The article in question is “The "Mythological Sabra" and Jewish Past: Trauma, Memory, and Contested Identities,” written by Yael Zerubavel. Yael Zerubavel is currently a professor of Jewish Studies and History at Rutgers University in New Jersey. Much of Professor Zerubavel’s work centers around how past events in Israeli history have been shaped by more modern perceptions. For example, she published a book called Recovered Roots, which is about how tragic events in Israeli history have been remembered to become national myths and stories of inspiration. This is not entirely dissimilar to the topic of the article “The Mythological Sabra.”

The main assumption of this article can be found in the first paragraph. Zerubavel states that “The Jews’ intense preoccupation with the examination of their collective identity was highly pronounced in the early years of Zionist settlement in Palestine.” It is assumed that the early Jewish settlers in Palestine spent a lot of time focused on what their collective identity was, thinking about what it was that unified them.

The thesis of this essay is about the changing nature of the Sabra generation. The author attempts to prove that one way that the identity of the Sabra has changed is through the trauma caused by the Holocaust and the stress caused by the nature of Israel’s relationship with its neighboring states and how these events have led to tension between the old exilic Jewish identity and the new identity which attempts to distance itself from its exilic past.

The author develops her argument using works of Israeli literature from the late 20th century. The reason for this decision is that “in Israeli society, writers have played an important role in the construction of the national Hebrew culture.” However, the author recognizes that one drawback of this method is that the works of 4 authors could never possibly represent the thoughts of an nation of millions. In turn, the author focuses on the views of Israelis from European descent. The books are used to show the individual level coping strategies of Israelis who lived through traumatic experiences like the holocausts, and subsequently how these experiences affect the characters generational views and ideas on nationalism and Israeli identity.

The conclusion of this essay is that when the 4 novels are analyzed, it becomes apparent that the nature of Sabra identity is more much fluid than stagnant. The vast differences in perspective put forth by the authors of the novel show that even those who have similar backgrounds can have vastly different interpretations of Israeli identity, effectively demolishing the idea that “the return to the ancient homeland revived a ‘buried’ native identity” as was hoped by the traditional Zionist narrative.