next scene.*.

Scene: Modern Day Johannesburg

This scene is a parallel to the earlier one of early Johannesburg set to a Yiddish song. Scene of Johannesburg 2004 are shown, with some landmarks, heavy traffic, and images of suburbia. It is clearly modern footage, with up-to-date vehicles and office buildings. A plane is shown taxiing on a runway – it could bearriving or leaving. The music (Track 5

or 10) is more traditionally and recognizably Jewish than the jazz-inflected music that has preceded it. The images merge seamlessly with the scene that follows..

Track 5 Yiddish Lyrics*: <u>Tayere brider, hartsiker brider, ven veln mir zikh vider zeen</u>? Dear brothers, dear sisters, When shall we see each other again? – (English translation shown on screen in subtitles).*

<u>Scene</u>: Final letter (Leah's daughter Karyn to her mother)

Music fades slightly but continues

Dear mom; I hope this email gets to you because I know you have been having some problems with your computer. Greg's birthday was on Sunday – everything went as planned – but it hard to believe he is nearly 12. I'm enclosing some photos from the party. I doubt that you would be able to recognize him if I didn't keep you updated – the wonders of modern technology! Our move is still going ahead but all the packing is difficult for me without any help! We've enjoyed this house but now its time to move on. We've made some changes since the last time you were here, but now you can look forward to seeing our new home. Anyway life is hectic in Australia and I can't believe its nearly the end of another year. Hope that it's a good one for our family; love Karyn

As this letter is read, a sequence of Leah doing her shopping is shown. She inspects each item carefully and places into her almost empty shopping cart. Fade to black.

Credits – Music: Track 4 (or 9) - (5:00)

References

Jewish South Africa & Lithuania:

Arkin, M, 1984, South African Jewry, A Contemporary Survey, Oxford University Press

Basner, Miriam, 1993, Am I an African? The Political Memoirs of H M Basner, Witwatersrand University Press.

Bozolli, L (ed.), 1987, Class, Community and Conflict, Ravan Press.

Casper 1992, BM, U, Keren B.M.C., Jerusalem.

Don-Yehiya (ed), 1991, Israel and Diaspora Jewry, Bar-Ilan University Press.

Dubb, A, 1994, The Jewish population of South Africa : the 1991 sociodemographic survey, Cape Town.

Gilman, L & Shain, M, 1999., Jewries at the Frontier, Cape Town.

Greenbaum, M, 1995, The Jews of Lithuania, Geffen Books.

Hellig, JL, 1995, 'The Jewish Community in South Africa', in Prozesky.

Hellig JL, 1992,'The Study of Judaism in Africa', in Platvoet.

Herrman, L, 1934, .A History of the Jews in South Africa from the Earliest Times to 1895.

Hoffman, T, 1988, The Jews of South Africa -What Future? Johannesburg Book Publishers.

Jacobson, D, 1998, Heshel's Kingdom, Hamish Hamilton, London.

Kaplan, M, 1986, Jewish Roots in the South African Economy, Struik.

Krut, R., 1987, 'The making of a South African Jewish Community in Johannesburg', in Bozzoli, 1987.

Leveson, M, People of the book: images of the Jew in South African English fiction 1880-1992.

Levite, A (ed.), 2000, Riteve, A Jewish Shtetl in Lithuania, Kaplan-Kushlik foundation.

Mendelsohn, R, 2000 in Shain & Mendelsohn (eds), 2000, *The Boer War, The Great War and the Shaping of South African Jewish Loyalties.*

Platvoet, Cox (eds.) The Study of Religions in Africa, Past, Present and Prospects, 1992.

Prozesky, Gruchy (eds.), 1995. Living Faiths in South Africa.

Sachs, B, 1949, Multitude of Dreams, Kayor Books.

Saron, G and Hotz, L, 1955, The Jews of South Africa : a history, Oxford University Press.

Shain, M, 1983, Jewry and Cape Society.

Shain, M, 1994, The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa.

Shain, M and Frankental, S, 1987, "Accomodation, Activism and Apathy – Reflections on Jewish Political Behaviour during the Apartheid Era", Jewish Affairs, Autumn.

Shain, M and Mendelsohn, R, eds, 2002, Memories, realities and dreams: aspects of the South African Jewish experience, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball.

Shimoni, G. 1980, Jews And Zionism: The South African Experience (1910 - 1967).

Shimoni, G, 1997, 'Zionism and the Apartheid Dilemma of South African Jewry', Jewish Affairs, Autumn.

Shimoni, G, 2003, Community and Conscience, Brandeis University Press..

Silvain, G. & Minczeles, H, 1999, Yiddishland, Hazan.

Van Onselen, C, 1982, Studies in the Social and Economic Hisotry of the Wiwatersrand, 1886-1914, Volume I, Ravan Press.

Film References:

Barsam, R. 1992, Nonfictional Film, A critical History, Indiana University Press.
Barnouw, E, 1983, Documentary: A history of Non Fiction Film, Oxford.
Bruzzi, S, 2000, New Documentary, A Critical Introduction, Routledge.
Comolli, J-L, 1976, Cinema, *Ideology & Criticism*, in Nichols, B (ed), Movies and Methods, University of California Press.
Drew, R., 1996, *Narration can be a killer*, in McDonald & Cousins (ed.), Imagining Reality: The Faber Book of Documentary, Faber & Faber, London.
Kozloff, S, 1988, Invisible Storytellers: Voice-over narration in American Fiction Film, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.
Nichols, Bill, 1988, *The Voice of the Documentary* in Rosenthal, New Challenges in Documentary, Berkeley.
Plantinga, C. 1997, Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Rabiger, M, 1998, Directing the Documentary, Focal Press.
Renov, M (ed.) 1993, Theorising Documentary, Routledge.
Vaugan, D., 1999, For Documentary - 12 Essays, University of California Press.
White, H, 1987, The Content of the Form: Narrative, Discourse and Historical Representation, John Hopkins University Press.
Williams, L, 1993, Mirrors without Memories: truth, history and the new documentary, Film Quarterly, 46, 9-21.
Wolverton, M, 1983, How to make documentaries for video/radio/film: reality on reels, Houston Tech.
Youdleman, J, 1982, *Narration, Invention, History*, in Rosenthal, ed, New Challenges for Documentary, University of California Press.