# THE POLITICS OF CANONICITY: LINES OF RESISTANCE IN MODERNIST HEBREW POETRY

*MICHAEL GLUZMAN*

**Stanford University Press**

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Nostalgia Jewishness is a lullaby for old men
gumming soaked white bread.

J. GLADSTEIN, *modernist Yiddish poet*

# CONTRAVERSIONS

## JEWS AND OTHER DIFFERENCES

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DANIEL BOYARIN,
CHANA KRONFELD, AND
NAOMI SEIDMAN, EDITORS

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The task of "The Science of Judaism"
is to give Judaism a decent burial.

MORITZ STEINSCHNEIDER,
*founder of nineteenth-century*
*philological Jewish Studies*

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MICHAEL GLUZMAN

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*For Erez*

הֱיֵה לִי אוֹר מְעַט, הֱיֵה שִׂמְחַת־פִּתְאֹם,
הֱיֵה לִי לְחֶם חֹק !

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History may be servitude,

History may be freedom.

—T. S. ELIOT

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THIS BOOK HAS TAKEN SHAPE over several years in two distinct geographical and cultural settings: Berkeley and Tel Aviv. The basis of this book is my Ph.D. dissertation, "Suppressed Modernisms: Marginality, Politics, Canon Formation," which was written at the University of California, Berkeley, the Department of Comparative Literature. The dissertation project was later expanded, revised, and sometimes even contradicted as I prepared this manuscript for publication. In many ways this book—which I kept reworking and rewriting—is a palimpsest revealing the process of my thinking about the emergence of Hebrew modernism in a time of nation-building.

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# THE POLITICS OF CANONICITY

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# PROLOGUE

> I have made some attempt not simply to revalue marginal elements . . . but to reinvest them in the dynamic of identity formation and to restore to them some of the critical force for which in the first place they had to be expunged as "unrepresentative."
>
> —DAVID LLOYD[1]

THIS BOOK EXPLORES the politics of aesthetic taste in the time of nation-building by examining the ideologies and practices of inclusion and exclusion in an emerging national culture. Looking at the modern Hebrew canon as "the location, the index, and the record of the struggle for cultural representation,"[2] I aim to expose the reasons behind the survival or centrality of certain texts and the demise or marginalization of others. In the time of nation-building, the alleged value of literary texts is inextricably entangled with the processes of identity formation. Thus, this book explores the ways in which literary culture—as site and as tool—participates in the production of national identity by removing antithetical, oppositional voices.

The contemporary view of the canon as a reflection of an "ideological struggle rather than a natural aesthetic order"[3] subverts the notion that texts attain high cultural status only by virtue of their intrinsic merit. In light of this insight, I advance the following questions: How did the modernist He-

brew canon, as we know it today, come into being? What were the aesthetic paradigms that informed a preference for certain texts or forms of writing over others? What were the political ideologies and social interests that shaped this period's conception of aesthetic value? What remained, and perhaps still remains, marginal or invisible in this modernist register?

Literature's role in nation-building—indeed, in Stephen Greenblatt's words, its "deep functional utility"—becomes increasingly visible in its constructions of aesthetic worth.[4] This view of value as a function of communal needs, while grounded in contemporary theory, is already embedded in the history of the word *canon*, which derives directly from the Greek *kanon* (rod, reed), which in turn has its roots in the Hebrew word *kane* (or *kne-mida*, measuring stick). In his discussion of the history of the term, Gregory Jusdanis demonstrates that in classical Greek culture, the word *kanon* was consistently used in discussions of sculpture, architecture, music, and philosophy, denoting a rod, measure, or ruler. Although the word was first used to indicate precision, it "eventually acquired metaphorical meaning: as the right measure or proportion."[5]

With the advent of Christianity, *kanon* assumed a rather different meaning. Following the emergence of the Hebrew Bible as the Jewish people's closed list of holy texts, Christianity formed its own canon of sacred scriptures. Consequently, the term *kanon* was increasingly used to mean a list or paradigm, referring not only to the truth in the holy scriptures but also to "the list of texts embodying this truth."[6] While this dual conception of the canon originated in a religious context, it gradually resurfaced in discussions of aesthetic worth. In both religious and aesthetic contexts the canon is not simply a list of worthy and inspired texts, but also an implicit narrative reflecting the shared beliefs of a community. By delimiting borders, the canon articulates communal regulations, needs, and concerns, thereby signifying the collective's boundaries of the permissible. Thus, in the process of canonization, "institutions of evaluative authority," in Barbara Herrnstein Smith's words, "will be called upon repeatedly to devise arguments and procedures that validate the community's established tastes and preferences."[7]

The instrumentality of literature in the time of nation-building—indeed, the effort to solidify the community's identity via literary texts—derives, as David Lloyd asserts, from the fact that "literary culture is conceived as offering not merely a path towards the resolution, but the resolution itself of the problems of subjective and political identity."[8] While this insight characterizes

the role of literature in many national movements, its relevance to Hebrew literature cannot be overstated, for Zionism emerged almost from the onset as a literary utopia.[9] In the absence of both territory and self-government, the "Republic of Letters"[10] was indeed the only means by which Diaspora Jews could promote national unity. The naturalized triad of nation, territory, and language—which gave rise to the European nation-state—was so far removed from Jewish reality during the nineteenth century that it first had to be created by the literary imagination.

The cataclysms that swept through the Jewish world at this time pulverized its entire structure: the old religious beliefs, which had persisted for two millennia, as well as the protective self-containment of the Jewish community, were challenged by the new concepts of modernity, humanism, and secularism. In the wake of modernity, the fate of the Jew and of the Jewish people became an urgent existential issue, one explored through literary texts that proposed various potential solutions for what has come to be known as *tsarat ha-yehudim* (the affliction of the Jews). Consequently, Hebrew literature became instrumental in imagining a Jewish national revival and in inducting its readers into the ideology of the "imagined community."[11] The "national poet," Chaim Nachman Bialik, was well aware of Hebrew literature's historic role in shaping the nation, and of its ability to create a sense of unity and continuity in a time of crisis:

> And indeed, only through Hebrew literature did we arrive at revival and Zionism. Without it, we wouldn't have arrived at this point. All of the [Hebrew] literature of the last hundred and fifty years has been a preparation for our revival. He who doesn't understand this, his feet did not stand on the Mount Sinai of Hebrew literature. Even the writers of the Haskalah [Jewish Enlightenment], who are viewed as anationalists, prepared us and brought us to the present. This cannot be denied: that from Smolenskin on, it was Hebrew literature alone that refined the nation and brought us to revival because she [Hebrew literature] was the guide.[12]

Bialik's observation that Hebrew literature "refined the nation" not only negates the perception of literature as autonomous, but also anticipates contemporary theory's observations on the role literature plays in nation-building. Bialik suggests that modern, secular, Hebrew literature replaces

traditional religious texts in unifying the nation, as is clear from his reference to Mount Sinai, the biblical site of national birth. Bialik's reference to the nation's coming-into-being at Mount Sinai creates an analogy between two textual sites of national birth: inasmuch as the Bible narrates the birth of Israel as a nation, modern Hebrew literature narrates the nation's revival in modern times.[13] Bialik's description of Hebrew literature as a laboratory in which national identity is refined should be read against the background of Anthony Smith's characterization of nationalism: "Nationalism must be seen as a form of historicist culture and civic education, one that overlays or replaces the older modes of religious culture and familial education. More than a style and doctrine of politics, nationalism is a *form of culture*—an ideology, a language, mythology, symbolism and consciousness."[14]

However, these constitutive aspects of national culture—ideology, language, mythology, symbolism, and consciousness—were the subject of fierce debate within the Jewish world at the turn of the century.[15] The production of Zionism as a form of civic culture that was to replace religion as the unifying characteristic of the nation demanded the resolution of questions concerning the nature of the would-be modern Jewish culture. First among these was the question of the national language. Theodor Herzl, for example, imagined in his 1902 utopian novel *Altneuland* that German would become the official language of the new society in Palestine. However, Hebrew rapidly came to be identified as the mythic language of Zionism, violently ousting Yiddish, which had been the predominant language of European Jewry.

The function of language as an ideological tool in the emergence of modern nationalism has been emphasized time and again. Eric Hobsbawm, for example, says, "For Germans and Italians, their national language was not merely an administrative convenience or a means of unifying state-wide communication. . . . It was the *only* thing that made them Germans or Italians, and consequently carried a far heavier charge of national identity than, say, English did for those who wrote and read that language."[16] While there are perhaps similarities between Hebrew and these languages with respect to the central role they play in national identity formation, the revival of the Hebrew language presents a marked deviation from this normative European model. The choice of Hebrew, a language that had not been spoken for two millennia, was in more ways than one an "artificial" choice, a radical invention of tradition.

It is in light of this ideologically motivated, "artificial" choice that Ben-

jamin Harshav proclaims that Israel is the result of "an ideology that created a language that forged a society that became a state."[17] Harshav's astute formulation of the process of Jewish national revival emphasizes the reversal of the naturalized triad of territory, nation, and language that characterizes the emergence of most European nation-states.

The engineering of national culture, which was one of Zionism's primary concerns, involves a continuous process of selection and combination, binding and separating, inclusion and exclusion. My analysis of the correlation between aesthetic worth and national ideology in Hebrew modernist culture pays special attention to sites of exclusion. Following Jonathan Culler's assertion that "what is marginal or taboo turns out to be essential to the system that excludes it,"[18] I uncover sites of exclusion that reveal the underlying ideology of cultural production and consumption in an emerging nationalist context. Culler's emphasis on the importance of the excluded acquires significant relevance in the context of nation-building, for national cultures are formed around repression, forgetting, and exclusion. This idea was first articulated by Ernest Renan in his 1882 essay "What Is a Nation?" where he contends that "forgetting . . . is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation." Since "unity is always affected by means of brutality," the nation must repress its violent beginning in order to establish and retain a sense of harmonious unity. Thus, says Renan, "the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things. . . . every French citizen has to have forgotten the massacre of Saint Bartholomew or the massacres that took place in the Midi in the thirteenth century."[19]

Homi Bhabha, who pays considerable attention to Renan's formulation of nationhood, argues that "it is through this syntax of forgetting—or being obliged to forget—that the problematic identification of a national people becomes visible. . . . the identity of part and whole, past and present, is cut across 'the obligation to forget,' or forgetting to remember."[20] Bhabha's emphasis on Renan's "syntax of forgetting" is crucial to my understanding of exclusion as a form of cultural forgetting. Bhabha extends Renan's formulation to show that the nation represses not only traumatic moments of internal conflict, but also cultural representations of difference. The canon is the site in which we witness the repressive removal of cultural moments that appear to threaten national unity. This removal translates into "institutional forgetting"[21] and "symbolic violence,"[22] both of which are consti-

tutive forces in the organization of national culture. If implicit violence is indeed at the center of cultural engineering, it is because, as David Lloyd contends, "the formation of identity requires the negation of other possible forms of existing."[23]

By performing "rites of purification and exclusion,"[24] Hebrew culture negated other possible forms of existing, thus advancing a new hierarchy of cultural and aesthetic values. First among the exclusions was the negation of exile. In seeking to create a new, secular, national culture, Zionism advanced a fierce critique of—indeed, waged a war against—diasporic existence, thereby negating traditional Jewish life almost in its entirety. This negation of exile was disseminated via Hebrew literary texts that played a vital role in structuring the textual field into ideological polarities: Zionist/diasporic, Hebrew/Yiddish, productive/unproductive, masculine/feminine. By condemning and rejecting one pole of the binary divide—that is, the diasporic, Yiddish, unproductive, and feminine—Hebrew culture engineered a new aesthetic order that demanded an identification with Zionist ideals.

While the "extreme demand for identification with the nation that nationalism imposes"[25] underlies the production of modern Hebrew texts, it would be erroneous to suggest that all Hebrew writers reacted similarly to this demand.[26] In fact, many literary texts resisted, explicitly or implicitly, this national imperative, thereby problematizing literature's participation in nation-building. In this context, Rosemary Marangoly George notes: "Literature (even that which is written at the height of nationalist struggles) does not relate the exact same story that nationalism does. Nationalist movements narrate one story, literature creates its home through tangential locations. Literature may thus serve also as a site for resistance to dominant ideologies like nationalism."[27] The story narrated by national movements is itself a site of conflict between opposing versions and is thus more nuanced and contested than George's formulation would allow us to think. However, her observation that literature—even one produced in the height of nationalist struggle—may *also* offer a site for resistance to nationalist ideology is pertinent to my analysis of Hebrew modernist culture. Moments of resistance can often be located at the very heart of literary nation-building. In Hebrew literature, however, the boundaries between complicity with and resistance to nationalism cannot always be marked easily, because writers who identified wholeheartedly with the national project often rejected the outright demand for engaged literature (*sifrut meguyeset*).[28]

Indeed, the extent to which Hebrew literature participated in nation-building and was politicized cannot be overstated. The literary and political worlds, especially after the shift to Palestine, were entirely intertwined: writers addressed political questions and political leaders in turn expressed their views on literary and aesthetic issues. However, despite the engaged nature of Hebrew modernist culture, many proponents of modernist aesthetics rejected the demand to subordinate their literary production to Zionist ideology, although they identified wholeheartedly with the Zionist project, and perceived the goals of Hebrew letters in nationalist terms.[29]

Such an oscillation between an ideological commitment to Zionism, on the one hand, and an insistence on upholding the autonomy of the artist, on the other, is apparent, for example, in the writings of Yosef Chaim Brenner. Brenner's entire literary career is marked by the tension between complicity and resistance; his total devotion to the idea of reshaping Jewish identity was only matched by his fierce critique of the emerging national culture in Palestine. In a 1900 letter to his close friend the Hebrew modernist Uri Nissan Gnessin, for example, Brenner denounces his friend's attraction to the idea of "art for art's sake." Gnessin's affinity with European cultural trends of the fin de siècle, and especially with impressionist poetics, disappointed Brenner, who accused his friend of disinterest in the larger, pressing concerns of the Jewish people:

> As to your theory expressed in that letter regarding "art for art's sake" . . . I don't agree at all. My outlook on life is completely different; in short: we have to sacrifice our souls and diminish evil in the world, the evil of hunger, slavery, idleness, hypocrisy, and so on. It is necessary to *understand* everything, to understand and to distance ourselves from mysticism and illusion; it is necessary to increase reality and holiness in the world; it is necessary to mend the life of the people of Israel so that they become normal. The great suffering of my soul stems from my doubts in general. Is there a remedy? Are we moving forward?—You write a long historical poem—and that I cannot understand. Can we turn our attention away for even one moment from the present? Do you know the condition of our youth? Do you know that we are the last of the Mohicans? Do you know that our people are dying? Do you know that the world is sick? Do you know that this despair is destroying the soul? Do you have eyes?![30]

This set of heated rhetorical questions negates Gnessin's theory of "art for art's sake" in the name of moral responsibility. In a time of national disaster, Brenner argues, the role of literature is to mend the life of the people of Israel so that they become normal. In Brenner's view, Gnessin's impressionist poetics, his focus on the self and his disengagement from the collective sphere, amount to blindness. When Brenner asks, "Can we turn our attention away for even one moment from the present?" he gives succinct expression to the urgent role of the Hebrew writer.

However, this rhetoric of engagement, which echoes Russian literary views of the period, is rendered ironic in light of Brenner's later essays, in which he ridicules Hebrew criticism's demand that writers blatantly subordinate their production to national ideology. In his 1911 essay "Ha-zhaner ha'-erets israeli ve'-avizarehu" (The genre of Erets Israel and its devices), Brenner advances a scathing critique of the tendency of Hebrew prose fiction to produce sentimental representations of life in Palestine:

> When I hear one writer asking another, "Is your new piece on life in Erets Israel?" a feeling of derision awakens within me: as if writing were something external, as it were, and what is written is "From the Life of the Jews in Lodge," "From the Life of the Galicians," "From the Life of the Karaites," "From the Life of the Sephardic Jews," "From the Life of Erets Israel" . . . rather than something internal, the exposure of the inner life and its essence . . . at a specific time and place.[31]

Without delving too deeply into this fascinating, polemical essay, which attracted a great deal of critical attention,[32] we can see that Brenner—who wrote this critical piece in defense of his own controversial novel *Mikan u-mikan* (From here and from there)—parodies Hebrew criticism's criteria of aesthetic worth and rejects its narrowly defined nationalist demands. Yet, Brenner's parody of "engaged literature" in the novel and his position in the essay seem to conflict with the collective and nationalist concerns voiced in his letter to Gnessin. This is not only due to the decade that elapsed between the writing of these two texts, or to the different genres in which they are written, but also to Brenner's dual, indeed ambivalent position vis-à-vis the writer's role in nation-building.

In 1925, a similar debate erupted between the poet Avraham Shlonsky, the leader of the emerging literary coterie of the *moderna*, and Berl Katznelson,

the revered and powerful editor of the daily newspaper *Davar*. Following the example of Russian literature after 1917, Katznelson minimized the importance of literary talent and emphasized instead sincerity in writing; his was an antimodernist stance that rejected linguistic experimentalism and favored social realism in writing. Thus, he claimed, literature should not necessarily be written by professional writers, but rather by pioneers who are able to provide firsthand testimony of their experiences in Erets Israel.[33] Shlonsky—whose literary career began with depictions of pioneer life in the Jezreel Valley—bitterly rejected Katznelson's approach, which marginalized the writer's position and judged literature solely on the basis of its social usefulness.[34] Although Shlonsky himself admired Vladimir Mayakovsky for his role as the poet of the Revolution, and although he fully identified with socialist Zionism, he could not accept such simple-minded perceptions of literary production. Shlonsky did announce time and again, however, that Hebrew literature had a major role in Jewish national revival; he believed that the writing of every good translation into Hebrew and the writing of every good original poem is a Zionist gesture.

As Shlonsky's and Brenner's positions manifest, nationalism's demand for identification with the nation is answered in Hebrew modernism in intricate ways. Hebrew modernists such as Shlonsky and Brenner are confronted with an antimodernist demand for naive portrayals of national life. In rejecting these demands, they intercept the imposition of nationalist ideology as the sole criterion of aesthetic value, only to produce, I argue, more subtle forms of identification with the national project. Although it would be possible to advance a subversive reading of such canonical writers, a reading that would undo "the tendency to bracket the critical and even transformative potential of texts,"[35] this book focuses on writers who have resisted more profoundly Hebrew literature's nationalist paradigms of worth.

Shlonsky and Brenner's cultural centrality attests to the legitimacy of such positions, even at the height of nationalist struggle. In light of their elevated status within Hebrew modernism, a series of questions arises: Why were these two writers considered so central even as they advanced forms of resistance? Why were these instances of resistance acceptable? How were they different from other—more threatening and enraging—forms of resistance? If Brenner and Shlonsky rejected political pressures only to produce more subtle forms of national identification, the writers on whom I focus in this book advanced a critique that was often more difficult to ingest. Thus, my study of Hebrew

modernism does not center on such canonical figures, but rather on writers who remained, and perhaps still remain, on the margins of Hebrew culture. In promulgating a recovery project of suppressed cultural products, my study pays special attention to voices that have been marginalized, bowdlerized, and excluded from the records of Hebrew modernism. These marginal, undervalued writers, who were often subjected to hostile readings, are reread as important contributors to Hebrew modernist culture. This cross section of Hebrew modernism, while markedly atypical, sheds new light on the period's conception of aesthetic worth, on processes of inclusion and exclusion, and on the formation of national identity in the time of nation-building.

*The Politics of Canonicity* is organized in the following manner: The first chapter relates the story of the 1896–97 debate between Ahad Ha'am and Mikha Yosef Berdichevsky over the function of literature in the time of nation-building, thereby unveiling the intricate relationship between public and private in modern Hebrew letters. This debate, I argue, produced the *regulative* paradigm of Hebrew letters and contributed to the emergence of the national allegory as a dominant mode of writing and reading.

The second chapter offers an overview of the modern Hebrew canon vis-à-vis its relation to exile and diaspora. While international modernism often glorified exile, Hebrew modernism fiercely negated the exilic condition. Ironically, however, this negation was advanced by writers who left their European "homeland" for a new and unfamiliar land. When these canons are compared and contrasted, the Hebrew canon emerges as an inverted mirror image of the canon of international modernism, suppressing the cosmopolitan, polyglot, and international experience in favor of the local and indigenous.

While the first two chapters are panoramic in nature, the following three chapters focus on specific sites of exclusion. The third chapter focuses on David Fogel, a poet who produced his Hebrew writings in Vienna and Paris, away from the budding national culture in Palestine. Fogel distanced himself from Hebrew letters in general and from Zionist ideology in particular, thereby producing anationalist poetry in a time of heightened nationalist struggle. His withdrawal from national discourse and his marked emphasis on the language of selfhood are read as an example of minor writing.

The fourth chapter delineates Hebrew literature's reception of its first women poets. The belated emergence of women's poetry is read in light of Amalia Kahana-Carmon's resonant description of modern Hebrew literature as "a synagogue of the spirit."[36] Just as women in the synagogue are ex-

pected to observe the ceremony passively, so were women writers expected to position themselves at the margins of the new national culture. However, women poets like Rachel, Esther Raab, and Anda Pinkerfeld often revolutionized the male-dominated language of their time, although their poetic revolution remained largely invisible.

The fifth chapter focuses on Avot Yeshurun's 1952 poem "Passover on Caves" and on the critical polemic that followed its publication. While the earlier chapters deal with nationalism in its prestatehood days, Yeshurun's text explores identity formation in the time of statehood. Resisting the Zionist construction of national identity and negating its xenophobic depiction of its national Other (the Arab), Yeshurun produces a radical, nearly unreadable text that intends to destabilize the very identity of the Zionist subject.

The epilogue of this book directs attention to questions of conspiracy and culpability in canon formation through a close reading of a story-cum-critical essay by Henry Louis Gates. The successful operation of exclusion depends on naturalizing a system of beliefs, and yet it is precisely this "naturalness" of beliefs that renders canonization "conspiratorial."

# 1 THE NATIONAL IMPERATIVE: WRITING THE NATION, (UN)WRITING THE SELF

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I will argue that although we may retain for convenience such categories as the subjective and the public or political, the relations between them are wholly different in third-world culture.

—FREDRIC JAMESON[1]

Poesy alone, the outpouring of the soul about the splendor of nature and the pleasure of love and so forth—let our youth seek these things in other national languages to their satisfaction.

—AHAD HA'AM[2]

## 1

Following Hannah Arendt, Homi Bhabha observes that "the society of the nation in the modern world is 'that curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance' and the two realms flow unceasingly and uncertainly into each other, 'like waves in the never-ending stream of the life process itself.'"[3]

One way to examine the ways in which the private and the public realms intersect and interact in a specific cultural setting is to look at literary texts that dramatize their interdependence. Modern Hebrew literature offers a par-

ticularly interesting example of how these two realms flow into each other in the modern discourse of the nation. The historical development of Hebrew literature is characterized by a painfully slow process in which the private realm is permitted into the literary sphere. In this sense, Hebrew literature at the end of the nineteenth century may be something of an oddity for a contemporary reader habituated to Euro-American national literatures. For, while other European literatures at the fin de siècle were intensely preoccupied with the individual, Hebrew writers in Odessa, Warsaw, and Berlin were absorbed in—or engulfed by—their role as emissaries of the people's needs and concerns.

As religious practice ceased to be the center of Jewish life, Hebrew literature became the site where national identity was expressed, asserted, and debated. For Jews, who lacked any form of self-government, the "Republic of Letters"[4] was perhaps the only existing form of national life. By permitting an imaginary perception of unity before it was achieved politically and administratively, Hebrew literature was enormously instrumental in creating an "imagined community" that led to national unity.[5] As Robert Alter observes, "by the late eighteenth century European Jewry was launching on that process of radical historical transformation we call modernization, and what was at issue now in the act of writing Hebrew was not just an aesthetic pursuit but a programmatic renegotiation of the terms of Jewish collective identity."[6]

This role of "renegotiat[ing] the terms of Jewish collective identity" is what turns Hebrew literature on the eve of modernism into a cultural enterprise that subordinates the private to the public. As Simon Halkin observes, "the material and spiritual deficiencies of ghetto life so engrossed the attention of all Haskalah [Jewish Enlightenment] writers that there is scarcely a novelist or essayist of the period, rarely even a poet, who can afford to be the creative artist only. The Haskalah author is forever the social thinker and preacher as well."[7] On another occasion, Halkin makes special reference to Yehuda Leib Gordon's 1883 poem "Atem edai" (You are my witnesses), as an example of the erasure of the private from the scene of writing:

לֹא פָצַחְתִּי רִנָּה עֵת אִשָּׁה אֵרַשְׁתִּי,
לֹא נָשָׂאתִי קִינָה עֵת אִתָּהּ גֵּרַשְׁתִּי.

...

בָּנִים לִי נוֹלְדוּ -שִׁירַי לֹא נִשְׁמָעוּ,
חָלוּ וּמֵתוּ - אַנְחוֹתַי לֹא בָאוּ,

...
לִבְנֵי עַמִּי וַאלֹהָי אֹתָךְ הִקְדַּשְׁתִּי;
...
אַתָּם, עֵטָי, עֵדַי נֶגֶד כָּל קָמָי,
כִּי בְתֹם וָיֹשֶׁר יָגַעְתִּי כָּל יָמָי,
כִּי כְסוֹפֵר בְּעַמּוֹ מִלֵּאתִי חוֹבָתִי
וּמְנוּחָה עַד יוֹם אַחֲרוֹן לֹא מָצָאתִי.

I did not sing when I became engaged
I did not write an elegy when I divorced
. . .
sons were born to me—my poems were not heard,
they got sick and died—my sighs did not come out.
. . .
To my people and my god I sanctified [you, my pen];
. . .
you, my pens, are my witnesses against all my enemies,
that in innocence and honesty I toiled all my life,
that as a writer for the people I did my duty
and rest until my last day I did not find.[8]

The poem is a series of assertions by the speaker-poet, who declares his devotion to his people. The private, namely the poet's biography, is negated outright, which is the only way that it appears—as sediments or traces of concrete biographical events. In view of this poem, whose theme is by no means exceptional,[9] it is quite obvious that Hebrew literature at the end of the nineteenth century still exhibits great difficulties in addressing the private without subordinating it to the public. Halkin describes this peculiar phenomenon as follows:

> Why is Hebrew literature so late in arriving at [modernity]? We are talking about a European tradition, about a European literary language, etc. What prevented Hebrew literature from adopting [the European literary norms]? In my opinion, there were three reasons. First: the responsibility of the Hebrew text for the Jewish people. Second: a sort of psychological modesty, almost self-asceticism, in everything that touches personal and private aspects of life. Third: modern He-

> brew literature's extraction from a completely normative traditional [Jewish] literature. These are what I call the three inhibitions—internal inhibitions, internal psychological taboos—that work within the soul of the Hebrew writer when he writes a poem or a story.[10]

By describing the suppression of the private, Halkin delineates the limits of literary possibility at a certain historical moment. Yet, in using psychological language ("internal inhibitions") to describe social and historical determinants, Halkin problematizes, however inadvertently, the distinction between the private and the public. It is precisely this critical insight that I want to pursue in the following pages, albeit with a slight change of emphasis. While Halkin places the difficulty mainly within the "private" realm, namely the writer's psychology ("soul of the Hebrew writer"), I want to place it in the "public" realm, namely in the canon's hidden grid of do's and don'ts.

To sketch the Hebrew canon's constellations of inside/outside, I will investigate in some detail one of the most crucial controversies in modern Hebrew letters, the 1896 debate between Ahad Ha'am and M. Y. Berdichevsky. Ahad Ha'am (the pen name of Asher Ginsburg; it means "one of the people"), "widely considered Zionism's greatest thinker,"[11] was the influential editor of *Ha-shilo'ach*. His adversary, Berdichevsky, an influential prose writer and essayist, spoke in this debate on behalf of a generation of writers known as the Youths (*tseirim*). Although the debate between these two figures evolved in *Ha-shilo'ach*, the participation of several other writers extended this literary controversy into the pages of other Jewish publications.

My purpose here in describing this debate is to sketch out the constraints on literary production at a specific historical moment. The questions I advance are: What did the canon promote at the moment of its emergence? What did it find reprehensible? What was still unthinkable? The debate between Ahad Ha'am and Berdichevsky is instructive to the extent that it sheds light on these questions. As one of the most important debates in the history of modern Hebrew literature, this controversy attracted extensive critical attention. The debate, it is commonly argued, was about nothing less than the future of Hebrew letters. As both writers pronounced their aesthetic ideals and ideological credos, it became clear that their conflicting views produced two paradigms of aesthetic value, as well as two views of the emerging national canon. Their positions, as traditionally understood, are summarized succinctly by Avner Holtzman in his study of Berdichevsky:

> Berdichevsky . . . favored a greater autonomy for literature within the entire spiritual production of the people of Israel; he strongly supported liberating Hebrew literature from the social and didactic purposes it was expected to fulfill; he cherished aesthetic and universal values in the literary work as well as traces of individualism, as a counter-balance to the ideological and national baggage which for Ahad Ha'am was of primary importance.[12]

Although Hebrew literary historiography has already paid considerable attention to this debate, and although my own account relies heavily on previous interpretations,[13] the reading that follows promotes a rethinking of two aspects of this controversy. First, I argue that despite the obvious differences between them, Ahad Ha'am's and Berdichevsky's positions are not as diametrically opposed as most critics would have us believe. Avner Holtzman takes an important step in this direction when he argues that "the schematic binary positioning of Berdichevsky as opposed to Ahad Ha'am tends to obfuscate the many similar points in their views."[14] Following this critical insight, I aim to show that Berdichevsky's opposition to Ahad Ha'am's literary-cum-national agenda is in itself phrased in nationalist terms. Second, Hebrew literary historiography tends to view this debate as a historical episode that, however consequential, belongs to the past. I argue that although this polemic took place over a century ago, and although it embodies many of the dilemmas this nascent literature confronted en route to modernity, it has in fact never quite ended: the positions voiced in the debate haunt Hebrew writers and critics to this day.

## 2

Ahad Ha'am unveils his editorial policy for *Ha-shilo'ach* in his mission statement. Addressing the entire people, Ahad Ha'am pledges that under his editorship the periodical will spiritually nourish everyone: "We turn our hearts to the entire people who will find in this periodical proper food for the soul and other things it needs to know in order to repair its breeches and rebuild upon its ruins."[15] This nutritional metaphor is by no means accidental: the Jewish people are likened to a hungry person who needs feeding. In using the semantic field of hunger and nourishment (and by implication, health

and disease), Ahad Ha'am joins other Jewish intellectuals of his time who describe the Jewish people as suffering from malnutrition and disease.[16] In the context of national sickness, Ahad Ha'am views Hebrew literature as part of the prescribed cure for national convalescence.

It is noteworthy, however, that literature itself is somewhat marginalized in Ahad Ha'am's cultural prescription. He lists four categories of writing, the last of which is literature. In describing this fourth category, he details the kind of texts he seeks to publish. In an often quoted passage encapsulating Ahad Ha'am's view of aesthetic value, he gives succinct expression to his literary ideology:

> The poetic work, in fulfilling a vision of life . . . within beautiful tangible forms, affects most people and is capable of inscribing things in their hearts and awakening them to thoughts and reflections, much more than abstract theoretical debates. Good stories from the life of the people, from the past and the present, which give a faithful picture of our position in different times and places, and shed a ray of light on dark aspects of our "inner world," will bring about in us a great awakening of thought and an expansion of national consciousness, and will fit our purposes, therefore, no less than the theoretical sections discussed above. However, the beautiful creation that has nothing but its own beauty, that stimulates the emotions for pleasure alone, even that type of work has a place and value in a certain aspect of human life; but in our situation right now, we argue, our poor literature should not waste its limited powers on such things while more pressing and useful issues require attention and there is no energy left for them. For this reason it is possible that this periodical will publish few poems. Because most of our poets today do not follow Y. L. Gordon's path of unifying poetry and thought [and relating art to] our lives and great needs. Poesy alone, the outpouring of the soul about the splendor of nature and the pleasure of love and so forth—let our youth seek these things in other national languages to their satisfaction.[17]

Ahad Ha'am strongly opposes the aestheticist view of art for art's sake that was prevalent in European culture at the time.[18] In his opinion Hebrew literature must serve a larger purpose, namely the "expansion of national con-

sciousness." This national measuring stick prevailed throughout Ahad Ha'am's literary career. It is hardly surprising, then, that he considered Tchernichovsky's style too European, suggesting that many of his poems lacked a specifically nationalist Jewish content. In a similar vein, he objected to the appointment of David Frishman as editor of *Ha-dor* because of Frishman's anti-Zionist views.[19] In his mission statement, he makes a clear distinction between various literary genres and their social usefulness. "Good stories" are precisely those that portray the "life of the people" and attempt to "offer a faithful picture of our position in different times and places." Ahad Ha'am's commitment to the historical unity of the people and to the oneness of the nation brings him to underscore a linear continuity between past and present. The texts he wishes to publish are therefore of a specific kind: socially useful ones that can "bring about in us a great awakening of thought and an expansion of national consciousness."

The inclusive language ("us") with which Ahad Ha'am expresses his ideology masks a series of exclusions: of genres, ideas, subject positions, and political views. Of all literary genres, poetry is the least useful because it focuses too much on personal matters such as "the outpouring of the soul about the splendor of nature and the pleasure of love." It is no accident that Y. L. Gordon, whose poem "You Are My Witnesses" exemplifies Hebrew literature's erasure of the private, is Ahad Ha'am's favorite poet. Ahad Ha'am explicitly states that poets who do not follow Gordon's example will not be published, and thereby will be excluded in the most literal, physical of senses.

It is noteworthy that Ahad Ha'am does not deny the importance of such topics as love and nature for his readers. However, since Hebrew literature has only limited powers it need not waste energy on relatively minor matters. In a revealing letter to Yehoshua Chone Ravnitsky, dated February 10, 1897, he exhorts, "We have hardly any literature or writers, nor even ordinary people who could write two or three decent pages."[20] The poor state of affairs of Hebrew letters compels him to refuse publication to literary works focused too extremely on what he perceives as the private realm.

Ahad Ha'am was aware that exclusion lay at the heart of his activity as editor. In a letter to Yehuda Zeitlin dated January 13, 1897, he argued,

> And that is the principal thing for me: to *cultivate* the good taste of Hebrew readers until they find no pleasure in those tasteless and unmannered "essays" that they now devour so enthusiastically and which

> don't exist in any other literature. And this is what I always say: the principal activity of *Ha-shilo'ach* will be perceived by its readers not by what it contains but rather by what it doesn't contain.[21]

While this statement posits stylistic merit as a central criterion for inclusion, elsewhere Ahad Ha'am reveals that the political content of a work also affects its publication potential. Looking retrospectively at the first volume of his journal, he underlines the necessary condition for entry into his canon: "I think that the issue, from beginning to end, is *national* in the sense that I like best, and would you believe that all the writers came together to avoid what completely contradicts this outlook."[22]

Revered as both an editor and writer, Ahad Ha'am's view of aesthetic worth attracted the attention of an entire generation of Hebrew writers and shaped their perceptions of literature. For example, Ch. N. Bialik, the designated national poet, changed his views on poetry after his detrimental meeting with Ahad Ha'am. As Dov Sadan has illustrated, the emerging young poet understood that his personal poems would not be acceptable to Ahad Ha'am. Consequently, he created a new poetic discourse that merged inextricably the personal and the national.[23] Bialik's struggle with Ahad Ha'am's views is clearly reflected in his correspondences with other writers and critics. In a letter dated March 17, 1897, Bialik tells Ravnitsky that Ahad Ha'am suggested that he publish his poems with Achiasaf, a publishing house supervised by Ahad Ha'am. However, Bialik expresses some doubts as to whether or not his poems would be published there:

> First, the new Achiasaf does not publish poems. Second, almost half of [my] poems have nothing to do with Achiasaf's agenda, which deals with nothing but national literature, and among my poems many are of the kind that Ahad Ha'am describes in *Ha-shilo'ach* as: "the outpouring of the soul and love poetry [that] one finds in abundance in other literatures."[24]

A month later, in another letter to Ravnitsky, he adds:

> I am afraid that Ahad Ha'am won't like my volume [of poems]. . . . I need the money badly. I am not worried about their lacking any value, or that they won't be accepted [because of their lack of value], but be-

cause of [someone's] "opinion." Many of them are everyday poems [*shirei chol*] and that is not in line with Achiasaf's agenda.[25]

Bialik faced these difficulties time and again. Upon sending his poem "Mangina le-ahava" (A tune for love) for publication, he addressed Ravnitsky in an apologetic manner: "In the present poem, 'A Tune for Love,' there isn't even the slightest trace of nationalism. If a poem with no national sentiment is acceptable to [your publication], I'm assured that you will accept this one willingly." Ravnitsky, however, returned the poem to Bialik and refused to publish it on the grounds that "it speaks about personal matters."[26]

Bialik's initial attempts to voice the private encountered such resistance that he began to reshape the relation of private to public in forms more acceptable to his readership. His identification with and admiration for Ahad Ha'am led him to invent a new poetic discourse that, in Sadan's view, confused these two spheres. That Bialik internalized Ahad Ha'am's views is clear from his reaction to Berdichevsky's invitation to participate in the revolt against the old guard of Hebrew letters. Thus, when Berdichevsky, Ahad Ha'am's adversary, pursued Bialik's support in the polemic, the latter replied, "[My] opinion tends more to Ahad Ha'am as expressed in 'Need and Capability.'"[27]

As Bialik's letters reveal, Ahad Ha'am's views shaped an entire generation of writers, who needed to struggle with this perception of poetic value even when they found it disturbingly restrictive. Thus Bialik's admission that many of his poems are "everyday poems" (*shirei chol*) bears witness not only to Ahad Ha'am's view, but also to the elevated status national poetry had acquired. Bialik's use of the term *shirei chol* reveals the cataclysmic transformation Jewish culture underwent in this period. The traditional, religious opposition between *shirei chol* and *shirei kodesh* (literally "sacred poetry") is transformed into a new, secular opposition between everyday poetry and national poetry. Bialik substitutes the national for the sacred in what turns out to be an apotheosis of national poetry. However, Bialik's language is descriptive rather than prescriptive: the poet himself acknowledges that his poetry falls short of this nationalist measuring stick.

While Ahad Ha'am's nationalist criterion emerges clearly from his mission statement for *Ha-shilo'ach*, the stylistic consequences of his position are more obscure. Ahad Ha'am's call for the erasure of anything "private" from the scene of writing should be read as an antimodernist position. He resists

on principle both the "content" and "form" of coetaneous trends in European literatures, which are slowly infiltrating Hebrew literature. He fears that Hebrew literature in following these trends will succumb to mimicry, a mere imitation of foreign, non-Jewish culture. Thus, in a rejection letter to the young writer M. Z. Feierberg, dated June 30, 1897, Ahad Ha'am asserts: "Despite your 'explanation' I didn't like your 'Shadows.' As I hinted in my previous letter, *I like simple and understandable things, and not 'symbols' and perplexing phrases.* Much to my distress, this 'disease' has been spreading, also among us recently, and many talented people are chasing 'shadows.'"[28] Ahad Ha'am's fear of cultural assimilation—which in his eyes amounts to denigrating self-effacement—generates a rejection of contemporary European forms. In resisting "symbols" and "perplexing phrases" he expresses a literary ideology that is essentially anti-Symbolist and antimodernist. He rejects Feierberg's formal experimentalism and proto-Symbolist language, as well as his individualist, emotional, and often pessimistic worldview.[29] In expressing these views Ahad Ha'am created not only a canon, but also an anticanon of themes, texts, and writers he found unworthy.[30]

In advancing this antimodernist ideology on the eve of modernism, Ahad Ha'am set a standard for entry into the Hebrew canon. By necessity, every Hebrew writer at the turn of the century was compelled to struggle, whether consciously or unconsciously, with Ahad Ha'am's aesthetic prescriptions. As we shall see, even when Ahad Ha'am's views were fiercely contested and eventually fell out of favor, his requirement that Hebrew literature be socially useful remained a pivotal critical and aesthetic criterion.

## 3

Ahad Ha'am's nationalist position created an upheaval. Steven Zipperstein rightly observes that Ahad Ha'am's position stirred "furious criticism, especially in Hebrew literary circles where many found his designation of what was and what was not Jewish to be cramped, conservative and arbitrary."[31] But the anger felt in Hebrew literary circles was not only due to Ahad Ha'am's views of what was and what was not Jewish. His restrictive view of what were proper subjects for Hebrew literature also elicited strong resistance. M. Y. Berdichevsky wrote an open letter to Ahad Ha'am, in response to the mission statement for *Ha-shilo'ach*, in which he agrees with Ahad Ha'am's diagnosis

that Hebrew literature is in a state of emergency. Admitting that Hebrew literature is losing its remaining writers and readers, he asserts that "the establishment of such a literary enterprise [*Ha-shilo'ach*] is like fixing a cornerstone to strengthen our crumbling house."[32] However, this compliment is followed by harsh criticism.

Referring to Ahad Ha'am's proposition that readers seeking the private ("the outpouring of the soul") should turn to foreign literatures ("other national languages"), Berdichevsky advances a powerful critique of Ahad Ha'am's cultural nationalism. Moving Hebrew literature toward a modernist poetics requires, he contends, a radical rethinking of the relationship between Jewishness and Europeanness. He addresses Ahad Ha'am directly:

> Allow me, respected writer, to tell you that I personally see the foundation that you have laid—to support the spiritual needs of our contemporary literature only with Judaism and what touches and relates to Judaism—as diverting [our literature] into a narrow path. . . . When we limit our circle in the name of Judaism . . . [suggesting that] life beyond our border is different from life within . . . we split life into two branches, ours and what is around us; [in so doing] we augment the internal rupture in the heart of our youth, who even without this, experience a constant war in their hearts between the beauty of Japheth and the tents of Shem.[33]

Although, as a post-Enlightenment Jew, Ahad Ha'am is shaped in part by European culture, he nonetheless views Jewishness and Europeanness as two separate components of life and personality.[34] Berdichevsky's primary desire is to overcome the breach that separates European and Jewish culture: "With us, secular and profane are not separate, there are no two worlds of external culture and national culture; we want to become complete human beings, human beings with one horizon, one thought, and one time."[35]

Berdichevsky directs attention to a double exclusion that lies at the heart of Ahad Ha'am's project. In devaluing texts that do not contribute to the expansion of national consciousness, Ahad Ha'am marginalizes and occludes both the non-Jewish and the private. Berdichevsky warns Ahad Ha'am that his editorial policy will bear catastrophic consequences: "You come to repair the ruptures but the waters of *Ha-shilo'ach* will tear the heart of every man in Israel into two separate parts: a Jewish part and a humanist part."[36] This al-

most apocalyptic and violent image contrasts with Ahad Ha'am's original intention. In the Bible the waters of *Ha-shilo'ach*, a stream in Jerusalem, "go softly" (Isa. 6:6). The title's allusion to Isaiah indicates that Ahad Ha'am opted for an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary progression within Hebrew literature and Jewish culture.[37] Berdichevsky's image of *Ha-shilo'ach*, however, underscores the danger inherent in a resistance to change. Berdichevsky threatens that if Ahad Ha'am's journal insists on separating Jewish culture from European culture it will rip the national heart.

Ahad Ha'am's zealous disregard for private concerns also comes under fire. In advancing a critique of Ahad Ha'am's position, Berdichevsky underscores the incongruence of public and private: "it is difficult for me to forget that besides our national and social world, we are living human beings, who have spiritual and *personal* needs that require attention."[38] In so arguing, Berdichevsky accentuates the personal needs of the individual, needs that Ahad Ha'am's nationalist agenda chooses to disregard. Berdichevsky concludes that Ahad Ha'am's ideology hinders Berdichevsky's entry into *Ha-shilo'ach*, pointing out that the invitation to publish in the journal is phrased in conditional terms: "Look, first you exclude from your borders a humanistic characteristic which lacks a Hebrew color, and within your borders you add another restriction when you prefer thought over poetry. So how can you say . . . that anyone wishing should come and work with us as his mind and heart pleases."[39] And he adds resolutely: "As one of the current younger generation, who knows more or less what is in their heart and soul, the greatness of their spirit and aspirations, I think that I will speak to you today 'as their heart and soul': the place is too narrow for us!" (ibid.). This exhortation, which clearly marks a generational and ideological gap between the two writers, indicates, as many critics have observed, a turning point in Hebrew letters.

As the above quotes indicate, this turning point is characterized by a new openness to individual expression (form), as well as to the expression of the individual (content). It is important to explore, however, what kind of an individual Berdichevsky has in mind. In this particular statement, he addresses Ahad Ha'am on behalf of a generation of writers, using the first person plural. This is by no means a simple grammatical slippage, I argue, for Berdichevsky's advocacy of the individual is shaped by and phrased in nationalist terms. The call for the inclusion of the private is expressed here not only as the personal need of Berdichevsky-as-writer, but also as a collective need

whose fulfillment alone can generate national convalescence. This is evident not only in his critical writings, where he often asserts the need to overcome the breach between individual and collective, but also in his stories where the individuality of his protagonists is simultaneously asserted and negated.

In Berdichevsky's seminal 1899 story "Machanayim" (Two camps), for example, the protagonist, a solitary young Jewish man (*boded be-mo'ado*), is divorced from his traditional past, community, and family.[40] The protagonist, Michael, typifies the *tlushim* (uprooted), characters who lacked a social framework to the extent that they were estranged from both traditional Jewish culture and a largely anti-Semitic Christian society. Berdichevsky's protagonist moves from the shtetl to the city and attempts to assimilate in a non-Jewish environment: "Hebrew books he no longer reads as he used to, and his tefillin and prayer book he purposefully forgot somewhere so as to cleanse himself of all assets of Judaism, in whose path he would no longer walk."[41] Although he "does not think about the Jews or Judaism,"[42] he is constantly haunted by an internalized collective against which he struggles. While he struggles to lead a "private" life far from the overbearing law of his orthodox father, he realizes that traces of this traditional Jewishness still reside within him, and that despite his desire to repress his previous identity, the past uncannily returns. Hence, the carefully constructed private realm is infiltrated by the public, and Michael, who aspires to become a free, private Europeanized individual, ultimately cannot unfetter the bonds of Jewish collective identity. Here and elsewhere, Berdichevsky posits an opposition between the private and the public only to reveal that it is a false opposition whose polarized components collapse into each other.[43]

In his open letter to Ahad Ha'am, Berdichevsky simultaneously speaks for and as an individual ("*I* personally see") and for and as a collective ("the place is too narrow for *us*"), thereby destabilizing his call for individual expression. Interestingly, Ahad Ha'am detected immediately this inner contradiction, and retorted in "Need and Capability" that Berdichevsky writes "not as a private person but as a public messenger."[44] Clearly, Berdichevsky's complaint did not change Ahad Ha'am's views, for he remained resistant to individual expression in both form and content. He reiterates his position, albeit in a slightly different form, in a letter to Berdichevsky dated July 28, 1897: "I will not conceal from you . . . that I did not like your *style*. . . . After all, you know that there's nothing I hate more than exaggerated boasting *and a most conspicuous 'I'*" (emphasis added).[45] Two weeks later he adds:

> I received your letter and thought about what you said, as you requested, but have not come to the conclusion that you were correct, as you had hoped, and I don't accept that guilt that you have heaped on me, that I am mortifying to the "selfhood" of writers. On the contrary, I try to allow everyone their thoughts and style. I only require two things: that things be clear and without lofty phrases which say nothing, and that the style be that of real "Torah students" who speak modestly and *don't foreground their selves too much.*[46]

In this statement, Ahad Ha'am once again unveils a strict editorial policy that specifies the do's and don'ts of writing. While denying Berdichevsky's accusation that he is mortifying to the selfhood of writers, he reiterates his opposition to writers' increasing preoccupation with the "I." In rejecting writers "who foreground themselves too much," he gives voice to a nationalist ideology that expects writers to unwrite the self. At the same time, however, this nationalist agenda translates into an antimodernist stylistics that rejects both formal experimentation and subjective expression.[47]

Ahad Ha'am's advocacy of the selfless style of "Torah students," while stated offhandedly, cannot be taken lightly. This tacit yet unequivocal demand strictly delineates not only the thematic and stylistic borders of the permissable, but also the biographical profile of the ideal Hebrew writer. Ahad Ha'am's ideal Hebrew writer-cum-Torah-student gives precedence to the Jewish over the European, tradition over modernity, and collective over private. Moreover, since tradition excludes women from Torah study, the ideal Hebrew writer is by definition male.[48] Given the almost total absence of women from Hebrew letters at the turn of the century, Ahad Ha'am's gender blindness is not surprising (see also Chapter 4). Yet, what appears as merely a stylistic imperative is in fact an exclusionary practice founded on a set of national, gender, and class-related determinants.

**4**

Although Berdichevsky rejected Ahad Ha'am's monolithic and essentialist view of Jewish history, and although his own account of the Jewish past is indeed much more flexible, heterogeneous, and dynamic, it is also true that Berdichevsky's literary and historiographic work was deeply rooted within a

nationalist framework, as well as in the desire to reshape Jewish collective identity.[49] When Berdichevsky writes, "This is the purpose of our work, to become a people, individuals united by a general national feeling and a historic place,"[50] he gives voice to the recognition that national recovery can be attained only through the work of the individual. This inner tension in Berdichevsky's thought—between writing the nation and writing the self—culminated, I argue, in the creation of a national subject whose fate is simultaneously private and public. Y. Ch. Brenner (1881–1921), who played a key role in canonizing Berdichevsky as a writer who focuses on the "depths of the individual,"[51] articulated the relationship between the individual and nation in Berdichevsky's writing as follows:

> [Berdichevsky] and the entire people of Israel are one. "My sorrow is not mine . . . but the sorrow of our entire people, the sorrow of the many people, which became my own sorrow"—thus wrote Berdichevsky at the end of *Arakhin* [Values]. . . . The sorrow of the nation was the poet's sorrow, even when he placed the individual, and only the individual, at the center.[52]

Brenner's description of Berdichevsky is telling. The depth of the individual stems from the inseparability—and in fact unity—of individual and nation, private and public. While this description aptly portrays Brenner's own aesthetic and ideological pursuits, as well as his own conflation of private and public, it also sheds light on the critical reception of Berdichevsky's texts. In stressing Berdichevsky's merging of private and public—of sorrows that are at once private and public—Brenner helps to create a mode of reading as well as a mode of writing that constructs a national subject who speaks for himself and for the nation simultaneously.[53] This mode of writing has become ideologically dominant in Hebrew letters, perhaps because it provided a way of reconciling the mutually exclusive realms of private and public. Let us look, for example, at Brenner's 1903 semiautobiographical novel, *In Winter*. The protagonist, Jeremiah Feirman, who has abandoned traditional Judaism and continues to search for a modern, secular Jewish identity, offers this self-description: "The main subject of my thoughts was the relationship between myself and society. I said to myself that my private life is nothing, and that for someone like myself it is better . . . to sacrifice myself entirely for the good of the public. In this way can my individuality be formed."[54] While there may be an ironic dis-

tance between Brenner and his protagonist, Jeremiah's struggle to define himself within and against the collective characterizes many of Brenner's antiheroes and many of the protagonists of the period's literary texts. What we witness here, once again, is a moment in which the private is subsumed by the public, paradoxically for the sake of the individual's very identity. Although Brenner's text has a strong psychological slant, it reads the protagonist's psychology in social and collective terms. The protagonist's flight from the private is indeed a form of repression, but it occurs precisely because the private in and of itself is construed as an impossibility. Brenner's protagonist, not unlike the protagonists of Berdichevsky's stories, is tormented by a personal sorrow that is rooted in the character's childhood. But this "private" psychology is constantly presented as a social fact that stems from the very reality of a generation of sons who were "banished from their father's table."[55]

Brenner's reading of Berdichevsky is by no means arbitrary, for his interpretation is based on a deeply sedimented tradition in Hebrew writing that perceives the writer as a prophet. In Ezekiel, the prophet is described as follows: "Son of Man I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel" (Ezek. 1:17). As Dan Miron has astutely pointed out, modern Hebrew literature adopted the figure of the prophet-as-watchman to describe the writer's role.[56] Like the biblical prophet who serves as an intermediary between God and his people, the Hebrew writer speaks for and to the nation. In this role, the watchman has an ambivalent position vis-à-vis the nation, for he stands both within and outside its boundaries.[57] No matter how acrimonious the relationship between the prophet and his people may become, he cannot avoid his representational status as the speaker of the nation. Moreover, this role precludes the possibility of speaking from an exclusively individual or private subject position. As Berdichevsky beautifully illustrates, the writer-as-watchman is always already locked up in a cyclical movement: "My sorrow is not mine . . . but the sorrow of our entire people, the sorrow of the many people, which became my own sorrow." And thus, in Brenner's *In Winter*, Jeremiah Feirman's flight from the private compels him to assume responsibility for the entire people of Israel: "I had a belief that society awaited me. Society, that is to say: the People of Israel, the Jewish Nation, for whom I should live, to mortify myself and to do her good, she that expects that I will come and save her."[58] Although the story renders this belief ironic and pathetic by presenting the flight to the public as a form of repression, it nevertheless aspires to create a unity between self and nation.

I began this chapter by asking how private interests assume public significance and how the two realms flow unceasingly into each other. As we have seen, Hebrew literature offers a unique example of the ways in which private interests eventually enter into the public sphere as embodied by literature. The private comes to be legitimized and valued as a literary topic only belatedly, with the creation of a national subject whose very existence embodies the intersection of private and public. Against this background, Berdichevsky's intervention is traditionally viewed as an important moment in the process of what also could be termed the modernization and Europeanization of Hebrew. Thus Hannan Hever argues that by subordinating the national to the private Berdichevsky created a new relationship between private and public: "Berdichevsky's position repeatedly destabilizes the collective identity of the national subject. . . . Berdichevsky's national subject subordinates the public to the private, and in so doing lends universalist power and authority to the particular nationalist position."[59]

Hever's analysis sheds light on Berdichevsky's contribution to the emergence of a new kind of discourse in Hebrew letters. Indeed, when Berdichevsky's literary ideology is read against the background of previous writers, there is no denying that he created a new relationship between the private and the collective. And yet, when Berdichevsky's position is examined in *hindsight*, when it is read not against what preceded it (Ahad Ha'am), but also against what was about to emerge in Hebrew letters in the first years of the twentieth century, it becomes clear that his position, however revolutionary at the time, was also very restrictive. By intertwining the individual and the collective, Berdichevsky created a powerful model of writing in which self and nation become figures for each other. This model of the national subject, which eclipsed all other forms of writing, limited the possibility of writing from other subject positions. Writers who did not or could not write as national subjects—because they did not match the profile of the ideal national subject—faced great obstacles and were relegated to marginality.[60]

## 5

Hebrew literature's conflation of private and public signifies a collapse of what is known as the private/public divide predominant in the discourse of Western culture. But such a collapse should come as no surprise, since, as

Fredric Jameson argues, this phenomenon is typical of texts written in the Third World. As the epigraph to this chapter suggests, Jameson believes that the relations between "the subjective and the public or political are wholly different in third-world culture." Such texts, Jameson contends, should be read as "national allegories, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel."[61] He goes on to explain, "Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of public third-world culture and society."[62] Jameson's patronizing tone and totalizing generalizations have already come under fire.[63] Although there are good reasons to take Jameson's formulation with a grain of salt, it offers a suggestive perspective on Hebrew literature as a Third World literature. The fact that Hebrew literature at the turn of the century is produced in Europe should not deter us from seeing the analogies between Hebrew and Third World texts. In fact, Jameson himself finds Third World "pockets" within European culture, thereby extending his conception of the Third World beyond its geographical boundaries. In his eyes, the 1887 Spanish novel *Fortunata and Jacinta*, by Benito Perez Galdos, exhibits the same conflation of private and public characteristic of Third World texts. Thus, he argues, "Although 19th century Spain is not strictly *peripheral* after the fashion of the countries we are here designating under the term third-world, it is certainly semi-peripheral . . . when contrasted with England or France."[64]

Jameson's overestimation of England and France marginalizes all other European national cultures. While this biased view throws into question the validity of his dichotomy between First and Third World, it allows us to further problematize the presumed homogeneity of European culture. If Spain, with its imperial tradition, is semiperipheral, as Jameson argues, then Hebrew literature is certainly at the invisible margins of European culture. The case of Hebrew may further prove that the Third World is not necessarily "out there," but rather within the very boundaries of Europe. There is yet another reason to read Hebrew texts of the period as Third World texts. As the Others within Europe, Jews have always had a particularly ambivalent relationship with dominant European culture. Being on a cultural rim, Jewish cultural forms developed not only against the background of "predominantly western machineries of representation," but in dialogue with them.

While Jameson's cartographic reading of world literature is deeply troubling in its zeal for totalizing generalizations, as well as in its conflation of nation and territory,[65] his observations are immensely useful for describing Hebrew literature's route to modernity. The national allegory, which in Jameson's view characterizes Third World literatures, had indeed become the dominant mode of writing in Hebrew letters, and Berdichevsky himself contributed to the dissemination of this mode of writing and reading. Let us go back and look at the ways in which Berdichevsky, who is customarily perceived as the advocate of the individual, constructs the inseparability of private and public. While he resisted Ahad Ha'am's negation of the private, Berdichevsky himself denied the possibility of a purely private Hebrew voice. In "Divrei shira" (On poetry) he writes:

> Private poetry about the individual cannot exist without public poetry, that is, without expressing the suffering of the public, the suffering of the people. . . . All that is within us and within our lives ferments from public disaster and public anguish. Listen and you shall hear in your own soul the destruction of the entire people, all its suffering and its divides. . . . Who among us still lives only for himself and exists only within himself? Who among us is not rotting because of the [previous] generations and is not suffering in his soul because of the [previous] generations? Who among us lives for himself unconnected to that which occurred in the past and the present?[66]

In this striking passage, Berdichevsky seems to contradict his previous statements on the importance of an individual perspective in Hebrew literature. It is no surprise, then, that he attempts to appease the tension between both positions. Thus he adds: "Indeed, alongside the poetry of the Tolada [history] we need a poetry of nature, a poetry of the individual himself and the sorrow and yearning of his soul." For Berdichevsky, as for Ahad Ha'am, the category of the personal includes any expression that goes beyond the limits of the national, including "a poetry of nature." However, as soon as this desire for personal poetry is expressed, Berdichevsky renders it unattainable. Ultimately, Jewish collective suffering in the Diaspora overwhelms individual expression:

> Poetry is the force of creative personal freedom; with clear vision, it opens paths and moves the wheels of life. . . . Poetry was born to ele-

> vate man . . . but among us it sighs and struggles with its sorrows and an expression of its sorrows. Its voice comes from the ruins of Horeb and the destruction of the nation. When we approach nature, we find that it is closed to us by history.[67]

Jewish history, dominated by trauma and destruction, is not located in the past but rather in the present. Individuality and individual expression are forever crushed by its presence. Thus, the writer's recourse to the private, as represented by nature, is frustrated and negated by the nightmare of history. Berdichevsky's repeated efforts at voicing the individual are constantly hindered by this nightmare; thus, he aspires to achieve a new equilibrium between individual and collective, private and public. However, despite these attempts, Berdichevsky construes the individual in terms of his contribution to the collective. Thus he exhorts: "Give us the possibility for an individual's life; the collective will follow after him."[68]

Individuality, then, is not an aim in and of itself, but rather the means by which the collective will be reshaped, restored, and recreated. The individual is instrumental to national rebirth, and national revival can be enhanced even by individuals who break away from the collective. The oppositions private/public and individual/national never cease to inform Berdichevsky's writings, and in negotiating a new equilibrium between each binary he makes them in fact inseparable from one another. Thus, in another essay he writes, "I myself am tied by thousands of knots and cords to my people, to its sorrow, to its past, to its homestead, and I am forced to dream its dreams, hope its hopes, and suffer its despair. I am forced [to do so] against my will, and my own wishes are suppressed before the wishes of the entire people."[69] The writer's own individuality is constituted by feelings and sentiments that are forced upon him by the collective.

Berdichevsky was well aware of the contradictory nature of his thinking. In an often quoted letter dated March 11, 1891, he writes, "We are used to believing the well known phrase, 'one cannot hold two opposite [opinions] on the same subject,' but when I look inside myself I conclude: one cannot but hold two opposite [opinions on the same subject]—because in truth my whole existence is contradictions."[70] This embrace of contradictions, itself a proto-modernist stance, appears time and again in Berdichevsky's writing. In his essay "Be-shirateinu anu" (In our poetry), he turns this contradiction into the main characteristic of his generation's poetry. A new poetry arises from the

following inner conflict: the poet, torn between a longing for the knowledge of his forefathers and a desire to revolt against their religious world, gives voice to his ruptured heart:

> The poet feels the grandeur of the study house and its oppressiveness. With one hand he wants to remove from himself the burden of the generations, and with the other hand he carries that chain forward; he himself is another link in the chain that he wishes to break. . . . this poetry is the poetry of the ruptured heart. The heart is torn and seething, different forces are pulling it in opposite directions, and the poet stands at the crossroads and sings. And the one thing that is common to all kinds of [Hebrew] poetry is the reckoning of the Jewish individual with his people. The poet . . . suffers the suffering of his people.[71]

While Berdichevsky considers this contradiction a rupture, it is noteworthy that it does not lead to the individual's total divorce from the collective. In fact, the rupture emerges because of the impossibility of separating the private from the public, the present from the past. Consequently, Berdichevsky demands an equilibrium between these binaries: "This is the main point: that 'man' and 'nation' shall not be two separate entities, one apart from the other. You already know the great spiritual damage we suffered because of the rejection of the individual in favor of the nation and vice versa."[72] The words "vice versa" are important here. Berdichevsky is apprehensive not only of the rejection of the individual in favor of the nation, but also of the rejection of the nation in favor of the individual. It is this required equilibrium and interdependence between individual and collective that makes the national subject (who acts within a national allegory) into such an attractive and powerful mode of writing and reading in the Hebrew tradition.

However, the question remains: who can become a national subject, let alone "the" national subject? Or, put differently, who can speak for and represent the collective? If the debate between Ahad Ha'am and Berdichevsky is a convenient starting point for a study of the Hebrew canon, it is because both figures deal with the question of value from the perspective of the individual's work and the collective's need. As mentioned earlier, Ahad Ha'am and Berdichevsky have been perceived traditionally as the representatives of two mutually exclusive literary ideologies. But as we have seen, there are important similarities between their positions. For both of them literature is

first and foremost a collective, national enterprise. They both describe the exilic condition of the Jews as a sickness. As cultural nationalists, they believe that Hebrew literature's role is to help *cure* the people's malady. Their prescriptions, however, are different. Ahad Ha'am believes that the private realm should be put in parenthesis, at least temporarily. Berdichevsky, on the other hand, calls for an expansive view of literature—as well as for the inclusion of various, previously marginalized issues—but within the male-dominated nationalist construction of the individual and the collective.

Both of these authors, however, cannot imagine an individual who lives and works outside the imaginary boundaries of the nation.[73] This anational subject is the blind spot in each of their views of the space of Hebrew literature. Moreover, precisely because their views appeared to be diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive, they appeared to exhaust the entire range of possible models for Hebrew writing and the potential relations between individual and collective. Thus, their similarities rather than differences can come to explain the limited possibilities in Hebrew literature at that historical moment. Their constructions of aesthetic value, although markedly different, still place significant importance on the individual as a voice of the collective. True, Berdichevsky does allow the individual to break away from tradition, and to negate the past in his search for authentic modern selfhood. Yet his construction of a national subject whose biography is, by definition, always already representative of the collective, created a major paradigm in modern Hebrew letters. In thus understanding the act of writing, Berdichevsky obviously left many things outside the frame. Writers who were unsuccessful in constructing a national subject—either because they did not want to be part of a national discourse (Fogel), or because they were not viewed as representatives of national culture (mainly, women writers)—were relegated to the margins of Hebrew literature. In a "Republic of Letters" that put so much emphasis on narrating the nation, writers who failed to address the fate of the nation were immediately rendered minor. To view Ahad Ha'am and Berdichevsky as constituting an opposition is in some ways to disregard another option—indeed an option that had not yet materialized in 1896—of Hebrew texts that ignore altogether the discourse of nationalism.

I have pointed out the contradictions in Berdichevsky's position, contradictions that are perhaps unavoidable when one wishes to reconcile the private and the collective in an era of nationalism. Such contradictions marked the thinking of other writers as well. The inability to fully circumvent a na-

tionalist vocabulary is most evident perhaps in the case of David Frishman. Frishman, an important figure in the budding Hebrew culture at the turn of the century, was an anti-Zionist who favored an aestheticist, Europeanized approach to literature. Although he resisted Ahad Ha'am's nationalist imperative, it is noteworthy that he also spoke of Hebrew literature in markedly collective terms. An aestheticized Hebrew literature, Frishman contended, could be the remedy for the people's malady. He thus thought that the leaders of the Jewish people should find the financial means that would allow Hebrew writers to dedicate themselves to writing. The leaders of the nation, he argued, "fail to understand that the most necessary of all institutions is literature."[74] This tension between Frishman's aestheticist views and collective language is indicative of the difficulty in—perhaps the impossibility of —using the Hebrew language without evoking nationalist meanings.

It is somewhat ironic that Berdichevsky's attack on Ahad Ha'am, which in 1896 constituted a counterpublic sphere,[75] turned in time into a dominant and *regulative* paradigm. While Berdichevsky's early attack on Ahad Ha'am seemed to challenge the latter's view of poetic value (personified by Y. L. Gordon, who spoke for the nation), Berdichevsky's subsequent descriptions of a poet who must, by definition, integrate the private and the public are not that far removed from Ahad Ha'am's view.

Yet, in making this critical intervention, I do not want to gloss over the differences between the ways in which each of these thinkers conceptualized the relationship between nation and the individual, or the differences between their political agendas. In this theoretical context, Aijaz Ahmad reminds us that "nationalism is no unitary thing" and that "it is always very hard to think of nationalism at the level of abstraction, without weaving into this abstraction the experience of particular nationalisms and distinguishing between progressive and retrograde kinds of practices."[76] In historicizing this debate, it seems necessary to examine Ahad Ha'am's and Berdichevsky's positions along a temporal axis: while Berdichevsky's critique of Ahad Ha'am in 1896 cannot but be read as an instance of progressive nationalism, the demarginalization of this stance over time turned it into a limiting and constricting position. As it turns out, the welding of private and public, which Berdichevsky and his canonizers so strongly advocated, became such a powerful and accepted mode of writing that writers who insisted on a markedly individualist voice—a voice divorced from the imagined community—were rendered minor.

I claimed at the beginning of this chapter that although the polemic between Ahad Ha'am and Berdichevsky embodies problems typical of the nascent Hebrew literature en route to modernity, it has never quite ended. As the following chapters will show, the question of whether Hebrew literature should be committed to the nation's needs or whether it should voice the individual has never ceased to haunt Hebrew writers. Hebrew literature of the last century is characterized by a compulsion to repeat this very polemic. A review of the critical reception of Hebrew writers throughout the twentieth century, and a scrutiny of some of the critical debates over the role of literature, will reveal that the polemic between Ahad Ha'am and Berdichevsky continued to resonate in Hebrew letters many years after its eruption in 1896.[77]

# 2 MODERNISM AND EXILE: A VIEW FROM THE MARGINS

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> Jean Genet once said that a homeland is a stupid idea, except for those who still don't have one. The Spanish poet Goitisolo then replied: "What about when they get one?" And Genet replied, "Let them throw it out the window."
>
> —MAHMOUD DARWISH[1]

## 1

The terms exile and diaspora have become fashionable tokens in much postmodern and multicultural theory.[2] In his "Imperialism/Nationalism," Seamus Deane succinctly summarizes the postmodernist view of exile:

> [Exile] can lead from belonging nowhere to becoming at home everywhere, a migrant condition that owes something to the old Enlightenment ideal of the Citizen of the World, but also owes much to the contemporary belief that there is an essential virtue and gain in escaping the singularity of one culture into the multiplicity of all, or of all that are available. In such a turn we witness a rejection of nationalism brought to an apparently liberating extreme.[3]

This view of exile as privilege has its roots in modernist celebrations of exile. High modernists such as Joyce and Pound repeatedly emphasized the intel-

lectual advantages of being away from home, presenting exile as a vehicle for individuality, freedom, and resistance. As Deane notes, modernist writers' "distance from and disaffection with their home territories has almost always been understood as a paradigmatic refusal of the writer to surrender his or her radical freedom to the demands of an oppressive state or system."[4]

In critical constructions of modernism and exile Jews often occupy a pivotal position. There are, of course, at least two reasons for the Jews' centrality in discussions of modernism and exile: first, Jews have historically been perceived as the paradigmatic diaspora people. Second, modernist Jewish thinkers and writers like Erich Auerbach and Theodor Adorno, Paul Celan and Franz Kafka, played a key role in directing critical attention to the ways in which exile yields intellectual freedom and creative power. Given these facts, it is perhaps no wonder that the Wandering Jew has often been invoked as a standing symbol of modernism and modernity.

The three-way correlation between modernism, exile, and Jewishness is brought into focus in David Carroll's foreword to Jean-François Lyotard's *Heidegger and "the jews."* Referring to Lyotard's citation of Freud, Benjamin, Adorno, Arendt, and Celan as "expelled, doomed to exodus," Carroll argues that "these are ultimately 'the jews' we all have to read and even in some sense to become, 'the jews' we always already are but have forgotten we are."[5] To be sure, in a number of ways these Jewish writers need to be read as exemplary modernists. As such, Freud, Benjamin, Adorno, Arendt, and Celan are indeed not only Jews by origin but also by "fate": they all suffered the burden of homelessness and exile.

What we witness here, however, is a common, albeit tacit, double conflation of modernism and exile, of exile and Jewishness. While these conflations are partially grounded in historical facts, it would be grossly inaccurate to assume that all Jewish modernists advocated exile or found it intellectually liberating. In fact, modernist Hebrew writers resisted the idea of exile as a literary privilege or as an inherently Jewish vocation. Their resistance, which will be fleshed out below, calls into question the very privileging of exile in contemporary theory; it also calls into question the critical tendency to read modernist practices as essentially antinationalist.

Against the backdrop of Anglocentric or Eurocentric views of the modernist canon, the modernist Hebrew canon stands out as somewhat of an oddity. Although Hebrew modernism was often simultaneous with and closely affiliated to European modernisms, and although many of its practitioners

lived and wrote in the capitals of international modernism, it does not fit neatly into the categories of central modernisms. One way to illustrate the historical specificity of the modernist Hebrew canon is to contrast its rejection of exile as a literary ideology with the glorification of exile and extraterritoriality among high modernists. In this chapter I read Hebrew modernism's "negation of exile" (*shlilat ha-gola*) as a counternarrative that problematizes and disrupts Eurocentric and Anglocentric constructions of both "home" and "exile." The negation of exile in Hebrew modernism should be viewed, I argue, as an inverted mirror image of the celebration of exile in the writings of Anglo-American and European writers.

The negation of exile in Hebrew modernism involves a striking reversal of the home/exile binary. The "exile" described in modernist Hebrew texts is Europe, the place where the vast majority of Hebrew writers were born and reared; the "home" these writers embrace is Palestine, a new land they continuously portray as unbearably hot, foreign, and forsaken. Yet the desire for a national sense of place and identity that is untroubled, as well as the pressures of the canon to fulfill that desire, compels Hebrew modernists to *repress* or palliate their sense of exile at "home" in Palestine. Thus, although they are torn between continents, homes, and languages, modernist Hebrew writers often deny the difficulties inherent in their "homecoming." Torn between their Europeanness and their newly fashioned "indigenousness" in Palestine, they developed a particular way of seeing the home/exile dichotomy.

Referring to Adorno's view that "it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home," Edward Said notes that "to follow Adorno is to stand away from 'home' in order to look at it with the exile's detachment."[6] By contrasting different views of exile, by slapping them one against the other, I aim to contextualize and historicize various exilic conditions as well as various canonical representations of exile. I aim, in other words, to look at exile with a sense of critical detachment: from outside in and from inside out.

## 2

The often quoted words of Stephen Dedalus in the *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* have long come to emblematize the dominant modernist view of exile as offering unique possibilities for resistance and freedom: "I will not

serve that in which I no longer believe whether it calls itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can . . . using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile, and cunning."[7] In this formulation, exile and freedom become almost synonymous. Exile turns out to be not only a mode of life but also a form of art that, together with silence and cunning, allows for individuality and resistance. Dedalus's words on silence, exile, and cunning are the background against which Joyce's own exile should be viewed. Exile, for Joyce, is not decreed from above; it is a creative choice, a modernist form of resistance that should be cherished and cultivated. Thus Richard Ellman observes that "whenever [Joyce's] relations with his native land were in danger of improving, he was to find a new incident to solidify his intransigence and to reaffirm the rightness of his voluntary absence."[8] Constantly renewing the quarrel with his homeland was a way to remain both physically and emotionally in exile. The idea that exile is indeed a form of freedom is similarly expressed in Maurice Blanchot's description of Franz Kafka. Describing Kafka as one of those who were "excluded from Canaan," Blanchot sees in Kafka a new sense of elsewhereness. The "error of infinite migration" is for Blanchot nothing less than "the origin of a new freedom."[9] Joyce and Blanchot were not alone in promulgating exile. Ezra Pound argued that the American genius could not develop in the cultural "Dark Ages" of the United States; it could flourish only in London or Paris. He asserted that "if you have any vital interest in art you sooner or later leave the country."[10] And Gertrude Stein argued that "Americans needed Paris because they could not be artists, they could be dentists at home." In *What Are Masterpieces?* Stein articulated her position as an expatriate writer: "I am an American and I have lived half my life in Paris, not the half that made me but the half that made what I made."[11] In *Paris France* Stein added, "After all, that is, everybody who writes is interested in living inside themselves in order to tell what is inside themselves. That is why writers have to have two countries, the one where they belong and the one in which they live really. The second one is romantic, it is separate from themselves, it is not real but is really there."[12] Stein's words posit exile as a precondition for writing. Although the words "have to have" make exile mandatory for writing, it is noteworthy that the exile Stein describes is one of choice. In Stein's writing exile is in fact a choice, a privileged position, something to be desired; it is a modernist accomplishment, a token of internationalism, an asset rather than a liability. This view is repeatedly expressed in discourses on

high modernists. Thus Delmore Schwartz's characterization of T. S. Eliot as an "international hero,"[13] whose experiences and words transcended the limits of the national, typifies a modernist stance that views exile as a form of resistance to nationalist ideology.

The advent of modernism has come to be perceived as so inextricably entangled with exile that major critics like George Steiner, Raymond Williams, and Hugh Kenner depict exile as almost a necessary condition for membership in international modernism. In George Steiner's words, modernism is an art of "extra-territoriality," whose proponents are poets "unhoused . . . wanderers across languages."[14] For Steiner, then, exile is the defining characteristic of modernism at large.

Describing the "endless border-crossing . . . [that] worked to naturalize the thesis of the non-natural status of language," Raymond Williams notes in "When Was Modernism?" that

> Paris, Vienna, Berlin, London, New York took on a new silhouette as the eponymous City of Strangers, the most appropriate locale for art made by the restlessly mobile émigré or exile, the internationally anti-bourgeois artist. From Apollinaire to Joyce to Beckett and Ionesco, writers were continuously moving to Paris, Vienna and Berlin, meeting there exiles from the Revolution coming the other way, bringing with them the manifestoes of post-revolutionary formation.[15]

The "restlessly mobile émigré or exile" was, in Williams's view, the new era's protagonist. Continuously moving across borders, creating through such migration a new international culture, these exiles were emblems of a new, modern world.

In his seminal essay "The Making of the Modernist Canon," Hugh Kenner advances the idea of modernism-as-exile even further. The exclusion of key modernist figures such as Wallace Stevens, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner from his construction of "International Modernism" is explained as follows:

> The absence of Wallace Stevens from the canon I use has somehow been made to seem notorious. I account for it by his inassimilability into the only story that I find has adequate explanatory power: a story of capitals, from which he was absent. Like Virginia Woolf of Blooms-

> bury or Faulkner of Oxford, he seems a voice from a province, quirkily enabled by the International Modernism of which he was never a part, no more than they.[16]

The exclusion of Virginia Woolf from the canon ("She is not part of International Modernism; she is an English novelist of manners, writing village gossip from a village called Bloomsbury for her English readers")[17] demonstrates that the narrative Kenner advances is one of exile. It was not enough to be in a European capital, as was Woolf. One had to choose a European city in which one was not at home. Moreover, by arguing that "International Modernism was the work of Irishmen and Americans," although the cities of modernism were in fact London and Paris, Kenner tacitly suggests that the prerequisite for membership in international modernism is exile.

Inasmuch as exile turned into an emblem of modernism, the "Jew" was increasingly perceived as a prototypically modernist figure.[18] Mary McCarthy argues in "A Guide to Exiles, Expatriates, and Internal Emigrés" that the "wandering Jew . . . is the archetypal exile, sentenced to trail about the earth until the second coming."[19] It is precisely this commonplace that turns the Jew into an emblem of modernity itself. We have already seen how David Carroll, following Lyotard, turns "the jew" into a generic term that represents all forms of otherness, a critical maneuver that turns the readers of "real" Jews into allegorical "jews." We have similarly seen how Blanchot turns Kafka's Jewishness into a modernist quality of homelessness. In the same vein Marina Tsvetayeva writes in a poem intended for Osip Mandelstam that "all poets are Jews,"[20] and H.D. draws a parallel between the Jews' wandering and the fate of her Moravian ancestors, who used the term diaspora to name their own homelessness.[21]

While modernists like Pound, Joyce, H.D., Eliot, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald often saw "the Jew" as the emblem of both modernism and exile—and in many ways understood their own work as "Jewish"[22]—actual Jews did not quite fit the model. For while European high modernists turned the wandering Jew into an emblem or allegory of the human condition (Joyce's Bloom is a salient example), modernist Hebrew writers were enthusiastic participants in the project of bringing the wandering Jew back home. Hebrew writers thus resisted the view of exile as a "kind of literary privilege,"[23] inasmuch as they rejected exile as an "inherently Jewish vocation."[24] The "negation of exile" consequently became a dominant theme or topos in Hebrew modernism. So

while Marina Tsvetayeva wrote that "all poets are Jews" and Joyce "Judaized" Ulysses, Hebrew modernists were working to distance themselves from traditional Jewishness, from the "error of infinite migration."

**3**

In 1925 Shaul Tchernichovsky, second only to Bialik in the premodernist generation of Hebrew writers who first became active in Odessa of the 1890s, published a long poem entitled "Ha-adam eno ela . . . " (A man is nothing but . . . ), which celebrates the speaker's emotional attachment to his native Ukraine:

הָאָדָם אֵינוֹ אֶלָּא קִרְקַע אֶרֶץ קְטַנָּה,
הָאָדָם אֵינוֹ אֶלָּא תַּבְנִית נוֹף־מוֹלַדְתּוֹ.

Man is nothing but a little plot of land,
man is nothing but the image of his native landscape.

The poem's celebration of the Ukraine as the speaker's homeland is striking in its deviance from the accepted norms of Hebrew poetry of the day. Unlike Bialik, the designated national poet who described Europe in the wake of the Kishinev pogrom of 1903 as the antithesis of home ("The whole earth is a slaughtering block to me"), Tchernichovsky evokes the Ukraine as a beloved homeland.

Tchernichovsky's life embodies the Jewish experience of exile. Born in a village in the border region between Crimea and the Ukraine, he was forced to study medicine in Heidelberg and Lausanne because of restrictions against the admission of Jewish students to Russian universities. After graduating, he returned to Russia but left again for Germany in 1922, for he suspected that there was no future for Hebrew writers in the Soviet Union. He attempted unsuccessfully to get a medical position in Palestine, a delay that resulted in his long-term residence in Germany. In 1931 he emigrated to Palestine, where he resided until his death in 1943. The poem "A Man Is Nothing But . . . ," which was written in Germany, positions the speaker as the wandering Jew who is relegated to eternal exile. Surprisingly enough, Tchernichovsky celebrates his own exile; despite the speaker's elegiac tone (the speaker does lament his inability to reach the "Southern Sea"), he does not

present exile in negative terms. Unable to ignore the negation of exile in Hebrew letters, he underscores the marginality of his own position:

וְשִׁירִי נָכְרִי, שִׁירִי זָר לְלֵב אֻמָּתִי,
עָרִירִי כִּי הוֹפִיעַ וְעָרִירִי יֵלֵךְ,
בְּאֶפֶס לֵבָב קוֹלֵט אוֹתוֹ וּלְלֹא־בַת־קוֹל,
כְּאוֹתָהּ צְוָחַת נָשֶׁר בּוֹדֵד, צְוָחַת־פֶּרֶא.
וּכְאוֹתָהּ רוּחַ, אֲשֶׁר תִּדֹּד לָעוֹלָמִים,
נָדַדְתִּי מִיָּם וְעַד יָם כָּל יְמֵי־חַיַּי.
וְיָהִי בִרְצוֹתִי לָבוֹא עַד הַיָּם הַדָּרוֹמִי,
וַיִּגְדְּרוּ דַּרְכִּי הָרִים ... וְאֵיפֹה אֶבְנֶה קִנִּי?

עוֹד מֶרְחָב וְעוֹד דְּרָכִים! אַיֵּה מַקְלִי - אֵלֵךְ...

And my poem is alien, my poem is stranger to the heart of my nation
all alone it appeared and all alone it shall leave
with no one to receive it and with no word
like the screech of the lonely eagle, a wild screech.
And like that wind, which will wander eternally,
I wandered from sea to sea all the days of my life.
And when I wanted to reach the Southern Sea
mountains blocked my way . . . where should I build my nest?

More wide open space and more roads, where is my walking stick—
I shall go . . . [25]

Tchernichovsky's words are interesting precisely because he markedly and painfully recognizes that the image of the wandering Jew, an image he fully identifies with, has run out of vogue in modern Hebrew letters. The wandering Jew, the emblem of Jewish life in the Diaspora, is portrayed in Hebrew texts in extremely negative terms. In most Zionist texts, Zionism is continuously portrayed as the cure while exile is identified as the disease.[26] Zionist denunciations of exile were clear and unequivocal.[27] Thus Ben Tsiyon Dinburg writes in an essay entitled "Ha-ideologia ha-tsiyonit vi-ysodoteha" (Zionist ideology and its principles): "The principle underlying the Zionist conception of Jewish reality was—the Negation of Exile. This negation is the first principle of Zionist ideology. Jewish misfortune has but a single name: exile [*galut*]. Exile embodied all the [Jewish people's] disasters and calamities;

persecutions and suffering."[28] Against the background of Dinburg's words, Tchernichovsky's embrace of the "exilic" Ukraine—and his identification with the wandering Jew—are startlingly iconoclastic. The extent of Tchernichovsky's deviance from the ideological norms of Hebrew literature becomes clear when we read the uncompromising denouncements of Jewish life in the Diaspora that pervaded Hebrew literary production in the first decades of the twentieth century. In fact, the poems Bialik and Tchernichovsky wrote at the turn of the century marked a cataclysmic change in Jewish cultural history, a change characterized by a fierce rejection of exilic forms of national existence. In Tchernichovsky's 1899 poem "Le-nokach pesel apollo" (Facing the statue of Apollo"), for example, the poet exhorts "I'll kneel before life, heroism and beauty," thereby expressing the rejection of traditional diaporic Jewish values in favor of Greco-Roman, markedly un-Jewish, ideals.[29] Similarly, Bialik rejects in his 1903 long poem "Be-ir ha-harega" (In the city of slaughter), which was written after the Kishinev pogrom, the passivity and cowardice of Diaspora Jews. God, who is the speaker in this powerful long poem, directs the poet's attention to the horrors of the pogrom, admitting to his inability to help his worshipers. In Bialik's poem, God's impotence signifies the meaninglessness of traditional systems of belief:

סְלְחוּ לִי, עֲלוּבֵי עוֹלָם, אֱלֹהֵיכֶם עָנִי כְמוֹתְכֶם,
עָנִי הוּא בְּחַיֵּיכֶם וְקַל-וָחֹמֶר בְּמוֹתְכֶם,
כִּי תָּבֹאוּ מָחָר עַל-שְׂכַרְכֶם וּרְפַקֻּתֶם עַל-דַּלָתָי –
אֶפְתְּחָה לָכֶם, בֹּאוּ וּרְאוּ: יָרַדְתִּי מִנְּכָסָי!
וְצַר לִי עֲלֵיכֶם, בָּנַי, וְלִבִּי לִבִּי עֲלֵיכֶם:
חַלְלֵיכֶם – חַלְלֵי חִנָּם, וְגַם-אֲנִי וְגַם-אַתֶּם
לֹא-יָדַעְנוּ לָמָּה מַתֶּם וְעַל-מִי וְעַל-מַה מַתֶּם,
וְאֵין טַעַם לְמוֹתְכֶם כְּמוֹ אֵין טַעַם לְחַיֵּיכֶם.

Forgive me, the wretched of this world, your god is as poor as you
he is poor in your life and even more so in your death,
if you come before me and knock on my doors—
I would open them, come and see: I have nothing left!
and I feel sorry for you my sons, and my heart goes out to you:
those of you who died died in vain, and neither you nor I
know why you die and for what purpose
and there is no meaning in your death as there is no meaning in
your life.[30]

In Bialik's poem, God's admission that he cannot fathom Jewish suffering marks a change in the way Jews interpret Jewish history: the valorized diasporic concept of Jewish martyrdom is flatly rejected in favor of self-defense, national honor, and heroism. These texts, which had a huge impact on Jewish readers of the period, helped shape the binary opposition between "old Jews" and "new Jews," a divide that informed the literary production of the period. Consequently, Hebrew writers at the begining of the twentieth century, such as Moshe Smilansky, Y. Ch. Brenner, and Yosef Luidor, turned the negation of exile into a dominant theme in their writing, thereby portraying the Jews' exilic condition as a national pathology. This antidiasporic sentiment was directed even at Ch. N. Bialik, the "national poet" whose poems helped shape the Zionist negation of exile. When Bialik read his short story "Marinka" (later published as "Behind the Fence") to a Hebrew-speaking audience in Jaffa in 1909, the audience reacted with unabashed ambivalence. One newspaper described the audience's reaction as follows:

> The heart of the audience was stunned before this wonderful work that will undoubtedly stand among the classics; the audience enjoyed the vivid pictures which passed before its eyes like beautiful stills from a silent movie. But in its heart, the audience protested. The [gentile Russian character] Shkoripintchshika, [emerged] from Bialik's lips in Erets Israel on a Hebrew stage. How odd. And the heart became bitter. Should [the gentile protagonist] Marinka unite our hearts with the great heart of the poet of our generation upon his departure from Erets Israel?[31]

The audience's sentiments were already articulated during the reading itself when Menachem Sheinkin rose and scolded Bialik for choosing this particular story, which in his view had no relevance to the emerging Zionist project in Palestine. Sheinkin's critical response gives voice to a double expectation: Hebrew texts must advance a negation of exile and should embark upon an intricate depiction of the emerging Zionist project. While this demand did not remain uncontested in Hebrew letters, it nonetheless continued to inform the field of Hebrew culture.[32]

The negation of exile—the pinnacle of Zionist ideology—found expression in myriad literary and critical texts. The war was waged not only against the Diaspora as site but also against the diasporic character of the old Jew. The new national culture in Palestine sought to engineer a new Jew whose

body and character would be the exact opposite of the diasporic Jew. The negation of exile, then, involved a cultural cleansing of diasporic elements that were feared to come not only from outside but also from within. Thus, Uri Zvi Greenberg could write in 1924 against the arrival of petit-bourgeois immigrants of the Fourth Aliyah to Erets Israel: "Within our liberation movement, the diasporic nightmare rears its head in Zionist form."[33] In his typical belligerent fashion, Greenberg vehemently warned against the return of the suppressed and negated diaspora. While Greenberg's rhetoric was always extremely transgressive, his ideas in the 1920s—when he still identified with the labor movement—were commensurable with mainstream Zionist ideology.[34]

The Diaspora is described as a site of sickness and the source of Jewish suffering in myriad texts. Consider, for example, the following popular poem by Avigdor Hameiri. Hameiri, a Hungarian-born poet who served in the Hungarian army during World War I (he was taken captive by the Russians and sent to a POW camp in Siberia), emigrated to Palestine in 1921. The following dialogue between a mother and her son brings to light the ideological and geographical rift between two generations:

כּוֹחֶבֶת אֵם בְּדִמְעַת עַיִן:
לִבְנִי הַטּוֹב בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם,
אָבִיךָ מֵת, אִמְּךָ חוֹלָה.
בּוֹא הַבַּיְתָה לַגּוֹלָה...
בּוֹא הַבַּיְתָה לָאָבִיב,
בּוֹא הַבַּיְתָה, בֵּן חָבִיב.
בּוֹא !
...
כּוֹתֵב חָלוּץ בְּדִמְעַת עַיִן:
שָׁנַת תַּרְפַּ"ד בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם.
סְלַחִי אִמִּי הַחוֹלָה,
לֹא אָשׁוּב עוֹד לַגּוֹלָה.
אִם אֱהוֹב תֹּאהֲבִינִי,
בּוֹאִי הֵנָּה וְחַבְּקִינִי.
לֹא אֶהְיֶה עוֹד עָע וָנָד.
לֹא אָזוּז מִפֹּה לָעַד.
לֹא אָזוּזָה, לֹא אָזוּזָה,
לֹא !

A mother writes with the tear of her eye
to my good son in Jerusalem
your father is dead, your mother is ill
come home to the Diaspora . . .
come home to spring,
come home beloved son.
Come!

And the son replies:

The pioneer writes with the tear of his eye
it is 1924 in Jerusalem.
Forgive me my sick mother
I will not return to the Diaspora.
If you truly love me,
come here and embrace me.
I shall be a wanderer no more,
I shall not move from here forever.
I will not move, I will not move.
No![35]

Note that from a Zionist perspective the mother's appeal to the son to "come home to the Diaspora" is an outright oxymoron. Since "Diaspora" and "home" are flagrantly contradictory the son cannot but flatly reject the mother's plea. Moreover, Hameiri rhymes the words "Diaspora" (*gola*) and "ill" (*chola*), a device that strengthens the association, prevalent in Zionist ideology, between exile and sickness.

Hameiri's bluntness was not exceptional. The Hebrew poets who took part in the nation-building process were eager participants in the cultural war against exile. The most influential Hebrew modernist was the poet Avraham Shlonsky, who was born in Plotov (Ukraine) in 1900. At age thirteen he was sent off by his father to study in Palestine. The outbreak of World War I found him on a visit to Russia, where he was forced to stay through the crucial years of the revolution and the war. In 1922 he emigrated to Palestine and soon became the leading proponent of what was "New" in Hebrew letters. Like other modernist Hebrew poets, Shlonsky was well versed in European culture, and his poetry exhibits a close affinity for and affiliation with the poetics of Russian poets Alexander Blok and Vladimir Mayakovsky. But while

Shlonsky's experimentalism and wild imagery—as well as his iconoclastic rejection of tradition—are couched in and modeled after European examples, his blunt rejection of exile sets him apart from the European poets he follows. The poetics of newness advanced by Russian Futurism, including the extended use of neologism, is used by Shlonsky for political means. He advances a utopian Zionist agenda of newness that calls for a new society, a new language, and a new homeland. That the new is couched in the rhetoric of return (to productivity, to Hebrew, to Palestine) renders the utopia just and attainable. Shlonsky, who was once characterized as "the poet of the Zionist revolution," identifies wholeheartedly with the Zionist rejection of exile. Addressing both his comrades and the homeland ("Listen brethren / and listen [my] homeland"), Shlonsky describes in his poem "Komemiyut" (Revival) the marked differences between home and exile, past and present:

אַחַי
כֹּה לָחֵי
הַעְפִּילוּ הָהָרָה!
תְּמוֹלִים הֶאֱפִילוּ
נַבִּיט הַמֶּחֱרָה.
אֵיכָה תִּיעַפְנָה כְּנָפַיִךְ, הַנָּשֶׁר,
הֵן אָנוּ שָׁרַפְנוּ
שָׁרַפְנוּ הַנָּשֶׁר.
מִי זֶה מוֹשְׁכֵנוּ לָשׁוּב אֶלֵי תְּמוֹל?
...
אָנוּ
כֻּלָּנוּ
יָדַעְנוּ
כִּי בָאנוּ
מֵאֶרֶץ נוֹשֶׁבֶת אֶל אֶרֶץ נִדַּחַת
כִּי פֹּה יִשְׁימוֹן הוּא
וְלָנוּ נָכוֹנוּ
רָעָב
וְקַדַּחַת.
וְאַף־עַל־פִּי־כֵן
הַאָמֵן
נַאֲמִין
כִּי אָנוּ נָקוּם גַּם כִּי שָׁבַע נִפֹּל.

הַיְשִׁירוּ הָעַיִן
הַגְבִּירוּ הַקוֹל:
מִי זֶה טוֹעֶה וּפוֹסֵעַ יָמִין?
שְׂמֹאל!
שְׂמֹאל!
שְׂמֹאל!

hurray
climb the mountain!
yesterdays have darkened
we shall look at the morrow.
how do the eagle's wings tire?
indeed we burned,
we burned the bridge
who is trying to pull us back to yesterday?
. . .
we've
all of us
known
that we came
from a settled land to a forsaken place
that this is the wasteland
and that hunger and
malaria awaited us.
and in spite of it all
we do believe
and we shall believe
that we will rise
even if we fall time and again.
straighten your gaze,
raise your voice:
who errs to step right?
left!
left!
left![36]

Although the playful inventiveness of Shlonsky's Hebrew is lost in translation, his ideological identification with the negation of exile remains fully

visible. It is noteworthy that Europe is not even mentioned in Shlonsky's poem. The speaker, whose tone of voice is couched in a revolutionary European context, ignores Europe altogether, identifying it only indirectly as "a populated land." Europe is present in the poem only through negation, representing an undesired past. Shlonsky's route leads him toward a leftist, socialist vision that is shaped by the Russian Revolution; this vision is imbricated here with a nationalist-cum-modernist thrust that in turn leads Shlonsky away from Europe. Although Shlonsky presents Palestine as a forsaken place (*erets nidachat*) and as a wasteland, he celebrates it as home and homeland, expressing full confidence in the imminent success of the Zionist project.

As this example clearly shows, Shlonsky is aware of the harsh conditions in Palestine (hunger, malaria); if Europe looms large in the background as a "populated land," it is only as an emblem of the past. Shlonsky does not deny the difficulties inherent in leaving Europe and immigrating to Palestine, but he accepts the difficulties with great enthusiasm, as he writes in "Metropolis":

אֲהַבְתִּיכֶם, אֲחָי, בֵּין מַדְקְרוֹת צָבָר,
בֵּין צִפָּרְנֵי חַמְסִין דּוֹרֵס וּצְחִיחַ־סָלַע,
בְּמֶרֶד וּבְשָׁלוֹם נִפְשַׁס־נָא הַצַּוָּאר:
בָּרוּךְ מַכְבִּיד עָלֵינוּ.
אָמֵן.
סֶלָה.

I have loved you my comrades
among the thorns of the *tsabar* [prickly pear]
in eagle-clutches of parched-rocky heat;
in rebellion and in peace
let us extend our necks:
blessed be He who places his heavy yoke on us.
Amen.
Selah.[37]

In Shlonsky's view the newly arrived pioneers cannot but accept the hardship in Palestine wholeheartedly. The modernist desire to reshape, and at times even to negate the past ("Make it new," as Pound famously declared) expresses itself in Shlonsky's poem as the negation of Europe. When Shlonsky claims to have burned the bridge (to Europe, to the past) and refuses to

be pushed back to yesterday, he identifies exile as a chronotope that enmeshes time (past) and place (Europe). The negation of exile that leads the speaker to negate his own past involves various difficulties. As Shlonsky confesses in another poem, "Pgisha im nof" (Encounter with a landscape):

אֵיכָה אֶשְׁתֹּל גּוּפִי מוּל וַאדִי שָׁחָרַב,
מוּל שַׁיִת וּלְטָאָה,
מוּל גַּרְמֵיוּת דַּבֶּשֶׁת?
יִרְאֵנִי הַגָּמָל - וְזָרוּ לְנִחִירָיו
גּוּפִי וְרֵיחוֹתָיו, עַדֵי יִרְאָה לָגֶשֶׁת

How shall I plant my body across a dried-up valley
across a thorn-bush and a lizard
across the boniness of the [camel's] hump?
A camel will see me—and my body and smell
will be strange to his nostrils—fear to get near.[38]

The sense of estrangement in the new homeland, as voiced by Shlonsky, marks an important difference between Hebrew literature and the official story of Zionism. Rosemary Marangoly George has already pointed out that while "nationalist movements narrate one story, literature creates its home through tangential locations."[39] In describing the estrangement he feels in his new homeland, Shlonsky appears to resist the dominant ideology of the negation of exile.[40] Interestingly, however, he wishes to overcome this gap between national narrative and personal experience. Thus, he presents Zionism not only as a nationalist ideology but also as a modernist practice. His national-cum-cultural imperative could be described as follows: to negate the past/Europe is to embrace modernism/Palestine. The boundaries between the nationalist project and the literary one seem to fall down when Shlonsky asserts that the writing of every good translation into Hebrew and the writing of every good original poem is Zionism. And thus the rebuilding of the land and the writing of modernist Hebrew poetry are perceived by Shlonsky as synonymous. Consider, for example, the quasi-religious description of the Zionist rebuilding of the land in his famous poem "Amal" (Toil):

My country wraps itself in light as in a prayer shawl
houses stand out like phylacteries
and like phylactery straps, the highways that hands have paved glide down.[41]

Note that in Hebrew the word *batim*, which is translated above as "houses," is also the word for stanzas (as well as the receptacles of the phylacteries). Thus the modernist/Zionist poem's stanzas and the newly built houses are synonymous. Consequently the poet is a full participant in the Zionist project, a "road-building bard in Israel."

In his diary Shlonsky explained the relation of Zionism to modernist Hebrew poetry:

> What does the sense of a homeland, the fact of a homeland [Palestine], bestow on our culture . . . ? It allows an emancipation from the . . . always-Jewish, only-Jewish—that is from the external and the limiting and bragging all at once. . . . It is no coincidence that in the Diaspora, our literature—our art—was specific, and hence *Naturalistic*, since nothing natural, taken for granted, existent and safe (that is a homeland, a state) gave us a sense of self, nor did it safeguard our particular characteristics,—and hence our culture became . . . a substitute for a homeland, for a state. . . . It had to preserve . . . everything that was Jewish and only Jewish. . . . In Palestine, I do not need to be only Jewish, always Jewish in order to be a Jew. In Palestine, I can, I must be a man, first of all a human being, for Jewishness is anyway automatic within the territorial, social, and political structures of the homeland. For what does a homeland mean to a people if not a sense of taken-for-grantedness. It saves a national group from [chauvinistic] nationalism, and it is the only possibility to base a culture on humanism. It is no coincidence that Hebrew literature in Palestine is mostly of this kind: *modern*, *relevant*—in its thematics, its mentality, its desires (and also perhaps in its chances) to take off from a national moment into the international horizon, just as an airplane takes off from an airport.[42]

For Shlonsky, Zionism and the emergence of a Jewish homeland are modernist catalysts that bring about the demise of naturalism. Shlonsky equates exile and naturalism just as he links the return to Palestine with modernism.

The very possibility of internationalism, which is crucial for Shlonsky as well as for many other modernists, is based on the existence of a homeland, metonymically figured through the airport. As this passage clearly indicates, Shlonsky is not insensitive to the allure of modernist internationalism as a means of resisting "[chauvinistic] nationalism" (*leumanut*), but he acknowledges that in order to resist or criticize the nation-state structure one must first have a state. The anecdote told by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (which is quoted in the epigraph to this chapter) may indeed serve to illustrate Shlonsky's position. When Shlonsky argues that he wants "to take off from a national moment into the international horizon," he says, in fact, that people have to have a homeland in order to "throw it out the window."

Shlonsky's view of Hebrew modernism is expressed more fully in a historical account of the emergence of what he terms the "new poetry" in Palestine. Here too he equates Zionism and modernism: "A new poetry could have arisen only as a result of its identification with a vision, with the beginning of a new society which is socialist in its form and nationalist in its content."[43] Shlonsky's account of the new Hebrew poetry of which he was part is revealing enough to be worth quoting at some length:

> This Hebrew poetry . . . was chronologically and essentially the logical offspring of the Third Aliyah [immigration wave] in all its manifestations. For better or for worse, its doubts and its achievements—it is the voice and reflection of this glorious story of this Aliyah. It cannot be located outside this climate, outside the joy of the storming settlers [*mista'arim*], "bare-hearted and labor-driven," of this period. . . . The sites are well known: the Road and the Gilboa, the tent and the commune, [the kibbutzim] Ein-Charod and Beit-Alfa, and Yachad Camp. . . . Only in this way, through such an identification with a vision, with the beginning of a different society, "socialist in form and nationalist in content," could a new poetry arise. . . . And so a party of poets came together, who together built the stanzas [*batim*—stanzas but also houses] of the new poem. Each one with his particular temperament, but always bearing the collective trait of this newness. [These poets'] roots in the country's landscape are deeper, and the personal biography of almost all of them is already that of total identification with the public of Erets Israel, whose main essence and glory is the camp of the pioneers.[44]

On reading Shlonsky's account of the emergence of Hebrew modernism it becomes unequivocally clear that he identifies Hebrew modernism with the rejection of exile. In identifying the new Hebrew poetry with the writers of the Third Aliyah, Shlonsky strictly confines the borders of Hebrew modernism. Delineating clear temporal, geographical, and ideological borderlines to contain the story of Hebrew modernism, mappings like these exclude from the canon writers who did not *emigrate* to Erets Israel (like Hayim Lensky); a nativist poet who was born in Erets Israel (Esther Raab); and writers who were not politically committed to Zionism (like David Fogel).

The story Shlonsky recounts here, perhaps unexpectedly, is one of migration. Not unlike Kenner, Williams, or Steiner, he identifies migration as the only concept that has explanatory power. But as the examples adduced here clearly show, Shlonsky perceives the emigration of Hebrew writers from Europe to Palestine not as exile but rather as a late return, as a homecoming. Thus the modernist Hebrew canon, which cannot be separated from the Zionist nation-building process, can be said to have worked to change the premodernist norm of exile. The desire expressed by Shlonsky and most of his contemporaries is not one of *deterritorialization*. It is rather a desire for *reterritorialization*! It is against this desire for reterritorialization that we should read Moshe Kleinman's 1928 assertion: "Only someone who is completely blind could fail to see the mutual influence that exists between Zionism and Hebrew literature, [they] arise and succeed together just as they fall and fail together, and God forgive some of our friends, who stubbornly subscribe to the idiocy that Hebrew literature can be built on the basis of a-Zionism or even anti-Zionism."[45] While Kenner excludes writers such as Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, and Wallace Stevens from the canon of international modernism because they did not live in exile, Hebrew poets who chose to remain in the Diaspora or who did not fully negate the concept of exile were excluded from the modernist Hebrew canon or were marginalized by its center. That the exile in which these marginalized Hebrew writers remained included some of the major sites of international modernism is one of the curious ironies of literary history. And while exile seemed like a modernist stance or accomplishment to many European or American writers, most Hebrew writers perceived it as essentially *premodern*, something that needed to be abolished altogether.

**4**

To fully understand a culture one must attend not only to dominant voices but also to the voices that have been silenced, cast out, expelled, or excluded. Although the negation of exile turned out to be the dominant ideology of Hebrew letters, it would be grossly inaccurate to imply that other poetic/ideological positions did not find expression in the textual field we name Hebrew modernism. Indeed almost all Hebrew poets were devout Zionists; but some did voice ambivalence toward or disappointment regarding the "home" they found in Palestine. Since Hebrew criticism demanded full identification with Zionism, poets who continuously expressed ambivalence toward the Zionist project were often thought of as minor. Consider, for example, the poetic/political ambivalence of Noach Stern. Stern, who was born in Lithuania in 1912, emigrated to Ottawa when he was seventeen; two years later he moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to study English literature at Harvard. After graduating, Stern was offered a scholarship at Columbia University but he decided to emigrate to Palestine. He arrived in Palestine in 1935 but was never at home in his new homeland of choice. Ambivalent, he describes the orange groves, the emblem of the new land:

אַךְ רֵיחוֹת־תַּפּוּחֵי־הַזָּהָב הַכְּבֵדִים
כְּבָר בָּאִים לְהַנּוֹת וּלְעַנּוֹת,
כְּבָר בָּאִים לְהַעֲנִיק וּלְהַחֲנִיק כְּעֵדִים
לַחַיִּים בַּמּוֹלֶדֶת הַזֹּאת.

The smell of the heavy oranges
comes to give pleasure and to torture
to nurture and strangle as witness
to the life in this homeland.[46]

Another poet who continuously described Palestine as a disappointing homeland is Alexander Penn. Penn, a Russian-born poet, who was while still in Russia a friend of Vladimir Mayakovsky, wrote poems in both Russian and Hebrew. Constantly torn between the USSR and Palestine, Penn wrote in 1929 a poem entitled "Moledet chadash" (A new homeland). This new homeland is described in astonishingly negative terms:

בְּלִי אֱמֶן וּמַגָּמָה
אֲנִי מַפְסִיעַ רָגֶל,
וּבִגְרוֹנִי שִׁמְשֵׁךְ - צָרֶבֶת נְחוּשָׁה.
הֵן כָּל תְּנוּפַת נַפְשִׁי
אַתְּ מַדְבִּירָה בֵּן רָגַע,
אַתְּ, הַמְּכֻנָּה מוֹלֶדֶת חֲדָשָׁה !

Without faith and direction
I walk
your sun in my throat—bronzed heartburn.
And all the energy of my soul
you eradicate instantly,
you so-called New Homeland.[47]

The "so-called New Homeland," with its intolerable climate and utter foreignness, eludes the speaker, who can only express his disillusionment in angry terms. The negative portrayal of the "homeland" in the above-quoted poems by Stern and Penn undoubtedly contributed to these authors' marginalization in Hebrew modernism. Unlike Stern or Penn, however, Leah Goldberg was a leading poet in Shlonsky's coterie, the *moderna*. Her poems offer perhaps the most ambivalent poetic rendition of Jewish "homelessness" in Hebrew modernism. Goldberg continuously problematized the notions of home and exile without attempting to hide her own ambivalence. Born in Könisberg, East Prussia, and educated in Semitic languages at the universities of Kovno, Bonn, and Berlin, Goldberg was thoroughly familiar with Russian and German literature; she attained native or near-native fluency in many European languages, including Russian, German, French, Italian, and English. Although Goldberg's mastery of Russian was far superior to her knowledge of Hebrew, she decided to write poetry in Hebrew when she was ten years old. When she was twelve years old she wrote the following poem, entitled "Galut" (Exile):

אַךְ בְּכָל זֹאת אָחוּד אֶת שְׂדוֹת הַגָּלוּת
הַמְּלֵאִים שִׁבּוֹלֵי שׁוּעָל וּפִשְׁתָּה,
אֶת יוֹם קַיִץ חַם וּבָעֶרֶב הַקְּרִירוּת,
אֶת שְׁתִיקַת הַלַּיְלָה מֻתָּה

אֶת הָאָבִיב הַחִוֵּר וְהַשֶּׁלֶג הַנָּמֵס,
אֶת הַזְּמַן שֶׁל֣א קַיִץ וְל֣א סְתָו
כְּשֶׁבַּגַּן כְּאִלּוּ בְּאֵיזֶה נֵס
נֶהֱפַךְ הַיָּרֹק לְזָהָב.

How difficult the word how many memories
of hatred and slavery
and because of it we had shed so many tears:
exile

and yet, I'll rejoice in the fields of exile
which are filled with oats and flax
the hot day and the cool evening
and the dead silence of night

the pale spring and the melting snow
the season which is neither summer nor autumn
when, in the garden, by some miracle
the green turns to gold.[48]

The poem's shift from an ideological negation of exile to an unabashed celebration of the exilic landscape is striking. Goldberg focuses here and elsewhere on the gap or rift between ideology and experience. She begins with a textbook rejection of exile only to find out that the negated site is beautifully familiar. Moreover, a close scrutiny of the text reveals that exile for her, at least here, is textual. It is presented as a "difficult *word*," a concept in Jewish collective memory ("memories of hatred and slavery") rather than as a concrete experience or fact of life. The speaker's shift from the "difficult word" to the happiness aroused by the fields is undoubtedly surprising. As Goldberg's literary career progressed, however, she became increasingly aware of the problematics of "home" and "exile" and thus gave expression to a particularly complex position.

With Goldberg, home is often a function of distance and nostalgia, a place always already beyond one's grasp and therefore longed for. In a cycle

entitled *Mi-shirey tsiyon* (From the songs of Zion), Goldberg thematizes, and indeed problematizes, the relationship between poet and land, immigrant and home. The cycle's first section, entitled "Laila" (Night), reads:

הַאִם עִנְבַּל זָהָב בְּרָקִיעַ עֶלְיוֹן?
הֲנָטַף אֵגֶל טַל עַל צַמֶּרֶת הַבְּרוֹשׁ הַגָּבֹהַּ?
שִׁירוּ לָנוּ מִשִּׁירֵי צִיּוֹן!
אֵיךְ נָשִׁיר שִׁיר צִיּוֹן עַל אַדְמַת צִיּוֹן
וְעוֹד לֹא הִתְחַלְנוּ לִשְׁמֹעַ?

Does the golden tongue of a bell quiver in the uppermost heaven?
Did a drop of dew fall on the top of the tall cypress tree?
Sing to us of the songs of Zion!
How shall we sing the song of Zion in Zion's land
And we have not yet begun to hear.[49]

Goldberg's poetry becomes increasingly wary of the expectation that Hebrew poetry should be politically committed to Zionism in general and to the negation of exile in particular. The above poem echoes the words of the exiles in Psalms 137, who resist their captors' demand that they sing the songs of Zion. Exile for them is a state that negates the very possibility of singing. The allusion to Psalms 137, the ur-text on exile in the Jewish tradition, cannot pass unnoticed by Goldberg's readership. Before considering the meaning of Goldberg's iconoclastic allusion, let us look at Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi's reading of the biblical passage:

> The theme of exile and homecoming is as old as literature itself, becoming, in its most radical modern readings, virtually synonymous with the literary process. At the source of a long intertextual journey, the 137th Psalm is the canonic moment that generates the poetic vocabulary of exile: "By the rivers of Babylon, *there* we sat and wept as we remembered Zion." The pleonastic "there" in the first and third verses calls attention to itself by its very redundancy; syntactically superfluous, "there" defines exile as the place that is elsewhere. Being elsewhere is the pre-text for poetry.[50]

While Ezrahi sensitively points to Psalm 137 as the "canonic moment that generates the poetic vocabulary of exile," she ignores the fact that the biblical

passage presents exile as antithetical to poetry, for being in exile precludes the very possibility of singing. Goldberg makes a striking use of this biblical passage by relocating this exilic logic within Palestine. Unlike the exiles in Babylon, she is, in fact, at "home" in the ever longed-for Zion yet is still haunted by the impossibility of singing. Attempting to listen to the land's unheard voices, Goldberg acknowledges her inability to capture poetically the sounds of this unfamiliar homeland.

Why is the Zionist demand—"Sing to us of the songs of Zion!"—compared, at least tacitly, to that of the Babylonian captors? Despite her many poems about the land, Goldberg resists engaging the topic on command. Goldberg's 1939 debate with Alterman over the function of poetry in wartime similarly demonstrates her opposition to any demand that poetry be socially or nationally useful. Even at the outbreak of World War II, Goldberg insisted that the poet should not "forget the real values of life. A poet is not only allowed to write a love poem in time of war, but must, because also in times of war love is more valuable than murder." And she adds: "I take upon my self the role of forerunner, in order to say, in my own personal name, that I, in September 1939, see myself compelled to go out into the literary world with a verse that opens, for example, with these words: "On a morning in the month of Elul / the sea in our land is transparent and cool."[51] Goldberg's refusal to engage poetry in politics is in and of itself a political gesture. Yet, this gesture creates an equilibrium between various, almost opposing, positions: her political statement is counterbalanced by a highly personal, apolitical tone. Similarly, her rejection of the idea of politically engaged poetry is tacitly offset by her use of the word *artsenu* ("our land"), which in the Hebrew context carries patriotic connotations. However, critics often failed to notice the ambivalence and complexity of her position and denounced her lack of nationalist commitment.

Goldberg's ambivalence also comes into play in "Tel Aviv 1935," in which she describes the arrival of a group of immigrants to Tel Aviv. This long-awaited arrival is marked by a sense of exile and estrangement:

הַתְּרָנִים עַל גַּגּוֹת הַבָּתִּים הָיוּ אָז
כְּתָרְנֵי סְפִינָתוֹ שֶׁל קוֹלוּמְבּוֹס
וְכָל עוֹרֵב שֶׁעָמַד עַל חֹדֶם
בִּשֵּׂר יַבֶּשֶׁת אַחֶרֶת.

וְהָלְכוּ בָּרְחוֹב צְקְלוֹנֵי הַנּוֹסְעִים
וְשָׂפָה שֶׁל אֶרֶץ זָרָה
הָיְתָה נִגָּעֶת בְּיוֹם הַחַמְסִין
כְּלַהַב סַכִּין קָרָה.

אֵיךְ יָכוֹל הָאֲוִיר שֶׁל הָעִיר הַקְּטַנָּה
לָשֵׂאת כָּל כָּךְ הַרְבֵּה
זִכְרוֹנוֹת יַלְדוּת, אֲהָבוֹת שֶׁנָּשְׁרוּ,
חֲדָרִים שֶׁרוֹקְנוּ אֵי־בָּזֶה ?

כְּתְמוּנוֹת מַשְׁחִירוֹת בְּתוֹךְ מַצְלֵמָה
הִתְהַפְּכוּ לֵילוֹת חֹרֶף זַכִּים,
לֵילוֹת קַיִץ גְּשׁוּמִים שֶׁמֵּעֵבֶר לַיָּם
וּבְקָרִים אֲפֵלִים שֶׁל בִּירוֹת.

וְקוֹל צַעַד תּוֹפֵף אַחֲרַי גַּבְךָ
שִׁירִי לָכֶת שֶׁל צָבָא נֵכָר,
וְנִדְמָה - אַךְ תַּחְזִיר אֶת רֹאשְׁךָ וּבַיָּם
שָׂטָה כְּנֵסִיַּת עִירְךָ

The masts on the house roofs then, were
like the masts of Columbus's ship
and every crow standing on their tips
announced a different continent.

And the knapsacks of the travelers walked down the streets
and the language of a foreign land
was plunged into the hot day
like the cold blade of a knife.

How could the air of the little town
bear so many
childhood memories, loves which dropped away
of rooms which were emptied out?

Like pictures turning black in a camera
clear winter nights turned inside out.
Rainy summer nights of overseas
and dark mornings of capitals.

And then sound of a footstep behind your back drummed
marching songs of a foreign army
and it seems—if you would only turn your head—that in the sea
your hometown's church is floating.[52]

Although the poem is clearly about her own immigration to Palestine (she arrived in Jaffa in 1935), Goldberg describes her "homecoming" in strikingly impersonal terms. The experience is collective rather than personal, and the process as a whole is dehumanizing, for the immigrants in the poem turn from subjects into walking knapsacks. The walking knapsacks are devoid of any human content, transient specters of elsewhereness. As we read these lines, it becomes clear that Goldberg problematizes the notion of "homecoming." Goldberg's double position, simultaneously insider and outsider in both Europe and Palestine, is expressed in the poem through the speaker's visual perspective. The "detached" modernist eye that looks at the "walking knapsacks" from afar seems to be standing on a roof in Tel Aviv. Goldberg describes the immigrants' arrival to a new land as if she is not implicated in the picture she portrays. By looking at a group of immigrants (of which she is part) from outside, with no apparent trace of involvement, she gives succinct expression to her sense of detachment from herself as well as from the collective. Goldberg's double perspective informs the poem in many different ways. For example, one disturbing question remains unsolved: Which is the foreign language that is "plunged into the hot day"? Is it the immigrants' Russian or is it the natives' Hebrew? What, in other words, constitutes the "foreign" in the pregnant moment of homecoming? The question remains unresolved. Moreover, as Goldberg arrives in Palestine, a moment of Jewish wish fulfillment, she instantly thematizes her emotional and spiritual longing for her hometown's architecture, figured through a church.

The poem's first stanza gives voice to Goldberg's ambivalence through an interesting allusion to the biblical story of Noah's ark. In this story a crow is sent by Noah to discover whether the flood has receded, and the crow returns with a negative answer. Eventually, it is the dove, as opposed to the crow, who finds dry land, signaling the end of Noah's journey. In Goldberg's poem, however, the speaker finds the crows—who in the biblical story signify wandering and homelessness—in her new homeland. Thus, Tel Aviv turns from a destination into a site signifying continuous migration; it is as "temporary" a home as the ark. Arriving in Tel Aviv does not signal the end

of the immigrants' journey but rather the beginning of a new sensation of internalized exile. The town itself is likened to Columbus's ship, and the crows announce many different continents. Even here, in this new homeland, Goldberg cannot but express the simultaneous coexistence of different languages, backgrounds, and continents. The same simultaneity is repeated in the subsequent stanzas in which past and present become increasingly enmeshed.

In another poem Goldberg's double position becomes even more explicit, as she acknowledges her sense of "elsewhereness."

כָּאן לֹא אֶשְׁמַע אֶת קוֹל הַקּוּקִיָּה.
כָּאן לֹא יַחְבֹּשׁ הָעֵץ מִצָּנֶפֶת שֶׁלֶג,
אֲבָל בְּצֵל הָאֲרָנִים הָאֵלֶּה
כָּל יַלְדוּתִי שֻׁקָּמָה לִתְחִיָּה.

צִלְצוּל הַמְּחָטִים: הָיָה הָיָה - - -
אֶקְרָא מוֹלֶדֶת לְמֶרְחַב־הַשָּׁלֶג,
לְקֶרַח יְרַקְרַק כּוֹבֵל הַפֶּלֶג,
לִלְשׁוֹן הַשִּׁיר בְּאֶרֶץ נָכְרִיָּה.

אוּלַי רַק צַפָּרֵי־מַסָּע יוֹדְעוֹת -
כְּשֶׁהֵן תְּלוּיוֹת בֵּין אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם -
אֶת זֶה הַכְּאֵב שֶׁל שְׁתֵּי הַמּוֹלָדוֹת.

אִתְּכֶם אֲנִי נִשְׁתַּלַּחְתִּי פַּעֲמַיִם,
אִתְּכֶם אֲנִי צָמַחְתִּי, אֲרָנִים,
וְשָׁרַשְׁתִּי בִּשְׁנֵי נוֹפִים שׁוֹנִים

Here I'll not hear the cuckoo's voice,
here the tree will not wear a snowy hat
but in the shadow of these pines
my entire childhood is revived.

The sound of the conifers: once upon a time—
homeland I'll name the snowy planes,
the greenish ice which chains the stream
the language of poetry in a foreign land

perhaps only the passing birds know—
as they dangle between earth and sky—
this pain of the two homelands.

With you, I was planted twice
with you, pines, I grew,
with my roots in two different landscapes.[53]

While Gertrude Stein views the simultaneous affiliation to two countries as a liberating privilege and as a double presence, Goldberg experiences this double affiliation as a tormenting lack or absence. A simple sense of home is untenable for Goldberg, for she perceives her two homelands as mutually exclusive. Having "roots in two different landscapes" is by no means liberating for Goldberg. While contemporary theory advances the idea "that there is an essential virtue and gain in escaping the singularity of one culture into the multiplicity of all, or of all that are available,"[54] Goldberg stresses her inability to feel fully at home in either of her homelands. The multiplicity is experienced as loss. When Goldberg says "I was planted twice" she brings into focus her sense of having been uprooted. Exploring her double positionality, she defines "homeland" in terms of the landscapes she feels close to, as well as in terms of her closeness to texts: thus Russian poetry always remains a homeland.

In 1940 Goldberg expressed herself more fully on the question of exile: "Or perhaps, perhaps only now we have learned to feel that the essence of poetry is not in the combination of harmonies, but in the terrible anxiety which the human heart feels before death, in the human longing for tranquility and a homeland—which are always beyond our reach?"[55] The question mark at the end of this passage tells the entire story, for the desired homeland is indeed always out of reach. Goldberg's sense of "homelessness," her having two homelands, could obviously grant her entry into constructions of modernism that valorize the exilic condition. But within Hebrew letters, the position Goldberg held vis-à-vis exile was often construed as "excentric."[56] Consider, for example, Avraham Blat's assessment of her poetry: "Leah Goldberg is a humanist poet. This is her great strength and this is her weakness because her national and social uprootedness left her lonely with her single poem, the love poem (alongside her nature poems). . . . Although we relish great humanist lyrical poetry, we cannot ignore the absence of a

specifically Israeli color in her poetry."[57] Blat's description of Goldberg's social and national uprootedness is clearly indicative of the limited range of valued literary topics at this specific historical moment. In his assessment of Goldberg's poetry as excessively personal, Blat articulates a collective literary expectation that poetry participate in the nation-building process. Blat's assessment was not exceptional. In a similar vein, A. B. Yoffe, one of Goldberg's greatest admirers, writes: "In 1940 Goldberg's second volume of poetry had been published. It was, undoubtedly, a big step forward in comparison to her first book. The poems became not only less personal and more objective, but the poet exhibited a desire to conquer the landscape of Erets Israel."[58] While he compliments Goldberg's second book, Yoffe grounds this compliment in the poet's increased sense of belonging to the new homeland, thereby revealing the nationalist measuring stick that never ceases to inform Hebrew letters.

Goldberg's uprootedness repeatedly came under fire. The critic Y. Saaroni (who published under the pseudonym Y. Sin) complained upon reading Goldberg's first book that "it is hard to believe that this poet lives in our day, in a modern city . . . and not in a medieval monastery, in a dark and solitary chamber. It seems as if she arranges an exile for herself, flapping in the prison of loneliness without finding the gate that would allow her to get out to the wide world."[59] Condemning Goldberg's detachment from the "here and now," Saaroni describes Goldberg as uprooted, too European; in his view, she is too attached not only to Europe but also to Christianity. Culturally and emotionally immersed in the Old World, wrapped in an exile of choice, she is viewed as lacking a commitment to either Judaism or Zionism. As these critical remarks suggest, Goldberg's somewhat ambivalent relation to Palestine as homeland is denounced as irresolute. Her overt longing for the European landscapes of her childhood and her close affiliation with European culture are perceived as evidence of her lack of commitment to the emerging national culture. The poems in which Goldberg voices an ambivalence toward Erets Israel, however fascinating, reveal only part of the story. They are countered by many other poems in which she does express her love for Erets Israel, thereby involving herself in the literary production of the nation in its reclaimed homeland. This intricate equilibrium facilitated Goldberg's canonization,[60] and yet the cosmopolitan, international, and exilic tenets of her poetry turned her into a liminal figure in a hegemonic coterie.

5

By calling into question the Eurocentric/Western view of exile as freedom and by pointing to the ways in which Hebrew writers disrupt the home/exile dichotomy, I do not mean to negate or dismiss the view of modernism as exile. What I intend to do is to reuse the concept of exile in ways that will not gloss over the differences between various exilic conditions. By juxtaposing two different canons, two opposing views of modernism and exile, I want to advance a distinction between various kinds of exile. Taking a step in this direction, Mary McCarthy has already suggested a three-way distinction between exiles, refugees, and expatriates. "Classically," she writes, "exile was a punishment decreed from above, like the original sentence of banishment of Adam and Eve."[61] The expatriate, in her view, is the opposite of the exile: "His main aim is never to go back to his native land, or, failing that, to stay away as long as possible. His departure is wholly voluntary. An exile can be of any nationality, but an expatriate is generally English or American."[62]

Without limiting the expatriate's nationality, I wish to redeploy McCarthy's important set of distinctions. It is obvious by now that Gertrude Stein's exile was very different from Goldberg's. My sense is that despite the tension between Paris and Oakland, Stein knew where home was, at least in the sense of knowing what she was working against ("what made her," in her terms). Despite the "internationalism" of her literary salon, she was an American writing in English. Paris was a privilege, a perspective that allowed her to transcend national limits. When Stein writes, "Writers have to have two countries, the one where they *belong* and the one in which they live really," she expresses her sense of belonging to America. American expatriates like Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Henry Miller also had a very clear sense of where home really was. As Mary McCarthy notes, "When the dollar dropped in value during the thirties, after the crash, the American, by and large, went swiftly home, proving that even those who like Malcolm Cowley (author of a book called *Exile's Return*) had imagined themselves to be exiles were only expatriates."[63]

Exile for Goldberg was something entirely different. To begin with, exile was forced on her as a child, for her family fell victim to the expulsion of Jewish families from Lithuania at the outbreak of World War I. Goldberg described her return to Lithuania in 1919 in her autobiographical novel *Ve'hu ha-or* (And that is the light); in 1938 she retells the traumatic experience. The passage deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

I remember it well: the end of September or the beginning of October 1919. The days were very cold. The fields were very barren. A stabbing, nasty wind was blowing. At a distance shots were heard. A crossroads. Somewhere on the border between Russia and Lithuania. Most of the column had already crossed the border. We were stopped. Father was arrested and every day they threatened to execute him. His shoes were yellowish-reddish and the Lithuanian troops announced that such shoes were a clear sign of belonging to the Communist party. . . . One day the hope glimmered that we would be allowed to continue our journey. Mother went to beg the officers for mercy. I remained to watch over the suitcases. Alone. In the field. It was very cold. A few "fingers" in my gloves were missing. My hands were freezing. No one was around. Barren fields. Every once in a while soldiers passed by. They didn't touch me. Continued on their way. Many hours passed and it started getting dark. My feet also froze. A terrible fear emerged from the fields. And I didn't cry. I wasn't afraid of wild animals. I was afraid of human beings and from the absence of human beings in the surrounding. I was already eight years old, and I knew that evil comes from man and from desertion. My feet froze and my head was burning. Later it became clear that I had a high fever. Over thirty-nine degrees. Rubella. Once the stars had been turned on in the sky my mother appeared, found me alone in a field at a crossroads. Sitting and watching over the suitcases. I still remember from the thread of those days: a huge, transient wooden hut that was built in the fields. Babies were crying. Mothers wept at night. Tortured men wept as well. Someone rebuked. The column did not move from that spot. For ten days nothing, nothing has come into my mouth except for water, and once every three days, a tiny slice of bread. I do not recall the distress of hunger, or the dread. I mainly remember a wide field and cornflowers among the aging spikes. And I still remember a well at the edge of the village, and a day after, the rain. A little greenish frog leaped out of the well. I sat on a big stone and spoke to it. Who knows what I said to it but [life] was almost good. I don't remember the distress of hunger.[64]

Edward Said has already noted that "exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience."[65] And indeed, against the background of Blanchot's construction of exile as freedom or against the background of

Stein's privileged exile in Paris, Goldberg's description is troubling and disruptive. Goldberg's description fractures the immateriality of allegorical readings of both Jewishness and exile. Moreover, it throws into some question the whole privileging of exile in modern literature and theory. However disturbing the description is (it definitely explains the appeal of Zionism for Goldberg), one must not forget that Goldberg did not feel fully at home in Palestine either.

Although Goldberg identifies herself as Zionist, it is noteworthy that in her homeland of choice she felt uprooted from her Europeanness, from the landscapes of her childhood. The only option left for Goldberg was to thematize her ever growing sense of uprootedness. From a constantly problematized positionality, Goldberg was able to question and rewrite the home/exile binary. But her perspective, although typically, even prototypically modernist, has given her a dual position in the Hebrew canon, a canon whose constellations of inside/outside, home/exile are diametrically opposed to the constellations Kenner posits for international modernism. Writers like Goldberg, who refused to fully participate in the construction of nationness as a form of social and textual affiliation, were gradually rendered marginal. In a modernist movement that celebrated Jewish nationalism, the "cosmopolitan," exilic, anationalist constructions of "elsewhereness" were construed as violations of social and poetic codes.

# 3 DETERRITORIALIZATION AND THE POLITICS OF SIMPLICITY: REREADING DAVID FOGEL

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> Power can be affronted through attack or defense, but withdrawal is what society can assimilate the least.
>
> —ROLAND BARTHES[1]

> The principle says: to swell the settlement [*yishuv*] and increase the number of Hebrew workers in Erets Israel. And when a man who intends to go to Erets Israel is found, who does not have money, all the money [of the agency] which was intended for me is now given to him. And me? Am I going to Erets Israel? Principles. This is how principles kill me [*ma'avirim oti min ha-olam*].
>
> —DAVID FOGEL[2]

## 1

In the previous chapter we saw how the Hebrew canon's promotion of nationness led to the marginalization of poets who promulgated a cosmopolitan, international, diasporic sense of identity. Leah Goldberg, who described the "pain of [having] two homelands," was thus denounced as suffering from "national and social uprootedness." However ambivalent Goldberg's position had been, she created a careful equilibrium in her oeuvre between different poetic and political sentiments. If Goldberg's Janus-faced portrayal of her homeland(s) fell within the boundaries of the permissible, it is because

she participated in the project of describing the "nation's 'coming into being.'"[3] Could one possibly write poetry in Hebrew—the language that has come to be recognized as the vehicle of Zionism—without engaging Zionist ideology? Was there any possibility of writing Hebrew poetry without being incorporated into the dominant ideology of Zionism?

The Hebrew poet David Fogel is perhaps the most conspicuous example of what Roland Barthes names "withdrawal." To understand Fogel's biography is first and foremost to consider his rejection of "the comfort of social belonging,"[4] as he wandered throughout Europe. As Robert Alter explains, "He sojourns in Vilna, then Odessa, Lemburg, and beginning in 1912 in Vienna, as if on an inadvertent pilgrimage of the major way stations of Hebrew literature in Europe."[5] But Fogel's wanderings did not end there. World War I found him in Vienna, which he had come to consider home. As a native of enemy Russia, however, he was arrested by Austrian authorities and spent two years in a prison camp. In 1924 Fogel was offered permanent residency in Austria, but strangely enough he declined and moved to Paris. In 1929 he immigrated to Tel Aviv, but did not feel at home there either. He traveled back to Europe, and after short stays in Vienna and Berlin, he settled down in France. When World War II erupted Fogel was arrested by the French as a citizen of enemy Austria, and once France was occupied by the Germans he was arrested once more by the Nazis. He died in a concentration camp in 1944.

Fogel's rejection of "the comfort of social belonging," was not only a biographical fact. His entire literary career was also marked by his refusal (or inability) to participate in any collective enterprise, be it national or literary. Interestingly, Fogel's literary choices were similarly determined by his self-imposed isolation, and his perpetual exilic condition found expression in his style. Writing Hebrew poetry in Vienna in a style reminiscent of Georg Trakl and Gottfried Benn rendered Fogel marginal almost in every respect: Viennese writers, writing in German, shared his aesthetic preferences and pursuits but could not read his Hebrew. Hebrew writers, who by and large were influenced by Russian rather than German modernism and who engaged Zionist ideology, often found little interest in Fogel's aestheticized world. Reflecting on Fogel's decision to write in Hebrew, Robert Alter notes:

> Fogel's attachment to Hebrew was neither sentimental nor nationalist, and it is something of a puzzle as to why this profoundly isolated,

> neurasthenic, desperately unhappy young man trying to find a place for himself in Vienna should have chosen to record his most intimate thoughts in a language he had almost no occasion to speak, whose revival as a vernacular was being undertaken elsewhere.[6]

While the reasons behind Fogel's decision to write in Hebrew will remain a mystery, we can speculate about the meaning of this decision to write Hebrew outside its immediate and most "natural" context. To read David Fogel, then, is to consider the other side of national and literary belonging, that is, the biographical, political, and aesthetic consequences of withdrawal.

In *Nationalism and Minor Literature*, David Lloyd offers a three-tiered definition of minor literature. "The primary feature of any literature that is to be defined as minor," he writes, "is its exclusion from the canon, an exclusion that may on the face of it be as much on the grounds of aesthetic judgment as on those of racial or sexual discrimination." The second characteristic of minor literature is that it "remains in an oppositional relationship to the canon and the state from which it has been excluded." Third, minor literature refuses to produce "narratives of ethical identity"; instead, it works to perpetuate "non-identity."[7]

In what follows, I read David Fogel's poetry as a particularly complex example of minor writing.[8] The concept of minor writing, which coalesces stylistic, political, and historical dimensions of poetics and critical reception, elucidates both Fogel's poetry and its marginal status in the modernist Hebrew canon. I propose to see David Fogel's poetry as minor first because it was subjected to exclusion. As early as 1962 Shlomo Grodzensky noted that

> David Fogel was not interwoven into the story of Hebrew poetry between the two World Wars, and did not receive the attention of the small reading public that favorably read Shlonsky and Alterman and Uri Zvi Greenberg. It seems that this lack of attention was quite intentional. Fogel's poetry was hardly ever mentioned in the periodicals which fought for the New in Hebrew literature.[9]

In the decades that have passed since Grodzensky wrote these words, Fogel's marginal status has often been acknowledged. And yet, as Dan Miron argued recently when he complained that Hebrew criticism failed to commemorate Fogel's centennial anniversary, "Fogel's poetry is as forgotten and neglected

today almost as it was before its redeemers and defenders arose in the 1950s and 1960s."[10]

Second, in his resistance to partaking in the nation-building process, Fogel's writing stands in oppositional relationship to the canon from which it has been excluded. In *Belated Modernity*, Gregory Jusdanis maintains that "nation building entails the invention of collective narratives . . . and the induction of citizens into the ideology of the imagined community."[11] Literature, by permitting an imaginary perception of unity before it is achieved politically and administratively, is instrumental in creating an "imagined community" and in effecting national unity. As Bialik, the designated national poet, once explained, "all of the [Hebrew] literature of the last hundred and fifty years has been preparation for our revival. . . . it was Hebrew literature alone that refined the nation and brought us to revival."[12] This view, which intertwines Hebrew literature and national revival, was equally dominant as Hebrew literature entered its modernist phase. Thus, it is hardly surprising to read Avraham Shlonsky, the *moderna*'s leader, explain the emergence of Hebrew modernism as follows: "A new poetry could have arisen only as a result of its identification with a vision, with a beginning [*be-reshit*] of a new society which is socialist in its form and nationalist in its content."[13]

David Fogel did not participate, personally or poetically, in the nation-building process. An assiduous scrutiny of Fogel's poetic oeuvre cannot yield a single poem about Palestine, Zionism, patriotism, or for that matter, any collective issue.[14] In his diary, which was recovered only after his death, Fogel explicitly dissociates himself from Zionism. Describing how an acquaintance declined to help him because of his refusal to immigrate to Erets Israel, Fogel writes: "Ha ha, to go to Erets Israel to cultivate the soil—that's not in accordance with my physical capacity or my desire; but in accordance with this man's principles who boasts of being intelligent . . . and a so-called idealist. . . . boo to this intelligentsia and its principles."[15] Fogel renders as a joke the idea of immigrating to Erets Israel and ridicules the social values of his Zionist friends. In his political "passivity" and "silence" toward Zionism, Fogel stands in clear opposition to the politically committed literary establishment of the period. When viewed as silent negation, Fogel's poems confirm Roland Barthes's observation, as quoted in the above epigraph, that withdrawal is the most tenacious form of protest or resistance, because it is something "society can assimilate the least."

The third reason for considering Fogel's work as minor (in Lloyd's privi-

leged sense) is that his very refusal to participate poetically in the Zionist endeavor manifests a disinterest in "narratives of ethical identity." Zionism consciously attempted to create a new ethical Jewish identity. Avraham Shlonsky was once characterized as the first poet since Bialik to have written "poems about the new Hebrew man of the land."[16] Shlonsky's major writing—as a poetic embodiment of socialist Zionist ideology—is thus inextricably part of an attempt to form a new ethical model of identity. When Shlonsky described himself in "Amal" (Toil) as "a road-building bard in Israel" (*paytan solel be-israel*), he presented the ideal of the "new Jew," a poet-pioneer who emblematizes the Zionist agenda of returning to productivity. Fogel, by way of contrast, exhibited a total lack of interest in narratives of ethical identity; he negated the possibility of self-definition when he wrote in his diary "Fogel has lost Fogel," suggesting perhaps that identity can be construed only as an absence or lack.[17]

Although Fogel's marginality is well known, very little rigorous critical attention has been given to his work in an effort to illuminate the three-way correlation between his biography, politics, and aesthetic choices.[18] While the term "minor" often refers to a writer's political position, it also has stylistic ramifications: the minor (as opposed to major) has affinity with simplicity, understatement, and minimalism. Fogel's status as a minor writer resonates with his poetics of simplicity, which stood in sharp contrast with the dominant style of the *moderna*, whose members practiced a Symbolist/Futurist maximalist poetics of abundance.[19] A rereading of Fogel is by necessity also a rereading of his readers, who rendered him marginal and unimportant. Rather than seeing previous misreadings of Fogel as only parochial or inadequate, I see them as indicative of the period's constellation of inside/outside. To put it another way, by peeling back the superimposed layers of critical judgment, I will delineate the hidden ideological grid that determines both centrality and marginality in this period. Moreover, what these misreadings expose is how ideological and political differences can effect the perception of aesthetic worth.[20]

## 2

The concept of "simplicity"—a concept first introduced by Rachel,[21] further developed by Fogel and explicitly attacked by members of the *moderna*—is

of utmost importance for an understanding of Hebrew poetic modernism. The largely untold story of what I term the "simplicity debate" may be seen as one of the most ramified critical controversies within Hebrew modernism, involving questions of style, politics, and gender. Although quite a few poets and critics participated in this unacknowledged polemic, I will focus mainly on the direct and encoded exchanges between two antithetical modernist figures: David Fogel and Avraham Shlonsky.

Fogel's blatant attack on Shlonsky, in a 1931 lecture, "Language and Style in Our Young Literature,"[22] is somewhat of a surprise. Having distanced himself radically from the institutions of Hebrew literature, Fogel avoided any form of critical writing about Hebrew poetry, an activity widespread among many Hebrew writers of this period. The writing of this text should perhaps be understood against the background of his year-long stay in Palestine, in 1929–30, which necessarily brought him into contact with the emerging national culture there.[23] But in choosing to deliver his talk in Poland before an exclusively female audience, he neutralized and marginalized his own critical intervention. Delivered far from the emerging center of the budding national culture and before a meager audience, Fogel effectively erased his own critical intervention.

In this lecture Fogel draws an arresting distinction between two categories of writing. In distinguishing between "masters of style" and "masters of language," Fogel does not formulate an abstract theoretical argument. Historically minded and polemical in tone, Fogel's lecture/manifesto offers instead a stylistic mapping of Hebrew modernism that carves out two essentially distinct trends in the literary production of the time. While the distinction between "masters of style" and "masters of language" may seem rather obscure, Fogel's examples are luminously instructive. The category of "masters of style" is embodied and exemplified by four prose-fiction writers: U. N. Gnessin, Gershon Shofman, Y. Ch. Brenner, and Dvorah Baron. Fogel's apparent, albeit implicit, proposition is that these "masters of style" have a stylistic common denominator: a minimalist aesthetics. He describes Shofman as a writer who has "stripped his style of all excess, all traces of blabbering long-windedness, all empty rhetoric." Brenner's style is described metaphorically as that of "a poor person who lives on bread and onion"; Dvorah Baron is praised for her "humility of idiom." And Gnessin is described as being interested in the soul's "microscopic folds impenetrable to the naked, conscious eye." In contrast, the "masters of language," whose identity is not immediately revealed, are harshly

denounced for their maximalist aesthetics that emanate from the lack of a truly individual style:

> I must turn my attention to the impostors who in recent years have become so numerous in our literature, to the *masters of language*, masters of prattle devoid of any creative content and of any trace of individuality. Certain writers have arisen among us whose language is their craft, who completely lack any experience of the world, any creative pangs. They shell us with *linguistic bombs* that do not explode at all, and when by chance they do explode, they just make a *loud noise* and don't ignite from lack of explosive material. These are counterfeiters of style, artistic frauds, counterfeiters even of individuality, and when you look at them closely, you find only prattle, without any inner necessity, without any element of truth from the soul.[24]

According to Fogel, these "counterfeiters" are not writers who "sit in a remote corner and do their thing," but rather those who "jump right to the top, like all ignoramuses, professing to be guides of literature." When it becomes unequivocally clear that the writers under fire are the most canonical figures of the time, Fogel finally reveals the real object of his attack:

> If we had learned and sophisticated critics, would it have been possible for a literary clown like Shlonsky to raise his head? And would not the disgrace of [Eliezer] Steinman's fraudulent writing and style have been publicly exposed? Could the shallow midrashic chaos of that writer what's-his-name, who is renowned as a true artist, have become accepted in our literature? I mention these writers because they are typical of masters of language and linguistic ability, lacking the virtues of style and individual creation, and because they are hindrances to both readers and critics.[25]

In this lecture Fogel gave every indication of being eager to dissociate himself from the expansive, maximalist poetics of the mainstream *moderna*. While it would be safe to assume that the unnamed practitioner of "shallow midrashic chaos" is Agnon, it is clear that Fogel is more interested in targeting Shlonsky and Steinman, the coeditors of *Ktuvim*, the *moderna*'s literary journal. Fogel's sardonic depiction of the "masters of language's" use of "linguistic bombs," as

well as his attack of their use of the *melitsah* (lofty phrase),[26] makes it clear that the maximalist aesthetics of Shlonsky and his coterie is indeed the dividing issue. Describing the "counterfeiters'" language as idle chatter, Fogel goes on to argue that "the empty *melitsah*, the regurgitation (*ha'ala'at ha-gera*) of ready-made verses, which every empty and talentless *Maskil* used at one time to adorn himself, this *melitsah* whose tomb we already sealed once, has risen up again before our eyes, even if in a slightly different form, a more modern form as befits the times."[27] The striking alignment of the *moderna*'s maximalist poetics with nineteenth century, premodernist verse is no doubt one of the manifesto's most interesting arguments. Fogel's charge, then, is that the *moderna*'s poetics of abundance does not convey newness, as it claims, but rather continues the premodernist poetic tradition that it purported to oppose.[28] Delivering this lecture was a declaration of war on Shlonsky, as becomes clear from the fact that Fogel's lecture-qua-manifesto could not be published in its entirety until 1974, more than forty years after its original presentation.[29] Odd as it may seem now, Shlonsky's power was perceived as so all-embracing and coercive that Fogel's critique of his use of language remained censored and largely unheard.

Although the relationship between Shlonsky and Fogel has received close critical attention,[30] the fact that Shlonsky actually responded in detail to Fogel's critique has not been noticed or acknowledged. How Shlonsky obtained a record of Fogel's unpublished lecture remains a mystery; but his response—while never referring to Fogel by name—uses Fogel's terminology with such precision as to prove that he was familiar not only with Fogel's main arguments but also with Fogel's style of address. In his 1938 essay "'Lahatey lashon' o 'pashtut'"[31] ("Language tricks" or "simplicity"), Shlonsky reverses Fogel's claims to argue that "simplicity, in its most popular form, has conquered almost all of our literary territory," and adds that "the lack of novelty has had a catastrophic victory." One passage in Shlonsky's essay is of particular relevance:

> Accusations about "arrays of language" [*ma'arakhey lashon*], about the *melitsah*, as it were, about *clownish* juggling, and so on, are especially prevalent. Just as *X*, who is no intellectual *regurgitator*, but rather is graced with a little *sense of self*, is held among us to be a sophist; and *Y*, whose command of poetic forms attains a cultured level, is considered a "juggler"—so too *Z*, who is not a dim-witted and colorless stutterer, but is rather in command of expression and in possession of a [wide]

palette, is considered among us a *melits* [rhetorician; a practitioner of the exalted *melitsah*]. It is as if poverty and meagerness, the quotidian and the lowly are our permanent historical characteristics.[32]

Shlonsky uses many of Fogel's expressions—"clownish," "regurgitation," "*melits*," "sense of self" (*atsmiyut*)—to counterattack his claims. By associating abundance with command of expression and the possession of a wide palette, Shlonsky strengthens the equivalence between simplicity and colorless stuttering, pronouncing it to be a defect or deficiency rather than a conscious poetic choice. But there is more to Shlonsky's rejection of simplicity than I have suggested so far. The issue at stake is clearly larger than conflicting stylistic preferences. True, marked tensions between minimalist and maximalist versions of modernist poetics are prevalent in many strands of modernism. William Carlos Williams's self-proclaimed simplicity on the one hand and Ezra Pound's expansiveness (in the *Cantos*) on the other embody this discordant opposition in American modernism. Similarly, in Latin-American *vanguardista* poetry, the spare nature of Alfonsina Storni's early poetics is antithetical to Borges's Baroque-influenced poetry. In Hebrew poetic modernism, however, this conflict between minimalism and maximalism has an underlying political meaning: it signifies opposing ideological stands concerning the role of poetry in the nation-consolidating process. When Bialik argues that Hebrew literature "refined the nation" and when Avot Yeshurun contends that "Hebrew literature brought us to Zion," they give succinct expression to the vital role Hebrew literature played in the nation-forming process. Similarly, for Shlonsky, as mentioned in earlier chapters, the very act of writing poetry in Hebrew is a Zionist deed: "In my opinion," he says, "every good translation, as every good original [poem], is Zionism."[33] I stress this point because minimalism in general—and Fogel's simplicity in particular—were perceived not only as a stylistic choice but also as a political stance.

No one expressed the political impropriety of simplicity more vehemently than Uri Zvi Greenberg. Complaining that the "disconnectedness from the reality of a Hebrew State in its formation . . . is felt in ninety-nine percent of Hebrew writers," Greenberg draws an analogy between aestheticized minimalism and a lack of nationalist commitment:

The *little* poem [*ha-shir ha-katan*]—hum . . . but of course. Individualism is permitted to celebrate, to show off its manicured nails in the

name of "*good taste*," and to forever indulge in perfect rhyme, as if Hebrew poetry had no special destiny . . . as if the constitution of the Hebrew revolution does not apply to writers who write in the Hebrew language: to become different, just as it applies to every single man in the tribe of the pioneers of Erets Israel.[34]

Greenberg's rejection of the little poem is telling. The minimalist form is perceived as overaestheticized and devoid of the necessary historical consciousness. Its practitioners are thus more interested in their "manicured nails," as it were, than in the "tribe of the pioneers." In his 1929 poem "Kematkonet moladeti" (In the form of my homeland), Greenberg draws an analogy between maximalism and patriotism, implying that minimalism cannot be an appropriate vehicle for national sentiments:

כְּמַתְכֹּנֶת מוֹלַדְתִּי
לִי נִדְמֶה, כִּי יָדִי מְחַקָּה בְּחִכּוּן נִדְבֵכֵי פִּיּוּטַי:
לֵאלֹהַי, שֶׁתִּכֶּן מוֹלַדְתִּי הַזֹּאת הַסַּלְעִית, הַחוֹלִית.
כְּמַתְכֻּנְתָּהּ בַּחוֹל וּבַסֶּלַע בַּגַּי וּבָהָר -
מַתְכֹּנֶת מוֹלֶדֶת הָרוּחַ שֶׁלִּי: בְּטוּיַי.

אֵינֶנִּי אֲמַן הַצְּמָצוּם וְאַלּוּף מִשַּׁת סְדוֹם,
לָכֵן לֹא אוּכַל לְכַיֵּל בְּתוֹךְ קִלְפַּת אֱגוֹז קְטַנָּה
מַאֲוַיֵּי הַדָּם הַנִּגְרָשׁ.
וְהִנֵּנִי לוֹמֵד אֶת תּוֹרַת הָרִיתְמוּס מִיָּם:

בְּחַרְתִּיךָ מִמּוֹרִים, יָם תֵּיכוֹן, לְמוֹרִי בַּשִּׁירָה !
מִפְּלַח מֵימֶיךָ הֵן מֶלַח דָּמִי וּדְמָעַי - -
סָלַח, כִּי נוֹלַדְתִּי *בְּמָעוּת לֹא עַל חוֹפֶיךָ*
וּשְׂפַת עֵבֶר לֹא הָיְתָה שְׂפַת־אִמִּי, אֶלָּא שְׂפַת דָּמִי,
וְאָנֹכִי נָחֳנַקְתִּי מְאֹד שָׁם בַּיַּמְבּוּס הַלּוֹעֵז - -

וְיַעַן מְעַטִּים הֵם עֲדַיִן תּוֹפְשֵׁי הַמַּתְכֹּנֶת
הַסַּלְעִית הַחוֹלִית בָּהָר וּבָעֲמָק,
כְּדֵי שֶׁתִּשְׁתַּקֵּף בְּעֵינֵיהֶם, בְּדִמְעָם וּבְדָמָם -
מְעַטִּים מְאֹד הֵם מְבִינֵי שִׁירַי בְּמוֹלַדְתִּי.

וַאֲנִי מַפְרִיעַ לִישֹׁן בְּזֶה רִיתְמוּס־הַיָּם־שֶׁבִּכְתָב.

I imagine that my hand is mimicking in preparing the lines of my hymns:
to my god, who planned this rocky and sandy homeland.
Like its form in sand and rocks in valley and in mountain—
the form of my spiritual homeland: my verses.

I am not a master of sparseness or the champion of Sodom's bed,
thus I will not be able to measure within a small nutshell
the gushing desires of my blood.
And here I am learning the theory of rhythm from the sea:
I chose you from all teachers, Mediterranean Sea, to be my poetry teacher!
From the salt of your waters is the salt of my blood and tears—
forgive me that by mistake I was not born on your shores
and Hebrew was not my mother tongue, but the language of my blood,
and I choked there on foreign iambs—

and they are still only a few who understand the
rocky and sandy form in the mountain and valley,
so that it would be reflected in their eyes, tears and blood—
very few in my homeland understand my poems.

I disturb the sleep with this written sea rhythm.[35]

Greenberg's view should not be perceived as a personal idiosyncrasy of a poet on the far right of the political spectrum. His condemnation of minimalism —although more blatant than Shlonsky's—is part of the same simplicity debate I have started to outline. Greenberg denounces minimalism precisely because of its lack of commitment to nationalist ideology. In his view, Hebrew literature has a special purpose and must develop its forms in accordance with its historical role. Just as God designed the form of the landscape, so does the poet design the formal structure of his verse. Greenberg attempts to draw an analogy precisely between these two activities and between the grandeur of his poetry and the grandeur of nature and creation. In this regard, the minimalist idiom is in his view dissonant with the very landscape of Erets Israel. His proud exhortation, "I am not a master of sparseness or the champion of Sodom's bed," renders minimalist ideology limited and insufficient. Moreover, the minimalist idiom is widely perceived as too preoccupied with the self (and hence, with the private sphere). As the 1897 debate between Ahad Ha'am and

Berdichevsky revealed (see Chapter 1), writing the private was often hindered by the expectation that Hebrew literature serve a larger purpose—the awakening of a national consciousness. While the years that elapsed since this debate have expanded the scope of valued literary topics, an "excessive" preoccupation with the self is still viewed negatively.[36]

That politics played a major role in the rejection of simplicity as a poetic style becomes even more evident upon reading Avraham Shlonsky's poem "Ne'um ha-mukyon" (The clown's speech).[37] The poem has traditionally been read as Shlonsky's combative rebuttal of Bialik. It is organized around the opposition "you" (the poets of Bialik's generation) and "us" (the modernist writers), maximizing the differences between modernists and antimodernists. As the poem makes clear, Shlonsky opposes the poetry of Bialik's generation because it is characterized by simplicity. The modernist poet, unlike his predecessors, gives voice to the angst and madness of his period, thereby developing a poetic complexity that is analogous to the puzzle of the modern reality.[38] Interestingly, however, Shlonsky's rebuttal of Bialik seems to address many of Fogel's claims in his attack. By underscoring the parallels between Bialik's antimodernist position and Fogel's claims, Shlonsky renders Fogel's position antimodernist. This dual address, with its explicit and implicit layers, allows Shlonsky not only to dethrone Bialik but also to present Fogel's rival, antithetical, modernist stance as premodernist. In uttering and articulating an attack on simplicity from a clown's perspective, the speaker insolently adopts Fogel's characterization of Shlonsky as a literary clown. The poem, a key text for understanding Shlonsky's position in the simplicity debate, begins with a reply to the proponents of simplicity, a reply marked by the speaker's ironic tone:

אַתֶּם אוֹמְרִים: פַּשְׁטוּת !
אַךְ טוֹב ! נַסְכִּים לְרֶגַע.
כִּי אֶל נָכוֹן הַכֹּל יָדוּעַ וּפָשׁוּט:
הַנֶּפֶשׁ הִיא סִירָה, וְלַהּ מָשׁוֹט וְהֶגֶה,
וּבָהּ אֶפְשָׁר לָשֶׁבֶת, לָשֶׁבֶת וְלָשׁוּט.

You say: simplicity!
But well, let's agree
that all in all everything is known and simple:
the soul is a boat which has an oar and a wheel
and in it you can sit, sit and sail.

In Shlonsky's view, simplicity entails not only a stylistic directness but also a poetic fascination with the psyche as an autonomous object. In his ironic caricature of this position, Shlonsky thoroughly rejects the poetic formation of subjectivity that posits the psyche as a separate spatial entity unaffected by external reality. Instead of focusing on the autonomous self, Shlonsky brings to the fore the external factors that shape human fate; mentioning an assemblage of mythical and historical disasters both natural and man-made (Sodom and Gomorrah, the submergence of Atlantis, the sinking of the *Titanic*), he argues that a psychological self-analysis cannot look into or touch upon the larger issues of human existence. Charging the poets of simplicity with turning the Sambatyon, the mythical, mighty river of Jewish lore, into a tiny bathtub (*ambatyon*) of self-indulgence, the speaker says:

הוֹ טוֹב לָכֶם מְאֹד, מְאֹד מְאֹדְתַיִם,
בָּאַמְבַּטְיָה הַזֹּאת לַחְתֹּר וְגַם לָשׂוּט...
וּמָה עוֹד אֲסַפֵּר לָכֶם צַל אוֹדוֹתַי, אִם
אֶצְלִי הַכֹּל־בַּכֹּל לְגַמְרֵי לֹא פָּשׁוּט.

...

מָה עוֹד אֹמַר? יֵשׁ דָּם... וְהוּא שָׁחוֹר כְּשֶׁלֶג
בְּלַיְלָה בּוֹ שֻׁבְּרוּ כָּל פַּנְסֵי הָרְחוֹב.
אֲבָל אַתֶּם אוֹמְרִים: דּוּגִית... וְשֶׁקֶטוֹן לַפֶּלֶג...
וְגֶשֶׁר־פֶּשֶׁר קֶט נָטוּי מֵחוֹף אֶל חוֹף.

Oh, you enjoy yourself a lot
rowing and sailing in this tub
and what shall I tell you about myself if
for me nothing but nothing is simply simple.
[ . . . ]
What more shall I say? There's blood and it's as black as snow
in the night in which the street lamps were broken
but you say: A boat . . . a quiet stream . . .
a bridge-of-meaning links the shores.

The poem's reference to violence, blood, and turmoil, and its use of a deliberately self-contradictory trope (the oxymoron "black as snow"), aim to convey that the proponents of simplicity repress and palliate the complexity of modern life. For Shlonsky, those poets who maintain distance from the

political realm are mere blind aesthetes. Shlonsky's poem takes Fogel's pejorative epithet, the "clown," and shows its underlying political meaning. Aiming to galvanize his audience into political action, Shlonsky finds it useful to allude to a nonelitist art form. For him, the clown's art is populist in a positive sense, directed at a wide and heterogeneous audience. Moreover, the persona of the clown allows Shlonsky to escape from the kind of "unmediated" personal discourse he dislikes.[39]

If Shlonsky's "The Clown's Speech" can be read as a poetic reply to Fogel's lecture, then Fogel's poem "Rav hel'anu ze ha-rechov" (The street has made us tired) can be read as a "response" to "The Clown's Speech."[40] Fogel's poem explicitly calls for a solitary lifestyle that would minimize the speaker's participation in the historical-materialist world:

רַב הֶלְאָנוּ זֶה הָרְחוֹב ! נָשׁוּבָה אֶל קִרְבֵּנוּ !
יַעַר עָבֹת הוּא וְשָׁקֵט, בּוֹ נַעֲמִיקָה שָׁבֶת,
קְרוֹבִים יוֹתֵר אֶל הַחַיִּים, קְרוֹבִים אֶל הַמָּוֶת.
יָגַע בָּנוּ עָלֶה נִדָּף - וְדַיֵּנוּ.

מֵחֲרַכֵּי חֲגִגָה זוֹ הַזָּרָה תָּצִיץ אֵימָה כְּבֵדָה.
בָּדָד כֹּה הָיִינוּ תָּמִיד עִם הַהוֹלְלִים יָחַד -
עַתָּה נַעֲזֹב הֶמְיַת שָׁוְא, הִרְעִיפָה בָּנוּ פָּחַד.
אֶל הַיְחִידוּת נִפְרֹשׁ, כִּי הֶלְאָתְנוּ זוֹ הָעֲדָה.

The street has made us tired! We shall return inward!
It is a thick and quiet forest where we can dwell deeply
closer to life, closer to death.
Were a trembling leaf to touch us—it would have been enough.

From the blinds of this strange festivity a heavy anxiety will peep
so lonely we always were with those who celebrate together—
Now we shall leave the meaningless sounds that have dripped fear
within us
into solitude we shall withdraw, for the crowd has made us tired.

Fogel's speaker, tired of the public domain (metonymically represented here by the street) calls for a withdrawal into the psyche, portrayed metaphorically as a forest. When portrayed as a shelter, the psyche—a "thick and quiet

forest" of the soul—is somewhat similar to Shlonsky's parodic depiction of the poet's psyche as a sailing boat. In contrast to Shlonsky's image of a poet blithely and blindly withdrawing from the world, however, Fogel's speaker engages in a desperate attempt to ward off the distracting forces of exterior reality. Yet even in his shelter the speaker does not find peace, realizing that he is now closer, paradoxically, to both life and death.

The poem clearly lends itself to a political interpretation. Presenting the turmoil of the public sphere as "meaningless sounds" (*hemyat shav*), the speaker renders external events as an escape from the life and death that take place within. The speaker's sense of interiority, however, is constantly threatened by the outside world since this inner space cannot be hermetically sealed.[41] A minor movement, a "trembling leaf," can destabilize the speaker's fragile sense of quiescence, not only because it brings the exterior world into the innermost self but also because the slightest movement can yield both life and death. Although the poem's political implications seem unambiguous, a cautionary note is in order. Fogel's language always conceals twists that produce moments of indeterminacy and undecidability. Two paradoxes can be traced in this short poem. First, the trembling leaf that seems to be part of the external world may be read as belonging metonymically to the forest of interiority. If this is indeed the case, the world's distracting forces are within the self as well as outside. This poetic move shatters the binary opposition of inside/outside that the poem seems to construct. Second, Fogel's poem advances a call for inwardness and solitude by using the first-person plural (*hel'anu, nashuva*). In a poem that calls for the separation of the "I" from the public it would be only logical to use the pronoun "I." Yet this flight from the "I" to the "we" often occurs in Fogel's most "individualistic" poems, calling into question the very possibility of inwardness and solitude.[42]

Let us turn now to the debate's originary moment. I am referring to Shlonsky's 1923 review of Fogel's *Lifney ha-sha'ar ha-afel* (Before the dark gate). The review is suggestive enough of the intricate process by which Fogel was marginalized, trivialized, and rendered invisible to be quoted in its entirety:

> "Before the Dark Gate" . . . It's outside: a black cover. And it's inside: "black closets," "black birds," "black ship," "the night's black organ," "dark wine," "dark scripture," "dark forest." And night—night—night. Also father has a "black coat" and "his beard is black." Oh father! father!

> "Like a lonely star my father is wandering there now between his mountains." And we, in fact, we all are lost, blindfolded, bent down on autumn's paths covered with foliage. Each to his own way, each to his own way. But one day we shall meet, we shall all meet.—"All the paths are going toward the evening." And the evening is close, very close. And here is the night.—In a little while! Just in a little while! . . . But the one who will not sense the "fluttering black flags quivering in the wind"—should not open the book. In wide eyes there is too much wittiness. Only the ones that are groping, whose fingers are long and very thin, will follow and feel the "dark gate."[43]

Dan Pagis has already noted that Shlonsky's ironic tone implies that Fogel's poems are "too gentle and nebulous."[44] Because Shlonsky's reading of Fogel's poetry is symptomatic of the perceptions of Fogel's poetry until the 1960s, it is important to uncover the political meaning that lies repressed in his review. What Shlonsky sees in Fogel's poetry sharply underscores not only what he does not see, but also his expectations from poetry in general. If the aesthetic value of literary texts is inseparable from the "function [they are] expected or desired to perform,"[45] as Barbara Herrnstein Smith maintains, the perception of Fogel's poetry as second-rate or minor in the evaluative sense stems from the functions his poems "failed" to perform. Shlonsky's critique is two-pronged: Fogel's intent focus on the personal sphere on the one hand, and his limited palette (as manifested by his repetitive use of the color black) on the other, tacitly indicate the limited stature of his poems.

It is significant that Shlonsky's first comment on *Before the Dark Gate* concerns the sameness of "inside" and "outside." Although he refers sardonically to the color of the book cover and to the frequent recurrence of black as an adjective and even as an adverb throughout the book, he nevertheless pinpoints a quality that emblematizes Fogel's main poetic project. Fogel, as my analysis of "Rav hel'anu ze ha-rechov" demonstrates, delineates no definite boundaries between the internal and the external. Although Shlonsky's dislike for Fogel's poetry is not yet expressed in terms of the simplicity debate (as in "The Clown's Speech" or "'Language Tricks' or 'Simplicity'"), his reservations are precisely of this type. The blurring of the dichotomy between inside and outside is what Shlonsky opposes in Fogel's poetry. Shlonsky, who admired Mayakovsky's unabashed ideological involvement in the Russian Revolution, and who was fully committed to left-wing Zionist na-

tionalism as well as to the left's optimistic social vision, considered Fogel's overwhelming "blackness" as a sentimental and solipsistic depiction of personal sorrow. Shlonsky's parody of Fogel's style clearly expresses his dislike for what he regards as self-indulgent emotionalism, repetitious diction, and a poetic imagery of agony and loss.[46]

My reading of this review is supported by Shlonsky's diary, where he reflects on various poetic positions, offering some poetic do's and don'ts. The following passage clearly rejects overtly emotional poetry:

> It is forbidden to cry in public. Therefore: it is forbidden to cry in a poem. Just as it is forbidden to vomit on stage even when the actor personifies a drunk. An exaggerated, emotional, "honest," simplistic, and very *private* lyricism is the vomit of the soul. It is an outpour, a weeping [*bechiya*] rather than construction [*bniya*].[47]

While Fogel's manifesto posits an opposition between "artwork" (*yetsira*) and the lesser "work" (*asiya*), Shlonsky's opposition consists of valorizing the work of "constructing" (*bniya*) as opposed to the proscribed "weeping." Instead of sentimental poetry, Shlonsky champions "closed, secretive, masculine poems. Because the poet is a man. An essence of malehood." Although not directed at Fogel, these assertions in Shlonsky's diary are telling. The adjectives attributed to what Shlonsky sees as lesser poetry ("emotional," "honest," "simplistic," and "feminine,") are strikingly reminiscent of Hebrew criticism's conceptions of Fogel's poetry. Shlonsky's words succinctly express the hegemonic ideological paradigm of poetic value in prestatehood modernism. According to this paradigm, the "personal" is aligned with the feminine and the emotional and is inferior, by way of contrast, to the "public," the masculine, and the intellectual.

A similar critical hierarchy was postulated by Yitshak Norman, one of the prominent critics in Shlonsky's coterie. In an authoritative, harsh tone that explains why Avot Yeshurun characterized him as a "gendarme of poetry," Norman asserts that Fogel belongs to a group of unworthy poets who are too preoccupied with their personal sorrow:

> The rooster's cry [but also "the male's call," *kri'at ha-gever*] begins with celestial poets: U. Z. Greenberg and A. Shlonsky. Here the perspective is broader, the distinction more subtle. . . . The poetry after Ch. N. Bialik

(and maybe also Z. Shne'or)—like that of S. Tchernichovsky, Y. Cahan, Y. Steinberg, Y. Fichman, D. Shimonovitch, Y. Karni, Y. Lamdan, and the dying bubbling American group—can be skipped. . . . In his [the poet Baruch Katznelson's] mood, in his *private sorrow* expressed in *fragments of voices*, he is part of a group of poets like M. Temkin, D. Fogel, Y. Bat-Miriam, A. Pinkerfeld—a *tiny* oil-jar, *embers of energy that whisper and die*, an *orchestrated confusion* at heart, and a light rustle of poetry's foliage—*the worship of the miniature* for its own sake, the *snail's vision*, and a poetry that will follow children's steps.[48]

Norman's explicit rejection of Fogel's thematics and fragmentary, polyphonic style (*shivrey kolot*) is interesting in several different ways. Despite his impressionistic and personal tone—a widespread style in polemical critical writing of the time—and although he does not distinguish between premodern and modernist writers, Norman astutely categorizes Hebrew literature into two groups. The group he finds meaningless and intolerable includes Fogel as well as several male and female writers who belong to what I call a suppressed tradition of minimalism or simplicity within Hebrew modernism. It is significant that Norman aligns two pairs of oppositions (masculine-feminine and collective-private), implying that while "important" male poetry is essentially concerned with broader, collective issues, feminine poetry (by both male and female writers) is of lesser quality because of its personal, minimalist focus. Norman's choice of words is telling; in describing unworthy poetry in terms such as "small" (*katan*), "embers" (*remets*), "rustle" (*ivsha*), and "snail" (*chilazon*), he indicates that unlike the all-encompassing nature of public themes, personal issues (sexual, emotional, domestic) are slight and lack substance.[49] Moreover, when he praises Shlonsky and Greenberg for their expansive poetics (*miklachat gvanim*, "a shower of hues"), it is hardly surprising that antithetical minimalist poets are undermined, trivialized, and marginalized.

A similar view can be traced in more neutral—or even favorable—reviews of Fogel's poetry. Yosef Lichtenboym, for example, draws a connection between Fogel and Ben-Yitshak and aligns both with modernist German poets such as Else Lasker-Schüler and Arno Holz. Maintaining that Fogel, like certain of his German contemporaries, is mainly interested in the short *Stimmung* poem, Lichtenboym asserts that Fogel's poetry struggles to liberate itself from the stranglehold of the schematic naturalism of previous gen-

erations. Although Lichtenboym compliments Fogel's poetry for its lyric qualities, he also warns:

> Yet, one should not disregard the danger such poetry faces, the danger of turning from hovering [*rechifut*] to volatility [*hitnadfut*], to be caught in a pose, sometimes even in philosophizing, to become vague, anemic; Fogel's poetry has not escaped these dangers entirely: some poems are characterized only by the beauty of their language and symbols; poems that are merely sketches of silhouettes, only shadowy lines, or nothing but an aphorism, a sketch. Sometimes life is represented by bits and pieces, but art seeks the whole.[50]

Alongside Zmora's complaint that one does not know "what is [Fogel's] world view . . . one sees only vagueness, fog, confusion and bewilderment,"[51] Lichtenboym's view typifies a reading that condemns Fogel for a lack of ideology and substantial content. Like other misreaders, however, Lichtenboym is a sensitive interpreter capable of detecting Fogel's poetic goals.[52] It would not be inaccurate to suggest that he condemns Fogel, to put it oxymoronically, for the right wrong reasons. Right, because he astutely detects the "volatility" and fragmentation of Fogel's poems;[53] wrong, because he fails to acknowledge that these are exactly the poetic qualities Fogel seeks.

The critical view of Fogel's poetry as lacking substantial content is prevalent to this day. In a relatively recent critical debate over Fogel's status in the modernist canon, Dan Miron argued that

> Fogel's poetry lacks the dynamics of experience, it is barren of active or activating human references. In this respect, its stature next to the poetry of poets like Bialik, U. Z. Greenberg, and Alterman is the stature of a *dwarf*. But the static [nature] and the stable, *limited horizons* blemish the poems much less than they do the prose fiction. It is not accidental that Fogel always remained within the domain of the very short poem which exhausts a single moment of experience. Nor is it accidental that in his best poems he *avoided intellectualizing* the moment of experience and focused on conveying it in a *direct*, *personal*, and *singular* way. We will not go to Fogel's poetry in order to struggle with a richly complex and dynamic emotional and philosophical worldview. We shall indeed look at them to find models for absolute lyrical expression.[54]

Miron's positioning of Fogel against the background of Bialik, Alterman, and Greenberg is by no means accidental. More than other Hebrew poets, these three emblematize the Hebrew poet's commitment to the idea of the nation. What surfaces in Miron's critical judgment—as in the previous misreadings—is a hierarchy that privileges the public over the private. Moreover, Miron's reading perpetuates the view of Fogel not only as a nonintellectual but also as a writer of direct, personal, and biographical experiences. Miron's reading of Fogel, and of minimalism in general, tends to be highly ambivalent.[55] He argues, for example, that "an abstract paraphrasing of [Fogel's] poems will leave us with a bunch of uninteresting and dull truths."[56] Yet the same thing can actually be said of Alterman or Bialik: any poetic content divorced from its unique form of expression can be said to be a "dull truth." But while the inseparability of form and content is often acknowledged in studies of Bialik or Shlonsky, Fogel's poems are read only as biographical data detached from any intellectual or metapoetic context.

In light of the consistent disapproval with which Fogel's poetics met, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that by the standards of the hegemonic literary establishment his poetry is almost "ungrammatical." The fact that Fogel's poetry remained marginalized and unread throughout the 1930s and 1940s can be attributed to the enormous power of canonical conceptions of "proper" literary values. Dan Pagis has already accounted for Shlonsky's aforementioned misreading of Fogel, expounding it in terms of both personal taste and the rupture between Russian-affiliated and German-affiliated poetry.[57] It may be possible, however, to outline this clash between conflicting versions of modernism with greater precision. The conflict seems to be a two-tiered one. First and foremost, it is a struggle over the role of the poet in a society that seeks to construct a national identity. Secondly, it is a conflict over appropriate poetic language. Fogel's simplicity, which dissociates itself politically and aesthetically from the expansive language of both Bialik and the *moderna*, was perceived as simplistic by poets who advocated a Symbolist/Futurist poetics of abundance.

The foregoing discussion has served a double purpose: to demonstrate how Fogel's poetry was misread and marginalized, and to sketch out the limits of literary possibility in prestatehood modernism. Having described Fogel as an oppositional figure in Hebrew poetic modernism, I aim both to demonstrate the complexity of his simplicity and to politicize his so-called nonideological poetry.

## 3

Inasmuch as texts come before us as "always-already-read,"[58] a reading that aspires to explain a poem must confront not only the text's meaning but also its history of signification. My attempt to reread David Fogel's poetry aims to take issue with the prevalent construction of his poetry as simple, nonideological, and apolitical. If Fredric Jameson is right in claiming that "there is nothing that is not social and historical" and that "everything is 'in the last analysis' political,"[59] it should be feasible to unearth a political meaning in Fogel's so-called nonideological poems. My critical assumption is that form, in and of itself, carries a political meaning.[60] A political rereading of the form of Fogel's poems will inevitably generate a shift of emphasis. Rather than focusing on Fogel's subject matter as producing *Stimmung*, I analyze the ways in which Fogel's texts destabilize any certainty so as to induce—via language, image, and poetic structure—an ideological and perceptual indeterminacy and undecidability. Although Fogel's poetry has no effective ideology of agency that would enable it to move toward political action, its silences, gaps, and indeterminacies effect a critique of the hegemonic trajectory of Hebrew letters. "Be-leilot ha-stav" (In the nights of autumn) is an instructive example of the ways in which Fogel's style underscores ideology.

בְּלֵילוֹת הַסְּתָו
נוֹפֵל בַּיְּעָרִים עָלָה לֹא־נִרְאֶה
וְשׁוֹכֵב דּוּמָם לָאָרֶץ.

בַּנְּחָלִים
יִקְפֹּץ הַדָּג מִן הַמַּיִם
וְהֵד נְקִישָׁה לַחָה
יַעַן בָּאֹפֶל.

בַּמֶּרְחָק הַשָּׁחוֹר
נִזְרָעוֹת דַּהֳרוֹת סוּסִים לֹא־נִרְאִים
הַנִּמַּסִּים וְהוֹלְכִים.

כָּל אֵלֶּה יִשְׁמַע
הַהֹלֵךְ הָעֵיְרָה
וְרַעַד יַעֲבֹר אֶת בְּשָׂרוֹ.

In the nights of autumn
falls in the forests an invisible leaf
and lies still to the earth

In the streams
the fish will jump from the water
and an echo of a wet beat
will answer in the darkness.

In the black distance
are sown gallops of invisible horses
that are dissolving away.

All these
the tired wanderer will hear
and a quiver will pass through his flesh.[61]

This *Stimmung* poem, which centers on the speaker's nocturnal experience, seems somewhat resistant to analysis. The reader habituated to the maximalist, perceptibly allusive, and overtly ideological poetry of many premodernists and modernists is predisposed to find Fogel's simple, ascetic style somewhat disconcerting. Let me outline the characteristics that make Fogel's poems register as ascetic. Like other poems of his, "In the Nights of Autumn" is ostensibly simple, bearing no "hidden" meaning. Its "transparent," simple language appears to achieve communicative directness and seems generally literal. The poem apparently renders a continuous realist frame of reference that unifies the text mimetically. And finally, the depiction of a personal "mood" seems to be the poem's ultimate goal. In light of these appearances, Fogel's simple poem, like many minimalist texts, can be said to resist analysis: what is there to be said about such a simple text? However, these appearances all prove deceptive upon close examination of the texture of Fogel's language and the indeterminacy it underscores.

One way to problematize the perceived notion of Fogel's simplicity is to examine his intertextual patterns. If a meaning of a poem is always another poem, as Harold Bloom maintains in his *Anxiety of Influence*, then Fogel's "Be-leilot ha-stav" can be read as a modernist (re)writing of Goethe's 1780 "Wanderers Nachtlied II."[62] Let us look at Longfellow's English translation of the poem:

O'er all the hill-tops
Is quiet now,
In all the tree-tops
Hearest thou
Hardly a breath;
The birds are asleep in the trees:
Wait, soon like these
Thou, too shalt rest.[63]

Fogel's simultaneous affiliation with both Hebrew modernism and German Expressionism is best emblematized, perhaps, by his response to Goethe's poem. In German letters, Goethe's poem was often perceived as the high-water mark of German lyric poetry. In the 1920s, however, the poem came under fire when German Expressionists/modernists attacked it as an emblem of the false lyricism of the past. Herwarth Walden, the editor of *Der Sturm*, critiqued the poem in his 1920 "Kritik der vorexpressionistischen Dichtung" (Critique of pre-Expressionist poetry). And Bertolt Brecht parodied it in his 1924 "Liturgie vom Hauch" (Liturgy of breath).[64] Unlike the critiques by Brecht or Walden, however, Fogel's critique of Goethe is tacit, undemonstrative, and—in compliance with Fogel's minimalist poetics—does not call attention to itself.

There are striking similarities between Goethe's poem and Fogel's: both aim to increase poetic power by restricting their expression to a minimalist form. Both poems also share some poetic vocabulary, especially the depiction of stillness as both silence and lack of movement. Similarly, the two poems explore the topos of a wanderer overwhelmed by nature. And finally, both poems begin with a depiction of nature and only then focus on its effect on the wanderer. Yet these similarities also mark a sharp difference between the two poems, a difference that clearly underlines Fogel's modernist ideology.

Fogel's poem can be read as a *restructuring* of the form of Goethe's text.[65] While Goethe's poem depicts a single moment, Fogel's poem consists of a brief series of broken images whose interconnections are problematized: the first stanza portrays a falling, unseen leaf; the second stanza depicts the jumping fish and the echo it creates; and the third focuses on the gallops of dissolving horses. What is the relationship between these reported events? Do they occur successively or are they simultaneous? Are they specific to a certain moment in time or, rather, habitual to autumn nights? Although the last stanza suggests a mimetic solution—namely, that all these fragmentary pic-

tures are perceived by the wanderer as he roams—their mode of existence remains perplexingly ambiguous.

By disrupting its own narrative continuity, Fogel's poem pulverizes the totality of Goethe's single moment. Not unlike other Fogelian poems, "In the Nights of Autumn" initially seems to encourage the reader to reconstruct a story. Yet an attempt to build a narrative from the discrete events makes it clear that any attempt to link these events in a causal or temporal chain is bound to fail: the story is fragmentary and incomplete, and narrative is impossible to recuperate. The very use of the plural form of the noun (*leilot*) as the poem's temporal marker already problematizes the text's narrativity and subjectivity. If the reported events occur on many autumn nights, as the plural noun / temporal marker suggests, then there is nothing specifically personal in the wanderer's experience: another wanderer on another night (or the same wanderer on another night) could have the same experience. The anchoring of the experience in time is thus indeterminate and impersonal.

Moreover, Fogel's deliberately ambiguous use of some verbal forms developed in the later phases of biblical grammar further complicates the relationship between the reported events, making at least some of them appear hypothetical and imagined. In an astute analysis of Fogel's syntax, Chana Kronfeld argues that Fogel's language can be seen as oscillating between the biblical aspectual system and the modern tense system. Kronfeld's analysis of the verbs of "Slowly My Horses Climb" (Le'at olim susay) and "As the Day Falls" (Bi-netot ha-yom)—verbs such as *eshlach* (send), *tabit* (look), or *itar* (jump)—demonstrates how they can be read in two different ways: "[these verbs] are either aspectual, describing habitual, imperfective action which the speaker experiences (in a future converted to the present or the past), or they are marked for tense, projecting a desired, unattained and perhaps unattainable future event."[66] The same holds true for the verbs in "In the Nights of Autumn," which are rendered ambiguous in the future-imperfect form. "In the streams the fish will jump from the water" grammatically contrasts with the preceding and following images.[67] The use of the future-imperfect may very well be said to obfuscate the ontological status of this reported event, suggesting that it is different from that of the other images. An even more puzzling shift to the future-imperfect occurs in the last stanza. The realist-oriented impressionist explanation of the loose concatenation of images in terms of the perceiving subject is destabilized by the use of the hypothetical imperfect, suggesting perhaps that the act of perception itself is hypothetical.

While the first and third stanzas are written in the present tense, the second and fourth stanzas are written in the future-imperfect, making it virtually impossible to determine whether the depicted events are actual or imagined.

The sense of unreality is enhanced when one notes that the poem itself thematizes the problematics of human perceptions: can one hear or see an invisible single leaf that falls silently to the ground on many different nights? Can one hear or see dissolving unseen horses? Fogel's interest in analyzing the sense impressions of objects and events undermines our certainty that these objects and events can be perceived by the wanderer. In sum, the poem seems to disorient the reader's sense of temporality: are these events taking place simultaneously at one time and in the same place, or are they simultaneous only in the wanderer's perception (as a moving, displaced subject)? Any determination to produce a mimetic reading will be frustrated by the gaps and indeterminacy of Fogel's text.

The undecidabilities of Fogel's poem do not simply result from Fogel's desire to subvert Goethe's lyrical picture (whose realist continuity is never interrupted). Working with the remnants of the poetic system that he inherited from Goethe, Fogel forces the reader to confront the devaluation of the ideological framework that shaped them. By detotalizing Goethe's depiction of nature, Fogel fashions a modernist fragment.[68] This fragment of totality is further problematized since its sincerity is somewhat undermined by the use of allusion. In *Discovering Modernism*, Louis Menand maintains that

> by the standards of sincerity, an allusion is an operative of questionable legitimacy, since its energy derives not from anything that might be pointed to the poet's experience but from the fact of its already having enjoyed an aesthetic success: it works because it has worked before. But its effectiveness, like the effectiveness of any literary figure, will depend on its cultural status.[69]

Precisely because Fogel's poems are normally construed as personal, it is important to show how his use of language and literary tradition aims to disrupt traditional conceptions of subjectivity. If the seemingly personal events that the poem represents are indeed not personal but, rather, a homage to a previous canonical text in the public domain of literary (German) culture, then Fogelian subjectivity must be placed in quotation marks. In aligning his own poem with Goethe's, Fogel presents the most personal feeling as always-

already a quotation and public artifact. In so doing, Fogel follows Walden's expressionist observation that "there are indeed experiences of the person but no personal experiences."[70] Reading Fogel's poetry either as a biography or as *Stimmung* ignores not only his thematics and poetic ideology, but also his dialectical relation to tradition. Fogel's poetry, usually perceived as a personal "diary" of suffering and desire, needs to be read in the literary-historical context of modernist preoccupation with uncertainty and indeterminacy.

Another extended illustration will amplify the sense we have developed of Fogel's propensity to undermine the subjective power of his own discourse. "Le'at olim susay" (Slowly my horses climb), the opening poem of *Before the Dark Gate* is another example of Fogel's attempt to problematize narrativity and subjectivity:

לְאַט עוֹלִים סוּסַי
עַל מַעֲלֵה הָהָר,
לַיְלָה כְּבָר שׁוֹכֵן שָׁחוֹר
בָּנוּ וּבַכֹּל.

כְּבֵדָה תַּחְרֹק עֲגָלָתִי לִרְגָעִים
כַּעֲמוּסָה אַלְפֵי מֵתִים.

זֶמֶר חֲרִישִׁי אֶשְׁלַח
עַל פְּנֵי גַּלֵּי הַלַּיְל,
שֶׁיַּעֲבֹר לַמֶּרְחָק.

סוּסַי מַאֲזִינִים וְעוֹלִים לְאָט.

Slowly my horses climb
uphill,
night already dwells black
in us and in everything.

Heavy my coach will creak at times
as if laden with thousands of dead.

A silent song I will send
on the waves of the night,
that will reach far out.

My horses listen and climb slowly.[71]

In this poem, the reader is literally left in the dark as to the actual frame of reference of the poem. Although the time and space are mentioned (a mountain at night), it is nevertheless unclear where exactly this experience takes place. Who is the speaker and what is he doing there? How familiar or unfamiliar is he with the surrounding nature? Is the "action" in the poem habitual or singular? Therefore, despite the speaker's ostensible closeness to nature, the "mood" is created in an empty space, a gap in which the poem takes place.[72]

Despite its apparent stylistic simplicity, the depicted situation can hardly be understood as a "whole" and is more likely to be understood as a fragment of a larger picture. But even as a fragment of a world (or a synecdoche), the poem is not entirely readable. Like the events in "Be-leilot ha-stav," the situation depicted in this poem is rendered ambiguous, for it is unclear what is actually happening "outside" as an event in the world of the poem and what is only a thought or a projection of the speaker. Although the depiction of merging with the night in the first stanza can be understood literally, there is a figurative layer in its fashioning. The night is not only a temporal marker but also an object, a palpable entity that resides in the speaker as well as in his surroundings. In fact, it is typical of Fogel's so-called simple language to deface its own simplicity by blurring the opposition between the metaphoric and the literal (as we have seen, for example, in "Rav hel'anu ze ha-rechov"). The embodied temporal marker "night already dwells" (*layla kvar shokhen*) turns into a dominant participant in the first stanza, as important as its human participant. The neutral equilibrium between a subject and an "object" suggests that the poem also blurs the opposition between outside and inside. As a "substance" that dwells within the speaker, the night is not only an external temporal marker but also an inner quality. Moreover, the opposition between foreground and background is also destabilized as a result of the complex relationship between subject and object, since it is unclear whether the night foregrounds the speaker or whether the speaker foregrounds the night.

An analogy to modernist painting may clarify this point. I refer to what has come to be known in art history as the modernist reaction against the "figure in the field" composition, traditionally used in the past as a means of signifying the figure's centrality in opposition to the background's secondary status. Modernist artists such as Cézanne, Picasso, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko, for example, have reacted, each in his own way, against the traditional concept of the "figure in the field" by denouncing compositions that allow a clear demarcation of a single center. In fact, even in paintings

that seem to have a center, it becomes clear that this center is highly problematized. Picasso, for example, achieves this effect of "decentralization" in his *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* by fashioning the "solid" and the "empty," the "opaque" and the "transparent" in quite the same way, suggesting that the figures and the background are actually made of the same "material." Pollock, on the other hand, achieves this effect by creating an "overall" composition in which the distinction between margins and center is rendered impossible. Fogel does precisely the same thing: the speaker in the field is not only overwhelmed by the devouring, invasive night; he reveals that the night resides within him, and that the world and the "I" are constituted of night.[73]

Whereas the first stanza blurs the above oppositions by embodying the night, the second stanza achieves the same effect in a slightly different way. Apparently the second stanza depicts the continuous nocturnal journey. Yet while in the first stanza the speaker speaks in the present tense, he now turns to speak in the future-imperfect, denoting a progressive action that has not been completed: "Heavy my coach will creak at times / as if loaded with thousands of dead." As is often the case with similes, one thing is likened to another, suggesting that the former (the creaking coach) "occurs" in the world of the poem whereas the latter is "imported" into the situation in order to clarify its mood or meaning. The mimetic frame of reference that one has started to reconstruct in the first stanza would suggest, then, that the creaking coach is "real" whereas the thousands dead are imaginary. Yet, as I have already suggested, the shift to the future-imperfect describes not only an uncompleted action but also a hypothetical, imagined event. According to such a reading, the common relationship between the two components of the simile is twisted, since both of them are equally "imported" and projectional. That, no doubt, is in congruence with the goals of the German Expressionists who influenced Fogel considerably. It is well known that the Expressionists sought to avoid the representation of external reality and instead sought to project the artist's self and his or her highly personal vision of the world: in other words, since reality already exists there is no point in recreating it. In Kasimir Edschmid's own words, "the Expressionist artist doesn't reproduce, he fashions."[74] Traces of such an idea can be found in "Le'at olim susay" and in Fogel's poetry at large. Yet, it goes without saying that unlike the Expressionists, Fogel consistently insists on creating an appearance of a realist frame of reference. Moreover, as is typical of impressionism, the deviations from that "realist" frame of reference can frequently be explained mimetically as the way in

which a specific eye perceives reality. This tension between expressionism and impressionism is, no doubt, one of Fogel's most striking novelties.[75]

In the second stanza the dead on the coach are clearly metaphoric and projectional (in the expressionist sense of the word). However, the realistic component of the simile can be also taken as projectional, defacing the continuity of the realist frame of reference and proving the second stanza to be no more than a representation of a reflexive thought. Like its precedent, the third stanza is written in the future-imperfect, which, as argued earlier, destabilizes the mode of existence of the depicted events by blurring the opposition between the actual and the imagined. The word "song" (*zemer*) can, therefore, allude to this poem in a self-referential way, but it can also refer to an imagined unspoken song. Thus, the concluding line is also subject to a double reading: if the song is spoken out loud, the horses are listening to it. Yet if the song is imagined, the horses are listening, ironically, to the intense, abysmal stillness of the palpable night; the very same stillness that led the speaker to imagine the creak.

## 4

Fogel's interest in indeterminacy is in and of itself not sufficient to distinguish him from other modernist Hebrew poets. Specific to Fogel's minimalist poetics, however, is the refusal to support any collective, utopian, or constructive ideology. With the exception of "Rav hel'anu ze ha-rechov," Fogel's resistance is never explicitly expressed; instead, it is tacitly disclosed through the form. Fogel's tendency to inject undecidability into the reading process, to undermine all mimetic and ideological certainty, to express skepticism about the power of language to galvanize readers into political action, to negate the notion of originary "truth," and to question the concept of representation, are manifestations of this resistance.

Working to fracture and subvert its own appearance, Fogel's language yields its own "negative." Hence the literal often turns out to be metaphoric, the actual reveals itself as projected, the interior engenders the exterior, and the personal becomes public. Constantly oscillating between opposing axes, Fogel's indeterminate language could not become an empowering political tool. Yet Fogel's poetry is political precisely because it refrains from being socially useful. While the majority of Hebrew poets were writing poems about

Erets Israel (Tchernichovsky's "Oh artsi! moladeti" [Oh my land! my homeland!], Shne'or's "Ba-arets" [In the land], Fichman's "Artsi" [My land], Lamdan's "Massada," Raab's "Libi im tlalayikh moledet" [My heart is with your dew, homeland], Rachel's "El artsi" [To my land], and Bat-Miriam's "Erets Israel," to name but a few examples), Fogel avoided this subject altogether. He declined to anchor his poems in a specific time or place. Rather than mythologize a universalized city (as Shlonsky and Alterman did in their poetry), he situated the depicted events in an empty or permeable space or territory, in the gaps between spatial and temporal categories.

In his comprehensive essay on Hebrew poetry of the 1920s in Erets Israel, Uzi Shavit delineates the main characteristics of this period's poetics, as extrapolated from poems by Shlonsky, Greenberg, Lamdan, Hameiri, and others.[76] Among its characteristics, he claims, is a thematic emphasis on large generational issues such as the redemption of man, nation, and land. Despite their split from the poetics of Bialik's generation, many of these poets perceived the poet as a prophet. In line with their interest in larger themes and prophetic modes, they were attracted to larger poetic forms and thus rejected the small poem. According to Shavit, most of these poets attempted to express directly the reality of Erets Israel and portrayed the secular reality in Palestine in religious terms. They used very bold images and metaphors as well as many neologisms, and tended to shock their readers by violating thematic and linguistic norms. Additionally, their poetry avoided the subject of love almost completely and was equally uninterested in poetic depictions of nature. David Fogel's poetry—which was written outside of Erets Israel—stands in clear opposition to the poetic preferences of this period as delineated by Shavit. His embrace of the small poem and rejection of larger poetic forms, combined with his total withdrawal from any national or collective concerns, rendered him minor in the sphere of Hebrew letters.

Fogel's style can be said to emerge from what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call a "deterritorialization of language." In their influential book on Kafka, in which they develop the concept of minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari maintain that Kafka's style is the result of the impossible situation of a Czech Jew writing German in Prague: "Prague German is a deterritorialized language, appropriate for strange and minor uses."[77] Kafka's decision to write in German is not dissimilar to Fogel's choice of Hebrew. Kafka could write in either Czech or Yiddish, both being more immediate to his Prague setting. Yet, in embracing German Kafka opted for a language not entirely his own.

Interestingly, however, Deleuze and Guattari's construction of minor literature privileges the writing in major languages, such as German. They thus argue:

> "Minor" no longer characterizes certain literatures, but describes the revolutionary condition of any literature within what we call the great (or established). Everyone who has had the misfortune to be born in the country of a major literature must write in its tongue, as a Czech Jew writes in German, or as an Uzbek Jew writes in Russian. To write as a dog who digs his hole, a rat who makes his burrow. And to do that, to find his own point of underdevelopment, his own jargon, a third world of his own, a desert of his own.[78]

Interestingly, the metaphors Deleuze and Guattari use turn misfortune and underdevelopment into celebrated privileges. Moreover, since the minor is to be found in the great or the established, marginal or peripheral literatures are stripped of their oppositional potential. The peripheral turns out to be superfluous, too minor to be read. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari's appropriation of the minor makes the "truly minor" texts—in "truly marginal" languages—extraneous and irrelevant. If the "revolutionary condition" can only be found within the "great (or the established)," then Fogel's decision to write in Hebrew, a decision that completely marginalized him in Vienna and Paris, also excludes him from this theoretical framework. Renato Rosaldo questions Deleuze and Guattari's choice of Franz Kafka and James Joyce as prototypical examples of minor writing. "Kafka and Joyce," he writes, "hardly exhaust the range of minor writers. Apart from appearing Eurocentric and elitist, exemplifying an argument with such writers make one suspect the validity of Deleuze and Guattari's generalization about minor literature."[79] The result of a theoretical construction that suggests that minor literature is not written in a minor language is that writers working in minor languages are excluded. Thus Chana Kronfeld argues that Deleuze and Guattari's choice of Kafka as their prototypical example clearly "pulls the category of the minor away from the senses of 'marginalized,' 'suppressed,' 'excluded,'—namely, away from a focus on the minor as a feature of the history and politics of a work's reception."[80]

Although Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization is too ahistorical (or transhistorical) to be used uncritically, it may be usefully ap-

plied to Fogel's poetic language. Yet, appropriating the concept of deterritorialization for Fogel's poetry should by no means be automatic. Because Hebrew was deterritorialized and unspoken for approximately two millennia, a deterritorialization of language does not seem to be specific to Fogel's poetry. But while Hebrew modernists were desiring a *reterritorialization* of language, Fogel seems to have been eager to strengthen—both biographically and poetically—the effects of deterritorialization. Fogel's deterritorialization should be understood against the background of the centrality of the concept of territory not only in Zionist thought but also in Hebrew literary criticism. When Ben-Tsiyon Shalom complements Anda Pinkerfeld's children's verse, for example, he writes that "they are not exterritorial. They have the smell of the place."[81] Thus, although territoriality rarely came up as an explicit stylistic demand, it was implicitly present in numerous critical evaluations. When Avraham Blat denounced Leah Goldberg, suggesting that her poems lack a "specifically Israeli color,"[82] he succinctly articulated the demand that poetry reflect and emblematize the territory. Fogel's biography, his constant exile(s), is a living metaphor for deterritorialization. In a period when the reterritorialization of language was the ultimate goal of Hebrew literature, Fogel's continuous attempt to destabilize meaning—to deterritorialize his language—could not be understood or valued.

We have already seen how, and up to a certain point why, Fogel's mode of writing has been misread or silenced. As I have shown, only by placing Fogel in a European context and by focusing on his ideological intervention within Hebrew literature can one fully appreciate the radical option his poetry offers. But however original and significant, Fogel did not act alone. He is part of a suppressed tradition of minimalist aesthetics or simplicity in Hebrew poetic modernism that includes other marginalized poets. In the next chapter, I will argue that modernist women's poetry (Rachel, Esther Raab, Anda Pinkerfeld, and possibly the early poetry of Bat-Miriam and Leah Goldberg) can be perceived as belonging to this suppressed tradition. What I aim to show, however, is that the poetic simplicity of Fogel, in and of itself, is anything but plain. Fogel's simplicity should be read in light of Yuri Lotman' s assertion that "the concept of simplicity as an aesthetic value . . . is invariably connected with the rejection of ornamentality. Perception of artistic simplicity is possible only against the background of 'ornamental' art. . . . Consequently, simplicity is structurally a much more complex phenomenon than ornamentality."[83]

# 4 THE INVISIBLE REVOLUTION: REREADING WOMEN'S POETRY

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There is a genealogy of women within our family: on our mother's side we have mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers, and daughters. Given our exile in the family of the father-husband, we tend to forget this genealogy of women, and we are often persuaded to deny it. Let us try to situate ourselves within this female genealogy so as to conquer and keep our identity. Nor let us forget that we already have a history, that certain women have, even if it was culturally difficult, left their mark on history and that all too often we do not know them.

—LUCE IRIGARAY[1]

What are the constituent elements of female Modernist writing . . . ? We know it best, of course, by the ways in which it has traditionally not fit the law of Modernist writing; or rather, by the way in which it has seemed second-rate to acknowledged Modernist texts.

—SHARI BENSTOCK[2]

Unlike [Mr. Pencil's] interest in important issues such as man's fear of retirement and his anxiety of impotence, Ms. Pencil is interested in immaterial issues such as the anxieties of a woman who does not know what to do with herself now that her children have left home, or the anxieties of a woman who ceases to be attractive.

—AMALIA KAHANA-CARMON[3]

When Luce Irigaray argues, in the passage quoted above, that because of "our exile in the family of the father-husband, we tend to forget [the] genealogy of women, and we are often persuaded to deny it," she draws attention to the ways in which women are erased from the history of culture. This erasure, which stems from what Celeste Schenck terms, a "politics of exclusion,"[4] has generated a feminist reexamination of the literary canon and the value it ascribes to texts written by women. Feminist readings advance a double challenge: on the one hand, they counter evaluations that present women's writing as inferior, mediocre, and amateurish. On the other hand, they uncover the stratagems by which such aesthetic evaluations were made to appear natural, self-evident, and deserved.[5] This double challenge is the point of departure of this chapter, in which I examine the role and cultural status of the first women poets in Hebrew literature. The entry of women poets into the field of Hebrew letters, which until the 1920s had been an exclusively male arena,[6] generated far-reaching consequences. Nevertheless, the poetic work of such poets as Rachel, Esther Raab, and Anda Pinkerfeld was largely overlooked, often misconstrued, and consequently, subjected to cultural forgetting.[7] Although it would be erroneous to suggest that these three poets shared the same fate in the margins of collective memory, we shall see that all of them were subjected to a tradition of hostile readings that ignored their poetics and judged their poetry according to criteria opposed to their objectives.

In order to understand the contribution of women's writing to the realm of the Hebrew word one should first look into the exclusion of women from Israeli cultural memory. A brief glance at literary reviews, historiographic accounts, and literary textbooks reveals how women's writing was rendered minor and insignificant. In his "Israeli Hebrew Literature: A Historical Model," for example, Itamar Even-Zohar articulates an accepted view of the development of modernist Hebrew poetry:

> Hebrew poetry clearly moved from the [premodernist] Revival period, dominated by such figures as Bialik (1873–1934) and Tchernichovsky (1875–1943), to an expressionist-futurist-neosymbolist "modernistic" poetry dominated by such figures as Shlonsky (1900–1974), Alterman (1910–1962) and Greenberg (1895–[1981]), and then (in the fifties) to a sort of "neo-imagist" modernism, represented by such poets as Zach

(1930), Avidan (1934–[1995]) and Amichai (1924–[2001]). These shifts are very clear, and are expressed on all levels of the literary text.[8]

This construction of Hebrew poetic modernism construes Hebrew literary history as an exclusively male arena. It is noteworthy that even Leah Goldberg, a leading poet in Shlonsky's modernist coterie, and Dalia Ravikovitch, an important poet of the following poetic generation led by Nathan Zach, are entirely missing from this description. Moreover, this description—the likes of which appears time and again in Hebrew literary historiography—perceives the historical progression of Hebrew poetry as a series of revolutions in which poetic sons rebel against poetic fathers. The two poetic revolutions that lie at the heart of this description are Shlonsky's war against Bialik during the 1920s and 1930s and Zach's war against Alterman during the 1950s and 1960s.

This view reappears in Meir Wieseltier's essay on Nathan Zach's poetry. In this essay, Wieseltier describes the rupture between the two waves of Hebrew modernism and sketches a map of Hebrew poetry in the 1950s. Although Wieseltier explicitly states that the map he draws is not an exhaustive description of the "galaxy" of Hebrew poetry, he gives examples for almost every possible position within it:

> This domain, the domain of Hebrew poetry, was like an established kingdom in the midst of an emerging republic (a not unfamiliar phenomenon in the history of Europe), in which court protocol reigned with no serious opposition. However, it was a somewhat unusual kingdom since two kings (Shlonsky and Alterman) shared one crown, and it also had an exiled king (Uri Zvi Greenberg) and maybe even a usurped prince (Ratosh). But most decisions were carried out as in any other kingdom in which the defects and weaknesses of the royalty are camouflaged by an army of tailors, jewelers, decorators, and loyal panderers who obey kings' orders even when it appears that the kings don't bother to state their wishes. The world . . . was full of verses written by the epigones of Shlonsky and Alterman admiring them with a foolish, slavish, and sterile admiration, perceiving them as giants (and not only as literary giants), and never dreaming of deviating from their official poetics, unless it was an evolutionary movement so timid as to be practically invisible. And if there were poets (Amir Gilboa) who rebelled

> against their absolute hegemony and sought to forge their own path, they did this for the most part with an afflicted, whimpering voice in order to avert the rage of these demigods and their minions. Whoever couldn't conceal his unconventional ways (Avot Yeshurun) was considered as marginal, just barely tolerable, and lived on the fringes oppressed by an ever growing sense of suffocation.[9]

Wiesletier, who describes the literary scene before Zach's rebellion against Alterman, portrays Hebrew literature as an exclusively male world. This is especially conspicuous because his description of the royal court of Hebrew makes implicit use of a family metaphor, one often used in literary historiographies.[10] Surprisingly, however, the royal family of Hebrew does not consist of a king and queen, but rather of two kings. Moreover, both the powerful positions (kings, prince) and marginal roles (exiled king, dispossessed prince, panderers) are occupied by men alone.

These examples, which erase women's poetry from the map of Hebrew modernism, are by no means exceptional. In fact, Hebrew literary history is often described by male metaphors that by definition preclude the inclusion of women.[11] However, erasure was by no means the sole method by which women's writing was trivialized. Texts that do discuss women's poetry, even sympathetically, can likewise contribute to the exclusion of women. Consider, for example, Joseph Lichtenboym's characterization of Rachel's poetry:

> The purpose of women's art is the uncovering of inner life rather than the artistic impression in and of itself. Women's poetry—and even [women's] prose—is mostly of the lyrical type, that is, the type of the personal and subjective. It is in essence a poetry of feeling and of imagination, of emotional nature and quiet reflexivity. The woman feels only herself, her own suffering, and thus women's poetry often bears the stamp of occasional poetry ("Gelegenheitsgedichte"). [Women's poetry] expresses life-feelings, life-aspirations but very seldom a general, cosmic world-feeling.[12]

Believing that there is an essential difference between men and women that produces opposing styles, Lichtenboym attempts to articulate the particular tenets of women's writing. He aligns the binary opposition male/female with other hierarchical oppositions such as public/private, eternal/occasional,

and intellectual/emotional. In these sets of polarities, women's poetry is associated with inferior qualities: the private, occasional, and emotional. In arguing that "our women poets have not escaped from . . . artistic dilettantism," Lichtenboym gives succinct expression to the widely held prejudices against women's poetry as self-involved, limited, minor, and amateurish—even if these prejudgments appear in a generally positive review of Rachel's writing.

Such stereotypical descriptions of Rachel's writing and of women's writing in general are so prevalent that the ideology underlying their production has very nearly attained invisibility, becoming part of the fabric of Hebrew literary criticism. Israel Cohen, for example, reiterates the widely held view regarding the minor stature of Rachel's poetry when he claims that her "poetry does not require explanations. It speaks for itself. It has no secrets . . . It doesn't draw from the depths, but rather from the waters of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River which flow in the open before all eyes." Looking at the process by which Rachel turned into a cultural myth, Cohen takes issue with what he perceives as a tendency to overrate the value of her poetry: "The flood of praise and her position as the poet of the revolution [*meshorer ha-mahapekha*] of our days belie the truth. Rachel is essentially an individualist poet. The revolution is like an enormous bell while she is like a little timbrel which rings softly and pleasantly."[13] Cohen's perception of Rachel's poetry as self-explanatory suggests that her texts leave no room for exegesis. In writing "poet of the revolution" in the masculine, Cohen not only denies Rachel the title but also implies that this role cannot possibly be occupied by a woman. For a woman poet to be *meshorer ha-mahapekha* is almost a grammatical oxymoron: to become one she would first have to overcome her gender.

The view that women's poetry requires no explanation reappears in Avraham Blat's essay on Leah Goldberg's poetry, in which he argues:

> The new Hebrew poetry took different paths, either in Bialik's *nusach*, with its artistic world and old symbols, or in Shlonsky's "revolt" [*mered*] that aimed to "break the vessels" and initiated a modernist school. But in female Hebrew poetry there is no trace of this struggle. Rachel's poetry is mainly intimate, as the "poet of the sea of Galilee," and Elisheva, Yocheved Bat-Miriam, and Leah Goldberg were flavored by Russian Symbolist poetry.[14]

Blat goes on to argue that Leah Goldberg's poetry is too personal and lacks social and national commitment. While Blat's assessment of Goldberg is telling, it is more important to note how he reads women's poetry only in biographical terms, outside the context of trends, movements, rivalry, and influence—that is, outside the context of literary history. When read along these lines, women's poetry cannot but be an addendum extraneous to the body of Hebrew literature.[15] Even Leah Goldberg and Yocheved Bat-Miriam, full participants in Shlonsky's *moderna*, are not viewed as part of the modernist revolt against Bialik. This reading of women's poetry is very widespread, although in some contexts it appears in more implicit terms.

## 2

How does this ubiquitous view of Hebrew women's poetry emerge and what ideological presuppositions does it reflect? It should be made clear from the outset that such characterizations of women's writing are by no means specific to Hebrew criticism. John Crowe Ransom, for example, characterized Emily Dickinson as "a little homekeeping person," and R. P. Blackmur, just as patronizingly, argued that Dickinson "wrote indefatigably, as some women cook or knit."[16] Similarly, Osip Mandelstam described Marina Tsvetayeva's poetry as "domestic needlework," only to conclude that "women's poetry continues to vibrate at the highest pitch, offending the ear, offending the historical, poetical sense."[17] And Eduardo González Lanuza, who participated in the Latin-American avant-garde movement of the 1920s, condemned Alfonsina Storni for her aesthetic impurity, arguing that "she could not fulfill herself as a poet because she didn't know how to rise above herself." Although he admits that she possessed genius, he asserts that "her sex constituted an obstacle."[18] Although set in myriad geographical and cultural contexts, modernist women's writing has been denounced and trivialized in astonishingly similar terms.

While the similarities in cultural perceptions of women's writing are indeed striking, Hebrew literary culture also offers specific configurations of its symbolic gender hierarchies. Amalia Kahana-Carmon argues that the lower stature of women's writing in Hebrew literary history rests on a cultural "deep structure." She attempts to describe the second-ratedness attributed to women's writing by comparing the position of women in Hebrew literature to the marginal status of women in the synagogue. While men have

a performative role in the synagogue, women are expected to observe the ceremony passively. Tracing the ideology that relegates women to marginality, Kahana-Carmon asserts:

> Writing can be compared to prayer. In many ways, these two activities derive from and also respond to the same need. . . . [In Hebrew literature] one can compare fiction to the secular Israeli synagogue. Why a synagogue? Because in Judaism there are two levels of prayer. There is the prayer by the collective [*tfilat rabim*], for the collective, performed collectively. This is the higher level. This is the important and the supreme level. It is a prayer in the name of the entire people of Israel and for the entire people of Israel. This kind of prayer is an expression of the inner heart of the collective "I." Then there is the prayer of the "I," the prayer of a person as an individual. This is considered the lower level. . . . To speak for and in the name of Israel is important. To speak for yourself is outside the main issue. That is, to express personal perspectives or personal distress, as personal, not as national, is less important, trivial. Until recently the same pattern continued complacently, since Hebrew fiction is something like a synagogue of the spirit. Until recently, the Hebrew writer saw himself as one eminently suited for addressing the congregation from the altar. Not in order to speak his own piece, but in order to serve as a mouthpiece for the collective "I" of the congregation. . . . The pattern of the synagogue continues in another sense. We know how a synagogue is built. There are two floors. The first floor is the active floor, where everything happens, where things are done . . . and there is another floor, separated by a partition, which is the women's section, the passive floor. There you're supposed to shut up. Because whoever's speaking downstairs is speaking for her, and you sit quietly and you don't disturb.[19]

Addressing the woman's passivity and silence in the women's section, Kahana-Carmon directs attention to the female writer's inability to speak for the congregation, that is, her inability to be a national subject. In Chapter 1 we saw how the male Hebrew writer constructs himself as a speaker of the collective, thereby intertwining private and national concerns. Thus Berdichevsky writes at the end of *Arakhin* (Values), "My sorrow is not mine . . . but the sorrow of our entire people, the sorrow of the many people, which became my own sor-

row."[20] It is this representational status that is withheld from the female writer who at most can speak about herself.[21]

Moreover, Kahana-Carmon's resonant metaphor not only explains women's marginal position in one patriarchal culture; it also addresses implicitly the very real historical exclusion of Jewish women from the realm of the Hebrew word. As is well known, the Jewish community in Eastern Europe was diglossic. Both men and women spoke Yiddish, but only men studied Hebrew as a holy tongue. Consequently, Yiddish literature was recognized as intended, at least officially, for a female audience, while Hebrew was recognized as an exlusively male language.[22] Benjamin Harshav describes the difference between Hebrew and Yiddish as follows:

> Religious education and scholarship were predominantly for men; schools and study-houses were exclusively for men; teachers and preachers were male; boys accompanied their fathers to synagogue and absorbed expressions in Hebrew and Aramaic. Thus, the Holy Tongue became associated with the male world. . . . Yiddish books were ostensibly printed for women though read by men as well. Yiddish was the language of home, family events, and intimacy. It was the "mama-language," with all possible connotations, negative and positive, which this division implied.[23]

That Hebrew was an exclusively male language becomes clear upon reading the biography of Dvorah Baron, the first female Hebrew prose writer. Only because she was the daughter of an unusually progressive rabbi was she permitted to study Hebrew. But even she had to remain in the women's section, listening to class from behind the partition. Moshe Gitlin, who studied with Baron, records this unusual scene: "Dvora would sit by herself, imprisoned in the 'women's section,' studying Eyn Ya'akov [a collection of haggadic material in the Talmud] or midrash aloud. From time to time she would call over the partition: 'Father' or 'Benjamin!' 'What does this mean?'"[24] Gitlin's description of Baron as imprisoned in the women's section is indicative of the difficulties women faced en route to participation in Hebrew culture. Even Esther Raab, the first native-born Hebrew poet in Palestine, and daughter of a man who turned his back on the traditional Jewish world to become a farmer in Petach Tikvah, describes how her father belittled her studies:

> My thirst for knowledge was insane in my youth, and I was enraged when my brother Baruch was sent to study in Jerusalem, while regarding me, my wonderful and wise father said off-handedly: "this one will marry and give birth to boys . . . "—this discrimination I will never forget and never forgive. I would copy from the notebooks of the boys who studied at the "Herzliya" gymnasium—I devoured books—but until today I feel that I lack a systematic literary education.[25]

In other words, even decades after Y. L. Gordon, in his poem "Le-mi ani amel?" (For whom do I toil?),[26] lamented the exclusion of women from Hebrew studies, women like Esther Raab still encountered discrimination. As Raab recalls:

> The boys and girls learned separately, and so it remained for a long time until the eighth or ninth grade. Then [in 1909] they unified the school—and then my enlightened and good father took me out of school. This event had a crucial impact on my education and perhaps some part of this event has stayed with me all my life. This prohibition on mixing the sexes was unnatural and in opposition to my entire being.[27]

Virginia Woolf describes a similar though not identical cultural exclusion that affected British women, who for the most part were denied the classical education that could provide them with access to Greek and Latin. Unable to attend "Oxbridge" and barred from the library, the woman writer's entry into the cultural world of British letters began with an extreme disadvantage. In Hebrew, however, the situation of the woman writer was even more acute. If the English woman writer was denied access to the high-culture languages of Greek and Latin that formed the backdrop and context for English literature, the Jewish woman in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe was denied access to the Hebrew language itself. Even by the turn of the century, when women gained access to Hebrew, their educational patterns differed significantly from that of their typical male counterparts, who had been educated in traditional religious texts. Consequently, women's language was less "Talmudic," as it were, less adorned with biblical phrases (*melitsah*), and less likely to enter into an explicit allusive dialogue with traditional Hebrew texts.

This estrangement from Hebrew religious texts was, in fact, thematized by the first modern Hebrew women poets. Yocheved Bat-Miriam's first volume of poetry *Merachok* (From afar), the only one in her corpus that can be read in the light of a feminine resistance to a masculinist poetics of abundance, includes a section called "Vilon" (Curtain; or, in the context of the synagogue, partition) that engages these themes.[28] "Vilon" (which, significantly enough, is dedicated to Bat-Miriam's mother) opens with a poem that linguistically and thematically draws upon the Yiddish tradition of the *tkhine*, the personal prayer that served as a feminine substitute for the masculine collective liturgical tradition. In the poem's first stanza, the female speaker expresses her uneasiness in addressing a God associated with both a patriarchal tradition and a language not her own:

אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם, יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב,
חָנֵּנִי, רַחֵם נָא, אֵל אֱלֹהִים !
שִׂיחִי אֵיךְ לִשְׁפֹּךְ לֹא אֵדַע,
הִנֵּה לִבִּי לָךְ נָתוּן, אֱלֹהִים.

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
have mercy, take pity, God of Gods
How to pour out my words I don't know
Here is my heart, God.[29]

The God Bat-Miriam addresses is not the God of women or the matriarchs (Sara, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah) but, rather, a male God. Bat-Miriam records her exclusion from the male liturgic tradition and admits that as a woman she does not know how to address this God. Precisely because she feels that her command of language is incomplete and lacking, she offers her heart in desire to circumvent the barrier of language. However, in the next stanza this humility as well as the willingness to give up linguistic communication are transformed into challenges that emphasize the advantages of the female stance. The poetic speaker clarifies that her prayer refers not to standard masculine liturgy, but to the alternative tradition available to her—the feminine genre of prayer that traditionally acknowledges the speakers' inability to form an acceptable (Hebrew) expression. This tradition is not uniformly humble, however, for it also valorizes the sincerity it offers in place of the well-turned phrase: "I will take a *tkhine*, ragged and old / I'll read the prayer,

each prayer in silence." In invoking here the silently uttered prayer, Yocheved Bat-Miriam recalls another female figure associated with the submerged tradition of personal prayers, Chana, the wife of Elkana, whose moving lips were misinterpreted by the high priest as a sign of drunkenness (1 Sam. 1:12–13). In a later poem in this cycle, the reference is made more explicitly:

אַחֶרֶת מִמֶּנָּה אָנֹכִי.
שׁוֹנָה מִנִּיכָהּ גַּם נִיבִי.
אַךְ כְּמוֹתָהּ כְּמַהָּה בֵּין צְלָלִים
אֶעֱמֹד וְאֲדַבֵּר עַל לִבִּי – – –

I am different from her,
my expression is different from hers
but like her, between the shadows
I will stand and speak in my heart.[30]

By alluding to the biblical Chana, Bat-Miriam not only places herself within a female tradition, but also reminds us that female discourse has never been understood by men. This subversive allusion to Chana—and more importantly, to the way in which her prayer was misinterpreted by the high priest —allows Bat-Miriam to underscore the intricate relationship between reading and gender, as well as between interpretation and power. My intention is not to perform a close reading of this poem, but rather to show that women poets were conscious of both the difficulties and the opportunities of their position outside the male canon and the male religious and linguistic tradition.

Recalling in *A Room of One's Own* how she had been prohibited from entering the university library, Virginia Woolf observed that while it is unpleasant to be locked out, it is worse, perhaps, to be locked in. Without essentializing women's writing (and without glossing over its vicissitudes), I want to argue that the entry of women poets into the sphere of Hebrew poetry revolutionized and revitalized Hebrew as a poetic language. Precisely because they were locked out of rabbinic culture, women writers were able to distance themselves from the premodernist literary tradition and to create a new language of the self.[31] Likewise, because they could not speak for the nation, they were better able to fashion a discourse of the self as such. In the first chapter, I quoted Simon Halkin's discussion of Hebrew literature's belated absorption of European literary models. Halkin's observations on the inhibitions of the Hebrew writer are important in this context as well:

> What prevented Hebrew literature from adopting [the European literary norms]? In my opinion, there were three reasons. First: the responsibility of the Hebrew text for the Jewish people. Second: a sort of psychological modesty, almost self-asceticism, in everything that touches personal and private aspects of life. Third: modern Hebrew literature's extraction from a completely normative traditional [Jewish] literature. These are what I call the three inhibitions—internal inhibitions, internal psychological taboos—that work within the soul of the Hebrew writer when he writes.[32]

The period Halkin discusses is one in which all recognized Hebrew writers were men. The inhibitions he so astutely describes, which exclude the private from the scene of writing, did not apply as appropriately to the first women writers who were less inhibited by these cultural boundaries. Women writers' attempt at reinstating the "I" (rather than the allegorical "collective 'I,'" in Kahana-Carmon's terms) can be said to have initiated a new trajectory in Hebrew letters. The new emphasis on the private involved not only a thematic shift, but also a linguistic and rhetorical one. The personal tone of women's poetry was accompanied by a rejection of highly rhetorical poetry. Favoring "simplicity" (*pashtut*) and "spareness" (*dalut*), women writers such as Rachel, Esther Raab, and Anda Pinkerfeld often employed a minimalist poetics that negated the poetic legacy of three generations of male writing. As a three-tiered negation, women's minimalist poetics involved a rejection of Haskalah writers' use of the biblical phrase (*melitsah*), a rejection of Bialik's multileveled, rabbinically inflected *nusach*, and a rejection of the modernist poetics of Shlonsky's *moderna*, whose intertextual patterns, while iconoclastic, continued to evoke traditional Jewish sources.

In promulgating this three-tiered negation, women writers advance not only a minimalist poetics, but also a radically new view of Hebrew literary history. Rather than seeing the progression from Y. L. Gordon's Haskalah to Bialik's *nusach* to Shlonsky's *moderna* as a series of poetic revolutions, Rachel, Esther Raab, and Anda Pinkerfeld draw attention to the underlying continuity within this male-dominated tradition. I would argue, in short, that what looked to so many critics like a deficiency in thematic range and linguistic richness turns out to be a deliberate, conscious, and truly revolutionary modernist poetics. This invisible revolution was precisely what Hebrew literature and language needed at that time, and it constitutes a devel-

opment in Hebrew letters as or more important than the codified turning points named above.

Naturally, not all women poets viewed their poetic projects or the literary tradition in precisely the same terms. Moreover, it would be incorrect to construe Hebrew poetic minimalism with its emphasis on the private strictly as the contribution of women writers. After all, male poets such as Avraham Ben-Yitshak, David Fogel, and Yehuda Karni similarly attempted to revitalize Hebrew in that direction. Yet, while Hebrew criticism has already acknowledged, however belatedly, the contribution of male writers such as Fogel and Ben-Yitshak, it has still failed to acknowledge the major role modernist women writers played in revolutionizing Hebrew as a poetic language.[33]

## 3

The emergence of Hebrew modernism has often been identified with Shlonsky's blunt rejection of Bialik's *nusach*. It is noteworthy, however, that Bialik's *nusach*, in and of itself, was a revolution against the Haskalah writers' inflated use of *melitsah*. This series of poetic revolutions is worth discussing in some detail. In his illuminating discussion of the *melitsah*, Robert Alter argues that over the centuries "most people who have written Hebrew have known the Bible virtually by heart and have counted on a similar knowledge in their readers." Describing how this knowledge generated an incessant flow of biblical allusions, Alter shows how the use of biblical phrases (*melitsot*) turned into the fundamental constituent of nineteenth-century Hebrew writing. In Alter's apt words, *melitsah* is

> poetry (or perhaps one should say "poesy"), rhetoric, and, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the high-flown biblical phrase. . . . Thus, a Haskalah writer would not simply say that something soared or bounded but that it was "like the sparks that fly upward" (Job 5:7). . . . lifted from its classical Hebrew contexts and slapped down on contemporary realities, [the *melitsah*] was meant by its mere application to give the dignity of the ages to contemporary objects of representation.[34]

Bialik rejected the Haskalah writers' use of *melitsah* by interjecting all levels of postbiblical Hebrew into his writing, creating a more nuanced language he

termed *nusach*. Despite his successful attempt to distance himself from the inflated language of the Haskalah, Bialik was attacked by Shlonsky, the high priest of prestatehood Hebrew modernism, for succumbing nonetheless to the allure of the *melitsah*. According to Shlonsky, comprehensive familiarity with the large body of biblical and postbiblical Hebrew texts rendered premodernist writers unable to distance themselves from religious sources, making them subservient to the textual context and phrase in which the word was embedded. In a famous response to Bialik's poem "Reitikhem shuv be-kotser yadkhem" (I have seen you in your inadequacy), Shlonsky wrote, "I don't deny: this man is a precious Jew. But in poetry the poetic message is the main issue, not the Holy Tongue [*ha-leshon kodesh*]."[35]

Shlonsky's flat rejection of Bialik's "Holy Tongue" expressed itself in many forms. In one of his key manifestos, titled "Ha-melitsah" (The lofty phrase), he ridiculed Bialik's language by referring tacitly to Bialik's poem "Bi-tshuvati" (Upon my return). Shlonsky presented Bialik's use of *melitsah* and called for a liberation of the Hebrew language: "The word succumbs, giving up her dignity. The word does not want to be set free: I love my master. And thus her ears were pierced. . . . The word (under the rule of the *melitsah*)—like a woman (in patriarchal society)—is not liberated."[36] Shlonsky's three-way analogy between the word under the rule of the *melitsah*, a slave who does not want to be set free (see Deut. 15:17), and a woman in a patriarchal society is fascinating precisely because it shows how difficult it is for a male Hebrew writer to free himself from a deeply ingrained allusive tradition. Even in his truly iconoclastic attempt to redefine the function of the Hebrew word, Shlonsky relies on biblical intertextuality. As will become increasingly clear in the following pages, women poets like Rachel, Esther Raab, and Anda Pinkerfeld thought that Shlonsky's maximalist version of modernism perpetuated the rule of *melitsah* in Hebrew letters. In rejecting the ready-made language of Jewish sources and the "echo effect" it created, women poets aimed to transform and modernize Hebrew as a poetic language. In developing a form of female modernism, women poets challenged Shlonsky's stylistic and linguistic preferences, although their poetic intervention was largely misconstrued.

Even though my assertion that women revolutionized the Hebrew language goes against the grain of Hebrew literary criticism, it is possible to recover an antithetical or oppositional critical stance that did acknowledge the contribution of women to the revival of Hebrew. Several poets and critics have already presented similar views, but their critical perspective was mar-

ginalized in the critical canon just as women's poetry was marginalized in its literary equivalent. As early as 1881, forty years before the emergence of modernist women's poetry, the poet Y. L. Gordon reflects on the major difference between male and female styles. In a letter to Shayne Wolfe, Gordon articulates the difference between male and female styles as they appear in letters:

> All the letters in the Holy Tongue written by the finger of a woman that I had the opportunity to read were better in their style and their purity of language than many letters written by men. The woman writes with a pen of a bird and the man with a pen of iron and lead. The woman's letter is written in a simple style, and it walks innocently in the spirit of the language; it has no lofty phrases (*melitsot*) that the beautiful soul abhors, and about such matters it is said: "no makeup, no adornment, and still enchanting." And men do not do that, because most of them like to use words as sand and to sound loud cymbals that ring and grate in the reader's ears. The reason for this, I think, is that the mind of the girls was not ruined in their youth in the deadly heder, and their brain was not deformed by sermons and hair-splitting exegesis, and thus their taste remains, their scent is not changed.[37]

Gordon raises the hypothesis that women's style is indeed distinct, and that this difference stems from "nontraditional" language acquisition. He valorizes their "simple style" and most importantly recognizes its incompatability with *melitsah*. Gordon's position is surprising especially in light of the fact that all Haskalah poets used *melitsot* extensively, and Gordon's own letter is replete with *melitsot*. Gordon's use of the formula "and about such matters it is said" is a typical example of the ways in which he relies, like other Haskalah poets, on traditional texts. In mentioning, "no makeup, no adornment, and still enchanting" (Ketubbot 17), "loud cymbals" (Ps. 150:5), and "their scent is not changed" (Jer. 48:11), he makes use of precisely what he characterizes as male style. Although he praises women's ability to distance themselves from the tradition of *melitsah*, he himself is unable to do the same.

In the same vein, albeit significantly later, Ya'akov Steinberg writes, in a fascinating essay on Elisheva's poems:

> Many poets who possess an endless power of expression write subjective poetry which uses a style of borrowing [*nusach hash'ala*]: their say-

> ings are lofty, generalized, and very broad. Like garb borrowed from a far-off land; they say "my heart," and they presumably refer to a concept which is much broader than a single human heart. Elisheva is one of the few poets to give, in accordance to her spirit, a poetry of reality, of one's own life. . . . It is a precious ability—to follow the truth, the things that are real.[38]

Although Steinberg's essay centers on Elisheva, his characterization can be usefully applied to modernist Hebrew women's writing in general. While his reading mirrors Lichtenboym's aforementioned characterization of women's writing as personal, Steinberg is nevertheless able to historicize this personal style and to acknowledge the newness of its anti-*melitsah* style. Upon reading Steinberg's evaluation of Eliezer Steinman, Shlonsky's coeditor in *Ktuvim*, it becomes clear that his view is not accidental. Steinberg complains that Steinman has more expeditiousness than truthfulness (*zrizut yoter me-asher emet*), only to conclude that "in his way stood as a stumbling block—and maybe even as a blessing!—another quality of the Jewish character, that is the ability to mimic, the endless mimicry."[39]

A juxtaposition of Steinberg's views of both Elisheva and Steinman is revealing in that it exposes Steinberg's rejection of borrowing or mimicry in favor of truthful poetry of reality. For Steinberg, the "endless mimicry" that characterizes Hebrew literature stems from the continuous attempt to evoke the Bible and the Talmud through intertextuality. The endless reference to Jewish sources is, in his view, the reason for Hebrew literature's lack of authenticity, what he calls "garb borrowed from a far-off land." In rejecting Steinman's intertextual borrowing, and in embracing Elisheva's attempt to relate her own personal experience, Steinberg perceives women's writing as offering a new trajectory in Hebrew letters.

Especially interesting in this context is Shimon Ginzburg's essay "Meshorerot ivriyot" (Hebrew women poets), which argues that women's poetry revitalized the overly masculine literary tradition. In recalling his reaction to a poem by Sara Shapira, he asserts: "She was the first free woman that prophesied the emergence of the gentle, beautiful, liberating woman in our tradition-bound and untender literature."[40] Despite his somewhat patronizing terms (gentle, pretty), Ginzburg's proposition that women's poetry introduces literary qualities that are absent from the male-dominated literary system is particularly radical. Specifically important is his suggestive argument that wom-

en's poetry liberates a tradition-bound literature. Despite his impressionistic tone, Ginzburg's view of women's poetry comes close to attributing the novelty of women's style to its distance from traditional religious texts.

In a 1932 essay, A. Libenstein offers a similar view in his astute analysis of the novelty inherent in Rachel's poetic language. Hebrew writers, he claimed, were "attracted to the great abundance of an ancient language [and therefore] did not know how to start anew." Although he credits Bialik with the invention of simplicity, he gives exceptional weight to Rachel's poetics of simplicity:

> Our new poetry heavily carries the rich burden of a mummified language. Hebrew was not used for two thousand years. The Hebrew word ceased to be an expression of the living emotion, it lost its flexibility. The pipes between word and emotion had been clogged with broken vessels of ossified phrases, with the cumbersome and oppressive *melitsah*. . . . Rachel was almost the first among Hebrew poets to have been tested and to have succeeded [in resisting the *melitsah*].[41]

Gordon, Steinberg, Ginzburg, and Libenstein understood, each in his own way, that due to its excessive use of *melitsah*, Hebrew poetry had reached a crisis point and lost its vitality. The very fact that Hebrew was not a vernacular compelled generations of Hebrew writers to use the Bible as a repertoire of expressions. As a result, poetic language sounded almost by definition cliche. The aforementioned critics and writers understood that women—due to their different patterns of language acquisition—can perhaps distance themselves more effectively from the constraints of tradition.

It is striking that both the antimodernist Bialik and his chief modernist rival Shlonsky understood that the true novelty of women's writing lies in its sparse, almost colloquial sound. Recalling a conversation with Ch. N. Bialik, Anda Pinkerfeld recounts the following anecdote: "I once told [Bialik] that it seems to me that I will never be able to conquer Hebrew as he did, as people whose mother-tongue was Hebrew [did]. But Bialik replied that this abundance [*shefa*] often turns into a curse because, as he argued regarding himself—when I think of a word, it brings about a whole train [*shoval*] of other words."[42]

Shlonsky, Bialik's nemesis, referred to Esther Raab's poetry in surprisingly similar terms. As Raab recalls, Shlonsky told her, "I envy you. You have your own [poetic] vocabulary and you don't change it. And you express so much

with these words. And I, when I come to write, the words come to me like bees and I forget the content and I don't know what it says."[43]

In light of their almost identical reaction to the status of the word in the minimalist poetry of Raab and Pinkerfeld, it becomes clear that both Bialik and Shlonsky employ a maximalist, allusive poetics, although they belong to opposite sides of the premodern/modern divide. Interestingly, although both of them are critical of what they see as the limited horizons of women's poetry, they acknowledge the newness of its minimalist affinities. Although these observations attest to the fact that both writers and critics sensed the novelty inherent in women's minimalist poetry, it would be erroneous to suggest that this was the prevalent view of women's writing. These views were expressed either in private conversations (as in the case of Bialik and Shlonsky) or in marginal publications. Recovering these views involved a great deal of archeological work, for they go against the grain of Hebrew criticism. Moreover, one can draw an analogy between the suppression of women's poetry and the suppression of the critical stance that acknowledged the revolutionary nature of women's writing. However, against the background of critical disregard for women's writing, it is important to uncover the voices that did acknowledge the revolutionary moment in women's writing, as well as its contribution to the revitalization of Hebrew as a poetic language.

Having suggested that Hebrew women's writing revitalized Hebrew poetry by rejecting a male-dominated maximalist tradition, I shall now look at the ways in which the minimalist style of Rachel, Esther Raab, and Anda Pinkerfeld was indeed a conscious effort to depart from the Haskalah's *melitsah*, from Bialik's *nusach*, and from the *moderna*'s maximalist aesthetics.

## 4

The critical reception of Rachel's poetry—which has been marginalized and even relegated to "popular culture"—reveals the ways by which women's poetry has been excluded from the modernist canon. Rachel's poetry is customarily conceived of as confessional, and her poems are frequently read as autobiographical outpourings. The nearly obsessive critical preoccupation with Rachel's biography did not allow for a careful examination of her poetry within the context of Hebrew and international modernisms. Rachel's famous couplet "Only about myself did I know how to speak / my world is narrow

like the world of an ant" was often read by critics as a literal statement, thereby justifying their biographical readings of her poetry. Such readings ignored the complexity of these texts and the novelty that they emulated, thus perpetuating the stereotyping of women's writing in general and of Rachel's poetry in particular. In fact, even this outcry "Only about myself did I know how to speak," which expresses a new mode of subjectivity as well as a new poetic diction centered on the self, was never read in a literary-historical context.[44]

The simplicity that Rachel advocated both in her poems and in her original yet often ignored manifesto, "Al'ot ha-zman" (On the mark of our times), was usually perceived as a proof of her limited talents—as an "involuntary asceticsm"[45]—rather than as a conscious poetic choice. Even Dan Miron, whose seminal study of Hebrew women's poetry pays considerable and favorable attention to Rachel, argues that "the thinness of Rachel's poems was not as intentional and principled as [David] Fogel's."[46] I claim that such a reading of Rachel's simplicity as unintentional ignores her own modernist stance and situates her outside the boundaries of Hebrew modernism. In fact, Rachel is not read as a modernist at all. For example, Dan Miron asserts that Rachel's advocacy of simplicity in "On the Mark of Our Times" identified her as an antimodernist: "In these statements Rachel involved Hebrew women's poetry in the debate between the conservatives and the revolutionaries in Hebrew poetry. She presumably presented the 'mark of our time'—simplicity—as opposed to modernism, which was accused of lacking simplicity as well as of complexity for the sake of complexity alone."[47] If Rachel was construed as an antimodernist, it is only because she offered a modernist alternative to the modernism of Avraham Shlonsky, who was to become the most conspicuous figure of the Hebrew *moderna*. However, Rachel's opposition to Shlonsky's poetics does not make her an antimodernist. On the contrary, it seems that Rachel, Esther Raab, Anda Pinkerfeld—and also David Fogel—resisted Shlonsky because in their eyes his poetic practice was not modernist enough. What we witness here is a phenomenon not atypical of international modernism at large: a struggle between opposing minimalist and maximalist modernist trends. Miron disregards that the struggle in Hebrew letters in the 1920s and 1930s was not only between modernism (Shlonsky) and premodernism (Bialik), but also a struggle between opposing types of modernism: a minimalist modernism that Rachel advocates and the maximalist modernism of Shlonsky and Greenberg.

In a series of statements in letters, reviews, and poems, Rachel speaks about her affiliation to modernism. In 1925, for example, she writes in a letter to her sister: "By the way, regarding style, I want to comment on something I've had in mind for a long time: why do you use the future tense instead of the present and past, like Mapu and Y. L. Gordon? That negates the liveliness and freshness of modernist writing."[48] This statement is indicative of the importance Rachel attributes to a rejection of Haskalah stylistics.

Rachel's preference for simplicity as the utmost expression of modernism is determined by her affiliation with both Russian Acmeist aesthetics (best represented by Anna Akhmatova and Osip Mandelstam), which favors a bare, straightforward narrative style, and with a Hebrew minimalist poetics, which similarly rejects ornamentality. In asserting Rachel's affiliation with Acmeism, we must remember that as a modernist trend Russian Acmeism involved itself in a double move, in that it emerged as a reaction against Symbolism but also rejected Futurism, the dominant trend in Russian modernism. Although the relevance of Russian trends to Hebrew poetic modernism cannot be overestimated, we must consider what exactly we mean when we tag Rachel as a Russian-Hebrew Acmeist. In *On the Margins of Modernism*, Chana Kronfeld describes the fruitful rapport that existed between the aesthetic demands of external modernist affiliations and the particular needs of the newly revived Hebraic tradition. Rejecting rudimentary notions of poetic influence and cultural import, Kronfeld demonstrates how the "dynamic hierarchies of diverse stylistic and ideological tendencies within modernism were particularly adaptable to the internal needs of each of the national literatures that participated in it." Thus, to mention but one of Kronfeld's examples, "the *moderna* poets of the Palestinian Generation often employed neologism both as a vehicle of modernist (futurist-inspired) poetics and as part of the push toward lexical innovation that was necessary for the revival of the Hebrew language."[49]

Similarly, Rachel's affiliation with Russian Acmeism should not be perceived as an "import" of a ready-made Russian style. An examination of Rachel's affiliation with Acmeism should look into the congruence between Acmeism and the specific needs of the Hebrew poetic system as Rachel saw them. In her lucid poetic manifesto "On the Mark of Our Times," Rachel gives an interesting account not only of her poetic views but also of her perspective on the period:

> It is clear to me: the mark of our time is the simplicity of expression. A simple expression, namely, an expression [describing] the quivering of the lyric emotion, an instant expression before it succeeds in covering its nakedness with silk garb and golden jewelry. An expression which is clean of literariness, which is touching in its human standards.[50]

As the title suggests, Rachel is preoccupied with determining what characterizes modern poetry. Her answer—simplicity—offers an alternative poetic paradigm to Shlonsky's modernist matrix. Like Shlonsky, Rachel introduces the "new" in bodily-erotic terms. However, Shlonsky compared the break from the *melitsah* to "free love between words,"[51] a verbal one-night stand, whereas Rachel aspires to a babylike, innocent, and natural nakedness that precedes ornamentality. Shlonsky's style poses a challenge to Rachel's own construction of modernism, as she states: "And then you take [Shlonsky's] 'Le-aba-ima' [To [my] parents; literally, to father-mother], and you read and reread, and you tend to forgive Shlonsky for his tricks [*ta'atu'av*] because of his talent for being so much a man of his period." While admitting to his genius, she claims that one needs to forgive Shlonsky's tricks in order to enjoy his poems. In indirectly referring to Shlonsky as one of our country's "hieroglyphic artists" (*hartumey artsenu*), she sets him up as the oppositional figure against whom she works.

For Rachel the metaphor underlying the production of simplicity is birth, and thus the ideal poet is one who captures the "instant expression . . . before it succeeds in covering its nakedness with silk garb." However, she perceives Shlonsky's poems as lacking that desired nakedness: in his poems "the emotion comes out of the womb in this clothing, like 'lucky' kids who are born fully dressed." In suggesting that Shlonsky's poetic expression comes out of the womb fully clothed, Rachel tacitly refers to the *melitsah*, which by cloaking language in previous meanings and usage unnecessarily mediates between emotion and expression. Rachel's euphemism should not deter us from seeing that the compliment she pays to Shlonsky's poems—which are compared to lucky kids—is in fact a critique of his poetic practice.

Reading Rachel against the background of the Acmeist manifestos of Osip Mandelstam, Nikolai Gumilyov, and M. A. Kuzmin, one is struck by the similarity between their poetic credo and Rachel's poetics. Especially remarkable is the relevance of Acmeist poetic ideology to Hebrew women poets' rejection of maximalist aesthetics in general and lexical innovation in particular.

In his 1910 Acmeist manifesto, "On the Beautiful Clarity," Kuzmin argues that the Symbolists' "excessive obscurity and acrobatic syntax" offends good taste. He concludes: "If you are a conscientious writer pray that the chaos within you (if you are chaotic) will become clear and will settle, or in the meantime, rein it into a clear form. . . . love the word like Flaubert, cut back the means, be stingy with words, be precise and authentic—and you shall find the secret of a miraculous thing—that I would call 'clarism.'"[52] In his 1919 manifesto "The Morning of Acmeism," Mandelstam praises how the "modest exterior of the work of art often deceives us with regard to the monstrously condensed reality contained within. In poetry this reality is the word as such."[53] Similarly, the Acmeist rejection of Symbolism's "forest of symbols" (in Mandelstam's words, "We do not want to distract ourselves with a stroll through the 'forest of symbols,' because we have a denser, more virgin forest"),[54] and its similar rejection of Futurism's focus on lexical innovation (Mandelstam: "We reject the games of the Futurists for whom there is no greater pleasure than catching a difficult word on the end of a crochet hook"),[55] are clearly analogous to Rachel's rejection of Shlonsky's style.

In the context of Hebrew modernism, however, Rachel's intent focus on modest, authentic, and clear style is meant to negate the maximalist male-dominated Hebraist tradition. In advancing the concept of simplicity, Rachel promoted the Acmeist idea of "the word as such" in order to negate the poetics of intertextuality of her male predecessors and contemporaries, for whom words come in "trains" (Bialik) or as "bees" (Shlonsky). Rachel's affinity for the goals of the Acmeists manifests itself in more ways than one. Like them, she is fascinated with irony (which Gumilyov defined as one of the constituents of Acmeist poetics). She, too, does not accept the division of the world into poetic and nonpoetic; any experience, however low, is legitimate material for her poetry. Just as the Acmeists called themselves "the poets' guild" to affirm the role of craftsmanship in their writing, Rachel's poems express a commitment to and an awareness of her craft. Most importantly, perhaps, is Rachel's perception of classical appearance as a truly modernist act, a view clearly reminiscent of Mandelstam's assertion in "Word and Culture": "Classical poetry is the poetry of the revolution."[56]

Rachel's explicit desire to modernize Hebrew by means of rejecting the *melitsah* has not received the critical attention it deserves. In many of her poems she clearly rejects ornamentality in favor of simplicity. "Niv" (Expression), one of her more explicit poems, can be read as a metapoetic re-

jection of maximalist poetics and as a negation of the idea that simplicity stems from lack of knowledge.

יוֹדַעַת אֲנִי אִמְרֵי נוֹי לְמַכְבִּיר,
מְלִיצוֹת בְּלִי סוֹף.
הַהוֹלְכוֹת הָלוֹךְ וְטָפוֹף,
מַבָּטָן יָהִיר.

אַךְ לִבִּי לַנִּיב הַתָּמִים כְּתִינוֹק
וְעָנָו כֶּעָפָר.
יָדַעְתִּי מִלִּים אַיִן מִסְפָּר -
עַל כֵּן אֶשְׁתֹּק.

הֲתִקְלֹט אָזְנְךָ אַף מִתּוֹךְ שְׁתִיקָה
אֶת נִיבִי הַשָּׁח ?
הֲתִנְצְרֵהוּ כְּרֵעַ, כְּאָח,
כְּאֵם בְּחֵיקָהּ ?

I know many ornamental sayings,
endless lofty phrases,
which walk mincing as they go.
Their glance is arrogant.

But my heart follows an expression as innocent as a baby
and as modest as dust.
I know numerous words—
therefore I am silent.

Can you hear even while silent
my humble expression?
Will you guard it as a friend, as a brother,
as a mother at her breast?[57]

Two words, *niv* and *melitsah*, are central to my brief analysis of this poem as a metapoetic manifesto. The title "Niv" has several meanings and can be used to designate "expression"; yet at the same time it also means an "idiom" and a "dialect." In the poem itself the word appears twice; first, when the speaker says that she likes expressions that are as innocent as a baby, and then when the speaker asks her addressee whether he can hear her humble

expression. The word, then, can be understood in this context as a simple colloquial expression in opposition to fancy, ornamental formulaic speech (*melitsah*). This poem, I argue, proposes a modernist, antiformulaic poetic style. The speaker rejects the formulaic *melitsah* because it is connected to the external trappings of desire, courtship, and coquettish behavior. The word *melitsah* has, as is well known, a long history of signification. Although in everyday use it means "rhetorical" or "ornamental" (language), in the context of Hebrew criticism, as I have shown, the word refers to the Haskalah writers' inflated use of biblical expressions. In rejecting the *melitsah*, the speaker advocates an expression that is modest and, moreover, unseductive. The *melitsah* is likened to a woman whose mincing steps echo. With this description of the *melitsah*, Rachel clearly rejects the echo chamber of Hebrew intertextuality, where every word, almost by necessity, carries its history of signification. However, as she rejects this intertextual tradition Rachel alludes to Isaiah 3:16, where the prophet condemns the disloyal daughters of Zion, portraying them as mincing ("the daughters of Zion are haughty . . . walking and mincing as they go"). In order to prove her statement that she knows many ornamental sayings and lofty phrases, Rachel "plants" a biblical *melitsah* in her antiformulaic speech, but her use of this biblical phrase is highly subversive: in the biblical context the mincing daughters of Zion are portrayed in extremely negative terms and their prospective punishment, as Isaiah prophesies, is to be stripped naked. Rachel, who wishes to capture the naked emotion before it is covered with silk garb, aims to "undress" the Hebrew language of its biblical garment. Rachel's preference of *niv* over *melitsah* is ironic in another sense. As is typical of Rachel, the poem conceals an ironic twist: the simple and innocent *niv* also means a "fang" or "canine tooth," implying that simplicity is more incisive and effective than formulaic poetic diction.

It is not insignificant that the poem's addressee is explicitly marked as male (*ha-tiklot oznecha*). He is instructed how to understand and protect this expression. As a male, he should be not only a friend and a brother but also a protective mother to the poet's simple idiom. By asking the male addressee to take on a female role, Rachel blurs the male-female opposition in order to formulate an unseductive relationship between the speaker and her addressee. Rachel is aware of the difficulties inherent in simplicity. In her manifesto, she writes, "indeed, the path of simplicity is difficult. On the one hand lurks the prosaic and on the other dandyism." Yet in this poem she un-

derscores the gender components of this difficulty, as she raises the doubt that a male addressee can possibly understand or be attuned to a female discourse. Only a male addressee who would be willing to take on a female role could potentially hear her mute language. In favoring silence, the speaker aspires to overcome the barriers of language; however, by concluding the poem with a question mark she throws into question the very possibility that a man could read as a woman.

Another aspect of Rachel's poem that calls for close critical attention is its intertextual dialogue with Y. L. Gordon's "Lemi ani amel?" (For whom do I toil?), a poem in which the male poet presents himself as the last Hebrew poet.[58] Writing in a "forgotten language," Gordon claims that his readers are possibly "the last readers [of Hebrew]." Against the backdrop of a dwindling audience, Gordon notes that women cannot fully appreciate his poetry due to their lack of erudition. Describing how his religious parents stood aghast upon learning that their son is an aspiring, secular Hebrew poet ("[there is] death in poetry, heresy in poesy / it is forbidden to live with a poet [under the same roof]") Gordon notes that the female reader's distance from religious tradition prevents her from being a worthy "audience." Acknowledging the exclusion of women from Torah and Talmud study, Gordon uses the same word for poetic idiom that Rachel echoes in the title of her poem: "My idiom you shall not despise, you will say to me: our brother" (*Nivi lo tivzu. Tomru li: achinu*). Moreover, this poem, one of the most famous texts of the Haskalah, uses *melitsah* and *niv* in an interesting way. The word *melitsah* appears in the parents' disgusted reaction upon the realization that their son is a poet. In their speech, *melitsah* is synonymous with both poetry and heresy. The word *niv* describes the more personal language the poet uses to address his audience. But in comparison to Rachel's later poem, Gordon's use of these two words is still somewhat undifferentiated.

Rachel, like every other Hebrew writer, was undoubtedly familiar with Gordon's poem. In more than one way, she echoes her male precursor's text while inverting its meaning and gender roles. Rather than a male poet dismissing his potential female audience, we now face a female poet with a male addressee. Yet as I argued earlier, Rachel is not only interested in a simple inversion of roles that would mirror the previous gender hierarchy. Instead, she reshuffles the male-female opposition so that the male would become a maternal listener. Furthermore, in advancing a much more categorical distinction between *niv* and *melitsah*, Rachel challenges Gordon's

expansive, allusive, and overtly rhetorical style as a model that continues to affect male poetry. If Rachel indeed engages in a dialogue with Gordon's text, it is noteworthy that she refrains from directly alluding to his text. To put it another way, there is no clear marker to signify the intertextual relationship with the evoked text.[59] Unlike Gordon's poem, which is filled with biblical allusions (*melitsot*), Rachel's text seems to be devoid of any overt intertextual patterns. I believe that it is women writers' rejection of the *melitsah* as well as their attempt to forge a rhetorical effect of simplicity that leads to the "concealment" of their allusions, a phenomenon that will become increasingly clear as we direct our attention to additional examples. However, the fact that women's intertextuality differs from male intertextuality does not permit us to forego an analysis that ignores the hidden intertextual web contrived by women writers.

Rachel was not alone, however, in promoting a minimalist modernist aesthetics that challenged Shlonsky's modernist paradigm. As early as the 1920s, Esther Raab wrote poems that differ significantly from the texts of her mainstream male contemporaries. Raab's early poetry is striking in many different ways; her use of free verse, her rejection of the quatrain and regularized rhyme, as well as her idiosyncratic syntax and word order are very different from the mainstream poetic preferences of Shlonsky and the *moderna*. Raab, sexually blunt, insubordinate, and eager to subvert and eradicate traditional perceptions of femininity, is also radically different from Rachel in both her portrayal of women and her deliberately disruptive language.

Unlike Rachel, who was not carefully analyzed but was nevertheless widely known, Raab's poetry remained until recently virtually unread. There are several reasons for Raab's marginal position within Hebrew modernism. In a literary milieu dominated by immigrants (Shlonsky, Goldberg, Alterman, but also Zach and Amichai), Raab's idiosyncratic "nativist" style was perceived as alien and thus excluded from canonic representations of modernism.[60] Likewise, in a society marked by severe gender inequality (despite Zionism's claim to be a "sexual revolution"),[61] it was easier to embrace Rachel's submissive femininity (she compared herself to a loyal dog in her poem "Isha" [Woman]) than Raab's radical, ostensibly "unfeminine" posture. While her nativist and feminist themes contributed to her marginality, her stylistic preferences rendered her unreadable for decades to come. The scant critical attention Raab received even affected the way in which her family perceived her, as her nephew and biographer, Ehud Ben-Ezer, recounts:

> In our house there was no copy of her volume of poetry . . . her name was not mentioned even once in my expansive study of Hebrew literature. She published two to three poems a year in *Ha-arets*'s literary supplement, edited by her friend Ya'akov Hurvitz. In our family it was considered as her hobby, our aunt who was once considered a poet, who once published a book when she was rich, and who recently came back to writing but who is clearly not a poet in the same sense that Bialik and Tchernichovsky and Rachel are poets or in the sense that Shlonsky, Alterman, and Goldberg are poets today.[62]

Raab's minimalism, however, is different from Rachel's. Her poems do not convey the rhetorical effect of simplicity that Rachel toiled to achieve. Although at first glance Rachel and Raab seem to have little in common, a closer examination reveals that Raab, too, can be said to advance a poetics in which "the word as such" is an aesthetic imperative. In Raab's case, however, the emphasis on the word as such springs from her attempt to disrupt, both syntactically and rhythmically, the "natural" flow of language. In rejecting the highly figurative and abstract language of her male predecessors and mainstream contemporaries, and in rejecting the line as the central rhythmical unit, Raab clearly promotes a minimalist style. In an interview, she describes her attraction to the newly reborn Hebrew language in terms that may illuminate her perception of poetic language:

> The living Hebrew, I heard her first words. A word—was an invention, a beginning, a certain special sound. I love the words in themselves, not the language but the words, because every word needed to be found. The Hebrew people spoke was so spare [*dala*], like a stutter. . . . Now Hebrew is much richer but also more superficial. Every word had a flavor because it was sought after—and until is was found and used, that was a very long process.[63]

Raab perceives linguistic or poetic spareness (*dalut*) as an advantage. As this 1971 interview suggests, she prefers the spareness of turn-of-the-century Hebrew to the richness of its more current form. Her preference for words over language—"I love the words in themselves"—is indicative of a minimalist approach to writing, also embodied by her statement: "I quarry words."[64]

Raab's language in these statements is reminiscent of Kuzmin's and Mandelstam's objection to the convoluted style of the Symbolists. While there is no reason to assume that Raab was acquainted with their writings, there are still striking similarities between the Acmeist battle against Symbolism and the Hebrew minimalists' struggle against Shlonsky's symbolist-maximalist language. Raab was eager to distance herself from Shlonsky, and on more than one occasion she spoke against him. "Shlonsky and Alterman," she argued, "were stuck in Russianness."[65] It is no accident that Raab chooses to recount the aforementioned anecdote in which Shlonsky says to her, "When I come to write, the words come to me like bees and I forget the content and I don't know what it says."[66] Raab clearly perceived her style as antithetical to Shlonsky's.

Raab's view of poetic language is related to her view of gender: she is constantly aware of the fact that her language is different from the language of her male contemporaries. In an interview with Moshe Dor, she reiterates her response to a male friend who asked her why her poems are less understandable than Bialik's: "Bialik studied Talmud and you studied Talmud. He spoke a pan-Judaic language [*safa klal-yehudit*] and I don't. This is why you understand one another."[67] Chana Kronfeld, who analyzes Raab's response, claims that "Raab refers to the exclusion of women from the study of Talmud only indirectly (she does not say 'you study Talmud and I could not study it and therefore, I had to develop a language of my own'). Yet, this silenced text is, of course, part of her answer to the question regarding her unreadability."[68] Like other minimalist writers, Raab sees a close three-way correlation between aesthetic minimalism, rejection of the language of Jewish sources, and a focus on the "I." That male tradition is too bound both to tradition and to the collective—in other words, it restricts personal expression—becomes evident when she speaks about her literary tastes:

> Alterman—his poetry charmed me . . . but I don't have an affiliation with it, because he is not personal enough for me. He is folkist [*amami*] and nationalist and I also have that element but it is not the main focus, but it is the main focus in Alterman. As a lyrical poet others were much better than him. David Fogel is a very important poet . . . I thought very highly of Avraham Ben-Yitzhak . . . I loved the poems of Leah Goldberg . . . and of Rachel, and most of all, my true affiliation among the female poets is with Bat-Miriam.[69]

Raab's rejection of Alterman's style, on the basis of its lack of personal agency, and her preference of Fogel over Alterman are revealing. Although this evaluation goes against the grain of the canon's paradigm of aesthetic value, it is consistent not only with Raab's own poetic preferences, but also with the attempt of women writers to create an alternative paradigm: Raab paid tribute to Rachel and Fogel; Rachel acknowledged Pinkerfeld, Elisheva, and Fogel; and Pinkerfeld praised Rachel and Fogel. It is noteworthy that Raab's rejection of Alterman on the grounds of his overt and excessive nationalism ("he is not personal enough for me") aligns her with other women poets who understood that the linguistic revolution of rejecting the *melitsah* was inseparable from a thematic revolution that promoted the private over the collective.

Poem after poem in *Kimshonim* (Thistles) is characterized by elliptical syntax, formal experimentation in free verse, and a continuous attempt to reverse traditional gender roles. Raab's 1922 "Ani tachat ha-atad" (I am under the bramble bush) is a particularly complex example of her poetic style:

אֲנִי תַּחַת הָאָטָד
קַלָּה, זֵידוֹנָה,
קוֹצָיו צוֹחֲקֶת
לְקִרְאָתֵךְ זָקַפְתִּי:
אוֹר מַכֶּה עַל הַמֶּרְחָב.
כָּל קִפּוּל בְּשִׂמְלָתִי
לִי יִלְחַשׁ:
לְקִרַאת מָוֶת
לְבָנָה וּמְחוֹלֶלֶת
אַתְּ יוֹצְאָה.
אַתָּה מוֹפִיעַ -
וַאֲנִי קַלָּה צוֹהֶלֶת
מְנִיפָה חֶרֶב נוֹצֶצֶת
וּבְעָצָם צָהֳרַיִם
בְּשָׂדוֹת לְבָנִים מַאוֹר
אֶת דִּינֵנוּ גָּזַרְתִּי
בְּאָחַת !

I am under the bramble bush
light, wanton,
his thorns I laugh
to you I erected;

light strikes the wide open space,
every wrinkle in my dress
will whisper to me:
unto death
white and dancing
you are going.
You show up—
and I am light and exulted
a gleaming sword I swing—
and at very noon
in field white from light
our verdict I pronounced/cut
at one![70]

The first line, "Ani tachat ha-atad" (I am under the bramble bush), clearly alludes to Jotham's parable (Judg. 9:7–20) of the trees' search for a king. In the biblical story, fruit-bearing trees or shrubs such as the fig tree or the vine refuse the offer. The *atad* (bramble bush), a barren, fruitless bush, is the only tree to accept the offer to become king. In the biblical context, Jotham's parable is a satirical critique of the Israelites' desire to have a king. Negating the institution of kingship, this biblical text posits the *atad* as a good-for-nothing exploiter. Because the Hebrew word *atad* is associated with Jotham's parable, Raab's poem cannot be read but as a reversal of the Bible's negative characterization of the *atad*. In contrast to the biblical text, Raab's poem presents the *atad* favorably, as an integral part of the native landscape, using its unproductive and uncultivated aspects to underlie the speaker's sexual freedom. While other Hebrew modernists endeavored to transform the land into an emblem of newness (Shlonsky: "We will dress you in a gown of cement and concrete"), Raab celebrated the land's natural barrenness. In focusing on the fruitless *atad*, she champions qualities of the land that others —in both the past and present—despise. Yet, although working "against" the biblical text, the text's allusion to the Bible is almost concealed, in accordance with Raab's attempt to resist excessive allusivity.

The word *tachat* can mean "under," but it also signifies "for," "in lieu of," or "instead." The poem's first line can thus be read in two different, albeit complementary ways. According to the first reading, the woman awaits her lover *under* the bramble bush. According to the second, she *is* the bramble bush.

This tension between metaphor (I am *atad*) and metonymy (I am under the *atad*) is further complicated as the poem progresses. The lines "Kotsav tsokheket / likratkha zakafti" are especially suggestive, for they indicate that the speaker and the *atad* are inextricably entangled. While giving the *atad* human attributes (the *atad*'s thorns laugh), the speaker receives some of the *atad*'s qualities (she erects his thorns). The fusion of woman and bramble bush (*atad* is marked as male in Hebrew) allows the speaker to assume male qualities and thus to interact with her male lover as an equal, even as a superior. She erects, swings a sword, and possibly kills her lover, but at the same time she is markedly feminine, wearing a dress and dancing (*mecholelet*).

The poem's concluding lines "et dinenu gazarti— / be-echat!" undoubtedly mark a dénouement, although it remains unclear precisely how this encounter between the speaker and her lover ends. In the context of "verdict" (*din*, or *gzar din*), the verb *gazarti* is a dead metaphor that refers to the moment in which the verdict is decided. Given the presence of the sword in the preceding lines, the dead metaphor is resuscitated. Yet whether she actually uses the sword to kill her lover, or simply announces a verbal verdict, remains unknown. The exclamation mark at the poem's end, however, makes it unequivocally clear that whether physically violent or verbally decisive, the moment is charged. "Be'echat," the poem's concluding word, is a portmanteau, combining *echad* and *achat* (male and female words for "one," but also a wordplay on or distortion of *be-achat*, "at once"). In using this word, Raab perhaps indicates the sudden erotic union of the speaker and her male lover. Becoming finally one entity, the speaker and her lover are referred to not as masculine or as feminine but as a unique fusion of both. The erotic violence that persists throughout the poem finds poetic fulfillment in its last word, which defies the laws of grammar. If the erotic materialization of the speaker's desire remains unfulfilled, the portmanteau word is used to underline her internal fusion of male and female qualities. The poem's last word, then, works to problematize the facile, ready-made contrasts between cultural (and in Hebrew, also grammatical) perceptions of femininity and masculinity.[71]

Raab's radical free verse, as well as her formal experimentation and explosive thematics, make her one of the most interesting modernist Hebrew writers. She is also one of the most unique, in her stylistic rejection of the *melitsah* and the *nusach* of her predecessors, as well as of the quatrain, meter, and elaborated allusivity of Shlonsky's coterie. Despite the obvious disparity between Rachel's concept of simplicity and Raab's fascination with

what she calls "spareness" (*dalut*), their styles react, albeit in different ways, against the same male-dominated poetic tradition.

Anda Pinkerfeld is even less familiar to contemporary Hebrew readers than Esther Raab. Those who are familiar with Pinkerfeld know her mainly —if not solely—as a writer of children's verse. However, children's verse constituted only a part of her literary production, a part that she herself considered subsidiary to her modernist poetry. Although Anda Pinkerfeld is, as one critic already observed, "undoubtedly one of the first modernists in Hebrew poetry,"[72] she has rarely been included in the modernist canon as it is represented in anthologies, textbooks, and curricula. Following Rachel and Raab, Pinkerfeld started publishing her minimalist poems in the late 1920s, and like her two female contemporaries she rapidly distanced herself from Shlonsky. In Pinkerfeld's own words:

> I went back to Poland to study. There, in Lvov, I studied in a high institute for five years. One year I studied Bible, Talmud, and medieval Hebrew poetry like a madwoman. . . . When I returned to [Palestine], I was discovered. Ya'akov Hurvitz came to me . . . and brought me to Shlonsky. I gave Shlonsky some poems—I had even sent him and *Davar* poems from Poland—but when I came back I tended to avoid him, following an inner sense. I didn't like his look [*blorit*] or his devout followers. Shazar asked me why I no longer publish in [Shlonsky's] *Ktuvim* and I replied, "We have become estranged" [*zarnu lanu*].[73]

Pinkerfeld's antagonistic relationship with Shlonsky is reminiscent of Esther Raab's relationship with the *moderna*. In both cases, however, the antagonism is more than a personal dislike; it is, rather, a signal of opposing views of what poetry is and ought to be. Pinkerfeld's description of her relationship with Leah Goldberg, a celebrated poet and the only woman in Shlonsky's coterie, shows how personal relationships are inseparable from poetic ideologies:

> Then I had a real antagonist—Leah Goldberg. When she, Leah, came to this country I was so excited that I welcomed her with flowers. True, we were very different. That applies also to our views of poetry. She was very concerned with constructing poems while I am more wild [*pru'a*]. While sitting in a cafe, Leah allowed herself to say (in reference to my

poems): "I don't know if this is poetry." The truth is that she transferred her subjective feelings into the domain of aesthetic evaluation.[74]

Goldberg's dislike of Pinkerfeld is related to her attempt to disassociate herself, at least in part, from women's poetry and to distinguish herself as the only woman poet in a male coterie. In her early book *Mikhtavim mi-nesi'ah medumah* (Letters from an imagined journey), Goldberg writes: "I am not a young girl writing rhymes. I am a [male] poet [*ani meshorer*]."[75] Pinkerfeld and Goldberg differed not only in their view of gender, but also in their stylistic preferences. When Pinkerfeld describes herself as "wild" (*pru'a*), she refers to her rejection of the quatrain and traditional prosody. While Goldberg, who promoted classical forms, is an antagonist, David Fogel who wrote in free verse is regarded as a literary ally: "[David Fogel] was my friend. Also in poetry. We are very close in our poetic styles."[76] Similarly, she mentions Rachel as a friend and as a source of poetic influence. Dov Sadan, perhaps the first major Israeli critic to have understood the contribution of women writers to the revival of Hebrew, has provided the following explanation for the marginality of Pinkerfeld's simplicity:

> I have paralleled her poetry to the palm tree which has no bends and knots and to the human being whom God made honest [*yashar*, straight] and who wishes to be only as God created him; and I tried to explain the customary habit to overlook and exclude her poetry as part of an atmosphere of "ornamentality" [*ptaltalut*, convolution] which pervades this generation.[77]

Following Sadan, my reading of Anda Pinkerfeld's poetry aims to demonstrate the way in which her minimalist aesthetics contributed to her marginalization. Although the only book dedicated to Pinkerfeld's writing consists of review articles, several critics have pointed to the radicalism of her minimalist style. Shimon Ginzburg's characterization of Pinkerfeld's children's verse, for example, could be usefully applied to the poetic style of her first volume of poetry: "There are no stylistic jugglings here that stem from erudition (quite the contrary, Anda Pinkerfeld's style is at times very 'impoverished' [*ani me'od*] lacking any habitual literary flashiness.")[78]

The opening poem of Pinkerfeld's first volume of Hebrew poetry *Yamim dovevim* (Speaking days) may serve as an example of her minimalist stance:

לָנוּ, לַעֲזוּבִים בַּמֶּרְחָבִים,
גָּרְעִין זָעִיר נוֹתָר:
- שִׂמְחָה
מִפֶּה לְפֶה,
מֵעַיִן לְעַיִן
מִדָּם לְדָם -
שְׁאֵלָה וּתְשׁוּבָה.

וְהֵן עָוֹן הוּא,
נָעוֹל פְּתָחִים
לִפְנֵי חוֹזְרִים עֲלֵיהֶם.

פִּתְחוּ פְּתָחִים וּזְרוֹעוֹת
לְקֹרַאת הַבָּאִים !

To us, who are abandoned in the open
a tiny grain has remained:
—happiness.
from mouth to mouth,
from eye to eye
from blood to blood.—
a question and an answer.

For it is a sin
to lock doors
in the face of those seeking them.

Open doors and arms
to those coming!

Pinkerfeld had published a book of verse in Polish before emigrating to Palestine. The opening poem of *Yamim dovevim* can only be read as the poet's request for legitimacy and acceptance in Hebrew letters. Interestingly (but perhaps not surprisingly), her request is not phrased in the first person. Although Pinkerfeld, like other women poets, is inclined to use the personal "I," her opening poem chooses to call for acceptance in the first person plural (*lanu*). But in assuming the voice of the group, Pinkerfeld's speaker does not take on the collective, agentless identity of the pioneers, for example. Instead she speaks on behalf of those who are rejected and float aimlessly in the wide open space. Although the poem's narrative moment, as it were, is ostensibly

simple—a request by those left out to be accepted and included—the poem's "gaps," as well as its spacing on the page and its elliptical syntax, leave many questions unanswered. Quite typically, the reader receives scant information about the speaker and her motives. In light of the poem's gaps and "wild" spacing on the page, the dashes are perceived not only as signifying a fluidity of ideas, but also as marking the incompleteness of sentences.

Creating an immediate sense of intimacy with her reader, Pinkerfeld's first word (*lanu*, to us) can be read both as referring to all the deserted people as well as to the affinity between writer and reader. It is this invitation to the reader that closes the gap between writer and reader, creating a text in which intimacy, in and of itself, is a poetic value. In asserting that those who are abandoned still have a grain of happiness, Pinkerfeld does not explain what this happiness consists of. It is said, however, to be something that passes "from mouth to mouth, from eye to eye, from blood to blood." In describing this source of happiness in dialogic terms (*she'ela u-tshuva*, question and answer), Pinkerfeld's description can be read as referring to a discursive dialogue (poetic communication); but in describing this discursive communication in carnal terms (mouth, eye, blood), she presents this dialogue as potentially erotic.

Furthermore, in presenting this discursive dialogue as "question and answer" Pinkerfeld alludes not only to the exchange between a writer and an audience, but possibly to the religious tradition of *responsa* literature, which consists of "questions and answers." This possibility becomes even more tangible as one realizes that the speaker's entire request for inclusion is phrased in religious terms. The concluding lines, "open doors and arms / to those coming," may be read as an allusion to the famous prayer that concludes the Yom Kippur service: "Open for us the gate at the time of the closing of the gates, for the day has turned." Pinkerfeld's allusion presents some difficulties for a reader habituated to the male allusive tradition of premodern and modernist Hebrew poetry. Moreover, her allusions seem to "lack" a clear marker, almost canceling their own allusiveness. In aspiring to a simple, intimate poetry, Pinkerfeld is reluctant to use full-fledged allusions. Nurit Govrin has already observed that in Pinkerfeld's poetry "there is no use of phrases [*psukim*] or half-phrases in their original form, since the escape from the *melitsah* to the naked language [*ha-lashon ha-eiroma*] is one of the characteristics of this poetry."[79] But the words Pinkerfeld uses in this poem create a semantic field clearly reminiscent of the Yom Kippur prayer. Pinkerfeld's use of *avon* (sin),

*naol* (lock), *pitchu* (open), and *ptachim* (apertures) is undoubtedly derived from the semantic field of the prayer. In substituting some of the prayer's original words, however, Pinkerfeld distances herself from the prayer not only to avoid *melitsah*, but also to secularize her request. Moreover, in using overlapping allusions to both the Yom Kippur prayer and the Song of Songs (the request "open the gates" is clearly reminiscent not only of the prayer but also of the male lover's request that his beloved open the door), Pinkerfeld eroticizes her request for inclusion.

By phrasing her request in terms both similar and dissimilar to the prayer and to the Song of Songs, Pinkerfeld achieves a conversational tone while still allowing both texts to resonate from afar. It is interesting to compare Pinkerfeld's poem to Avraham Ben-Yitshak's "Bodedim omrim" (The lonely say), which also alludes to this Yom Kippur prayer. Ben-Yitshak, one of the first poets to have deviated from Bialik's *nusach*, does not hesitate to allude to the prayer in an explicit way: ("And upon the day of our leaving [the earth] we shall stand before the gate"). The marker is clear and the religious, awe-filled tone of the speaker underlines the analogy between the prayer and his poem. Moreover, because the poem's beginning already uses another allusion (to Ps. 19:2: "Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge"), it would be only fair to argue that the entire text aims to achieve an allusive texture. By way of contrast, Pinkerfeld's poem uses the same material only to place the allusion "under erasure," as a sign that is both present and absent.

Pinkerfeld's intimate tone is clearly modeled after Rachel's poetic simplicity. In an interview, Pinkerfeld recalls that Rachel told her upon reading *Yamim dovevim*, "Now I can stop writing."[80] Rachel's review of Pinkerfeld's first volume of poetry is instructive in several different ways: "The poems are very short: a quiver [*nid nid*], a twinkling of an eye [*heref a'yin*]. Sometimes the poem appears to be a fragment of a poem; but sometimes it is strongly placed in its blank frame and one cannot add or subtract." In this short description Rachel comes close to describing the constituent elements of minimalist aesthetics at large: the brevity of the poem; its origin in a perceiving eye; its tight functionalism (which, aside from favoring the word as such, involves a rejection of abundance). Especially revealing in this context are words like "silence" and "transparency," which are used to describe Pinkerfeld's style, as well as the concluding line, which asserts, "The language is flexible, luscious, to the point."[81]

Although Anda Pinkerfeld was undoubtedly influenced by Rachel, she was also receptive to themes from the poetry of Esther Raab. Pinkerfeld's unabashed eroticism ("We women / walk in the world / as torches of love / our dresses are burning from the heat of our bodies"), and insubordinate, feminist views ("Not you, my own life I desire"; "You lost me between your kisses. . . . I knew: you shall not find me"), are somewhat reminiscent of Raab's poetry. It is noteworthy that Pinkerfeld combines Rachel's simplicity with Raab's radical feminist perspectives. Although both Rachel and Raab take issue with the *melitsah*, each one of them rejects it in a different way. Pinkerfeld's interesting fusion of two rather distinct models shows, I believe, that women's poetry—not unlike other literary groupings—should be studied not as a homogeneous category but rather as a dynamic network of relations best explained, perhaps, by the metaphor of family resemblance.[82]

## 5

In the afterword to her anthology of women's writing, Lily Ratok argues that "Hebrew fiction by women did not reach the magnitude, variety, and freedom of women's poetry. One of the reasons for that is . . . the absence of a portrait of a woman-as-narrator. In other words, in women's poetry there is already a 'poetic self' distinguishable from the male model, while in women's prose a fictional portrait of the self as writer does not exist."[83] While the differences between women's poetry and prose are beyond the scope of this chapter, Ratok's observation on the woman's distinct "poetic self" deserves further discussion. The emergence of the woman's "poetic self" was indeed nothing short of a cataclysm. However, Hebrew criticism often dehistoricized the revolutionary invention of this "private" self, and succumbed to crass biographical readings. In other words, the favorable reception of the female "poetic self" that Ratok refers to prevented a more critical examination of the literary-historical stance embodied in women's writing. Dan Miron's illuminating description of the originary poetic model of women's poetry provides yet another example of this phenomenon. In discussing Rachel's poems, he argues:

> One could trace in these first poems the first poetic "model" of a clearly "feminine" poetry: a very short lyric poem, modest, general, emotional,

> verging on sentimentality, intellectually and descriptively unpretentious, minimalist and modest in its style, clear in its language and content, rhythmically regular, occupied with personal topics (loneliness, longing for lost youth, disease, death) and "feminine" themes (unreciprocated love, female loneliness, barrenness), raising these subjects with lyrical emotional force and at the same time balancing and restraining any emotional outpouring.[84]

Although he later acknowledges the deceptiveness of this "modest" poetic model, Miron continuously perceives women's poetry as emotional and confessional in opposition to intellectual and rational male poetry. While women's writing did indeed advance a modest style and focused on the private, Miron's description comes short of acknowledging the radical newness of this poetic model. What Miron fails to see, I argue, is how women's modest style contributed to the dismantling of the allegorical self, which was promoted by both Bialik and Shlonsky. In emphasizing the thematics of the female poem and in presenting women's preoccupation with the personal as anti-intellectual, Miron misreads the literary-historical context that generated women's style. Although Miron's account of the emergence of women's poetry is indeed fascinating, he tends to read it outside of the context of Hebrew *modernism*, thereby relegating women's writing to an isolated sphere.

The radical newness of women's style can be understood only when it is read in the context of Hebrew modernism, for women developed forms of female modernism that offered a far-reaching alternative to forms of male modernism. The fact that Rachel, Raab, and Pinkerfeld disliked Shlonsky (and later, Alterman) and distanced themselves from the poetics of the *moderna* resulted in their exclusion from the historiographic narrative of Hebrew modernism. In order to understand the eventual fate of women in the official narrative of Hebrew modernism, let us look at Nathan Zach's revolutionary 1966 essay-cum-poetic manifesto, "Le-akliman ha-signoni shel shnot ha-chamishim ve-ha-shishim be-shiratenu" (The poetic climate of the fifties and sixties). Zach's text, which influenced and shaped the historiographic perception of Hebrew modernism, involved itself in a double move. On the one hand, Zach characterizes the Statehood Generation's poetics as a negation of Shlonsky's and Alterman's poetic preferences. On the other hand, he attempts to show that the poetic preferences he seeks have precedence in the history of Hebrew letters. To use Viktor Shklovsky's formalist

terminology, Zach's rebellion against the "fathers" (Shlonsky and Alterman) was accompanied by a turn to poetic "uncles" as a source of influence.

Zach enumerates fifteen characteristics of the Statehood Generation's poetics, such as the rejection of the quatrain, irregularity in rhyming, freer metric rhythms, the rejection of excessive figurative language, the deflation of the poetic image, more conversational language, an objection to rhetoric, a preference for small lyric forms, and so on.[85] In offering this list of poetic do's and don'ts, Zach targets his attack on Shlonsky and Alterman, whose poetry embodies all poetic wrongs. In advancing his own modernist revision of the canon, Zach demarginalizes poets like Fogel, Preil, Steinberg, Kovner, Zamir, Gilboa, and Avot Yeshurun. On the other hand, Zach's essay-cum-manifesto completely erases women from the map of Hebrew literature, with the exception of his contemporary Dalia Ravikovitch. When Zach looks at the past, he does not see a single woman poet who could serve as a source of influence.

This erasure of women is baffling since the poetic qualities Zach advocates are clearly reminiscent of the female modernist style. Rachel, Raab, and Pinkerfeld favored a "more conversational tone," advanced "an objection to rhetoric," and embraced "small lyric forms." Raab and Pinkerfeld also "rejected the quatrain," abandoned rhyme almost altogether, and used "freer metric rhythms." Despite his affinity to the style of women's poetry, Zach was careful in this particular essay-cum-manifesto to distance himself from what could be perceived as a "feminine" style and thus ignored his female precursors. This is most notable in his brief discussion on the need to "[deflate the] *nusach*." In looking for an exemplary figure who resisted the *nusach* (and the *melitsah*), Zach mentions the prose writer Y. Ch. Brenner, as if to indicate that he would rather give the credit to a male prose writer than to a female poet.

How does our perception of Hebrew modernism change when we include women poets in the annals of literary history? Before answering this question, it is important to emphasize the constructedness of every historical narrative, including my own. In this context, one recalls the preface to *The Order of Things*, in which Michel Foucault meditates on a story by Borges describing a certain Chinese encyclopedia in which animals are divided into the following categories: (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.

In light of this puzzling taxonomy, which clearly portrays a system of thought very different from our own, Foucault examines the nature of categorization so as to claim that

> order is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language; and it is only in the blank spaces of the grid that order manifests itself in depth as though already there, waiting in silence for the moment of its expression.[86]

Foucault's attempt to offer a new order is based on the understanding that some orders are perhaps not the only possible ones or necessarily the best ones. The order therefore exists not only as a given set of similarities and differences but also as an eye, as a language of a beholder.

Having drawn attention to the patriarchal constructions (or orders) of Hebrew modernism, this chapter attempted to propose a new glance, as well as a new politics of inclusion. Yet this politics of inclusion does not result simply in an expansion of the existing canon. Instead, it changes the internal hierarchy and dynamics of this canon. As we have seen, Hebrew poetic modernism is usually described as consisting of two successive (and rival) movements. This view, which focuses on the clash between the *moderna* and the Statehood Generation, leaves no room for women poets who did not participate in these movements and who do not fit neatly into the critical categories that these movements advanced.

The inclusion of women poets into the narrative may change our perception of Hebrew modernism. Rather than as a series of poetic revolutions in which sons rebelled against their poetic fathers (Shlonsky against Bialik, Zach against Alterman), we may underscore instead the evolutionary moments of Hebrew modernism. I am not thinking only of the aforementioned influence of women writers on Zach's generation, but also of the noncombative relationship between generations of women writers. Consider, for example, the admiration Dalia Ravikovitch expressed for Leah Goldberg's work. Although they belonged to two rival groups, and although Ravikovitch was Zach's ally, she did not share his contempt and antagonism for *moderna* poets. Moreover, she described her love for Goldberg in several poems as well as in her recollection of their first meeting: "It was like meeting Queen Elizabeth. I came

earlier than expected to show her my poems and walked around the house until it was time. She opened the door with a genteel expression and a light blouse. I was stunned."[87]

By way of conclusion, let me recapitulate that instead of seeing two modernist generations, *moderna* and Statehood Generation, engaging in a constant war, a feminist reading of Hebrew modernism can underscore its *evolutions*. When one thinks of Rachel's interest in simplicity, Raab's fascination with open forms, and Pinkerfeld's rejection of excessive literariness, as well as of their shared effort to develop a language of the self (as opposed to a language of the collective), one realizes that the poets of the 1950s did not only develop a local version of Anglo-American modernism; they also continued a female poetic tradition, minimalist in nature, that has never been acknowledged as a source of influence.

# 5 THE RETURN OF THE POLITICALLY REPRESSED: AVOT YESHURUN'S "PASSOVER ON CAVES"

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> A strange relationship has settled in between me and Hebrew literature. She did not attract me. I have a major gripe against her: she did not fulfill her fundamental role—to bring us closer to the Arab question and to the Arab people of the land. . . . Hebrew literature brought us to Zion and she had to say the truth about who lived in the land, not to say that it was empty.
>
> —AVOT YESHURUN[1]

> Our youths went through a tremendous crisis in the War of Independence. The crisis of two holocausts: the holocaust of the Jewish people there and the holocaust of the Arab people here. When one wakes up in the morning to see that a people that had been living in its land yesterday is now gone, and hears from his parents that the Jewish people in Europe had perished in the Holocaust—a contradiction is created within him. On what happened there the father recounts; while on what happened here he passes in silence.
>
> —AVOT YESHURUN[2]

## 1

If literary resistance begins with a questioning of the unspoken assumptions of the center, then the poetry of Avot Yeshurun[3] is an illustrative example not only of poetic resistance but also of the canon's occlusion of "troublesome and inassimilate manifestations of difference."[4] While it is perhaps a critical commonplace to assert the marginal position of Yeshurun's poetry

within Hebrew modernism, his hermetic style and radical thematics, among other issues, have yet to be fully explored or adequately explained. Yeshurun's distance from mainstream *moderna* poets suggests one immediate line of inquiry: what was the reason for his marginalization and what can his marginalization reveal about the center that denied him admission into the canon during the 1940s and 1950s? My aim, then, is not simply to embark upon a reversal of Yeshurun's status in the canon. More central to my project is the extrapolation of what was considered taboo for the milieu that marginalized him and rendered his poetry invisible.

Yeshurun's poetry disregarded and defied the center's poetic taboos: three aspects (or by-products or consequences) of Zionism, largely repressed in Hebrew poetic modernism in general and in mainstream *moderna* poetry in particular, are at the core of his poetic project. The first aspect concerns the toll exacted by Zionism's break with the past: the linguistic, cultural, and emotional difficulties that emerged from its ideological negation of Jewish history and tradition.[5] Modernist Hebrew poetry rarely addressed the cost of this rupture. Rachel dedicated the poem "I feared that he too would depart from us" to a comrade who, unable to adjust to the new environment, committed suicide in Erets Israel.[6] In "Tel Aviv 1935," already discussed in Chapter 2, Leah Goldberg describes the arrival of a group of immigrants to Tel Aviv in terms of exile and estrangement:

> And the knapsacks of the travelers walked down the streets
> and the language of a foreign land
> was plunged into the hot day
> like the cold blade of a knife.[7]

And Noach Stern's description of the orange groves—the emblem of the new land—expresses his ambivalence:

> The smell of the heavy oranges
> comes to give pleasure and to torture
> to nurture and strangle as witness
> to the life in this homeland.[8]

As a whole such poems are not only scarce in number but also safely marginal within each of these poets' corpus. Yeshurun, however, haunted by the

memory of Krasnystaw, his Polish hometown, and of the parents he left behind, declined to participate in the systematic erasure of the past, making the return of the repressed past the leitmotif of his poetic oeuvre.

The second aspect concerns the Zionist rejection of bilingualism in general and Yiddish in particular, a rejection so resolute that it has come to be described in military terms: the Battalion of the Defenders of the Hebrew Language (*gedud meginey ha-safa ha-ivrit*) was the name of a militant group that supported the use of Hebrew in what has come to be known as the "language war" (*milchemet ha-leshonot*).[9] Although most modernist Hebrew poets were polyglot, they were reluctant to use Yiddish and Russian, for example, not wishing to spoil the "purity" of the newly reborn Hebrew. Given that Hebrew was not a mother tongue for the vast majority of Hebrew modernists (Esther Raab and Yonatan Ratosh are two notable exceptions), their decision not to write any language other than Hebrew was a crucial ideological choice. If Elizabeth Kloty Beaujour is right in her claim that polyglot writers express the psychic difficulties of moving from one language to another in terms of infidelity and betrayal, then Hebrew modernists largely repressed these feelings.[10] Unlike his contemporaries, however, Yeshurun acknowledged his guilt toward the forsaken Yiddish language, and in more than one way brought the Yiddish heritage into his Hebrew writing. Even slight acquaintance with Avot Yeshurun's poetry shows that the poems are studded with expressions in Yiddish and Arabic, bilingual puns and portmanteaus. Unlike his contemporaries' purist Hebrew, Yeshurun's poetic language can be described metaphorically as a "fusion language,"[11] that is, a language that, like Yiddish, takes its elements from different source languages, enmeshing the different components in an "open" and unpredictable way.

The third aspect concerns Zionism's obliviousness to the Arab presence, an obliviousness that (willfully or through genuine ignorance) helped shape the myth of the "empty land."[12] As my epigraph suggests, Avot Yeshurun expressed an explicit objection to this poetic and political blindness. In 1952, when Hebrew poets in the newly born State of Israel were celebrating the fulfillment and embodiment of Zionist nationalism, Avot Yeshurun published his "Pesach al kukhim" (Passover on caves; see Appendix for full text).[13] This fascinating long poem (re)presents Zionism not only from the Jewish perspective but also from the vantage point of Zionism's other—the dispossessed Arab. By not accepting the unspoken rules of the canon, Yeshurun defies the ideological hierarchy set up by his contemporaries. Irreducibly liminal, Yeshu-

run's poetry in general, and "Passover on Caves" in particular, are perceived by the center as transgressive and revolting, an emblem of betrayal.

Through a close analysis of "Passover on Caves" and its critical reception, I examine the ways in which Yeshurun's writing was construed as transgressive. By outlining the way in which such transgressive writing maintains a disruptive existence within a dominant culture, I show how the center uses the transgressive moment to assert its own position. The exclusion of the transgressor becomes essential, thus enabling the center to maintain its identity and hegemony as well as to reify its power.

## 2

"I consider the Jewish question neither a social nor a religious one, even though it sometimes takes these and other forms. It is a national question."[14] These are Theodor Herzl's words in *The Jewish State*, the book whose publication in 1896 is said to have signaled the birth of political Zionism. The ultimate mission of Zionism—to end the abnormality of Jewish life in the Diaspora by forming a Jewish state in Palestine—was fulfilled with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. In the half century that elapsed from the publication of Herzl's book to the materialization of his prognosis, Zionism was transformed from a fin-de-siècle utopian idea into a living reality. Hebrew literature did not merely reflect this political process. Instead, by being a reflective manifestation of the nation, Hebrew literature played an active role in spreading Zionism and, consequently, the nation-building process. Literature, by permitting "an imaginary perception of unity before it is achieved politically and administratively,"[15] becomes one of the means through which national identity is forged. Although literature invariably participates in the nation-forming process, as Gregory Jusdanis's work shows convincingly, the case of Hebrew literature's conjunction with Zionism is unique in its use of a "dead" language, a nonvernacular, as a vehicle for national identity. The very act of writing Hebrew—a language not only without territory but also unspoken in a secular context for two millennia—was no doubt an ideological choice on the part of Hebrew writers in the late nineteenth century, a choice that, with various degrees of intentionality, aimed to intensify national sentiments. Thus, when Avot Yeshurun says "Hebrew literature brought us to Zion," he means it in the most literal sense, ac-

knowledging that the "invention" of Hebrew literature (to use Robert Alter's terms) served as a means for creating a nation. Indeed, in *Language in the Time of Revolution*, Benjamin Harshav maintains that the revival of the Hebrew language was a major link in a chain of events that led to the creation of the Jewish state. Israel, he argues, is the result of "an ideology that created a language that forged a society that became a state."[16]

Prior to the emergence of the Statehood Generation in Israeli Hebrew literature of the 1950s, Hebrew poetic modernism's leading movement, the *moderna*—influenced by Russian modernist trends and by the utopian spirit emanating from the Russian Revolution—was intensely committed to Zionism as a nationalist political process and to the weaving of a national narrative. In this respect Hebrew modernism is fundamentally different from its European or Anglo-American counterparts. In Europe, the ideal of the national language (one language for one people in one state) culminated in the nineteenth century and was therefore interrelated and simultaneous with the rise of Romanticism. Influenced by this European trend, Hebrew emerged as a national language in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although Ch. N. Bialik, the premodernist writer whose poetry is most often associated with the rise of Hebrew as a poetic vehicle for nationalism, has vigorous roots in the Romantic tradition, the belated emergence of Hebrew as a national language made the real flowering of its literature simultaneous not with Romanticism but rather with modernism. In contrast, Anglo-American and European modernism's emphasis on internationalism—not to mention its glorification of exile—is usually seen as one among many strands in modernism's comprehensive critique of nationalist ideology (see Chapter 2). While European high modernists turned the wandering Jew into an emblem of the human condition, modernist Hebrew writers were working to change the Jew's exilic position, committing themselves and their literary production to the idea of the nation. Thus, the modernist Hebrew canon is inextricably intertwined with the nation-building process.

To fathom the reasons for Yeshurun's marginality, we need to identify the central figures in the Hebrew canon of the 1940s and 1950s. The premodernist Bialik and the high modernists Shlonsky and Alterman were considered the cornerstones of this canon. Although considerably different from one another, the three may very well be said to share a common denominator: each was perceived as a representative of his time and as a speaker for the nation. That Ch. N. Bialik, the designated national poet, is the principal

figure in the Hebrew canon is beyond dispute—though that status is more a product of his reception than of his own intention. Gershon Shaked argues that Bialik's place in the canon owes much to the fact that he "unraveled the underlying basis of the collective experience of Eastern European Jewry in the 20th century, a collective experience that became the basis for the Jewish existence in Israel and in most of the Diaspora."[17] Shlomo Grodzensky's rhetorical question, "Was there ever a poet as Jewish, as Zionist, as public?"[18] clearly stresses that a poet's position in the Hebrew canon is related to political criteria as well as to aesthetic qualities.

The next generation's most celebrated poets, the *moderna*'s leaders Avraham Shlonsky and Nathan Alterman, were equally committed to Zionist ideology. Although Shlonsky was identified with Mapam, a fairly radical left-wing party, his political ideology fell within the boundaries of the national consensus. For his own generation Shlonsky represented the resurrection of Hebrew. "When we came to Erets Israel," he wrote, "we couldn't continue to live with optic Hebrew only. We wanted our language to be audible too, to be a Hebrew of all the senses."[19] Shlonsky was perceived by his contemporaries as the poet of the socialist Zionist revolution. As Me'ir Ya'ari, the political leader of Mapam, put it, "Each revolution wishes for a poet of its own who can carry its message to the people. . . . Shlonsky is the poet of our pioneering generation's revolution." And Nathan Alterman, although less obviously political in his early lyrical poems, became—once the State had been established—the speaker of the nation. The poems Alterman wrote about David Ben-Gurion, Israel's founder and its first prime minister, and the correspondence they exchanged are illustrative of Alterman's relationship with Labor, the ruling party. As Aharon Komem observes, "Alterman not only quoted the national consensus but rather verbalized it and actually created it." Komem concludes that

> for years, and with an unmatched consistency, Alterman succeeded in reading the deepest thoughts of the nation. . . . Because of this quality to instantly examine [issues] and react, with no irrelevant considerations but rather with a great concern for the nation's fate and status, he, more than Bialik, deserves the title of the national poet.[20]

This is the backdrop against which Yeshurun's marginal position should be understood. In a canon where writing the nation was considered essen-

tial, Yeshurun's iconoclastic and defiant poetry could not be endorsed or legitimized. Although not directed at Yeshurun, Uzriel Uchmany's denunciation of the depoliticization of the new poetry of the 1950s gives succinct expression to the critics' demand of poetry: "Now, a new poetry is created, and I search in it for the idea of home, of the state, of the family, and I cannot find it."[21] Although Uchmany's socialist-realist expectations are by no means representative of the entire critical field, his outcry is indicative of a larger expectation that pervaded the Hebrew canon for decades: to subordinate the private to the public, the self to the nation.

One way to illustrate Yeshurun's marginality is to look not only at Hebrew literary criticism's collision with his poetic ideology but also at the unwritten—the silences and the ellipses—which in the context of literary history represent the practically "nonexistent" literary production: the texts left out of anthologies, histories, and textbooks. Yeshurun's absence from comprehensive anthologies, such as Toren's 1954 *Sifrutenu ha-yafa* (Our belles lettres), Lichtenboym's 1963 *Sifrutenu ha-chadasha* (Our new literature), and Mati Meged's 1970 *Shirim liri'im: 1900–1970* (Lyrical poems, 1900–1970),[22] is of course not accidental. Equally meaningful, however, is Yeshurun's absence from comprehensive literary histories of the period, such as those of Ben-Or, Kurzweil, and Sadan. Meaningful as these absences are, however, it is important to note that Yeshurun's position differs from that of other marginal poets like David Fogel and Esther Raab in two somewhat contradictory ways: (1) Unlike Raab or Fogel, Yeshurun was, at least to a certain degree, part of the *moderna*'s social circle; (2) but also unlike Raab and Fogel, who were overlooked or trivialized, Yeshurun's poetry was rejected in stronger terms and referred to as heretical, absurd, dangerous, and even insane. Fogel, for example, was considered minor as a result of his decision not to participate—personally or poetically—in the Zionist endeavor. Unlike Fogel's silent critique of Zionism, Yeshurun's criticism was explicit and reverberating. Consequently, rather than being read as second-rate or minor, Yeshurun's poetry was construed as transgressive, and he himself was seen as the pariah of Hebrew poetry for more than two decades.

How could Yeshurun be described as a pariah if he was part of the *moderna*'s social circle? Yeshurun's complex relationship with Shlonsky and Alterman, the *moderna*'s high priests, is best emblematized, perhaps, by an anecdote describing the sociopolitics of the seating arrangement at Café Roval, one of the coterie's cafés. As the story goes, Yeshurun always sat alone,

placing himself—or being placed—as the outsider within. Yehudit Hendel recalls that

> Shlonsky had a regular, well-attended and surrounded table in the depth of the café. Alterman had a regular, well-attended and surrounded table in the depth of the café. . . . And Avot, Yechi'el Perlmutter, also had a regular table but alone. Always at the same table and always alone, and always . . . as close as possible to the door so that if he wanted to leave he would not have to force his way through.[23]

From Hendel's vantage point outside the café, Alterman and Shlonsky are at the café's center (the word *omek*, "depth," reveals Hendel's perspective as a passerby looking at the café from the sidewalk), while Yeshurun is at the margin, on the edge.

Looking back on his relationship with the coterie, Yeshurun reveals a great deal of ambivalence: "Shlonsky accepted me with generosity. . . . [Yitshak] Norman scared me to death with his nostrils like the smokestacks of an enormous ship, and with his critical reviews of poetry. A gendarme of poetry."[24] Realizing that he disliked Shlonsky's poems, which seemed to him like "Russian poems in Hebrew garb," Yeshurun recalls:

> After we came to know each other, Shlonsky sensed what I felt about his poems. At his fiftieth birthday party we met in his or Alterman's house; everyone delivered a toast of praise and applauded, and only I kept silent. When the thrill was over Shlonsky came over to me and asked: "Why didn't you open your mouth". . . . And yet I always had deep feelings for him, I loved him very much and I still miss him today. He was for me a symbol of a message although I did not know what kind of a message, a symbol of the Hebrew literature I was not close to.

In an intimate interview with his daughter, Helit Yeshurun, he is asked: "During the last fifteen years you have been writing more than you wrote in the previous thirty or forty years. How do you explain that? And during these years you did not belong to any coteries." Yeshurun replies:

> I don't know why. Maybe another generation arose. Maybe that generation [of Shlonsky and Alterman] suffocated [me]. Maybe that gen-

eration did not understand. [I] got fed up with that generation. You saw the pettiness, the behavior, twisting around with itself and its things, and you got sick of it. One saw the pettiness of poetry, the pettiness of the poems, their dependence on a small public's opinion. The enslavement, the provincialism of Hebrew poetry in my time. Provincialism toward right-wing Zionism [*tsiyoni klali*], the desire to be liked, how am I, how am I, it ate me alive. Maybe I am hurting someone here, someone who is really precious to me. I mourn his death. Maybe I am risking myself but I have to say it. It suffocated me.[25]

Helit Yeshurun then asks, "Could one say, and excuse my vulgarity, that Alterman's death set you free?" And Avot answers "I cannot say such a thing. Let God say it." Yeshurun's love-hate relationship with the Shlonsky-Alterman circle is symptomatic of his ambivalent relationship with the *moderna* in general. If he disliked the coterie's Russian-influenced poetics, why did he associate himself with its members? And if he indeed associated himself with the coterie, why did he always make a point of being an outsider within it? Although there is no simple answer to these questions, it seems that the paradoxical position of Yeshurun within the coterie correlates with his ideological relation to Zionism. A piercing and blatant critic of Zionism, who nevertheless sees himself as a Zionist, Yeshurun always places himself—personally, ideologically, and poetically—as the *outsider within*: personally, as a member of a coterie that marginalized him and failed to defend him when he was fiercely attacked; ideologically, as a Zionist who dedicated his life to attacking Zionism's blindness; and poetically, as a so-called *moderna* poet who distanced himself from the coterie's poetic guidelines.

The reaction of the emerging Statehood Generation poets to Yeshurun's sociopoetic isolation makes it clear that Yeshurun's position in the literary cafés was not accidental, but rather a model for his marginality in the literary canon. Looking back on his attempt to reach out to Yeshurun, Moshe Dor recalled in 1985:

When we [Moshe Dor, Nathan Zach, and Arye Sivan] presented ourselves thirty-three years ago to Avot Yeshurun, we were—as members of "Likrat" [Zach's coterie in the fifties]—in the midst of a two-way struggle. We attacked and were attacked. We attacked the "collectivist" norms and the attempts to impose external directions and tasks on art,

to turn it into a tool in the service of ideology. . . . At any rate, we saw in Avot Yeshurun a potential ally. He himself was attacked from all directions. His poems from that period were subjected to absolute negation, a negation so harsh that it bordered on malevolence. Also in those days there were "vigilantes" of national honor, and he was suspected—because of poems like "Passover on Caves"—of spiritual collaboration with the Arab enemy. . . . Why then did we go to Avot Yeshurun? Why did we approach him hesitantly yet decisively in Café Stern and bring him out . . . of a circle of isolation and loneliness? We went to the "original" whose revolutionary and unique poetry spoke to us despite age difference and different sources of influence. We went to the Maestro who never demanded for himself the crown of an Admor [Hassidic rabbi] and never surrounded himself with followers. . . . We went and extended our hand to him. And he accepted it, this hand, and shook it. So, that's why we went to Avot Yeshurun.[26]

This is, of course, a firsthand testimony of what the Russian Formalists called the "uncle-nephew" principle. According to the Formalists' "family romance," the poetic son, in his rebellion against a gigantic poetic father, chooses a poetic uncle—a more remote and less threatening figure—that enables him to distance himself from the influential father. In a brilliant account of the intricate relationship between writing and politics in Hebrew literature, an account that properly correlates with Moshe Dor's memoir, Dan Miron describes the end of the process by which writers were identified with and committed to political parties, thereby showing how the dissolution of "party-affiliated literature" (*sifrut memufleget*) helped legitimize Yeshurun's poetry:

In the 1950s the figure of Alterman was repelling, almost frightening (most young writers admired his early poetry)—a "national" poet magnanimously accepted in the halls of power, surrounded by high-ranking military officers, literary flatterers, and court jesters, who rhymed his party's propaganda every Friday, carrying the flag of national "responsibility" and writing poems that were increasingly dry and lifeless. No less disturbing was the figure of Shlonsky, the leader of the progressive culture [camp], who organized around himself the literary-cultural establishment of Mapam so that it supplied the solaces (in the form of honors, jubilees, prizes, yearbooks, and so on) for his loss of hegemony

> to Alterman. The typical representatives of the 1948 generation were not respected either. Ha'im Gury's poems, good looks, fluttering hair [*blorit*], sensitivity, and endless public hesitations were perceived as the embodiment of the collective high-soulfulness [*yefi-nefesh*] of the left's literary circle. And on the other side—Moshe Shamir, who held a . . . Stalinist position in *Masa* [the literary supplement of left-wing *Al ha-mishmar*], his hand on the cultural pistol. . . . A literary relation was possible only with rejected poets: those who were ejected from the system for various political reasons (Ratosh for his "Canaanite" views, Avot Yeshurun after the publication of "Passover on Caves").[27]

Describing the *moderna*'s gradual downfall as it was losing its hegemony and authority to a new generation of poets headed by Nathan Zach, Miron acknowledges this new generation's interest in previously rejected poets. The new generation's explicit openness to individualism and its outright rejection of the *moderna*'s collectivist values were accompanied by a revisionist rewriting of literary history: Fogel and Yeshurun, previously overlooked, were now gaining new respect. One objection to Miron's presentation is in order, however. Because he focuses on the *moderna*'s collapse rather than on Yeshurun's changing position, he seems to locate the shift in Yeshurun's status at far too early a date. The earliest signs of support appeared in the 1960s, and most of them came about after 1964, following the publication of *Shloshim amudim shel Avot Yeshurun* (Thirty pages of Avot Yeshurun), a book in which the Arab question is not mentioned at all.[28] It is of course undeniable that Yeshurun's status changed, but it was an extremely gradual change; while some young poets were silently sympathetic to Yeshurun's poetry, almost all critics harshly condemned it.

In the context of its reception it is noteworthy that "Passover on Caves" was published twice. Its first appearance in 1952 in the daily *Ha'aretz* was followed by a flood of hostile responses. The sole exception to the general attitude at this time was Aharon Amir, who was subsequently grouped with Yeshurun as a result of his relatively favorable review. The poem's reappearance in 1962 in Yeshurun's book *Re'em* once again provoked a chain of negative responses, except for that of an emerging young critic, Dan Miron, who in a series of essays (beginning in 1954) attempted to explain Yeshurun's poetic world. Despite the ten years that separate the long poem's two publications—and although the poem's second appearance took place when the

Statehood Generation's interest in individualism was becoming widespread —the critical response remained essentially the same. Moreover, "Passover on Caves" came to be identified with Yeshurun's poetics, a synecdoche that supposedly illustrates all that is wrong with the poet's worldview. Some salient examples of critical condemnation follow. The following section of Ya'akov Gil's response to Yeshurun's "Passover on Caves" illustrates Hebrew criticism's premise that literature should be politically committed to the nation's platform. Gil comes very close to accusing Yeshurun of disloyalty and treason. Shortly after the initial publication of "Passover on Caves," he wrote: "On May 23, Avot Yeshurun published a lengthy poem of twenty-seven quatrains entitled 'Passover on Caves,' all of which is [about] assimilation [*hitbolelut*] with Arabs, moral slavery, and psychological complexes." Even Aharon Amir, who published a relatively supportive close reading of the poem, and the daily *Ha'aretz*, which printed both Yeshurun's poem and Amir's interpretation, were not spared harsh opprobrium: "Aharon Amir's explanations of the poem of July 13 in *Ha'aretz* are senseless and lack national conscience (*matspun le'umi*). If *Ha'aretz* will nourish its readers with this heretical literature (*sifrut shel minut*) not only will their national sentiment be in danger but so will their mental health." Gil is especially angered by Yeshurun's focus on the Arab as a symbol of continuity, the missing link that binds the present reality to the biblical land of the patriarchs:

> It is not the Bilu member [organization of Russian Jews who immigrated to Palestine in 1882], not the immigrant who comes in a sailboat from Poland's exile, not the post–World War I pioneer [*chalutz*] who is the basis of the historical continuity of our nation; but rather the Arab farmer [*falach*]. Shaul Tchernichovsky, a native of the non-Jewish Crimea and a graduate of Heidelberg University in Germany, perceived the Jewish pioneer in the Valley of Jezreel as the central pillar of Erets Israel . . . and Yechi'el Perlmutter of Poland [Avot Yeshurun] despises [the *chalutz*] and replaces him with the Arab farmer.

Gil's conclusion is clear: "Until these lines were printed in *Ha'aretz* we didn't know that there are Jews among us who linked themselves to the Arab." The poem's concluding line "[the land] is not destined" arouses in him sheer dismay: "Just like that, Erets Israel is not destined! It's a wonder that these guys do not move to the East Bank of the Jordan [i.e., to the Kingdom of Jordan]."[29]

Two revealing responses to Yeshurun's "Passover on Caves" appeared in the form of a parody. In his own journal, *Be-terem*, L. Livne wrote a parodic text entitled "Purim al nekhasim" (Purim on real estate),[30] which equates Yeshurun's poem to a "porridge of sardines, straw, and onions" (*daysat sardinhes teven ve-onzinehes*). By replacing Passover with Purim—a Jewish holiday with an omnipresent carnivalesque essence—the title is interesting not only as an act of mockery or derision, but also, in a Bakhtinian sense, as an act of demarcating transgression. Purim, as carnival, allows the unthinkable to be expressed. Although Livne's text parodies "certain tendencies prevalent in the trend of modernist poetry," such terms as "flipped out" (*yarad min ha-pasim*) make clear that the parodied poet's words are seen as a violation of the canon's rules.

Another parody entitled "Nikhnas ha-ru'ach be-avi Avot Yeshurun" (The demon enters the father of Avot Yeshurun; a euphemism for "let Avot Yeshurun go to hell"), by Chaim Shorer, was published in *Ha-dor*, a Labor-affiliated newspaper.[31] Shorer, editor of the influential *Davar*, seems to focus his parody on the subordination of ideas to sound patterns in Yeshurun's poetry, implying that Yeshurun's poem is decadent in nature, a petty cultural product that springs from the joviality of the cafés: "Between Kassit / and Roval, / on a drink, / in the crowd, / from Hatskel / to the sky / fly [*tas*] / dew [*tal*] / basket [*sal*] / light [*kal*] / fell? [*nafal*] / alas [*chaval*]!" The only poetic principle that can be said to unify the text is the rhyme that dictates word choice as well as content. Although the excessive rhyming is what seems to disturb Shorer, the following depiction of Yeshurun—

reclusive [*parush*]
weak [*chalush*]
stirred [*bachush*]
uprooted [*talush*]
meager [*kalush*]
a stinking [*ba'ush*]
flea [*par'osh*]

—is clearly politically motivated. Most of these words are politically charged: *Parush* is not only reclusive; it is the name of a member of the *prushim* (Pharisees), a sect that during the Second Temple period believed in the validity of oral law and allowed free interpretation of written law. The members of this

group, whose interpretation of the written law was perceived as dangerous and transgressive, became social outcasts. In describing Yeshurun as a *parush*, Shorer thematizes and historicizes Yeshurun's marginality, underlining his political views as the reason for his distinctness. Moreover, in calling Yeshurun a *talush*, he identifies him with the tradition of the *tlushim* in Hebrew literature—those individualists (often described in the prose fiction of Gnessin, Brenner, and Baron) who, failing to belong to either the old shtetl or post-Enlightenment urban culture, could never find peace for themselves in any community. The image of the *talush* is aligned here with words like *chalush* (weak) that reveal Shorer's contempt for this social and mental position.

When "Passover on Caves" was reprinted in *Re'em* ten years after its original publication, the critical responses were by no means kinder. The following angry review, clearly politically motivated (published in the right-wing daily *Ha-boker*), is outraged specifically by Yeshurun's language. Like Gil's response, the following review never reconsiders its underlying assumptions that literature must be nationalist in character:

> We read the poems of Avot Yeshurun and were pained. We suffered the pain of our humiliated language, the pain of our values that were trampled between herds of camels and caravans of Arab nomads, the pain of the holy that turned into a mocked and presumptuous profanity, and we were pained because of the poetry whose face had become distorted. There is everything in here but loyal poetry [*shira ne'emana*]. . . . But if we were pained by the distortion of culture and the violation of poetry, we were shocked to read in the . . . following "beautiful" line: "the holocaust of Europe's Jewry" and the animosity between "the children of the Hebrews" [*bnei ever*] and the "children of Arabs" [*bnei arav*] are, in his view, two facets of one and the same national disaster. How can one juxtapose the two issues in one breath without choking.[32]

Although this passage may now seem like a gruesome misreading, founded almost exclusively on political rivalry, it nevertheless traces the main stylistic feature of Yeshurun's poetics—the juxtaposition of "incompatible" things. In what has turned into a famous modernist dictum, Lautréamont equated beauty with the chance encounter, on an operating table, of a sewing machine and an umbrella. Yeshurun uses this modernist strategy in many different

ways: he alludes to different texts, smashing contradictory sources against one another so as to explode them from within; he combines words, creating portmanteaus out of Hebrew, Yiddish, and Arabic. But, above all, he politicizes the juxtaposition by expressing the unthinkable, and by seeing the so-called enemy as a brother. It is hardly surprising, then, that the above review favors some simple poems that do not take upon themselves to "reform the universe by mingling [*sha'atnez*] the kingdoms of Muhammad and Moses."

That the politicized juxtaposition is the stumbling block for Yeshurun's canonization becomes clear in Shalom Kremer's acrid yet appreciative review of Yeshurun's *Re'em*, entitled "Shira ektsentrit" (Eccentric poetry).[33] Kremer observes that the poems in *Re'em* challenge every critic, let alone the common reader, due to the exaggerated modernism they present as well as their "eccentricity and deviance from the accepted circle." Although he acknowledges Yeshurun's "great uniqueness," he uses the adjective "eccentric" to denote both idiosyncrasy and deviance from accepted norms: "The book expresses a poet enclosed within himself, immured within himself and cut off from his surroundings." Moreover, as the critical review unfolds, Yeshurun is presented as an antithetical figure, the other whom "we" cannot tolerate: "His intellectual and emotional means of connecting [things] are not our own, his associations are not our associations. Enclosed in his own circle, his uniqueness is great, so much so that it creates strangeness." Kremer tacitly creates a powerful congruence between the imagined community and an imagined reading audience, thereby placing Yeshurun outside the boundaries of the collective "we" that is invoked as a homogeneous, monolithic body. Here too, Yeshurun's poetic and political juxtapositions are considered offensive:

> The world in which he lives is based upon a mingling of things, [a mingling] that we cannot tolerate. Abraham our Father walks arm in arm with the Bedouin of the Negev; the "Yahndes" of Poland's shtetl is intermingled with the exoticism of the Orient; the cold weather of the north penetrates the oriental desert, and the colorful and bitter period of the British Mandate never ended and still shares power with the State of Israel.[34]

In his conclusion Kremer admits that "with some labor and some self-forgetfulness one gets caught up in his [Yeshurun's] thought and special poetic combinations/phrases, and one is rewarded with both understanding

and pleasure." But Kremer nevertheless expresses the wish that Avot Yeshurun will eventually "free himself from the magic of the "strange-intoxicated," and will return to our world and language so that his portion in [our] poetry will not be eccentric but the property of all people—property that has the right to exist outside the circle of his associations alone." It is noteworthy that the final terms of this exhortation express the extent of Yeshurun's otherness; two of the metaphors used here, magic and intoxication, reinforce the realm of the unreal.

While most critics stop short of accusing Yeshurun of treason, the following letter to the editor of *Aleph*, the literary journal of the Young Hebrews, explicitly accuses Yeshurun of working for Arab propagandists. The letter followed a program on Damascus Radio, in which Yeshurun and Amir were praised for their sensitivity to the suffering of Arab refugees.[35] The letter sheds light on the uses and abuses of poetry in an era of zealous nationalism:

> One day I heard Rabhi Camal in his Hebrew program on Damascus Radio, praising the strange poem "Passover on Caves," a poem written by the Canaanite poet Avot Yeshurun. . . . [The poem was perceived as] an expression of the "honest" feelings and "regrets" of a "large number of Jews in Palestine" over the expulsion of the [Arab] refugees. At the end he suggested that Avot Yeshurun and Aharon Amir "unconsciously" echoed the feelings of an Arab poet, one of the refugees themselves, as expressed in a poem entitled "Afterward," whose main idea reads more or less as follows: "My land, my land I shall return to you / my land, land and home / my land, land and olive tree . . . / All the foreigners who came to you, my land / from France unto China / will not become rooted in you, my land / because my roots in you are deeper / I shall return to you.". . . . I simply want to ask whether the poets of the Young Hebrews innocently match the ideas of Arab propagandists, and whether it is accidental that Damascus Radio emphasizes their stand and compliments them.[36]

While the critical reception of Yeshurun's text was very harsh, the question remains: what made "Passover on Caves" such a transgressive text? It seems that the most common criticism of Yeshurun concerns his attempt to speak the unspoken language of otherness—both literally, by including words in Yiddish and Arabic, and metaphorically, by representing the Arab's polit-

ical perspective. As the above sample of critical responses clearly shows, Yeshurun's language came under fire for being too hermetic; and his version of modernism, unlike Shlonsky's or Alterman's, was regarded as unintelligible gibberish. Given the vehemence with which Yeshurun's poetic politics was denounced, the allegation that his language is incomprehensible is highly paradoxical. How can Yeshurun's poems be at once meaningless and heretical, nonsensical and dangerous? Although it would be impossible to ignore the "poetics of difficulty" that lies at the heart of Yeshurun's poetry, it is a critical commonplace to misread it or misplace it altogether. In actuality, the aesthetic evaluation of Yeshurun's poetry was inseparable from the rejection of its politics. My analysis of "Passover on Caves" addresses the reasons for Yeshurun's apparent unreadability. It also examines the correlation between Yeshurun's ideology and his poetics of difficulty. Most importantly, I will elucidate the poetic strategies through which the politics of "Passover on Caves" is expressed.

**3**

"Passover on Caves" is so overwhelmingly difficult and hermetic that any attempt to interpret its structure and meaning is bound to be partial and incomplete. However, a preliminary note on the poem's generic structure may provide a workable starting point. "Passover on Caves" is a *Bildung* poem. Despite its apparently disjointed, "arbitrary" and collagelike concatenation of words and images, the poem unfolds a cohesive formation narrative that centers on the speaker's immigration to Erets Israel. Virtually all the essential elements of a *Bildung* narrative recur in Yeshurun's poem: coming of age, separating from one's parents, the travel (be it literal or metaphoric), and the acquired wisdom of a protagonist who is jolted into new realizations. The experience that the poem takes care to describe—an encounter with a new land and its inhabitants—is immersed in a painful personal awakening from previously held beliefs, a political awakening that involves a great deal of disillusionment and self-questioning.

Nevertheless, extrapolation of a *Bildung* narrative from Yeshurun's text involves a great deal of "archeological" work, since this narrative is embedded in a ramified intertextual network that must be unearthed for the poem to be adequately understood. Yeshurun's text contains a large number of ex-

plicit negations of identifiable texts. The Passover Haggadah, the Book of Esther, the Song of Songs, and even Shlonsky's "You Are Hereby" (Harey at), Alterman's *Poems of the Plagues on Egypt* (Shirey makot mitsrayim), and Greenberg's "Suffering" (Enut) are among the texts challenged and negated in "Passover on Caves."

If Yeshurun's text is indeed a tissue of negated quotations, it aims to problematize, critique, and disrupt the "story grammar" of what I call the biblical Jewish-gentile master-narrative: a set of relatively stable relations between Jews and gentiles in Jewish cultural memory.[37] Yeshurun focuses on this master-narrative as embodied in and exemplified by the Passover Haggadah (or more precisely, its underlying biblical source), and by the festival of Purim and the biblical Book of Esther, among others. Yeshurun's readings of various biblical and postbiblical texts differ significantly from their widely accepted traditional interpretation. Simply put, if according to the Bible's logic the concept of Jew is inextricably entangled with the concept of gentile, Yeshurun's "Passover on Caves" is an attempt to disrupt a relational construction of identity, one that reproduces a process by which Jews and gentiles see each other only as archetypal figures of otherness. It is possible to understand "Passover on Caves" as a critique of the formation of otherness that beset the history of Jews as they came to define themselves in opposition to gentiles.

For our purposes it is important to understand how, in the biblical texts Yeshurun evokes, identity is construed as a negation of the gentile-other. In both the Haggadah and the Book of Esther the "story grammar" of negation works as follows: a Jewish minority is oppressed by a gentile majority, often represented by a single figure (pharaoh, Haman); the Jews (or Israelites),[38] on the brink of disaster, find salvation in a devout leader who more often than not is instructed by God; the gentiles' scheme to crush the Jews is either unsuccessful or averted; the gentiles and their leader(s) are crushed in what takes on a form of "justified revenge." Although there may be some historical truth in the Haggadah or the Book of Esther (more in the former than in the latter), it may be argued that in transforming the raw materials of history into salvation narratives these texts mirror and reproduce the xenophobia and racial or religious intolerance encountered by the Jews. Moreover, Yeshurun takes care to allude to antithetical moments in the Bible that problematize such a relational construction of identity, thereby juxtaposing—indeed violently slapping together—seemingly incompatible biblical sources.

A question of purpose imposes itself: why does Yeshurun advance a critique of biblical texts in a poem that narrates the speaker's immigration to Erets Israel? The answer lies, I believe, in Zionism's use of the Bible to warrant its claim to Palestine.[39] Herzl himself described Zionism as a modern reenactment of a biblical story, drawing a parallel between the proposed exodus from Europe and the exodus from Egypt. As Yeshurun's text takes care to remind us, the Bible—with its detailed accounts of the conquest of the land, for example—is filled with examples of racial intolerance. The Bible, as defining the Jew's self-concept and as the underlying text of Zionism's claim to Palestine, must be critiqued in order to avoid a compulsive political repetition that would reproduce the errors of the past.

Fredric Jameson argues in *The Political Unconscious* that the "other is not feared because he is evil; rather he is evil because he is other, alien, different, strange, unclean and unfamiliar."[40] Yeshurun, tracing the fear of the other in traditional Jewish texts, aims to bring the other closer. Rather than seeing the indigenous Arab as other, Yeshurun sees him as a family member, alluding to the kinship between Isaac and Ishmael as well as between Jacob and Esau.

Let us examine more closely how Yeshurun destabilizes and disrupts the self-other opposition in "Passover on Caves." The obscure title refers to the Jewish holiday that celebrates the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. In its biblical context, the verb *pasach* (from which *pesach* [Passover] is derived) is used to describe God's selective punishment—enacted upon the Egyptians but not upon the Israelites. Signifying "positive" discrimination, this word is the starting point of Yeshurun's poem. Establishing an intertextual relation to the Passover Haggadah and its underlying biblical sources, Yeshurun's text examines the very meaning of this act of differentiation. Here are the relevant passages from the Bible:

> But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know that the Lord doth *put a difference* between the Egyptians and the Israel. (Exod. 11:7; emphasis added)

> And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will *pass over you*, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. (Exod. 12:13; emphasis added)

While the difference (or distinction or discrimination) in the biblical story is based upon religious/national identity (of Egypt and Israel), Yeshurun's title defers and obfuscates the evoked oppositional difference in two ways. First, it is unclear who is doing the passing over. Second, the anonymous subject(s) who is about to make a "distinction" passes over caves or crypts rather than over people. This ellipsis marks the pregnant absence around which the poem centers itself; as the reader gradually learns, the passing over is not over caves or pits but rather over their inhabitants—the dispossessed indigenous Arabs of the land. By rewriting and inverting the Passover narrative (with the Jews taking on the role of the oppressors while the Arabs are the oppressed), Yeshurun criticizes the Bible's intolerance and blindness to otherness. Yeshurun's reversal of the Bible's vindictive celebration of the gentiles' defeat is expressed in another poem: "The Song of Deborah of the present will represent the Arabic mother of Sisera."

The centrality of the Arab to Yeshurun's *Bildung* poem becomes clear in the first stanza, even before the protagonist's actual arrival in the land. Given the focus of Zionist thought on territoriality as a political solution, it is not surprising that Yeshurun's poem begins with an extended description of the land. Interestingly, however, the land—a signified—is referred to by a chain of signifiers, each of which implies a different political and geographical vantage point. In this palimpsest of names or "war of nomenclatures," the allusion to a Zionist song in German that was sung in Poland in the 1920s ("Palestina hoch hoch") introduces the European Zionist name for the land, while "Phalasteen" invokes the Arab perspective, since it is the name given to the land by its indigenous Arab inhabitants. Furthermore, Yeshurun, by associating and juxtaposing the promised land's biblical name with the term for contemporary Arab farmers ("Canaan-fellaheen"), disrupts the perception of the Arab as other. Wishing to bring the other closer, he parallels the Jewish Patriarchs to present-day Arabs.

From the poem's outset, then, there are resonant moments of conjunction resulting from Yeshurun's purposeful fusion of languages and historical perspectives. It is not until the seventh stanza, however, that an actual meeting between the speaker-protagonist and an Arab takes place. From that point on the poem focuses on several encounters with the Arabs of the land, so much so that the encounter with the land turns out to be an encounter with its inhabitants. The first Arab the speaker meets is a sailor, "his hands—from my father's house." Yeshurun's view of the parallels between

the Arab and the father is not accidental, as becomes clear upon reading the following recollection:

> I was in the environment of Arab villages, of Hebrew towns, of the beautiful, young Tel Aviv. . . . All this was graceful and young and I knew it was good here, but I knew, on the other hand, that there was something unclear to me. The Arab village. Look at the coastal plain, you see a certain Arab village. It reminds you of the shtetl, with its huts, with the *falaheem* [Arab farmers].[41]

Similarly, in "Passover on Caves" it is the Arab who introduces the immigrant to this new land, helping him in his journey, and it is Fatima, the Arab woman, who instructs him on how to behave in this new homeland. In order to underscore the kinship between Jews and Arabs, Yeshurun uses a series of allusions to biblical stories and to the history of their (often allegorical) reception; thus the encounter with the Arab sailor is modeled after the biblical story of Jacob and Esau, while the ensuing encounter with the Arab woman is modeled after Eliezer's first encounter with Rebecca.

The seventh stanza reads:

וְהֵקִימָנוּ עַל הַסַּף סַפָּן עֲרָבִי -
אֶזְרוֹעוֹתָיו שְׁלוּחָנִיוֹת וְקֶנְצֵי קוֹל לוֹ,
וְהַיָּדַיִם - מִבֵּית אָבִי ...

> And an Arab sailor set us on the threshold
> his arms extended, he has slight of voice
> and the hands—from my father's house.

The allusion to the biblical story of Jacob and Esau is of particular interest, since the twin brothers have been destined from birth to become the fathers of two nations: "And the Lord said to [Rebecca], two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels, and the one people shall be stronger than the other people. And the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23). Fighting over the birthright, Jacob fulfills the prophecy by way of deceit; as the biblical story reads: "And Jacob went near to Isaac his father; and he touched him, and said, the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he recognized him not, because his hands were hairy as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. And he said, art thou really my

son Esau? And he said, I am" (Gen. 27:22–24). Following the biblical story's lead, Yeshurun's poem uses voice and hands as identificatory features while tacitly critiquing the Bible's ongoing focus on difference. In the biblical story difference is consistently emphasized ("And Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents"). Sameness—Jacob's likeness to Esau—is achieved only through deceit.

Yeshurun, fascinated by sameness, undertakes the task of reminding the reader of the kinship that exists between Arabs and Jews. Hence, the protagonist's sense of loneliness dissipates when the Arab woman instructs him on how to establish a close family relation to the land:

וְהִגַּעְנוּ, וְלָאָרֶץ עֲרִירִי,
וְלָאָרֶץ אֵין פֹּה אֵם, וְיִהְי מָה,
וַתֹּאמֶר פַּאטְמָה: "מַהֲרָה, נַעֲרִי,
אֱמֹר לָהּ 'אִמָּא'".

וְאֹמַר: "דִּינָר לִי מֵאִמִּי, לַעֲנִיֵּי עִירִי,
אַךְ רָעֵבְתִּי. כִּי עָנִיתִי", וְאֹמַר -
וַתּוֹרֶד אֶת כַּדָּהּ: "שְׁתֵה נַעֲרִי,
לְךָ הוּא הַדִּינָר"...

And we arrived, and to a land childless,
and the land has no mother here, no matter what,
and Fatima says: "Come quick, my child,
say to her 'Mommy.'"

And I say: 'I have a dinar my mother gave me for my city's poor,
but I'm hungry, because I've become poor.' And I say—
and she put down her pitcher: 'Drink my child,
Keep the dinar.'"

These lines echo Rebecca's cordial reception of a stranger who, as she later learns, is Eliezer, Abraham's slave: "And she said, Drink my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink" (Gen. 24:18). This allusion to the biblical story of Eliezer and Rebecca is meant to point to an alternative model for an interracial relationship. Not knowing who the stranger is, Rebecca still welcomes him, giving Eliezer the indication that she is indeed a possible match for Isaac. It is noteworthy, however, that Abraham wishes for Isaac not to marry a Canaanite woman. To secure the

family's ethnic or tribal integrity, Eliezer goes to Abraham's kinsman and homeland, Aram Naharayim, in search of a wife for Isaac. The Bible's emphasis on difference is again the subject of Yeshurun's critique. In comparing Fatima, the Arab woman, to Rebecca, Yeshurun presents the other as one of "us," shattering the ethnic opposition suggested in Abraham's last wish.

As the poem progresses, however, the speaker ceases to describe his encounter with the Arabs of the land, and turns to question the political implications and consequences of Zionism in general, and of the Zionists' settlement of an already populated land in particular. Paradoxically, as the poem becomes more overtly political, the Arab is mentioned only indirectly through intertextuality, metaphor, and metonymy. In the fourteenth stanza, it becomes clear that the title "Passover on Caves" refers to the Arabs of the land:

הֲלֹא תִשְׁאָלִי לְעַמֵּךְ־מַלְאָכוֹ -
וְהוּא חֻלְדָּ פַּאלַאסְטִין.
הוּא הָלַךְ פֹּה אֶל כּוּכוֹ,
אֶל הַפְּלֶתִי ...

Will you ask about your people-his angel—
and he is the wretched of Phalasteen,
he went to his cave,
to the Pelethite.

This address clearly alludes to the famous words of the medieval Hebrew poet Yehuda Halevi: "Zion will you not ask for the fate of your prisoners?" In Halevi's poem, the Jews living in exile are likened to prisoners, and the poet addresses a personified yet indifferent Zion who manifests no interest in the fate of its former inhabitants. In Yeshurun's text, however, the exiles are not the Jews but the Arabs, whom Zion now ignores. But here, as in other instances, the Arab is mentioned only indirectly through intertextuality, metaphor, and metonymy. Why is the Arab referred to in such an indirect, almost meandering, way? And why is he referred to, in this particular example, as the Pelethite?

In the Bible the term "Pelethite" signifies two contradictory things. Seen from an Israelite perspective, the Pelethites—like other gentile peoples of the land—are an emblem of otherness that signifies a mob and riffraff. But the Pelethites were also King David's most loyal bodyguards. When Absalom, David's beloved son, conspires to usurp the throne—a conspiracy widely

supported by the people—the Pelethites are among the few who remain loyal to the dispossessed king abandoned by his own kin. The Pelethite can therefore be seen not only as an other but also as a close, trustworthy ally. Moreover, the word has yet another layer of meaning: *pletim* is the Yiddish pronunciation of the Hebrew *plitim*, refugees, a name usually reserved for survivors of the Nazi genocide. This is a dazzling example of the way in which Yeshurun activates different meanings by fusing intertextuality and diglossia (or polyglossia). By choosing what Harshav calls a "junction word," Yeshurun ties together three different meanings of the word Pelethite: the Pelethite is the other; but he is also one's most loyal ally. In the political context of Zionism, he is also a refugee expelled from his own house.

It is also no accident that the Pelethite/Arab lives in a cave (*kukh*). We have seen how the title "Passover on Caves" alludes to the Passover Haggadah and its underlying biblical sources. Yet in the title the word *kukhim* (caves) remains obscure, because in the Bible God passes over the houses of the Israelites rather than over caves. What is the meaning and what are the implications of Yeshurun's decision to transform "houses" into "caves"? Here too, the "riddle" remains unsolved unless the reader identifies the poem to which Yeshurun alludes. This poem, I argue, is Uri Zvi Greenberg's 1929 poem "Enut" (Suffering), in which the speaker bewails the fate of his brethren, the Jews who return to Jerusalem. These Jews, he exhorts, live under terrible conditions: "And indeed, the houses of their mothers are not houses but caves (*kukhim*) / and these caves are like sheepfold— // O, I am very sad in Jerusalem."[42] "Passover on Caves" inverts Greenberg's description, for now—following the establishment of the State of Israel—the Arabs are the ones living in caves. In Greenberg's poem identification is based on sameness, for Greenberg is tuned only to Jewish suffering ("I hear the voice of suffering as from a well, / the voice of all suppressed generations calling: / Help!! All night"). Yeshurun's poem, by way of contrast, is tuned to the suffering of the dispossessed Arab. It is noteworthy that Greenberg and Yeshurun were close friends until ideological differences marred their friendship. Yeshurun perceived Greenberg as "the greatest poet after Jeremiah"[43] and dedicated five poems to him. Yet, as Yeshurun recalls, they always argued bitterly about the Jewish-Arab conflict, and Greenberg once shouted at Yeshurun: "Well, open [the gates of] Tel Aviv to them, have them burn the town."[44] Yeshurun's ironic reversal of Greenberg's words draws attention not only to the suffering of the

Arabs, but also to new analogies between Jews and Arabs. The words that were so fitting to describe Jewish "homelessness" are now relevant for the description of Palestinian "homelessness."

When the poem's addressee is advised to approach the Pelethite/Palestinian, we witness yet another juxtaposition of intertexts that evoke (and subvert) the biblical Jewish-gentile master-narrative: "and everything he did in caves— / surely, Jacob's rose, / ask the thorns." As is well known, "Jacob's rose" (*Shoshanat Ya'akov*) is a traditional metaphor for the Jewish people. Thus, the poem advises the Jews to "ask the thorns" what they think about the Zionist endeavor. The reference to the rose is by no means accidental. By juxtaposing the rose with the thorns, Yeshurun evokes yet another biblical intertext, the Song of Songs: "Like the rose among the thorns so is my love among the daughters" (2:2). Fearing that the Song of Songs's explicit and unabashed celebration of erotic love would exclude it from the canon, Rabbi Akiva suggested, in what has become an authoritative reading, that the text be read as an allegory of the relationship between God and Israel. According to this reading, Israel is the rose while the thorns represent the surrounding polytheistic nations. Like other postbiblical traditions that Yeshurun subverts, the postbiblical rereading (or misreading) of the Song of Songs denounces and degrades the other so as to solidify Jewish identity.

Desiring an equal relationship with the Palestinians, Yeshurun creates a mosaic of negated quotations, thus attempting to undo the othering of the Arab as the first step toward the stimulation and reestablishment of communication between these two nations. This series of similes culminates in a powerful address to the rose / Jewish people that encourages the Jews to ask the Pelethite/thorns/Palestinians how they feel about events that emblematize Zionism ("the grouping of the kibbutzim / . . . the ingathering of the exiles"). The fundamental operation of the poem, then, consists in de-othering the other, presenting him—or her—as a family member or ally. This turn, the point of reversal where ethnic/national identity collapses, corresponds to what is, in Hegelian terminology, the "negation of negation." When the Jew's identity is defined in terms of negation (nongentile), Yeshurun's negation of negation cancels the difference, allowing the other to be more than just the foil against which the Jew defines himself. In promulgating the view that the Arabs and the Jews are in fact similar, Yeshurun explodes the binary self-other opposition from within:

פֶלַלְחִין בֶּדְוִין, הָאָבוֹת,
- כְּדוֹר מִדְבָּר לְדוֹר יוֹרֵשׁ -
צִוּוּנוּ פִּיתָה לֶאֱפוֹת.

Fellaheen-Bedouins, the Patriarchs,
like the generation of the wilderness to the generation who inherited
have ordered us to bake pita.

The poem's equation of the Arab farmers [*fellaheen*] and the Patriarchs is by now an anticipated move within the internal logic of the text. A description of the Arabs as the forsaken generation of the wilderness (*dor ha-midbar*), the generation that—despite its effort—was not allowed into Erets Israel, appears in yet another moment in "Passover on Caves" where the Arab is compared to the biblical Israelite, a comparison that shatters the negation of the other as the basis for one's self-concept. Replacing the Passover unleavened bread with "pita" is another instance where Yeshurun blends two traditions often perceived as alien and hostile to one another.

It is noteworthy that the poem's powerful moral admonition—"And father-mother from looting . . . / have commanded us not to forget Yahndes"—draws a connection between the mistreatment of the Palestinians and the biblical concept of plunder (which also refers to captives). The word Yeshurun uses, *milkoa'ch*, echoes (and is undoubtedly derived from) the biblical word *malkoa'ch*, which denotes "looting" and "spoils." Here, the mistreatment of the Palestinians is perceived as a violation of parental order and a defilement of (Eastern European) Jewish values. Considering the Zionist rejection of traditional Jewish life in Eastern Europe, Yeshurun's proposition that Diaspora Jews had superior moral values to those of Israeli Jews is of far-reaching political significance. The vehicle for this theme is the term "Yahndes." After the poem's first publication, this word, perceived as an emblem of Yeshurun's incomprehensible language, was mocked and ridiculed so vehemently that Yeshurun felt compelled to explain what it stands for. In a lengthy response-poem entitled "Ru'ach ba-arbe" (Wind in the locust), Yeshurun acknowledged the marginal status of the political views expressed in "Passover on Caves" ("Passover wasn't understood, / caves weren't clear / they are like a fifth / wheel in a wagon"). Moreover, in "Ru'ach ba-arbe" Yeshurun echoes his readers' impatient responses ("What is Yahndes, Yahndes?"), thematizing his reception by turning it into a recurring line in the

poem. Well, what is Yahndes? In "Ru'ach ba-arbe" it is said to be "compassion for a lonely man's property / compassion for the rugs / and for a poor man's share of the crop." In a passage addressing the issue, Yeshurun writes in *Re'em*: "It is allowed, and even better, to say Yahndes, which is the word for Jewish conscientiousness and compassion among Poland's Jewry." Etymologically the word seems to be a Yiddishized nasalization of "Yahades," which in Ashkenazi Hebrew means Jewishness (Yahadut).[45] It is highly significant that for Yeshurun Jewishness is not a racial or religious category; nor is it a relational term that can be understood only against the antithetical figure of the gentile. Instead, it is a code of behavior, a nonbiological ideal of compassion that is represented, first and foremost, by Yiddish culture.

The Zionist ideology that underwrites the production of Hebrew literature perceived Yiddish as an emblem of the old Jewish world, a language signifying the disempowerment of Jews in the Diaspora. Brenner's exhortation "We, free Jews, have nothing to do with Judaism" is a typical example of the blanket rejection of the Jewish past in Hebrew modernism.[46] Given the period's ideology, Yeshurun's embrace of deterritorialized Yiddish as a verbal icon of justice is startling. To be Jewish, for Yeshurun, is to be conscientious, "and not to forget Poylin," a line that clearly evokes "and you shall not forget that you were slaves in Egypt."

My reading of "Passover on Caves" has focused so far on Yeshurun's negation of a series of biblical texts (and their postbiblical interpretations), texts that have been used to deepen the gap between Jews and gentiles. Yeshurun's iconoclastic rereading of the Bible—a reading that promotes a radical political end—is typically modernist in more ways than one. Not unlike Eliot or Pound, Yeshurun's reading of tradition aims to crush what he sees as a constitutive structure of the past. Yet Yeshurun, by adopting the values of the Diaspora, deviates from the ideological trajectory of his contemporaries; he accepts part of the near past's heritage in a way that seems unacceptable to his fellow poets, particularly those committed unconditionally to the Zionist ideological paradigms. In so doing, Yeshurun strives to form a model for Hebrew poetry, a new trajectory that would generate a dialogue between Jews and Arabs.

It is important to note that Yeshurun does not negate only biblical texts and postbiblical exegetic traditions. One of the interesting structures of negation advanced in "Passover on Caves" does not focus on a biblical text but rather on another group of texts, perhaps best represented by Shlonsky's

poem "Harey at" (You are hereby). We have already noted the key role played by the land in "Passover on Caves." It is also worth mentioning that the land in "Passover on Caves," as in the rest of the literary tradition, is repeatedly referred to as a woman; this is facilitated by the fact that the Hebrew *adama* (land) is feminine in gender. A question of purpose imposes itself: why does Yeshurun invest the land/earth with gender? Several possibilities can be adduced, one of which is that as for *moderna* poets Yeshurun's love for the land expresses itself in sexual terms. But a close examination of Yeshurun's text reveals that it actually negates this model. Let us look at this topos in Shlonsky's "Harey at," in which the land is described as a bride:

עֲרִיָּה הִיא - מְקֻטֶּרֶת אֵד וְזֶבֶל.
תּוֹבַעַת וְנוֹשֶׁפֶת אֶת חֲמָתָהּ.
שָׂדֶה - וּמִנְּחִירֶיהָ טַל וְהֶבֶל.
כַּלָּה - בְּהִינּוּמָהּ. וַיְחוּמָה.

She is naked—steaming mist and dung,
demanding and puffing her heat—
a field—and from the nostrils: dew and vapor—
a bride—in a veil. An aroused woman.

This poem, which Chana Kronfeld has brilliantly analyzed,[47] alludes to the Jewish marriage ceremony, impelling the reader to believe that "Harey at" will focus on a relationship between two lovers. Gradually, however, the reader comes to realize that the sexual relationship that the poem takes care to unfold is not between a man and a woman but rather between the speaker and the naked land. Praising the agricultural ethos of Zionism (for which the return to the homeland was not simply a return to Erets Israel but, as A. D. Gordon suggested, a return to the soil, to a productive life), Shlonsky describes plowing in sexual terms, presenting it as an act of love: "They will come, your plowers will husband you / and they will establish in you a seed for crops." (Note that in Hebrew seed and semen are the same word.)

Yeshurun's poem, unlike Shlonsky's, does not focus on the act of love itself but rather on its result—pregnancy: "Hot she is and reddening / like the opening of a woman giving birth." But while Shlonsky invests the land with gender in order to evoke the speaker's passionate and abiding love for the land, Yeshurun genders the land so as to show how barren this love really is

and how apocalyptic it may turn out to be. For despite her pregnancy in Yeshurun's poem, the land does not bear a child. Instead, the land undergoes a phantom pregnancy, as is clear from the descriptions "filled with earth" and "not destined." Translated into political terms, the phantom pregnancy comes to represent the failures of Zionism. This is what Nissim Calderon means when he suggests that we read Yeshurun's poetry against the background of Zionist ideology. "The [Zionist] assumption," he argues, "is that the previously whole Jewish existence broke down at some point in history, and that Zionism mends it, bringing back the old whole."[48] Note that the Zionist attempt to mend the broken Jewish existence is essentially based on territoriality and the formation of a nation-state. When Yeshurun describes the land-territory in terms of a failed pregnancy, he questions the Zionist assumption that the return to the land is indeed a solution. Moreover, whereas in Shlonsky's poem the land is not merely loved but also controlled by man (the Hebrew word *ba'al* means husband as well as owner, and is the root of the verb *liv'ol*—to have sexual intercourse initiated by the male), Yeshurun's poem describes the woman-land as uncontrollable, mysterious, savage, and untamed. When the poem concludes with the apocalyptic figure of the pregnant woman who cannot give birth (*harat olam*) it becomes clear that Yeshurun wants to negate the Zionist conception of the woman-land as the promised land.

Although the foregoing pages focus mainly on Yeshurun's critique of the Bible's construction of the Jew's national identity through the rebuke of the gentile (a phenomenon reenacted, according to Yeshurun, in Zionist perceptions of the Jewish-Arab conflict), it should be clear by now that this critique is a constitutive part of the poem's *Bildung* structure. Although politically and historically minded, "Passover on Caves" focuses on the speaker-protagonist who undergoes a profound change. The poem's compounding of political critique and personal evolution—of the private and the public—is in itself not atypical of Hebrew poetry (see Chapter 1). Interestingly, however, despite the underlying *Bildung* structure—a structure that generically emphasizes the personal—Yeshurun's "I" is absent from the poem's beginning. The poem's focus on the land serves not only to emphasize the centrality of territoriality in the period's ideology, but also to illustrate how ideology—in addition to its larger political effect—shapes the personal lives of real people.

The "I"'s momentary disappearance from the poem's first six stanzas shows how the self can be subordinated to larger political ideologies. This

subordination dissolves only when the protagonist meets the Arab-other and discovers that a discrepancy exists between theory and practice, a realization that marks the first gap or hole in the ideology that has shaped him. Thus, immediately after the prolonged encounter with the Arab, the poem focuses on the question of the protagonist's self-identity in relation to his father, an issue that gains some urgency when the protagonist—in a dialectical move—seeks parental approval despite the understanding that he is now on his own. The twelfth stanza reads:

אַבָּהוּנָא שְׁלִי, הַבֵּט עַל בְּכוֹר הַחַאנִים.
בָּחַרְתַּנִי בְּכוֹר עָנִי מֵאֵין כָּמוֹהוּ עוֹד.
שׁוּר עַל מַעֲשַׂי - יָפִים לַמַּה גִּשְׁתַּנָּה ?
וַאֲנִי שִׁמְךָ קָנִיתִי לְעָבְדְּךָ מְאֹד".

My abhuna, look at the eldest of the khans.
You chose me eldest poor there is no other like him.
Look at my deeds—good for how is it different?
And I bought your name to serve you greatly.

Although he left his parents behind in Europe, the speaker's journey in this new land is marked by both the absence and presence of them. As I mentioned earlier, Avot Yeshurun's original name was Yechi'el Perlmutter. Not unlike other Jewish immigrants to Palestine, Yeshurun sought to substitute his diasporic, Yiddish-sounding name with a Hebrew one. But while the very act of changing one's surname could be interpreted as one's attempt to distance oneself from the father's legacy, Avot Yeshurun's choice is marked with ambivalence: the name he chose literally means "our fathers are looking [at us]." Both *abhuna* ("our fathers" in Aramaic) and the archaic word *shur* ("look"), from which the name Yeshurun is derived, point to the semantic meaning of the poet's chosen name. Thus, the address to the father "Look at my deeds" tacitly unfolds the drama of enunciation. Like biblical protagonists who receive new names, Yeshurun's new name marks a character trait. If the *Bildung* poem centers on the speaker's transformation, Yeshurun's new name marks his reluctance to abandon his parental heritage, a reluctance that, as we have seen, carries a powerful political meaning.

For Yeshurun, then, to have an identity is to be able to acknowledge and welcome the other:

פְּנֵי אָבִינוּ הָיוּ פֹּה...
אָז הָיִינוּ עוֹד בָּנִים...
עַתָּה אָבִינוּ בַּמַּחְפּוֹא.
אֵיךְ נְקַבֵּל פָּנִים ?

Our father's face was here . . .
Then we were still sons . . .
Now our father is in hiding
how shall we receive a face?

In introducing the father, Yeshurun allows the personal and familial narrative to penetrate the political story of his relationship with the land. In so doing, he maximizes the tension between the personal and the political to show their inseparability. This is evident in his brilliant use of the expression "to receive a face" (*lekabel panim*), which is also idiomatic for "to welcome." This quatrain, then, describes the moment of self-formation (when the speaker is about to form an identity, to "receive a face") as inseparable from one's ability to see and welcome the other. Yeshurun's desire to welcome the other came at a high price. He himself acknowledged, "As my poems about the Arab subject became more explicit, the attacks on me became more explicit. . . . It was a hard feeling, as if I were expelled from the Jewish people."[49]

**4**

A few weeks before his death at the age of eighty-seven, Avot Yeshurun was chosen as the 1992 recipient of the Israel Prize for Literature. He died before the prize was awarded to him. The other corecipient of the 1992 award was Emil Habibi, the Israeli-Arab writer who dedicated his life—politically (as a member of the Knesset) and literarily—to the construction of a Palestinian national identity. While Habibi's nomination was accompanied by sometimes violent protests from right-wing politicians (like then Tehiya member and former secretary of science Yuval Ne'eman), Yeshurun's nomination did not seem to provoke antagonism. It is perhaps not surprising that Yeshurun was nominated for the prize together with an Arab writer considered sympathetic to the then villainized PLO. In the very moment of canonization, Yeshurun—like Habibi—was perceived as the belatedly "legitimized" other, as the other

within. Although he did not comment on his nomination publicly, one could only guess that Yeshurun would have liked the idea of sharing the prize with an Israeli-Arab writer. Interestingly, Avot Yeshurun's daughter, Helit Yeshurun, editor of the prestigious literary journal *Chadarim*, refused to accept the prize posthumously on behalf of her father. Feeling that the prize amounted to too little too late, she suggested that in accepting the prize she might be helping to suppress the ways in which her father had been marginalized and mistreated. Shortly before his death, Yeshurun also received the Israel Poetry Award. When asked for his reaction to the award, he said: "A honey cake is given to man during his lifetime so that he will eat it and shut up."[50] Yeshurun's refusal to "shut up" even at the very moment of canonization—his refusal to be blinded by literary prizes—is just another example of his resistance. The last point I wish to raise, therefore, concerns the ways in which the canon appropriates others and otherness. Observing how "counternarratives of all kinds do constantly enter 'mainstream' culture," Russell Ferguson notes that in the process of canonization "alternative cultural forms are drained of any elements which might challenge the system as a whole."[51] It can be argued that Yeshurun's gradual canonization, a process that culminated when he was awarded the Israel Prize and the Israel Poetry Award, seems to have happened in a somewhat similar way. I believe that the center is still somewhat blind to the radical nature of Yeshurun's poetry. Current readings—although rather sympathetic—seem to focus on Yeshurun's Yiddishisms and nostalgia rather than on his iconoclastic approach to constructions of personal and national identity. Though his pro-Palestinian approach is occasionally mentioned, in general the center—in order to accept Yeshurun—has been engaged in a selective modeling of his corpus. It seems to me that this selective modeling amounts to an attempt to tame and domesticate the radicalism of Yeshurun's poetry. It is hardly surprising that to mark his passing, a leading Israeli newspaper described Avot Yeshurun as "a poet of the Holocaust." Yeshurun, who in his life lamented both the Jewish and Palestinian holocausts—an analogy that enraged his audience—became, posthumously, a poet of the Jewish Holocaust alone.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 5

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פֶּסַח עַל כּוּכִים

יוֹם אֶחָד לָאֲדָמָה,
לָעֲמֵקָה מִן פַּאלַאסְטִין,
מִן "פַּאלֶסְטִינָה הוֹךְ הוֹךְ",
מִן כְּנַעַד־פֶלְלָחִין.

יוֹם אֶחָד לָאֲדָמָה
הַמְּלֵאָה אֶת הַכַּדִּים.
וְקָשָׁה הִיא וּמְאֻדָּמָה,
חַמָּה הִיא וְגִידִים.

אֶת עָרְיָתהּ אֵינָהּ מַגֶּדֶת
לְרוֹכְבֵי עַל עֲרָיוֹת.
וְאֵינָהּ מַגֶּדֶת לְרוֹכְבֵי
עַל אֲתוֹנוֹת צְחוֹרוֹת;

וְעַל אֵלֶּה שֶׁקָּרְסוּ לַפָּרֶךְ
עִם צַלַּצַלַּת אֹרְחוֹת,
עַל אֵלֶּה שֶׁעָמְדוּ בַּפֶּרֶא
כְּאַח וְאָחוֹת -

הֲלֹא יִשָּׂאֵל הַלָּה לְפִלְלָתוֹ.
הַלָּה תָּמִיד יִדְרֹשׁ לַחֲלָךְ.
הָיָה זֶה פֹּה יַד מַלְאָכוֹ.
יַד הַלָּה כְּיַד הַמֶּלֶךְ.

וַיְהִי הַלָּה טוֹפֵשׁ עָלָיו דַּבָּשֶׁת -
וְזֶה גּוֹמֵל עָמָל עַל הַשַּׁבָּשְׁתְּ ...
הָיוֹ יִהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר נוֹשָׂא שַׁבָּשֶׁת -
יֵצֶר הִיא שֶׁל אֵיזֶה בָּעֹשְׁ"ט ...

שֶׁהִגִּיעָנוּ אֶל הַחוֹף בְּגִ'אנִיקוֹלוֹ
וְהֻקַּמְנוּ עַל הַסָּף סַפָּן עַרְבִי -
אֶזְרֹעוֹתָיו שְׁלוּחָנִיוֹת וְקַנְצֵי קוֹל לוֹ,
וְהַיָּדַיִם - מְבֵית אָבִי ...

וְהִגִּיעָנוּ, וְלָאָרֶץ עָרִירִי,
וְלָאָרֶץ אֵין פֹּה אֵם, וְיִהְי מָה,
וַתֹּאמֶר פָּאטְמָה: "מַהֲרָה, נַעֲרִי,
אֱמֹר לָהּ 'אִמָּא'".

וָאֹמַר: "דֵּינָר לִי מֵאִמִּי, לַעֲנֵי עִירִי,
אַךְ רָעֲבְתִּי. כִּי עָנִיתִי", וָאֹמַר -
וַתּוֹרֶד אֶת כַּדָּהּ: "שְׁתֵה נַעֲרִי,
לְךָ הוּא הַדִּינָר"...

"הַזָּהוּב פָּרַטְתִּי, אָבִי מִכָּל הַחַאנִים !
בְּדִינַר אִמִּי קָנִיתִי לִי בְּרַאנְז'וֶנְס.
הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי פֹּה בֵּין וַאדִיוֹת, חוֹלוֹת וְרַמַּת־גַּן'ִים.
בְּדָמֵי אִמִּי קָנִיתִי לִי סַארְדִינָס.

שֶׁהֻבָּנוּ הַסַּארְדִינָס ! מִי מִכֶּם דִּינָר עִלָּע ?
מִסַּארְדִינָס מִי עוֹשֶׂה בֶּבָּה ?!
יָפוֹ וְדַיָּגֶיהָ ! - שֶׁאֵין רֶשֶׁת אֶלָּא לָהּ.
לַבֹּקֶר וְיֹאכְלוּ, וְהַדִּינָר חֲבָם.

אַבְהוּנָא שֶׁלִּי, הַבֵּט עַל בְּכוֹר הַחַאנִים.
בְּחַרְתַּנִי בְּכוֹר עָנִי מֵאֵין כָּמוֹהוּ עוֹד.
שׂוּר עַל מַעֲשַׂי - יָפִים לַמַּה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה ?
וַאֲנִי שִׁמְךָ קָנִיתִי לְעָבְדְךָ מְאֹד".

פָּנַי אָבִינוּ הָיוּ פֹּה...
אָז הָיִינוּ עוֹד בָּנִים...
עַתָּה אָבִינוּ בַּמַּחֲפוֹא.
אֵיךְ נְקַבֵּל פָּנִים ?

הֲלֹא תִשְׁאָלִי לְעַמְּךְ־מַלְאָכוֹ -
וְהוּא חֶלֶךְ פַּאלַאסְטִין.
הוּא הָלַךְ פֹּה אֶל כּוֹכוֹ,
אֶל הַפָּלָתִי...

וְעַל כָּךְ וְעַל דַּרְכּוֹ
וְכָל מַעֲשֵׂהוּ בַּכּוּכִים -
הֲלֹא, שׁוֹשַׁנַּת יַעֲקֹב,
תִּשְׁאָלִי אֶת הַחוֹחִים.

תִּשְׁאָלִי פֹּה בַּפְּרָצִים
עַל קַבָּצַן הַסִּלְיוֹת,
עַל קִבּוּץ הַקִּבּוּצִים
וְעַל קִבּוּץ הַגָּלְיוֹת;

וַתִּשְׁאָלִי אֶל נֵס
תְּנוּעַת חִבַּת צִיּוֹן
אֶת עַרְבֵי הַנֵּס
שֶׁנָּסוּ בְּלָצוֹן;

וַתִּשְׁאָלִי אֶת פִּי -
עַל שְׁתַּיִם הוּא הַדִּין:
צַר לִי עַל טַפִּי
וְצַר עַל דִּין וָדִין:

וַתִּשְׁאָלִי אֶל נֵס־
תְּנוּעַת חוֹבְבֵי שִׂיחָה
עַל עַרְבֵי הַנֵּס
אֲשֶׁר "קָבְרוּ בְּדִיחָה".

קָבְרוּ - עַד הַקִּיצוֹ
שֶׁל כַּד הַמַּטְבְּעוֹת.
יְצַלְצְלוּ, לְעֵת מְצוֹא,
יָמִים, שָׁנִים, מֵאוֹת...

עַד עָמוֹד יַעֲמֹד הַלָּה
וְסַב הוּא בָּאִישׁוֹן -
וַאֲדָמָה כַּלָּה
שׁוֹאֶגֶת יוֹם רִאשׁוֹן...

בַּעֲמָקֵיךְ, שׁוֹשַׁנָּת,
לוּ שׁוֹשַׁנָּה לְפָלָלְחִים;
מִי שׁוֹשַׁנָּה - וְלוּ עַל מְנַעַת
פֶּסַע אֶל כּוּכִים.

פְּלָלְחִין בֶּדְוִין, הָאֲבוֹת,
- כְּדוֹר מִדְבָּר לְדוֹר יוֹרֵשׁ -
צִוּוּנוּ פִּיתָּה לָאֲפוֹת.
נָשֵׂם לַחְמָם לְחוּךְ הָאֵשׁ.

וְאַבָּא־אִמָּא, מִן מִלְקָח,
אֵשׁ־אֵל־רַבְרַבָּא מִלְקָח -
צִוּוּנוּ יַהְנְדֵּס לֹא לְשָׂכַח.
וְעַל פּוֹלִין לֹא לְשָׂבַח.

אֲדָמָה הִיא בַּת בְּלִיַּעַל.
גַּם אַבְרָהָם גַּם אִיבְּרַהִים -
שָׂרָה עִמּוֹ הִנַּעַר
וְשָׂרָה מִן הַמִּצְרִים...

וְהָאֲדָמָה וְהָאֲדָמָה
מְבַלְּעָה אֶת הַכְּדִים.
הִיא חַמָּה, הִיא מְאֻדָּמָה -
וְהִיא גִּידִים לַמַּגִּידִים.

הִיא חַמָּה וּמְאֻדָּמָה
כְּפִתְחָהּ שֶׁל הַיּוֹלֶדֶת.
מְלֵאָה לָהּ אֶרֶץ אֲדָמָה
וְלֹא נוֹעֶדֶת.

*Passover on Caves*

One day to the land,[1]
deeper than Phalasteen,
than "Palestina, *hoch hoch*,"[2]
than Canaan-*fellaheen*.[3]

One day to the land,
filling the urns.
And hard she is and reddening,
hot she is and tendons.

She doesn't tell her nakedness
to riders on loins.[4]
And she doesn't tell to riders
on white she-asses;[5]

and on those who were crushed to hard labor
with the ringing of caravans,
on those who stood in the wild[6]
like brother and sister.

Will that one not ask about his *fallah*.[7]
That one will always look for the wretched.
It was here the hand of his angel.
That one's hand like the hand of a king.[8]

And that one stupefies a camel's hump on him
and he rewards hard work on the mess . . .
Whatever it is that carries the mess—
it is the desire of some Besht . . . [9]

That we arrived at the shore on *Gianicolo*
and an Arab sailor set us on the threshold
his arms extended, he has slight of voice
and the hands—from my father's house . . . [10]

And we arrived, and to a land childless,
and the land has no mother here, no matter what,
and Fatima says: "Come quick, my child,
say to her 'Mommy.'"

And I say: "I have a dinar[11] my mother gave me for my city's poor,
but I'm hungry, because I've become poor." And I say—
and she put down her pitcher: "Drink my child, keep the dinar" . . . [12]

"I changed the gold coin, my father of all the *khans*![13]
With my mother's dinar I bought *berginehs*.[14]
I walked here among the wadis, sand, and Ramat-Gans.[15]
With my mother's money I bought *sardinehs*.[16]

They gave us life, the *sardinehs*! Which one of you swallowed the dinar?
From *sardinehs* who makes a doll?!
Jaffa and her fishermen!—There is no other net but hers.
In the morning and they ate, the dinar in them.

My *abhuna*,[17] look at the eldest of the *khans*.
You chose me eldest poor there is no other like him.
Look at my deeds—good for how is it different?[18]
And I bought[19] your name to serve you greatly."

Our father's face was here . . .
Then we were still sons . . .
Now our father is in hiding[20]
how shall we receive a face?[21]

Will you ask about [the fate of] your people—his angel—
and he is the wretched of Phalasteen,
he went to his cave,
to the Pelethite . . . [22]

And about that and about his way
and everything he did in caves—
surely, Jacob's rose,[23]
ask the thorns[24]
ask here in the breaches
about the beggar of shoe soles,
about the grouping of the kibbutzim
and about the ingathering of the exiles;[25]

and ask about the miracle—
of the Lovers-of-Zion Movement[26]

[ask] the Arabs of the miracle
who fled as a joke;

and ask me—
the judgment is based on two:
I feel sorry for my children
and I'm sorry about judgment and judgment;[27]

and ask about the miracle—
of Lovers-of-Talking Movement
about the Arabs of the miracle
"who buried the joke."

Buried—until the awakening of the urn filled with coins
which will ring in due course days, years, centuries . . .

Until that one will stand still
and turn back in the middle of night—
and a land-bride[28]
is roaring first day . . .

In your valleys, rose of,
if only the *fellaheen* had a rose;
who is [a] rose—if only in order to avoid
overstepping on caves . . . [29]

*Fellaheen*-Bedouins, the Patriarchs,
like the generation of the wilderness to the generation who inherited[30]
have ordered us to bake pita[31]
we shall put their bread in the [chewing] fire.

And father-mother from looting
fire-of-God from taking
have commanded us not to forget Yahndes[32]
and not to forget Poylin.[33]
The land is good-for-nothing[34]
both Abraham and Ibrahim—
the lad struggled with him[35]
and Sara is of the Egyptians . . .

And the land, the land,
devouring the urns.
hot she is and reddening—
and tendons to Tellers.[36]

Hot she is and reddening
like the opening of a woman giving birth
the land is filled with earth
and not destined.[37]

## EPILOGUE

### NOTES ON CONSPIRACY AND CULPABILITY

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> Power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself.
>
> —MICHEL FOUCAULT[1]

> It is the task of the intellectual . . . not just to produce this right to speak and behave in an individual way in our culture, but to assert its political value. Failing to do this, the function of the intellectual strangely enough turns into one of coercion.
>
> —JULIA KRISTEVA[2]

THIS BOOK ORIGINATED from the American debate on canon formation and cultural wars that predominated academic discourse during my years at University of California, Berkeley. Yet this project is grounded not only in this theoretical discourse, but also in critical moments within Hebrew literary history that question and problematize the idea of aesthetic value. In this respect, the perspective I have been advancing is not as revolutionary as its rhetoric suggests. Over seventy years ago, Ch. N. Bialik acknowledged the inseparability of culture and politics: "Isn't politics itself, in its wider sense, really culture? And isn't culture itself really politics?"[3]

In the context of canonicity, the marginal positions of Rachel, Esther

Raab, Anda Pinkerfeld, David Fogel, and Avot Yeshurun have often been noted, and as I have mentioned throughout this book, the varied reasons for these writers' marginality have also been partially outlined by other critics. My project is different from other studies of Hebrew modernism in one respect. By way of *accumulative* evidence—through the juxtaposition of multiple critical evaluations—this book has shown how exclusion and marginalization are systematic and consistent rather than accidental and random. Although my own project bears perspectival limitations—and although it does not account for all types of marginality within Hebrew modernism—it does show how the apparently divergent evaluations of poets as different as Rachel and Avot Yeshurun stem from the same ideological formation.

It may be appropriate to conclude this study with a brief consideration of the question of intentionality and responsibility: who should be held accountable for this systematic pattern of inclusion and exclusion? It may prove instructive to consider this question in light of Henry Louis Gates's short story-cum-critical essay "Canon Confidential: A Sam Slade Caper," which opens his book *Loose Canons*.[4] Gates's text, a suggestive commentary on the canon debate, is adroitly elusive not only because it is a short story and/as/or critical essay, but also because it can be read in two distinct generic modes, as both allegory and parody.

I will recapitulate the plot. The story's protagonist, a private detective named Sam Slade, is hired by a Betty Grable look-alike named Estelle to investigate a perplexing mystery. In Slade's words, "[It] seemed there was some kind of setup that determined which authors get on the A list of Great literature. . . . If you're on the list, they teach your work in school and write critical essays on you. Walden house moves you from the Fiction section to the Literature section" (pp. 3–4). Slade begins to look into the matter only to find a well-organized operation that aims to assure "the triumph of civilization over barbarity" (p. 7). Sniffing around, Slade meets powerful critics but makes little progress. Helen Vendler tells him that he is wasting his time: "I hear the talk. But it's just a tabloid fantasy. . . . There is no overlord, Slade. Nobody's fixing what we read—the whole idea is preposterous. If a book's good, people will read it. If it's bad, people won't" (p. 4). Alfred Kazin, after claiming he knows nothing, is pushed to confess, "You know I don't make the decisions. . . . Look it's an institutional configuration. It's societal. *Everybody's* in on it" (p. 6). Harold Bloom, who is sought by the NYPD for a series of murders, from Matthew Arnold to Robert Lowell, offers Slade the follow-

ing explanation: "The strong poet will abide. The weak will not. Politics has nothing to do with it" (p. 8). Finally, Slade is brought to an old man who appears to be the head of the organization. In the old man's own words:

> The literary canon—now that ain't chopped liver. Could be you don't understand how big this is. We've got people all over, wouldn't work otherwise. We've got the daily reviewers, we've got the head of the teachers' union. . . . We've got people in the teacher's training colleges. We've got the literature profs at your colleges, they're all on it. The guys who edit the anthologies—Norton, Oxford, you name it—they all work for us. (pp. 10–11)

In light of the unfolding conspiracy, Slade is certain that he will be killed. But he is offered an alternative solution. The old man's "boys" come up with a poem Slade published when he was in high school. In exchange for his silence, the organization will include his poem "Cadence of Flight" in a Norton anthology of poetry. When he tells Estelle that he is off the case, she reveals her true identity. Taking off her wig and makeup, she transforms into Thomas Pynchon, who simply wants out of the canon (p. 14).

What are we to make of this story? There are good reasons, I would argue, to read the text as an allegory.[5] Slade's co-optation powerfully reveals the critic's inability to either fracture or change a powerful and increasingly flexible system. This essay-cum-story can be said to question the very possibility of critique, for the critic's attempt to open up a space from which a critique can be launched is frustrated and negated. Unable to remain on the rim, both outside and inside, the critic is seduced into the canon, thus losing (or relinquishing) his critical perspective. Moreover, the story attests to the self-interested nature of any investigation, since the critic, like the detective, is paid by a client and compensated by an organization.

There are equally good reasons, however, to read the text as a parody. The text parodies the conspiratorial mood that hovers over recent discussions of canonicity, mocking the "paranoid metaphysics" that construes power as "everywhere and always alert."[6] Moreover, it calls into question the self-importance of critics who believe that an investigation of the canon can be a vehicle for social change. As Gates puts it in his introduction: "the significance of our own interventions is easily overstated; and I do not exempt myself from this admonition."[7]

The text's vacillation between story and essay, allegory and parody—its "blurring of genres"[8] to use Clifford Geertz's apt formulation—generates indeterminacy, making it increasingly difficult for the reader to pin down the text's position. Is there or isn't there a conspiracy? Can we blame someone for the ins and outs of the canon? Can we assume agency, that is, responsibility and intentionality, in the process of canon formation? The answers, as I read Gates's text, are yes and no.

As critic-cum-detective, my own position is somewhat paradoxical. Since the evidence adduced in this study clearly shows a pattern of ideological suppression, I believe that there is an ongoing "conspiracy." At the same time I argue that it is an "unintentional" one. It is "unintentional" for two reasons. First, it is not easy to decide who is to be held accountable for suppression, for as Russell Ferguson argues, the "place from which power is exercised is often a hidden place. When we try to pin it down, the center seems to be somewhere else."[9] In addition to the elusive and slippery nature of power, we should be cautious not to isolate the power of individuals from collective, social forces. However tempting the idea of blaming a Shlonsky may be, it is clear that the power of the period's ideological formation is too sweeping to be identified with one individual or even a group of individuals. Second, it is impossible to prove a conspiracy because the successful operation of exclusion depends on naturalizing a system of beliefs. By now it is so self-evident to the Israeli reader that Rachel, for example, is a mediocre poet, that any attempt to show that this judgment is based on ideological presuppositions is bound to encounter a great deal of antagonism. It is precisely the "naturalness" of beliefs that is "conspiratorial" but it is also this "naturalness" that makes it impossible to prove a conspiracy. If we are left with substantial circumstantial evidence that cannot be ignored, we are also left with no clear evidence of intent.

In weighing the arguments for and against intentional conspiracy, it might be worthwhile differentiating between a few different scenarios. In some cases, no doubt, critics and readers unconsciously internalized the dominant ideology while believing themselves to be judging Hebrew literature on purely aesthetic grounds. Hence, we could describe a conspiratorial structure that functioned with little or no conscious intent. But there are undoubtedly instances of perfectly intentional efforts to discredit writers who threatened the dominance of the majority cultural value system. While the condescension toward women writers—still abundantly evident even today—may very well

fall under the first category, the rejection of Avot Yeshurun's radical critique of Zionism or the disapproval of Fogel's non-Zionism almost certainly falls under the second category. More complex interactions between the intentional and the unconscious are possible as well. The intentional marginalization of a writer like Fogel, on the grounds of his unacceptable "simplicity," for example, may cover for a conscious or unconscious perception of the ideological dimensions of this ostensibly stylistic characteristic.

Although it may be desirable to distinguish between intentional and unintentional marginalization, the paradoxical possibility of a "conspiracy without intent" should not be disheartening. A scrutiny of the canon is most successful, I believe, when the idea of conspiracy is simultaneously affirmed and denied. Only when we search for a conspiratorial operation can we detect the period's "rules," that is, its mechanisms of exclusion and dominance. And only by ruling conspiracy out of existence can we truly fathom the complexity of power. It is precisely when we hold these two contradictory positions simultaneously that we are able to account for the politics of culture.[10]

Although this paradox also implicates and complicates the possibility of resistance, as it problematizes the idea of intention and agency, my position in regard to resistance is unequivocal.[11] If my method throughout this study has focused on preserving the other's right to speak differently, it is because denying this right—implicitly or explicitly, intentionally or unintentionally—amounts to coercion. To look for forms of writing that were perceived as either insignificant and minor or damaging and dangerous is in this context a modest attempt to counter hegemony. In trying to expose modes of interpretation that relegate texts to marginality, and in searching for alternative interpretive practices that would allow otherness to speak, I look for nothing more—but also nothing less—than a space, a vantage point, that would allow me to speak about difference.

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# REFERENCE MATTER

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# NOTES

## PROLOGUE

1. David Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 5.

2. Michael Bérubé, *Marginal Forces/Cultural Centers: Tolson, Pynchon, and the Politics of the Canon* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 5.

3. Karen R. Lawrence, "The Cultural Politics of Canons," introduction to *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century "British" Literary Canons*, ed. Karen R. Lawrence (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 2.

4. Stephen Greenblatt, "The History of Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 462.

5. Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 53.

6. Ibid., p. 56.

7. Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Contingencies of Value," in *Canons*, ed. Robert von Hallberg (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), p. 22. The "Great Books debate" or the "canon debate," of which Smith's essay is part, has generated vast critical literature. To mention several examples, see Bérubé, *Marginal Forces/Cultural Centers*; Lawrence, *Decolonizing Tradition*; Charles Altieri, *Canons and Consequences: Reflections on the Ethical Force of Imaginative Ideals* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1990); Joan Dejean and Nancy K. Miller, eds., *The Politics of Tradition: Placing Women in French Literature, Yale French Studies 75* (1988); Arnold Krupt, *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Virgil Nemoianu and Robert Royal, eds., *The Hospitable Canon: Essays on Literary Play, Scholarly Choice, and Popular Pressures* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1991).

8. Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p. 13.

9. As early as 1902, Herzl published his utopian *Altneuland*, which advances the Zionist idea through a novelistic form. See Theodor Herzl, *Old-New Land*, trans. Lotta Levensohn (New York: Bloch, 1960).

10. The term is Dan Miron's; see *Bodedim be-mo'adam* (When loners come together) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1987), pp. 9–22.

11. According to Benedict Anderson "Nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind." The nation, for Anderson, is "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." See *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 6.

12. Ch. N. Bialik, *Dvarim sh-be'al pe* (Speeches), vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1965), p. 148. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

13. For an illuminating analysis of the Bible as a national biography, see Ilana Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel: National Narratives in the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

14. Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 91.

15. For an overview of the cultural debates in the 1897 First Zionist Congress, see Avner Holtzman, "Tarbut noledet: Ha-sifrut ha-ivrit u-fulmus ha-tarbut ba-tenu'ah ha-tsiyonit be-reshita" (A culture is born: Hebrew literature and the cultural debate in the First Zionist Congress), in *Idan ha-tsiyonut* (The age of Zionism), ed. Anita Shapira, Judah Reinhartz, and Jacob Harris (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2000), pp. 145–65.

16. Eric Hobsbawm, "The Rise of Ethno-Linguistic Nationalisms," in *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 179.

17. Benjamin Harshav [Hrushovski], *Language in Time of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. viii.

18. Jonathan Culler, "Rubbish Theory," in Culler, *Framing the Sign* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 169.

19. Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 11.

20. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 160.

21. Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd, "Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse: What Is to Be Done?" in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, ed. Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 6.

22. The term is Pierre Bourdieu's. In Terry Eagleton's rendering of Bourdieu, "symbolic violence is at work in the whole field of culture, where those who lack the correct taste are unobtrusively excluded, relegated to shame and silence." See Terry Eagleton, *Ideology* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 158.

23. Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p. 4.

24. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 10.

25. Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p. 89.

26. For a nuanced analysis of the different ways in which Hebrew writers and critics responded to demand for national identification, see Iris Parush, *Kanon sifruti ve-ideologia leumit* (Literary canon and national ideology) (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1992).

27. Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 5.

28. It is perhaps no accident that the Hebrew term *sifrut meguyeset*, literally "drafted literature," is difficult to translate into English. The Hebrew term derives from the French *littérature engagée* and, even more so, from Russian perceptions of socially engaged literature.

29. See Brenner's attack, in his seminal essay "Ha-zhaner ha'-erets israeli ve'-avizarehu" (The genre of Erets Israel and its devices), on the expectation that Hebrew literature portray local life in Erets Israel. Y. Ch. Brenner, *Ktavim* (Collected works), vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim and Hakibbutz Hameuchad), pp. 569–78. See also Shlonsky's rejection of Berl Katznelson's views in "Musaf le-shabatot u-le-mo'adim —o' hosafa sifrutit" (A supplement for sabbath and holidays; or, A literary Addendum), *Davar* (October 16, 1925).

30. Y. Ch. Brenner, *Kol kitvey Y. Ch. Brenner* (Collected works), vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1967), p. 222.

31. Brenner, "Ha-zhaner ha'-erets israeli ve'-avizarehu," p. 569.

32. For an overview of this polemic and its cultural aftermath, see Nurit Govrin, *Brenner: "Oved-Etsot" u-moreh-derekh* (Brenner: "Nonplussed" and mentor) (Tel Aviv: Misrad Habitachon and Tel Aviv University Press, 1991).

33. Berl Katznelson, "El ha-shotkim" (To the silent ones), *Davar* (September 7, 1925).

34. Avraham Shlonsky, *Davar* (October 16, 1925). See also Hannan Hever, *Paytanim u-biryonim: Tsmichat ha-shir ha-politi be-Erets Israel* (Poets and zealots: The rise of political Hebrew poetry in Erets Israel) (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1994), p. 71.

35. Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 21.

36. Amalia Kahana-Carmon, "Gal chadash shel nashim sofrot" (A new wave of women writers), *Davar* (July 26, 1991).

### CHAPTER 1: THE NATIONAL IMPERATIVE

1. Fredric Jameson, "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (1986): 69.

2. Ahad Ha'am, "Te'udat *Ha-shilo'ach*" (Mission Statement of *Ha-shilo'ach*), *Ha-shilo'ach* 1 (1896): 1.

3. Homi K. Bhabha, "Narrating the Nation," introduction to *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 1.

4. Dan Miron, *Bodedim be-mo'adam* (When loners come together) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1987), p. 9.

5. According to Benedict Anderson, "Nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind." The nation, for Anderson, is "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." See *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 6.

6. Robert Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), p. 3.

7. Simon Halkin, *Modern Hebrew Literature: From Enlightenment to the Birth of the State of Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1950), p. 74.

8. Y. L. Gordon, *Kitvey Y. L. Gordon: Shira* (Collected writings: Poetry) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1964), p. 32.

9. A brief review of Haskalah poetry, or of the poetry of "Chibat Tsiyon" (Love of Zion) that followed it, shows how poets of the period perceived themselves as public emissaries who write on behalf of and for the people. Thus, for example, Abba Constantin Shapira writes in "Mi-chezyonot bat 'ami" (From the visions of a daughter of my people): "And my heart breaks, turned into a mountain of fire: / all the troubles of my people have gathered within it / filling it, until it got smashed to pieces." See Ruth Kartun-Blum, *Ha-shira ha-ivrit bi-tkufal chibat-tsiyon* (Hebrew poetry in the period of Chibat Tsiyon) (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1969), p. 85.

10. Simon Halkin, *Muskamot u-mashberim be-sifrutenu* (Conventions and crises in Hebrew literature) (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1980), p. 78.

11. Steven J. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. xviii.

12. Avner Holtzman, *Hakarat panim* (Essays on Micha Yosef Berdichevsky) (Tel Aviv: Reshafim, 1994), p. 181.

13. See, for example, Yeshurun Keshet, *M. Y. Berdichervsky* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1958), pp. 109–22; Gershon Shaked, *Ha-siporet ha'-ivrit, 1880–1980* (Hebrew narrative fiction, 1880–1980), vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad and Keter, 1977), pp. 163–68; Holtzman, *Hakarat panim*, pp. 181–94; Hanan Hever, "'Guru lakhem min ha-galitsaim': Sifrut galitsia ve-hama'avak al ha-kanon ba-siporet ha-ivrit" ("Fear the Galicians": Galicia's literature and the dispute over the canon), *Teoria u-bikoret* 5 (1994): 67–69.

14. See Holtzman, *Hakarat panim*, p. 181. Similarly, Nurit Govrin argues in a footnote to her study of Brenner that the positions of Ahad Ha'am and Berdichevsky were not as diametrically opposed as critics would have us believe. "In reality," she ar-

gues, "their relationship and positions were much more complex and not as opposed." See Nurit Govrin, *Brenner: "Oved-etsot" u-moreh-derekh* (Brenner: "Nonplussed" and mentor) (Tel Aviv: Misrad Habitachon and Tel Aviv University Press, 1991), p. 202. These views, however, are expressed cursorily and thus fail to change the accepted critical perception of this debate.

15. Ahad Ha'am, "Te'udat *Ha-shilo'ach*," 1.

16. See, for example, Leo Pinsker's description of the Jewish people as a person suffering from anorexia and resisting any nourishment; *Auto-Emancipation* (London: Federation of Zionist Youth, 1932). For an analysis of Bialik's nutritional metaphor in "language pangs," see Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 83–92.

17. Ahad Ha'am, "Te'udat *Ha-shilo'ach*," p. 5.

18. From German Romanticism on the idea of art for art's sake enjoyed popularity in European culture. Aestheticist ideas became increasingly popular among the "decadents" (i.e., Baudelaire, Wilde). For a study of the influence of decadence on Hebrew literature in the late nineteenth century, see Hamutal Bar-Yosef, *Maga'im shel dekadens* (Decadent trends in Hebrew literature) (Be'er Sheva: Ben-Gurion University Press, 1997).

19. See Iris Parush, *Kanon sifruti ve-ideologia leumit* (Literary canon and national ideology) (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1992), pp. 26, 28.

20. Ahad Ha'am, *Igrot* (Letters), vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1957), p. 64. In a letter to Levontin on October 27, 1896, he wrote: "I was embarrassed to read in your letter that you expect 'great and marvelous literature' from my journal. Oh, my dear sir! Our literature has become a desert, and no one has joined me [in my attempts to help the situation]. The first issue is coming out next week, and I and my god both know, how much sweat went into each and every line, to eliminate every stupidity, laziness, and tactlessness" (p. 23).

21. Ahad Ha'am to Y. Zeitlin, January 13, 1897, *Igrot*, vol. 1, pp. 58–59.

22. Ibid., p. 160.

23. Sadan was the first to demonstrate that in many of Bialik's poems it is difficult to distinguish the private from the collective, "for poems which appeared as poems of the collective, were revealed to be poems of the individual, and poems which appeared as poems of the individual were revealed to be poems of the collective; the more [critics] have looked into this issue, the more they have discerned the confusion of these two spheres, and as they attempted to arrive at conclusions, they could not conceal their bafflement." See Dov Sadan, *Bein din le-cheshbon* (Between judgment and reckoning) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1963), p. 12. Following Sadan, Adi Zemach argues that the suffocating and ossifying environment of Hebrew literature at the end of the nineteenth century

> demanded again and again the writer's entire soul, and did not leave [Bialik] alone until his poetry became a *shofar*, in order to express national-social

> hopes, views, opinions, and criticism. . . . Dov Sadan stresses that Bialik's meetings with Ahad Ha'am and Mendele in Volozhin were fatal encounters that curbed Bialik's poetic strength and made him conceal the principles of his poetry and cloak them in a veil of symbols.

See Adi Zemach, *Ha-lavi ha-mistatar* (The hidden lion) (Jerusalem: Sefer, 1988), p. 7. For an interesting analysis of the ways in which Bialik constructed a self that is both personal and allegorical, see Dan Miron, *Ha-predah min ha'-ani he'-ani* (Taking leave of the impoverished self) (Tel Aviv: Open University, 1986), pp. 29–67.

24. Ch. N. Bialik to Y. Ch. Ravnitsky, March 17, 1897, *Igrot* (Letters), vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1938), pp. 93–94. Here, Bialik is quoting from memory and distorts the original quote.

25. Ibid., April 18, 1897, p. 94.

26. Ch. N. Bialik, *Shirim: 1899–1934* (Poems), vol. 1, ed. Dan Miron et al. (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1990), p. 220.

27. Bialik to Berdichevsky, July 25, 1897, *Igrot*, 98–99.

28. Ahad Ha'am to M. Z. Feierberg, June 30, 1897, *Igrot*, p. 110.

29. Even though he published Feierberg's "Le'an" (Whither), he tried to persuade the writer to change its pessimistic ending.

30. My use of "anticanon" is drawn from Parush, *Kanon sifruti ve-ideologia leumit*, p. 153.

31. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*, p. xix.

32. M. Y. Berdichevsky, "Al parashat drakhim: Mikhtav galuy el Ahad Ha'am," (At a crossroads: An open letter to Ahad Ha'am) *Ha-shilo'ach* 1 (1896): 154.

33. Ibid., p. 155. The expression "the beauty of Japheth" has a long history of signification. It refers to the beauty of foreign culture (as represented by the sons of Japheth) in the eyes of Jewish culture (as represented by Shem).

34. Moses Mendelssohn's famous dictum "Be a man in the streets and a Jew at home" illustrates such a split.

35. Berdichevsky, "Al parashat drakhim," p. 155.

36. Ibid.

37. See also Arye Simon, *Ahad Ha'am* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1955), p. 42.

38. Berdichevsky, "Al parashat drakhim," p. 155.

39. Ibid., p. 158.

40. See M. Y. Berdichevsky, *Kol ha-sipurim* (Collected stories) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1951), p. 22.

41. Ibid., p. 23.

42. Ibid., p. 24.

43. In her discussion of the emergence of the individual in French political theory after the Revolution, Joan Wallach Scott points to the paradoxes inherent in the discourse of individuality:

> When abstract individualism referred to a prototypical individual, it at once made a generalization about all humans and evoked a notion of individuality as unique. But to conceive of the uniqueness of an individual still required a relationship of difference. What was an individual, after all, if not a distinct unit? How distinguish its unitary nature, if not by bounding it, by setting it off from others? How else secure a sense of individuality except by a relation of contrast?

While these paradoxes emerge in the context of a political aspiration for equality, the circularity she underscores is relevant to our study as well. See *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 7.

44. Ahad Ha'am, "Tsorekh vi-yekholet" (Need and capability), *Ha-shilo'ach* 2 (1897): 268.

45. Ahad Ha'am to Berdichevsky, July 28, 1897, *Igrot*, vol. 1, p. 120.

46. *Igrot*, vol. 1, p. 249; emphasis added.

47. The words of Mordekhai Ehrenpreis are indicative of the objection of the "Youths" to Ahad Ha'am's clearly premodernist sensibility: "Ahad Ha'am, who by his nature lacked a bursting revolutionary spirit could not share our admiration for beauty and fast pace, but he did like us to a certain degree because of our enthusiasm which he knew was genuine." Mordekhai Ehrenpris, "Bein mizrach u-ma'arav" (Between East and West), in *Bodedo be-ma'arvo* (On M. Y. Berdichevsky: Memoirs of his contemporaries), ed. Nurit Govrin (Holon: Dvora and Emanuel House, 1998), p. 156.

48. Ahad Ha'am seems to have in mind the *nusakh*, a style forged by Abramovich and Bialik, characterized by intensive intertextual references to the Talmud.

49. For a short summary of Berdichevsky's nationalist views, see Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 21–25.

50. Berdichevsky, "Al parashat drakhim," p. 156.

51. See Shaked, *Ha-siporet ha-ivrit*, p. 164.

52. Y. Ch. Brenner, "Micha Yosef Berdichevsky: Dvarim achadim al ishiyuto hasifrutit" ("Micha Yosef Berdichevsky: A few words on his literary personality"), in *Kol kitvey Y. Ch. Brenner* (Collected works), vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1967), p. 831.

53. Brenner himself was often depicted in contradictory terms, as both an exceptionally unique individual—thus resembling nobody—and as a representative of his people. Thus, Itzhak Tabenkin describes Brenner as follows: "Brenner was in his personal life at one with the sorrow of the generation, the sorrow of the people. He identified with them and gave them artistic and journalistic expression." While describing Brenner's individuality in clearly collective terms, Tabenkin writes that Brenner's texts deal with "the emergence of the individual, the lonely person who lacks a social

context and who is an other." This tension between collective need and individual expression finds its solution in the emergence of a national subject whose very being is marked by a union of private and public. See Itzhak Tabenkin, "Brenner be-eney doro" (Brenner in the eyes of his generation), *Machbarot Brenner* 2 (1977): 9, 12.

54. Y. Ch. Brenner, *Ba-choref* (In winter), in *Ktavim* (Collected writings), vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1978), p. 165.

55. This expression, which underscores the generational rift between fathers and sons, appears in many of the period's depictions of *tlushim*, uprooted young men who turn their back on their forefathers. It thus appears in texts such as Brenner's *In Winter*, Berdichevsky's "Two Camps," and Feierberg's "Whither." Alan Mintz aptly chose this expression as the title of his book on the fiction of the period. See Alan Mintz, "*Banished from Their Father's Table": Loss of Faith and Hebrew Autobiography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

56. Dan Miron, "Hirhurim be-idan shel prozah" (Reflections in the era of prose), in *Shloshim shanah, shloshim sipurim* (Thirty years, thirty stories), ed. Zisi Stavi (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronoth, 1993), pp. 404–8.

57. The watchman's double position is marked by both national responsibility and moral superiority. While the first marks his belonging to the nation, the second marks his distance from the people.

58. Brenner, *Ba-choref*, p. 165.

59. Hever, "'Guru lakhem min ha-galitsaim,'" p. 69.

60. If marginality and eccentricity are "defined by the central culture's claim to universality," as Carlos Fuentes contends, then writers in Hebrew who did not or could not write as national subjects lost their claim to universality. See Carlos Fuentes, "Central and Eccentric Writing," in *Lives on the Line: The Testimony of Contemporary Latin American Authors*, ed. Doris Meyer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 113.

61. Jameson, "Third World Literature," p. 69.

62. Ibid.

63. For an incisive critique of Jameson's position see Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 95–122.

64. Jameson, "Third World Literature," p. 78.

65. Jameson's cartography of the world and world literature construes the nation-state as a natural given, thereby ignoring that the borders of national literatures and identities are often blurred and deterritorialized.

66. M. Y. Berdichevsky, "Divrei shira" (On poetry), in *Kol ma'amarei M. Y. Berdichevsky* (The collected essays of M. Y. Berdichevsky) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1952), p. 176.

67. Ibid.

68. M. Y. Berdichevsky, "Li-she'elat ha-tarbut" (On the question of culture), in *Kol ma'amarei*, p. 41.

69. Similar views are expressed in his "Al em ha-derech" (At a crossroad), in *Kol ma'amarei*, p. 22.

70. Quoted in Holtzman, *Hakarat panim*, p. 73. See also Berdichevsky, *Kol ma'amarei*, pp. 21, 23.

71. M. Y. Berdichevsky, "Be-shirateinu anu" (In our poetry), in *Kol ma'amarei*, p. 174.

72. Berdichevsky, "Al parashat drakhim," p. 159.

73. In a discussion of the Hebrew canon, Dan Miron similarly outlines the preconditions for entry into it. The conditions of entry into the center of the canon, Miron asserts, are

> whether you have a unique personality and a suitable biography, whether you've participated in the public sphere, the national one, and whether you've combined these two characteristics in a frame that was termed "artistic unity." Only someone who has fulfilled these three criteria, national, personal and artistic—like Bialik or Mendele—can enter into the portals of this Pantheon.

Miron's examples are illustrative:

> Even Brenner, who had a huge cultural impact, couldn't enter into the center because he didn't pass the artistic criterion, for his style was considered sloppy. His friend Gnessin, who, from the start, was seen as having a new kind of artistic perfection, even he was not accepted because he was too personal and didn't relate the national panorama to a sufficient extent. Only during the fifties and sixties did this panorama stop being a measuring stick.

See "Mahi klasika israelit?" (What is an Israeli classic?), *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv) (April 23, 1993).

74. David Frishman, quoted in Parush, *Kanon sifruti ve-ideologia leumit*, p. 39.

75. Sneja Gunew's distinction between the public sphere on the one hand and the counterpublic sphere on the other may be useful for understanding the double bind of Berdichevsky's position. The public sphere is constituted by "a series of discursive formations of legitimizing and institutionally endorsed public statements." A counterpublic sphere "qualifies and interrogates these authorizations." Sneja Gunew, "Denaturalizing Cultural Nationalisms: Multicultural Readings of 'Australia,'" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 100.

76. Ahmad, *In Theory*, p. 7.

77. In an interview with Dalia Karpel, Dan Miron harshly criticizes Amos Oz, A. B. Yehoshua, David Grossman, Meir Shalev, and Batia Gur, whose recent books are characterized by "a preoccupation with private and intimate [concerns], while they turn their back to social and national problems." See Dalia Karpel, "Ha-dor ha-zeh avud" (This generation is lost), *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv) (July 8, 1994): 18.

## CHAPTER 2: MODERNISM AND EXILE

1. Mahmoud Darwish, "Ha-galut kol-kach chazaka be-tokhi, ulai avi otah artzah" (Exile is so strong within me, I might bring it to the land), *Chadarim* 12 (1996): 176.

2. See James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 244–77.

3. Seamus Deane, "Imperialism/Nationalism," in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 367.

4. Ibid.

5. David Carroll, "The Memory of Devastation and the Responsibilities of Thought: 'And Let's Not Talk About That,'" in Jean-François Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews,"* trans. Andreas Michel and Mark S. Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. xxiv. For a critique of Lyotard's universalization of "the jew" see Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (1993): 693–725. For an analysis of the intersections of Jewishness and modernity, see Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus, eds., *Modernity, Culture, and "the Jew"* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998).

6. Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *Altogether Elsewhere*, ed. Marc Robinson (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), p. 147.

7. James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Vintage, 1973), pp. 246–47.

8. Richard Ellman, *James Joyce* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 113.

9. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), pp. 70–71.

10. Ezra Pound, *Selected Prose, 1909–1965* (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 122.

11. Gertrude Stein, *What Are Masterpieces?* (New York: Pitman, 1970), p. 62.

12. Gertrude Stein, *Paris France* (New York: Liveright, 1970), p. 3.

13. Delmore Schwartz, cited in Susan Stanford Friedman, "Exile in the American Grain: H.D.'s Diaspora," in *Women's Writing in Exile*, ed. Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 89.

14. George Steiner, cited in Malcolm Bradbury, "A Nonhomemade World: European and American Modernism," in *Modernist Culture in America*, ed. Daniel Joseph Singal (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1991), p. 36.

15. Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, ed. Tony Pinkney (London: Verso, 1989), p. 34.

16. Hugh Kenner, "The Making of the Modernist Canon," in *Canons*, ed. Robert von Hallberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 373.

17. Ibid., p. 371.

18. For an interesting conflation of Jewish textuality, extraterritoriality and modernity, see George Steiner "Our Homeland, the Text," *Salmagundi* 66 (1985): 4–25.

19. Mary McCarthy, "A Guide to Exiles, Expatriates, and Internal Emigrés" in *Altogether Elsewhere*, ed. Marc Robinson (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), p. 49.

20. Marina Tsvetayeva, *Selected Poems*, trans. Elaine Feinstein (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1974), p. 3.

21. See Bryan Cheyette, *Constructions of "the Jew" in English Literature and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 267.

22. Bryan Cheyette argues further that "the Jew" became a standing symbol of modernism. Tracing the abundance of "semitic representations" in modernist texts, Cheyette argues that "the acceptance, within a modernist aesthetics, of the impossibility of fully 'knowing' anything, made 'the Jew' an ideal objective correlative for this lack of absolute knowledge. There is, in short, a coincidence of interest between 'the Jew' as an unstable cultural signifier and a modernist style which refuses to be reduced to a settled narrative." Cheyette also believes that it is precisely this congruence between "Jewishness" and modernism that produced T. S. Eliot's anti-Semitism: "It was Eliot's repressed fear of being Judaized that resulted in an extreme racialization of 'the Jew' in his 1920 *Poems*." See ibid.

23. The words are those of Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi. See "Our Homeland, the Text . . . Our Text the Homeland: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 31, no. 4 (1992): 468.

24. Ibid. Edmond Jabès's words, "Gradually I realized that the Jew's real place is the book," exemplify the view of exile as an "inherently Jewish vocation."

25. Shaul Tchernichovsky, *Kol ha-shirim* (Collected poems) (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1950), p. 469.

26. The examples are numerous. See, for example, Pinsker's 1882 characterization of Jewish exile in medical terms. Jewish exile is personified as a sickly anorexic man who is unwilling to eat although food is his only possible resort. See, Leo Pinsker, *Auto-Emancipation* (London: Federation of Zionist Youth, 1932).

27. Yael Zerubavel argues: "The Zionist binary model of Jewish history portrays Antiquity as a positive period, contrasted with a highly negative image of Exile. Since the main criterion for this classification is the bond between the Jewish people and their land, the period of Exile is essentially characterized by a lack." See *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 17–18.

28. Ben Tsiyon Dinburg, "Ha-ideologia ha-tsiyonit vi-ysodoteha" (Zionist ideology and its principles), in *Mivchar ha-masa ha-ivrit* (A collection of Hebrew essays), ed. Y. Becker and Sh. Shpan (Tel Aviv: Gazit, 1945), p. 552. Explicating the negation of exile in Zionist ideology, Anita Shapira argues: "The concept *Negation of Exile* was one of the dominant components in Labor ideology in Palestine. A revolutionary movement's need to repudiate everything that had preceded it, to burn bridges to the past in order to gather together the necessary psychological strength for a revolutionary shift, was expressed in the total rejection of Jewish patterns of life in the Dias-

pora." See Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 321.

29. Tchernichovsky, *Kol ha-shirim*, p. 74.

30. Ch. N. Bialik, "Be-ir ha-harega" (In the city of slaughter), in *Kol kitvey Ch. N. Bialik* (Collected writings of Ch. N. Bialik) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1965), p. 87.

31. Chaim Be'er, *Gam ahavatam, gam sinatam* (Both their love and hate) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1992), pp. 92–93.

32. The most blatant attack on this demand was voiced by Y. Ch. Brenner in his provocative 1911 essay "The Erets Israel Genre and Its Devices" (Ha-zhaner ha'-erets israeli ve'-avizarehu) (see Prologue), in *Ktavim* (Collected works), vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim and Hakibbutz Hameuchad), pp. 569–78.

33. Quoted in Shapira, *Land and Power*, p. 145.

34. Analyzing labor-readership reactions to Greenberg, Anita Shapira claims that Greenberg's "Zionist-revolutionary maximalism was viewed as being quite commensurate with their own outlook." Ibid., p. 152.

35. Hameiri's poem is cited in Amos Elon, *Ha-israelim* (The Israelis) (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1971), p. 128.

36. Avraham Shlonsky, *Shirim* (Collected poems), vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1961), p. 302.

37. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 23.

38. Ibid., p. 216.

39. Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 5.

40. Although an avid Zionist, whose literary career as poet, editor, and translator was shaped by the idea of the poet's participation in nation-building, Shlonsky often rejected "extraliterary" political demands that threatened what he perceived as the autonomy of literature. For example, in 1925, he entered into a fierce debate with Berl Katznelson, the influential editor of *Davar*. While Katznelson opted for a social-realist aesthetics, Shlonsky advocated a greater freedom for the writer. Yet Shlonsky's career manifests a constant vacillation between these two views: politically committed poetry on the one hand and literary freedom on the other. This double position characterizes not only Shlonsky, but also other writers and critics of this period. For a survey of the debate between Shlonsky and Katznelson, see Hannan Hever, *Paytanim u-biryonim: Tsmichat ha-shir ha-politi be-Erets Israel* (Poets and zealots: The rise of political Hebrew poetry in Erets Israel) (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1994), pp. 69–74.

41. Shlonsky, *Shirim*, vol. 1, p. 165.

42. Avraham Shlonsky, *Pirkey yoman* (Chapters of a diary) (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1981), p. 59.

43. Avraham Shlonsky, *Yalkut eshel* (Selected critical writing) (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1960), p. 56.

44. Ibid., p. 57.

45. Moshe Kleinman, *Demuyot ve-komot: Reshimot le-toldot ve-hitpatchut ha-sifrut ha-ivrit ha-chadasha* (Characters and levels: Notes on the history and evolution of the new Hebrew literature) (Paris: Voltaire Press, 1928), p. 208.

46. Noach Stern, "Ba-moledet" (In the homeland), in *Bein arfilim* (Within the fog) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1966), p. 100.

47. Alexander Penn, "Moledet chadasha" (A new homeland), in *Leilot bli gag* (Nights without a roof) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1985), p. 54.

48. Cited in Tuvya Ruebner, *Leah Goldberg: Monografia* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1980), p. 10.

49. Leah Goldberg, *Kol ha-shirim* (Collected poems), vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1970), p. 219.

50. Ezrahi, "Our Homeland, the Text," p. 465.

51. Leah Goldberg, "Al oto nose atsmo" (On the very same subject), *Ha-shomer ha-tsa'ir* (September 8, 1939): 9–10. For an analysis of Goldberg's position vis-à-vis war literature, see Hannan Hever, "'Ha-zemer tam': Leah Goldberg kotevet shirei milchama" ("The song is over": Leah Goldberg writes war poems), in *Pegishot im meshoreret* (Encounters with a poet), ed. Ruth Kartun-Blum and Anat Weisman (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 2000), pp. 74–97.

52. Goldberg, *Kol ha-shirim*, vol. 3, p. 14.

53. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 143.

54. Deane, "Imperialism/Nationalism," p. 367.

55. Cited in A. B. Yoffe, *Leah Goldberg: Tavei dmut vi-ytsira* (Leah Goldberg: An appreciation of the poet and her work) (Tel Aviv: Reshafim, 1994), p. 6.

56. For a review of the critical reception of Goldberg's poetry see Chaya Shacham, "Meshoreret bi-kehal meshorerim: Al hitkablut shiratan shel Leah Goldberg ve-Dalia Ravikovitch al yedei bikoret zmanan" (A female poet among male poets: On the critical reception of Goldberg and Ravikovitch by the critics of their time), in *Sadan*, vol. 2, ed. Ziva Shamir (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1996), pp. 203–40.

57. Abraham Blat, *Bi-ntiv sofrim* (Following writers' path) (Tel Aviv: Menora, 1967), p. 107.

58. See Yoffe, *Leah Goldberg*, p. 241.

59. See Y. Sin [Y. Sa'aroni], "Be-kele ha-intimiyut" (In the prison of intimacy), *Ha-boker* (October 25, 1935).

60. Goldberg was recently described not as a marginal writer, but as a writer at "the margins of the literary center," a characterization that I find particularly apt. See Anat Weisman, "Ha-memu'ar ke-pulmus" (Memoir as a literary debate), in *Pegishot im meshoreret*, ed. Kartun-Blum and Weisman, p. 74.

61. McCarthy, "Guide to Exiles," p. 40.

62. Ibid., p. 51.

63. Ibid., p. 52.

64. Cited in Yoffe, *Leah Goldberg*, pp. 17–18.

65. Said, "Reflections on Exile," p. 137.

### CHAPTER 3: REREADING DAVID FOGEL

1. Roland Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice*, trans. Linda Coverdale, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), p. 364.

2. David Fogel, *Tacahanot kavot* (Selected prose) (Tel Aviv: Siman Kri'a, 1990), p. 301.

3. Homi K. Bhabha, "Narrating the Nation," introduction to *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 1.

4. Ibid., p. 2.

5. Robert Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose: Modern Fiction and the Language of Realism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), p. 75.

6. Robert Alter, "Fogel and the Forging of a Hebrew Self," *Prooftexts* 13, no. 1 (1993): 4.

7. David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 20–22. Recent theoretical discussions tend to conflate the minor and the marginal, privileging the concept of writing in the language of a hegemonic culture (Irish writers who write in English, for example). My analysis aims to reappropriate the notion of the minor for oppositional stances that resist either the idiom or the ideology of a hegemonic culture: not only minority groups but also individual, antithetical voices, be what may their language or ethnicity.

8. In a recently published essay on the reception of David Fogel's poetry, Dan Miron takes issue with my reading of Fogel and with similar readings by members of what he terms "the Berkeley School." Although he compliments the Berkeley school's contribution to the study of Fogel for its "sensitive and sophisticated readings of selected texts . . . and [its] attempt to place the examination of Fogel's poetry in a dynamic, historical system," Miron finds serious flaws in its approach. He claims that Fogel was never excluded from the canon of Hebrew literature and thus any attempt to read him as a minor writer is bound to fail. Toward the end of his essay, Miron admits that what concerns him is what he labels as the Berkeley school's anti-Zionism. In his own words,

> The Berkeley School's enthusiastic embrace of Fogel in particular, out of all the protagonists of Hebrew modernism, is of course not accidental. It comes to serve their post-Zionist (in fact, anti-Zionist) politics, which is the foundation of their entire enterprise as interpreters of Hebrew literature in a non-Israeli context. . . . The "existence" of Fogel—as well as the possible existence of a Fogelian "anti-*nusach*" which includes works by other writers—appears to establish spiritually and concretely the existence of a study of Hebrew liter-

ature that is detached from a Jewish-national context and which presents itself as an antithesis to the main Israeli ethos. (91)

While I do not wish to defend myself against Miron's political accusations, I find his reading of the Berkeley school indicative of his difficulty in accepting Fogel's own a-Zionism, if not anti-Zionism. In describing Fogel's apolitical poetry along political lines, I attempt to show how Fogel struggled to divorce Hebrew from the nationalist connotations it carried. My reading of Fogel, then, is an attempt to point to an interesting anationalist, cosmopolitan moment within Hebrew modernism, a moment that was largely misconstrued and hence relegated to the margins of Hebrew literature. Miron's reading of the Berkeley school's project attests to the difficulty, even to date, of the establishment of Hebrew literature to accept a non-Zionist writer and non-Zionist readings. See Dan Miron, "Ahava ha-tluya be-davar: Toldot hitkablutah shel shirat David Fogel" (Conditional love: The critical reception of David Fogel's poetry), in *Aderet le-Binyamin* (An overcoat for Benjamin), vol. 1, ed. Ziva Ben-Porat (Tel Aviv: Porter Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999), pp. 29–98.

9. Shlomo Grodzenzky, *Otobiografia shel kore* (Autobiography of a reader) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1962), p. 118.

10. Dan Miron, "Shnei ta'arikhim: Al David Fogel ve-Gavriel Preil" (Two dates: On David Fogel and Gabriel Preil), *Siman Kri'a* 22 (1991): 7.

11. Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 28.

12. Ch. N. Bialik, *Dvarim sh-be'al pe* (Speeches), vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1965), p. 148. For an analysis of this quote, see Prologue.

13. Avraham Shlonsky, *Yalkut eshel* (Selected critical writings) (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1960), p. 56. See Shlonsky's account of new Hebrew poetry, of which he was an important part, in Chapter 2.

14. The only exceptions are the poems about World War II. See, for example, "Sha'atat tsva'ot bi-mlo tevel" (The roar of armies fills the world), p. 262. Unless otherwise indicated, all page references refer to David Fogel's *Kol ha-shirim* (Collected poems) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1966).

15. Fogel, *Tacahanot kavot*, p. 301. It is noteworthy that Fogel did attempt to live in Palestine but that he found it unbearable and returned to Europe after a year. See Dan Pagis, introduction to Fogel, *Kol ha-shirim*, p. 23.

16. Dov Shay, "Le-Avraham Shlonsky be-yovlo" (To Avraham Shlonsky on his jubilee), *Hedim* (June 1950).

17. Fogel, *Tacahanot kavot*, p. 314. Fogel similarly describes himself as "having been emptied of all content" (p. 325).

18. The exception to this is Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 159–93.

19. Modernist Hebrew poetry from the 1920s to the early 1950s is highly influ-

enced by and affiliated with Russian poetry. Shlonsky, for example, is profoundly inspired by both Symbolism and Futurism. Although Futurism in Russia emerged as a reaction against Symbolism, Shlonsky and other Hebrew modernists are simultaneously influenced by these contradictory modernist trends. This awkward phenomenon is typical of Hebrew literature (perhaps even of peripheral literatures at large). The explanation for this enmeshment of styles may be found in Amos Oz's shrewd observation that "literary developments which occurred in English and other European literary traditions over centuries took place within decades in Hebrew." See Amos Oz, "Contemporary Hebrew Literature," *Partisan Review* 49, no. 1 (1982): 17.

20. A similar blindness, on the part of critics rather than poets, is astutely outlined by Marjorie Perloff's "Stevens/Pound: Whose Era?" where she shows that critics who favor one modernist model automatically denounce the opposite poetic model. See *The Dance of The Intellect: Studies in the Pound Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 1–27.

21. Rachel [Bluvstein], "Al ot ha-zman" (On the mark of our time), in *Shirat Rachel* (Rachel's poetry) (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1989), pp. 204–5. Rachel was the first to describe Shlonsky's style as *lahatey lashon* (language tricks). Moreover, her characterization of the proponents of maximalist style as "our writers of hieroglyphics" (*chartumey artsenu*) is indicative of her rejection of Shlonsky's maximalist aesthetics. Rachel is aware, however, of the risks of simplicity: "The way of simplicity is difficult. From one side lurks the prosaic (*proza'I*) and from the other—dandyism (*gandranut*)."

22. David Fogel, "Lashon ve-signon be-sifrutenu ha-tse'ira" (Language and style in our young literature), *Siman Kri'a* 3–4 (1974): 387–91; English trans., Yael Meroz and Eric Zakim, *Prooftexts*, 13, no. 1 (1993): 15–20. All quotations are from this translation.

23. Fogel obviously did not like what he found in Palestine. As Menachem Poznansky writes to Gershon Shofman: "I could not endure his complaints about writers, Erets Israel, Jews in general, and Hebrew literature." Quoted in Pagis, introduction to Fogel, *Kol ha-shirim*, p. 26.

24. Fogel, "Lashon ve-signon be-sifrutenu ha-tse'ira," p. 18; emphases added.

25. Ibid., p. 19.

26. See p. 112 for a discussion of this term.

27. Ibid., p. 20.

28. Interestingly, Fogel's attack on Shlonsky and his maximalist aesthetics is almost identical to Bialik's attack on Shlonsky's modernist language. Bialik argues that the "modernists are performing tricks. A true poet should listen to himself, and listen to the sounds of true poetry which come from the depth of his soul; but these [modernists] take the external, the shell; they want to amaze me with language 'tricks.' But language is still not everything." Quoted in Dan Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, achayot chorgot* (Founding mothers, stepsisters) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1991), p. 47. Although strikingly similar to Bialik's disapproval of Shlonsky, Fogel's critique of Shlonsky and the *moderna* should be separated from Bialik's for one simple reason: as

a premodernist, Bialik attacks Shlonsky for having chosen a new poetic trajectory. Fogel's attack, in contrast, blames Shlonsky for not having radically deviated from the language of Bialik's generation. As Fogel's attack on the *melitsah* clearly shows, he finds the maximalist language of Shlonsky too similar to that of the antecedent poetic generation. It would be erroneous, then, to assume that Fogel's attack on Shlonsky stems from or is indicative of a conservative, antimodernist position. Bialik's antagonistic characterization of Fogel's poems ("they are totally senseless") attests to the fact that the only thing they shared was a dislike for Shlonsky's so-called "language tricks."

29. See Moshe Haneomi, "Hakdama," introduction to David Fogel, "Lashon vesignon be-sifrutenu ha-tse'ira" (Language and style in our young literature), *Siman Kri'a* 3–4 (1974): 387.

30. Uzi Shavit, "Bein Shlonsky le-Fogel" (Between Shlonsky and Fogel), *Ha-sifrut* 4, no. 2 (1973): 251–56.

31. Avraham Shlonsky, "'Lahatey lashon' o 'pashtut'" ("Language tricks" or "simplicity"), in Shlonsky, *Yalkut eshel*, pp. 151–57.

32. Ibid., p. 151; emphases added.

33. Avraham Shlonsky, quoted in Dov Vardi, *Shira ivrit chadasha* (New Hebrew poetry) (Tel Aviv: Sefer, 1947), p. 29.

34. Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Klapey tish'im ve-tish'a* (Against ninety-nine) (1938; reprint, Tel Aviv: Makhon Porter, 1976), pp. 7–8; emphases added. Benjamin Harshav (Hrushovski) has already noted that Greenberg's *Against Ninety-nine* declares war against minimalism (as embodied by the poems of Karni). When Greenberg asserts that "the minimalist poets (*sofrei ha-tsimtsum*) negate the value of expansiveness . . . because a danger exists that due to the roar of young lions in the open, their lyrical whispering outpour in the corner, in the shadow, will not be heard. If they could roar: 'clear the way,' a roar for expansiveness . . . they would have done it" (p. 19). See Benjamin Harshav [Hrushovski], *Ritmus ha-rachavut* (The expansive rhythm) (Tel Aviv: Siman Kri'a, 1978), pp. 16–19.

35. Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Kol ktavav* (Collected poems), vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1991), p. 65.

36. Uri Zvi Greenberg repeatedly denounced the preoccupation with the self, as well as the view of art for art's sake. In his poem "Meshorer Israel bein ha-btarim (chatima)" (The poet of Israel between the pieces [a signature]), he writes: "I am not a poet for the sake of poetry in the world. / On the earth the feet of millions of Jews / their thick agony is my agony and their glory is my glory." See *Kol ktavav*, vol. 1, p. 103.

37. Avraham Shlonsky, "Ne'um ha-mukyon" (The clown's speech), *Shirim* (Collected poems), vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1961), p. 110. The poem was included in *Avney bohu* (Stones of chaos), a collection of poems written between 1931 and 1934, and first appeared in a different form, under the title *Atem* (You), in *Ktuvim* (Tel Aviv) (November 17, 1932).

38. See Hagit Halperin, *Mi-agvaniah ad simfonia: Ha-shira ha-kala shel Avraham*

*Shlonsky* (A muse to amuse: The light verse of Abraham Shlonsky) (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1997), pp. 141–43.

39. It should be noted that Shlonsky's rejection of simplicity is two-pronged. On the one hand, he rejects a Fogelian focus on the psyche as an aestheticist position. On the other hand, he rejects a socialist-realist demand that poetry reflect the achievements of the revolution. Aiming to integrate and balance the poetic and the political, Shlonsky rejects simplicity both as form and as content.

40. David Fogel, "Rav hel'anu ze ha-rechov" (The street has made us tired), *Kol ha-shirim*, p. 241. As Pagis indicates, the poem was first published in 1938. Interestingly, Pagis cites this poem as an example of Fogel's failure to maintain his individual style in metrically ordered poems (p. 53). Yet Pagis's dislike for the poem's didactic tone takes its meaning at face value, ignoring its ambivalent logic (see below).

41. In his diary Fogel similarly writes about the invasive and threatening nature of the external, materialist world, exhorting, "I have become outside. And there is no inside" (*Na'ase-ti chuts. Ve-eyn pnim*). See Fogel, *Tacahanot kavot*, p. 324.

42. See poems like "Be-etsba'ot anugot" (With tender fingers), *Kol ha-shirim*, p. 108; or "Dgalim sh'chorim mefarperim" (Fluttering black flags), p. 138.

43. Avraham Shlonsky, "Lifney ha-sha'ar ha-afel" (Before the dark gate), *Hedim* 6 (1923): 66–67. It should be noted that Uzi Shavit reads the same passage differently, suggesting that the "blackness" of Fogel's poetry is reminiscent of Shlonsky's own poetics in *Dvay*. Although Shavit sees Shlonsky's review as a supportive, welcoming text he too suggests that Fogel's poetry was viewed as somewhat reactionary: "It seems that poetry like Fogel's was perceived by Shlonsky and his fellows at that time as an early, rather conservative, stage of modernism, contrasting with the 'real' modernist, revolutionary poetry as in Russia." See Shavit, "Bein Shlonsky le-Fogel," p. 256.

44. Pagis, introduction to Fogel, *Kol ha-shirim*, p. 36.

45. Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Contingencies of Value," in *Canons*, ed. Robert von Hallberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 17.

46. In fact, in constructing himself as a national subject embodying both the private and the public, Shlonsky could by no means appreciate Fogel's personal poetry. As Uzi Shavit notes, Shlonsky perceived himself as Bialik's true successor, for his own poetry "disregarded the division between personal and collective poetry." See Uzi Shavit, "Ha-shir ha-paru'a: Kavim le-signonah u-le-aklimah ha-sifruti shel ha-shira ha-erets-israelit bi-shnot ha-'esrim" (The wild poem: Indications of the literary climate and style of Erets Israel poetry in the 1920s), *Tèuda* 5 (1986): 176.

47. Avraham Shlonsky, *Pirkey yoman* (Chapters of a diary) (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1981), p. 46; emphases added.

48. Yitshak Norman, "Be-shovakh ha-shira ha-modernit" (In the dovecote of modern poetry), *Ktuvim* (Tel Aviv) (October 20, 1932); emphases added.

49. The correlation between poetic/political radicalism and the rejection of femininity is reminiscent of the Italian Futurists' praise of masculinity. Filippo Marinetti

denounced the "femininity" and "delicacy" of Gabriele D'Annunzio and celebrated (in his Futurist manifesto of 1912) masculinity, speed, and war. Although the *moderna*'s politics were entirely different, many *moderna*-affiliated writers and critics denounced women's writing.

50. Yosef Lichtenboym, *Bi-tchumah shel sifrut* (In the domain of literature), (Tel Aviv: Aleph, 1962), p. 91.

51. Y. Zmora, "Le-shirato shel David Fogel" (On David Fogel's poetry), *Davar* (June 17, 1966).

52. Norman, Zmora, and Lichtenboym are highly perceptive. However, their descriptions of Fogel's poetics can be used only when the value judgments they ascribe to the poems are ignored and suspended.

53. In condemning Fogel's poetry for its fragmentary nature, Lichtenboym echoes David Hurvitz's 1922 account of the Histadrut's debate over the legitimacy of modernist fragmentation:

> The main tragedy of contemporary culture is its fragmentary nature. . . . The cultural disintegration created a human being who is detached from any cultural ground, who struggles with his own contradictions, exploding his life into thousands of splinters. . . . Life and culture turn into a chain of fragments which are not interconnected; there isn't a possibility of seeing the fragments as one organic picture.

Yet, from his examples it becomes clear that Hurvitz legitimizes fragmentation when it is politically committed to the Russian Revolution. See Benjamin Harshav [Hrushovski], ed., *Manifestim shel modernism* (Modernism's manifestos) (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2001), pp. 197–98.

54. Dan Miron, "Matay nechdal 'legalot' et Fogel?" (When will we cease to "discover" Fogel?) *Yediot Ahronoth* (June 2, 1987).

55. For a critique of Miron's reading of women's minimalism, see my "The Exclusion of Women from Hebrew Literary History," *Prooftexts* 11, no. 3 (1991): 256.

56. Miron, "Matay nechdal 'legalot' et Fogel?"

57. Pagis, introduction to Fogel, *Kol ha-shirim*, p. 35.

58. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 9.

59. Ibid., p. 20.

60. I do not mean to suggest that form has a fixed, transhistorical meaning or essence. Instead, I argue that in each period some poetic forms are conservative while others are subversive. Any discussion of the politics of form would thus have to historicize the use of the form under investigation.

61. David Fogel, "Be-leilot ha-stav" (In the nights of Autumn), trans. Eric Zakim (professor of Hebrew literature, Maryland University), *Kol ha-shirim*, p. 113.

62. Goethe's poem reads:

Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schwigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.

The German text and the translation are drawn from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Selected Poems*, ed. Christopher Middleton (Boston: Suhrkamp/lnsel, 1983), pp. 58–59. I want to thank Benjamin Harshav and Bluma Goldstein for helping me sort out the intertextual relationship between Fogel's poem and Goethe's.

63. Ibid.

64. Bertolt Brecht, *Poems, 1913–1956*, ed. John Willett and Ralph Manheim (New York: Methuen, 1976), p. 100. It is noteworthy that Brecht's attack on Goethe's poem equates lyricism with co-optation and political blindness. Brecht's criticism is not dissimilar to Shlonsky's attack on Fogel. The irony, of course, is that Fogel himself critiqued Goethe, although in a much subtler way.

65. It is common for modernists to rewrite (and restructure) texts from the past. A salient example is Joyce's *Ulysses*, a mock epic that parodies Homer's *Odyssey*. See also Eliot's quotes from the Baudelaire, Dante, and others in *The Waste Land*, or Faulkner's use of a biblical story in *Absalom Absalom!* Fogel's interest in rewriting is manifested in other poems as well. As Chana Kronfeld suggests, "Bi-netot ha-yom" can be read as a rewriting of Bialik's "Im dimdumey ha-chama" (In twilight).

66. Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism*, p. 97.

67. The same phenomenon appears in many of Fogel's poems. In "Le'at olim susay" (Slowly my horses climb), for example, the speaker begins in the present tense (which in the late biblical model is also adjectival or gerundive) but shifts to the future-imperfect: "Heavy my coach will squeak." In "Yamim ponim al yadi" (Days pass by me), this shift is even more conspicuous. While beginning in the present tense, the speaker turns to the future-imperfect to describe an imagined meeting with his deceased father, a meeting that is modeled after a childhood experience. While the imagined meeting is described in the future-imperfect, the part that is based on childhood memory is projected onto the present as if it were an ongoing state or action: "I shall still stand before you / your little, good boy / and my hand silently pulling / your black coat's button" (hen od e'emod lefaneikha / na'arkha ha-katan, ha-tov, / ve-yadi morta cheresh / kaftor me'ilkha ha-shachor).

68. Fogel's fragmentation of Goethe's depiction of nature is typically modernist. According to Roland Barthes, "modern poetry, that which stems not from Baudelaire but from Rimbaud . . . destroyed relationships in language and reduced discourse to words as static things. . . . In it, Nature becomes a fragmented space, made of objects

solitary and terrible, because the links between them are only potential." See *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), pp. 49–50.

69. Louis Menand, *Discovering Modernism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 22–23.

70. Herwarth Walden, "Kritik der vorexpressionistischen Dichtung" (Critique of pre-Expressionist poetry), in Paul Pörtner, ed., *Literaturrevolution, 1910–1925*, vol. 1 (Darmstadt: Herman Luchterhand, 1960), p. 416.

71. Fogel, "Le'at olim susay," *Kol ha-shirim*, p. 73.

72. In his brief analysis of "Facing the Sea," Fogel's fascinating novella, Menakhem Perry holds a similar view: "The starting point is life in 'brackets'—life torn off from its habitual regularity, suggesting an entry or retreat into another existence as in a time-out." See Menakhem Perry, "Ibed Fogel et Fogel" (Fogel lost Fogel), afterword to David Fogel, *Tacahanot kavot* (Tel Aviv: Siman Kri'a, 1990), p. 332. Although in the case of "Facing the Sea" this "time out" is merely used to describe a vacation, Perry's spatial/temporal metaphor is an apt one for the description of the depicted situation in many of Fogel's poems. Another description of writing in terms of a spatial void has been proposed by Roland Barthes: "Writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing." See Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 142.

73. Another of Fogel's poems, "Ki yigash ha-layil el chalonekh" (When night approaches your window), shapes the merging of speaker and night in very similar terms. See *Kol ha-shirim*, p. 89.

74. Kasimir Edschmid, quoted in Richard Sheppard, "German Expressionism," in *Modernism*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 278.

75. For a fuller account of this tension see Chana Kronfeld, "Fogel and Modernism: A Liminal Moment in Hebrew Literary History," *Prooftexts* 13, no. 1 (1993): 45–63.

76. Shavit, "Ha-shir ha-paru'a."

77. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 16.

78. Ibid., p. 18.

79. Renato Rosaldo, "Politics, Patriarchs, and Laughter," in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, ed. Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 125.

80. Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism*, p. 10.

81. Ben-Tsiyon Shalom, "Shirat Anda Pinkerfeld" (The poetry of Anda Pinkerfeld), in *Anda*, ed. Zehava Beilin, (Tel Aviv: Eked, 1977), p. 19.

82. Avraham Blat, *Bi-ntiv sofrim* (Following writers' path) (Tel Aviv: Menora, 1967), p. 107.

83. Yuri Lotman, *Analysis of the Poetic Text*, trans. D. Barton Johnson, (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1975), p. 26. Lotman adds that "it is, of course, significantly easier to study the belletristic nature of the more ornate work."

### CHAPTER 4: REREADING WOMEN'S POETRY

1. Luce Irigaray, "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother," in *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Margaret Witford (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 44

2. Shari Benstock, "Expatriate Modernism: Writing on the Cultural Rim," in *Women's Writing in Exile*, ed. Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 29.

3. Amalia Kahana-Carmon, "Le-hitbazbez al ha-tsdadi" (To be wasted on the periphery), *Yediot Ahronoth* (September 15, 1985).

4. Celeste Schenck, "Exiled by Genre: Modernism, Canonicity, and the Politics of Exclusion," in *Women's Writing in Exile*, ed. Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 244.

5. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (1979; reprint, Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 6. For a feminist reading of Bourdieu's theory, see Toril Moi, "Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture," *New Literary History* 22 (1991): 1017–49.

6. While it is commonplace to mark the 1920s as the historical moment of the appearance of Hebrew women poets, it is noteworthy that Dov Sadan has already drawn attention to a number of lesser known women writers who participated in nineteenth-century literary culture. Aside from the relatively known Italian Hebrew poet Rachel Morpurgo, he also mentions

> Yhetti Wohlerner, whose rhymes were praised by educated men; Miriam Merkl-Mosezon, who corresponded with the lion of her generation, Y. L. Gordon, and who also translated a novel from the Crusader period; Sara Shapira, whose one and only poem encapsulates the agony of both biblical poetry and popular songs. And others, Sheindel Segal, Devorah Weissman, and Chava Shapira, whose name and singularity seemed in her eyes to justify her pseudonym "Em kol chai" (Mother of all living things).

Sadan's description is of utmost importance not only because he directs attention to these forgotten writers, but also because he acknowledges the existence of a female literary tradition. Thus he remarks, "[These writers have] modest visions, but it is the modesty of a seed whose value is not in its own size but rather in the size of the tree

that emerges from it. And it is a tree of many branches." See Dov Sadan, *Bein din le-cheshbon* (Between judgment and reckoning) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1963), p. 367.

7. It would be erroneous to suggest that these three poets shared the same position in the canon and in collective memory. As we shall see, however, all of them were subjected to a tradition of hostile readings that ignored their poetics and judged their poetry according to criteria opposed to their objectives.

8. Itamar Even-Zohar, "Israeli Hebrew Literature: A Historical Model," in *Papers in Historical Poetics* (Tel Aviv: Porter Institute, 1978), p. 83. I have taken the liberty to alter Even-Zohar's unconventional transliterations of Hebrew names.

9. Meir Wieseltier, "Chatakh orekh be-shirato shel Natan Zakh" (A cross-section of Nathan Zach's poetry), *Siman kri'a* 10 (1980): 405.

10. See Chana Kronfeld's discussion of key metaphors used in literary historiography. *On the Margins of Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 57–70.

11. See Aharon Shabtai's claim that every poet's desire is "to become a father." "Likrat shinuy ha-nusakh" (Toward a change of form), *Akhshav* 50 (1985): 67.

12. Joseph Lichtenboym, *Sofrey Israel* (The writers of Israel) (Tel Aviv: Niv, 1963), p. 204.

13. Israel Cohen, *Ktavim* (Collected writings), vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Va'ad, 1962), p. 384.

14. Avraham Blat, *Bi-ntiv sofrim* (Following writers' path) (Tel Aviv: Menora, 1967), p. 106.

15. Yosef Se-Lavan's book on Devorah Baron, for example, is titled *Dvorah Baron: The Man and His Writing* (Tel Aviv: Or-am, 1976). The series' subtitle, *The Man and His Writing* (Ha-ish vi-ytsirato), is not altered even when a woman writer is included in this series; the title demonstrates that she does not belong. Similarly, Aharon Ben-Or's (Urinovsky) ambitious textbook on Hebrew modernism, *Toldot ha-sifrut ha-ivrit be-dorenu* (History of Hebrew literature in our generation) (Tel Aviv: Izráel, 1956), does not quite know how to categorize women writers. They appear in the table of contents in a chapter on women's poetry. But when turning to that chapter, one is directed to other chapters where women are integrated into literary history at large. Ben-Or's vacillation is symptomatic of the confusion and prejudices that govern Hebrew critics' descriptions of women's writing. He also cannot decide whether they constitute a separate category or belong to larger trends and movements.

16. Cited in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The War of the Words* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 155.

17. Cited in Svetlana Boym, *Death in Quotation Marks* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 192. Chapter 3, titled "The Death of the Poetess," offers a particularly interesting analysis of the status of women's poetry in Russian modernism.

18. Cited in Gwen Kirkpatrick, "The Journalism of Alfonsina Storni: A New Approach to Women's History in Argentina," in *Women, Culture, and Politics in Latin*

*America: Seminar on Feminism and Culture in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 108.

19. Amalia Kahana-Carmon, "Gal chadash shel nashim sofrot" (A new wave of women writers), *Davar* (July 26, 1991).

20. M. Y. Berdichevsky, *Arakhin* (Values) (Warsaw: Tseirim, 1899).

21. Thus Rachel, for example, describes her contribution to the national project first as a series of negations, and later as a series of affirmations, thereby thematizing her inability to be a worthy (male-coded) national subject. In "El artsi" (To my country), she writes:

I did not sing to you, my country
nor did I glorify your name
in heroic deeds
in many battles,
only a tree did I plant
quiet shores of the Jordan
only a path did my feet pave
in the fields.

In the second stanza, the speaker identifies her contribution as "spare" (*dala*). See *Shirat Rachel* (Rachel's poems) (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1975), p. 58.

22. As Naomi Seidman argues, "Yiddish texts would typically open with an apologetic introduction explaining the necessity of writing for those who were ignorant of Hebrew, a social category often referred to in some variation of the phrase, 'women and simple people.'" Naomi Seidman, "*A Marriage Made in Heaven*"*? The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 3.

23. Benjamin Harshav [Hrushovski], *The Meaning of Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 23. For a brilliant feminist analysis of this diglossic situation see Seidman, *"A Marriage Made in Heaven"?*

24. Moshe Gitlin, "Bi-ne'ure'a: Mi-zikhronot ben-ir" (In her youth: Memories of a fellow townsman), in *Agav orkha* (By the way), ed. Devorah Baron (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1960), p. 208.

25. Esther Raab, quoted in Ehud Ben-Ezer, *Yamim shel la'anahs u-devash* (Days of gall and honey) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1998), p. 95.

26. Y. L. Gordon, "Le-mi ani amel?" (For whom do I toil?), in *Kitvey Y. L. Gordon: Shira* (Collected Writing: Poetry) (Tel Aviv, Dvir, 1964), p. 27.

27. Raab, quoted in Ben-Ezer, *Yamim shel la'anahs u-devash*, p. 95.

28. Yocheved Zhelezniak's choice of the pseudonym Bat-Miriam is clearly indicative of her awareness of the differences between male and female writing, as well as of her desire to uncover a female genealogy. Bat-Miriam consciously attempts to create a female tradition, and her choice of names, Bat-Miriam, is an effort to recognize her predecessors, those mothers and grandmothers erased from history. The words of

Luce Irigaray, quoted in the epigraph to this chapter, are relevant for understanding Bat-Miriam's move, as she tries to locate herself within a feminine genealogy. See Ilana Pardes, "Yocheved Bat-Miriam: The Poetic Strength of a Matronym," in *Gender and Text in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature*, ed. Naomi Sokoloff, Ann Lapidus Lerner, and Anita Norich (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992), pp. 39–64.

29. Yocheved Bat-Miriam, *Merachok* (From afar) (Tel Aviv: Keren Zangvil, 1932), p. 109.

30. Ibid., p. 124.

31. Some biographical notes may help illustrate this point. Uri Milstein notes that "Rachel learned a few prayers in her parents' home, [but] she didn't always understand the meaning of the words. . . . She learned Hebrew in Palestine when she was nineteen. Her vocabulary wasn't as rich as Bialik's or Shlonsky's, but she had, perhaps, an advantage over them. She learned the Hebrew of the streets and of the kindergartens." See *Rachel*, ed. Uri Milstein (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1985), p. 50. As will become increasingly clear from the examples adduced in the following pages, women writers expressed estrangement from rabbinic culture and language. They experienced Hebrew as a new and "spare" language. With few exceptions, men experienced Hebrew somewhat differently, an understandable fact given the way they acquired Hebrew as a textual language at a very young age.

32. Shimon Halkin, *Muskamot u-mashberim be-sifrutenu* (Conventions and crises in Hebrew literature) (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1980), p. 78.

33. For an introduction to the silenced female tradition in Hebrew poetry, see Shirley Kaufman, Galit Hasan-Rokem, and Tamar S. Hess, eds., *The Defiant Muse: Hebrew Feminist Poems from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Feminist Press, 1999).

34. Robert Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose: Modern Fiction and the Language of Realism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), p. 234.

35. Cited in Zohar Shavit, *Ha-chayim ha-sifrutiyim be-Erets Israel, 1910–1933* (The literary life in Palestine, 1910–1933) (Tel Aviv: Makhon Porter, 1982), pp. 428–29.

36. Avraham Shlonsky, "Ha-melitsah" (The lofty phrase), *Hedim* 1 (1923): 189–90. Reprinted in Benjamin Harshav [Hrushovski], ed., *Manifestim shel modernism* (Modernism's manifestos) (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2001), p. 154.

37. Y. L. Gordon, *Igrot* (Letters), vol. 2, ed. Yitshak Wiessberg (Warsaw: Schuldenberg Brothers, 1894), p. 5. For an analysis of this passage see also Iris Parush, *Nashim kor'ot: Yitrona shel shuliyut* (Reading women: The benefit of marginality) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2001), pp. 238–39.

38. Ya'akov Steinberg, *Dyokna'ot va-arakhim* (Portraits and values) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1979), p. 55.

39. Ibid.

40. Shimon Ginzburg, "Meshorerot ivriyot" (Hebrew women poets), in *Anda*, ed. Zehava Beilin (Tel Aviv: Eked, 1977), p. 23.

41. A. Libenstein, "Sfata shel Rachel" (Rachel's language), in *Rachel ve-shirata*

(Rachel and her poetry), ed. Mordechai Snir and Shimon Kushnir (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1946), pp. 111–12.

42. Itamar Ya'oz-Kest, "Im Anda: Monolog bi-shnayim" (With Anda: A monologue for two), in *Anda*, ed. Zehava Beilin (Tel Aviv: Eked, 1977), p. 135.

43. Esther Raab, "Sicha be-Tiv'on" (Conversation in Tivon), *Chadarim* 1 (1981): 115.

44. Dan Miron has already cautioned against an oversimplistic reading of this poem and offered an interesting reading of its inner tensions. The ant whose world is seemingly narrow aspires to reach "wondrous shores and distant lights." See Dan Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, achayot chorgot* (Founding mothers, stepsisters) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1991), p. 17. It is also noteworthy that in a review of Maeterlinck's *The Life of the Ants* Rachel writes: "The book is a panegyric poem to the ant, a corrective to parables of all generations which described her as a revolting and miserable creature in her stinginess, ordered poverty, and selfishness. 'Now it is proven,' says Maeterlinck, 'that the ant is one of the most noble, compassionate, devoted, and generous creatures on earth.' Nothing for herself, everything to others." See *Shirat Rachel*, p. 227.

45. Ziva Shamir, *Od chozer ha-nigun* (The tune still returns) (Tel Aviv: Dyunon, 1989), p. 156. Shamir argues that unlike Alterman's deliberate refrain from the language of traditional Jewish sources, Rachel's "thinness" was "involuntary asceticism" (*hitnazrut me-ones*).

46. Dan Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, achayot chorgot*, p. 100.

47. Ibid.

48. Milstein, *Rachel*, p. 77.

49. Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism*, p. 81. The examples for this "double modeling" on a European tradition and an intrinsic Hebraist tradition are, of course, innumerable. Rather than discussing Hebrew texts in terms of either "borrowing" or intrinsic development, one should perceive these texts as working simultaneously within two traditions. Thus, as I showed in the previous chapter, Fogel applies the lessons of German Expressionism by using the Hebrew of the Song of Songs. Naomi Seidman has similarly shown (in an unpublished paper) that Uri Zvi Greenberg's misogyny in *Ha-gavrut ha'-ola* (Masculinity rising) is modeled both on Marinetti's Futurism and on the Book of Ecclesiastes, which reads: "Be-rachamim Gedolim saneti et ha-isha" (I hated the woman with great pity). It is perhaps this double modeling that led Dov Sadan to state that all the "isms" are already present in the Bible.

50. Rachel [Bluvstein], "Al'ot ha-zman" (On the mark of our time), in *Shirat Rachel*, pp. 204–5.

51. Shlonsky, "Ha-melitsah."

52. Harshav, *Manifestim shel modernism*, p. 32.

53. Osip Mandelstam, *The Complete Critical Prose and Letters*, ed. Jane Gary Har-

ris (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1979), p. 61. All further citations from Mandelstam are from this edition.

54. Ibid., p. 63.

55. Ibid., p. 62.

56. Ibid., p. 116.

57. Rachel, "Niv" (Expression), *Shirat Rachel*, p. 52.

58. Gordon, "Le-mi ani amel?" p. 27.

59. "Marker" is Ziva Ben-Porat's term for the intertextual component. See "The Poetics of Literary Allusion," *Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976): 105–28.

60. For a similar view of the reasons for Raab's marginalization, see Re'uven Shoham, "Esther Raab ve-shirata" (Esther Raab and her poetry), introduction to Esther Raab, *Yalkut shirey Esther Raab* (Selected poems of Esther Raab) (Tel Aviv: Yachdav, 1982), p. 52.

61. See David Biale, *Eros and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), pp. 176–203.

62. Ben-Ezer, *Yamim shel la'anah u-devash*, p. 453.

63. Esther Raab, "Ne'urei ha-shirah be-erets lo zeru'a" (The youth of poetry in an uncultivated land) *Chadarim* 1 (1981): 101.

64. Ben-Ezer, *Yamim shel la'anah u-devash*, p. 266.

65. Ibid.

66. Raab, "Sicha be-Tiv'on," p. 115.

67. See Moshe Dor, *Legalot le-adam acher* (To tell another person) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1974), pp. 47–58. It is noteworthy that contemporary Hebrew readers, who received their education in the secular Israeli schools, are in a position not unlike that of the female writer in the 1920s. Estranged from religious culture, they are unfamiliar with the traditional texts that informed generations of Hebrew writers. The irony is that the very reasons that caused the marginalization of women writers are now working to legitimize them, for their Hebrew is more Israeli. By way of contrast, Bialik's or Shlonsky's Hebrew is rather difficult for contemporary Israeli readers.

68. Chana Kronfeld, "Nativism and Gender in the Poetry of Esther Raab" (paper presented at the Conference in Honor of William M. Brinner, Berkeley, Calif., March 1993).

69. Raab, "Ne'urei ha-shirah be-erets lo zeru'a," p. 106.

70. Esther Raab, "Ani tachat ha-atad" (I am under the bramble bush), *Kol ha-shirim* (Collected poems) (Tel Aviv: Zmora Bitan, 1988), p. 31.

71. Recently, an earlier, unpublished version of this poem has been recovered. In this version Raab does not obfuscate the boundary between metaphor and metonymy, and the poem also ends differently: "Et dinenu peta gazarti" (Our verdict I suddenly pronounced/cut). The final version, which fuses the masculine and the feminine in a violent grammatical and erotic union, is much more radical. See Ben-Ezer, *Yamim shel la'anahs u-devash*, p. 256.

72. Ya'oz-Kest, "Im Anda," p. 132.

73. Ibid., p. 134.

74. Ibid., p. 132.

75. Leah Goldberg, *Mikhtavim mi-nesi'ah medumah* (Letters from an imagined journey) (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1982), p. 63. This was not the only instance in which Goldberg distanced herself from women's poetry. In a 1969 interview, a year before her death, Goldberg proclaimed: "There is something that I dislike in this women's section. The woman is a writer or not a writer [*sofer o lo sofer*]." Interestingly, Goldberg uses the masculine *sofer* rather the feminine form *soferet*, thereby rejecting her classification as a "female writer." See *Ma'ariv* (Tel Aviv) (January 24, 1969).

76. Ya'oz-Kest, "Im Anda," p. 134.

77. Dov Sadan, "Isha ve-hi meshoreret" (A woman who is a poet), in *Anda*, ed. Zehava Beilin (Tel Aviv: Eked, 1977), p. 100.

78. Ginzburg, "Meshorerot ivriyot," p. 23. For an overview of the meaning of *lahatei-signon* in Hebrew criticism see my analysis of the exchange between Fogel and Shlonsky in Chapter 3.

79. Nurit Govrin, "Kni'a le-tsorekh kibush" (Surrender for the sake of conquer), in *Anda*, ed. Zehava Beilin (Tel Aviv: Eked, 1977), p. 118.

80. Ya'oz-Kest, "Im Anda," p. 134.

81. Rachel, "Yamim dovevim" (Speaking days), in *Anda*, ed. Zehava Beilin (Tel Aviv: Eked, 1977), pp. 9–10.

82. See Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism*, pp. 21–34.

83. Lily Ratok, "Kol isha makira et ze" (Every woman knows it), in *Ha-kol ha-acher* (The other voice), ed. Lily Ratok (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1994), p. 261.

84. Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, achayot chorgot*, p. 17.

85. Nathan Zach, "Le-akliman ha-signoni shel shnot ha-chamishim ve-ha-shishim be-shiratenu ha-chadasha" (The stylistic climate of the 1950s and 1960s in our new poetry), *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv) (July 29, 1966).

86. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage, 1973), p. xx.

87. Nurit Zarchi, "Al sfarim ve-al kotvim ve-al ktiva: Sicha im Dalia Ravikovitch" (On books, writers, and writing: A conversation with Dalia Ravikovitch), *Al ha-mishmar* (November 14, 1976).

### CHAPTER 5: AVOT YESHURUN'S "PASSOVER ON CAVES"

1. Sh. Shifra, "Re'ayon im Avot Yeshurun" (Interview with Avot Yeshurun), *Davar* (April 1, 1975).

2. Avot Yeshurun, quoted in Yitzhak Bezalel, *Ha-kol katuv ba-sefer* (Everything is written in the book) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1969), p. 39.

3. Avot Yeshurun's birth name was Yechi'el Perlmutter. However, like many of his

generation, he chose a more Hebrew-sounding name after arriving to Palestine. In Yeshurun's case, however, this change is resonant with meaning. His name of choice means literally "our fathers are looking [at us]," thereby advancing an ambivalent relationship with the negated past that is simultaneously present and absent. Interestingly, his name of choice also marks a shift from the mother (Perlmutter) to the father (Avot), a shift that signifies perhaps the Zionist desire for enhanced masculinity. For a discussion of the correlations between Zionism and masculinity, see Michael Gluzman, "Ha-kmiha le-hetrosexualiyut: Miniyut u-le'umiyut be-altneuland" (Longing for heterosexuality: Nationalism and sexuality in Herzl's *Altneuland*), *Te'oria u-vikoret* 11 (1997): 145–62.

4. David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. x.

5. Benjamin Harshav aptly describes the common denominator of various Jewish political views as a three-tiered negation: "NOT HERE, NOT LIKE NOW, NOT AS WE WERE." The first negation, "NOT HERE," resulted in a mass migration movement overseas. The "NOT LIKE NOW" took the shape of ideologies aiming to restructure the "here" entirely by building a new life. The "NOT AS WE WERE" was expressed by the suppression of "negative," "stereotypically Jewish" traits. See Benjamin Harshav [Hrushovski], *The Meaning of Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California press, 1990), p. 130.

6. Rachel [Bluvstein], *Shirat Rachel* (Rachel's poetry) (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1989), p. 15.

7. Leah Goldberg, "Tel Aviv 1935," *Kol ha-shirim* (Collected poems), vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1970), p. 14.

8. Noach Stern, "Moledet chadasha" (A new homeland), *Bein arfilim* (Within the fog) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1966), p. 100.

9. In her book on Israeli cinema, Ella Shohat recounts an anecdote that is indicative of the ways in which Yiddish was suppressed: "When Goldfaden's operetta 'Shulamith' was performed in its original language, Yiddish, the Hebrew-language fanatics threw stink bombs." See Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Polities of Representation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), p. 53.

10. Elizabeth Kloty Beaujour, *Alien Tongues* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 6.

11. The term is Max Weinreich's. For a lucid explanation of Yiddish as a fusion language, see Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish.*

12. As J. N. Jeffries argues, "Herzl visits Palestine but seems to find nobody there but his fellow Jews; Arabs apparently vanish before him as in their own Arabian nights." And Dr. Chaim Weizmann added in a 1931 speech that "if you look at prewar Zionist literature you will find hardly a word about the Arabs." Cited in Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken, 1972), p. 210. It should be noted, however, that figures like Ahad Ha'am and Yitzhak Epstein at the turn of the century cautioned the Jewish people against ignoring the Arab presence in Palestine.

13. Avot Yeshurun, "Pesach al kukhim" (Passover on caves), *Re'em* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1960), pp. 99–104.

14. Cited in Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, p. 86.

15. Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. xiv.

16. Benjamin Harshav [Hrushovski], *Language in Time of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. viii.

17. Gershon Shaked, "Lama Bialik adayin imanu kan ve-akshav?" (Why is Bialik still with us?), in *Hallel li-Bialik* (Tribute to Bialik), ed. H. Weiss and Y. Itzhaki (Tel Aviv: Universitat Bar Ilan, 1977), p. 25.

18. Shlomo Grodzensky, *Otobiografia shel kore* (Autobiography of a reader) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1962), p. 205.

19. Avraham Shlonsky, cited in Dov Vardi, *Shira ivrit chadasha* (New Hebrew poetry) (Tel Aviv: Sefer, 1947), p. 29.

20. Aharon Komem, "Ha-meshorer ve-ha-manhig: Bialik ve-Ahad Ha-am, Alterman u-Ben-Gurion" (The poet and the leader: Bialik and Ahad Ha-am, Alterman and Ben-Gurion), in *Alterman vi-ytsirato* (Alterman and his work), ed. M. Dorman and A. Komem (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1989), p. 55.

21. Uzriel Uchmany, quoted in Grodzensky, *Otobiografia shel kore*, p. 235.

22. Chaim Toren, *Sifrutenu ha-yafa* (Our belles lettres) (Jerusalem: Achiasaf, 1948); Yosef Lichtenboym, *Sifrutenu ha-chadasha* (Our new literature) (Tel Aviv: Niv, 1963); Mati Meged, *Shirim liri'im: 1900–1970* (Lyrical poems: 1900–1970) (Ramat Gan: Masada, 1970).

23. Yehudit Hendel, "Dyokan ha-meshorer ke-sus boded" (The portrait of the poet as a lonely horse), *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv) (September 9, 1988).

24. Shifra, "Re'ayon im Avot Yeshurun."

25. Helit Yeshurun, "'Ani holekh el ha-kol'" ("I walk toward everything"), interview with Avot Yeshurun, *Chadarim* 3 (1982–83): 94.

26. Moshe Dor, "Madu'a halakhnu el Avot Yeshurun?" (Why did we go to Avot Yeshurun?) *Ma'ariv* (Tel Aviv) (March 22, 1985).

27. Dan Miron, *Im lo tihyeh Yerushalayim: Masot al ha-sifrut ha-ivrit be-heksher tarbuti-politi* (If there is no Jerusalem: Essays on Hebrew writers in a cultural-political context) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1985), p. 72.

28. Avot Yeshurun, *Shloshim amudim shel Avot Yeshurun* (Thirty pages of Avot Yeshurun) (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1964). It becomes clear from several critical responses that this book marks the first change in Yeshurun's position within the canon. The right-wing writer Moshe Shamir praised the book as it was awarded the 1964 Brenner Prize for literature. However, that it was only the beginning of a change becomes clear from Yeshurun's own recollection of the threats he got before receiving the prize.

29. Ya'akov Gil, "Avdut be-tokh ha-medina" (Slavery within the state), *Cherut* (July 18, 1952).

30. L. Livne, "Purim al nekhasim" (Purim on real estate), *Be-terem*, found in Avot Yeshurun file in the Gnazim Archives, Beit ha-sofer (The writer's home), Tel Aviv, with no further reference.

31. Haim Shorer, "Nikhnas ha-ru'ach ba-avi Avot Yeshurun" (The demon enters the father of Avot Yeshurun), *Ha-dor* (October 3, 1952).

32. A.K., "'Yahndes' o malkhut ha-tohu va-bohu" ("Yahndes" and the kingdom of chaos), *Ha-boker* (May 26, 1961).

33. Shalom Kremer, "Shirn ektsentrit" (Eccentric poetry), *Yediot Ahronoth* (July 14, 1961).

34. Ibid.

35. See Eda Zoritte, *Shirat ha-pere he-'atsil* (The song of the noble savage) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1996), pp. 161–69. Zoritte claims that the letter was fabricated by Aharon Amir.

36. Letter to the editor, *Aleph* (October 1952).

37. A methodological clarification should be noted before proceeding further. By master-narrative, I mean a continuous and reproductive representation—in the Bible as well as in postbiblical exegetic traditions—of gentiles as Others. Although the term "master-narrative" is drawn from Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), my view of the Jewish-gentile narrative is modeled after Edward Said's critique of Orientalism. The "distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philological texts," is an elaboration, in Edward Said's words, "not only of a basic geographical distinction . . . but also of a whole series of 'interests.' . . . " See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 12.

38. In the biblical context it is more correct to speak of Israelites than of Jews. Yet, in the postbiblical interpretations of the Bible Israelites are referred to as Jews. Yeshurun's critique of the Passover Haggadah and the Book of Esther draws an analogy between two very distinct texts.

39. Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 3–36.

40. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 115.

41. Helit Yeshurun, "'Ani holekh el ha-kol,'" p. 93. *Falaheem* is the Hebrew pronunciation of the Arabic word for "farmers." However, Yeshurun changes the spelling to *fellaheen* to create a more idiosyncratic sound (which is closer to Arabic). When I quote from the poem, I use Yeshurun's spelling. When I speak about the Arab farmers of the land, I use the common *falaheem*.

42. Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Kelev bayit* (Home dog) (Tel Aviv: Hedim, 1929), p. 12.

43. Avot Yeshurun, *Homograf* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1985), p. 56. For an interesting overview of the relationship between the two poets see, Zoritte, *Shirat ha-pere he-'atsil*, pp. 110, 178–79.

44. Helit Yeshurun, "'Ani holekh el ha-kol,'" p. 103.

45. Compare the more familiar nasalization of Yacov (Jacob) as Yankev or the diminutive Yankel.

46. Cited in Harshav, *Language in the Time of Revolution*, p. 22. Brenner's words incited a fierce debate as he was accused of swaying his audience to conversion. For a survey of this debate, see Nurit Govrin, *Me'ora Brenner: Ha-ma'avak al chofesh ha-bituy, 1911–1913* (The Brenner event: The struggle for freedom of expression, 1911–1913) (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Tsvi, 1985).

47. Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 103–9.

48. Nissim Calderon, *Be-heksher politi* (In a political context) (Tel Aviv: Siman Kri'a, 1980), p. 9.

49. Shifra, "Re'ayon im Avot Yeshurun."

50. Avot Yeshurun, quoted in Zoritte, *Shirat ha-pere he-'atsil*, p. 278.

51. Russell Ferguson, "The Invisible Center," introduction to *Out There: Marginalization in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh Minh-ha, and Cornel West (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), p. 11.

### APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 5

Regarding the translation, there is little resemblance between the original text and its English version. Yeshurun's language is extremely cryptic and therefore nearly impossible to translate. However, the ungrammatical aspects of the text are just as pervasive in the Hebrew original as in the English version. To facilitate understanding, I have annotated the poem rather extensively so as to convey some of the meaning lost in my translation. Words in languages other than Hebrew (i.e., Yiddish, Arabic) are left untranslated so as to preserve the text's polyglot nature.

1. Interestingly, in Yiddish to "go to the earth" is idiomatic for "go to hell."

2. "A song sung in German by Zionists in preimmigration training camps in Poland; *hoch* is 'high' in German." This note is the only one that Yeshurun himself included in the Hebrew text.

3. Canaan is the biblical (precovenant) name for the Land of Israel; *fellaheen* is "farmers" in Arabic.

4. The original Hebrew line is very obscure. There seems to be a word play on lions (*arayot*) and incest (*giluy arayot*).

5. The Song of Deborah (Judg. 4:9) reads:

My heart goes out to the governors of Israel
that offer themselves willingly among the people. Bless the Lord
you that ride on white she-asses
you that sit on the couched
and you who walk by the way, tell the tale.

Moreover, according to Jewish belief, the Messiah will appear riding on a white she-ass.

6. There seems to be a word play here: in Hebrew the nonidiomatic "stood in the wild" (*la'amod ba-pere*) echoes the idiom "to withstand hardship" (*la'amod ba-perets*).

7. *Falah* is "farmer," singular of the *fellaheen* of the first stanza.

8. Idiomatically, in Hebrew, "like the hand of a king" means "with great generosity."

9. "Besht" is Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of the Hassidic movement. Literally, "holder of a good name."

10. This line clearly evokes the biblical story of Jacob and Esau. By means of disguise Jacob gets the blessing intended for Esau. "And Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he touched him, and said, the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he recognized him not, because his hands were hairy as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. And he said art thou really my son Esau? And he said, I am" (Gen. 27:22–24). Note that the voice and the hands appear in this stanza when the speaker meets the Arab. Note also that Jacob's name will be changed to Israel while Esau (like Ishmael) will come to be recognized as the father of the Arabs. The poem's depiction of the first encounter with the Arab echoes the biblical scene while subverting its roles.

11. A dinar is a coin (from the Latin *denarius*).

12. The Hebrew word *kad* means both urn and pitcher. While in the second stanza it was used to evoke archaeological connotations, it is used here to evoke a biblical typescene. See, for example, Gen. 24:18: "And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher." Note that in the first version of this biblical typescene Abraham's servant is a stranger in a foreign land, as is the speaker of "Passover on Caves."

13. *Khan* is "hotel" in Arabic.

14. *Berginehs* is "eggplants" in both Ladino and Arabic.

15. Ramat-Gan is the name of an Israeli town.

16. The Hebrew word *demey*, translated above as "[my mother's] money" can also mean "[my mother's] blood." While contextually money seems like a more accurate translation, the second meaning seems to be in congruence with Yeshurun's "guilt poems," where he maintains that his immigration to Israel "killed" his mother. *Sardinehs* is Yiddish for "sardines."

17. *Abhuna* means "our fathers" in Aramaic. Note that the words "fathers" and "look" are related to the poet's chosen name, Avot Yeshurun, which means "our fathers are looking at us." This stanza unfolds the drama of enunciation.

18. "How is it different" is a key phrase from the opening line of the "four questions" in the Jewish Haggadah (the tale of Exodus read on Passover night). It is noteworthy that the evoked text deals with the relationship between the Israelites and the Egyptians just as Yeshurun's text deals with the relationship between Jews and Arabs.

19. In biblical Hebrew "bought" also means "created."

20. The Hebrew word machfo, translated above as "hiding" is a portmanteau combining "hiding" (*machbo*) and "covered" (*chupa, mechupe*), suggesting that the father is dead.

21. In Hebrew to "receive a face" is also to "welcome" guests.

22. In the Bible "Pelethite" signifies mob, riffraff but also the bodyguards of David and Solomon.

23. In the *piyut*, as well as in a popular song that is drawn from the Book of Esther, Jacob's rose is a metaphor for the Jewish people. Interestingly, like the Haggadah, the book of Esther tells the story of a clash between a Jewish minority and a powerful non-Jewish majority. Yeshurun uses these texts ironically, to subvert their original meaning.

24. The Song of Songs reads: "Like the rose among the thorns so is my love among the daughters." Because of its explicit sexual language the Song of Songs was read allegorically, whereby Israel is seen as the rose while the surrounding nations are thorns.

25. Note that the Jews are advised to ask the Arab what he thinks of the Zionist enterprise.

26. Chibat tsiyon, or Love-of-Zion, was a nineteenth-century Jewish movement that sought to build and develop the Land of Israel.

27. Idiomatically, "judgment and judgment" means double standard.

28. In Hebrew "bride" (*kala*) is a homophone of "to be finished" or "to be destroyed." This may account for the "roaring" in the next line.

29. The wordplay between overstepping and passing over appears in the Hebrew. Moreover, what is translated above as "in order to avoid" is a portmanteau of "in order to [achieve]" and "to avoid."

30. The generation of the wilderness were those after the Exodus who did not enter the Land of Israel.

31. Quite typically, Yeshurun turns the Jewish *matzah* (the bread the Israelites ate when they fled Egypt) into an Arabic pita.

32. "Yahndes" is Yiddish for "Jewishness."

33. "Poylin" is Yiddish for "Poland."

34. Literally: a daughter without value.

35. "With him" is homophonic to "his mother." *Sara* means "to struggle." Thus, the wordplay on "Sara is his mother" refers to Ishmael.

36. The "Teller" (Magid) used to travel between Jewish towns in Eastern Europe and engage in homiletical interpretation.

37. The last two words "not destined" serve to negate or at least problematize the

myth of the promised land. Moreover, the image of the woman in labor who cannot give birth stands in opposition to Shlonsky's depiction of the Zionist cultivation of the soil as lovemaking between man and earth.

### EPILOGUE: CONSPIRACY AND CULPABILITY

1. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980), p. 86.

2. Julia Kristeva, "A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 294.

3. Ch. N. Bialik, "Tarbut u-politika" (Culture and politics), in *Kol kitvey Ch. N. Bialik* (Collected writings of Ch. N. Bialik) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1965), p. 268.

4. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 3–15.

5. It is noteworthy that the move from the literal to the allegorical is not metaphoric but metonymic. The fact that many of the text's characters are "real" critics problematizes—but does not negate—an allegorical reading. This blurring of the metaphor/metonymy divide is part of a larger maneuver within the text aimed at destabilizing all generic distinctions.

6. The first phrase is Frank Lentricchia's. He uses the phrase to criticize Foucault's conception of power, in *Ariel and the Police: Michel Foucault, William James, Wallace Stevens* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 68. The second phrase is from Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977), p. 177.

7. Gates, Jr., *Loose Canons*, p. xiv.

8. Clifford Geertz, "Blurred Genres," *American Scholar* 49 (1980): 165–79.

9. Russell Ferguson, "The Invisible Center" introduction to *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh Minh-ha, and Cornel West (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), p. 9.

10. Lacking in sophistication and nuance, one-sided explanations usually resort to name-calling. Consider, for example, Harold Bloom's description of contemporary criticism:

> Suddenly all sorts of people, faculty members at the universities, graduate and undergraduate students, began to blame the universities not just for their own palpable ills and malfeasances, but for the ills of history and society. They were blamed, and to some extent still are, by the budding School of Resentment and its precursors, as though they were not only representative of these ills, but, weirdly enough, as though they had somehow helped cause these ills, and even more weirdly, quite surrealistically, as though they were somehow capable of ameliorating these ills. It's still going on—this attempt to ascribe both culpability and apocalyptic potential to the universities.

Note that by characterizing contemporary politically revisionist criticism as the "School of Resentment," Bloom does nothing more than mock his opposition without truly engaging with its theoretical arguments. See Harold Bloom, "Authority and Originality," in *Wild Orchids and Trotsky*, ed. Mark Edmundson (New York: Penguin, 1993), p. 203.

11. Pierre Bourdieu, as Peter Bürger shrewdly shows, wavers paradoxically between conspiratorial and nonconspiratorial explanations: "First of all he attributes to the members of the ruling classes an invention of distinction [from lower classes]. . . . He later stresses that he does not wish to suggest that the modes of conduct under discussion are a result of rational calculation." While Bürger is eager to see this contradiction as a flaw, I believe that the simultaneity of action and lack of intention has a strong explanatory power. See Peter Bürger, "The Problem of Aesthetic Value," in *Literary Theory Today*, eds. Peter Collier and Helena Geyer-Ryan (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 24.

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