Chapter 1

Introduction

Literature is fast becoming democratized. It is slowly but surely tending towards tolerance and acceptance of outcastes—cast out by the high priests of canonical literature for their non-conformity or refusal to toe the line. In art, culture, music, dance, in the way of dressing and even in eating, popular versions, once scoffed at, are now being welcomed with open arms. In fact, they have even become barometers of fashion. Popular forms seem to symbolise youth and modernity. Junk food and its parallels in literature can no longer be kept out of the reach of the majority.

This is the age when pure and impure, right and wrong are no longer white and black or in watertight compartments. Standards are fast changing and becoming relative just as perfection is becoming comparative. Serious critics have labelled popular art and popular literature variously and subjectively. They come with different labels—*junk, pulp, trash, cult, mongrel, garbage, formulaic, bestseller* and so on. Scorched by the flames of literary criticism, like the mythical Phoenix, the popular form rises again and again. Pop fiction must be intrinsically strong, since it has withstood much stringent criticism. Popular genres have survived the onslaught of canonical ire. The bestseller that has survived thus sets us thinking. It has taught us the lesson of survival by its very continuum.

Bestseller novels reflect people’s dreams and nightmares, loss of innocence, feeling of alienation and impotent fury against reality. Through their fictitious characters one can settle scores and win the impossible and become heroic. A
bestseller is the magic carpet of Merlin that transports the readers and helps them escape the harsh realities of life. Such novels also inspire them to face challenges boldly. They are the permissible steroids to strengthen the readers’ drooping spirits in moments of weariness and exhaustion.

The canons of literature ever keep changing. Once upon a time, no living language was respected as literary. No living author was acknowledged. In course of time, however, this trend changed, it is fitting and proper that people should live with living literature. A thinking mind should respond to popular literature that has persisted in spite of critical disapproval. Leslie Fiedler, in his book *What Was Literature?: Class Culture and Mass Society*, asserts that literature cannot be kept alive and growing if popular literature is despised (109-14). James D. Hart, in *The Popular Book*, observes: “Belief does not remain static and taste is ever fluid. For knowledge and for faith, for surcease and for sensation, each period needs its own books, books often trivial but written out of the demands of the day” (280).

A shift in literary tastes indicates a shift in human attitudes or beliefs. While great writers help readers learn more of man, writers of popular books help them learn more of men of that particular age. A popular book pleases readers as it is moulded by the same forces that shape their non-reading hours. A popular book, according to Hart, recreates the present (280-81).

According to Fiedler, only a minority reads standard, canonical literature whereas popular fiction “lives on in the collective memory of us all”; books prescribed in schools and colleges are considered literature due to the virtues of the authors, the elegance of style, subtle thoughts and clear language; but popular fiction
books are read for “their mythic resonance, their archetypal appeal” (*What Was Literature?* 77).

Fiedler maintains that popular fiction survives by the images existing outside the words. Hence bestsellers can move from one medium to another and, when made into a film, do not lose authenticity. Popular writing is like a primal myth. Therefore, demand for elegant structure and distinguished style is irrelevant. Style is individual, whereas pop fiction, being archetypal, is communal (*What Was Literature?* 122).

Popular fiction is read openly by the majority of readers and on the sly by the high brow minority. Youth, especially, have turned away from canonical works of high literature to less respected popular books. Nowadays bestsellers are read along with standard books (*What Was Literature?* 77-80).

Popular culture and fiction cannot be dismissed with contempt any more. There are no rigid divisions between high and low art. Literature is now viewed as one long continuum. Levels of literature are related, not disparate. “Only the cynic and the heedless can disregard popular literature,” Frank Luther Mott says in *Golden Multitudes* (5).

Popular fiction is regarded as negative by many while canonical literature is deemed to be positive. According many critics, popular literature is standardized, formulaic, time-bound, debased, and distorted, of no moral value and so on. Less knowledgeable readers are to be rescued from the “predatory tentacles of the pleasure of popular fiction,” as Derek Longhurst mocks in his introduction to *Gender, Genre and Narrative Pleasure* (1). But, today, English literature is invaded by changes that are complex. Terms such as *semiotics, deconstruction, post-structuralism,*
*intertextuality, narratology* etc. are no longer considered jargon and they have come to stay. One important feature of popular genres, Longhurst declares, is that “they are not rigidly self-contained categories . . . but evolve interactively and in relation to specific historical formations” (5).

One should challenge the myth that great literature is produced by a creative genius unerringly and popular fiction by those concerned with market demand alone. Bestsellers are not mere commodities, as Peter Humm, Paul Stigant and Peter Widdowson declare in their introduction to *Popular Fictions* (9). Literature is said to be great art which enhances our understanding, imagination and intelligence, but popular fiction, according to many critics, subdues or dulls them (Humm, Stigant and Widdowson 11). They assert that, to continue to teach “Literature” as if it comprises only the “great texts,” is to play *Hamlet* without the Prince (or even *Dracula* without the Count). The study of popular fiction calls History back on to the stage as a crucial participant in reformulating a relationship between fictional production and society (15). In the light of the above averments, the critical study of all forms of writing must be legitimized, for Literature without History is intellectually unthinkable.

Literature is a source of knowledge and delight. It is a source of power. Harriet Hawkins, in *Classics and Trash*, says that Shakespeare’s Caliban and Hareton in *Wuthering Heights* remained brutes as they were kept away from books and that deprecating any genre and keeping away from it might make us Calibans (183).

“A best-seller can provide an enjoyable slick surface from which we can skid away from the fixities of literary typology to the freedom of historical and cultural change” (Humm, Stigant and Widdowson 11). Edna Ferber objected to being called a
bestseller author as it implied substandard writing and non-elite readership, as Louis
Filler mentions in his introduction to *A Question of Quality* (1). Filler also states,
“Popularity is a category which, in so open a democracy as our own, presents more
opportunities and dangers than many another” (3). He adds that it is strange that the
people who fear the free market in economics trust its validity in literature (4).

Ray B. Browne, in his essay “Irving Wallace: Independent Drummer,” says
that Irving Wallace is proud to be a popular writer rather than an elite one; that the
difference between the two is not real, but shades on a long continuum; that while
Plato labelled the non-elite oxen and their works dung, Aristotle believed that all
levels of life and art are equally important; and, that Terence went further and said: “I
am a human being; therefore nothing human repels me” (100).

Today the walls between elite and popular, high brow and low brow arts are
breaking down thanks to the impact of the mass media. Browne points out that,
according to several critics, all of American culture would appear to be popular to
foreigners; that Abraham Kaplan argues that popular arts should be regarded as
“newly bom artifacts that were growing toward maturity in a ‘higher’ form”; that
Susan Sontag, in *Against Interpretations*, maintains that popular art is an entirely new
dimension, to be judged on its own standard and merit and not to be presumed a
higher art and has declared: “One cheats himself, as a human being ... if one has
respect only for the style of high culture”; and that Ross Macdonald, proud to be
known as a popular writer, declares: “We learn to see reality through the popular arts
we create and patronize. That’s what they’re for. That’s why we love them” (101).

Talking of popular art and popular artists, Russel Nye remarks:
Popular art can depend on no subsidy, state, or patron; it has to pay its way by giving the public what it wants, which may not always agree with what the artist may feel to be the most aesthetically apt.

Satisfying a large audience involves no less skill than pleasing a smaller or more sophisticated one; popular artists can and do develop tremendous expertise and real talent. A best-selling paperback is not ipso facto bad; a song is not necessarily worthless because people hum it; a painting is neither bad because many look at it with pleasure nor good because few do. (6-7)

According to Fiedler, the form of the novel embarrassed critics in the beginning due to its intimacy and its democratization of culture; however, when it came to stay, it was accepted; and, most of today’s famous novels were once dismissed as trash (What Was Literature? 76).

Anthony Burgess, in The Novel Now, points out that the very term novel means “new”; that compared to the traditional forms of literature, there is still an upstart quality about this form; that the novelist’s aim is entertainment rather than upliftment: instead of ennobling the world, he presents it as it is with its dirt and meanness; and, that the novelist is not a robed dignitary but a common man of the streets, flinching at nothing (13).

The novel is new in the sense that it seems to strike at certain traditional values. Therefore, it is not surprising that bestsellers move away from the traditional standard novel. “The poet fights against time; the novelist yields to it” (Burgess 17). Burgess goes on to add;
We can no longer expect the one big book, the single achievement, to be an author’s claim to posterity’s regard; we shall be more inclined to assess the stature of a novelist by his ability to create what the French call an œuvre, to present fragments of an individual vision in book after book, to build, if not a War and Peace or Ulysses, at least a shelf.

(19).

According to Gore Vidal, as quoted by Harriett Hawkins, like the superstars of each generation, certain books such as *The Lord of the Rings* or the *OZ* books by L. Frank Baum, films such as *The Wizard of OZ*, and television shows such as *Star Trek*, that were first encountered in childhood or adolescence by successive generations, may “do more to shape the imagination and its style” than all of our “later calculated readings of acknowledged masters” (Preface, *Classics and Trash: Traditions and Taboos in High Literature and Popular Modern Genres* xvi).

While discussing what is good or bad literature, Hawkins remarks that there are critical arguments that what counts most is not what you read but the way that you read it... what matters is not the script involved but the critical or ideological insights emergent from your reading of whatever it is you are reading (105).

Hawkins points out the flexibility and freedom provided by books thus:

Books are useful precisely because you need not necessarily derive from them the message your rulers want you to. On the contrary, you can choose your own role models from wicked characters as well as from virtuous types.... you can learn a lot from what is said between
the lines and from what certain authors do not say or dare not say. You can learn models of behaviour traditionally deemed attractive and admirable. . . . Or reverse them so as to identify yourself as a rebel. And so on. These truisms tend to be ignored in discussions about the academic study of high literature and popular genres alike. (108) Critical elitism has always sneered at popular genres as they give the public what it wants in the way of sentimentality, sensationalism, sex, violence, romanticism etc. (Hawkins 108-09). Hawkins takes support from Vidal, who, in his essay on the OZ books, says that the surest way to kill the popularity of a work is to put it on the syllabus; instant hostility to it will be created in the minds of unwilling students; and, Vidal wonders whether Baum’s survival is due to the fact that he is not taught as part of any syllabus (109).

The poet Tom Paulin, reviewing a collection of essays in favour of cultural studies, as quoted by Hawkins, writes:

The contributors are collectively of the opinion that English literature is a dying subject and they argue that it can be revived by adopting a ‘socialist pedagogy’ and introducing into the syllabus ‘other forms of writing and cultural production than the canon of literature’ . . . it is now time to challenge ‘hierarchical’ and ‘elitist’ conceptions of literature and to demolish the bourgeois ideology which has been ‘naturalised’ as literary value. . . . (105-06)

It is difficult to judge where literature ends and sub literature begins. Themes, medium, myth, and formula are terms often used in popular literature. The themes of
popular literature are vague and varied. The focus has, in popular literature, shifted to medium rather than content or form. The term *myth* is interpreted variously and in confusion. John G. Cawelti, in “The Concept of Formula in Popular Literature,” says: “All cultural products contain a mixture of two kinds of elements: conventions and inventions. Conventions are elements which are known to both the creator and his audience beforehand.... Inventions, on the other hand, are elements which are uniquely imagined by the creator.... (85). Conventions represent shared experiences and inventions deal with new things not yet realized by us. Conventions stabilize a culture while inventions help it to keep pace with the changes. While a formula is “a conventional system for structuring cultural products,” form is “an invented system of organization”; formula is linked to culture: “it represents the way in which a culture has embodied both mythical archetypes and its own preoccupations in narrative form” (Cawelti, “The Concept of Formula in Pop Literature” 86).

Genre can be defined as “a structural pattern which embodies a universal life pattern or myth in the material of language”; Cawelti agrees with Northrop Frye’s opinion that genres embody fundamental archetypal patterns, reflecting stages of the human life cycle; myths are universal but formulas are specific; Cawelti agrees with Sigmund Freud’s view that recurrent myths and stories embody a kind of collective dreaming process and adds that “the idea of a collective dream applies to formula as well as to myth” (“Concept” 88). In *A Fiedler Reader*, Fiedler regards popular literature in the same way in which Matthew Arnold regarded the emergence of literature as scripture in a world that was giving up the old time religion (275).
At present, the novel, which itself is in a transitional condition, flourishes “on the border between the world of Art and non-Art,” and it is prepared to give up realism for the “marvelous” and “magical” which it disavowed earlier (Fiedler, *A Fiedler Reader* 289).

Fiedler declares:

> It is time ... to be through with pretenses; for to Close the Gap means also to Cross the Border between the Marvelous and the Probable, the Real and the Mythical, the world of the Boudoir and the counting house and the realm of what used to be called Faerie, but has for so long been designated mere madness. Certainly the basic images of Pop forms like the Western, Science Fiction and Pornography suggest mythological as well as political or metapolitical meanings. The passage into Indian Territory, the flight into Outer Space, the ecstatic release into the fantasy world of the orgy: all these are analogues for what has traditionally been described as a journey or Pilgrimage ... toward a transcendent goal, a moment of vision.

But the mythologies of voyage and vision, which the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance inherited from the Classical World and the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and which froze into pedanticism and academicism in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, have not survived their last ironical uses in the earlier part of the twentieth.

Pop Art, however, can no more abide a mythological vacuum than can High Art: and into the space left vacant by the disappearance of
the Matter of Troy and the myths of the ancient Middle East has rushed, first of all, the Matter of Childhood: the stuff of traditional fairy tales out of the Black Forest, which seems to the present generation especially attractive, perhaps, because their “progressive” parents tended to distrust it. But something much more radically new has appeared as well: the Matter of Metropolis and the myths of the Present Future, in which the nonhuman world about us, hostile or benign, is rendered not in the guise of elves or dwarfs or witches or even Gods, but of Machines quite as uncanny as any Elemental or Olympian and apparently as immortal. Machines and the mythological figures appropriate to the media mass-produced and mass-distributed by machines: the newsboy who, saying SHAZAM in an abandoned subway tunnel, becomes Captain Marvel; the reporter (with glasses), who shucking his civilian garb in a telephone booth is revealed as Superman, immune to all but Kryptonite—these are the appropriate images of power and grace for an urban, industrial world busy manufacturing the future. (A Fiedler Reader 289-90)

There is no condescension or mockery in today’s writers. According to Fiedler, these writers

are living in the only world in which they feel at home. They are able, therefore, to recapture a certain rude magic in its authentic context, by seizing on myths not as stored in encyclopedias or preserved in certain beloved ancient works—but as apprehended at their moment of
making, which is to say, at a moment when they are not yet labeled myths. *(A Fiedler Reader 291)*

Reiterating the goals of literature, Fiedler remarks: “The Dream, the Vision, ekstasis: these have again become the avowed goals of literature; for our latest poets realize in this time of Endings ... that merely “to instruct and delight” is not enough” *(A Fiedler Reader 292).*

Great art should also lead to release and liberation. According to Fiedler, with the Closing of the Gap, “literature becomes again prophetic and universal” *(A Fiedler Reader 294).* Fie calls upon critics not to be high brow and to accept popular forms:

> Pledged like Isaiah to speaking the language of everyone, the prophets of the new dispensation can afford to be neither finicky nor genteel; and they echo, therefore, the desperate cry of the Hebrew prototype: “I am a man of unclean lips in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” *(A Fiedler Reader 294)*

The term *bestseller* has been coined with a specific purpose. It fills a need. Commonly used today, the term describes what are not necessarily the best books, but books people like best. If we analyse popular books, we get an idea of the books people have actually read; not books they should have read. Popular fiction is an index to the social history of a particular period. Bestsellers help us understand the thinking of people at a given point of time.

It is interesting to analyse and study the success of bestsellers. They are filled with personal adventure and sensationalism. They tell a good story about action and courage. Another reason for their popularity is strong characterization. While reading
bestsellers, readers are able to make contact with and relate to people full of life and vitality. Even when the book is not well written, the substance and the vivid construction meet popular demand. Other factors contributing to its popular appeal are timeliness and topical interest, fantasy, exotic settings, sex and glamour (Mott 285-88).

Bestsellers appeal to all kinds of people. They keep the fire of imagination stoked. The characters in books come again and again in different disguises and names to inspire us to great deeds of courage. They are barometers to record the emotions, thoughts and anxieties of the present. They indicate social trends. Popular literature is no longer a narcotic nor its fans mere junkies. Bestsellers provide for intertextuality and the reader is able to identify himself with the fictitious characters.

Seen in this light, bestsellers are more a social phenomenon than a literary one. They find resonance with the majority of the reading public. Bestsellers are cultural artifacts due to their link with the social world.

Stanley Fish, as quoted by Elizabeth Long, emphasises the social context of interpretation: texts have neither an infinity of meanings nor a lack of meaning; meaningfulness is always dependent on an interpretive community (57). Bestsellers are considered to be conventional entertainment literature; they are easily consumed communications from author to reader; and, people opt for bestsellers fully knowing what they will be experiencing (Long 58). Most bestsellers, according to Long, “Probably settle easily into the sediment of their readers’ past experience, becoming part of their tacit and taken-for-granted ways of viewing the world, the structure of assumptions that seems so natural it hardly ever rises to conscious awareness” (59).
Bestselling American novelists and socio-cultural critics work side by side to portray the American Dream and the American Nightmare and they chronicle this dramatic cultural transformation (Long 191). Down the ages, bestsellers have mirrored urges, motives and inner drives. Entrepreneurial ideals flourished in an uncomplicated world. The fragmented world put an end to this. Hierarchy interfered with success and sacrifices were demanded in the frightening, complex society. Life was no longer simple. Self-examination and cynicism entered bestsellers. But this could not completely cloud the value of individual independence. The calling has become more spiritual now and mystical. While some characters are forged by failure, others are successful yet restless (Long 192-94). Moreover, bestsellers “show a striking multiplicity of explicitly innovative response to social-structural change” (Long 195). Exhaustion and the spirit of survival alternate. The crisis of modern life is attempted to be conquered by renewal of conviction in traditional institutions. Some bestsellers reflect the erosion of morality while others search for some order amidst the chaos. Diversity in real life leads to diversity in bestsellers as well. Characters retreat into the self but come back to the real world.

The novels often centre on crime and scandal. There is no religious preoccupation in them. Such novels also portray the “failure of success”. There is an obsession with sexuality but traditional values, institutions and morality are upheld (Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* 278-81).

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despised (109-14). Peter Humm, Paul Stigant and Peter Widdowson, in their
introduction to *Popular Fictions: Essays in Literature and History*, assert: “The study
of popular fiction calls History back on to the stage as a crucial participant in
reformulating a relationship between fictional production and society” (15). An
important feature of popular genres, as Longhurst says is that “they are not rigidly
self-contained categories ... but evolve interactively and in relation to specific
historical foundations” (5). Popular fiction may not qualify as strictly historical, but it
facilitates the production of period novels, wherein according to Royal A.Gettmann,
the characters are “expository illustrations of the period rather than living people”
(218). Such period novels, like historical novels, help to re-read history. Most of the
novels of the American novelist Leon Marcus Uris are period novels. His fiction also
falls into the category of what David Cowart calls “The Turning Point—fictions
whose authors seek to pinpoint the precise historical moment when the modern age or
some prominent feature of it came into existence” (qtd. in Kathleen Shine Cain, *Leon-
Uris: A Critical Companion* 16)

Going back to the recent past and, wherever necessary, to the distant past too,
Uris attempts to re-read history. The Holocaust, the unthinkable historical reality that
happened in twentieth-century Europe, is re-read in his Jewish novels. The post-war
cold war is revisited in his American novels. The Irish confrontation with the British
is re-read in his Irish novels. His Marine Corps novels project the United States
Marine Corps as a living national entity in its own right, a throbbing American
community, rather than a mere fighting force. Most people learn more about the past
from historical fiction, period novels, and films than in the classroom. This is
certainly true of the generation that witnessed the birth of Israel. Many of them learned more from the novels of Leon Uris than from the many scholarly tomes on the subject.


Uris’s Jewish novels belong to the Holocaust novel tradition. The Holocaust revealed that human beings are capable of total evil. One of the most famous literary works to emerge from the Holocaust is Anne Frank’s *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947), the true account of a family’s years of hiding from the Nazis. Among the other novels dealing with the Holocaust is William Styron’s *Sophie’s Choice* (1979), in which a Polish Catholic woman’s experiences at Auschwitz are recalled. Styron’s tale focuses on the guilt of survivors as well as on the overwhelming evil of the Nazis and raises questions similar to those raised in Uris’s *QB VII*. Questions of collaboration with the Nazis also arise in Kurt Vonnegut’s *Mother Night* (1961),
featuring an American broadcaster in Germany who works as a double agent. Despite their effectiveness in furthering the Allied war effort, the broadcasts are immeasurably valuable to the Nazis, raising the question of precisely who the agent is working for. Less ambiguous than either of these novels is John Hersey’s *The Wall* (1950), often compared favourably with Uris’s *Mila 18*. Hersey’s novel, like Uris’s, uses fictional characters and diaries to recount the story of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Through this single event, both authors comment on the atrocities of the Nazis, the unspeakable suffering of European Jews during World War II, and, the indomitable nature of the human spirit. Uris tries to re-read the Holocaust from the inside, to view it through the eyes of the victims.

Leon Marcus Uris was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1924 to Wolf William, and Anna Blumberg Uris. His father, a Polish immigrant, was a paperhanger, later a storekeeper. Anna was a first-generation American. William spent a year in Palestine after World War I before entering the United States. His father derived his surname from Yerushalmi, meaning "man of Jerusalem." "He was basically a failure", Uris said later of his father. "He went from failure to failure." Uris attended schools in Norfolk, Virginia, and Baltimore, flunked three times in English, and never graduated from high school. He was an undersized child as well as asthmatic, and he once said "I used to think of myself as a sad little Jewish boy." Uris did not receive any religious training, because his father, being a Communist, forbade his son any preparation for becoming a Jew; including training for a bar mitzvah. (Leon Uri’s son and daughter through his third wife, Jill Peabody, received a bar mitzvah and a bat mitzvah). Because of the Holocaust, Leon Uris embraced a part of Judaism, "because
I wanted it as my moral standard for living." After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, at the age of seventeen, Uris joined the United States Marine Corps, his mother signing his papers allowing her underage son to enlist. He served as a radio operator in the South Pacific at Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and New Zealand from 1942 to 1945. Following his discharge from the Marines, Uris served for a short period of time as circulation district manager for the San Francisco Call-Bulletin, but his real ambition was to be a novelist. He had been writing stories since his childhood, but his first attempts to get them published were not successful. In 1950 Esquire bought an article on football; it marked the beginning of his career as a full-time writer. Uris began to work intensively on a novel about the Marine Corps, often writing 18 hours a day. The story was based on his experiences during training and combat. Although the manuscript was first rejected by several publisher, it finally appeared as his first successful novel, Battle Cry (1953) (Jack Fischel. American Jewish Life: Art & Letters, highbeam.com. 22 March 2010. Web. 31-05-2012).

Uris was married three times, first to Betty Beck in 1945, with whom he had three children. They were divorced in 1968. He then married Margery Edwards in 1969, who died, an apparent suicide, a year later. Finally he married Jill Peabody in 1970, with whom he had two children before they divorced in 1989. All three of his marriages were to non-Jewish women, although the wedding ceremonies were solemnised by a rabbi. That -Uris's three marriages were to gentile women is notable when we consider that, in a number of his novels, the primary male Jewish character falls in love in with a non-Jewish woman. Examples include; Ari Ben-Canaan's relationship with Kitty Fremont in Exodus, Andrei Androfski’s attraction to Gabriela
Rak, the beautiful Polish Roman Catholic in *Mila 18*, Abe Cady's love affair with Samantha, who comforts him when he lies temporarily blinded in a British hospital after crash-landing his plane, and later marries him in *QB VII*, and Gideon Zadok, a novelist who is unhappily married to Valerie, his non-Jewish wife, in *Mila Pass*. The latter two novels appear to mirror Uris's own career, let alone his personal life. Thus, in addition to his novels on Israel, the theme of intermarriage between Jews and gentiles is also an ongoing theme in his books. In Uris’s novels, as well as in his own personal life, the marriages fail at best, or are at least unhappy relationships. It is possible that Uris, through his fiction, is cautioning his readers about the difficulties inherent in marriage between Jew and gentile, a growing trend within the Jewish community.

In Uris’s first novel *Battle Cry* (1953), a ragtag group of Marines under the command of Major Sam Huxley enters the Second World War’s Pacific campaign, beginning at boot camp, climaxing with a bloody battle at Saipan, and ending with a newspaper account of the U.S. victory at Iwo Jima. Originally to be called *The Beachhead*, Uris’s first novel was based almost entirely on his experiences as a Marine during the Second World War. Uris began to write the book while working full time for a San Francisco newspaper. He displayed an extraordinary work ethic, writing 4,000 words every night after work-8,000 to 9,000 on his days off. After three years he had his book: 2,200 pages, which the publisher ordered him to cut substantially. Putnam was so confident about the book that it offered readers a money-back guarantee if they weren’t satisfied. The book spent fifty-two weeks on
the bestseller lists, and, in a national poll of book critics for the best novel of 1953, Battle Cry came second.

Uris’s second novel The Angry Hills (1955) is an account of the Jewish brigade from Palestine that fought with the British army in Greece in World War II. Mike Morrison, an American adventurer, is caught in war-torn Greece between the fleeing Allied army and the invading German blitzkrieg. While attempting to smuggle vital espionage papers out of the country, he becomes the object of an intensive Gestapo manhunt led by deadly SS agent Konrad Heilser. In the nightmare of the chase, Morrison shares a desperate, hopeless love with Lisa, a secret agent in the Greek underground. Inevitably, the German dragnet tightens and Mike Morrison must break for freedom, or face certain death. A terror-filled race through the blazing countryside provides the unforgettable climax to this classic war-time thriller. The spy-chase story drew on the actual experiences of Uris's uncle, who had fought as a volunteer in the campaign.

In 1956 Uris covered the Arab-Israeli fighting as a war correspondent. Two years later appeared Exodus (1958), Uris’s third novel, an epic 600-page story of the Jewish struggle to establish the State of Israel. The book became an instant bestseller and was made into a blockbuster film in 1960. Initially, Uris worked on the screenplay, but clashed with Otto Preminger, the film's producer and director, who proceeded to engage the blacklisted writer Dalton Trumbo to write the screenplay for the film. Uris had written the novel with a film version in mind. Preminger, however, "very quickly realized that Uris couldn't write Preminger's kind of movie." What Preminger wanted was to make "an American picture ... that tries to tell the story,
giving both sides a chance to plead their side." Preminger wanted to balance his characters, including a British general sympathetic to the Jewish cause, but, as in the novel, he did include an officer who was anti-semitic.

For the book Uris travelled widely in Israel "by train, plane, Vauxhall, and Austin, jeep and by foot," and interviewed more than 1,200 people—covering nearly fifty thousand miles for gathering material. *Exodus* deals with the struggle to establish and defend the state of Israel. The birth of a new nation is depicted through several characters but the story of an American nurse and an Israeli freedom fighter forms the nucleus of the work.

The story begins when some thirty thousand Jews, who have fled from Europe, are interned by the British on the island of Cyprus and denied entry into Palestine. An American journalist, Mark Parker, comes to Cyprus to see Kitty Fremont, an American nurse and his lifelong friend, who lost her husband in the war. After preparations made by Ari Ben Canaan, a young officer of the Jewish underground, three hundred refugees, mostly orphaned children, escape from the internment camp. They board an old freighter called the *Exodus* and go on a hunger strike in protest against the British immigration policy. Kitty is also aboard the ship. She becomes attached to a refugee girl named Karen. Dov Landau, a survivor from Auschwitz, becomes friends with Karen. Influenced by the intervention of the island commander, General Sutherland, the British permit the *Exodus* to sail for Haifa. In Palestine a strong bond of affection develops between Ari and Kitty. Ari’s uncle Akiva and Dov are members of the Irgun, a terrorist organisation. When they are captured by the British and are scheduled to be hanged, Ari joins with the Irgun and
executes a mass breakout of Jews from the Acre prison. Though the escape is successful, Akiva dies and Ari is wounded.

When the United Nations votes for the partition of Palestine, hostilities increase. Kitty remains by Ari's side. Karen and Dov Landau plan their future. Karen wants to continue her work in a kibbutz. Ari and Kitty wait for Karen to attend the seder. When she does not come, Ari makes enquiries and finds out that she has been killed by terrorists from Gaza.

Uris subsequently published a book about the places he describes in Exodus titled Exodus Revisited (1959), in collaboration with the famous Greek photographer Dimitrios Harissiadis.

Uris's fourth novel, Mila 18 (1961) chronicles the Warsaw ghetto uprising. The title of the novel refers to the address of the command post of the Jewish resistance in the city. From a bunker at Mila 18, a group of Jewish resistance fighters takes on the Nazis in the final days of the Warsaw ghetto. A reporter from the West, Christopher de Monti, befriends both the Nazi villains and the starving, ghetto-imprisoned Jews, but ultimately sides with the Jews. As the ghetto is destroyed and the final liquidation is under way, de Monti escapes to tell the world the horrific story. Uris had a personal connection to this story through his father, William Uris, who once lived in Warsaw and whose parents were murdered in Treblinka, the camp where the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto were sent to be gassed to death. Uris travelled to Warsaw in 1959 to research the 1943 uprising and the ghetto itself, but did not get far. Finding it difficult even to get permission to see the ghetto remains, he left after about a week. Uris found what he needed at the Ghetto Fighters’ Kibbutz in Israel,
where he met the couple who had led the 42-day ghetto revolt. Uris dedicated *Mila 18* to them, and to another Warsaw ghetto fighter who took great pains to document the atrocities and hide the evidence underground. The title *Mila 18* became so well known that a young Joseph Heller was forced to change the title of his satirical, anti-war novel *Catch-18* to *Catch-22*.

Leon Uris’s fascination with World War II continues in *Armageddon: A Novel of Berlin* (1963), his fifth novel, which begins during the final days of the war and quickly moves to the escalating tensions between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies over control of Berlin. The story is told through the lives of fictional characters on all sides of the conflict. In this novel, the Americans and the anti-Nazi Germans are almost exclusively moral and idealistic, while the Soviets and pro-Nazi Germans are equally immoral and unscrupulous.

In 1964 Uris and his British publisher, Bantam, were sued for libel by a Polish doctor, Wladislaw Dering, who claimed that Uris had mentioned him by name as one of the surgeons who had committed atrocities against the Jewish prisoners in Auschwitz. The court ruled against Uris, but ordered Dr. Dering to pay the legal costs of both sides. He was awarded only a halfpenny for damage. The incident provided the basis for Uris’s later novel *QB VII*, which was published in 1970 and in which Dr. Adam Kelno sues the Pulitzer Prize winning author Abraham Cady.

In *Topaz* (1967), his sixth novel, Uris highlights the Cuban Missile Crisis, presenting an espionage thriller that also involves Soviet infiltration of NATO through French sources. *Topaz* focuses on political and social themes engendered by the cold war atmosphere of the 1950s and the 1960s. The struggle between good and
evil is characterized by the battle for world influence between democracy and totalitarianism. The highly charged political scenario complicates the lives of the characters by fostering divided loyalties and doomed affairs. The tension between capitalism and communism hovers over the action of the novel.

The background of *Topaz* reads like a spy story. An exiled French diplomat, who did not support De Gaulle's foreign policy, approached Uris with papers containing information about the French Intelligence Service. The publication of *Topaz* caused a serious conflict inside the French government. When Alfred Hitchcock decided to adapt the book into a film, Uris wrote the screenplay, but Hitchcock was not impressed. The final script was written by Samuel A. Taylor. The location filming in Paris was delayed. Andre Malraux, the French Minister of Culture, withdrew the crew's shooting permit as he felt the film was anti-French. At least three different versions for the ending were shot and later Hitchcock regarded the film as a complete disaster. Philippe Thyraud de Vosjoli, the former French diplomat and intelligence official, sued Uris for breach of contract. Eventually he was awarded royalties from the book and the film version.

*QB VII* (1970), Uris's seventh novel, is autobiographical since it is loosely based on an incident in his life. In *QB VII*, Uris takes on the twin issues of inmate collaborators in the Nazi camps and the capacity of evil in ordinary and otherwise good, citizens. Polish Catholic surgeon Adam Kelno, survivor of the fictional Jadwiga concentration camp, spends fifteen years after the war working with primitive people in Borneo. Returning to London, he discovers that he has been labeled a war criminal in a new book, *The Holocaust*, by the American novelist Abraham Cady. During the
libel suit that he files against Cady, the horrors of the concentration camp life are revived. Uris uncovers the darkest side of the Holocaust and also the participation of ordinary citizens in the atrocities committed against the Jews in World War II.

In Uris’s eighth novel *Trinity* (1976), the political and religious issues fuelling the troubles in Ireland are laid out in the intertwining stories of three Irish families, Catholic and Protestant, in the North and in the Republic, stretching from the 1840s to 1916. The central characters are a young Catholic rebel and a Protestant girl, who try to find their own place in the country divided by religion and wealth. For once, Uris wrote on a topic with which his own history was not connected—at least it wasn’t until he began researching the book. He and his third wife Jill spent nine months travelling through Ireland and Northern Ireland. They arrived at a volatile time: a few months after Bloody Sunday, when 14 unarmed men were shot dead after a civil rights march in Derry. Threats were all around them: There were shootings, curfews and bombs. In Belfast, their hotel was evacuated when a car bomb was found half a block away. “He and Jill were definitely exposed to danger,” Nadel says. “But he had to experience these things before he could write about them. That’s partly why Uris has been such a successful novelist. He conveys that authenticity that ‘I was there.’ And he was.” *Trinity* spent 100 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

In *The Haj* (1984), his ninth novel, Uris presents the tale of the birth of Israel from the Arab perspective. *The Haj* paints a portrait of the Arabs that is no more flattering than that in *Exodus*. Told largely through the words of Ishmael, son of Haj Ibrahim of Tabah, *The Haj* explores the history of Jewish settlement in Palestine and the eventual displacement of Palestinian Arabs.
Uris’s tenth novel *Mitla Pass* (1988) begins with the historical decision by
Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion to attack Egypt in anticipation of an
Egyptian attack on Israel. *Mitla Pass* resembles *QB VII* in that its main character is a
novelist whose career mirrors that of Leon Uris. *Mitla Pass* is a semiautobiographical
account of the Sinai campaign of 1956. The protagonist is Gideon Zadok, a gifted
young author of a successful World War II novel. He travels to Israel, determined to
find material for a new book. There he meets Natasha Solomon, a survivor of the
Holocaust. Gideon is torn between her and his love for his wife, who supported him
when he was an aspiring writer. On the eve of the 1956 Sinai War, Gideon joins the
Israeli forces. He is parachuted to the key junction of Mitla Pass, deep behind enemy
lines. In *Mitla Pass* the primary focus is on one man, Gideon Zadok. All the other
themes are woven around this central character. This novel portrays Jews on the
offensive.

*Redemption* (1995), Uris’s eleventh novel, fleshes out the stories of the main
characters of his earlier Irish novel *Trinity*. Many of the characters have committed
sins against their country, their loved ones, or themselves, and therefore must be
redeemed. This forms the theme of the novel *Redemption*. Uris researches thoroughly
before putting pen to paper. Thomas A. Larkin, in “A Talk with Uris: *Trinity* was the
seed, *Redemption* was the Unplanned progeny,” quotes Uris: “Research to me is as
important as or more important than the writing. It is the foundation upon which the
book is built. I have a sense of duty toward history, not to distort it and keep within
the framework of the basic truth” (n.p).
Uris’s twelfth novel *A God in Ruins* (1999) is set in the United States on the eve of the 2008 presidential election. It manifests the American-Jewish dream of a Jewish-American President, effected through such strategies as adoption, Marine honour, the American belief in human decency and personal integrity and the sheer power of truth. It is not an exclusively Jewish novel. The protagonist Quinn Patrick O’Connell is Irish, American, Roman Catholic and Jew. He is also a United States gyrene, a member of the United States Marine Corps, which, to Uris, constitutes a virtual and exclusive community. The novel offers some glimpses of American Jewish life. Uris interweaves historical fact with fiction to produce a powerful novel of politics, family, intrigue, love and passion (Jack Fischel, *Remembering Leon Uris*. American Jewish Life: Arts & Letters, highbeam.com. 22 March 2010. Web. 01 June 2012).

*O’Hara’s Choice* (2003), Uris’s thirteenth novel, set in tumultuous times for the Marine Corps—and for America—joins two headstrong young people in a rare kind of love. Amanda and Zachary try to rid themselves of the unstoppable attraction that gnaws at them, but resistance proves futile. They risk status, career and even their lives to quench their desires. Amanda, who, with her striking beauty and her wealth, could have her pick of beaus, is stubbornly drawn to the dashing young Marine in a gesture of defiance. Her father, Horace Kerr, has influence, but hungers for more power. When it becomes obvious that Amanda has fallen for Zachary O’Hara, her father’s attitude turns sour. He pitches himself into a rage and is on the verge of disinheriting his favorite child. Irish immigrant Paddy O’Hara raised his son among the Corpsmen, driving him to enlist as a Marine. Zachary becomes a man filled with
anguish, tom by his love for Amanda and his allegiance to the Corps. At this point in history, the Marine Corps teeters delicately on the brink of extinction. Saving it will take great effort and loyalty on the part of the remaining few officers. Zachary looks like the brilliant light that could guide them back to the top. He immerses himself in a highly secret, critical report that is designed to make the Corps indispensable. Its success seems to pivot on O'Hara's leadership, which would require a minimum of two heartbreaking years away at sea. After much soul-searching and agonizing, he makes his choice. So does Amanda. As with Uris’s other stories, O’Hara’s Choice is an historical epic laced with political overtones. (Kate Ayers. Rev. of O’Hara’s Choice, by Leon Uris. bookreporter.com. 22 Jan. 2011. Web. 01 June 2012).

The Holocaust is the basic theme of the Jewish novels of Uris. In fact, he may be regarded as the ultimate creative chronicler of the Holocaust. In other words, the harrowing details of the Nazi cruelty to the Jews has not been exposed as eloquently and as heart-rendingly by any other creative artist as by Uris. In his novel Armageddon: A Novel of Berlin, Uris attempts to trace the Nazi motivation for their anti-semitism in German folklore, particularly The Legend of Rombaden. In his American novel Battle Cry, Uris presents racial bigotry, particularly anti-semitism. In his Jewish novels, Uris presents in detail the centuries-old European anti-semitism. In Exodus, Mila 18 and QB VII, he paints harrowing and detailed pictures of the atrocities indulged in by the Nazis and their fellow-travellers against the Jews of Europe. His novel Exodus presents the anti-semitic attitude of a section of the British race. In The Haj, he paints a detailed picture of the sheer hatred of the Arabs towards the Jews. In his novel Topaz, however, he shows the French, at least some of them as
being sympathetic towards the Jews. Moreover, there are also portraits of European individuals sympathetic to the Jews in a few of his novels.

To Uris, as well as to all Jews, the Holocaust was an incomprehensible and an unpardonable betrayal of humanity. Though anti-semitism is not new, since virtually every early European literature harboured anti-semitism in its works, as for instance, William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, Christopher Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*, or Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, what puzzles human understanding is the magnitude and the intensity of the Holocaust.

Anti-semitism has a long history. The Holocaust Project, in “A Brief History of Antisemitism,” traces anti-semitism to the year 70 B.C.E. when Pompey the Great, a powerful Roman military leader, conquered Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine, defiled the Jewish temple, killed the priests, and ordered the Jews to begin worshipping the Roman gods. Most Jews resisted, and, as the pressure increased, so did conflict within the Jewish community. Many Jews called for open rebellion against Rome, while others argued that Jews must be willing to adapt. A hundred years later, Jesus began his ministry in Palestine. The debate between the rival Jewish factions grew increasingly heated, and the climax of the conflict was triggered by the death of Jesus. Immediately afterwards, the followers of Jesus renounced Judaism, and Christianity was born as a distinctively separate religion (The Holocaust Project. *A Brief History of Antisemitism*, humanitas-intemational.org. n. d. Web. 4 June, 2012).

Most Christians believed that the Jews and their priests were responsible for the death of Jesus. As Christianity spread, the differences between Christianity and Judaism became pronounced. By the fourth century, Jews were generally despised by
Christians everywhere. Laws were passed throughout the Christian world to "protect" the "faithful" from Jewish "contamination," by forbidding them to eat with, do business with, or have sex with Jews, and by the sixth century, Jews were not allowed to hold public office, employ Christian servants, or even show themselves in the streets during the Holy Week (The Holocaust Project. *A Brief History of Antisemitism*, humanitas-intemational.org. n.d. Web. 4 June, 2012).

Beginning in 1096, Christian leaders launched a series of Crusades against the Muslims to win control of Palestine, the birthplace of Jesus. On their way to the Middle East, the Crusader armies attacked Jewish communities along the route. In the First Crusade entire communities of Jews were forced to choose between baptism or death, resulting in nearly 10,000 Jews being slaughtered during the first six months alone. The Second Crusade in 1146 intensified the religious persecution of Jews. Thousands of Jews fled to Eastern Europe, but they were unable to escape the relentless oppression, and by the thirteenth century, Church leaders in what is now Germany required all Jews to wear cone-shaped hats so that no one would mistake them for ordinary Germans. In Latin countries, Jews were forced to sew yellow badges on their clothing as a means of instant identification (The Holocaust Project. *A Brief History of Antisemitism*, humanitas-intemational.org. n.d. Web. 4 June, 2012).

By the end of the fifteenth century, except for a few business encounters, Jews were totally isolated from their Christian neighbours. In some countries, Jews were forcibly confined in ghettos. With forced segregation came new myths and stereotypes. Increasingly Jews were portrayed as agents of the devil, responsible for every catastrophe from random crime to plague and drought. Artists portrayed Jews
as having horns, tails, and evil satanic faces. Christian priests and scholars often elaborated on the idea that Jews were evil creatures who were somehow less than human (The Holocaust Project. *A Brief History of Antisemitism*, humanitas-international.org. n.d. Web. 4 June, 2012).

Over time, most Jews were driven from central Europe. Many of them settled in Poland and Russia. But there too the persecution continued. In 1648 and 1649, thousands of Polish Jews were slaughtered. During the late 1800s, in both Poland and Russia, Jews were murdered in organized mass killings called pogroms (The Holocaust Project. *A Brief History of Antisemitism*, humanitas-international.org. n.d. Web. 4 June, 2012).

Meanwhile, in France, many Christians were calling for the emancipation of Jews as an outgrowth of the French Revolution (1789-1799), with its emphasis on liberty and equality. The movement grew, and by the mid 1800s, most Western and Central European Jews were fully emancipated (The Holocaust Project. *A Brief History of Antisemitism*, humanitas-international.org. n.d. Web. 4 June, 2012).

Yet, during the late 1800s, "Jew-hatred" resurfaced as a formidable force throughout Europe, and in 1879 the word *anti-semitism* was coined by the German journalist and pre-Fascist Wilhelm Mahr, who felt the need for a more scientific, more benign term than *Juden-hass* (German for "hatred of Jews") to define a political movement centered upon hatred of Jews (The Holocaust Project. *A Brief History of Antisemitism*, humanitas-international.org. n.d. Web. 4 June, 2012).

About this same time a new Jewish movement called Zionism emerged, and many Jews began working toward an independent Jewish state in Palestine, viewing
this as the only sure way to avoid the resurgent persecution. Zionists in large numbers bought land and settled in Palestine (The Holocaust Project. *A Brief History of Antisemitism*, humanitas-international.org. n.d. Web. 4 June, 2012).

In 1918, during the course of World War I, Britain captured Palestine from the Ottoman Turks. Fearing the hostility of the local Palestinians and neighbouring Arab nations, Britain soon limited Jewish immigration to Palestine, even though many Jews had aided in the British takeover (The Holocaust Project. *A Brief History of Antisemitism*, humanitas-international.org. n.d. Web. 4 June, 2012).

In 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and set out on a concentrated programme to intensify his nation’s hatred of the Jews. Hitler once said that if the Jews had not existed he would have had to invent them. In many respects that is exactly what he did. Hitler mounted a powerful propaganda campaign designed and implemented by Joseph Goebbels, which blamed the Jews for Germany's many economic problems, as well as Bolshevism and the worldwide threat of Communism. Germany's nationalist hatred of the Jews ultimately led to what was known as the "Final Solution," the physical annihilation of almost six million Jews—in addition to almost five million other non-Jewish "racial enemies" of the German people during World War II (The Holocaust Project. *A Brief History of Antisemitism*, humanitas-international.org. n.d. Web. 4 June, 2012).

Jews the world over, vowing "Never Again" in reaction to the Holocaust, rallied to the Zionist cause. Though faced with often violent opposition from Palestinian Arabs and others, Jews persisted in their quest for freedom and autonomy. Finally, in 1947, the United Nations partitioned Palestine into Arab and Jewish states.

Anti-semitism reached its climax in the Holocaust. The *Reader’s Digest,* in *WWII: The People’s Story,* summarises the Holocaust in “The Horrors of Nazi Rule” thus:

Genocide is not unique to World War II, but Adolf Hitler’s regime made it a core faith. A mystique developed, was encouraged, and still persists around Nazism; in reality, it was a society ruled by conspiracy of thugs, racists, psychopaths, and murderers. Amid the moral chaos created by Hitler and his associates, anyone could become a victim. First, they were Germans, then they were from all European states. Specific groups were targeted, denied their humanity, slaughtered without compunction—people with disabilities, slavs, gypsies, homosexuals, political opponents, and most of all, Jews.

As soon as the Nazis came to power, Jews were excluded from the civil service and the professions. Within two years, the Nuremberg race laws stripped citizenship from any German with a Jewish grandparent. Then the expansion began....

More than 50 percent of Germany’s half-million Jews had emigrated by 1939, but Hitler’s advance left the fate of more and more Jews in Nazi hands. With the invasion of Poland in 1939, some 2.5 million Polish Jews came under Nazi rule....
With the takeover of Poland, the Nazis confined Jews in ghettos—to be used as forced labor, murdered, and starved. Then in June 1941, came the German invasion of the Soviet Union. The Wehrmacht’s and SS’s mass murders were accompanied by those of special death squads, the Einsatzgruppen who, assisted by local squads of collaborators, targeted Jews. By the end of the year, around one million Jews had been murdered.

That autumn the Nazis moved toward the “final solution”—the gassing of all Jews and other “undesirables.” The final solution was already under way when, on January 20, 1942, Reinhard Heydrich summoned a group of German bureaucrats to a conference in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee to discuss details for the planned murder of every European Jew. In the new death camps, murder was the sole objective. In concentration camps, meanwhile, inmates were also being murdered, starved, and worked to death.

Even as the war intensified, the Nazis devoted more of their efforts to mass murder. While focusing on eastern Europe, they reached out to engulf the ancient communities of Greece and the Balkans. The Jews of western Europe, along with others, were consigned to the camps. Resistance to the final solution took many forms.... In autumn 1943, Jorgen von Fuhren Kieler, a 24-year-old member of the Danish Resistance, heard of Nazi plans to abduct Danish Jews....
Some 7,000 Danish Jews were saved. Earlier that year, the Warsaw ghetto had risen against the Nazis in the first phase of an epic of resistance. The Jewish Fighting Organization, together with the Jewish Military Union, fought with homemade weapons as the Nazis sought to liquidate the ghetto. Final resistance was not crushed until July. A total of 14,000 Jews died in the uprising, 7,000 were murdered in the Treblinka death camp, and some lived to fight alongside fellow Poles in the Warsaw uprising of August-October 1944. A quarter of Warsaw’s one million population died. The Nazis then demolished most of the city.

Between 1940 and 1942, a cluster of concentration camps and a death camp were built at Auschwitz. In that place of cruelty, inmates were enslaved, subjected to inhumane medical experiments, and gassed.

Systemic genocide, as it was practised by Germany, has no precedent in modern history and nothing of such magnitude in recorded history. It is sometimes said that if the Germans could lend themselves to near-extermination of a whole people, other nations are similarly capable. Possibly so. But these speculations beg the question. Mass murder of a people on the scale reached in Europe under Hitler has never before occurred (Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry 1933-1945*. 6).

No one can convincingly explain such unparalleled savagery. The destruction of European Jewry during World War II has by now become part of history. It is a
finished chapter, a catastrophe from which Jews can scarcely hope to recover. The physical and spiritual heartland of a two-thousand-year-old civilization has perished forever. The Holocaust refuses to go the way of most history, not only because of the magnitude of the destruction—the murder of six million Jews—but because the events surrounding it are still in a very real sense humanly incomprehensible. No one altogether understands how mass murder on such a scale could have happened or could have been allowed to happen. The accumulation of more facts does not yield this understanding; indeed, mankind may never comprehend the Holocaust.

The Nazis forced their victims to undergo a wholly new order of human experience and, inevitably, had to undergo vast changes themselves during this transformation. For the first time in history, human beings were processed into matter, and the processing began while they were still alive. Even during the most barbarous onslaughts in history some margin of human response remained, both for the victim and the persecutor. In the Nazified world, the narrowest of them were destroyed.

Extermination of starved and terrorized Jews became the desperate self-deception of a nation losing a war which it could not admit it was losing. The mass exterminations actually began with the invasion of Russia in June 1941 and continued with mounting excesses for the next three years. The Einsatzgruppen, mobile killing squads, were instructed to kill the Jews at will. Moreover Jews were made external scapegoats and, in the process leading to the extermination, the myth of the Jew as “race poisoner” and “enemy of the nation” and its inverse—the myth of Aryan supremacy—had a fatal grip on Nazi thought.
The extermination of millions posed no problems for Hitler. He had once told Rauschning, the former National Socialist President of the Danzig Senate: “Nature is cruel, therefore we, too, may be cruel. If I don’t mind sending the pick of German people into the hell of war without regret for the shedding of valuable German blood, then I have naturally the right to destroy millions of men of inferior races who increase like vermin” (Levin 297).

The marking of the Jews with the Jewish star, restrictions on their movement, confiscation of their property, conscription into forced labor, and the establishment of Jewish Councils were completed within the first few months of civil rule. The Jews who lived in the city were rounded up and moved into a very limited area called the ghetto site. In the summer of 1940, before the ghetto was officially established, the Germans built walls, eight feet high, which separated the section where the Jews were concentrated, from the rest of the city. The Warsaw ghetto was the largest in European history. Before ghettoization the Jews were instructed to hang the Jewish star in their shops and they were prohibited from entering certain areas and streets of the city. Jewish property was registered and all assets exceeding 2,000 zlotys were confiscated; Jewish bank accounts were frozen and Jews were forbidden to earn more than 500 zlotys a month (Levin 206).

For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead and for the living. He has no right to deprive the future generations of a past that belongs to the collective memory of the Jewish race. To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a
second time (Elie Wiesel, “Preface to the New Translation, Night xy). Wiesel
gloomily adds:

And now, scarcely ten years after Buchenwald, I realize that the
world forgets quickly. Today, Germany is a sovereign state. The
German Army has been resuscitated. Ilse Koch, the notorious sadistic
monster of Buchenwald, was allowed to have children and live happily
ever after . . . War criminals stroll through the streets of Hamburg and
Munich. The past seems to have been erased, relegated to oblivion.

Today, there are anti-Semites in Germany, France, and even the
United States who tell the world that the “story” of six million
assassinated Jews is nothing but a hoax; and many people, not
knowing any better, may well believe them, if not today then
tomorrow or the day after . . .

I am not so naïve to believe that this slim volume will change the
course of history or shake the conscience of the world.

Books no longer have the power they once did.

Those who kept silent yesterday will remain silent tomorrow.

(“Preface to the New Translation” xii-xiii)

Uris has borne witness. He has bequeathed to the future generations a past that
belongs to the collective memory of the Jewish race.

This thesis is organized as hereunder. The opening chapter introduces the
study: it argues that popular fiction deserves to be taken seriously, because of its
immediate relevance to society, particularly period novels, which, almost like

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historical novels, recreate past periods of history, but through stereotypes of the age depicted; it introduces the American-Jewish novelist Leon Uris and presents an overview of his fictional oeuvre; since Uris’s Jewish novels deal with anti-semitism and the Holocaust, it traces the history of anti-semitism and furnishes a summary of the Holocaust. The second chapter analyses Uris’s novel *Exodus* as a Jewish chronicle. The third chapter analyses Uris’s novels *Mila 18* and *QB VII* as chronicles of the Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. The fourth chapter analyses Uris’s novels *The Haj*, *Mila Pass*, and *A God in Ruins* as celebratory documents of Jewish history, projecting the Jew in a new, positive, triumphant mould. The final chapter sums up the thesis and offers suggestions for further research. A list of Works Cited is appended to the thesis. So is an article by the preset researcher, titled “Power Politics in Palestine: A Postcolonial Reading of Leon Uris’s *Exodus*” emanating from the present study.

Considering the controversial and the sensitive nature of the subject, the present researcher was constrained to base himself primarily on the texts of the novels analysed and has, therefore, quoted extensively from them. He has not ventured to probe the literary merits and demerits of the narratives, since his primary focus was on the “chronicle” and not on the form.

Uris has spelt the same term differently in different novels, for instance, *ovarectomies / ovariectomies, Afrika Korps / Afrika Corps Haj Amin el Husseini / Haj Amin al Husseini* and *Kawukji / Kaukji*. The present researcher has followed Uris’s spelling in each text while analysing it.
This dissertation has been written and documented according to the guidelines provided by the Modern language Association of America’s *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* 7th ed. (New Delhi: Affiliated East-West P, 2009).