

# Friendship and the Nation: Political Emotions in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

An Interdisciplinary Workshop  
sponsored by the Henry J. Leir Luxembourg Program -- Clark University  
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Organized by Thomas Kühne and Danny Kaplan

Conference Report by Lauren Bloomberg, Clark University

Reminiscent of Aristotle's emphasis on friendship as the fabric of citizenship, this interdisciplinary workshop, organized by Danny Kaplan (Bar Ilan University) and Thomas Kühne (Clark University), assembled a small group of scholars from the U.S., Canada, Israel, Turkey, Britain, Germany, and China to explore whether and how friendship, as a social tie and cultural construct, affects national identities and processes of nation building, and in turn how agents of the nation—the state, mass media, the military, and social movements—induce, manage and constrain emotions of friendship. While current scholarship stresses anonymous or metaphorical aspects of national solidarity, this workshop brought together case studies on various regions around the world to inquire into the impact of face-to-face relationships on the rise of nation states and nationalist movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

DANNY KAPLAN opened the conference by reviewing the historiography of “friendship” studies. Long ignored by academia, the politics of friendship is only now being systematically analyzed. Studies of nationalism present little discussion of the cultural mechanisms of inclusion that render members of the nation into companions and friends. Solidarity and friendship are often taken for granted rather than analytically explored. Discussions in the politics of friendship offer a good starting point for such inquiry but require a more systematic, cross-cultural and historical research to uncover how friendship ties relate to national solidarity in terms of linguistic rhetoric, structures of feeling, constructions of narrative and memory, and structures of organizations and social networks in particular cultural contexts.

In the first paper, “Solidarity versus Civic Friendship,” philosopher SIBYL A. SCHWARZENBACH (City University of New York) presented “civic friendship” as a necessary condition for genuine justice. Theorists, she said, must formulate a normative account of “solidarity” for historically solidarity has allowed the massive violation of individual rights. Schwarzenbach proffers instead the notion of “civic friendship,” which is based on an alternative notion of activity or what she calls “ethical reproductive praxis.” This praxis, the foundation of any truly democratic society, can be understood as all those “reasoned and conscious activities which go towards *reproducing flourishing human relations for their own sake* – in the ideal case . . . relations of friendship.” Such friendship minimally aims at the other's good, at equality as well as performs a ‘practical doing’ for the other. Civic friendship is far more a political version of *this* form of activity, and must be embodied in a society's basic institutions: it operates via the society's constitution, laws, and customs as well as by way of a modern doctrine of individual rights.

Solidarity, with its foundations in the workers' movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by contrast, emerges as inherently gendered: based upon traditionally 'male' forms of community. Schwarzenbach contrasted military and "production" models of labor – actions done typically by men, and (in the latter instance) primarily for the sake of the product or to appropriate material possessions, with "ethical reproduction (praxis)." The latter actions have been far more typical of women in the private sphere and are often performed in order simply to establish "philia": the reproduction of good relationships for their own sake. Such philia also incorporates far more difference and diversity (for instance, nurturing those far younger or older than one self). Thus, in Schwarzenbach's view the danger of promoting the ideal of solidarity today is the danger of assimilating all other groups into the white male military, competitive and productive models of activity. But in political practice it is, of course, the fraternal male model, that presupposes sameness and equality, which has pervaded Western notions of civic friendship.

In the ensuing discussion, the issue of ethnocentrism was raised. Is Schwarzenbach's model of friendship a culturally-specific, colonizing Western framework? Friendship models cannot be exported, it was argued. Schwarzenbach admitted a "push" aspect within her argument, but continually pressed for *some* normative model to provide minimal practical application of intellectual inquiry. The participants furthermore discussed whether inclusion was possible without some form of exclusion; is self-definition possible without the "other?" Does Schwarzenbach's vision hide exclusion, rather than erase it? Is it too idealistic? Schwarzenbach emphasized that her argument warns particularly against enemy-built exclusion based upon hatred or ignorance; contra Carl Schmitt there *are* many friendships which are gone for positively as ends in themselves and there is no need of an enemy. Other arguments came up in the discussion. Does Schwarzenbach's model impractically presuppose a "fair," enlightened state? Can it only at the local level of civil society or indeed on a national level as well?

Next, GABRIEL KOUREAS (Birkbeck College, University of London), specializing in the visual culture of war and memory, talked about "Friendship with Fallen Soldiers: Commemorating the First World War in Britain," taking the friendship between World War I officer Hutchinson and his batman (personal war servant) as an example of the centrality of male bonding in war memories. Hutchinson remembered the death of his "friend of perfection" by idealizing the batman's demise, for the politics of friendship made such a loss "ungrievable." Hutchinson later edited *The Superman*, a magazine promoting Eugenics and offering the image of the naked male body as an expression of socially-repressed homosocial friendship and desire. The photographs in *The Superman* embodied the memories of male bodies in the trenches, their proximity, nudity and comfort – the body as a vehicle for the expression of both traumatic and homoerotic memories. As Koureas explained, in the early 1920s society expected returning soldiers to re-incorporate quietly into daily life by remembering the War in terms of sacrifice, unselfishness and heroism but also by "forgetting" their traumas. British society hoped such positive memories of combat friendship would pacify growing class tensions. Koureas argued that romanticized "comradeship" and the idealized male body integrated the gap between individual memory and collective memory immediately following WWI.

The Cenotaph on Armistice Day projected a friendship between the soldiers of WWI and the nation, serving to reunite a highly divided population by celebrating "the Common Man." Koureas argues that the moment of silence and the unveiling suppressed unwanted memories

through ritualized commemoration. This “forgetfulness of self” into the collective “one body politic” transformed the faceless dead into the “heart of the nation.” The aesthetic simplicity of the ritual defies negative interpretation, contradicting the actual warfront experience and memories. In Britain, WWI memory’s friendship connotations were reworked throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though. In 2009 the last surviving WWI veterans died. Big public ceremonies celebrated their friendship with the nation. It turned out that neither of the veterans had been, for a long time, interested in any publicity. Rather, they privately mourned their personal comradeship memories, until the end of their lives, when they subscribed to the idea of a friendship with the nation – to express their views against war.

In the ensuing discussion, a few participants questioned the logical connection between *The Superman* magazine and its idealization of the male body and the nation: where *are* the dead friends within the pages of the Superman? Is there a connection between Koureas’s two symbols of silence and nakedness? Another attendee suggested clearer delineation of historical-contemporary versus modern friendship terminology. A different discussant appreciated the incorporation of a “sexual” type of friendship into the conference’s discourse. A participant raised the notion of the survivors’ indebtedness to lost comrades and their unpaid service to a nation that celebrates the war dead. Why is that *only death*, particularly in a military context, provides a socially-legitimized masculine expression of homosocial friendship?

In the third paper, “Making a ‘Mini Israel’ in the Pocono Mountains: Distance and Closeness in the Production of Nations,” sociologist DANI LAINER-VOS (University of Southern California) presented a microcosmic case study of the simulation of nation building in an Jewish-American youth camp, Massad. Nationalist rhetoric conceptualizes the nation as an extended family with the closeness home in order to unite the unrelated, diverse, “distant” populations within its borders. Lainer-Vos asked, what institutional mechanisms allow groups to overcome their differences and maintain a sense of closeness? The founders of Massad created the camp as a simulation of Israel in order for American-Jewish campers to voluntarily identify themselves as committed Zionists, despite their physical and cultural distance from Israel. The camp hoped to solve the gap between the American-Jew’s religious education and secular lifestyle, thus fostering cultural wholeness and harmony. Without brainwashing, the camp would “nation-build” within the positive, mini-Israel experience. Massad enforced Hebrew as vernacular and created a fused lexicon, modeled the grounds after Israeli geography, and designed quasi-religious rituals that combined the secular and the spiritual. Yet, campers did not feel the intense closeness of nationalism, for the culture-shock between Israeli counselors and American youth alienated rather than united the vastly different groups. However, years later most former campers admitted that their camp experience placed Israel at the center of their Jewish identity.

The discussion focused and questioned Lainer-Vos’ assumption that Massad did not brainwash its campers, and it was argued that Massad purposely created a strict cultural framework, isolated from the outside world and intensely nationalistic. In this context, the applicability of Victor Turner’s concept of liminality was addressed. One attendee contended that the presentation betrayed a logical fallacy between a “powerful experience” that fosters national identification and an “imagined experience” that admits a lack of belonging. Does Massad create a permanent state of national liminality? A different participant wondered whether

this paradigm could transfer beyond the unique Jewish Diaspora context. Another questioned whether the homogenous ideal of Israeli-American unity was a morally positive phenomenon, thus demanding prescriptive analysis. Lainer-Vos argued that Massad was too innocuous to criticize or analyze morally.

SHA HUA (Beijing and Oxford University) explored a rather different type of ‘camp’ experience, the non-partisan though communist dominated “World Festival of Youth and Students,” a series of Olympic-like gatherings intended to foster civic friendship and socially-responsible solidarity in the Cold-War era. The title of her paper was “Chinese Youths Join the World: Friends, Fellow Comrades, National Representatives or Rivals?” As she showed, political and cultural barriers thwarted the empathy and affinity required for genuine friendship between international participants. The festival’s vision – “peace through communication and exchange between young people” in order to prevent another world war - became a proxy political battleground on which (Soviet) Communism could win the hearts and minds of the world’s youth. Regardless of the publicity motive, positive mass participation of diverse groups spread ostensible warmth and goodwill between national delegates. “Realizing that one could relate to someone else beyond national and ethnic boundaries” – friendship and the *international* – “was a crucial lesson of the World Festival.” Hua argued that geopolitical realities of the Cold War crushed the festivals’ idealistic visions. The tenuous “comradely” friendship between Moscow and Beijing was one of four different Chinese national relationships, and required no personal sympathy, trust or intimacy. However, the Sino-Russian alliance was tested by national leaders’ competitive tensions, and this fracture appeared between respective festival delegates. A schism also appeared between post-colonial country delegates and former imperialist national delegates. The disunity within the Socialist bloc and other cultural differences thwarted the youth festivals’ vision of international unity. On the other hand, China effectively used friendship rhetoric to mobilize popular support for the Communist challenge to American imperialism.

Rejecting discussants’ suggestions to explore the linkage between such political friendships and everyday friendship, Hua emphasized the socialist countries’ understanding of “comradeship,” an honorific and trendy phrase that replaced the particularly-positive undertones of the Chinese word “friend.” A participant suggested the festivals displayed solidarity rather than friendship, to which Hua emphasized that the practical terminology between Socialist and pre-Socialist nations was that of friendship. She suggested further methodological analysis of the taken-for-granted difference between “friendship” and “comradeship.”

In his paper “Friendship into Comradeship, Gang Culture, Genocide and Nation-Building in Germany, 1914-1945,” THOMAS KÜHNE asserted that scholars must distinguish between different historical and analytical notions of friendship, among other the modern conception of self-chosen, symbiotic relations; second, the traditional bond revolving around friends fighting for a common goal – comradeship; third, blood brotherhood, forged through shared responsibility for heinous crimes. Kühne argued that the German nation’s complicity in the Holocaust forged this third category of closeness. He contended that the Nazis consciously applied this psychological phenomenon to unite the fragmented Volksgemeinschaft (“People’s Community”) through shared criminal guilt. Nation-building’s goal is to overcome internal frictions of an industrialized society; post-1871 Germany was bitterly divided by “cultural wars,” oppression, and the revolution of 1918. Nazi ideologists envisioned the Volksgemeinschaft, a

united and harmonious utopian national family, to overcome domestic tensions. After WWI, a militarized rightist discourse idealized the myth of frontline comradeship, but the ideology did not necessarily require an “other.” The rise of the Nazis in 1933 radicalized and transformed the myth of comradeship: there could be no in-group identity without an excluded enemy “other.” The Nazis targeted the Jews, and enforced compulsory German comradeship indoctrination that diffused individual moral responsibility by concealing the “I” within the “us.” The Nazi Holocaust was “nation-building” through fusing the Volksgemeinschaft across three levels: the immediate perpetrators (e.g. SS and concentration camp guards), the German army on the Eastern front, and the brotherhood based on knowledge of one’s own entanglement in the crime of mass murder. This one included women and children on the home front.

Kühne’s presentation provoked the question of whether the Holocaust was an *instrument* of or the *result* of nation-building. Kühne stressed that genocidal bonding was the oil of nation-building, not the outcome. A participant wondered if the post-Weimar comradeship microcosms of veterans’ associations and youth camps are comparable. Kühne explained that the similarity was within the realm of simulation, linked to national utopian solidarity. Another discussant disagreed with Kühne’s assumption that comradeship’s predestined rhetoric denies agency, and rejected other group theories. Kühne acknowledged that individuals in such groups still maintained subjectivity and agency but that they welcomed the offer to abdicate individual responsibility in favor of collective conformity.

Continuing the German case studies, historian THIES SCHULZE (University of Münster) contributed his argument, “Nationalism, Catholic Faith and Borderland Identity: The Concept of Friendship among German Catholic Inhabitants of Border Regions, 1918-1939.” He employed the term “friendship” in a broad sense, defined as interpersonal relations based upon group affiliation. During the interwar years, German-speaking inhabitants of border regions outside the German Reich and Austria such as South Tyrol, Eastern Upper Silesia and Alsace-Lorraine, constructed ‘hybrid’ identities that combined national, regional and religious elements. Although these local identity constructions could differ notably from each other, their similarities occasionally led locals to developing the idea of sharing common fate and identity. Catholic German-speaking inhabitants utilized highly influential local functionaries within religious and political networks to advocate their “hybrid identity” interests. Through regional presses that mobilized cross-territorial German-Catholic solidarity, public awareness of foreign political proceedings fostered empathy between minority-group members. Overlapping identities increased political strategic options, either via communication with the interregional Church hierarchy or by lobbying the generally-sympathetic German government. Schulze detailed the representative functionaries’ informal diplomatic channels with politicians and personalized relationships within the diocese, both avenues crucial to the formation of solidarity-friendship between dignitaries. Within the diplomatic processes, mediators were of a particular importance; in many cases, they shared Catholic-German identity with the borderland representatives, which was fundamental for the establishment of the critical political/religious friendships and the political advantages of German-Catholic border minorities.

After Schulze’s contribution, the discussion initially surrounded his sources and asked for incorporating private memoirs and sermons into his historical exploration rather than relying upon diplomatic archives and official correspondences: how can the extent and depth of personal

friendships be determined within such ritualized material? Schulze admitted that a major problem of historical diplomacy sources is their highly formalized nature but argued that such material nevertheless reveals examples which demonstrate that personal relationships often went beyond a purely professional context. The main part of the discussion revolved around the role of Christianity. Was there a particularly Catholic notion of friendship? What is the religious basis of such friendship ideology, and what is its relationship to God?

The anthropologist ASHLEY LEBNER (Montreal / University of Liverpool) changed the conference's European focus with a presentation on "Brazilian Liberalism, Populism and Marxism: Engaging the Problems of Friendship and Christianity for the Nation." In Brazil's 20<sup>th</sup> century friendship is a cosmological relationship; the theory of secular friendship is overdrawn. In the Northeastern Brazilian case, religion profoundly informs both politics and friendship. Lebner first traced Freyre and Holanda's early liberal discourse on Christianity's complicated and emotional relationship with cordiality. Then she illuminated the Brazilian populist "time of politics" (campaign trail) and its blatantly false but politically necessary rhetoric of constituent-candidate friendship. She demonstrated "how a problem of friendship remains the embarrassing cultural intimacy under girding official, political discourse that unites region and national politics." As Lebner pointed out, the politicians' invocations of God went unquestioned. "Popular Christianity is an integral part of everyday social and therefore political life for the majority of Brazilians." God is considered the best and ideal friend; thus, in comparison, human friendship is problematic, uncertain and ultimately inconsistent. Lebner's Brazilians are *friendly* with each other in daily interactions, but suspicion of evil intent inhibits true friendship. In short, "Everybody is my friend, but nobody is." Such superficial warmth but deep distrust impedes nationalist cohesion. Lastly, Lebner details how the nationalist-Marxist MST party secularized and mitigated the concept of friendship in order to produce the conditions for lasting solidarity and to emulate Christian discipline. This *companheirismo* movement is evident throughout the MST's conceptual grammar, but "not only does the MST reproduce the problem of friendship – the dangerous unpredictability of seeking support in others – its secular political cosmology actually exacerbates it."

In the following discussion, a comment prompted greater inquiry into the role of kinship. Lebner explained that in Brazil, the family is considered eternally devoted and loyal; friends are outside the family, and therefore their intentions cannot be trusted. A participant wondered about the Christians' perceived friendships with God. Lebner emphasized that popular Catholicism pervades Brazilian life, affecting the blurring of intimidation and intimacy. "Intentions," vulnerable to the devil's influence, are paramount. A participant worried Lebner included too many case studies to be effective, while another suggested her inclusion of "cultural intimacy" theory was unnecessary and irrelevant to her argument. One attendee was curious whether "the problem of friendship" erased social responsibility, and whether it impeded civic friendship (to reference Schwarzenbach)? A discussant contended that Lebner's paper is about political struggle, not nation-building, and that she requires further evidence of the latter. Lebner responded by framing the MST as a radical interpretation of Marxist-Leninism, different from the Western conception of nation-building and citizenship.

In the next paper, anthropologist AYBIL GOKER (Yeditepe and Bogazici Universities, Istanbul) explained "Borders of Friendship: Politics and Fragile Intimacy among London

Cypriots.” She traced the turbulent history of Cyprus from colonization to violence and territorial division, the polarized “politicization” of the island, and Greek enosis nationalism until in 1974 Turk-Greek Cypriot relationships were severed. Thus, the “other” was not imagined, but experienced daily through emotional separation. As a result of such social trauma, mistrust and prejudice flamed ethnic tensions in Cyprus that affected fragile Cypriot ex-patriot friendships in London. In short, the personal become political, and vice versa. Goker described how for many London Cypriots it was almost impossible not to remember and revise their memories of displacement or co-existence. “1974” froze pre-existing Turk-Greek Cypriot friendships in London. Those opposing London Cypriots who co-existed, and at times remained friendly, did so by separating the political sphere from the realm of friendship, thus creating a distinct boundary within the relationship. Other opposing Cypriot neighbors avoided each other completely, following strong emotional orders that dictate distance. However, the children of Cypriot ex-pats seem to have rejected or modified their elders’ historical narrative and traumatic memory. These children choose multicultural friendships, de-essentializing their parents’ identifications within the hybrid “British Cypriot” context. If Greek and Turkish Cypriots can live together peacefully in London, why can’t they also in Cyprus? In 2003, after Goker’s fieldwork studies concluded, the borders opened on the divided island, which affected ex-pat relationships by opening old trauma wounds. As London Cypriot “fragile friendships” cannot stand the reviving of old pains, 2003 caused ex-pats to reevaluate their lives in London. Once again, the personal collapsed into the political.

In the discussion, a participant delved deeper into the important element of boundary maintenance within inter-ethnic London-Cypriot friendships. Paradoxically, the case subjects resisted intimacy to avoid animosity. A participant pondered Goker’s usage of the “other self” (one’s unconscious voice that forces hatred of the other) that is internalized and overrides reasonable understanding of the “enemy.” Goker explained that London provides a soil of neutrality, but such friendships cannot transfer back to Cyprus. The role of gender was mentioned and the question rose whether men may have found it easier (or more difficult) to form friendship with the “other” than women, due to the female relegation to the private realm.

DANNY KAPLAN concluded the conference with his phenomenological discussion of “Chemistry and Alchemy: Building Blocks of Friendship and Nationalism in Israeli Culture.” He introduced three interrelated Israeli concepts: re’ut (fraternal friendship), which mediates between hagshama (fulfillment) and gibush (crystallization/cohesion). He examined male Israeli veterans’ friendships within the master Zionist context of solidarity, explaining how personal narratives of friendship represent nation-building components and core symbols of national unity. He argued that nationalism is an invented union of sentiment “not because it is a rhetorical device employed by elites . . . but because of its correspondences to personal friendships,” which are also fabricated sentiments. Zionism institutionalizes the value of fraternal friendship (re’ut) and links it to the elaborating symbol of fulfillment/actualization (hagshama), the voluntary commitment to participate in the collective ideal. Related is the key symbol of gibush, “implying undifferentiated collectivity based upon joint endeavors, cooperation, shared sentiments” and togetherness. Kaplan delineated the cultural constructs (“building blocks”) that friendship narratives employ to make sense of how/why a friendship has evolved and presented some correspondences with nation building. Many of his case participants focus on a mythical, primordial “shared past” that involves the on-going reconstruction of the friendship’s invented

“traditions.” According to Kaplan, friendship reflects the “localized dynamics of collective memory,” for the recollections operate within a “black box” and inform the present relationship. A related imagery is that of kinship, particularly the metaphor of “brotherhood,” used both in Israeli national discourse and in friendship narratives to reinforce close-knit ties between unrelated people. Another building-block is the revelation of a “shared destiny” between equal male friends. Some Israeli men employ a romantic rhetoric, explaining their bond as “love at first sight.”

To explain the “click” between friends, Israeli men sometimes use the metaphorical “chemistry” rhetoric to describe a strong and immediate connection (though this inexplicable, semi-magical power that unites men should be called “alchemy”). Kaplan concludes that the aforementioned cultural constructs “figure easily in narratives of national solidarity.” The Zionist master narrative presents a shared traumatic past, Jewish shared ancestry (brotherhood), alchemic connections (gibush) between lost brothers, and a shared destiny (hagshama) in the Homeland. Fraternal friendship (re’ut) was a powerful symbol during the “alchemic revolution,” the transformation of the Jewish people into a nation state.

After the presentation, a discussant wondered whether Kaplan’s concepts are unique to the Israeli friendship-nationalist dichotomy. Another took issue with Kaplan’s ignorance of homosexual eroticism between the male friends. Romanticism is very much about homosocial love, and friendship cannot be completely divorced from the erotic. Kaplan assured the panel that his related monograph deals with exactly that: the eroticization of the dead during commemoration in Israel. A different participant believed the role of myth and romanticization in nation-building to be inherently dangerous. Professing cynicism, the participant asked, are these myths at all based in reality? In a similar vein, another discussant expressed concerns with the conference’s generally hygienic treatment of friendship. Should ethical prescriptions be included to mitigate such dangers? Kaplan explained that a myth does not presuppose a lack of reality; the truthfulness is less important than the myth’s application. Indeed, some invented traditions are more dangerous than innocuous others. Next, an attendee mused that elevated, magical friendship rhetoric might generate feelings of inadequacy and disappointment. Kaplan again cited his book, explaining that such unfulfilled desire is released through necrophelic commemoration. Lastly, is nationalism a production of emotional manipulation? Kaplan disagreed: while both friendship and nationalism are socially-constructed, they are not inherently manipulative.

Overall, the conference showed that there are no clear answers to the question how friendship affects national identities and processes of nation building and how “the” nation induces or constrains emotions of friendship. Small-scale emotional bonds were, even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, powerful enough to intervene into national politics and ideologies; at the same time, the latter have influenced discourses and practices on friendship. But they did so, in the locally different political and social settings and regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in rather different ways and to different degrees.

**Program:**

**Friday, 5 March 2010**

**Danny Kaplan and Thomas Kühne**  
*Opening remarks*

**Sibyl A. Schwarzenbach**, City University of New York, U.S.A.  
*Solidarity versus Civic Friendship*

**Gabriel Koureas**, Birkbeck College, University of London, U.K.  
*Friendship with Fallen Soldiers: Commemorating the First World War in Britain*

**Dani Lainer-Vos**, University of Southern California, U.S.A.  
*Manufacturing National Comradeship in a Jewish American Summer Camp*

**Sha Hua**, Beijing, China and Oxford University, U.K.  
*Chinese Youths Join the World: Friends, Fellow Comrades, National Representatives or Rivals?*

**Saturday, 6 March 2010**

**Thomas Kühne**, Clark University, U.S.A.  
*Comradeship versus Friendship: Nation-Building, War and Genocide in Germany, 1914-1945*

**Thies Schulze**, University of Münster, Germany  
*National Identification and Catholic Faith: The Concept of "Friendship" among German Catholic Inhabitants of Border Regions, 1918-1939*

**Ashley Lebner**, University of Liverpool, U.K.  
*Brazilian Liberalism, Populism and Marxism: Engaging the Problems of Friendship and Christianity for the Nation*

**Aybil Goker**, Yeditepe University and Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey  
*Borders of Friendship: Politics and Fragile Intimacy among London Cypriots*

**Danny Kaplan**, Bar Ilan University, Israel  
*Chemistry and Alchemy: Building Blocks of Friendship and Nationalism in Israeli Culture*