CONCLUSION

The thesis has been an attempt at evaluating the inter-relationship between the political contingencies that centre round significant aspects of Jewish national identity and the production and reception of literary compositions relating to the above theme discernible in the novels of Leon Uris. There have been serious scholarly engagements such as the work of Yael Zerubavel, in which the involvement of politicians, writers and educators in Israel in the making of a new national tradition has been addressed. The projection of such powerful myths as the ingathering of the exiled, the up-building of Zion as a model society, the creation of a New Hebrew or Jewish “type” and an overarching vision of national redemption has been examined from a social-scientific perspective by Zerubavel. Taking cue from Zerubavel, the present thesis demonstrates that the novel as a medium has been employed by Leon Uris to unleash imaginations in the readers’ minds for the realisation of the Jewish agenda outlined above. Probably the novel served as a more effective site for governing their imaginations than disciplinary and institutional sites which functioned under the aegis of the pro-Israeli establishments. It could influence much wider ethnic collectivities besides the Jews and could go far beyond the precincts of the West Asian Semitic heartland.

Two of the important premises for the present thesis are that bestselling fiction certainly serves as an intellectual barometer for a culture and that Uris’ bestsellers have been utilised for making thematic realignments in the minds of the readers — both Jewish and non-Jewish alike. For greater analytical advantage and rigour, the study was limited to an evaluation of six works relating to Jewish nationalism and identity— *Exodus, Mila 18, Armageddon, Q B VII, The Haj* and *Jerusalem Song of Songs*, since they demonstrate the potential of such fiction in moulding the
imaginations of the people by staking claims on the past, present and future through textual affiliation. It has been a major concern in the present study to discern the crucial narrative strategies employed by Uris.

The thesis has laid stress on mythologies, given the fact that they have starting points in real or imagined events. As in the case of institutions, the deliberate use, perpetuation and manipulation of political mythology in Uris’ novels performed definite political functions, influencing several collectivities of people, making them amenable to the Jewish agenda. More importantly, it has been brought out how Jewish collective memory has been made instrumental in the construction of a distinct national identity and culture, wherein their generated imaginings lent its character to the political configurations and identities. Hence it was considered important to focus on how political mythologies have been employed for the dual function of providing legitimization of the contemporary Jewish aspirations as well as for privileging the Jewish world view.

The incommensurability between fiction as the playground of the unreal, and history as a discipline with claims to truth cannot be overstated. It has been brought out in the thesis how a mix of hard historical data and bizarre fiction has been employed by the author to raise imaginations to extreme heights. It could be demonstrated how the nation as a political artefact became real in the imaginary experience while the imaginings, in turn, served to heighten its reality. Some of the most crucial narrative techniques and strategies at work in the realization of the objectives outlined above could be discerned in the various chapters which are recapitulated below.

Given the fact that the Holocaust experience remained dreadful, the study has made extensive explorations into how Uris represents the Holocaust trauma of European Jewry under Hitler and Nazism from the
vantage point of the Jews. The meanings generated by depicting the Holocaust as the most unique and the most heinous act ever, perpetrated on a totally innocent, docile and defenceless lot, have been squarely addressed. Similarly it has been explained how the depiction of the West as passive agents, not preventing the atrocities on the Jews, and as callous agents denying immigration rights to Jewish refugees of Nazism, makes a case for the creation of safe living space for the Jews. The study has also examined how the image of a Jewish state—as the ultimate and invincible victor—is made to crystallise in the mind of the reader by drawing on the biblical analogy of the triumph of the shepherd boy, David, over the Philistine giant, Goliath, besides making metaphorical reductions of the contemporary Jewish struggles with those depicted in the Old Testament. It has been shown how instances of Jewish defeat in antiquity as well as in the pre-state years and above all as victims of Nazism in the ghettos of Europe are projected as examples of the Jewish determination to “fight until the last man.” The very act of offering armed resistance to a more powerful enemy is commemorated as a symbolic victory in itself, above and beyond the historical outcome of that act. The display of readiness to sacrifice one’s life for the Jewish cause is thus glorified as a supreme patriotic value that diminishes the significance of the outcome. History is thus subverted through the perpetuation of mythical representations of the past. The study demonstrates how Uris seeks to shape the reader’s understanding of the Jewish past by adjusting history into these mythical moulds.

The various narrative strategies employed by Uris in his works, which serve to legitimize Jewish settlement in Palestine and the territorial expansion of the state since 1948, have also been dealt with in detail. It is demonstrated how Uris here echoes the colonial settler’s justificatory ideology which described land outside European borders to be “empty” and available for settlement, their populations being barbarous and uncivilized.
It has been shown how claims of land redemption and the presentation of the Jews as the bearers of a civilizing mission put forth by Uris serve to justify the expropriation of Arab lands and the subordination of the indigenous people. In the novels of Uris, the conflict between the Jews and Arabs appears not as a conflict between two peoples over the same piece of land or as a colonial settler movement that displaced an indigenous people. Instead the author’s narrative strategies serve to place the responsibility for the flight/expulsion of the Palestinians on the Arab leaders. It has also been examined how the author, by his representation of the establishment of Jewish settlements on Palestinian Arab land through the expulsion of the indigenous Arab population, exonerates the Jews of all responsibility towards the same. Israeli statehood is depicted as the realisation of the renewal, restoration and redemption of Jewish life.

It has been a further concern in the thesis to show how Uris adopted a highly selective attitude towards the available historical knowledge while reconstructing the past. The author, while depicting the land of Palestine as empty, desolate, and yearning for the return of its ancient Hebrew inhabitants, marginalises the centuries of Arab life in Palestine. Uris argues that the land of Israel, for which the Jewish people traditionally have had deep attachment, was part and parcel of their religious and ethnic consciousness from the biblical times. It is concluded that what we see in the works of Uris is a mythologized Palestine as the land of the Bible, the birth place of Jesus, and therefore a Judeo-Christian domain that is an important extension of the West.

In the novels of Uris, Israel is represented as a nation in search of peace while the Arabs/Palestinians are made to appear as a warlike, bloodthirsty people, prone to irrational violence and bent on exterminating the Jews. Israel is associated with liberalism, freedom and democracy, while the Arabs appear as a twentieth century version of “Oriental despotism,”
sensuality, ignorance and backwardness. In Uris’ version the Arabs become villains rather than victims, being portrayed as culturally derelict, economically foolish and politically vindictive. The socio-political circumstances which impelled this “representation” of a “degenerate Arab world” and a “heroic Jewish Israel” are discussed in detail within the thesis.

For a newly emergent nation, precariously placed amidst hostile Arab nations, the need of Uris’ day was the creation of a citizenry armed with self-esteem and resoluteness, not only to protect the honour of the Jews, but to perpetuate them with aggression and far-sightedness. Uris’ fictional appropriation of memory and history is seen to have played a significant role in recasting the Jewish mind in this deterministic mould and manipulating American public opinion for the Israeli cause.