CONTEXTUALIZING ALTERNATIVE JOURNALISM

*Haolam Hazeh* and the birth of critical Israeli newsmaking

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The article explores the ways in which the weekly *Haolam Hazeh* (Hebrew for This World) earned its reputation as the definitive “designated maverick” of Israeli journalism during the 1950s and 1960s. It does so via an investigation of the journalistic practices through which *Haolam Hazeh* constructed a first-of-its-kind model of critical Israeli journalism combining a seemingly clashing mix of radical politics, investigative reporting, sensationalism, and sexually explicit contents. The self-positioning of *Haolam Hazeh* as a maverick publication, as well as its corresponding positioning by the Israeli mainstream journalistic community, delineated the professional ethos, inner conflicts and boundaries of that journalistic community in that era. Moreover, analysis of *Haolam Hazeh*’s journalistic formula illuminates the dynamic and contextual nature of the relations between mainstream and alternative media.

**KEYWORDS** alternative media; *Haolam Hazeh*; Israel; journalism

**Introduction**

On November 30, 1953 as Uri Avnery and Shalom Cohen, the editors of the Tel Aviv weekly *Haolam Hazeh* (Hebrew for This World; hereinafter *HH*) were leaving their offices they were brutally attacked by a gang of men. They were injured and hospitalized. In many ways this incident was not unusual in *HH*’s chronology: in 1952, 1953 and 1955 bombs were found in *HH*’s offices and the building in which the weekly was printed. Apart from this violence, *HH* suffered in various other ways due to its radical journalistic and political agendas: its phone lines were routinely tapped by Israel’s General Security Service, which also secretly financed the publication of *Rimon*, a competing weekly that imitated *HH*’s style and tone while publishing head-on attacks against it (Bar-Zohar 1970; Zach, 2001); *HH* reporters were officially ostracized by the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) and the weekly did not receive advertisements from government agencies and union-owned businesses. David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first Prime Minister and founding father, who was among the weekly’s harshest critics, highlighted the public attitude of the Israeli political establishment and mainstream journalism thus:

> *Haolam Hazeh* . . . is a filthy, despicable, lying newspaper. If I could, I would make a big fire and burn in it all the newspapers that disseminate hate and jealousy, but unfortunately I am unable to do so. But I do know: if we were able to overcome the Arabs, we will also overcome newspapers of this sort. (Peli, 1954, p. 6)
This article explores how and why HH earned its reputation as the definitive "designated maverick" of Israeli journalism during the state's formative era. It does so through an investigation of how HH constructed a first-of-its-kind model of alternative Israeli journalism that challenged the existing models by which mainstream Israeli journalists operated. Various explorations of Israeli politics and culture of the country's first years have utilized journalistic accounts as research data. But the vast majority of those studies looked at journalistic outputs merely as supposedly transparent reflections of Israeli reality of the 1950s and 1960s, or rather as direct derivatives, or extensions, of parliamentary debates. By contrast, this study focuses on the ways in which journalists of Israel's formative era shaped their perceptions and convictions as members of a professional and interpretive community. Within this context, a probe of HH's agitating role on the early Israeli journalistic scene enables us to trace the challenges and internal contradictions that characterized that community in its formative stages. Accordingly, this investigation offers a unique insight into the initial stages of the creation of the communal journalistic professional consciousness.

Beyond the specific contribution to the study of Israeli journalism, the exploration of HH enriches the more general discussion of alternative media, and it does so in two ways. First, as Kim and Hamilton (2006) suggest, researchers of the relations between alternative and mainstream media ought to view these two terms as contextual and dynamic conceptualizations. This is because the meanings of "alternative" and "mainstream" media vary across cultures, and can only be explored and explained by way of a thorough understanding of the specific historical and structural contexts in which they exist. Hence an analysis of the development of alternative media in non-English-speaking cultures, under various political and cultural circumstances, broadens the overall comprehension of what alternative and mainstream media are and how they interact. Second, the exploration of HH advances the study of alternative media by its focusing on alternative journalism. While scholars of alternative media tend to center their investigations on the social agendas that are advanced by such media, this inquiry into HH sheds light on the alternative aspects embedded in the execution of radical journalistic practices. By doing so the article offers journalism scholars a set of criteria which may be implemented in the study of other designated journalistic mavericks.

In the first of the article's four sections I discuss the theoretical foundations of this study through an investigation of the concept of "alternative journalism." Next I delineate the setting against which HH developed its journalistic voice, by a critical exploration of mainstream Israeli journalism during the state's formative era. Following this I address the fundamental components of HH alternative journalistic agenda, and the ways by which it addressed existing "blind spots" within early mainstream Israeli journalism. I do so through a probe of three interrelated dimensions: HH's self-declared journalistic vision; the practices through which this vision was executed; and a comparative section that contrasts the patterns of journalistic coverage implemented by HH and other Israeli newspapers. Finally, I discuss the contextual nature of HH's alternativeness.

What is Alternative Journalism?

An examination of the existing literature on alternative media yields four general, possible logics, or trajectories for classifying a media outlet as "alternative". These are not
mutually exclusive but complementary. Furthermore, sorting “alternative” from “mainstream” media in the real media world is far from a clear-cut decision.

The first trajectory focuses on financial and structural aspects (Shoemaker, 2001). Alternative media can operate on a strictly local level, or aim to address wider audiences (for instance, via the Internet); and their business models may vary from a reliance on subscription fees paid by avid supporters or on advertising as a main source of income. Still, according to this perception alternative media are characterized by the fact that they are not operated by large economic organizations; they operate on smaller budgets, so they are limited in their logistical capabilities, pay their employees modest salaries (if any), and make less money. Consequently, they are unable to reach mass audiences and they usually target particular small-scale social niches (Atton, 2002).

The second trajectory is embedded in an ideological context, by which alternative media represent disenfranchised sectors of society and promote radical political agendas. This conceptualization of alternative media views it as the voice of dissent that struggles to bring to the forefront of the public arena people and problems that are mostly absent from it (Downing, 2001). According to Herbst (1996), alternative media function as outlets for political frustration. They are employed by groups that tend to be excluded from mainstream political discourse due to race, ethnicity, sexual preference, or political standpoints. Such outlets “provide access to the media for these groups on those groups’ terms” (Atton, 2002, p. 11).

The third trajectory is based on self-reporting: alternative media outlets or journalists could be perceived as such according to their own assessment (Harcup, 2005, p. 363). According to this perception, a media outlet, or an individual practitioner of this sort, defines their vision and practices through the negation of the visions and practices embraced by mainstream media. For example, the Web page of the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies (2005) states that each member newspaper “has a distinct, local identity that sets it apart from the mainstream press in its market” (quoted in Tsfati and Peri, 2006, p. 169).

The fourth trajectory stands at the core of this study. It is based on the assumption that “alternative media by definition challenge notions of what journalism is ‘supposed’ to be” (Hindman, 1998, p. 177). It conceptualizes alternative media through a focus on their journalistic values, norms and practices of such media. In this context the following four main criteria emerge that constitute the phenomenon of alternative journalism.

### Topics of Coverage

The contents of alternative media challenge the existing social status quo through coverage of topics not usually addressed by mainstream media because of their commercial nature and hegemonic biases. At the same time, the challenge of existing journalistic conventions can also be met through a critique of routine coverage of news topics by mainstream media. In such cases alternative media do not necessarily offer an entirely new news agenda but point to the lacking or tilted reporting of mainstream media, and offer alternative accounts of the same topics. For instance, Harcup’s comparative analysis of the media coverage of the 1981 Chapeltown riots shows that while both the mainstream *Yorkshire Evening Post* and the alternative *Leeds Other Paper* reported on the riots and the trials that followed them, the two papers framed the origins
of the events (outside agitators as against social deprivation) in contrasting ways (2003, pp. 363–5).

**Producer–Consumer Relations**

The meager funding of alternative media, combined with their aim to voice otherwise excluded groups and viewpoints, is often associated with themes such as the de-professionalism of journalism, the use of “alternative sites for distribution”, and the transformed relationship of producers and readers (Atton, 2003). In this sense, alternative media are unique in their aspiration to reduce the conventional distance between the journalists who create the news and their audiences. Harcup mentions that a significant number of the alternative journalists he interviewed did not become reporters for alternative publications through the common pattern of journalistic training and recruitment. At first they were avid readers of these alternative publications. Next their sense of support for and affinity to the newspapers led them to offer their help as volunteers in a variety of non-journalistic tasks, which later evolved into full-scale journalistic operation (Harcup, 2005, pp. 364–5). An even more extreme challenge to the conventional perception of journalistic professionalism can be found in the case of publications such as the Korean online alternative outlet OhmnyNews, where all or most of the contributors are not professional journalists (Kim and Hamilton, 2006).

**Sourcing Practices**

Alternative journalism seeks to portray a world that is not represented in mainstream media. To capture or recreate such realities alternative journalists seek alternative sources of information that are rarely addressed by mainstream media. For instance, Eliasoph’s study (1988) of the radical KPFA-FM radio station revealed that the stations’ journalists were able to produce alternative news contents because their routine “official” sources often came from the ranks of the Sierra Club, the unions and other organizations that were rarely approached by mainstream journalists. Similar information-gathering methods were developed by the famed radical journalist I. F. Stone, who was routinely marginalized by American mainstream political establishment as well as American mainstream journalism of the 1950s and 1960s (Marro, 2006). Despite his outsider status Stone managed to uncover the misdeeds of various governmental agencies by means of low-ranking officials, as well as little-known and mostly ignored federal publications (Patner, 1988, pp. 9–20, 55–8).

**Objectivity and Balance**

Critics of the mainstream media have often pointed to the ways in which the common translation of concepts such as “objectivity,” “balance” or “fairness” into the concrete language of journalistic headlines, texts and images serves the existing social status quo, and marginalizes disenfranchised social sectors and movements (Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980). Most alternative journalists are aware of the biases embedded in the mainstream implementation of these concepts; yet the appearance of objectivity and balance clearly bestows upon a journalistic report a much-coveted aura of reliability and authority.
This fundamental dilemma is resolved by alternative journalists in a variety of ways: Eliasoph’s (1988) exploration revealed that the KPFA-FM journalists accepted conventional reporting norms and attempted to balance their stories through the airing of voices of various official sources. Similarly, the editor of the Alley, a radical neighborhood newspaper, “professionalized” his alternative publication through a conscious attempt to provide news stories with “another side,” and greater reliance on journalism school-trained journalists. At the same time, the Alley continued to feature on its pages first-person style pieces, mixing “hard news” with sharp social criticism (Hindman, 1998). Note here that other non-mainstream media that do not necessarily advocate politically alternative causes adopt a same position on the concepts of objectivity and balance, and they do so within the specific contexts of their “alternative universes” (Deuze, 2005). For instance, tabloid journalists strongly believe that science-related stories ought to be validated and balanced through interviews with expert sources. Such interviewees might be physicians or university professors, but also “prominent UFO explorers” or astrologists (Bird, 1990). Finally, a radically different approach is adopted by alternative journalists and publications that do feel the need to shield their radical reporting through the appearance of objectivity and balance. Hence 1960s reporters writing for underground American press rebelled against conventional journalism through overall abandonment of these professional concepts (Glessing, 1970).

HH clearly met all of the above-mentioned initial criteria: it was relatively “small” and financially limited; it had a radical political agenda; it most certainly presented and perceived itself as an alternative publication; and as can be seen throughout this article the weekly exercised in its operation alternative journalistic norms and practices. Still, I would argue that a comprehensive conceptualization of the nature of HH’s alternativeness, as well as the nature of other alternative publications, calls for inquiry into two complementary components: an “internal” component that looks at the journalistic values, norms and practices of that outlet, alongside an “external” component that positions these characteristics within the context of the specific values, norms and practices of the mainstream journalistic culture challenged by this alternative.

Therefore, the contextualized analysis of HH’s journalism offered in this article illumines the complex relations between mainstream and alternative media. HH’s definitive alternativeness during the 1950s and 1960s was the outcome of a set of specific political and journalistic circumstances. As seen in this study, the self-positioning of HH as a maverick publication, as well as its corresponding positioning by the Israeli mainstream journalistic community, delineated the professional ethos, inner conflicts, and boundaries of that community in that era. In a way, this is a circular argument: journalistic alternatives such as HH can only be effective if they formulate their agendas so as to correspond with the blind spots of mainstream journalism.

Early Israeli Journalism

In 1950, 17 dailies and 38 weeklies and biweeklies were published in the newly born State of Israel; 10 of the 17 dailies were affiliated to political parties, unions, or the government (Naor, 1998). Israeli television started broadcasting in 1968, so the only available electronic medium in Israel during the 1950s and most of 1960s was the radio. Israel’s two radio stations were non-commercial and they were directly supervised by the Prime Minister’s office or the military. In terms of circulation the privately owned daily
Ma’ariv was the most popular newspaper in Israel of that era. It was followed by the two more upscale leading morning dailies, Davar (published by the Histadrut, the General Federation of Labor and affiliated to the governing Mapai party) and Ha’aretz (privately owned), and the second major popular evening newspaper, Yedioth Aharonoth (privately owned) (Goldstein, 1951; Limor, 1999).

Israeli journalism was not invented in 1948 with the birth of the new state. Journalistic practitioners of Israel’s formative era had to accommodate existing ideological stands and structural constraints to the new circumstances. Hebrew journalism had a pivotal role in the establishment of the Zionist movement: deeper than the immediate involvement of Zionist parties and leaders in publishing politically committed newspapers, a more profound connection between the Zionist movement and the Hebrew language existed as Hebrew newspapers were the vehicle by which the ancient language was revived and disseminated. On a personal level, Israel’s media elite consisted long after 1948 of journalists, editors, and publishers who had entered the profession in the years of British Mandate (1918-48). Furthermore, the link between the journalistic and political elites was underscored before and after 1948 through the many politicians who were actively involved in journalism.

Most Israeli journalists of the 1950s, especially those who entered the profession before the establishment of Israel, were unable to position themselves as critical observers of the young state. This type of ideological commitment that characterized the journalistic cultures of many developing nations (Zelizer, 2004, pp. 168–9) held for Israeli journalists writing for the party-affiliated newspapers, who openly promoted ideological goals, as well as for journalists who wrote for privately owned commercial newspapers. The mainstream journalistic community of the 1950s was supportive of the Zionist ideal, but also viewed itself as an integral part of its fulfillment. Zionist ideology framed the work conventions of Israeli journalists in terms of news selection and representation. In most cases publication policies were restrained and attentive to the authorities’ requests (Nossek and Limor, 1998). The adoption of an ideological frame exerted fundamental influence on the way Israeli journalists distinguished between good and bad journalism. Of course, different journalists had different ideas regarding what was actually good for the Zionist endeavor, but it is essential to note that in that era such ideological justification was a fundamental element in the journalistic discourse on professional excellence.

While the Israeli journalistic community of the state’s formative era manifested a strong ideological commitment, it was also engaged in an initial effort to define its independent professional identity. A review of the yearbooks of the Association of Tel Aviv Journalists reveals a steady shift, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, from a focus on the achievements of the new state and the challenges facing it to a discussion of issues such as journalistic ethics, editing styles, and freedom of speech (Goldshmit, 1955; Zemer, 1957). Another demonstration of the growing professional consciousness among Israeli journalists at that time is found in the debate over journalists’ training. In the early days of the state there were no institutions, academic or other, that trained new journalists. All journalists learnt on the job, and in some party newspapers new journalists were hired on the grounds of their political loyalty and the employment demands of the affiliated Kibbutz movement (Tsafati, 2000). Through the late 1950s and after, these methods of recruitment and training were criticized by some journalists, who argued that methodical journalistic training was necessary to improve the status of the profession. In practice, two (failed) attempts were made then to establish an Israeli journalism school (Kinarty, 1958).
In sum, two major conflicting impulses characterized the internal Israeli journalistic discourse during the state’s early years: the desire to maintain the press’s status as an integral component of the Zionist endeavor, as against the wish to develop an authoritative professional identity. Disputes between journalists and political authorities, or negotiations over the establishment of journalistic codes of ethics, were all derivatives of these two competing drives (Meyers, 2005).

**HH’s Journalistic Ideology**

In 1937 the journalist Ouri Kessary established the weekly *Tesha Baerev* (Nine P.M.), which changed its name to *Haolam Hazeh* in 1946 (and folded in 1993). Kessary’s weekly published literary works alongside lighter sections dealing with Tel Aviv nightlife. In April 1950 Uri Avnery and Shalom Cohen, two young combat veterans of Israel’s 1948 war, bought *HH* from Kessary. Following the buyout Avnery, who became the weekly’s editor for the next 40 years, and Cohen, who became the chief of its editorial staff, recreated *HH* as a newsweekly. Estimates of *HH*’s circulation during the formative era vary, ranging from 13,000 weekly issues in 1954 to 15,000–16,000 issues in 1957–8 to 20,000 issues in 1965 and 25,000 issues in 1966 (Cohen, 1972; Elon, 1954; *Newsweek*, 1966). These numbers positioned *HH* as the second most popular weekly in Israel, following *Davar Hashavua* which was published by the Histadrut and was affiliated to the governing Mapai party. Though these circulation rates lagged far behind the circulation rates of Israel’s largest dailies they show that *HH*’s readership was not insignificant during that era.

As noted, Israeli journalism of the state’s formative era was influenced by two major tendencies: the fundamental identification of Israeli mainstream journalists with the Zionist endeavor and the slow evolution of a professional journalistic consciousness. In this sense, *HH* was an integral part of the journalistic community: it also negotiated through its messages and practices the tension between affiliating to a political agenda and committing to an ethos of professional journalism. But this was also where *HH* differed from other Israeli newspapers of that time: until 1965, when the *Haolam Hazeh–Ko’ach Hadash* (This World–New Power) party was established, the weekly was a politically identified publication, but unlike other Israeli politically identified newspapers it was not associated with a political party, which it would serve and from which it could recruit readership and financial support. Moreover, the principles advocated by *HH* during Israel’s first decades such as acknowledging the existence of a Palestinian people, accepting the Palestinian refugees’ right of return (to Israel), and the elimination of Jewish theocratic elements from Israeli law, and its support of the Algerian, anti-French FLN underground or its harsh personal attacks against David Ben-Gurion, were clearly far beyond the consensual journalistic discourse. The combination of these three factors—non-consensual ideology, lack of institutional backing, and the aspiration to appeal to mass audiences—led *HH* to develop a journalistic formula that was non-traditional yet attuned to the existing realities of the Israeli journalistic scene of the 1950s. This formula had several aspects, the most salient of them being the combination of *HH*’s “harder” and “softer” contents. The ultimate expression of this unique mixture can be found in the 1959 initiation of the two-covers system: *HH*’s front cover referred to hard news topics, mainly of a political nature, while the back cover highlighted sensationalist issues, usually of an outright sexual nature.
Another dimension of *HH*’s non-conventional journalistic formula was its self-presentation, in terms of the adoption of journalistic models. What *HH* offered as its unique journalistic vision was a derivative of its criticism of the two existing models of Israeli journalism, commercial and party-affiliated, and a contrary utilization of its own evident disadvantages. In terms of models of journalistic practice, *HH* aimed to convince its readers and critics that it was an advocacy-driven publication, fighting for just social causes while implementing objective journalistic practices. This complex self-definition was based on two fundamental components: first, *HH* positioned itself within, or rather against, the context of the debate between the two prominent 1950s models of Israeli journalism. On many occasions *HH* scorned commercial Israeli newspapers for their flexible values and shifting political stands, influenced by circulation considerations. In contrast to those profit-driven newspapers, *HH* presented itself as truly ideological, ready to sacrifice its own economic well-being to maintain its integrity. Correspondingly, *HH* attacked party-affiliated newspapers for their practice of political favoritism. According to *HH*, party newspapers exaggerated the activities and achievements of their party members while ignoring or criticizing the work of political rivals; they served their parties’ economic interests; and their hiring and promotion practices were decided by political operators rather than professional journalists (*HH*, 1957a,b). In contrast, *HH* presented itself as a truly non-affiliated political newspaper.

This method of distinguishing *HH* from all other Israeli newspapers was sustained through a second, complementary, ideological argument. *HH* contended that all major mainstream Israeli newspapers of that era, beyond their differences and disputes, were fundamentally similar in their support of conventional Zionist ideology and their attachment to the powerful “establishment.” Thus *HH* did not view other Israeli newspapers as true observers or even interpreters of Israeli life but as manufacturers of false consciousness and distorted fabrications. Following from this analysis was the claim that *HH* was more than just an advocate of specific political stands: it provided its readers with an outright alternative point of view and the keys for understanding Israeli reality as it was, beyond all deceptions.

The principles of this journalistic formula help explain why *HH* lost much of its distinctiveness once the *Haolam Hazeh–Ko’ach Hadash* party was established. All through the 1965 election campaign *HH*’s editors insisted that the weekly would not serve the party. Still, once the party won its first seat in the Knesset and its editors became respectable members of the “establishment,” it was hard to go on positioning *HH* as the ultimate outsider of Israeli journalism. The inevitable identification of the weekly with the party made *HH* similar to the veteran party newspapers it constantly criticized.

**HH’s World: Inventing Alternative Israeli Journalism**

*HH*’s essential promise to its readers was a focus on news reporting, following—admittedly—the tradition of news magazines across the Western world and specifically *TIME* magazine (Avnery, 1995). Unlike other Israeli newspapers of the time, especially the party-affiliated newspapers, *HH* indeed offered far more extensive coverage of both hard (politics, national security, economy) and soft (cinema, fashion) news while it dedicated relatively less space to essays and publicist writing. This did not mean that the pages of the weekly were free of political and cultural preferences; no depiction of reality was free of a guiding point of view. But *HH* managed to insert its various agendas into its news
reporting through diverse overt and covert stylistic strategies. The weekly executed its vision through the following journalistic norms and practices.

**Radical Journalistic Language**

*HH*’s fundamental journalistic task was to shape its own distinctive style to serve and amplify its social agendas: a journalistic language to echo its discontent with Israeli reality and its vision of a different country (Almog, 2004, pp. 56–63). Thus at the core of *HH*’s radical journalism stood its language. The headlines were terse, dramatic, and often cynical, and the texts aimed to reflect a denunciation of older traditions such as the cumbersome and pompous writing style of the founders of Hebrew journalism. Thus, for instance, in October 1950, *HH* marked the passing of six months since the weekly had changed hands with a head-on attack against the reporting conventions of mainstream Israeli journalism:

“In these ravaged days … after 2,000 years … fatal days … holy fear … immense responsibility … shaken and excited …” This is not the way in which the new editorial staff of *HH* presented itself, exactly six months ago, to the readers. Already, in its first step it [the new staff] violated the respected tradition: it did not promise anything, did not draft a florid statement, and did not take upon itself to save Israel, and redeem the world … we only had a small, simple, gray ambition: to publish a readable newspaper. (Avnery, 1950, p. 3)

*HH*’s discontent with conventional Hebrew, especially the limited vocabulary of Hebrew journalism, was emphasized through the weekly’s routine invention of new Hebrew terms. The use of such words strengthened the notion that *HH* was giving its readers a sense of attachment to a community rather than a mere journalistic product, since the weekly’s readers were in some way offered a language of their own. Furthermore, many of the new words invented by *HH*—such as iltur (improvisation), yomon (daily newspaper), halalit (spaceship), badran (entertainer), mad’an (scientist) and more—were eventually adopted by other newspapers and Hebrew speakers in general.

**Investigative Reporting**

*HH*’s self-presentation as a professional alternative to mainstream Israeli journalism was based on its muckraking reporting. *HH* published critical and investigative stories that were unique in Israel at that time in their choice of organizations and individuals to pan, the means of journalistic investigation, and the writing style. From 1950 to 1965 *HH* published investigative reports on issues such as discrimination against Jewish immigrants from Middle Eastern countries; the use of Israel’s General Security Service against *Mapai*’s political rivals; the authoritarian and corrupt reign of Aba Hushi, mayor of Haifa; living conditions in mental institutions; Israel’s arms export policy; and the systematic confiscation of Arab land by state authorities.

In many cases *HH* presented investigative reports in the form of sharp social contrasts. For instance, a series of reports about the ways in which some of Israel’s wealthiest individuals and companies avoided contributing, or contributed negligible sums, to the national Defense Fund (*Keren Hamagen*) was accompanied by a photograph of a “widowed new immigrant from Tripoli who gave her last possession—a wedding gift”
to the fund (Cohen, 1955). In fact, the Defense Fund series demonstrates, on several other levels, the fundamental characteristics of HH’s investigative tone and approach. First, HH obviously could not obtain such information without inside assistance of sources that might have officially condemned and ignored HH, but cooperated with it for tactical–political reasons. Sure enough, it was later revealed that the information about the Defense Fund donation dodgers was leaked by one of Ben-Gurion’s top aides (Cohen, 1972, p. 127). A second typical characteristic was the use of patriotic reasoning to justify the publication of the exposed.

**Sex and/as Ideology**

HH’s investigative fervor was accompanied by a tendency to deal with sexually explicit and sensational contents. In the first years of the new HH its presentation of sexually charged topics was rather timid. But toward the beginning of the 1960s, in parallel to growing trends among American underground newspapers (Hindman, 1998, p. 178), HH’s presentation of sensation, gossip and nudity became ever more explicit.

When HH turned its focus on gossip and sex it usually presented two fundamental arguments: first, HH argued that its lighter sections were supposed to lure mass audiences into reading the weekly so that they could also be exposed to its serious and subversive political messages. Second, the weekly positioned the sexual content and vulgar style as parts of HH’s larger political-cultural agenda. This latter approach presented the printing of photographs of naked women (undressed men were rarely featured in HH) and publication of sexual scandals as a politically liberating act. According to this perception sexual puritanism and hypocrisy were among the many tools of oppression employed by Israel’s governing elites. The mere coverage of such themes, especially the exposure of sex-related double standards, thus advanced the struggle against the existing political order (Avnery, 1960).

**Voicing Practices**

The uniformity of HH’s journalistic style was secured through the introduction of a rewrite editor—a new position in Israeli journalism of the time, who was in charge of standardizing the journalists’ writing style. Another method of achieving uniformity was HH’s policy of not according individual bylines to its writers or credits to its photographers, apart from a group that appeared on the weekly’s opening editorial page. An exception to this rule was Cohen’s and Avnery’s accredited essays and editorials. Another significant exception to the non-crediting policy was the many HH articles published in the first person, written by the protagonists of the stories themselves—an IDF reserve officer who wrote about his experiences during the 1956 Sinai war, a man arrested for beating his parents, etc. The combination of news reports by anonymous professional journalists with articles supposedly reported by their own sources reflected a rhetoric of transparency and strengthened the notion that HH was narrating world “as it is,” without mediation.

**A Community of Readers**

The weekly’s self-perception as a journalistic maverick was marketed first and foremost to its own readers. It was determined to identify itself and its readers with
everything that was non-conventional, therefore also (secretly) coveted by mainstream readers and newspapers. One way that HH emphasized the uniqueness of its readers was by publishing readership statistics showing that they were relatively younger and more educated than the average Israeli citizen (Avnery, 1955). During the 1956 Sinai War, HH reported that frontline combat soldiers were avid readers of the weekly, and that they provided the reporters with important information (Avnery, 1956, p. 2). After the war ended, the opening editorial explained that on the last page of the issue a crossword puzzle appeared that now could not be read by its writer, Dan Tzur. He had sent it to HH before he went to the war, whence he did not return. Among the fallen soldier’s papers was an article from HH that he had clipped and kept. “Till his last days,” the editorial continued, “[Tzur] argued with his comrades about the rightness of the Sinai operation. His views paralleled the views of this newspaper” (Avnery, 1957, p. 2). By such means HH imparted to its readers a sense of communality through the publication of news items in disguise. Perhaps the most famous use of this method was in 1964, when HH published a two-part “fictional” spying story entitled The Alexis Affair, dealing with the Turkish–Greek conflict over the future of Cyprus. The story actually revealed all the censored details of the Lavon affair, the cause of a major crisis in the Israeli political system in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Some readers were quick to unmask the disguise. Following the publication they congratulated the weekly and informed HH that they had managed to “solve the two-part crossword puzzle” (HH, 1964, p. 3).

Self-reflexivity

HH often discussed with its readers the processes by which the weekly was produced: the decision to cover a certain topic, the lengths the reporters went to obtain important materials, and more. In terms of positioning HH as an alternative to mainstream Israeli newspapers, self-reflexive sensibilities were evident once HH contrasted the easy access to official events enjoyed by reporters of other newspapers to the tricks HH reporters had to use to get into such events (Cohen, 1964, p. 2; HH, 1961, pp. 8–9, 22). HH’s strategy of discussing the processes through which the weekly was created was an extension of its moralist–purist vision. In this case its rejection of politics-as-usual was translated into the rejection of journalism-as-usual. HH’s intolerance of hypocrisy, and the separation of front-stage and backstage, which was usually targeted “outward,” to the political system, was directed in this context “inward,” to the weekly itself.

Ethics

The weekly’s hegemonic analysis of Israeli reality was the basis of its disputed claims to objectivity and fairness: since the weekly was supposedly the only truth-telling Israeli media outlet, it did not include in its investigative reports the responses of the people and the establishments it targeted. Accordingly, HH staffers’ methods of gathering information and captioning photographs were ethically questionable (Bar-Am, 1996, p. 206; Berkowitz, 1997, p. 35; Erel, 2006, pp. 303–6) and on several occasions it was argued that HH was hardly ever sued for libel since journalists and public figures feared the weekly’s journalistic vendettas (Grodzensky, 1970; Marcus, 1970).
HH and Other Israeli Media

In parallel to HH’s intensive self-reflection on its own work the weekly focused much of its journalistic attention on the work of other Israeli media. Hence, as early as 1950 the new HH initiated a regular column entitled “Journalism,” which reported on topics such as Mapai’s attempts to control Israeli foreign-language newspapers or the personal struggles for control of the Tel Aviv Journalists’ Association.

Several related reasons guided HH’s intensive coverage of Israeli media: first, such coverage offered a theme, or in some instances even a public service that was rarely provided by other Israeli newspapers of the time; in this sense HH was truly ahead of its time, since in later years extensive coverage of Israeli journalism became commonplace among other media as well. Second, HH covered other Israeli newspapers in order to respond to direct attacks against the weekly. HH argued time and again that although the weekly was officially boycotted by mainstream Israeli newspapers, its style, journalistic practices and regular sections were often copied by competitors. When mainstream newspapers attacked HH’s content or style the weekly replied by justifying its policies and aggressively pointing out the accusers’ own wrongdoings.

Comparative Analysis

Finally, to further triangulate my observations regarding the nature of HH’s contextual alternativeness I explored a major event that was covered by the weekly, as well as five Israeli daily papers, private and party-affiliated: Ma’ariv, Davar, Ha’aretz, Haboker (affiliated to the centrist-liberal General Zionists’ party), and Kol Ha’am (affiliated to the Communist party). I also included in the comparison two weeklies—Davar Hashavuah and Bamachaneh (the IDF weekly), which together with HH were Israel’s most popular weeklies of that era. On May 10, 1951 the State of Israel marked its third Independence Day. Clearly, the main news events were the two major military parades that took place in Ramat Gan (May 9) and Jerusalem (May 10), each attended by tens of thousands of citizens. Ma’ariv, Israel’s most widely circulated daily at that time, reported on the Jerusalem parade:

That was the IDF’s big day. And that was Jerusalem’s big day. The army bestowed its glory and might upon the capital and Jerusalem gave the army some of its holiness and eternity. The two became one, and the covenant that was sealed yesterday will never be broken. (Ma’ariv’s Jerusalem Correspondent, 1951, p. 2)

A similarly enthusiastic tone accompanied the coverage of the parades by Davar. The elitist and commercial Ha’aretz and Kol Ha’am, the Communist party’s daily, both reported on the parades in length, but in a far less emotional tone. Most of the reports were entirely textual or accompanied by small photographs of “worthy” figures: well-known officials, or unknown citizens and soldiers who took an active part in the celebrations. All the newspapers published editorials and essays aimed to frame the event within larger contexts. For instance, Ma’ariv’s essayists asked why Israel’s economy could not imitate its military’s successes. As expected, the Communist Kol Ha’am’s take on Israel’s current situation was far more critical, and it argued that Israel is not a truly independent state since its political leadership was turning the country into an extension of American imperialism (Israeli Communist Party, 1951).
HH’s coverage of Israel’s 1951 Independence Day appeared on May 17, six or seven days after the events were reported by the dailies. This constraint was of course because HH appeared only once a week. This is an important factor in understanding the difference between HH and other Israeli newspapers of the country’s formative era. Some dailies, such as Ma’ariv, Ha’aretz and Davar, had regular weekend (i.e., Friday) supplements, but those were mostly dedicated to essays and literary works. During the 1950s HH together with Davar Hashavuah and Bamachaneh were the only wide-circulation Israeli weekly magazines offering feature stories. This meant that HH was free to deal with issues already covered by the dailies, mainly because the latter did not offer feature-story descriptions of the events. The title of HH’s three-page pictorial coverage of the celebrations was “Menasheh Was Also There,” and the opening paragraph explained:

Everybody knows how the President, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Chief of Staff see Independence Day: they sit on the reviewing stand, salute and make speeches ... Everyone knows how this day is seen through the eyes of respected citizens: they drive their fancy cars, they watch the parades and in the evening they dance in the cafes. HH wanted to present the holiday through the eyes of the smallest man—the smallest, the poorest, and the most neglected person that could be found. And it [HH] found him. This is the true subject of Independence, the one for whom [Israel’s] independence was achieved: sitting on the sidewalk, studying his own shoes, from which the torn soles have fallen off. Menasheh Shalom, age 12: his father made aliya [immigrated] from Persia, his brother serves in the IDF and he, himself—who sometimes sells newspapers which he never learned to read and who learns tailoring in a course for kids—saw Independence Day. He celebrated [Israel’s] Independence. For one day he forgot it all—the soles that had come off, the schooling he never got, the carefree days of youth he will never experience. But the state that was the cause of his celebrations, and all of its citizens, would be better off if they did not forget him the day after the holiday. (HH, 1951, p. 2)

What characterized Menasheh’s Independence Day experience or rather point of view—as presented via the photo-essay—was his limited access: HH’s photographer accompanied Menasheh as he sneaked without paying into the stadium where the parade was held, and as he watched the official Mayor’s reception from behind the entrance, which he could not cross. The selection and positioning of the photographs conveyed the same rhetoric of contrast and limited access: the tattered soles of Menasheh’s shoes were contrasted with the soldiers’ marching boots and the fine footwear of the more well-to-do citizens.

By covering Israel’s Independence Day in such a manner, HH criticized the widening social and economic gaps in Israeli society and ridiculed the pompous way in which other Israeli newspapers had already covered the celebrations. The underlying assumption of HH’s coverage was that the readers had already been exposed to the depiction of the events by the mainstream dailies, so its own reporting corresponded with conventional reporting in order to critique it. In this context, it is helpful to compare HH’s Independence Day picture essay with the picture essays published by its two competing weeklies, Davar Hashavuah and Bamachaneh: in a sense, all three weeklies published similar photo-essays, since all three articles contained photographs of the main events, mostly the parades. But while Davar Hashavuah (1951) and Bamachaneh (1951) framed and presented those events in the “proper” and consensual manner, HH gave a subversive interpretation of the events through the use of unconventional journalistic practices.
This difference became evident through HH’s fundamental choice of Menasheh, the immigrant child, as the conveyer of the weekly’s point of view: all three weeklies presented marching soldiers, but while Davar Hashavuah and Bamachaneh selected photographs in which the soldiers were shown from the front, or from above (to emphasize the size of the marching group), HH presented the soldiers through Menasheh’s eyes, which meant showing the soldiers’ backs. Also: all three weeklies showed Israel’s first president, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, as he watched the parade. But while Davar Hashavuah and Bamachaneh showed the President standing upright between the Chief of Staff and the Deputy Prime Minister, HH (which chose the exact same camera angle as Bamachaneh) selected a photograph in which the “very old” President was shown as he was supported by his military adjutant. This deliberate choice illuminates several aspects of HH’s journalistic ideology: it exposed the intimate lives of public figures (the ailing President died the following year) and it aspired to eliminate the gap between “backstage” and “front-stage” as it shared with the readers information that other newspapers chose to conceal.

HH’s choice of such a point of view echoed its agenda as the champion of all outsiders, who were both physically and essentially left outside of the Israeli mainstream. Correspondingly, this presentation was also a self-reflexive comment on HH’s own journalistic work and status as the ultimate outsider of Israeli journalism. HH was eager to present itself as Menasheh’s equivalent: according to this construction, the weekly and the immigrant child alike were uninvited guests with limited access to the national-official arena. Finally, what made HH’s presentation so distinctive compared with the coverage of other newspapers was not necessarily its critical take. As shown, other newspapers used Israel’s Independence Day as an opportunity to criticize various institutions and phenomena. But those critical voices were limited to a journalistic sphere dealing with opinions: their form and content made them the equivalent or extension of the parliamentary speeches of opposition parties. By contrast, HH’s political criticism was not separated from the coverage of the event but was embedded in it. While the dailies limited their criticism to the editorial pages, and the two mainstream weeklies transformed the official celebrations into consensual journalistic presentations, HH was the only Israeli newspaper that consciously harnessed the tools and techniques of journalistic reporting to the service of a counter-hegemonic argument. In doing so, HH offered a unique conjunction of radical journalism and radical politics.

Conclusion

HH’s journalism aimed to expose the faults of Israeli reality through critical reporting while constructing an alternative reality populated by alternative heroes and alternative cultural trends. Through the use of means such as the constant invention of new Hebrew terms and the undermining of the conventional distance between news producers and news consumers HH aspired to go beyond the mere promotion of a specific political agenda; it aimed to create a new form of Israeli communication that will provide readers a new way of seeing (Hamilton, 2000, pp. 361–3).

At the same time, the urge to constantly preach for radical changes in Israeli society, combined with the wish to reach mass audiences, turned HH into a plethora of contradictory impulses evident through various features: a supposed focus on fair news reporting as against one-sided rhetoric; harsh criticism of Israel’s security policy as against...
ongoing glorification of the IDF; speaking on behalf of Israel’s disenfranchised sections as against eagerly manufacturing Israeli glamor. A similar sense of contradiction is evident in \( HH \)'s relations with mainstream Israeli journalism: while \( HH \) positioned itself, and was positioned by others, as the ultimate outsider, its journalistic potency was a direct derivative of its ability to address the inner tensions that characterized the operation of Israeli journalism during the 1950s and 1960s.

The addition of cross-cultural and durational perspectives further supports the notion that \( HH \)'s “otherness” was non-inherent: while many of \( HH \)'s journalistic practices discussed in this article were perceived as radical and alternative among Israeli journalists of the formative era, they were far more acceptable among journalists in more developed democracies. Furthermore, current journalistic accounts of \( HH \) show that the weekly is nowadays positioned as a precursor of contemporary critical Israeli journalism, and its memory is used to reinforce Israeli journalists’ status as authoritative narrators (Meyers, 2007). That is, a look into the dynamics by which journalistic practices are defined and constructed as “alternative” offers a unique opportunity to explore the development of communal journalistic consciousness.

Finally, this study’s exploration of the contextual nature of definitions such as “mainstream” and “alternative” journalism seems to expand the concept of journalists as an interpretive community. According to Zelizer, journalists are not only members of a professional group but also members of an interpretive community, “united through its shared discourse and collective interpretations of key public events” (1993, p. 219). The case of \( HH \) as well as other alternative publications adds an additional important element to this conceptualization. It suggests that in some cases journalistic communities shape their identity not only via the communal interpretations of “external” events, covered by the journalists but also through the negotiation over the values and practices of “internal” designated journalistic mavericks.

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NOTES

1. All translations from Hebrew to English are mine.
2. For an extensive discussion of \( HH \)'s political agendas, see Erel (2006, pp. 57–120).
3. Avnery became a Knesset member in 1965 and Cohen became a Knesset member in 1969.
4. The quotation marks were inserted by Avnery.

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