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For my grandmother, Mina (Artman) Rafal,

My mother, Judith (Rafal) Peles

And my daughter, Emma Almagor

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the intertwined worlds of Hebrew and German-Jewish modernism and their impact on the Jewish sense of belonging before the Shoah. Set against the growing impact of the so-called "Jewish question" and the background of World War I, the Holocaust, and the foundation of the State of Israel, I argue that Hebrew writers—including David Vogel, Leah Goldberg, and S.Y. Agnon—used the genre of the novel to claim and imagine a home in German-speaking Europe, transforming the possibilities of Jewish writing and the image of Zion in the process. Unlike previous historiographies concentrating on the desire to return to Zion, this study analyzes the Jewish and Hebraic attachment to—and rejection from—the German speaking world, specifically, Vienna and Berlin, as well as the role of the novel in mediating between cultural Zionism and the German-Jewish cultural sphere. Using various modern novelistic forms—such as the urban novel, the epistolary novel, and documentary fiction—these Hebrew writers position themselves in relation to a German literary sphere inhabited by Jewish and non-Jewish authors, such as Arthur Schnitzler, Rainer Maria Rilke, Erich Kastner, and Walter Benjamin. This Jewish literary negotiation of longing and belonging results in a poetics of the threshold that geospatially emerges in between Europe and Palestine, as well as interlinguistically between Hebrew and German.

My study is organized into three chapters, demonstrating how this poetics operates through several test cases. The first chapter examines the trope of the city as a liminal space in two Viennese novels, David Vogel's *Haye nisuim* (*Married Life*, 1929-1931) and Arthur Schnitzler's *Der Weg ins Freie* (*The Road into the Open*). Drawing on theories derived from urban and cultural studies, I show that while Schnitzler's novel demonstrates a multitude of perspectives on the Jewish condition, he is blind to the Eastern European Jew who lives in poverty in Leopoldstadt and walks the city. Vogel's deployment of Hebrew speech and Viennese topography, I argue, destabilizes both Schnitzler's

Jewish Vienna and the Zionist narrative of homecoming. Instead, the novel constructs spatial appropriations to implement a new category of belonging: a Hebrew Vienna. Chapter two interrogates the notion of intertextuality as an expression of the threshold in Leah Goldberg's novel *Mikhtavim minesi'ah medumah* (*Letters from an Imagined Journey*, 1936/7) and its intermedial exchanges with German poetry, cultural history, and the urban space of Berlin. Taking into account the novel's reception history, I argue that intertextual exchange in this case serves as a literary technique of non-translation to explore the kinds of cultural, linguistic, and political belongings that were or were not available to the Hebrew speaking Jew in both Palestine and Europe in the mid-1930s. Chapter 3 explores the figure of the library in S.Y Agnon's novella *Ad henah* (*To This Day,* 1952) and his relationship with the German-Jewish intelligentsia in his construction of the "Jewish town," arguing that for Agnon the imagination of Zion is dependent upon the diaspora, even after the State of Israel is established.

Mediating between cultural Zionism and the German-Jewish cultural sphere, these novels establish a space where an inter-lingual poetics serves to negotiate the migrant's experience of exile in relation to perceptions of homeland, oscillating between the Germanic Heimat and the Hebraic *moledet*. These interspatial and interlinguistic thresholds also plays out in an inter-generic aesthetics whereby the novel enters into a correspondence with neighboring literary forms such as fragments of poetry, letters, personal journals, memoirs, and essayistic prose. In the process of these ongoing exchanges, the novel becomes a vehicle, not only for literary experimentation with modernist forms, but also for cultural instruction and debate.

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Living in between the worlds of Chicago and Tel Aviv, I learned that love triumphs geography. The completion of this project took place not only during a world pandemic but also at a time of challenging life events. I could not have overcome these challenges without the love and support of my family and friends. My father, Israel Peles z"l, inspired me to reach for the stars. His spirit continues to push me forward. My brothers, Or and Alon Peles are my pillars and I am grateful for their never-ending support. My sisters-in-law, Shuli and Sharon Peles are my soul sisters, and with their children – my nephews and nieces – I am always at home. My friends are like fireflies who light the road even when the night seems dark. To Rina Tankel, Shiry Price, Adi Ben David, Dekel Shai Shchori, and Shani Rozanes – your faith and words of encouragement are inscribed onto these pages. Chicago has awarded me with friends who, in this past year, became my family. Michal Halperin, Rotem Semo, Shaylee Cioban Ben-Zaken, Maayan Friedland, and Sarah Veprinsky – you are my home away from home.

A woman, as Virginia Wolf taught us, needs a room of her own to write. A mother – I would add - needs the help of a caregiver to keep her children out of the room. I am grateful to Rhiannon Holzman for babysitting my daughter with care and love, affording me with time and the mental space to write. Idit Naor and Becky Reinhorn give my solid ground to stand on and wings to pursue my dreams. I cherish their place in my life.

In line with the multicultural nature of this project, I dedicate this project to three extraordinary women in my life, each of whom was born into a different mother tongue. To my daughter, Emma Almagor, who inspires me to be a better mother and person and teaches me daily about multilingual identities. To my mother, Judith Peles, whose life journeys and inner strength never cease to amaze me. Lastly, to my grandmother, Mina (Artman) Rafal z"l, whose love of people and languages opened for me the world of a multicultural salon, inspiring me with stories of home.

Introduction

Where is Home?

In 1960, the German actress and singer Marlene Dietrich visited Israel on tour. Known to have opposed the Nazi regime, Dietrich was warmly received in the young State of Israel. Tickets quickly sold out and the theater halls were completely full for her performance. Given the recent memories of the Shoah and its associations with the German language, it was decided that Dietrich would sing only in English. During the performance, however, Dietrich thoughtfully addressed the audience, asking them if they would like her to sing a few songs in German. Even though not everyone in the audience was a German speaker, the answer was a fervent yes, so the diva sang a few of her beloved old hits. As accounts of the event attest, the audience's response was emotional: her fans applauded affectionately, and many sobbed upon hearing the songs of a world they still remembered well. At this moment, for them, the German language was not the language of the murderers that needed to be forgotten, but rather the language of their music, their literature, and their childhood landscape. It was the language of home.[1]

The drama of this event belongs to the postwar period and the culture of the State of Israel, reminding us that German was not welcome in the Israeli sphere at the time. Furthermore, it situates the audience at the threshold between Zionist discourses that envisioned a utopian Hebrew monolingual sphere and the multilingual lived experience of the immigrant, disrupting this utopia. This seemingly minor event is notable because it made room for what many scholars of early and mid-twentieth century Zionism and Israeli culture believe was rarely possible; all of

[1] This event is documented in the Zionist archive. See: http://www.zionistarchives.org.il/en/AttheCZA/AdditionalArticles/Pages/MarleneDietrich2.aspx#:~:text=In%201939%20she%20became%20a%20US%20citizen.&text=At%20the%20end%20of%20the,whom%20were%20many%20Holocaust%20survivors.

sudden, people were free to sing in German in public, to reclaim at-homeness in several languages, spaces and environments. In other words, they were able to mitigate the supposed cultural, linguistic and geographic distance between German and Hebrew. While the concert must be understood in the post-Shoah context, the phenomenon of denying the mother tongues of the Jewish immigrants who had recently arrived in Palestine, thus marking it as foreign and forbidden, was rooted in cultural and political processes that well preceded the 1960s. Examining these dynamics, this project traces various literary occasions in which Hebrew writers used prose fiction to negotiate the Hebrew-German interplay, making space for its linguistic, cultural, and geographical thresholds.

My aim in this project is to shed light on the charged dynamics between the monolingual Zionist ideology and the multilingual everyday life of immigrants, who came to Israel after the war and were not necessarily Zionists. To fully understand this collision of sentiments of longing and belonging in relation to the German-speaking world, we need to look back at the longer history of the relations between German and Hebrew spheres in the interwar period and the complex dynamics of at-homeness and the alienation these relations produced. Linking Hebrew and German exposes a curious literary genealogy that has been obscured by the politics of "the negation of exile" dominating Hebrew literary historiography, and remains obscure through the lens of contemporary manifestations of the Zionist discourse. As Amnon Raz-Karkotzkin has shown, the Zionist historical consciousness is largely based on the suppression and erasure of history of the land and the Palestinians who were living there, as well as various histories of the Jews, whose exilic image disrupted this Zionist myth.[2] The literary works that I analyze in the

[2] Amnon Raz-Karkotzkin, "Galut betoh ribonut: le-bikoret 'shlilat hagalut' batarbut hayisraelit," *Teoria Ubikoret*, no. 4 (1993): 23–55.

following chapters express a cultural, linguistic and spatial thresholds to negotiate the Jewish belonging that emerges between Palestine and the German speaking world.

I understand the notion of the threshold as a Bakhtinian concept that derives from a hybrid literary modernity.[3] The notion of *threshold* in Bakhtin's work emerges as a literary topos as well as a relational ontology between the text and its social worlds. The principle of the chronotope of the threshold is expressed by geospatial dynamics and diverse registers of speech, generating dialogic modes of narration, underling the cultural content of linguistic constellations. As a spatial chronotope, it designs particular areas as liminal places, conjoining two different spaces, e.g. entrances, doorways, corridors, etc.[4] For Bakhtin, the spatial chronotope of the threshold is expressed in a twofold manner. First, through instances of corridors linking high and low domains; and second, the city of Petersburg in its entirety as standing on the threshold, "on the borderline between existence and nonexistence, reality and phantasmagoria, always on the verge of dissipating like fog and vanishing."[5] Bakhtin's notion is helpful, but it does not fully account for the Jewish literary context and early twentieth century Zionist discourses of return, which complicates the idea of the threshold.

This dissertation examines the different expressions of the threshold to reconsider sentiments of Jewish longing and belonging in the twentieth century among German and Hebrew writers. Set against the growing impact of the so-called "Jewish question" and the background of World War I, the Weimar Republic, the Holocaust, and the rise of the State of Israel, my study

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[3] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota , 1984).

[4] Bakhtin, ibid, 149. On Bakhtin's concept of the threshold see also: Leah Michele Feldman, *On the Threshold of Eurasia: Revolutionary Poetics in the Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), partiuclarly pp. 6, 9-11.

[5] Bakhtin, ibid, 167. Eduard Vlasov, "The World According to Bakhtin: On Description of Space and Spatial Forms in Mikhail Bakhtin's Work," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 37, no. 1/2 (March 1995): 37–58.

traces the poetics of the threshold that emerges both geospatially, between Europe and Palestine, and interlinguistically, between Hebrew and German. Examining the concept of the threshold, I argue that Hebrew writers—including David Vogel, Leah Goldberg, and S.Y. Agnon—used the genre of the novel to claim and imagine a home in German-speaking Europe, transforming the possibilities of Jewish writing and the image of Zion in the process. Unlike previous historiographies concentrating on the desire to return to Zion, this study analyzes the Jewish and Hebraic attachment to—and at times rejection from—the German speaking world, specifically, Vienna and Berlin, as well as the role of the novel in mediating between cultural Zionism and the German-Jewish cultural sphere. Using various modern novelistic forms—such as the urban novel, the epistolary novel, and documentary fiction—these Hebrew authors position themselves in relation to a German literary sphere inhabited by Jewish and non-Jewish writers, such as Arthur Schnitzler, Rainer Maria Rilke, Erich Kästner, E.T.A Hoffmann, and Walter Benjamin. These Hebrew novels were used not only to make room for other possibilities within Zionism but also to create a literary threshold that encompasses a sense of at-homeness.[6] To understand the dynamics of the threshold in relation to the German-Hebrew interplay, each chapter examines a

[6] My work builds on and participates in the growing subfield of German-Hebrew studies. See: Amir Eshel and Na'ama Rokem, "German and Hebrew: Histories of a Conversation," *Prooftexts* 33, no. 1 (2013). Amir Eshel and Rachel Seelig, eds., *The Hebrew-German Dialogue: Studies of Encounter and Exchange* (Berlin ; Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2018). Amir Eshel and Na'ama Rokem, "Berlin and Jerusalem: Toward German-Hebrew Studies," in *The German-Jewish Experience Revisited*, ed. Steven E. Aschheim and Vivian Liska (Berlin; Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2015), 265–71. I am also drawing on Benjamin Harshav's study concerning Jewish multilingualism: Benjamin Harshav, *The Polyphony of Jewish Culture* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007).

Undoubtedly, the German-Hebrew interplay is also related to question of *Heimat* in German modernism, as well as the German-Jewish complexities of belonging. On the evolution and tensions in the German understanding of *Heimat* see: Eric Santner, "On the Difficulty of Saying 'We': The Historians' Debate and Edgar Reitz's 'Heimat,'" *History and Memory* 2, no. 2 (1990): 76–96. Anat Feinberg, "Abiding in a Haunted Land: The Issue of Heimat in Contemporary German-Jewish Writing," *New German Critique*, no. 70 (1997): 161–81.

On the German-Jewish dialogue see: Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999). On the problem of distinguishing between German and German-Jewish modernism see: Scott Spector, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Vivian Liska, *When Kafka Says We: Uncommon Communities in German-Jewish Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

foundational trope through which the Jewish home is imagined: the metropolis, intertextuality, and the library.

In the history of Zionism, literature serves as means to imagine a home in Palestine, illustrating what Sidra Ezrahi calls the narrative of return.[7] For Ahad Ha'am (Asher Zvi Ginsburg), the father of cultural Zionism, Avraham Mapu's Hebrew novel *Ahavat Zion* (*The Love of Zion*, 1853) expressed the desired return to Jerusalem of both people and the Hebrew language. Ahad Ha'am also supported poets writing in Hebrew including H.N. Bialik, whose poems "To the Bird," (1987) and "In the City of Slaughter" (1904) contributed to shaping the Zionist discourse in Odessa, encouraging young Jews to "return" to Palestine.[8] While in Bialik's poems, the speaking subject looks at Eretz Israel from afar while located in Eastern Europe, the plot of Mapu's novel is set in Eretz Israel, portraying characters who were never exiled. Drawing heavily on Biblical Hebrew, Mapu offered a new vocabulary and used the genre of the novel to imagine a utopian narrative, depicting Palestine as a land flowing with milk and honey (*eretz zavat halav udvash*). Set in Biblical times, the plot offered a rewriting of familiar characters and a promise for a flourishing Jewish home in Zion, inspiring many young Jews in the nineteenth-century who studied Hebrew to become Zionists.[9]

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[7] Sidra Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley: Universirty of California Press, 2000).

[8] Hamutal Tzamir, *Bialik Ba'al Guf: Tshukah, Tziyonut, Shirah* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz hame'uhad, 2019).

[9] On cultural Zionism and the Hebrew revival project see: Robert Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose: Modern Fiction and Language of Realism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988); Yigal Schwartz, *The Zionist Paradox: Hebrew Literature and Israeli Idnetity* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2014).Dan. Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010).

For political Zionism, however, Herzl's utopian novel *Altnueland*, written in German, represented the possibility of return. Setting its point of departure in Vienna, the narrative demonstrated not only the longing for Zion but also the fulfilment of the journey and the possibility of actualizing the dream.[10] Written in different languages and expressing different views concerning the Jewish return to Zion, both texts ultimately use the genre of the novel to imagine a geographical home in Palestine, anchoring the doctrine of "the negation of exile" (*shlilat hagalut)* in the Zionist imagination of home. As Na'ama Rokem has shown, in the Zionist imagination the novel serves as a world-building mechanism and, by extension as "a literary nation building" praxis more broadly.[11] Thinking through Rokem's argument, the world making endeavor of the Hebrew novel consists of locating the plot in Palestine or, as in the case of *Altneuland*, embarking on a journey from the diaspora toward Zion.[12] In contrast to Bialik's imagery of the bird returning to Europe and the speaking subject sitting by window, pleading with it to tell him *about* Zion, the novel's plot travels to Palestine, putting down roots, transforming the land into a Jewish homeland.

Yigal Schwarz's foundational study of the Hebrew novel and what he calls the Zionist paradox illustrates the importance of spatial directionality within Hebrew literary historiography.

> Hebrew literature played a major part in the construction of modern Hebrew culture … since the people of Israel were exiled from their land, about two thousand years ago, they have dreamed about returning to Zion. These dreams are expressed in thousands of literary works.[13]

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[10] Schwartz, *The Zionist Paradox: Hebrew Literature and Israeli Idnetity,* 49-96. Na'ama Rokem, *Prosaic Conditions: Heinrich Heine and the Spaces of Zionist Literature* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 73-94.

[11] Rokem, *Prosaic Conditions: Heinrich Heine and the Spaces of Zionist Literature,* xxi.

[12] On Zionism ideology and Hebrew poetry see: Michael. Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity: Lines of Resistance in Modernist Hebrew Poetry* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003).

[13] Yigal Schwartz, *The Zionist Paradox*, 3-4.

Attending to five emblematic novels, Schwarz analyzes the directionality of longing embedded in Hebrew literature as an expression of the Zionist dream, identifying a primary "vector of desire" from the diaspora to Eretz Israel. Drawing on the Jewish exilic condition, this Hebrew literary directionality is already conveyed in the twelfth century in a verse by Yehuda Halevi, the great Spanish Hebrew poet, "My Heart is in the East and I in uttermost West." For Schwartz, this verse demonstrates not only a directional longing toward Zion but also an internal rift within the speaking subject between the heart, representing a higher sphere of spiritual and ideological existence of belonging to Zion, and the body, which represents the lowest sphere of earthliness.[14] The hierarchy between "highest" and "lowest" spheres highlights the elevated status of the desired Zion over local life in the diaspora.[15]

As noted above, this expression of the Zionist doctrine of the "negation of exile" (*shlilat hagalut*) has dominated Hebrew literary historiography.[16] In Schwartz's account, the directionality of longing from the diaspora to Zion has sustained the Zionist imagination of home from the inception of the Hebrew revival project in the mid eighteenth century until the 1960s, as

[14] Set in the Spain's Golden Age, Halevi famously tried to arrive in Israel but passed away during his journey. Interestingly, Halevi became an important figure not only for Zionism but also for Franz Rosenzweig and his *Lehrhaus*. In 1927, Rosenzweig saw into print the anthology Ninety-Two Poems and Hymns of Yehuda Halevi, introducing his work to the German-Jewish sphere.

[15] Schwartz dedicates a chapter to each novel, demonstrating the different facets of the "vector of desire" in Hebrew literary historiography. He maps this literary history by attending to following novels: Avraham Mapu's *Ahavat Zion* (*The Love of Zion*, 1853), Theodor Herzl's *Altneuland* (1902), Yosef Luidor's "Yoash" (1912), Moshe Shamir's *Hu halach ba-sadot* (He Walked in the Fields, 1948), and Amos Oz's *Navadim va-tzefah* (*Nomad and Viper*, 1963) In this context, it is important to note that Schwartz reads *Altneuland* as if it were a Hebrew novel, even though it was written in German.

[16] The notion of *shlilat hagalut* as a central trope in the making of Israeli identity is discussed at length in: Raz-Karkotzkin, "Galut Betoh Ribonut: Lebikoret 'shlilat Hagalut' Batarbut Hayisraelit." Daniel Boyarin identifies the "negation of exile" with the exclusion of the Talmud from the Israeli sphere. The Talmud, in Boyain's account, constitutes a traveling homeland, representing the Israelites exile as years of cultural flourishment rather than a national trauma. See: Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (1993).; On the relationship between the Jew and the book in the post-Shoah context, particularly the poetry of Paul Celan see: Françoise Meltzer, "Paul Celan and the Death of the Book," in *Hot Property: The Stakes and Claims of Literary Originality* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 45–81.

expressed in the writings of Amos Oz and A.B. Yehushua, the “first Israelis”. According to Schwartz, their writing redirects the “vector of desire” from Israel toward Europe. Oz adopts Yehuda Halevi’s split between the heart and the body but in reverse: “the body (the ‘home’) is in Israel, but the heart (the ‘Home’) is ‘elsewhere’, in Europe.”[17]

Indeed, Oz expresses a longing toward Europe. But the phenomenon of a redirected desire toward Europe as a Jewish home exists long before Amos Oz and the State of Israel. Whereas for Oz it is a fascination informed by a personal family history and a collective past, for the immigrants who came to Palestine, Europe *was* home, in the most everyday sense of a having a house, a city, and a language to which one is born. For the people who attended Marlene Dietrich’s performance, Europe wasn’t a source of fascination but rather the home that they had lost. Many of them were not Zionists, and they came to Mandatory Palestine after the war because they no longer had a home. The fledgling State of Israel provided a home for the Jews after World War II, but at the same time it was still a kind of exile.

This ambiguous sense of home and exile is explicitly expressed in Leah’s Goldberg’s short essay titled “Your Europe,” published in 1945, immediately after the war had ended:

> And we will not forget. You. The lovers’ wounds and the haters’ wounds. We will not forget. Until our deathbed we will carry her amongst us, that great pain that is called Europe – ‘your Europe’, ‘their Europe,’ and probably not… ‘our Europe’. Although we were hers, very much hers.[18]

For Goldberg, Europe has pushed away the Jews, while the Jews continue – in different capacities – to belong to Europe. Sentiments of nostalgia echo in this text, portraying a break

[17] Schwartz, *The Zionist Paradox,* 11.

[18] The article appeared for the first time in Hebrew in the newspaper *Mishmar* (my translation). See: Leah Goldberg, “Eropah Shelachem,” *Mishmar*, April 30, 1945, 6; It was reprinted in: Leah Goldberg, “Eropah Shelachem,” in *Ne’arot Ivriyot: Mikhtavei Leah Goldberg Min Ha-Provintsia*, ed. Giddon Ticotsky and Yfaat. Weiss (Tel Aviv: Sifrayat Poalim, 2009).

from a home that was lost. But how should we understand Goldberg's notion of "Europe"? What does it mean to have belonged to "Europe"? How does this "Europe" – as a home that the "we" in the text carry, but was never "ours" – manifest for Goldberg, who, in 1935, left "her" Germany because of anti-Semitism. This ambivalence toward the question of where the Jewish home is - or where the Jew belongs – dominated political, religious, and cultural discourses in the first half of the twentieth century. This is also the political context in which Zionism emerges in Vienna, Odessa, and elsewhere in Europe, and this is the political-cultural background in which we should understand the novels discussed by Schwartz in his mapping of the literary junctures of the Zionist imagination of home.

In other words, this dominant narrative in Hebrew literary historiography does not account for the ambiguous notion of home expressed in Goldberg's text, and disregards Hebrew novels that express an attachment to Europe - and specifically to the German speaking world – before World War II. Thus, these novels cannot be classified according to an unequivocal "vector of desire." Instead, they complicate the idea of a single vector, transforming the Hebrew novel into a liminal space of intercultural, interlingual, and interspatial belongings. This type of writing, which I call "the poetics of the threshold" does not comply to dichotomies of "here" and "there," identified in the narrative of homecoming. In addition, this approach calls into question the dominant – hegemonic – narrative of "one people, one land, one language," inquiring about the very definition of a Jewish sense of belonging through the lens of novels that center on the experience of the immigrant, who lives in between languages, cultures, and places.[19] For Leah

[19] The monolingual aspect of the Hebrew revival project was at the heart of Ahad Ha'am's notion of cultural Zionism and for the people of the *Second Aliah*, whose arrival to Eretz Israel was in in many ways a response to the horrors of Kishiniev Pogrom (1903).

The idea of ""one people, one land, one language" is inherently complicated because of the Palestinians, who are already in Palestine. I follow Amnon Raz-Karkotzkin's account, demonstrating how in Zionist consciousness, the negation of exile is strategic for claiming the land and erasing its history. It erases both the histories of the Nakba,

Goldberg, as Giddon Ticotsky posits, the image of Europe derives from a multilingual way of life, and a deep connection to Russian and German cultures, of which she became somewhat of an ambassador in Palestine.[20] Together with Tuvia Rübner, Dan Pagis, and others, she created a kind of a "German island" within the Hebrew literary sphere, that was marginalized in a twofold manner: first, by Zionist critics, aspiring to "purify" the Hebrew literary sphere form foreign languages, and, as Gideon Ticotsky notes, by the German-Jewish circles in Palestine who were reading and writing in German rather than Hebrew. Ironically, Ticotsky adds, these writers, who came Eastern Europe and were located on the margins of German culture, carried on its significance in the Hebrew-Israeli sphere.

This description applies, in different ways, to all three authors discussed in this dissertation. David Vogel, Leah Goldberg, and S.Y. Agnon were all Eastern European Jews who migrated to the West, namely to Vienna and Berlin, challenging through this cross-cultural experience the monolingual tendencies of the Hebrew literary sphere. Vogel, for example, arrives in Vienna in 1912 where he becomes part of the modest Hebrew literary center in the city. As a native Yiddish speaker from Stanov, he learns both Hebrew and German, confessing in his personal journal that his German schooling in Vienna impedes his Hebrew. As we will see in chapter one, this vulnerable dynamics between second languages is demonstrated in his novels,

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and the histories of Jews whose exilic presence disrupted this consciousness. Raz-Karkotzkin, "Galut Betoh Ribonut: Lebikoret 'shlilat Hagalut' Batarbut Hayisraelit."

[20] Giddon Ticosky, "Mavo," Ulai rak tziporei masah: halifat Michtavim, Leah Golderg and Tuvia Rübner (Bnei-Brak: Sifriyat Poalim; Ha-Kibutz ha-meuhad, 2016), 19. Leah Goldberg earned her PhD at the University of Bonn, where she trained as an expert for Semite languages, focusing on Samaritan dialect. In Israel, she established the Department of Comparative literature at the Hebrew University, where she taught World and European literature.

expressing an ongoing negotiation between Hebrew and German that transforms and resists the monolingual aspiration of cultural Zionism and presents a liminal Germanized Hebrew.[21]

Stanov's geography locates Vogel very close to the Austro-Hungarian border in terms of cultural influences, and yet not close enough to have studied German.[22] In contrast to Vogel, Goldberg and Agnon both came from cities whose borders have changed over time, affecting their political, cultural and linguistic sense of self. Leah Goldberg was born in Königsberg and grew up in Kovna, bordering with the German empire. Whereas she spoke Russian with her parents (and some Yiddish with her father), this proximity led to a multilingual form of schooling, and from a young age she studied German as well as Hebrew. While Kovna offered multilingual opportunities, Buczacz, Agnon's hometown, was primarily dominated by Yiddish speaking Jews. However, it endured many intercultural impacts as it was located in Polish Galicia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and now Ukraine. Other than Yiddish, people in town spoke Russian and German, including Agnon's mother, from whom he learned some German. Although each one of them was formed by a different set of linguistics circumstances, for all three German becomes as important literary language, shaping their path as Hebrew writers.

The Prose writers I discuss, and some of their contemporaries, are typically addressed as "modernist." Where there has been excellent studies focusing on Hebrew modernist poetry written in between languages and cultures, there has yet to be a study that considers the Hebrew novel as a systematic expression of the threshold, deriving not from the nationalist revival

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[21] Gershon Shaked, *Zehut: Sifruyot Yehudiyot Bileshonot La'az* (Heifa: Hotsa'at hasefarim shel Universiṭat Heifa, 2006). Vogel's Germanized Hebrew will be further discussed in chapter one.

[22] Stanov is located in the Russian pale of settlement very close to the border with Austro-Hungary, then becomes part of the soviet union, is occupied by the Nazis, and then becomes Ukraine

project of cultural Zionism in Eastern Europe but by authors living in between the Jewish worlds of the East, the West, and Palestine.[23] The authors described in this project share this liminality, located geospatially between Palestine and the German speaking world, and inter-linguistically between Hebrew and German.

How should we understand the kinds of liminal spaces these texts create? How does the spatial triangle of the East, the West, and Palestine complicate "the vector of desire," compelling us to address novels that do not fit these one-sided trajectories? How does the Hebrew-German interplay complicate the notion of minority discourse, and the relationship between the center and the margins?

Chana Kronfeld's influential study of Hebrew and Yiddish poetry written in Europe offers an entry point to think about the threshold, specifically through the notion of the minor. Attending to Hebrew and Yiddish poetry, Kronfeld underscores Deleuze and Guattari's exclusion of minor languages in their discussion of minor literature. Deleuze and Guattari famously discuss minor literature with respect to Kafka's fiction, exclaiming that in this context, a "minor literature does not come from a minor language; it rather that which a minority constructs within a major language."[24] According to their model, minor literature consists of a deterritorialization of the language, a connection to the political, and it has a collective significance.[25] For them, it becomes the defining mechanism of the politics of culture in that "the

[23] Chana Kronfeld's study on modernist Hebrew poetry was foundational in repositioning Hebrew poetry as a modernist phenomenon. See: Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). See also: Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity: Lines of Resistance in Modernist Hebrew Poetry;* Eric Zakim, *To Build and Be Built: Landscape, Literature, and the Construction of Zionist Identity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Naomi Seidman, *A Marriage Made in Heaven: The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[24] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. "What is Minor Literature," in *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 16.

[25] Deleuze and Guattari, ibid, 16-27. See especially pp. 16-18.

minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary condition for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature."[26] Their account, as Kronfeld points outs, aims to read modernism from the margins, underlining Kafka's place as a German speaking Jewish Bohemian from Prague, a city that was part of the Austro Hungarian Empire when Kafka was born, and later became the capital of the Czechoslovakia, and finally the Czech Republic. For Kronfeld, casting the category of the minor onto literary texts written in major languages expropriates the "truly minor" languages – such as Hebrew and Yiddish – making them once again invisible. Kronfeld posits:

> Deleuze and Guttari's restriction of the minor to the languages of the major culture precludes any alternative modeling of an international literary trend such as modernism on its 'non major' linguistic practices […] [I]n the process of setting up the 'truly minor' as this essentialist achievement term, the historically, culturally, and linguistically diverse formations of minor writing become – yet again – invisible."[27]

For Kronfeld, Deleuze and Guattari's use of Kafka as a prototype of minor writing dehistoricizes the relationship between the minor and modernism, ignoring his affiliation with other literary traditions and languages including Hebrew and Yiddish. Her observation underscores two elements in Deleuze and Guattari's reading that are important to our discussion: first, their definition of the minor is within a monolingual tradition. Second, a language essentially needs a geopolitical home in order to participate in the major-minor discourse.

Kronfeld's project discusses the ways in which "the trends and subversions of Hebrew modernism call into question the simple opposition of minor and major literature," focusing on the Hebrew *anti-nosah* (anti-formalistic) modernist poets. including David Vogel, Avraham Ben Yizhak, and others. The *anti-nosah* is oppositional to the *nosah* (a term that roughly translates as

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[26] Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism*, 18.

[27] Kronfeld, ibid, 6.

“formula”) of the Hebrew literary system, identified with Mendele Moycher Sforim, and carried on in poetry by a hegemonic male-based literary genealogy, consisting of Bialik-Shlonsky-Altherman-Zach. As Michael Gluzman has shown, this masculine canon dominating Hebrew poetry derives from a political worldview of nationalism, demonstrating the Zionist doctrine of the negation of exile and elevating a monolingual ideology.[28]

Recalling Marlene Dietrich’s 1960 performance, we recognize that this Zionist ideology precludes the possibility of sentiments of longing and belonging to major European languages, and the sense of at-homeness they encompass. Whereas these excellent studies teach us about the politics of Hebrew as a “truly” minor language, and its manifestation in poetry, the genre of the novel complicates these dichotomies. By the 1920s Hebrew literary centers exist in many major cities in Europe, including Vienna and Berlin. Whereas these centers are relatively marginal in comparison to their German literary counterparts, they nonetheless mark the emergence of Hebrew as a major language, supported by the growing literary center in Palestine.[29] As Yigal Schwartz’s study underscores, in the Israeli context, the Hebrew novel functions as a site for nation building while demonstrating complexities of migration. But this narrative does not account for novels such as David Vogel’s *Haye Nisuim* (*Married Life*, 1929-31) and Leah Goldberg’s *Mikhtavim minesia’ah medumah* (*Letters from an Imagined Journey*, 1936/7) that use the novel as a liminal space, expressing their longing – and the impossibility of belonging – to the German speaking world. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, these novels were poorly received by the Zionist readership of the 1930’s.[30] Critics were concerned by the nostalgic “European scent”

[28] Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity: Lines of Resistance in Modernist Hebrew Poetry*.

[29] Shachar. Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2011). Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany /* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1996).

[30] The reception history of *Married Life* and *Letters from an Imagined Journey* will be discussed at length in chapters one and two, respectively.

of the plots as well as the presence of foreign languages incorporated either in the original or through transliteration. For the critics, these novels undermined the monolingual nation-building project in Palestine, and they quickly dismissed them as "modernist" and "European."[31]

What makes the novel a form that triggers such anxiety? According to Franco Moretti, the European novel offers a space of exploration that operates not within a singular national context but rather within the European literary *system*. In his account, this literary system constructs of sense of "Europeanness" be means of interaction, resisting the notion of a singular national literature. "Neither European literature, nor merely national ones, but rather, so to say, national literatures of Europe."[32] This literary system offers stimuli and response.

> Where the political sphere creates symbolic problems for the entire continent, the literary sphere tries to address and to resolve them … the multiplicity of languages and ideologies, finally, is curbed by the middle style educated conversation (the most typical of novelistic episodes), and by the all-encompassing voice of the omniscient narrator.[33]

For Moretti, novelistic discourse is informed by and participates in the political sphere. How, then, should we understand this Hebraic expression of longing for "Europe," which, as we've seen in the example of Marlene Dietrich's performance, is understood as, among others, the German-speaking world? How do these interlinguistic dynamics reconfigure the literary expressions of the Jewish and Hebrew sense of at-homeness? In what ways do Hebrew depictions of Vienna and Berlin appropriate the German-speaking metropolis? How does the Hebrew narration impact the use of German enunciation and dialect in the novel? What kind of homeland do these texts portray?

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[31] I will address the reception history of Vogel and Goldberg's novels in chapter one and chapter two, respectively.

[32] Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (London: Verso, 2013), 18.

[33] Moretti, ibid, 20.

To explore these questions, this dissertation attends to a series of thresholds that emerge geospatially between Palestine and the German sphere, and interliguistically between Hebrew and German. By attending to the notion of the threshold., my reading underscores how the literary representations of home respond to and participate in political debates concerning Jewish cultural and political belonging. The notion of the threshold opens a new directionality to explore the multilingual and multispatial aspects of the Hebrew novel, rethinking the so called “natural” connection between modern Hebrew and the Zionist narrative of a homecoming in Palestine.

My study examines the different poetic expressions of the threshold in the Hebrew novel, demonstrating how this poetics operates through several test cases. Chapter One examines the trope of the city as a liminal space in two Viennese novels, David Vogel’s *Haye nisuim* (*Married Life*, 1929-1931) and Arthur Schnitzler’s *Der Weg ins Freie* (*The Road into the Open*). Drawing on theories derived from urban and cultural studies, I attend to the ways Schnitzler's novel demonstrates a multitude of perspectives on the Jewish condition but remains blind toward the Eastern European Jew who lives in poverty in Leopoldstadt and walks the city. Vogel’s deployment of Hebrew speech and Viennese topography, I argue, destabilizes both Schnitzler’s Jewish Vienna and the Zionist narrative of homecoming. Instead, the novel constructs spatial appropriations to implement a new category of belonging: a Hebrew Vienna.

Chapter two interrogates the notion of intertextuality as an expression of the threshold in Leah Goldberg's novel *Mikhtavim minesi’ah medumah* (*Letters from an Imagined Journey*, 1936/7) and its intermedial exchanges with German poetry, cultural history, and the urban space of Berlin. Taking into account the novel’s reception history, I argue that in this case intertextual exchange serves as a literary technique of non-translation. Goldberg uses this technique to

explore the forms of cultural, linguistic, and political belonging that were or were not available to the Hebraic Jew in both Palestine and Europe in the mid-1930s.

Chapter three explores the notion of the library in S.Y Agnon's novella *Ad henah* (*To This Day,* 1952) and his relationship with the German-Jewish intelligentsia in his construction of the "Jewish town." The liminality of the library in the novella is threefold: the library as a physical space, a corpus of knowledge, and the image of the author writing a book that would be added to the library of the emerging Hebrew literary sphere For Agnon, the image of Zion is sustained by the idea of non-arrival, even after the State of Israel is established.

Chapter 1
One City, Two Viennas:
(Re-) Writing Jewish Diaspora in David Vogel and Arthur Schnitzler

Introduction

The European novel develops concurrently with the rise of the city, which fundamentally shape it. In the literary representation of the metropolis, the novel concerns itself with the complex interactions among individuals and between the individual and society. "The novel has at all times reflected on the ambiguity of its narrative premises which can be understood both as literary conventions and as extra literary truth-claims," posits Michael Bell.[34] In the context of the twentieth century, the novel is the genre that evokes the process of modernization and pertains to the tension between historical representation and imaginary narratives. Rather than "seeking to represent and comment on a pre-existing world, the novel now enacted the processes of its creation."[35]

If "for the historian, the abundance of material that reality offers necessitates a reduction of complexity,"[36] then literature, and more specifically, the novel, is the place where liminal spaces of belonging can be represented, negotiated, and co-exist in their contradictions. Moreover, the polyphonic nature of the novel, as Mikhail Bakhtin has shown in his reading of Dostoyevsky,[37] underscores this literary form's potential to incorporate a variety of views and allow them to

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[34] Michael Bell, "Conclusion: The European Novel after 1900," in *The Cambridge Companion to European Novelists,* ed. Michal Bell (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 428.

[35] Ibid., 428.

[36] Dan Diner, *Cataclysms: A History of the Twentieth Century From Europe's Edge* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 3.

[37] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota , 1984).

challenge each other within the space of the work. In other words, the novel becomes a site of contradictory dialogues, discrepancies, and negotiations that engages not only in representation but also in imagining new possibilities for modern life. In the modern urban novel, these ideological and aesthetic negotiations are translated into spatial journeys:

> Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice. For this reason, spatial practices concern everyday tactics, are part of them, from the alphabet of spatial indication […] these narrated adventures, simultaneously producing geographies of action and drifting into the commonplaces of an order, do not merely constitute a "supplement" to pedestrian enunciations and rhetoric […] [T]hey make the journey, before or during the time the feet perform it.[38]

At the turn of the twentieth century, spatial journeys both real and imagined become a critical issue in European culture. Europe's changing borders, the decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the instability of the Weimar Republic, and the fragility of Eastern European borders all turned everyday life by default into a spatial journey. With the rise of national movements, the spatial story also became a story of political, social, and ethnic belonging, or, in many cases, into a story of uncomfortable "dis-belonging." One could live in the same town but travel through different republics. The town Buczacz, for example, was part of five different republics between 1918-1941,[39] so even while staying in place during the interwar period, one could still play a role in a spatial story. In Franco Moretti's words, geography "is not a box where cultural history 'happens', but an active force, that pervades the literary field and shapes it in depth."[40] For Moretti, literary geography points to two emergent spaces that overlap but are essentially different: fictional space and historical space. Yet, how are these spaces imagined in the novel, particularly in the urban novel? How does the novelist's choice of which language to write in

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[38] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2011), 116.

[39] Dan Laor, "Buczacz" *in Haye 'Agnon: Biyografyah* (Jerusalem: Shoken, 1998), 13-48.

[40] Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* (London; New York: Verso, 1998), 3.

impact our understanding of the spatial story the novel sets forth? What kind spatial journey does the novel portray, and what kind of claim is the novel making on the place it represents?

In the Jewish context, certain questions emerge not only regarding how the novel operates as a site for negotiating belonging, but also as to how the Jewish spatial narrative interferes with and reshapes the genre of the novel. Jewish culture is formed by a dual spatial narrative: on the one hand, Jews were historically bound to the political and linguistic realm of their host country; on the other hand, they were collectively intertwined with the notion of a two-thousand year *galut* (exile) from the ancestral Land of Israel. In this chapter I examine two urban novels, *Haye nisu'im (Married Life*, 1929-31*)* by David Vogel and *Der Weg ins Freie (The Road into the Open,* 1908*)* by Arthur Schnitzler, both written prior to World War II and set in Vienna. I show how these contemporary works were formed by both the European context of a changing spatial journey, and by Jewish spatial master-narratives.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Vienna was a pivotal cultural and intellectual center attracting Jews and non-Jews alike. Essential Jewish figures such as Theodor Herzl, Sigmund Freud, Arthur Schnitzler, and others immediately appear in discussions on the making of German modernism, fin de siècle Vienna, and urban coffeehouse culture.[41] After World War One, Vienna also fostered a modest Hebrew literary center, when Eastern European Jews such as David Vogel, Gershon Shofman, and Avraham Ben-Yitzhak ("Sonne") arrived in the city.[42]

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[41] Carl E. Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1979).

[42] For a comprehensive overview of the Hebrew literary center in Vienna and other literary centers in Europe, see Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2011); and Eisig Silberschlag, "Hebrew Literature in Vienna 1782-1939," in *The Great Transition: The Recovery and the Lost Centers of Modern Hebrew Literature*, eds. Glenda Abramson and Tudor Parfitt (Totowa, N.J: Rowman & Allanheld, 1985), 29-43.

While Vienna may seem exemplary of German and Hebrew modernism, the novels discussed in this chapter are not exemplary of the mainstream of the time. David Vogel was on the margins of the Hebrew literary republic, to use Dan Miron's term.[43] Even though he was "rediscovered" in the 1960's by Nathan Zach and Dan Pagis, he continues to be a relatively minor figure due to the non-Zionist nature of his writing. Arthur Schnitzler, on the other hand, was well known and well appreciated among his contemporaries and beyond. By choosing a non-Jewish aristocrat as his protagonist, Schnitzler offers a critique of the Jewish social milieu while opening opportunities to discuss pressing questions regarding aesthetics and loss of self. Despite its aesthetic innovations, Schnitzler's novel was censured by his contemporaries for its failure to sufficiently address the Jewish question, on one hand, and for its double plot line, on the other.[44] Yet, while literary critics have expressed severe dissatisfaction with this work, the political response is surprising: Zionist readers treasured the novel, as they found in it a service to their cause, and invited Schnitzler for readings in the Bar Kokhva circles. In a striking contrast, three decades later the novel was embraced by the Nazis, who saw the expressions of anti-Semitism in the novel as literal rather than ironic, and refrained from burning it with other Jewish books on the eve of World War II.[45]

The marginality of these Viennese novels raises salient questions about the Jewish community that was both influenced by and part of shaping Vienna as a flourishing cultural

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[43] Dan Miron, *Bodedim bemo'adam* (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1987).

[44] Josef Körner, *Arthur Schnitzlers Gestalten und Probleme* (Zürich: Amalthea-Verlag, 1921). I will address the novel's reception history in detail later in the chapter.

[45] Abigail Gillman, *Viennese Jewish Modernism: Freud, Hofmannsthal, Beer-Hofmann, and Schnitzler* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 104-105. Interestingly, the Nazis burned other literary works by Schnitzler, which they viewed as more Jewish, even though those works did not explicitly address Jewish themes. For a detailed account of the novel's reception, see: Konstanze. Fliedl, *Arthur Schnitzler: Poetik Der Erinnerung* (Wien: Böhlau, 1997), 225-229.

metropolis: Why does Vogel write a non-Zionist novel in Hebrew? Why does Schnitzler choose a non-Jewish Aristocrat as his protagonist? How can we better understand early twentieth-century Vienna in light of these novels and how do these novels "know the city"? How do they imagine Palestine, and, importantly, how should we conceive of the relationship between Hebrew and German as the languages in which these authors find portable homelands?

Read together, the novels destabilize the relation between center and margin, native and migrant, the Austrian Christian Baron and the Jew. As an urban novel in conversation with both the tradition of the Kaffeehäuser and the figure of the *flâneur*,[46] Vogel's Hebrew narration of Vienna destabilizes Schnitzler's Jewish Vienna and the Zionist narrative of homecoming. Instead, Vogel's novel employs Hebrew speech and constructs a series of spatial appropriations to effect a new category of belonging: *a Hebrew Vienna*.

Vogel appropriates Viennese space through the Hebrew language, claiming kinship to the German speaking world. In a way, this endeavor provides a dual counter-position: firstly, it resists the tradition of novels that depict a utopian homecoming to Jerusalem in Hebrew, such as Abraham Mapu's *Ahavat Zion* (*The Love of Zion*); secondly, it undermines Theodor Herzl's *Altneuland*, a utopian novel that imagines a Jewish homecoming in German. Whereas Vogel and Schnitzler both engage with the Jewish question, their spatial longing is not geared toward Zion, but rather toward Vienna. They both invoke the image of Zion to express the ambiguity of the Jewish Heimat as something residing between Vienna and Palestine, German and Hebrew. They draw on a similar technique of writing a fantasy of arrival, but portray a Jewish diasporic narrative to proclaim a Jewish-European belonging. Language, with its potential to imagine a

[46] Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 155-200.

sense of being at home, becomes a traveling homeland, transforming the novel into a liminal space in which modes of belongings are negotiated.

David Vogel: Between Hebrew and German

David Vogel arrived in Vienna in 1912. While Vogel belongs to a larger group of Hebrew authors who wandered around Europe and Palestine in the first half of the twentieth century, he is considered a unique case.[47] He wrote in Hebrew at a time of nation building, but simultaneously resisted Zionist representations such as that of a homecoming in *Eretz Israel*. Vogel's biography likewise reflects his ambiguous relationship with Hebrew literature as both a diasporic aspiration and as vehicle in the service of nation building. Born in the Ukrainian town of Stanov in 1891, Vogel studied Hebrew from an early age. As a young man, he traveled to Vilna to fulfill his literary ambitions and to become more proficient in Hebrew. At the age of twenty-one he moved to Vienna, where he would live off and on for over a decade.[48] When given the opportunity go to Palestine, Vogel confesses in his journal that he has no desire to pursue this path;[49] at the same time, however, he perceives writing in Hebrew as a means of joining "our great literature." What, then, is the "great literature" that Vogel aspires to join by writing in Hebrew?

Living in Vienna provided Vogel with the opportunity to immerse himself in German modernist literature and culture. Vogel, a poet-novelist, is typically associated with the *anti-nosah* (*anti-formulaic*) writers who drew on the themes and the style of the surrounding non-

[47] On the Hebrew literary centers in Europe see: Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe*.

[48] For a detailed overview of Vogel's biography, see Dan Pagis, "David Vogel: kavim lebiografiah," in *mihutz lashurah* (Jerusalem: Keshev, 2003), 9-29.

[49] David Vogel, *Takhanot kavot* (Tel Aviv: hakibutz hameuhat, 1990).

Jewish culture, such as Uri Nissan Gnessin, Avraham "Sonne" Ben-Yitzhak, and Gershom Shofmann. Scholars have noted the ties Vogel's writing upholds with German literature and culture, as well as his work's marked modes of impressionism, expressionism, decadent, and minimalism.[50] Yet even as an *anti-nosah* writer, Vogel's writing incited controversies relating to his distinctive Hebrew grammar, erotic themes, and poetics of simplicity.[51] These controversies, however, have focused mainly on his poetry. Dan Miron, for example, considers Vogel's prose fiction as insignificant on the basis of the fact that Vogel's "episode of prose fiction writing lasted only seven years, whereas Vogel wrote poetry for nearly thirty years."[52] While I disagree with Miron's assessment, I find his distinction between Vogel's poetry and fiction writing useful, as it compels us to ask a fundamental question: What does the genre of the novel enable Vogel to address that he cannot speak to in his poetry?

While Vogel's poetry addresses a universalist modern experience free of any Jewish markings, his fiction constitutes a site for negotiating an identity that oscillates between Hebrew and German, between Jewishness and Europeanness. Vogel began experimenting with prose as early as 1925 with a short fragment called "Hadayar" ("The Tenant").[53] In addition to *Haye nisuim*, he wrote two novellas, *Beveyt hamarpe* (*In the Sanatorium*, 1927) and *Lenohah hayam (Facing the Sea*, 1932), and left an unfinished manuscript of a second novel, *Roman Vinayi* (*A*

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[50] Glenda Abramson, "Vogel and the City," in *The Russian Jewish Diaspora and European Culture, 1917-1937*, ed. Jörg Schulte, Olga Tabachnikova, and Peter Wagstaff (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 37–54; Robert Alter, "Fogel and the Forging of a Hebrew Self," *Prooftext* 13, no. 1 (1993): 3–14; Michael Gluzman, "Unmasking the Politics of Simplicity in Modernist Hebrew Poetry: Rereading David Fogel," *Prooftexts* 13, no. 1 (1993): 21–44; Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports,* 87-104; Gershon Shaked, *Zehut: sifruyot yehudiyot bileshonot la'az* (Heifa: hotsa't hasfarim shel Universitat Heifa, 2006).

[51] Gluzman, "Unmasking the Politics of Simplicity in Modernist Hebrew Poetry: Rereading David Fogel, 21-44."

[52] Dan Miron, "Ahavah teluyah badavar: toldot hitkablutah shel shirat David Fogel," in *Aderet Lebinyamin: sefer hayovel liBinyamin Harshav*, ed. Ziva Ben-Porat, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: hakibuts hameuhad, 1999).

[53] Vogel, "Hadayar," *Tahanot kavot* (Tel Aviv: hakibuts hameuhad, 1990),

Viennese Novel posthumously published in 2012), which is also set in Vienna.[54] Most of these works tell of Jewish characters and their experience in distinct German-European locations, such as Vienna, the sanatorium, and vacation sites typically frequented by German-Jews.[55] Most recently Vogel was "rediscovered" once again, with the Hebrew publication of the correspondence between him and his wife, Ada Nadler, written originally in German. This praxis of "rediscovery," or resurfacing, taking place in different languages across prosaic genres demonstrate another expression of the interlingustic threshold between Hebrew and German.

Haye nisuim is Vogel's most extensive work of fiction. Published in three parts (1929-1931), the novel tells of the sadomasochist relationship between Rudolf Gurdweill, an Eastern European Jewish writer, and the Austrian Baroness Thea von Takow, in Vienna in the 1920's. The novel's five sections follow the evolution of their violent and destructive relations and marriage, while depicting interwar Vienna's urban life and Jewish community.[56] Throughout the novel, Thea abuses Gurdweill both physically and emotionally: she commands him, hits him, burns his manuscripts, and cheats on him with both strangers and friends. She repeatedly tortures him by announcing the fetus she is carrying is not his son, and once the child is born she neglects to take care of him, causing his untimely death. In the end, Gurdweill comes home to find his wife in bed with another man, goes over the edge and murders both Thea and her lover.

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[54] Lilach Nethanel found the manuscript of *Roman Vinayi* at Gnazim archive. On its discovery and compilation of the manuscript see: Lilach Nethanel, *Ketav Yado Shel David Fogel: Maḥshevet Haketivah* (Ramat Gan: Universitat Bar-Ilan, 2012); Nethanel Lilach, "David Vogel's Lost Hebrew Novel, Viennese Romance," *Prooftext* 33, no. 23 (2013): 307–32.

[55] On the Jews sanatorium see: Sunny Yudkoff, "In the Sanatorium: David Vogel Between Hebrew and German," in *Tubercular Capital: Illness and the Conditions of Modern Jewish Writing,* (Stanford University Press), 2019.

[56] Aharon Komem argues that the novel is structured like a five-act tragedy. See Aharon Komem, *Haofel vehapele: 'iyunim biyetsirato shel David Vogel* (Heifa; Tel Aviv: Universiṭat Heifa; Zmorah-Bitan, 2001).

Indeed, the novel *Haye nisuim* posits an enigma: What can we make of a novel that is written in Hebrew, yet expresses a clear sense of longing toward German culture, rather than Zion at a crucial time of nation building? What kind of hybrid of modern Hebrew and German-Jewish experience does this novel negotiate? Finally, what are the implications of such a worldview? In discussions of *Haye nisuim*, two main contradictory points of view typically arise: the first claims that it is a European novel "accidentally" written in Hebrew,[57] while the other asserts that Vogel's choice to write in Hebrew is necessarily ideological, and therefore must be read in the context of the nation building endeavor.[58] Robert Alter suggests that Hebrew nurtured Vogel's aspiration to enter European culture. "No European language—Russian, German, or later, French—could have served as his medium of expression because he was not sufficiently at home in any of them," and Yiddish, the alternative, lacked the aura of literary prestige. "Paradoxical though it may seem," continues Alter, "[Vogel] chooses Hebrew because it is the one avenue open to him for being European, for joining European high culture."[59]

While Vogel perhaps sought a means of feeling "at home" in language, he was caught in between Hebrew and German. Chana Kronfeld has argued compellingly that Vogel's status suffers from a double marginality.[60] On one hand, as a Hebrew author writing to a scattered Hebrew speaking audience, he is excluded from the scope of European literature; on the other

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[57] Gershon Shaked, *Modern Hebrew Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 128-132.

[58] For a comprehensive historical account of Vogel's reception in Hebrew literature discourse, see Dan Miron, "Ahava hatluyah badavar: toldot hitkabluta shel shirat Vogel," 29-98.

[59] Alter, "Fogel and the Forging of a Hebrew Self," 5.

[60] Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 14, 32, 68-70, 184-193. Kronfeld gives a historical account of Vogel's marginality and the ideological traits of renewed reception by the Statehood generation. She focuses on Vogel's poetry and argues that his non-Zionist, lyrical poetics enabled the Statehood generation to rebel against the collective Althermanian verse and generate an alternative poetic genealogy. On the interest of the statehood generation in David Vogel see also: Nathan Zach, "Beyikbot meshorer shenishkach," *Hashira sheme'ever lamilim* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz hameuhad, 2011), 218-224. Originally published in the journal Lamerhav, 23.9.54.

hand, he is also marginalized within Hebrew literature itself, as he focuses on non-Zionist issues and deviates from the "nosah," the mainstream of modern Hebrew literature, which expresses a yearning for Zion. Vogel's marginality invokes the question of Vogel's place within the Hebrew literary tradition. Alter suggests that Hebrew for Vogel was "neither sentimental nor nationalist,"[61] but his means of finding his place in Vienna. Building on Alter's claim, it is crucial to examine the notion of place in *Haye nisuim*, as it brings together the protagonist's longing for a home in Vienna, the geographical tension between Vienna and Zion, and the question of placing the novel within a Jewish literary tradition.

The Jewish Spatial Journey: Movement and Walking the city

In her seminal work about Jewish literary space, Sidra Ezrahi argues that the yearning for Zion was the stimulus for Yiddish and Hebrew literature in the nineteenth-and twentieth centuries. However, she destabilizes the notion that the authors writing in these traditions thought about the actual Zion as the place consisting of deserts, mountains, or people. Rather, she argues, Zion consists of an imagined homeland linked to the epic diasporic narrative of dislocation.[62] Similarly, as mentioned in the introduction, Yigal Schwartz employs spatial concepts to discuss the longing for Zion as the fundamental catalyst of modern Hebrew literature. To reiterate, in Schwartz's account, the "the vector of desire" – expressing a trajectory of longing - undergoes a redirection in the evolution of modern Hebrew literature. Whereas the trajectory of longing in the writings of early authors such as Abraham Mappo, Theodor Herzl, Yosef Luidor, and Moshe Shamir is set from diaspora toward Zion, an opposite trajectory—from

[61] Ibid., 4.

[62] Sidra Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 3-23.

the state of Israel toward Europe—appears in the contemporary writing of the novelist Amos Oz. Vogel's novel, however, suggests that there is yet another dynamic of longing at work: neither a longing for Zion while in Diaspora, nor a longing for Europe while in the State of Israel, but rather a longing for Europe while in Europe. He invokes the image of Zion to imagine a sense of European belonging.

Schwartz invokes Gideon Aran and Zali Gurevitch's notion of a rupture between the *makom gadol* (Place) and *makom katan* (place) in the Jewish spatial imagination.[63] In analyzing Israeli society Aran and Gurevitch detect a rupture between the locality, or nativism, of everyday life and the idea of *Eretz* (the Land), the place beyond places that is a redemptive and sacred territory. While the native can generate a natural connection between 'place' (the physical place) and 'Place' (the idea of a homeland that embodies memory, language, and meaning), the Jewish immigrant is never 'in place.' Hence, even after the formation of a Jewish, Jews still perceive themselves as migrants rather than natives and are not fully 'at home.'[64] The rupture Aran and Gurevitch apply to the Jews in Israeli society can also be identified in Vogel's novel with some modification: the rupture between the idea of a homeland and everyday life is located in Vienna rather than in Palestine. Vogel's Vienna encapsulates both the utopia of a Jewish life spoken in German and mediated in Hebrew, but at the same time the novel expresses the futility of this vision in Gurdweill and Thea's destructive relations.

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[63] Zali Gurevitch and Aran Gideon, "Al hamakom," *Alpayim* 4 (1991): 9-44. The English version on the article was published under the title: "The Land of Israel: Myth and Phenomenon" in: *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. X (1994): 195-210.

[64] Aran and Gurevitch brilliantly show an inherent paradox when reading the biblical segment of Moses and the burning bush. They argue that in the bible the sacred place was determined according to the whereabouts of God. A place becomes sacred only when God says (in the form of a speech act) that this particular place is sacred. Consequently, in Jewish thought the idea of "place" as a sacred place (Erez), exists prior to the place itself.

The question of being at home in language is central to the discussion of Vogel's work. Vogel's Hebrew resists the conventions of modern Hebrew, often experimenting with a German grammatical structure, inserting transliterated German words, and avoiding biblical allusions.[65] Unlike its literary contemporaries, *Haye nisuim* does not present a protagonist aspiring to go to Palestine or struggling with his Jewish identity. Rather, it focuses on the struggles of everyday life in Vienna and portrays the city's German-speaking Jewish and non-Jewish communities. I suggest that Vogel's writing should be read not only as occupying a minor position within the "Hebrew republic of letters,"[66] but also as an attempt to create an alternative tradition of Hebrew literature within the broader scope of Jewish-European literature that can only be articulated in-between Hebrew and German. Moreover, the novel not only aspires to participate in a European tradition, but by writing a presumably German speaking community in Hebrew, and writing the topography of the city in Hebrew, the novel engenders a Jewish experience that exists in an interlinguistic space.

For Vogel, the Hebrew language is not merely a "spiritual home," or a vehicle in the service of Zionism. Rather, it holds the possibility for the making of a Jewish home in a Vienna, emerging interlinguaistically between German and Hebrew. The Hebrew-German dialogue thus not only occurs on the intertextual or representational level, but also serves as a gateway to understanding what literature can do. For this, it has its place in both a diasporic Hebrew literary tradition and an urban tradition related to the German metropolis .[67]

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[65] Shaked, *Zehut*, 442.

[66] On the notion of the Hebrew literary republic, see Dan Miron, *Bodedim bemo'adam: lideyoknah shel harepublikah hasifrutit ha'Ivrit biteḥilat hameah ha'esrim* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'oved, 1987); on Vogel's poetry as situating a minor position within the Hebrew literature, see Gluzman, "Unmasking the Politics of Simplicity in Modernist Hebrew Poetry: Rereading David Fogel," 21-44; and Nirit Korman, "Etrakem behalomeh habetuli, hatzahor: 'ikvot erotikah veleumiut beleshono shel David Vogel," *Theoria vebikoret* 46 (2016): 117–41.

[67] Menachem Brinker, *Hasifrut ha'Ivrit kesifrut eropit* (Jerusalem: Karmel, 2016).

With respect to the modern experience of urban space, Michel de Certeau distinguishes between what he refers to as the panoramic gaze of the city, which he likens to looking at the city from the top of a high-rise, and the pedestrian gaze of the walkers, whose views are limited by buildings, routes, and streets.[68] Certeau argues that although the pedestrians are subject to the rules of urban production, they are also the producers of their own routes. Through their everyday practices, such as going from home to work, they consume space; they appropriate it through their practical usage of the urban landscape. By walking their specific routes, they apply an active choice, which transforms space into a practiced place. "The act of walking," posits Certeau, "is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or statements uttered."[69] Certeau's project ties spatial practices of walking and seeing with practices of knowing and interpreting, reading and writing. Each of these portrayed gazes—the vertical scrutiny from above and the horizontal vision of the walkers—offers a limited form of "knowing." While there is a tendency to mystify the panoramic gaze, Certeau wishes to reinforce the status of the "everyman" walking the city as part of the cultural system:

> The ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below,' below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; […] these practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as of lovers in each other's arms.[70]

Certeau links the pedestrian's role as an active writer of the urban space with the fact that each pedestrian has a limited scope of vision. Walking, then, while an activity restricted with respect to sight and visibility, allows for a closer gaze and the carving of individual routes. In other

[68] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 92.

[69] Ibid., 97.

[70] Ibid., 93.

words, being the writer of the urban text and a reader of the urban text constitute two different practices, and require two different—often contradictory—kinds of vision.

In Vogel's novel, Gurdweill often wanders the streets of Vienna. Scholars who explore the way the city is illustrated in *Haye nisuim* tend to point to the blending of the protagonist's inner and outer gazes. Shachar Pinsker argues that this novel's depiction of Vienna mirrors Gurdweill's consciousness: "the cityscape itself becomes a mental place […] [it] changes in the novel with every minute shade of nuance of Gurdweill's mood and his frame of mind."[71] And in his book *Reading the City – the Urban experience in Hebrew Narrative Fiction from the Nineteenth Century until the Middle of the Twentieth Century,* Oded Menda-Levi characterizes Vogel's style as a "cursory glance" that oscillates among three aspects of urban experience: endless descriptive details; rhythm and movement; and the wandering consciousness. The novel represents the ever-changing city and the subject's inability to comprehend the synchronic effect of urban space, in which everything occurs simultaneously.[72]

While these accounts explicate the city through the fragmented consciousness of the protagonist, they fail to investigate the epistemological implications of reading and writing the city. Vogel goes into great detail describing Gurdweill's routes and paths. He resides in a room in Leopoldstadt and goes for walks to clear his mind. However, while Gurdweill is constructed in conversation with the figure of the *flâneur (*and it's safe to believe Vogel was aware of this figure, as the novel was written in Paris), I argue that Gurdweill is not a pure *flâneur*, for he is not fully a man of leisure. Unlike the *flâneur,* his choice of routes appears in a pragmatically inclined manner, calculating whom might he meet on the street, who would lend him money, and

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[71] Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011), 100.

[72] Oded Menda-Levi, *Liḳro et ha'ir: haḥavayah haurbanit basiporet ha'Ivrit me'emtsa'h hame'ah ha-19 'ad emtsa'h ha-me'ah ha-20* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Helal Ben-Hayim: ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad, 2010), 180-187; 202-213.

who at the café might buy him lunch. For Gurdweill, walking is thus a practice motivated by practical considerations. On many occasions, he walks around Schotentor, passing but not necessarily entering the cafés. Walking, as well as sitting in the coffeehouse, are linked to attaining funds, buying food, and going to town: "That afternoon, at about three o'clock, Gurdweill was on his way to his regular café, where he hoped to find a 'victim,' some acquaintance from whom he could borrow money."[73] The materiality of the city as experienced by the *flâneur* takes shape in a different manner. In Vogel's novel, the machines, noise, and masses shaping the experience of strolling are confronted by a walk consisting of material, financial, and communal aspirations. On one occasion, Gurdweill deliberately walks by the residence of a wealthy acquaintance to improve his odds of running into the man by chance. This echoes Vogel's own experiences of poverty, distress, and hunger, which dominated his time in Vienna. In his journal he describes the burden his poverty places on his relationships:

> Today I had a small pleasure, small. My friend G' returned from his summer house and I was able to do him a favor: lend him funds. In my recent days of hunger I lived solely at his expense; I have taken from him almost all of his money—and I have suffered greatly for it, because our relations became exclusively financial, not a form of commodity, but charity.[74]

While literary and artistic depictions of strolling and sitting at coffeehouses often convey a sense of pure interiority associated with artists and intellectuals, Vogel's journal and novel undermine this urbane image. Instead, *Haye nisuim* invokes the image of the café as the modern synagogue,

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[73] Vogel, *Married Life*, 13.

[74] Vogel, *Tahanot kavot*, 300 [my translation].

but undermines its transcendent potential by pointing to the physical, bodily materiality of everyday life caused by poverty and hunger.

On the Verge of the Mundane: The Ambiguity of the Literary Coffeehouse

The coffeehouse is perhaps one of fin-de-siècle Vienna's most distinct urban markings. The literary café—such as Café Central, Café Griensteidl, or Café Herrenhof —was a place of assembly for artists and intellectuals both Jewish and non-Jewish, including Eastern European Hebrew writers.[75] Elias Canetti documented Avraham "Sonne" Ben-Yizhak's connections with figures such as Robert Musil, Hugo von Hofmannstahl, Richard Beer-Hofmann, and James Joyce, connections that were enabled by and forged in the café.[76] Shachar Pinsker points to the centrality of Café Herrenhof in *Haye nisuim*, and argues that the Viennese café was a spiritual homeland that functioned as a working space as well as living room, but, as a space inclusive for some and exclusive for others, also brewed feelings of alienation. The *Kaffeehaus* constitutes a "third space," a place that gives one a sense of home, and at the same time constitutes a public and alienating non-home.

The novel's tendency to oscillate between impressionism and expressionism is also evident in its depiction of the coffeehouse. Yet the narrator does not merely represent the urban landscape in order to reflect on its protagonist's interiority, but rather manipulates language to generate a mutually constitutive relationship between the individual and the coffeehouse:

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[75] On the literary café in Vienna and its role in shaping Viennese modernism see Harold Segal, *The Vienna Coffeehouse Witz 1890-1938* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993); on the history of the literary café and its role in modern Jewish culture, see Shachar Pinsker, *A Rich Brew: How cafés Created Modern Jewish Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

[76] Elias Canetti, *The Play of the Eyes*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1987), 132-162; on the coffeehouse as a "third space" in the Jewish context see, Shachar Pinsker, "The Urban Literary Café and the Geoography of Hebrew and Yiddish Modernism in Europe," in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. Mark Wollaeger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 433–58.

> It was nine at night. One by one the *habitués* of the little café assembled: students and minor officials who sat in the same chairs night after night, and ordered their coffee as if they were finishing off their evening meal at home. These customers were as much part of the café and its particular atmosphere as the ragged, threadbare velvet sofas around the walls and the dark, dirty marble tables. It was rare for a 'stranger' to appear here.[77]

In Vogel's description of the café, the guests are the subjects that bring upon the café an unspecified, spiritual "something," but at the same time they are also raw material, rather like the velvet sofas, marble tables, and walls they sit among. The verb Vogel uses for "instill," (or "infuse") is *"atslu"* (אצלו), which does not appear in the Bible but in the book *Mahzor leyom hakippurom* (*A Prayer for Yom Kippur*), published in Vienna in 1836. This uncommon third person plural form of the verb "instilled" invokes a spatial connotation of the horizontal *shhinah* descending slowly upon the surface. The verb *atslu* comes from the Hebrew root א.צ.ל and brings to mind the Kabbalistic term *Olam haatsilut* (the world of emanation), the highest, most spiritual and pure, of four worlds descending down to our world. This description of the coffeehouse demonstrates the dialectic relation between the individual and the coffeehouse. The relation between the café and its guests becomes mutually constitutive. The customers are not merely visitors sitting in the coffeehouse but rather part of the café in the most material sense, like its mixture of velvet, marble, and concrete, simultaneously dirty and glamorous. They are consumers as well as producers of space, pieces in the making of the coffee house, instilling this

[77] Vogel, *Married life*, 19.

"היה תשע בערב. אל הקפה הקטן בסביבות האוניברסיטה התלקטו אחד אחד האורחים הקבועים. סטודנטים ופקידים נמוכים שישבו על מקומם הקבוע והזמינו את המוקה התדיר, כמו בכל ערב אחר הסעודה. אלה האורחים שימשו כבר חלק מבית הקפה, אצלו עליו גונו המיוחד, ממש כספות-הקטיפה המוקרחות והמחותחתות שליד הכתלים סביב וכשולחנות השייש הכהה והמלוכלך. אדם 'זר' לא נזדמן לכאן אלא לעיתים רחוקות."(פוגל, *חיי נישואים*, 19)

place with a unique atmosphere. For Vogel, the café is a space of spiritual materiality, the highest form of *atsilut* mixed with the lowest form of dirt.

The root *alef-tzadi-lamed* (א.צ.ל) also brings to mind Uri Nissan Gnessin's story "Etsel" (1913), which was likely known to Vogel. While the verb *Atslu* generates a feeling of something gently descending downwards and infusing itself upon something else, thinking through Gnessin's *Etsel* complicates this notion, as the term points to a sense of deep proximity on the one hand, and to the impossibility of synthesis on the other. Through the uncommon verb *atslu* Vogel charges the café as a dialectic space of spirit and materiality, subject and object, the admixture of elements and impossibility of their full amalgamation.

At an unnamed coffeehouse by the university, Gurdweill meets Thea for the first time. While he is a regular there, she is a "stranger" (*rivah zarah*) who immediately captures his gaze. "Gurdweill could not take his eyes of her. He suddenly felt a vague unease, as if at the premonition of disaster."[78] Ironically, Thea, the native Viennese Baroness, is a 'stranger' in the context of the immigrants quarter. The café not only constitutes a "third place" in the novel, but also encapsulates the possibility that Gurdweill might form a 'traditional' home by means of a family. Seeing this strange woman raises a sense of distress (*metsukah*) mixed with attraction, both mediated by the gaze.

Gurdweill immediately notices her and whispers to his friend Ulrich:

> Did you see the new girl? At the third table on the left?
> 'I saw her. What about it?'
> 'What do you think of her?'
> 'Nothing in particular. A girl like any other.'

[78] Vogel, *Married Life*, 23

> 'No! There's something about her you've missed. Something of the old Viennese tradition. The Biedermeier period. Look at the line of authority in the bottom half of her face. I'd like to meet her.'[79]

This dialogue highlights the interplay between the noticeable and the unnoticeable. As a Jewish immigrant aware of his "otherness," Gurdweill links Thea with a period outside his own geographical and cultural history, though hers is a history to which he wishes to belong. Through Thea, he fantasizes about the possibility of generating a new kind of history: their marriage will produce a son that would unify "two ancient races." He not only fantasizes about Thea's prestigious heritage, but also sees his Jewish roots as a meaningful heritage, noting that he "came from an ancient Jewish family. He could trace his descent to a great and famous rabbi from Prague."[80] Ironically, Gurdweill seeks a connection to his ancient Jewish-Israelite origins to effect a European homecoming.

In order to accommodate that fantasy, Gurdweill promptly inscribes himself as a descendent of the ancient Israelites and recruits it to make a claim that he is a worthy match. He imagines the ancient Zion but does not employ the Zionist trajectory of longing. Instead, his fantasy of rooting himself in the Viennese realm has to travel through an imagined Zion and makes its way back to Vienna. However, it is not the holy land the Zionists hope to redeem and settle in that Gurdweill imagines. Instead, it is an imagined ancient Israel and the Rabbi from

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[79] Vogel, ibid, 23.

לחש גורדווייל לאולריך:
-הרואה אתה את הריבה? שום ליד השולחן השלישי משמאל?
-אני רואה. ומה בכך?
-מהי בעיניך?
-לא כלום! נערה ככל הנערות!
-לא! יש בה משהו, שאינך מבחין. מין מסורת וינאית. תקופת בידרמאייר. ראה נא את הקו של שררה בחלק הפנים התחתון. הייתי רוצה מאד להכיר אותה. (שם, 22)

[80] Vogel, ibid., 46.

Prague that would elevate him to a Hebrew-European identity and make him belong where he is already located physically. Matched with Thea's petit-bourgeois Biedermeier appearance, his questionable, ambiguous genealogy relies on an elevated Viennese belonging, rather than biblical exile.

When Thea and Gurdweill depart, he begins to look around and orient himself in his whereabouts, but instantly plunges into a fantasy of both geography and genealogy:

> "Gurdweill walked slowly on, swaying slightly, and without realizing where he was, he reached Nussdorfer Strasse. Aha! He suddenly remembered – the Währing district! He had just been in the Währing district! It was written on the sign, in so many words! And she, she lived in Schulgasse number 12. The Ba-ro-ness The-a von Ta-kow, Schulgasse 12. Not thirteen or eleven, but exactly twelve… six and six, seven and five, eight and four – they all made twelve! Thea von Takow, Rudolf von Takow – no, von Gurdweill… the Baron Rudolf von Gurdweill! Ha-ha-ha! Gurdweill burst into loud laughter, which somewhat cleared his head. A new part of his life was beginning. He could feel it in his bones. This evening was a milestone."[81]

Gurdweill is completely disoriented. As he attempts to reorient himself geographically, he is overtaken by his fantasies. Gurdweill's disorientation points to a longing for a cultural, lingual, and spatial unification. While Gurdweill's Judaism is hardly mentioned or practiced in the novel, here he imagines that he has a glorious past and a promising future, both, of course,

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[81] Vogel, *Married Life*, 28-29.

״גורדווייל המשיך דרכו לאט, מתנודד משהו, והגיע מבלי משים אל רחוב נוסדורף. א-הה! - נזכר בבת אחת - האיזור הויהרינגי! עבר קודם לכן את האיזור הויהירינגי! כתוב היה בפירוש על הלוח! ו ה י א, היא דרה ברחוב שול מספר 12. ה-ב-רו-נית תי-אה פון ט-קו, רחוב שו-ל 12. לא אחד-עשר ולא שלושה-עשר, אלא שנים-עשר בדיוק… שישה ושישה, חמישה ושבעה, שמונה וארבעה - תמיד שנים-עשר!… תיאה פון טקו, ר ו ד ו ל ף פון טקו, לא - פון גורדווייל… הברון רודולף פון גורדווייל!… ח-ח-ח! פרץ גורדווייל הצחוק קולני ודעתו נצטללה המקצת על ידי כך. עכשיו מתחיל חלק חדש, הוא מרגיש זאת בחוש. זה הערב הנהו ציון דרך.

Vogel, *Haye nisuim*, 26.

simultaneously elusive and illusive. Gurdweill's displacement is both temporal and spatial, and requires travelling through the land of Israel to imagine a mode of belonging to Europe.

Yet the novel resists any kind of homecoming to either Zion or the Viennese sphere.[82] *Haye nisuim* demonstrates a non-redemptive diasporic condition: Zion cannot offer Gurdweill redemption, but at the same time he longs for the demon-like Baroness who will eventually destroy him. Marrying Thea worsens Gurdweill's condition: he works harder to support her desires, he is isolated from his friends, and he is thrown out of his home. By the end of the novel, Gurdweill's wanderings are those of a man in despair. After the loss of his child and his manuscript to Thea, he is also exiled from his home. Only after meeting Thea on the street by chance is he granted permission to return to his apartment. For the reader, Gurdweill's decision to go back to Thea is disturbing and points to the extent of Gurdweill's fragmented consciousness and his inability to properly "read" his situation.

Gurdweill the Author: The Writer who cannot Read

In her book about Vogel's recently discovered work *A Viennese Novel*[83] Lilach Nethanel stipulates that in Vogel's fiction Vienna becomes a metaphor for the author's sheet of paper, on which he strolls with his pen. Wandering around Vienna is analogous to the movement of his

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[82] Whereas discourses of the Jewish *galut* (exile) have pointed to the ways in which at the core of the Zionist project lies the notion of the negation of exile, including the creative, productive outcomes of the Jewish diaspora. See: Amnon Raz-Karkotzkin, "Galut Betoh Ribonut: Lebikoret 'Shlilat Hagalut' Batarbut Hayisraelit," *Teoria ubikoret*, no. 4 (1993): 23–55.

[83] In 2012 Lilach Nethanel discovered a previously unknown manuscript in Vogel's literary estate at "Gnazim" archive in Tel Aviv. The plot of the untitled manuscript takes place exclusively in Vienna and provides valuable insights on Vogel's prose-fiction style, as well as his attitude toward the city. The manuscript was published under the title *Roman Vinai* (*A Viennese Novel*). David Vogel, *Roman Vinai* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'oved, 2012). On the discovery of the novel, see Nethanel, "David Vogel's Lost Hebrew Novel, Viennese Romance," 307-332. On Vienna in *Roman Vinai*, see: Tamar Setter, "'Alilotav shel hatalush hamufr'ah bevinah: krisato shel dmut hatalush baroman haganuz shel David Vogel," *Israelim* 8 (2017): 79–105.

sketching hand, the hand that writes in Hebrew. Along these lines, I suggest that Hebrew for Vogel becomes the language through which he appropriates Viennese space and resists the idea of Hebrew as a homecoming to the Zionist Zion. Instead, the novel offers a different image of Zion—that of the ancient Israelites, which goes back to the diaspora and to a Rabbi in Prague to claim a place in Vienna. But the contact point between Hebrew and the Viennese space transforms it into a language of illegibility, a language of alienation.[84] The illegibility is twofold: First of all, the local readership in Vienna cannot access the novel because it is written in Hebrew; secondly, the protagonist is unable to read—as in comprehend—the toxic marriage of which he is part and from which he cannot escape. The novel produces a Vienna of alienation, and yet, within this unintelligibility, it engenders, sketches, and maps an accurately legible city in the Hebrew language.

Like Vogel, Gurdweill establishes his routes and writes the city. As he is swept up in his fantasies, however, he is neither able to *read* it nor properly interpret his abusive relationship with Thea. His inability to *read* the city and the actuality of events prevents him from *re-writing* his path, routes, and choices. He therefore continues to walk along the destructive path which eventually leads to the deaths of his son, of Lotte, and of Thea.

Ironically, Gurdweill is an author. In his book *Haofel vehapele (The Darkness and the Miraculous)* Aaron Komem provides a comprehensive overview of Gurdweill as an author. Yet, surprisingly, he argues that Gurdweill's writing skills are merely an indirect characterization, secondary to the role erotic motivation plays in the novel.[85] Indeed, the novel does not focus on

[84] Lilach Nethanel, *Ketav yado shel Daṿid Fogel : maḥshevet ha-ketivah* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2012), 28-29.

[85] Aahron Komem, *Haofel ṿehapele: ʻiyunim biyetsirato shel Daṿid Vogel* (Heifa: Universitat Heifa; Tel Aviv: Tmorah-Bitan, 2001), 158-172.

Gurdweill's literary texts or his creative process. What we do find out is that Gurdweill does not struggle in his writing. In contrast to Ulrich, a fellow writer and his former roommate, who sits in the café all day but does not write a word, Gurdweill does not need the café to work. In fact, he has no creative barriers and writes calmly and effectively at home. For him, the café is a place to socialize and to obtain a meal.

Occasionally, Gurdweill comes across a kind of restlessness in his writing and goes out for a walk; but typically, he is not shown as suffering from any kind of "writer's block." In fact, the contrary is true. We learn early on that Gurdweill is a published and appreciated author. Just before he meets Thea, a story he has written is published in a distinguished journal and is read by everyone in his social circle. It is not clear what language Gurdweill writes in, Hebrew or German, but we are inclined to believe he writes in German, as there is no indication that the characters know Hebrew. The published story draws positive reactions. Lotte praises him for his work, as does his employer Kreindel. While Lotte's response can be perceived as unreliable due to her affection, there is no reason to doubt Kreindel's praise of the text. He even presents an educated interpretation of its plot and poetic style. We also learn that Gurdweill has received pay for a story prior to its publication, an indication of his high literary status. Gurdweill continues to write after his marriage, but not as frequently as before. Though the reader does not see Gurdweill's work, the narrator notes that in a moment of anger, Thea burns Gurdweill's manuscript. After that, he makes sure to work only in her absence.

Critics have pointed to Gurdweill's mental vision[86] and fragmented consciousness[87] to discuss the novel's fundamental irony, an irony that underlies Gurdweill's relations with Thea.

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[86] Pinsker, *Literary Passports*, 98-100.

[87] Eric Zakim, "Between Fragment and Authority in David Fogel's (Re)Presentation of Subjectivity," *Prooftexts* 13, no. 1 (1993): 103–24.

The narrator, Gurdweill's friends, and the reader all see what Gurdweill cannot: that his relationship with Thea is abusive and that his erotic infatuation is intertwined with her demeaning behavior. Critics have overlooked, however, the equally ironic relationship between Gurdweill's status as an author and inability to read.[88] This ironic contradiction challenges what seems to be a harmonic relation of reading and writing in the novel, as well as the assumption that a writer can properly read the world. There are three layers of authorship in the novel: Gurdweill, the narrator, and Vogel. By designing an author-character that cannot read, in the sense of registering and interpreting, the novel generates a form of reflexive irony that questions the ability of the novel itself to epistemologically "know" the world and to effectively narrate it.

Whereas Gurdweill appropriates space by walking, the novel appropriates the streets of Vienna by rewriting them in Hebrew. Through extensive descriptions in Hebrew—which by necessity involve the transliteration of street names and places—Vogel produces a Vienna that is neither Austrian nor Jewish. Instead, he uses Hebrew to appropriate—in Certeau's terms—the textual space as a practiced space. It is a modern Hebrew Vienna in which the characters walk, feel, and speak a German that is engendered by the Hebrew novel. The novel follows the topography of Vienna to document the city in Hebrew, and to rewrite the journey of the wandering Hebrew. The Hebrew of the novel does not attempt to invoke the archaic, but rather challenges grammatical conventions to the extent of deterritorializing the language, pointing to the materiality of the old-new forms of Hebrew language, and to the materiality of the old-new forms of everyday life. Rather than secularizing Hebrew, Vogel writes in an already secularized Hebrew that aims to form a sense of *Hebrewness* that is independent from the narrative of

[88] Aharon Komem argues that Gurdweill's being an author is insignificant to the main plot. See: Komem, *Haofel vehapele*, 158-163.

homecoming, and from the Talmudic thought that sees the book as a spiritual homeland. Instead, it appropriates the imagined ancient Israelite heritage as a seal of a new category of Hebrew, one that belongs to Europe.[89]

"The act of walking," posits Certeau, "is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or statements uttered"[90] The pedestrians, *Wandermänner*, "follow the thick and thins of the an urban 'text' they wrote without being able to read it."[91] Gurdweill thus becomes the tip of the pencil through which Vogel sketches Vienna. While providing his protagonist with the ability to write the city as a pedestrian and as an author, Vogel nonetheless denies him the ability to read. The Hebrew Vienna that he constructs, like the speech act of Certeau's pedestrian, challenges the notion that the individual can record, sketch, and interpret a map of modern urban life. Gurdweill is a gifted author that has no ability to read his own life or to escape his destructive marriage. I would further argue that Vogel's unique poetics questions the individual's capacity for reading on three different levels: on that of one's ability to properly read the map of the surrounding environment; that of one's ability to properly read the happenings in one's own life (and potentially rewrite what needs to be changed); and thirdly, of the novel's ability—as a modern polyphonic text—to *know* human life and consciousness.

Vogel's novel does not suit the narrative of the diasporic Jew exiled from the Promised Land, at least not in his own imagination. He is not exiled from Zion; he is simply exiled. Ironically, after finally receiving his Austrian passport, Vogel left Vienna and moved to Paris,

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[89] This linguistic appropriation reaches into the novel's narration, as well, through the choice of language. All the characters in the novel—even the Jews among themselves—speak in German, and there is no evidence of different vernaculars. It is also unclear in which language Gurdweill writes, or in which literary journal and city his work is published. We do know, though, that it was published in a prestigious magazine and that his social milieu is able to read and appreciate it.

[90] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 97.

[91] Ibid, 93.

where he wrote *Haye nisuim*, a novel that embodies a Viennese Hebrew experience. Hebrew for Vogel is not a trajectory toward Zion (as in Zionism). Instead, Hebrew becomes a spiritual homeland, a vernacular that generates neither a Jewish homecoming nor a Zionist narrative, but a new incarnation of the category of European Hebrewness.

Vogel's interrogation of the Jewish sense of belonging is expressed via Germanized Hebrew questions and the irony of the narrator toward the protagonist. While Vogel's experimentation in narration style was perceived as provocative and innovative in the Hebrew literary sphere, it should be understood in relation to the contemporary Viennese literary scene, particularly Arthur Schnitzler, whose narration style, according to Franco Moretti, impacted the development of the novel. Moretti singles out Schnitzler's 1901 novella *Lieutenant Gustl*, which investigated technique of the stream of consciousness.[92] This novella, and the drama it triggered in relation to Schnitzler's Jewishness, is vital to understanding the expression of the polyphony of consciousnesses Schnitzler forms in his 1908 novel *Der Weg ins Freie*, transforming the novel into a liminal space of Jewish belonging and novelistic form.

Arthur Schnitzler: In Between Aesthetic Forms

A self-identified "Austrian of Jewish Descendent writing in the German language," Arthur Schnitzler was a Viennese physician, playwright, and author.[93] He was neither a Zionist nor a religious practitioner of Judaism. He was, however, part of the broader Jewish community in Vienna, and participated in that community's everyday life. While many of Schnitzler's plays

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[92] Franco Morett, *The Modern Epic* (New York; London, Verso, 1996), 171.

[93] "Ich bin Jude, Oesterreicher, Deutcher. Es muss wohl so sein – denn beleidigt fühl ich mich im Namen des Judentums, des Oesterreichertums und das Deutscherlands, wenn man einem von den Dreien was Schlimmes nachsagt.Ä Letter to Elisabeth Streinrück, December 22-26, 1914, in *Briefe, 1913-1931*, by Arthur Schnitzler, ed. Peter Michael Braunwarth, Richard Miklin, Susanne Perlik, and Heinrich Schnitzler (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1984), 69.

deal with or critique the Viennese bourgeoisie, his novel *Der Weg ins Freie* (*The Road into the Open,* 1908) is one of the few literary works in which he explicitly deals with the Jewish condition in turn-of-the-century Vienna.[94]

Before transitioning into the novel, we first need to situate it in relation to Schnitzler's earlier work, *Lieutenant Gustl*, and its impact not only on novelistic form but also on Schnitzler's sense of Judaism concerning what was widely called the 'Gustl-Affaire.'[95] *Lieutenant Gustl* details the thoughts and emotions of a young officer in the Austrian army during the course of a single night. Following an argument in a theater cloakroom, Gustl fails to comply with the army's code of honor when he does not retaliate to a baker's threat to break his sword in half. Unable to challenge him to a duel, Gustl's only way to save his honor is to commit suicide. After wandering the streets of Vienna all night, he learns in the morning of the baker's sudden heart attack. Consequently, he does not feel obligated anymore to take his own life, and he returns to the army base with his honor seemingly restored.

Published in the Christmas edition of the *Neue Freie Presse*, the novella caused a scandal among political activists. The critic Gustav David accused Schnitzler of using Gustl with the intension of creating a representative "type," suggesting criticism of the Austrian army. Schnitzler's lack of response to these allegations was perceived by the right-wing as an opportunity to intensify the drama. They attacked Schnitzler, linking his "anti-Austrian" worldviews to his Jewish identity, arguing that "it is only expected that Schnitzler would write an

[94] Schnitzler addresses issues of anti-Semitism and the complexity of the Austrian-Jewish identity in a later play, *Professor Bernhardi*, which performed for the first time in 1912. On Schnitzler's turn to prose fiction see: Felix Tweraser, "Schnitzler's Turn to Prose Fiction: The Depiction of Consciousness in Selected Narratives," in *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*, ed. Dagmar C. G. Lorenz (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), 149–86.

[95] Holly Sayer, "Arthur Schnitzler's Critical Reception in Vienna: The Liberal Press and the Question of Jewish Identity," *German Life and Letters* 60, no. 4 (2007): 481–92.

anti-military novella because as a Jew he would be naturally inclined to hate the 'Aryan' Austrian army."[96] Centered on his Jewish identity as an opposition to his Austrian sense of belonging, the 'Gustl-Affaire' offers much-needed contextualization to understand Schnitzler's *Der Weg ins Freie* and the geospatial thresholds it performs.

The protagonist in Schnitzler's novel is an Austrian Baron, Georg von Wergenthin, a promising, talented composer who lacks the determination to work. By all accounts, the issue that bothered contemporary critics the most is the enigmatic two-in-one structure of the novel. Shortly after its publication in 1908, Schnitzler's friend, the Danish critic Georg Brandes wrote to him: "But haven't you written two books? The relationship of the young Baron and his mistress in one matter, and the new condition of the Jewish population in Vienna because of anti-Semitism is another one that, it seems to me, has no necessary relation to the first. The mistress is not Jewish."[97] Both in Schnitzler's time and in later years critics have continued to echo Brandes's observation to the extent of marking the novel as "flawed,"[98] expressing a disappointment with what they would have liked to be the great Viennese epos.[99] In recent years, others have attempted to find links between the two plots by noting points of contact between

[96] Sayer, ibid, 483).

[97] "Aber haben Sie nicht zwei Bücher geschrieben?" Letter dated "Ende Juni," in Kurt Bergel, ed. *Georg Brandes und Arthur Schnitzler; Ein Briefwechsel* (Bern: Francke, 1956), 95.

[98] Josef Körner argues that the novel is structurally "flawed" since it consists of two novels in one. Josef Körner, *Arthur Schnitzlers Gestalten und Probleme* (Zürich: Amalthea-Verlag, 1921). On the double structure see also: Andrew Török, "Arthur Schnitzlers 'Der Weg Ins Freie': Versuch Einer Neuinterpretation Author," *Monatshefte* 64, no. 4 (1972): 371–77; Abigail Gillman, *Viennese Jewish Modernism: Freud, Hofmannsthal, Beer-Hofmann, and Schnitzler* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 109-112.

[99] On the early reception of the novel see: Gillman, *Viennese Jewish Modernism: Freud*, 103-107. Interestingly, the Zionist circle in Schnitzler's time embraced the novel and its representation of the Jewish question. For an overview of the Zionist response to the novel see: Iris Bruce, "Which Way Out? Schnitzler's and Salten's Conflicting Responses to Cultural Zionism," in *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*, ed. Dagmar C. G. Lorenz (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), 103–26. Given its warm Zionist reception, it's surprising that the Nazis approved of the novel and did not burn it.

them.[100] The most notable link is Georg's presence throughout nearly the entire novel, and the privileging adherence to his consciousness by means of *erlebte Rede* (free indirect discourse). Felix W. Tweraser finds the character of Leo Golowski to be a possible link, as it ties the Jewish problem to Georg's difficulty with developing as a composer.[101] J.M. Hawes, meanwhile, argues that while the plots appear to have little surface connection, they are in fact linked via a proximity of opposites.[102]

The proximity of opposites, or, in other words, the binaries the novel simultaneously introduces and undermines, are explicit not only in the dual plotline, but also in critics' inability to effectively categorize the novel according to its structure. The first few pages of the narrative set up the expectation of a bildungsroman. Yet, as Russel A. Berman suggests, *Der Weg ins Freie* is "a novel of development without development," especially with regard to Georg, the protagonist, who fears commitment until the end. Rather than following one clear form, the novel varies among the forms of an unsuccessful Bildungsroman, a Zeitroman, a novel of ideas, and a failed love-story.[103] Indeed, the novel does not enable us to fully determine its kind. This splitting of plots, however—the narrative intertwined with the anti-narrative, and the lack of causality—is all at the heart of Schnitzler's negotiation between Jewishness and Europeanness.

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[100] For example: Kenneth Segar, "Aesthetic Coherence in Arthur Schnitzler's Novel 'Der Weg Ins Freie,'" *Modern Austrian Literature* 254, no. 3 (1992): 95–111; David Low, "Questions of Form in Schnitzler's 'Der Weg Ins Freie,'" *Modern Austrian Literature* 19, no. 3/4 (1986): 21–32.

Gillman, *Viennese Jewish Modernism,* 107-119.

[101] Felix W. Tweraser, "Leo Golowski as Minor Key in Schnitzler's 'Der Weg Ins Freie': Musical Theory, Political Behaviour and Ethical Action," *Austrian Studies* 17, no. May (2009): 90–112.

[102] J. M. Hawes, "The Secret Life of Georg Von Wergenthin: Nietzschean Analysis and Narrative Authority in Arthur Schnitzler's Der Weg Ins Freie," *The Modern Language Review* 90, no. 2 (1995): 377–87.

[103] David Low, "Questions of Form in Schnitzler's 'Der Weg Ins Freie,'" *Modern Austrian Literature* 19, no. 3/4 (1986): 21–32. Low finds the best definition to be the scenic novel. Abigail Gillman argues that the Jewish plot is a *Zeitroman*, which portrays what Robert Witrich refers to as "a colorful gallery of contemporary Austrian Jewish types confronted with the problems of Jewish identity under Catholic anti-Semitic rule." Gillman, *Viennese Jewish Modernism,* 110; Robert S. Witrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 609.

For Schnitzler, this Europeanness is by default Viennese, and the novel, as "die persönlichste meiner Schöpfungen" ("the most personal of my creations") becomes the site of a polyphonic debate that cannot be reconciled.[104] Written in 1908, the novel invokes nineteenth-century traditions of a dual plot novel such as Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. And yet the lack of a visible, intuitive link between the plots evoked anxiety among critics. Why did the novel provoke such a reaction? What kind of Vienna does Schnitzler construct poetically and ideologically? In this section, I explore both the double plot and the anxious response it has incited amongst critics as manifestations of minor literature, in which the deterritorialized language is geared toward an understanding of the minor through the lens of the native Austrian Baron. The deterritorialized language in the novel is linked to sound, to aesthetic questions regarding music and art, and to the tension between stream of consciousness and the dialogue as forms of inner and outer speech.

Moving in Circles: Toward an Aesthetics of Disorientation

The Road into the Open (1908) captures Georg's interactions with the Jewish bourgeoisie of Vienna. Heinrich Bermann, with whom Georg attempts to write an opera, the Zionist Leo Golowski, who advises him about his music, and the socialist Theresa Golowski are only a few of the diverse Jewish figures the novel portrays. The story also closely follows Georg's relationship with a Catholic working-class young woman named Anna Rosner. Their relationship leads to a pregnancy, yet Georg does not marry her. Instead, he puts her in a villa outside of Vienna and appears for short visits. When the time comes, the baby is stillborn, and with it, their relationship fades away. Shortly thereafter Georg receives a position in another city and leaves to pursue a career as a conductor in Germany.

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[104] Hugo von Hofmannstahl/Arthur Schnitzler, *Briefwechsel*, 257.

Even though it appears that Georg has achieved "a road into the open" by taking a position as a conductor, a closer examination reveals that he has not changed. The tension between the Bildungsroman—that is, a trajectory of development and of moving forward—and the circular movement that results from Georg's inability to commit, is explicated through the ways in which movement appears in the novel, physically, stylistically, and metaphorically.

Being a privileged Christian Baron, Georg has the ability to move among social circles. He can access the all-Christian club, the literary cafés, and the Jewish circles. While "he felt reassured by the fact that he had no close relationship with a single human being, though there were many with whom he could pick up again,"[105] he admittedly entangles himself in an uncommitted yet sustainable relationship with two social "others": Heinrich Bermann and the Jewish circle on the one hand, and the working-class Anna Rosner on the other. Centering on the notion of movement, I find that the novel attempts to represent and at the same time rewrite the hierarchal relations between the center and the periphery; between native and other.

At first glance it appears that Georg travels through the city comfortably and confidently. As a man of means, he typically rides a carriage around Vienna. His routes include his home, the Ehrenberg's salon, the Rosner's house, the café, the club, the Prater, the Ringsrasse, and an occasional "Spaziergang" in the forest bordering Vienna. Whereas these walks change their nature throughout the novel, they are still part of a routine. In the first half of the novel Georg goes on pleasurable walks and bicycle rides with Heinrich. After Georg and Anna return from Italy, however, he puts her in a cabin in a village for the rest of her pregnancy, and his walks to the forest assume the purpose of visiting her. By and large, the characters in the novel do not

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[105] Arthur Schnitzler, *The Road into the Open*, trans. Roger Bayers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 8.

wander aimlessly around the city like the *flâneur.* They mostly sit among their social circles at a café, the salon, or the club, and when they are done, they move purposefully to another place. In addition, their social calendar provides spatio-temporal order, including trips to Italy or to the mountains at designated times of year. Georg's movement around the city—his spatial habits—points to his sense of being at home, of being oriented within the socio-geographical trajectories of the city, and having a sense of ownership over the places he inhabits. However, we learn almost immediately that Georg's spatial order, in the sense of his orientation and stability that is not merely external but also internal, was interrupted by the death of his father. In the dialogue that interrupts Georg's initial stream of consciousness he states: "I've been back for a long time [...] I haven't left Vienna since my father's funeral." The death of Georg's father two months prior to the beginning of the novel is linked to what Hawes refers to as Georg's secret homelessness. While he appears to be the native who is undoubtedly at home, the proximity to the Jewish community, which represents the homeless nation *par excellence*, unravels Georg's own sense of being "Vater- und Heimatlos" (Fatherless and homeless).[106]

For Georg, both the father and the homeland are linked to music and to his aspiration to become a musician. In their last encounter before his father's death, Georg plays the piano for his father, and is interrupted by his father's words: "Where, where?" "Georg, as if embarrassed, let the flood of tones die away, and then, warmly as always, but not in so light a tone as before, the father started a conversation with his son about his future."[107] What does the question "where" mean? One possible interpretation suggests that "where" refers to the musical score. It is unclear to the father where the musical theme is going, or he dislikes its direction, and therefore he asks

[106] J. M. Hawes, "The Secret Life of Georg Von Wergenthin: Nietzschean Analysis and Narrative Authority in Arthur Schnitzler's Der Weg Ins Freie," *The Modern Language Review* 90, no. 2 (1995): 377–87.

[107] Schnitzler, *The Road into the Open*, 4.

Georg to cease playing. On another level it appears that the father is aware of his son's disorientation and lack of commitment, and thus turns the conversation toward the future. Yet, the reader does not know the outcome of this conversation. Georg's consciousness shifts away and we are left with a vague recollection of the music he played, the sound of the word "where," and the warm, yet firm tone of the father. Whereas music is an obvious theme, another layer of the audial appears in the novel. Schnitzler often privileges sound oversight in his narrative construction of Vienna and Georg's relations to places and other characters. In other words, Georg processes information via sound, hearing, speech, tone, and rhythm. For example, in his multiple conversations with Heinrich, he "listened to him, puzzled,"[108] "listened in shock,"[109] "found the tone of mixed tenderness and animosity […] strange and sometimes almost painful,"[110] and "had listened amazed, even a little moved."[111] Georg experiences and constructs the world for himself primarily through the aural.

A distinction between seeing and listening is therefore of the essence. In a 1902 essay, Dimitri Merejkowski distinguished between Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky as representing literature of the eye and literature of the ear, respectively:

> In Dostoyevsky it is impossible not to recognize the personage speaking, at once, at the first word uttered […] Dostoyevsky has no need to describe the appearance of his characters, for by their peculiar form of language and tones of voice they themselves depict, not only their thoughts and feelings, but their face and bodies. With Tolstoy the movement and gestures of the outward bodily frame, revealing the inner shapes of mind […] Not less distinctiveness in the physical appearance does Dostoyevsky achieve by the contrary process: from the internal he arrives to

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[108] Schnitzelr, *The Road into the Open*, 34.

[109] Ibid, 43.

[110] Ibid, 69.

[111] Ibid, 81.

> the external, from the mental to the physical […] With Tolstoy we hear because we see, with the other [Dostoyevsky] we see because we hear.[112]

The literary representation of Georg's perception follows the auditory tradition. Sound is the central sense through which Georg experiences the world. On the most basic level, Georg is a composer who not only creates sounds, but is also able to compose only through listening. The Adagio, apparently the work of greatest meaning to him, is a product of listening to a place. "I heard it once in Palermo […] it came to me out of the waves of the sea as I went walking alone on the shore." Inspiration for Georg is linked to the aural, yet the notion of sound also dominates the way Georg interprets situations and emphasizes the importance of words, sounds, and tone in Schnitzler's literary representation of Vienna. For example, Georg's anxiety as to whether Anna has understood that their relationship should remain casual is rendered via speech and word expressions that indicate intimacy and familiarity. "He had kissed her for the first time a week ago in an empty hall in the Lichtenstein Gallery, and from this moment on, Anna addressed him as du, as though the most formal address would have appeared a deception."[113] When they meet, Georg pleads with her to tell him all she has done since he had last seen her, and the dialogue goes into an hourly itinerary of Anna's doings. Only by hearing Anna are we able to perceive her, especially since we never receive any clues regarding her appearance. However, by listening to their dialogue, the reader perceives not only Anna's whereabouts, but also how Georg slowly appropriates her speech to make her his, so he can return whenever he wishes "to the only one being who completely belonged to him."[114] While Georg leads the reader by his stream of consciousness, Schnitzler employs dialogue in order to both critique the protagonist and compel

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[112] Dmitri Merejkowski, *Tolstoi as Man and Artist; With an Essay on Dostoievski* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1902), 242-244.

[113] Schnitzelr, *The Road into the Open*, 62.

[114] Ibid, 90.

him to listen. Even after their child is stillborn, Georg wishes for Anna to continue their affair. Having slept through the birth, and forgetting about Anna and the child as he pleases, Georg, the reader realizes, is seemingly unaware of the consequences of his actions. His fancy meanders cyclically, as he fantasizes about Anna's coming with him to Germany, the dialogue intrudes as if to wake him up the only way possible: with sound. As he attempts to convince Anna to resume their casual affair and refuses to break out of his circular movement, Anna's dialogic voice cuts through the illusive inner voice that nurtures his fantasies: "I'm not going through this again, Georg."[115]

Speaking in Mute: Schnitzler's Literary Café

Speech as a vehicle through which the novel constructs a sense of irony toward Georg appears not only in his relations with Anna, but also in his relationship with the Jewish milieu. While we are accustomed to thinking of the coffeehouse as a site of attraction, Schnitzler's portrayal of this place undermines its home-like, utopian allusion. Early in the novel Georg arrives at the café yet decides not to enter. He sees the familiar images of the "Jewish literati"[116]—the poet, the critic—as they engage in a lively debate over the value of art, and feels detached:

> As Georg could not hear their voices, but only observe the movement of their lips and their exchange of glances, he could hardly comprehend how they could stand to sit across from each other in a quarter of an hour in this cloud of hate [...] What did he have in common with these people?[117]

[115] Ibid, 289.

[116] Ibid, 69.

[117] Ibid, 70-71.

At the threshold of the Jewish coffeehouse, Georg turns away and enters the neighboring club, an exclusive aristocratic place on the other side of the coffeehouse. The coffeehouse is used not to elevate the prestige of the literary café but to mark its limits. The truly elevated people of society, i.e. the male Christian aristocracy, have access to clubs that the usual costumers of the coffee shop—the Jews—do not. While depictions of the literary café often include noise and debate, Georg's *erlebte Rede* conveys a muted picture of Jewish men waving their arms. We can see them, but we cannot hear anything but Georg's own thoughts of hate and discontent. Juxtaposing Georg's response to the café's occupants against his encounters with Heinrich and Leo, the narrative uses Georg's own inner speech to unravel his anti-Semitism, which will becomes clearer yet in the club, where "he gradually felt more comfortable, and decided he should come more often to these airy and well-appointed rooms, which were frequented by pleasant and well-dressed young people with whom one could converse in a proper and lighthearted way."[118] By granting his protagonist access to the club, Schnitzler exposes the disguised anti-Semitism of those who frequent the Jewish circles, yet continue to think of them as "these people."[119] Ultimately, Schnitzler points to the illusiveness of speech, and the discrepancy between Georg's behavior and his inner thoughts. He uses the tension between dialogic speech and *erlebte Rede* to confront the Jewish-European negotiation, and employs sound, voice, and the ambiguity of speech as both inner and dialogic to do so.

[118] Ibid, 71.

[119] Ibid, 35.

Collision of Sounds: The Jewish Polyphony and the Native Voice

The juxtaposition of dialogic speech with the inner speech of free indirect discourse governs the movement of consciousness in Schnitzler's novel. How does the extensive use of these opposing literary techniques contribute to the Jewish-European struggle in the novel? In order to explore this question, I turn to the third chapter of the novel, which demonstrates the mutually intrusive relations between dialogue and stream of consciousness, speech and sound. While free indirect discourse is in Georg's service as a native Austrian, the dialogue that takes place among Georg, Heinrich, and Leo on the topics of Judaism, Zionism, and the ambiguous notion of homeland contests Georg's privileged perspective. Instead, it provides the reader with a polyphony of voices, one focalized through Georg's consciousness even as it critiques his perspective.

In this scene, Heinrich and Leo debate the Jewish condition in Vienna. Their unintended encounter with Josef Rosner, Anna's brother, and his Jewish-free club evokes opposing feelings regarding the philosophical, political, and ideological standpoint one should take at such a crucial time. For Leo, Zionism is the answer to the Jewish question, while Heinrich is offended by the idea that he is not a native. Heinrich sees Austria as his homeland and distinguishes between the obscure *Vaterland* and the concrete *Heimat*:

> Zionism appeared to him [Heinrich] to be the worse affliction that had yet infected the Jews […] Fatherland… that was, in general, a fiction, a political concept, undefined, challengeable, unintelligible. Only *Homeland* indicated something real, not *Fatherland.*[120]

While Leo appears to be detached from the notion of Heimat for the sake of surviving anti-Semitism, Heinrich adheres to the idea that he not only belongs to German speaking Europe, but

[120] Ibid, 81.

also is no different from Georg, the Christians from the club, or any other "native." Heinrich insists that

> [H]ere, precisely here, is my homeland, and not some place that I don't know, which, from the descriptions, promises me nothing in the slightest, and which certain people now try to persuade me is my fatherland, for the reason that my ancient ancestors had been scattered into the world several thousand years ago.[121]

Heinrich resists the notion of migration in the name of religion. However, it soon becomes clear that unlike Leo, Heinrich does not believe that a catastrophe may actually happen. Still, he acknowledges such possibility, and therefore declares that if the stakes are raised, he will join the Zionist cause.

Only at this moment, "Georg interjected, 'those times will never come again.'" Leo and Heinrich laugh at of Georg's empty, detached words. Like the reader, they too are aware of his distant, disinterested standpoint. The movement between the heated dialogue, to which Georg had listened, and the documentation of his thoughts demonstrates his semi-conscious detachment from the Jewish condition. He listens to them, often touched, and yet persistently uninvolved. After a detailing this exchange, the novel follows Georg as he fades into his thoughts "The sentences […] flew into empty space;–and at some point Georg realized that he could hear only the noise of their argument, without being able to follow the content."[122] By adhering to Georg's consciousness, Schnitzler constructs a cinematic scene, in which the camera is shooting the three men lying in the meadow from above. The lens of the camera reflects Georg's attention: while he is listening to the debate, the camera records the conversation in detail; when he loses interest, the clear voices of the dialogue disappear and are replaced by background noise and Georg's

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[121] Ibid, 80.

[122] Ibid, 83.

own thoughts. In other words, the cinematic scene zooms in on Georg, while the background mumbling of the Jews remains outside the frame. While the thematic layer deals with the ideological question concerning the Jewish condition, Schnitzler constructs an aesthetic layer of polyphony, suggesting that Georg's silence is an active participant in the debate. From the perspective of the aftermath of World War II, the twenty-first-century reader cannot help but acknowledge the extent to which silence is a form of action. Written thirty years before that war, Schnitzler's conjunction of dialogue and free indirect discourse creates an ironic attitude toward Georg as an indifferent audience, who lays back and listens to the argument, unaffected.

The Sound of A Homeland

In the novel, sound becomes a vehicle through which a connection to the ancestral homeland is established. Yet the sound that invokes such nostalgia for Heinrich, the Jew, is not the name of Zion, Palestine, or Jerusalem, but rather "Rhine." Georg expresses wonder that although he has traveled around the world, he does not know the region of Bierbrich, where his ancestors came from. Heinrich, in response, asks Georg whether hearing the word "Rhine" spoken does not stir something inside him. Georg, in response, smiles and explains his detachment from that region by saying that it has been a hundred years since his ancestors left Bierbich. His smile conveys a sense of arrogance toward Heinrich's nostalgic notion of homeland.

> Why do you smile, Georg? It's been a lot longer than that since my forefathers came from Palestine, and yet plenty of otherwise quite logical people assert that my heart trembles with longing for that country.[123]

[123] Ibid, 74.

Heinrich generates an analogy between the two ways through which he and Georg came to be in Vienna, and positions them as parallel to one another. He resists the idea that one must long for the place one's ancestors came from. Instead, he distinguishes between the land the forefathers came from and the notion of homeland, and resists the "natural" tie between the land and the idea of longing. Yet, for Heinrich it is not the signified (the actual land) that stirs the heart, but rather the word "Rhine," its sound and tonality. The deterritorialized word becomes part of "the major and minor tonalities [that] moved the human soul in such diverse ways."[124] Heinrich thus undermines the Zionist idea of a physical connection with the land and suggests an alternative: longing comes from sound, and sound can make the heart tremble. This trembling, however, is a mere feeling that does not have to translate into political action, namely, migration. Longing for a place is not a first step toward belonging, but rather encompasses a gap between the two that does not need to be bridged.

Heinrich's understanding of longing as a type of trembling and nostalgia that does not consist of an arrival in the land itself resonates with Hamutal Tzamir's account of the inner gap in the notion of the longing for Zion. Tzamir analyzes the concept of longing in H.N Bialik's work and life and shows that Bialik's role as the national poet (a title given to him in 1903, long before Israel became a state), invokes the idea of longing as non-arrival. Bialik postponed his arrival in Palestine time and again, and eventually went there as a last resort. Tzamir argues that Bialik's position as a national poet stems from the idea of longing as non-arrival. Heinrich demonstrates a similar pattern of thought. And yet, unlike Bialik's nostalgic longing to "know" Zion via the gaze of the bird that has returned from *Eretz Israel* to Europe,[125] Heinrich does not

[124] Ibid, 77.

[125] Bialik's first poem, which was published in 1891 when the poet was nineteen years old, became a symbol in Zionist thought and represented the longing toward Arzot ha'hom (the warm land), Eretz Israel. The speaker in the poem sits

need a representation of the actual land. Instead, it is the sound of the spoken word that evokes a trembling, a physical connection between the migrant and his past. Nevertheless, while Heinrich identifies a possibility of such nostalgic longing that would be open for Georg, he himself resists having any sentiments for Palestine.

Capturing Inspiration: Music, Jewishness, and Sentimentality

Georg's most notable musical work, the Adagio, begins while he is on vacation, walking on the shore in solitude, listening to the sound of the waves. He starts to write the music immediately but he neglects to continue working on it. In his conversation with Leo Golowski, Georg confesses that he has done nothing since that initial moment of inspiration. In response, Leo addresses Georg's laziness, and distinguishes between talent and discipline. While he sees the seeds of Georg's talent, he cannot fully judge the artwork as a whole, as he identifies Georg's lackluster effort in professional terms:

> Finally [Georg] began to play the quintet from the score, had trouble with it, so Leo took the score to the window and read it attentively. 'I really can't tell yet,' he said. 'Some of it is like a dilettante with a lot of taste, and some like an artist without enough discipline. One feels it most in the songs … but what? … Talent? … I don't know …. In any case one feels that you have a noble nature, and musically noble nature.'
> 'Well, that's not much.'
> 'It may seem rather little. But since you still have worked so little, it doesn't prove anything against you. Worked little and experienced little.'
> 'You think …' Georg responded, forcing a derisive smile.
> 'Oh, lived through a lot, perhaps, but felt … do you know what I mean Georg?
> 'Yes, I can imagine. But you're quite wrong. I even feel that I have a certain inclination to sentimentality, which I have to resist.' [126]

by the window and speaks to the bird, which has returned from the warm lands, and asks her questions about what she has seen. H. N. Bialik, "El hatzipor" in *Shirim* (Odessa: Hovevy hashirah ha'Ivrit, 1915), 251.

[126] Schnitzler, *The Road into the Open*, 143.

Leo and Georg demonstrate opposing points of view regarding not the quality of the artwork, but how the artist should work. As Felix Tweraser notes, Leo functions as a minor key to Georg's major key in the novel.[127] While Georg is nurtured by the notion of inspiration, Leo follows rationality, discipline, and form. At the same time, he does not undermine the notion of talent, but rather suggests that it is not sufficient to become an artist or, in other words, to produce a work of art. His view collides with Georg's romantic idea of being struck by inspiration, rather than art as labor. From the very first page of the book, Schnitzler makes it clear that Georg has not worked on his quintet for over six months and that he floats on his good name, talent, and reputation. Georg does seem to be a talented musician, a piece of information that makes his lack of commitment more difficult to accept. If Georg was a failed musician, it would not matter how much he practiced. Schnitzler sets up a scenario, however, in which Georg has the potential to succeed, yet his own laziness, lack of commitment, and sense of entitlement stand in his way. As the dialogue continues, Golowski, links this sense of entitlement to sentimentality:

> 'Yes, that's it. Sentimentality is something that stands in direct opposition to feeling, something with which one compensates for one's lack of feeling, one's inner coldness. Sentimentality is feeling that one has bought, so to speak, for the purchase price. I hate sentimentality.'
> 'Hm, and yet I think you're not entirely free of it yourself.'
> 'I'm Jewish. It's a national illness with us. Decent people try to turn it into anger or rage. With Germans it's a bad habit, emotional laziness, so to speak.
> 'Therefore, to be excused with you, but not with us'?
> 'Even illnesses are not to be forgiven when one has, with full awareness of his disposition, neglected to protect oneself against infection. But we're beginning to become aphoristic, and we're coming up with only half or quarter truths along the way. Let's go back to your quintet. I like the theme of the Adagio the best.'[128]

[127] Felix Tweraser, "Leo Golowski as Minor Key in Schnitzler's *Der Weg ins Freie*: Musical Theory, Political Behavior and Ethical Action," *Austrian Studies* 17 (2009), 90-112.

[128] Schnitzler, *The Road into the Open*, 143.

Schnitzler's ironic portrayal of Georg as the entitled "native" who cannot succeed is highlighted by contrast with Leo Golowski, a Jewish Zionist musician, mathematician, and soldier, whose family lost its wealth due to anti-Semitism. In light of Leo's uncompromising discipline and his bravery in defending his family's honor, the narrative constructs an ironic gaze toward Georg, especially through the notion of sentimentality. Leo distinguishes between living and feeling as a way to understand Georg's inclination toward sentimentality. Sentimentality, he suggests, is the lack of feeling. However, shortly thereafter the conversation takes a turn from Georg's work to the national powers of the sentimental.

This artistic impasse is not limited to Georg in his own work but also appears in relation to the opera he and Heinrich try to write together. The opera links the two plot lines through Georg's sense of drift and lack of commitment. Georg's relationship with Heinrich parallels his relationship with Anna Rosner, and the immaterialized opera is an artistic analogue to Georg and Anna's stillborn child. In both cases, Georg fails to participate in a process of creation, and neither work nor child come to be. A stillbirth encapsulates a painful silence, an absent sound of a child's crying. This silence is related to both the child and the opera, to Georg's life and his art, and marks the failure of a match between the native and the other, either Jewish or working class. The opera—the potential result of a professional marriage between a Jew and an aristocrat; between writing and composing; between the playwright and the composer—fails. As Georg's interaction with both Anna and Heinrich is destined to wilt, perish, and fade away without a sound, he novel marks the limits of social mobility and acculturation.

At the end of the novel, Georg leaves Vienna and moves to Detmold, Germany to work as a conductor. Even though Georg's heart did not tremble to the sound of the word "Rhine," his move to Germany is depicted as a symbolic homecoming. Mark Weiner sees Georg's moving

away as a demonstration of his anti-Semitism, as "Georg's attempt to see Germany as free of Jewish presence is parallel to his compulsion to disavow any and all Jewish traits in his musical production."[129] While Georg's moving out of Vienna may affect our understanding of his anti-Semitism, it also points to the need to leave Vienna in order to compose, or at leas, to work in an opera house. Fin de-Siècle Vienna is associated with artistic flourishment and intellectual exchange. However, Schnitzler's novel demystifies the ways that we think of this period. Not only does Georg not work while in Vienna, he is also not inspired there. He composes his quintet in Italy, where he is inspired by the sound of the ocean. Ironically, the road into the open for Georg is a road that leads out of Vienna, while Vienna remains both Jewish and anti-Semitic. Schnitzler's novel builds on the idea of a stimulating Vienna, but simultaneously resists this myth, as none of the characters is part of this artistic flourishing.

Vienna at the Threshold

Haye nisuim and *Der Weg ins Freie* provide us with two opposite perspectives on the Jewish community in Vienna: that associated with the Christian Austrian Baron who represents the native Viennese, and that of the *Ostjude* migrant who resides in Leopoldstadt and is not even mentioned as a participant in Jewish culture in Schnitzler. Centered on the theme of marriage and the limits of acculturation, both novels destabilize the relations between the periphery and the center, the Austrian native and the Jewish other. Temporally set approximately fifteen years apart, they depict strikingly similar figures: Thea von Takow is a reincarnation of Georg von

[129] Mark Weiner, *Arthur Schnitzler and the Crisis of Musical Culture*, 140.

Wergenthin-Recco, an echo of the old Viennese monarchy, now stripped of its manners, politeness, wealth, and respect.

The death of the child and the failure of the opera in Schnitzler's *The Road into the Open* coincide with the tragic ending of *Married Life*. Vogel's Thea and Gurdweill also lose their child, who, in Gurdweill's fantasy, was the manifestation of the union between the "two old races." Even though Thea teases him time and again that the child is not his, the child is nevertheless Jewish, since Thea converted to Judaism. Therefore, the child, whether he was in fact Gurdweill's or not, was a Jewish baron for the short year he lived, thereby realizing the father's fantasy. Thinking through the limits of acculturation in Schnitzler's *Der Weg ins Freie*, we see that *Married Life* demonstrates a similar impasse. The children in both novels pass away, Georg and Heinrich's opera is not concluded, and Gurdweill's manuscript turns to ashes after Thea burns it. While Gurdweill sinks further into madness and murders Thea at the end of the novel, Georg leaves Vienna and moves to Detmold, Germany to work as a conductor. Yet, despite Thea's cruelty, she is still an erotic fantasy, an object of longing as the one who holds the memory of an old Viennese tradition that can never be fulfilled, and that did not actually exist, except for in the imagination of its beholders.

Whereas both Schnitzler and Vogel wrote in other genres as well, plays and poetry, respectively, the urban novel constitutes the place in which issues of at-homeness, homelessness, and belonging are confronted. Whereas Schnitzler's Vienna reveals the polyphony of Jewish characters, Vogel's novel points to the absence of the Eastern European Jew in German-Jewish consciousness. Moreover, it marks the absence of the Hebrew writer who lives in poverty and is an other in the second degree to Jewish otherness in Vienna. While both novels portray movement and loss around Vienna, their modes of narration depict different topographies of the

city that pertain to the relationship between geographical orientation and a sense of not-at-homeness. Yet what is at issue for Vogel is whether a Hebrew Vienna can fully exist. On the one hand, the very act of writing the novel proclaims the possibility of a Hebrew literary tradition that would be part of the German literary republic, but at the same time, the collapse of the family structure and the tragic deaths of both Thea and Lotte mark the limits of acculturation and the tension between futurity and fatality in Vienna. Vogel sets forth a new category of a Hebrew Vienna by means of appropriating the city-space via Hebrew speech. This work further challenges the assumption that every novel written in Hebrew in the interwar period is necessarily part of the Hebrew literary republic as a monolingual, national, and Zionist system. The novel, I suggest, employs Hebrew to imagine a non-Zionist Zion, and sets a trajectory of longing toward the German-speaking world, culture, and heritage—which the Hebrew novel does not so much aim to join as claim to already be a part of. Vogel's novel reveals another aspect of the problem of the German/Jewish separatrix. As Todd Presner shows, "'the Jewish'—that which is supposedly differentiated from, outside of, or somehow opposed to 'the German'—is actually within, if not constitutive of, that which is 'German.' What this means is that the Jewish is entangled with and already 'too close' to the German, despite the long and violent history, laced with anti-Semitism, of attempts to definitively separate the two."[130]

The mutually constitutive relationship between German and Jewish receives a different meaning in Vogel's novel, precisely because it is written in Hebrew. But Hebrew for Vogel is not a way out of Europe but rather a way in, a claim that it is already within, part of, if not constitutive of, that is European. Returning to Schnitzler's novel with this understanding, we detect the ways the Jewish novel—not only within Hebrew literary historiography—is entangled

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[130] Todd Samuel Presner, *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

with the Zionist narrative of homecoming and the German-Jewish separatrix. Vienna in Schnitzler's novel becomes a *Zwischenstation*, a city of in-between, for which the character longs but cannot belong to, in which he cannot create music and flourish. Georg, despite his talent and socio-political possibilities, leaves Vienna for Germany and sets aside his aspirations to compose. The dual trajectory the novel portrays, to Zion on the one hand and to Germany on the other, complicates the notion of Vienna as a *Zwischenstation*, particularly because it suggests that implicit anti-Semitism in the form of a spatial exclusion of the Jews is entangled with the decline of the city as a cultural and intellectual center. Both novels depict modes of longing for Vienna as home while exemplifying the limits of acculturation in modern urban life, and the possibility of literature—in both Hebrew and German—to appropriate, inhabit, and represent the city to negotiate their sense of (non)belonging.

Through a comparative approach this chapter has illuminated the ways Vienna functions as a threshold between longing and dis-belonging and how the urban novel becomes the place in which the authors imagine their Jewish-European belonging. The novels suggest different perspectives on the longing to be "at home" in Vienna by employing diverse degrees of free indirect speech, stream of consciousness, and a plot that concludes with either a tragic murder or a journey "into the open." Vogel and Schnitzler correspond with one another through the investigation of the urban novel as a site that pertains to the relationship between Vienna as a Jewish space, on the one hand, and the Jew's inability to belong, on the other.

While the trope of the city continues to be central, the notion of the threshold emerges not only through the tension between writing and movement within the borders of the city but also through the notion of intertextuality. Whereas this chapter has addressed the topography of the city-space and how modes of narration produce different layers of "knowing" the city, the next

chapter examines geospatial and interlingual intertextuality as an expression of the threshold in Leah Goldberg’s epistolary fiction.

Chapter 2
Between Longing and Belonging:
Intertextuality as Threshold in Leah Goldberg's Fiction

Introduction

The previous chapter ends with the topography of a Hebrew European city and a consideration of how the urban novel constitutes a site of negotiation for Jewish belonging in the 1920s. Transitioning into the 1930s, this chapter turns to intertextuality as an expression of the threshold among homelands and languages, and examines the reception, aesthetics, and political context of Leah Goldberg's epistolary novel *Mikhtavim minesi'ah medumah (Letters from an Imagined Journey)* published in Palestine in 1936/7.

In 2018, the Israeli Department of Culture selected the poem "Mi-shirei Eretz Ahavati ("From the Poems of My Beloved Land", 1951) by Leah Goldberg for the ceremony marking Israel's seventieth Independence Day. Broadcast on national television, the show included a version of the poem set to music, performed by the Mizrahi singer Sarit Hadad. This iconic song was selected to convey the sentiment of the Jewish *moledet*—the homeland, as indicated by its title. Indeed, its lines convey sentiments of intimacy, nostalgia, and community in relation to the portrayed homeland.[131] However, literary scholars were quick to point out that the poem's

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[131] The poem was first published in 1951 in the literary journal *Orlogin* under the title "Mekhorah sheli." It was reprinted in Goldberg's poetry collection *Barak Ba-boker* (*Morning Lightning,* 1955). In 1970, the poem was set to music composed by Dafna Eilat and sung by Chava Alberstein, one of Israel's most prominent singers. Soon thereafter, it became an iconic piece of music within Israeli culture. In the song, the words that depict a melancholic homeland collide with the joyful, uplifting tune, creating a sense of irony. In recent years new musical adaptations have been composed to accompany the lyrics, including a version by Ruth Dolloras Weiss, who deploys minor tunes that bring out senses of not only melancholy but also horror and alienation. In some sense, Albertstein's version highlights the seven days in which the community comes together, while Dolloras-Weiss emphasizes the poverty and terror of residing in the town during the rest of the year.

figurative language, imagery, and landscape describing "my motherland, beautiful and poor," all portray a homeland located not in Israel but rather in Eastern Europe, namely, Lithuania.[132]

Whether the selection of the poem was intentional or a result of misinterpretation, this incident draws attention to the poem's figurative amalgamation of images of the Jewish homeland, namely, Jerusalem, and the Jewish diasporic shtetl. Indeed, the poem depicts a motherland among the diaspora: "My motherland, beautiful and poor - / The Queen has no home, the King no crown. / Seven days of spring a year / Rain and chill all the rest."[133] At the same time, it evokes the trope of the wandering Jew in search of a homeland, and the ruins of the second temple figuratively intertwined with the destruction of the Jewish shtetl in Europe.

This mixed imagery of landscapes familiar to the Hebrew reader raises crucial questions about the threshold between Zion and Eastern Europe in relation to the notion of the Jewish home and homeland. Broadly, many of Goldberg's poems express what has become known as "the pain of the two homelands," namely, the oscillation between the new life in Palestine and the old home in Eastern Europe.[134] However, this portrayal of Goldberg "two homelands" does not account for her relationship with German culture, literature, and landscape. A closer look at her prose fiction—and at *Mikhtavim minesi'ah medumah* (*Letters From an Imagined Journey,* 1936/7) in particular—

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[132] The announcement of the ceremony's upcoming program immediately triggered a national debate surrounding the poem's interpretation. See: https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5230831,00.html.

[133] Leah Goldberg, "My Homeland," in: Leah Goldberg, *Kol hashirim* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat poalim, 1970).

For the recording of Leah Goldberg reading the poem see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8M9vjU4wPY

[134] The pain of the two homelands is most explicitly articulated in the poem "Oren" ("Pine"). In this poem, the speaker lists all the things that she will never hear, see, or do, because they are the traits of the old homeland. But most of all "[T]he 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. In: Leah Goldberg, Kol ha-shirim, vol. 2, 143. On the "two homelands" vis-à-vis Goldberg's poetry see: Michael. Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity: Lines of Resistance in Modernist Hebrew Poetry* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 58-67. The English translation of the "Pine" is quoted in Gluzman, p. 62. On Goldberg's relationship to Russia as her nostalgic homeland see: Natasha Gordinsky, *Bisheloshah Nofim: Yetsiratah Hamuḳdemet Shel Le'ah Goldberg* (Jerusalem: Hatsa'at sefarim 'al shem magnes, hauniversitah ha'Ivrit, 2016).

highlights the importance of Germany and the German language in her configuration of home and suggests that for Goldberg, the spiritual homeland is neither Eretz Israel nor Europe, but literature as a place that can carry "the entire world," to use the narrator's terminology, including memories that are both real and imagined.[135]

As we shall see, centered on multiple layers of intertextual relations, *Mikhtavim minesi'ah medumah* invites new questions about at-homeness and rootlessness as they are represented in the Hebrew novel. Modern Hebrew literary historiography is frequently discussed against and in relation to the entrenched Zionist narrative, which consists of the idea generated by cultural Zionism that Hebrew literature should support the longing to return to Zion and contribute to the linguistic "revival" process. While this narrative continues to dominate the discourse—and it is indeed tempting to read every Hebrew novel as either for or against the national narrative of return—Goldberg's novel pushes us to rethink the literary forces that were at play in the 1930s and the ideologies they reflect by emphasizing moments of *untranslatability*, linguistic and cultural alike.

I suggest that "the entire world," to use the terminology offered in Goldberg's novel, should be understood in the context of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism as means of intertextual encounter. Theories of intertextuality typically explore the relationship among texts to discuss the agency of the speaking subject. Harold Bloom's theoretical framework suggests an "anxiety of influence" that preserves a hierarchal structure of textual relations, whereas Julia Kristeva's model sees every text as "the absorption and transformation of another."[136] For Kristeva, the text is "a mosaic of

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[135] *Mikhtavim*, p. 9.

[136] Kristeva introduces the concept of intertextuality in two complementary essays, "Word, Dialogue, and the Novel," and "The Bounded Text," both published in 1969 in the collections of essays *Recherche pour une Sémanalyse*. See: Julia Kristeva, "The Bounded Text," in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 36–63; Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and the Novel," 66.

quotations,"[137] a product that is constructed out of an already existent discourse. The author does not conjure the text out of his or her individual intent but rather compiles it from a pre-existing archive. Building on Kristeva's work, Roland Barthes views the text as "a mosaic of quotations" that is part of an intertextual-cultural system, whether conscious or unconscious.[138] Barthes's approach to intertextual discourse echoes the Jewish literary system. In the Jewish context, intertextuality constitutes a foundational principle, especially for Talmudic discourse as an interpretative device of the Torah.[139] While Talmudic discourse is not concerned with the notion of authorship, modern Hebrew writing emphasizes the role of the author in retelling Biblical tales and utilizes intertextuality as means of claiming a mythical-historical right to return from the diaspora to Zion.[140]

Whereas Goldberg's novel demonstrates how texts are intertwined in one another, it shifts focus from the question of authorial agency and the originality of the speaking subject to that of geopolitical belonging to the diaspora. Kristeva famously coined the term intertextuality as part of her study of Bakhtin's work. For Bakhtin, what Kristeva calls intertextuality is central to novelistic discourse, both as an archive of texts and as part of linguistic systems. This literary praxis envisions a series of intersubjective encounters between a speaking consciousness and its underlying epistemological and historical formations.[141] For Goldberg, this intertextual system constitutes "the entire world," enabling a sense of Jewish-European belonging and transforming literature into

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[137] Kristeva, ibid, 66.

[138] Roland Barthes, Image - Music - Text (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

[139] Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

[140] Ziva Ben Porat, "The Poetics of Literary Allusion," *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1, no. 2 (1976): 105–28. Ziva Ben-Porat, "Represented Reality and Literary Models: European Autumn on Israeli Soil," *Poetics Today* 7, no. 1 (1986): 29–58. Chana Kronfeld, "Theories of Allusion and Imagist Intertextuality," in *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 114-142.

[141] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984)

a portable homeland. More specifically, in the context of modern Hebrew literature and the "revival process," intertextuality played an important role. Authors and poets alluded to the Bible to form a sense of kinship with Zion, or, in other cases, to critique Jewish life and Rabbinic institutions in the diaspora.[142]

Goldberg's novel raises a set of questions in relation to the dialogic nature of intertextuality: What kinds of intertextual exchange does the novel set forth? How should we understand the intertextual phenomenon of including German language and poetry in a Hebrew novel? How does intertextuality help us understand the intersection between a female *Flâneur* walking through Berlin and writing in Hebrew in light of the rise of Nazi anti-Semitism? And what makes the epistolary novel a particularly effective form for Goldberg's application of intertextuality as a means of providing commentary on the Jewish longing to belong to the German-speaking sphere? By definition, the epistolary novel is polyphonic but Goldberg transforms it into a monophonic form of epistolarity, relocating the idea of correspondence in its intertextual dialogues.[143]

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[142] In the effort of building a modern Hebrew canon, Hebrew writers would draw on Biblical intertextuality for content, while mimicking classical forms including the Homeric epos, drama, comedy, the sonnet, etc. A few prominent examples from the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries include Naphtali Hirz Wessely's *Shirei tiferet* tells of Moses and the burning bush and imitates the Homeric epos. Avraham Mappo's *Ahavat Zion* mimics the form of the nineteenth-century European novel while situating the plot in Jerusalem and using biblical figures. Yehuda Leib Gordon uses the genre of the long poem in order to retell biblical and Talmudic narrative to critique the Rabbinic institution. Well knows examples are the poems "Yael vesisrah" and "Kotzo shel Yod." The former portrays Yael's actions not through the national heroic lens but via her commitment to the *mitzvah* of hospitality (*hakhnasat orkhim*) and the latter discusses the deprivation of women's rights in the Halakha.

[143] Janet Girkin Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982); For further discussion on the epistolary novel see also: Joe Bray, *The Epistolary Novel: Representations of Consciousness* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003); Godfrey Frank Singer, *The Epistolary Novel; Its Origin, Development, Decline, and Residuary Influence* (New York, Russell & Russell, 1963); Linda S. Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). On the rise of the epistolary genre in the Hebrew literary context see: Moshe Pelli, "The Epistolary Story in Haskalah Literature: Isaac Euchel's 'Igrot Meshulam,'" *The Jewish Quaterly Review* 93, no. 3/4 (2003): 431–69.

Whereas scholars have commented on the deluge of intertextual references in the novel, no studies attend to the *system* of intertextuality that emerges from the novel. Goldberg's novel offers a model in which intertextuality operates not solely as a literary device but also as a site of cultural and ideological negotiation. In this case, intertextuality constitutes a threshold that unfolds not only according to textual references but also via literary forms, genre, language mixing and code switching. Goldberg's treatment of intertextuality unfolds according to three aspects of exchange: intermedial, interlinguistic, and interspatial correspondences, all of which are triggered by the exchange of letters, the plot's driving mechanism. I focus on the intermedial relationship that plays out in the theatrical form of fantastic realism; the interlingual presence of German poetry quoted in German in the Hebrew novel. Finally, I turn to interspatial relations to discuss the role of geography in situating Jewish national identities on the threshold between both texts and lands.

Beyond the Two Homelands

Leah Goldberg (1911-1970) was born in Könignberg, Prussia, and grew up in Kovna, Lithuania, at the time part of the Russian Empire. Her parents spoke Russian at home, and at the age of nine, she started school at the Hebrew Gymnasium in Kovna where she learned Hebrew, Lithuanian, and German.[144] She later lived and studied in Germany, first in Berlin (1930-1932) and then in Bonn (1932-1933), where she specialized in the philology of Semitic languages.[145] In

[144] Goldberg started to write her personal journal in Hebrew at the age of ten. Her parents spoke only Russian at home and she did not know Yiddish as a child. Her father tried to teach her Yiddish but she refused to learn it. See: Leah Goldberg, *Yoman Sifruti: Mivhar Reshimot 'Itonut*, ed. Giddon Ticotsky and Hamutal Bar-Yosef (Bene Berak: Sifriyat po'alim, 2017); Hamutal Bar-Yosef, *Leah Goldberg* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar leheker toldot ha'am hayehudi, 2012), especially chapter one about her childhood and youth. For a specific account of her schooling in Hebrew, German, and Russian see page 47. See also Goldberg's account in: "Pirkei zikhronot mekuta'yim," In: *Heikhal she-shakah*, p. 130.

[145] Goldberg completed her MA in the Department of Semitic Languages at the Friedrich Wilhelm University (Humboldt University of Berlin). She then pursued her PhD at the Oriental Seminar at the University of Bonn under the supervision of Professor Paul Ernest Kahle. See: Bar-Yosef, *Leah Goldberg,* 93-115; Yfaat. Weiss, *Nesi'ah*

addition to Russian, Hebrew, and German, Goldberg attained fluency in other European languages including French, English, and Italian.[146] Despite the wide range of linguistic possibilities at her disposal, Goldberg chose Hebrew as her primary creative language. Her first poetry collection, *Taba'ot Ashan* (*Rings of Smoke*) was published in 1935, and she was immediately embraced by the prominent literary group "Yachdav," which included the influential poets Avraham Shlonsky and Nathan Alterman[147] and centered on symbolism and figurative language. She went on to become a leading poet, playwright,[148] novelist, theater critic, journalist, translator, children's author, and university professor.

Scholars have long noted that Goldberg's poetry expresses what she describes in one of her poems as "the pain of the two homelands," namely, Lithuania and Palestine/Israel.[149] Goldberg's poetry, as Michael Gluzman suggests, presents an ambivalent poetic rendition of Jewish homelessness and "continuously problematizes the notion of home and exile without attempting to hide her own ambivalence."[150] Indeed, Goldberg's poetry conveys a sense of

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Unesi'ah Medumah: Leah Goldberg Begermanyah, 1930-1933 (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar le-ḥeḳer toldot ha-'am ha-Yehudi, 2014); Yfaat Weiss, *Lea Goldberg: Lehrjahre in Deutschland 1930-1933*, trans. Liliane Meilinger (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); Yfaat Weiss, "A Small Town in Germany: Leah Goldberg and German Orientalism in 1932," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 99, no. 2 (2009): 200–229.

[146] For further reading on Goldberg's biography see: A. B. Yaffe, *Leah Goldberg: Tavei Demut Viyetsirah* (Tel Aviv: Reshafim, 1994); Tuvia Rübner, *Leah Goldberg: Monografiah* (Tel Aviv: Makhon Katz leheker hasifrut ha'Ivrit, Bet hasefer lenada'ey ha-Yahadut 'al shem Rozenberg, Tel Aviv University: Sifriyat Po'alim , 1980).

[147] On Goldberg's affiliation with the literary group "Yachdav" see: Dan Miron, *Imahot meyasdon, ahayot horgot* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz hameuhad, 1991), 168-177. Uri S. Cohen has recently argued that Goldberg was not simply affiliated with the Shlonsky-Alterman circle but rather played a central role in shaping its literary direction. Thus, Cohen suggests, the core of "Yachdav" lies in its three-way intersection, namely, Alterman-Shlonsky-Goldberg. By doing so, Cohen pushes against the distinction between dominant male poetry and the marginal women's poetry and suggests that Goldberg, in fact, is at the heart of the Shlonsky-Alterman school. See: Uri S. Cohen, "Haefsharut Shel Goldberg Ve-Askholat Shlonsky-Alterman," *Ot* 6 (2016): 7–31.

[148] Ilana Na'aman, *Yam Bahalon: Ha'izavon Hadramati Shel Leah Goldberg* (Tel Aviv: hakibuts hameuhad, 1997).

[149] As mentioned earlier, the verse "the Pain of the two homelands" appeared in the poem "Oren" ("Pine Tree"). For further discussion see: Michael Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity: Lines of Resistance in Modernist Hebrew Poetry* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003).

[150] Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity*, 56.

oscillation between the home she had left and the home at which she had arrived. But this dichotomous understanding of the two homelands fails to address Goldberg's deep connection to Germany on the one hand and her prose writing on the other, both of which impact our understanding of her literary oeuvre.

Goldberg wrote three novels, of which two were published during her lifetime and one posthumously. They all engage with Weimar Germany in different ways and wrestle with the possibility of young Jews finding a home in Europe. According to historian Yifaat Weiss, Goldberg's experiences in Germany are crucial for understanding the oscillation between center and periphery, especially in light of the threatening political climate in Weimar Germany in the early 1930s. In grappling with this political instability, Goldberg uses the novel to negotiate her sense of belonging to—and experience of rejection from—Germany in the 1930s.[151] The presence of German landscape and language in this novel pushes against the narrative of two homelands; demonstrates a multiplicity of cultural and linguistic belongings that are never lost but are rather carried through literature. For Goldberg, the novel - and the epistolary novel in particular – constitutes a dialogic form that holds together a polyphony of voices, languages, and intertextual reference as an expression, and functions as political commentary for readers situated in Palestine.[152]

[151] Weiss, *Nesi'ah Unesi'ah Medumah: Leah Goldberg Begermanyah, 1930-1933*. Allison Schachter explores the novel as a diasporic genre and pays particular attention to Goldberg's novel *This is the Light*. See Allison Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[152] Whereas all three novels interact with Weimar Germany in different ways, the presence of German language and poetry is unique to *Mikhtavim*, which is the earliest of the three novels.

The Journey of the Text

Mikhtavim minesi'ah medumah (*Letters from an Imagined Journey*) was originally published in a serial format over a period of two months in the supplement section ("musaf") of the newspaper *Davar* in Palestine and appeared as a book in 1937. The novel consists of a prologue and a series of sixteen letters which the heroine, Ruth, writes to her beloved Emanuel. In this series of missives, she describes her journey through a number of Western European cities. But the letters are never sent and, as the reader learns in the preface of the novel, the journey they describe is complete fiction. In fact, Ruth turns out to be sitting in her room in a small town in an unspecified Eastern European location, no more than a hundred steps from Emanuel's apartment. Emanuel's rejection of her affection triggers her letter writing, demonstrating that despite their proximity, he is out of her reach.

Each of the novel's letters constitutes a chapter and includes a heading previewing its contents. Below each chapter heading appears a short description of Ruth in her room, narrated in free indirect discourse. These short mise-en-scènes, which I will discuss in further detail below, typically revolve around Ruth's unfulfilled relationship with Emanuel and serve to create a sense of tension between the stillness of Ruth's room and the mobility of her imagined journey. These descriptions offer a glimpse into Ruth's consciousness and into the events that prompt each scene of letter writing.

The novel opens with a prologue signed with the Hebrew letter ל. (Lamed), which may also stand for Leah, who assures the reader that Ruth is a fictional character. Due to the similarity in sounds between the English letter "L" and the name of the beloved, El—which is also the Hebrew name of God—I will refer to this figure as Lamed, which is what the letter is called in Hebrew. The novel ends with a double view of Ruth. The mise-en-scène describes Ruth saying farewell to

Emanuel and crying after he leaves her room. In the subsequent imagined letter, we find Ruth on the shores of Marseilles, waiting to board a ship that will take her away. Whereas the novel ends with a promise of departure, both scenes locate her at a standstill and on a threshold. As I will show later in this chapter, scholars have commonly read the ending as a homecoming to Palestine, drawing on Goldberg's biography and her departure to Palestine from Marseilles. However, we need not fall into the trap of adding biographical details that do not appear in text. Rather than a depiction of homecoming, the novel end when is imagined to be on the shore. The shore, I suggest, as well as Ruth's Room, is an expression of a geographical threshold that situates Ruth between departure and non-arrival.

Referencing a broad range of world literary texts, Goldberg's *Mikhtavim* appeared in book form in 1937, less than two years after she had arrived in Palestine. Her arrival in 1935 was accompanied by the publication of her first poetry collection, *Taba'ot Ashan* (*Rings of Smoke*), which quickly marked her as a rising poet.[153] Despite her esteemed status as a promising young poet, however, the novel was poorly received. "Friends at the coffee shop[154] [Kasit] reacted with a wounding coldness." Writes Goldberg to her friend, Mira Shlonsky. "On the day the first few

[153] Avraham Shlonsky arranged Goldberg's certificate to Palestine, and she received it because of her writerly skills. Furthermore, Shlonsky made an effort to bring Goldberg's *Rings of Smoke* to print so she could receive a copy when immediately upon her arrival. Legend tells that Shlonsky waited for Goldberg in Haifa and presented her with the book. Goldberg, in turn, was devastated from the numerous edits and typos that appeared in the book. See: A.B Yaffe, *Leah Goldberg: tavei demut viyetsirah*.

[154] Café Kasit was a prominent coffee shop in Tel Aviv that attracted artists, poets, authors, musicians, etc. Members of the Yachdav circle would often sit there, most notably Nathan Alterman and Avraham Shlonsky. Goldberg would go there often to associate with other writers and would write in diverse coffee shops. On the complex role of the urban café in Lea Goldberg's poetic texts see: Shachar Pinsker, "A Modern (Jewish) Woman in a Café: Leah Goldberg and the Poetic Space of the Coffeehouse," *Jewish Social Studies* 21, no. 1 (2015): 1–48, https.

chapters were published [in *Davar*] I was like a diligent hostess, whose guests had tasted the cake she was so proud of, and said absolutely nothing. I must admit, I was very upset."[155]

Goldberg's sense was quite accurate. Shortly after the novel's publication, critics remarked upon its overuse of literary references and over-attachment to the European landscape. Avraham Kariv, an influential literary critic, noted that both Goldberg and Ruth suffered from an overly educated, "know it all" persona, in a way that blurs the "equator between a textual reference and a geographical reference," and observes from a distance through "foreign eyes" (עיניים לועזיות).[156] For Kariv, the novel's attachment to European landscapes and world languages attested to its interest in everything "except for something Hebraic."[157] In a similar vein, Mordechai Ovadyahu, another critic contemporary to Goldberg, claimed that the "ultra-modern" intertextuality of the novel is an attempt to astonish the reader with the author's "talent for quotes" while denying Ruth a genuine "profound experience," and accused Goldberg of viewing Hebrew as an "impoverished language" in need of reinforcement from German and French.[158] Ultimately, critics were at odds with the novel's implicit attachment to the *galut*, the diasporic sphere, and saw it as a threat to the monolingual endeavor of the Zionist project.[159] More specifically, they took issue with the novel's

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[155] A letter from Leah Goldberg to Mira Shlonsky. Quoted in: Giddon Ticotsky, "Aharit Davar: 'Hanishkhahot – She'yi Efshar Lishkhoah,'" in *Mikhtavim minesi'ah medumah* (Bnei Brak: Sifriyat po'alim, 2007), 157.

[156] Avraham Kariv, "L. Goldberg: Mikhtavim minesi'ah medumah," Davar (Musaf), October 15, 1939. The essay was reprinted in Avraham Kariv, *'Iyunim: ma-amarei bikoret* (Tel Aviv: Hotzaat hasorim ha'ivriyim, 1950), 214-217.

"עתים מעומעם הדבר, היכן עובר קו המשווה בין מראה מקום בספר ומראה מקום גיאוגרפי."

Kariv also took issue with Goldberg's translations and publicly attacked her for adhering to European culture. See discussion in: Adriana X. Jacobs, *Strange Cocktail: Translation and the Making of Modern Hebrew Poetry*, *Strange Cocktail: Translation and the Making of Modern Hebrew Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018).

[157] Kariv, ibid.

[158] Mordechai (M. 'A. R) Ovadyahu, "'Al 'nesi'ah medumah' ve'od mashehu," *Haolam* 28 (1938): 213–14.

[159] On the extensive quotation in the novel also see: A. Reuveni, "Roman Tzituti," in *Sifrut Vehavai* (Jerusalem: Hotzaat Reuven, 1940), 11–13; Y. Senne, "Bemishkafayim Sifrutiyim," *Boust'nai* 3 (April 28, 1937): 22–23. On the novel's attachment to Europe see Y. Shimoni, "Reshimot Koreh," *Mibefnim* 5 (1938): 213–14.; Fishel Lahover points to the poetic freedom of the novel and the influence of romanticism. See: Fishel Lahover, "Basefer Ha'ivri," *Kneset* 3 (1938): 524–25.

intertextual ties with world literature and sentimental tone and longing for the Western European metropolis, which did not resonate with their idea of "shlilat hagalut" (the negation of exile).

Interestingly, the very same interlaced textual maze that triggered such scornful responses in the 1930s has served as a site of interest in contemporary debates. Since the novel was reprinted in 2007 (with an afterword and unpublished letters from the archive), scholars have addressed issues of intertextuality and genre, and embraced its hybrid nature. Tamar Hess focuses on the intersection of genre and gender in the work, showing that Goldberg leads her readers to anticipate a "feminine-intimate" epistolary form only to confront them with a texts emblematic of issues of national concerns written according to the trends of the time.[160] Giddon Ticotsky sees the novel's countless references as a mechanism resistant to intimacy,[161] whereas Natasha Gordinsky[162] and Tamar Merin[163] explore specific intertextual ties to Viktor Shklovsky and Uri Nissan Gnessin, respectively. For Yfaat Weiss, the entire novel is an exhibition of biographical intimacy, as it constitutes Goldberg's attempt to process her experiences in Germany in light of the rise of Nazism.[164]

My work differs from these studies in that I suggest rethinking the very way we define the term intertextuality in the novel and use it to examine the literary lineage that Goldberg sets forth.

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[160] Tamar Hess, "Pri bdidutah: 'al siah haohavim haepistolari vemikhtavim minesi'ah medumah," in *Pgishot 'im meshoreret*, ed. Ruth Karton Bloom and Anat Weissman (Jerusalem; Tel Aviv: Sifriyat po'alim vehamakhon lemada'ey hayadut - haoniversitah ha'Ivrit, 2000), 152–66.

[161] Giddon Ticotsky, "Aharit davar: 'hanishkhahot - she'yi efshar lishkhoah,'" in Mikhtavim minesi'ah medumah (Bnei Brak: Sifriyat po'alim, 2007), 133–70.

[162] Natasha Gordinsky, Bisheloshah nofim: yetsiratah hamuḳdemet shel Le'ah Goldberg (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at sefarim 'al shem Magnes, hauniversitah ha'Ivrit, 2016).

[163] Tamar Merin, "Hashir haganuv: Leah Goldberg mitkatevet 'im Gnesin (ve'im Celia Dropkin) besifrah *Mikhtavim minesi'ah medumah*," *Mikhan* 16 (2016): 31–54.

[164] Weiss reads the novel from a historical perspective and provides valuable information on Goldberg's years in Bonn and Berlin. Yffat Weiss, *Nesi'ah unesi'ah medumah: Leah Goldberg begermanyah, 1930-1933* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar le-ḥeḳer toldot ha-'am ha-Yehudi, 2014). On Goldberg's time in Germany see also: Weiss, *Lea Goldberg: Lehrjahre in Deutschland 1930-1933*.

The novel, I suggest, not only uses intertextuality as a literary device but also presents intertextuality as an expression of an unsettled cultural threshold through which the reader should understand the world. To put it another way, for Goldberg, the world is not something to be understood directly but through layers of intertext that offer commentary on the current political condition.

Before moving into the ways intertextuality is at work in the novel, I wish to show that the debate surrounding Goldberg's intertextual epistolary novel was part of a broader conversation that took place at the time about the role of Hebrew literature at the time of nation building. As Zohar Shavit[165] and Nurit Gertz[166] have shown, Hebrew writing in the Yishuv in the 1930s was ideologically determined and had political impact. The implications of the rejection of Goldberg's world view of literature as "the entire world" become clearer in light of her public debate with Nathan Alterman, which would take place two years later, in 1939, at the outbreak of World War II.

In a short essay titled "Why I do Not Write War Poems,"[167] Goldberg argues that in a time of war, the poet should see beyond the present and speak of a historical eternity. The poet's role is to be the gate keeper and remind society of life's capacity to overcome violence. Nathan Alterman, who believed that poetry should reflect the political stakes of its moment, attacked Goldberg for her naïve worldview.[168] Hannan Hever sees Goldberg's refusal to participate in the making of war

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[165] Zohar Shavit, *Hahaim hasifrutiyim be-eretz Israel 1910-1933* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz hameuhad, 1982).

[166] Nurit Gertz, *Sifrut veyideologia be-eretz Israel bishnot hashloshim* (Tel Aviv: Haoniversitah haptuha, 1998)

[167] Leah Goldberg, "Why I do Not Write War Poems," Hashomer Hatza'yir, 8.9.1939. In the essay Goldberg writes: "It is not merely the poet's right in these horrific days to sing his poem to nature, to the blooming trees, to the children who can laugh but it is his duty, a duty to remind the person that he is a person, and that the simple, eternal values exist in the world. These values make life more precious - and they make death even more perfect. Death but not murder."

[168] Alterman publicly attacked Goldberg for her "softness." According to Alterman, there is a time to write love poems and a time to write war poems. The poet's role is to reflect the needs of the time. For further reading on Goldberg's

poetry as interrupting a male-dominated hegemony devoted to promoting Zionist nationalism.[169] Goldberg's symbolism is not neutral but rather the political resistance of "one who looks from the margins into the center"[170] and fights to form her own space within it.

Published three years earlier, *Mikhtavim*, too, should be read not as a work of political detachment but rather as a poetic commentary. Building on Hever's view of Goldberg's political worldview, I suggest reading *Mikhtavim minesia'h medumah* not only as an epistolary novel but also as a *roman-feuilleton*, a work of serialized fiction, in this case one commenting on contemporary political events as they impact both Jews in Europe and Jewish migrants in the Yishuv in the 1930s. The feuilleton, as a genre of writing "below the line," according to its traditional placement in French daily newspapers of the mid-19th century, offers a dialogic commentary on political realities while proclaiming modernist poetic styles. In Liliane Weissberg's words, "While the paper's news section looked to the *past* and reported about what had happened, some articles aimed to describe the *present* situation and look *forward*. These pieces were different from the news."[171] As a roman-feuilleton, Goldberg's serial novel follows this model in that it complicates the political dichotomy of the Zionist and anti-Zionist and configures the text as a site of conflicting sentiments by establishing a network of intertextual dialogues. It is, in this respect, an endeavor to form a new kind of Hebrew novel that encapsulates a diversity of cultures, languages, and landscapes.

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unique position within the symbolism movement of "Yachdav," especially toward imagery of violence see: Hannan Hever, *Pitom mareh milhamah* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz hamehuhad, 2001).

[169] Hannan Hever, "Hazemer tam, Leah Goldberg kotevet shirei milhamah," in: *Pgishot 'im meshoreret*, pp. 128, 130.

[170] Hever, ibid, 132.

[171] Liliane Weissberg, "Newspaper Feuilletons: Reflections on the Possibilities of a German-Jewish Authorship and Literature." (forthcoming)

In Goldberg's intertextual novel, the referenced text is a marker not only in the sense that it points to another body of textual material but also in the sense of sharing and holding on to that other text's world view. This demonstration of Goldberg's capacity to recall, quote, and adapt as needed cultivates a sense of authorial agency, which is all the more remarkable given the forms of anti-Semitism with which Goldberg had to contend when she wrote the novel. The novel, and, more specifically, the epistolary novel, is a space that can simultaneously encapsulate longing and non-belonging, conflicting sentiments which Goldberg sets forth as political commentary, conveyed via intertextual layers.

Performing Intertextuality: "I Write this Like Vakhtangov Wrote 'Turandot'"

In one of her letters Ruth writes: "This is my trouble - literature has always been my glasses."[172] Indeed, Ruth's traveling experiences are intertwined with literary reflections, as Ruth processes her visions and her emotions through this "literary glasses." The novel's countless citations and intertextual references exhibit the centrality of cultural and intellectual exchange in the world that Goldberg constructs. Intertextuality, then, is at the heart of the novel but not in the sense of sources of influence or simply 'context,' but more specifically in the sense articulated by Julia Kristeva in her discussion of inter-textual exchange and her reading of Mikhail Bakhtin's polyphonic dialogism.[173] The epistolary form lends itself to Goldberg's interest in the tension

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[172] Goldberg, *Mikhtavim*, 84.

[173] Julia Kristeva first introduces her notion of intertextuality in 1966. See: Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and the Novel." I will discuss Kristeva's understanding of intertextuality and of Bakhtin's dialogism later in the chapter. I will also discuss in length Bakhtin's dialogism and the polyphonic novel: M. M. (Mikhail Mikhaĭlovich) Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); M. M. (Mikhail Mikhaĭlovich) Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). For an excellent and comprehensive overview of the origins and development of the notion of intertextuality see: Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000).

between continuity and rupture. The letter constitutes a means of communication, but one that is always postponed. The first-person address of the letters inspires a sense of intimacy and authenticity while the letter as a medium also underscores the distance between the correspondents. *Mikhtavim* adds another impasse of communication through Ruth's one-sided address, granting the reader a peek at missives that will never actually be sent. Yet this impasse of communication with Emanuel points to another addressee—the novel's reader—by explicitly and performatively turning to other texts and promoting a cultural and linguistic dialogue. This added layer of correspondence should be read as a form of Bakhtinian dialogism, in which the utterance upholds two conversations at the same time: it points to the world of the text, on the one hand, and to the socio-political stakes in the world beyond the text, on the other.

The novel reinforces this dialogic performativity starting in the prologue, where Lamed provides the reader with "reading instructions." Referencing Vakhtangov, she prescribes a mode of reading the novel while keeping its fictionality in mind. Describing Ruth in the prologue, Lamed exclaims:

> לפני כל מכתב ממכתביה היא [רות] תופיע לפני קוראי בשבתה בעומק החדר בעיר מולדתה ובכתבה מכתב מפריז או מבריסל. אני כותבת זאת כפי שהציג וכטנגוב את טורנדוט: השחקן מתאפר על הבמה לעיני הקהל – אל לשכוח שהוא שחקן ולא בן מלך סיני!
>
> Before each of her letters, she will appear before my readers while sitting in the depth of her room in her homeland and writing a letter from Paris or Brussels. I write this as Vakhtangov performed 'Turandot:' the actor applies his makeup on stage before the audience—not to forget that he is an actor and not a Chinese prince![174]

What does it mean for Lamed to write an epistolary novel as Yevgeny Vakhtangov, the Russian director, performed *Princess Turandot*? To fully understand this statement, we must first briefly

[174] Goldberg, *Mikhtavim*, 9

explore Vakhtangov's theatrical method and consider its relationship to the traditions of the epistolary novel. I propose that this experimentation with the fictional boundaries in and of the novel is linked to a kind of theatricality that Goldberg sees in Vakhtangov's 1922 production of *Princess Turandot* and, by extension, evokes the director's notion of fantastic realism.

Yevgeny Vakhtangov was a renowned Russian director from Moscow, who created the theater of fantastic realism. Trained under Konstantin Stanislavky, Vakhtangov pushed against his teacher's technique of the "fourth wall" and the representation of realism on stage, and sought to transform the theater into a site that engages critically with the world beyond the theater hall. In short, Vakhtangov's notion of fantastic realism aims to use the playfulness of theatricality to remind the audience that what they see on stage is a theatrical presentation rather than a mimetic representation of reality. Vakhtangov's fantastic realism consists of three main elements, each crucial to our understanding of Goldberg's novel: the amplification of theatrical disguise, a concurrent temporality that makes different eras present on stage, and the theater as a space of cultural and political commentary. Vakhtangov's theater is both an example of intertextuality and the paradigm according to which we should understand the performance of intertextuality in Goldberg's novel.[175]

Vakhtangov's 1922 production *Princess Turandot* to which Goldberg refers was written by Carlo Gozzi and performed in the last year of Vakhtangov's life. This production is considered to be the piece that best captured and exhibited the core principles of his theatrical approach of fantastic realism. He broke the illusion of the fourth wall, presented multiple places and historical times concurrently on stage, and used a far-away Chinese myth to provide commentary on the

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[175] On Vakhtangov's theory and practice of fantastic realism see: Evgeniĭ Vakhtangov, *The Vakhtangov Sourcebook*, trans. Andrei Malaev-Babel (Abington, Oxon; New York NY: Routledge, 2011).

censorship and socio-political circumstances in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Carlo Gozzi's play *Princess Turandot*, written in the style of *commedia dell'arte*, takes place in China and tells of the Chinese Princess, Turandot, who put three riddles to those who wish to marry her. The brave and reckless Prince Calaf agrees to solve the three riddles, even though it might cost him his life, since if the contenders get even one riddle wrong, their head is cut off. Despite Turandot's pride and cruelty, Calaf solves the three riddles but tells Turandot she will not have to marry him if she can guess his name and heritage (Calaf is a refugee in China). With the help of her slave woman Adelma, Turandot reveals Calaf's secret. Free from obligations, Turandot nonetheless marries Calaf, overcoming her pride.

Vakhtangov's staging demonstrates an intertextual network across languages and cultures, which he explicitly made present in his performance and rehearsal process.[176] Against the realist trend of making the audience "forget that they are at the theater," Vakhtangov was interested in a dramatic presentation that deliberately exposes itself as a theatrical performance. To that end, he had the actors dress on stage, so that the audience would see how they "put on" their characters. In this manner, the audience was to become aware of the character as well as the actor playing them, such that both would be seen to reside concurrently in the same body.

When directing the performance, Vakhtangov further asked his actors not merely to play the characters of the Chinese plot but rather to play the Italian troupe of actors performing the Chinese myth. The actor was required to exist in three concurrent levels. Yuri Zavadsky, who played the part of Prince Calaf notes: "Vakhtangov strived to achieve from me a 'double,' or even a 'triple' life onstage. I, Yuri Zavadsky, felt myself an Italian actor, who enthusiastically uses his

[176] Andrei Malaev-Babel, *Yevgeny Vakhtangov: A Critical Portrait* (Abington, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2013), 217.

mastery to create the character of Calaf."[177] Such richly layered onstage characterization an artistic reality constructed out of elements proper to three distinct chronotopes: 1922 Moscow, Italy at the time of commedia dell'arte, and a mythic China.[178]

The intertextual reference to the Chinese tale provided the opportunity for socio-political critique through playful satire and improvisation. For example, Vakhtangov instructed the masked characters to tell jokes during the performance that would hint at the political aftermath of World War I. For Vakhtangov, then, the presentation of a fantasy distanced from reality operates in a twofold manner: it accentuates the playful dimension of the theater but at the same time serves as a means of commentary on the world outside the performance hall.[179] Lamed's assertion that she is writing this novel in the same manner as Vakhtangov directed Turandot speaks specifically to his method of exposing the fact that the character is an actor and not really a Chinese prince. In other words, Lamed is interested in the reader's awareness that Ruth is not a representation of a 'real' person, or even a realistic person, but rather a crafted presentation of a woman writing letters. Later in the novel, Lamed moves beyond the mise-en-scène and interferes with Ruth's letter. This

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[177] Yuri Zavadsky's account is quoted in Andrei Malaev-Babel, "Introduction," in *The Vakhtangov Sourcebook* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 78.

[178] The layering of the actor and the mixture of roles served Vakhtangov's inquire of the creative threshold. Malaev-Babel identifies fours thresholds that are treated in the show: (1) the audience threshold, which separates the actual theatrical space forms the imaginary world of the play (2) The threshold of creative space and time, which transforms the theatrical reality. (3) The threshold between the actor-creator and the character (4) the final threshold that is situated between life and death, based on the contrast between the show's long running and Vakhtangov's death almost immediately after the show was first performed.

See: Malaev-Babel, "Introduction," 3–83, especially pp. 68-81.

[179] Playing an Italian troupe that is playing the Chinese myth intensified the theatrical mode of the actor as an agent of estrangement. Theatricality as means of estrangement with no doubt brings to mind Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (Alienation Effect). Brecht was no doubt aware of Vakhtangov's work and mentioned him in his seminal essay "On Experimental Theatre" in which he outlines his notion of the V-Effekt. Both directors strived to remind the audience that they are sitting in a theater hall. However, whereas Brecht's Epic Theater was geared toward political impact and social revolution, Vakhtangov's Fantastic Realism was interested in the worldly as commentary social issues. Bertolt Brecht, "On Experimental Theatre" in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willett (New York; London: Hill and Wang; Methuen, 1964), 130-135. One must also keep in mind that Vakhtangov worked in Russia under the restrictions of the Russian Empire, the revolution, and the transformation into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1917.

occurs while Ruth is describing a café gathering in Paris where the people around the table discuss modernist writers. Ruth drifts away in her mind, stating that she had wished to write a poem when, abruptly, the narration changes and the speaking subject becomes Lamed, who speaks to Ruth: "And I, mind you Ruth, hate young maidens who write poems […] I am not a maiden who writes poems. I am a (male) poet (*meshorer*)."[180] As in Vakhtangov's fantastic realism, Lamed's intrusion upon Ruth's letter further dissolves the fictional boundary between narrator and character, and underscores the performative aspect of this imagined journey.

The epistolary form in this case emphasizes the tension between private speech and public presentation, the real and the imagined. Goldberg draws on the model of the eighteenth-century epistolary novel, in which a narrator often describes the letters in the prologue, but modifies this precedent form in three ways. First, in the eighteenth-century novel the prologue conventionally serves to affirm that the letters presented by the author are real and authentic. In the seminal example of Richardson's *Pamela*, the male writer of the prologue claims that the epistles that follow are real letters found in a basement, as if to grant the reader with access to a concealed female consciousness. Goldberg, on the other hand, uses the prologue to assure the reader that the letters, as well as the heroine writing them, are complete fiction. And yet at the same time she hints that they draw on real life events. Goldberg further complicates these fictional layers, as Lamed discloses in the prologue that Ruth has never been to the cities she writes of, despite her ability not only to describe them in detail but also to invoke alleged memories of her past experiences among them.[181]

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[180] *Mikhtavim*, 95.

ואני, במחילה ממך, רות, שונאת עלמות הכותבות שירים [...] אני לא עלמה הכותבת שירים. אני משורר.

[181] The levels of narration blurring fictional boundaries is part of a literary tradition of the epistolary, for example, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie; or The New Heloise*.

Second, Goldberg's novel features not a correspondence but rather a one-sided monologue that imagines both the events described in each letter as well as the addressee of the letters. Ruth writes these letters to Emanuel in order to process her melancholy, but she never sends them. And third, before each letter we receive a short third-person description of Ruth in her room, either alone or with Emanuel. Circling back to Goldberg's reference to Vakhtangov, I read these narrated descriptions as mise-en-scènes that situate the text in between the novelistic and the dramatic, serving as the moment when Lamed "dresses" Ruth in front of the reader as though she were an actress to underscore the scene of letter writing as a fantasy.

This performance of fantasy is not an attempt to mimic the world but rather to present the "literary glasses" through which the novel comments on the Jewish experience in the 1930s. I suggest that we read these mise-en-scènes as a form akin to stage directions, providing the reader with a sense of Ruth's physical setting, her actions and gestures, while triggering the content on which the letters draw. For example, letter three is prefaced by a description of Ruth hearing Emanuel laughing with another woman outside her window. Then, the letter begins with Ruth writing to Emanuel that she had imagined him with another woman, "telling her all the things you never told me,"[182] and to stop these thoughts she went by herself to the coffee shop in Berlin. In a different preface (letter twelve), Ruth sees children at the playground, and then the letter includes a dream she had had about Emanuel holding a child, descriptions about the children in Paris, and memories of Josephine, a little girl she had known from the Rhine. The emotionally charged situations in the preface, then, trigger Ruth's need to write the letter as well as dictate the letter's contents.

[182] *Mikhtavim*, 21.

The novel's intertmedial relations with theater and art constitutes a threshold between what is real and what is imagined. Like the mise-en-scènes prefacing each letter, the intertextual references provide a sense of connection while simultaneously emphasizing distance. For example, Ruth declares that she went to see some old friends, but these beloved "friends," the reader learns, are but two paintings: Botticelli's "Portrait of a Young Man," and Ribera's "Saint Sebastian." Addressing the paintings as friends underscores the absence of actual living human connection. It points to a sense of familiarity with and belonging in the city via art, but at the same time exposes Ruth's alienation, as nothing but static images greet her. Moreover, she is confronted by the change in political climate, namely, the rise of anti-Semitism and the sense of fear over walking in the streets of Berlin as a Jew. As we shall see with Kästner and Rilke, Iin these moments, she turns to intertextuality not only as a mechanism of claiming kinship and belonging through text, language, and literature but also to demonstrate literature's potential to carry "the entire world" in times of political crisis, to provide a safe haven in uncanny moments of defamiliarizing horror.

Autumn in Berlin: Rilke, Kästner, and the Book of Jonah

Ruth's imagined journey takes place over the course of a month in autumn, from October 10 until November 11, 1934. In the first of her letters of fantasy, written during a train ride from Marienburg to Berlin, Ruth declares: "an international fountain pen is better than a typewriter because with a fountain pen one can write in all languages."[183] This metaphor of the multilingual pen takes shape in the novel as Ruth's letters incorporate words, phrases, and poems in other languages, primarily German and French. In two particular instances, Goldberg quotes a few lines from two poems in their original German (with no Hebrew translation): Erich Kästner's "A Typical

[183] Goldberg, ibid, 12.
"עט נובע אינטרנציונלי עדיף ממכונת-כתיבה, כי בעט נובע אפשר לכתוב בכל השפות."

Autumn Night" and Rainer Maria Rilke's "Autumn Day." In addition to the theme of autumn, which connects the poems to one another, as well as to the season of Ruth's journey, the presence of German poetry and the fact that it is quoted in German requires further interrogation. How should we understand the intertextual and interlingual ties between German poetry and the Hebrew novel in Palestine in 1936/7?

The choice not to translate these German poems, I suggest, expresses the limits of acculturation and emphasizes moments of cultural untranslatability. In the context of the Hebrew revival project and the constant endeavors to translate European literary forms and culture into Hebrew to support the idea of a Zionist homecoming, Goldberg's choice to include them in their original language is subversive. It pushes against cultural Zionism's ideology of translation, linguistic and cultural alike. It further suggests that there is a piece of meaning within intertextuality and in the transference of culture that can never be fully translated and can only be captured and transmitted by quoting in the original language. As Haun Saussy notes "[w]hen foreign words appear in a text, they make it macaronic: a patchwork, a hybrid, a graft."[184] Goldberg's novel thus constructs a linguistic constellation that attempts to create an aesthetic language, that is, in a way, at once familiar and alienating. For Saussy, "hybrid languages are born of migration and contact—sometimes migration of ideas, sometimes migration of people."[185] In Goldberg's case, both types of migration are at play, and the intertextual correspondence with Rilke, as well as with Kästner, occurs thematically via the reference to autumn and the figure of the addressee.

Ruth begins her fictional journey in Berlin, where she strolls nostalgically around Bambergerstraße. Yet her *flânerie* along these familiar streets evokes the ambiguity of the idea of

[184] Haun Saussy, "Macaronics as What Eludes Translation," *Paragraph* 38, no. 2 (2015): 214–30 [216].

[185] Saussy, ibid, 224.

return as she oscillates between the warm feeling of intimacy between her feet and the street, and the sentiments of horror, fear, and anxiety invoked by the display of a swastika on an ice cream shop window. In Freudian terms, this is an uncanny moment—a moment simultaneously *heimlich* and *unheimlich*—which elicits both familiarity and horror. Ruth, according to the narrator, had never been to Berlin before, but her narration is accurate and also, paradoxically, includes memories from the time she spent in Berlin as a fifteen-year-old gymnasium student. Taking these memories into account, Ruth does not merely arrive in Berlin, but rather returns to a city she once knew. The notion of return is particularly important, as it invokes the idea of a Jewish homecoming—but in reverse: Whereas Hebrew literature, in Sidra Ezrahi's terms, is a product of the Jewish longing for a homecoming in the land of Israel,[186] Goldberg's novel suggests a homecoming realized in Berlin. This, however, is a homecoming entangled with a sense of loss, as the turning swastika in the street marks the political impossibility of a return that turns out to be realized only in fiction.

At that moment, Ruth's narration becomes hesitant, and she stutters as she tries to depict what strikes her most, the street's darkness, or perhaps its emptiness (*reykut*). This moment of stammering marks Ruth's shift from Hebrew to German, as she quotes Erich Kästner's poem, "Exemplarische Herbstnacht" to process her feeling of estrangement, but at the same time claims her belonging by exhibiting a sense of intimacy with the German language and its literature. She proceeds to complicate this notion of at-homeness in language by alluding immediately thereafter to the book of Jonah (4:10). Her transition into German seems to be not a deliberate choice but rather an inevitable reflex triggered by the actual and metaphorical darkness of the street. As we are interested in the point of contact between the languages, I include the text as it appears in the

[186] Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination*.

Hebrew novel, which includes the poem in German, and later provide the English translation to the entire passage:

בשעה זו, שלא היתה כלל מאוחרת, רדף אחרי שירו של קסטנר:
Nachts sind die Straßen so leer
Nur ganz mitunter
Markiert ein Auto Verkehr…
ולי חרה מאד. אני חסתי על הקיקיון הזה שלא עמלתי בו. שאבות אבותיי לא נטעו אותו.

> At that hour, which was not quite late, I was haunted by Kästner's poem:
> The streets are so empty at night
> Only every now and then
> A car marks movement…
> And I was very upset. I cared for the gourd, for which I have not labored. That the fathers of my father had not planted.[187]

Why does Goldberg turn to Kästner at this moment? Why does she recall this particular poem? What kind of aesthetic and ideological dialogue does she uphold with Kästner? And what is the significance of its proximity to the book of Jonah? Quotes in literary works, as Ziva Ben-Porat points out, function as markers to the texts referenced.[188] Thus, in order to better understand what kind of work this text does for Goldberg, I turn to the poem, its title, and its proximity to the tale of Nineveh in the book of Jonah. Ruth quotes only the first three lines of the first stanza, but I bring the poem in full for a better sense of its role in the novel:

[187] ״בשעה זו, שלא היתה כלל מאוחרת, רדף אחרי שירו של קסטנר:
Nachts sind die Straßen so leer
Nur ganz mitunter
Markiert ein Auto Verkehr…
ולי חרה מאד. אני חסתי על הקיקיון הזה שלא עמלתי בו. שאבות אבותיי לא נטעו אותו.״
The original Hebrew alludes to the book of Jonah 4:10.
הציטוט התנ״כי: ״ויאמר יהוה—אתה חסת על הקיקיון, אשר לא עמלת בו ולא גדלתו: שבן לילה היה ובן לילה אבד. ואני לא אחוס, על נינוה העיר הגדולה אשר יש בה הרבה משתים עשרה רבו אדם, אשר לא ידע בין ימינו לשמאלו, ובהמה רבה.״

[188] Ben Porat, "The Poetics of Literary Allusion."

Exemplarische Herbstnacht
Erich Kästner

Nachts sind die Straßen so leer.
Nur ganz mitunter
markiert ein Auto Verkehr.
Ein Rudel bunter
raschelnder Blätter jagt hinterher.

Die Blätter haschen und hetzen.
Und doch weht kein Wind.
Sie rascheln wie Fetzen und hetzen
und folgen geheimen Gesetzen,
obwohl sie gestorben sind.

Nachts sind die Straßen so leer.
Die Lampen brennen nicht mehr.

Man geht und möchte nicht stören.
Man könnte das Gras wachsen hören,
wenn Gras auf den Straßen wär.

Der Himmel ist kalt und weit.
Auf der Milchstraße hat's geschneit.
Man hört seine Schritte wandern,
als wären es Schritte von andern,
und geht mit sich selber zu zweit.

Nachts sind die Straßen so leer.
Die Menschen legen sich nieder.
Nun schlafen sie, treu und bieder.
Und morgen fallen sie wieder
übereinander her.

A Typical Autumn Night
Erich Kästner

The streets are so empty at night .
Only every now and then
A car marks movement [traffic].
A colorful pack
chases after rustling leaves.

The leaves snatch and hustle.
And yet there is no wind.
They rustle like rags and hustle
and follow secret laws
even though they have died.

The streets are so empty at night.
The lamps no longer burn.

One walks as not to disturb.
One would be able to hear the grass grow
if there were grass on the street.

The sky is cold and broad.
On the Milky Way it snowed.
One hears one's footsteps wander,
as if they were footsteps of others,
and goes with oneself as a pair.

The streets are so empty at night.
The people lie down.
Now they sleep, true and honest.
And tomorrow they attack
each other once again.

Published in 1932, Kästner's poem oscillates between impressionism and expressionism.[189] The impressionist images of the urban setting such as the empty street and dry leaves are depicted with verbs such as "snatch," "chase," "rustle," "hustle," and "died." The

[189] The poem, „Exemplarische Herbstnacht" was published in Kästner's poetry book *Gesang zwischen den Stühlen* (1932). See: Erich Kästner, "Exemplarische Herbstnacht," in: *Gesammelte Schriften* (Zürich: Atrium Verlag, 1959), 241. For further reading on *Gesang zwischen den Stühlen* see: Helga Bemmann, *Erich Kästner: Leben Und Werk* (Frankfurt an Main: Ullstein, 1994), 232-237. The translation of the poem is mine.

sentiment of decline is intensified by the absence of wind, grass, and light. Instead of abiding by the rule of nature, the scraps of leaves rustle and follow an unknown system of laws "even though they are dead." The stanza does not fully determine who is dead, the leaves or the laws, thus establishing an analogy between the two. Both the leaves and the laws express an alienating atmosphere of emptiness and decline.

In the third stanza, the darkness grows, as even "die Lampen brennen nicht mehr" ("The lamps no longer burn"). The fading of man-made light is intensified by a human subject's entrance into the poem, a person who could have heard the grass grow if only there were grass in these streets. Even though Kästner uses the conditional (*könnte*), the reader cannot but envision the green grass and then experience the darkness setting in, as the colors and growth of the grass were never there to begin with. The impersonal pronoun ("man") remains present in the following two stanzas, and the cold, dark sky becomes a reflection on the growing darkness in and of mankind:

> The sky is cold and broad.
> On the Milky Way it snowed.
> One hears one's footsteps wander,
> as if they were the footsteps of others,
> and goes with oneself as a pair.[190]

These footsteps shuffle somewhere between the sky and the road. The steps are strange as if they belong to the "other" with whom the poem's speaker has no contact, and no desire to know. The every-person of the poem is not necessarily estranged from the city itself, but rather the city reflects the loss of a community, and—as demonstrated in the last stanza—the absence of moral responsibility for one's neighbor. The streets are empty at night since the people have gone to sleep:

[190] Der Himmel ist kalt und weit./ Auf der Milchstraße hat's geschneit./Man hört seine Schritte wandern,/als wären es Schritte von andern,/und geht mit sich selber zu zweit.

Now they sleep, true and honest.
And tomorrow they again attack
Each other.[191]

Whereas the nights are dark and empty, tomorrow holds no promise of comfort. The poem exhibits the speaker's estrangement from both nature and other individuals in society. The streets in Kästner's poem lack any specificity and are not associated with a particular place. They are, however, associated with a bleak atmosphere, as they appear to be ghostly streets with no wind and no grass, only the scraps of leaves, and an occasional car passing by. The collection of generic nouns such as "streets," "a car," and a street light thus create a non-place that is 'anywhere and everywhere.' Yet the universal melancholy of Kästner's streets is exactly what makes it so effective for Goldberg.

By recalling and quoting the poem while walking through the streets of Berlin, the novel links Kästner's uncanny poetic sentiments with the fear of being a Jew in Berlin in 1936, thereby appropriating the poem's affect. By quoting the poem from memory, Ruth demonstrates access to German poetry as well as her ability to direct this intertextual dialogue—to cut, extract, and rewrite. Kästner's poem becomes a vessel that loses its original sense of placelessness and shifts to encapsulate a Jewish experience in a particular place and time, a fact emphasized by the allusion to the book of Jonah.[192] As quoted above, after she reproduces the stanza from Kaestner's poem Ruth adds: "And I was very upset. I cared for the gourd, for which I have not labored. That the fathers of my father had not planted."

In the book of Jonah, God sends Jonah to prophesy and warn the people of Nineveh—a

[191] Nun schlafen sie, treu und bieder./ Und morgen fallen sie wieder/ Übereinander her.

[192] This brings to mind H.N. Bialik's text „Giliui vekisui ba-lashon," in which he invokes kabalah and Isaac Luria to portray words as an empty vessel for meaning. See: H.N. Bialik, "Revealment and Concealment in Language," in: *Revealment and Concealment: Five Essays* (Juresalem: Ibis Editions, 2000).

city of sins—that it is going to be destroyed. After hearing Jonah's prophecy, however, the people of Nineveh repent, and God decides to spare them. Upset by God's decision, Jonah asks God to end his life. He sits outside Nineveh to see what will happen in the city. God provides him with a *kikayon* (a plant) for shade, but with dawn, God sends a worm to eat through the plant. Jonah asks to die once more, and

> "the Lord said: 'you cared about the plant, which you did not work for and which you did not grow, which appeared overnight and perished overnight. And should I not care about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not yet know their right hand from their left, and many beasts as well!'" (Jonah 4:10-11, JTS)

> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה--אַתָּה חַסְתָּ עַל-הַקִּיקָיוֹן, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-עָמַלְתָּ בּוֹ וְלֹא גִדַּלְתּוֹ: שֶׁבִּן-לַיְלָה הָיָה, וּבִן-לַיְלָה אָבָד. וַאֲנִי לֹא אָחוּס, עַל-נִינְוֵה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה--אֲשֶׁר יֶשׁ-בָּהּ הַרְבֵּה מִשְׁתֵּים-עֶשְׂרֵה רִבּוֹ אָדָם, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדַע בֵּין-יְמִינוֹ לִשְׂמֹאלוֹ, וּבְהֵמָה, רַבָּה. (יונה ד: י-יא)

Through this allusion, Ruth compares herself to Jonah, the prophet that cares for the plant he did not work for. Yet, what does the *kikayon* (plant) refer to in Goldberg's text? One possibility is that the *kikayon* symbolizes Berlin, and therefore presents the city in a twofold manner: on the one hand, it is a city of sinners, but on the other, like Nineveh, it encapsulates the possibility of redemption. The irony of Jonah's attachment to the *kikayon* stems from its provisional nature.[193] God's confrontation with Jonah relies on the contradiction that while Jonah has become attached to a non-permanent home, he is amazed that God spares Nineveh, a town with stone homes, six thousand people, and a history. Berlin, according to this logic, becomes a second Nineveh, with its stone houses, sins, and the possibility of redemption. Whereas Ruth stresses that she has a deep familiarity and sense of intimacy with the city, she realizes that she has no claim over it, as the fathers of her fathers did not plant that *kikayon*. Goldberg uses the verb *nat'u*, which literally means "to plant," but is used in Hebrew specifically to refer to the planting of trees rather than flowers, i.e., establishing deep roots. The relationship is complicated once again, however, when Ruth declares:

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[193] Jack M. Sasson, *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), especially pp. 323-352.

> לפנים אהבתיך, ברלין. אהבתי את הטרזנוּת והקשטנוּת פה ברחובות אלה ואת קדרות-המבּטים בוֶדינג, את זריחת חלונות הראווה של ק.ד.ו. ואת ריח המליח באלכס, את דמותך המגוּונה והבלתי מובנת כנפשו של אדם קרוב. והנה לפני עיר זרה ומתנכרת.

> I once loved you, Berlin. I once loved the dandy and embellishment here in these streets and the [sad] faces in Wedding [district], the rise of the shopping windows of K.D.W., and the salty scent in Alex [Alexanderplaz], your diverse and incomprehensible character, as the soul of someone close. And now before me a city that makes itself strange.[194]

The city becomes a place that used to be home, that encapsulates memories and familiarity, yet it rejects Ruth. Or perhaps it was never hers to begin with. Like Emanuel, it is imagined and consists of a one-sided affection that oscillates between love and hate, belonging and alienation. Yet the proximity of the swastika, the German language reproduced in the novel, and the biblical allusion to the book of Jonah, together suggest that place is never solely geographical, but is mediated through language and text. In a moment of supreme rejection—in the light of the swastika, or under its shadow—Goldberg quotes a German text and invokes a non-Jewish author who opposed the Nazis. In so doing, Goldberg distinguishes between the "empty streets" and the German language that describes these streets in a manner of self-critique. It is language, and, more precisely, the contact point between German poetry and the Bible, rather than the city, that carries the feeling of home. Importantly, the German quote does not stand alone but is accompanied by the biblical allusion.

The reference to Jonah is further related to the issues of text and space, as the Biblical Jonah narrative is a story of a journey that revolves around the conflict between God and the prophet. Notably, the biblical tale is animated by a tension between open and closed spaces. Jonah

[194] Goldberg, *Mikhtavim minesi'ah medumah*, 15

hides in closed spaces—inside the ship, inside the whale, and under the *kikayon*—whereas God consistently draws him out. God overturns the ship in the storm, brings the whale to the shore, and sends a worm to consume the plant. Like Jonah, Ruth looks for cover, but rather than finding a hiding place, she pieces together Hebrew and German and creates a figurative quilt to shade her.[195] If we borrow the metaphor of the *kikayon* as a momentary home—like a Sukkah—that provides shade and protection, we can think of the way Goldberg pieces together Kästner and Jonah—German poetry and Hebrew Bible—as a quilt that temporarily shades Ruth from the horror of the turning swastika.

Goldberg invokes known practices of alluding to the Bible but modifies them. In the prominent novel *Ahavat Zion* (*Love of Zion*), Avraham Mappo draws on biblical figures to imagine a utopian return to Zion as well as a Hebrew speaking monolingual community. Goldberg, on the other hand, suggests a different model, in which German, Hebrew, and the ambiguity of the Jewish home in Europe are all tied together. While the novel presents the impossibility of fulfilling both a longing for geographical belonging and a marital union with El, it hints at the moment in which the European metropolis, namely Berlin, is revealed as a non-home, showing how language intercedes as a short-term cover.

Through the biblical allusion to Jonah, Ruth distances herself from Berlin, as it is a city that "the fathers of her fathers did not plant." This phrase points not only to Goldberg's Jewish heritage but also to the literary genealogy to which she aims to belong.

[195] I thank Yair Lipshitz for pointing out the spatial dimension in the Book of Jonah. Shimon Levy points to the theatrical potentiality in the Book of Jonah and argues that is should be read as a quest play. Shimon Levy, *The Bible as Theatre* (Brighton; Portland, Or.: Sussex Academic Press, 2000).

“I Remembered My Poet”: Goldberg and Rilke’s Universal Autumn

The novel employs the theme of autumn in Berlin to construct another layer of an intertextual dialogue that requires further inquiry. First, autumn constitutes an absent season in the Mediterranean climate, and thus represents another form of staging a familiar and yet alienated “elsewhere” in the context of the heat associated with the climate of Eretz Israel.[196] Second, the texts to which Goldberg refers are thematized around autumn. Kästner’s and Rilke’s poems are paired with two biblical texts, both read in the synagogue during the High Holidays, which are celebrated in the fall.[197] Whereas Kästner’s poem leads Ruth to recall the Book of Jonah, the section that concludes with Rilke’s poems—also quoted in German—begins with an allusion to the book of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes). Ruth alludes to Kohelet as she continues her stroll on Tauentzienstrasse and sees the prostitutes on the street. She thinks of their loneliness and how they do not have children to whom they might leave the money they have saved. “And I—I will never have a bank account. I will follow my path from asceticism (*sigufim*) to asceticism, from lonesomeness (*bdidut*) to lonesomeness, but ‘let my clothes always be freshly washed, and my head never lack ointment.’”[198] The biblical allusion to Kohelet, a book concerned with futility and

[196] Ziva Ben Porat explores autumn as a theme and as a symbol of decay in European and Israeli poetry. She argues that Israeli poetry is a sub-system of European poetry and as such, borrows descriptions of autumn even though those collide with Mediterranean climate. Ziva Ben-Porat, “Represented Reality and Literary Models: European Autumn on Israeli Soil,” *Poetics Today* 7, no. 1 (1986): 29–58.

[197] The book of Jonah is read on Yom Kippur and the book of Kohelet is read on Hol hamo’ed Sukkot. Hol hamo’ed refers to days of holiday in which the Torah does not explicitly prohibit work. According to the halacha, these days are considered in between *yom kodesh* and *yom hol*, in between the holy and the profane. In the context of this novel, hol hamo’ed constitutes another manifestation of the threshold – a temporal threshold – and the contact point between the holy and the profane.

[198] Goldberg uses quotation marks to indicate the authenticity of the quote from Kohelet 9:8.

״ואני – לי לא יהיה לעולם חשבון בבנק. אני אעבור את דרכי מסיגופים לסיגופים, מבדידות לבדידות, אך ׳בכל עת יהיו בגדי לבנים ושמן על ראשי לא יחסר׳״ (18)

Whereas the allusion to Kohelet is made clear, Goldberg changes the pronoun from “you” to “I”. The original verse is “Let your clothes always be freshly washed, and your head never lack ointment.”

״בכל עת יהיו בגדליך לבנים ושמן על ראשך לא יחסר.״ (קהלת ט, פסוק ח)

death, is tied to Ruth's political status. Her inability to have a bank account might be read as the financial plight of a young woman, but in 1934 Berlin, it is more likely that her statement indicates the deprivation of rights she experiences as a Jew.[199]

The entwined relationships between the Bible, German poetry and the aggravating political reality for Jews in Berlin are emphasized by the intertextual dialogue Goldberg constructs between Jonah, Kohelet, Kästner, and Rilke, to whom she refers as "my poet." While walking around the Tiergarten in Berlin "in the elevated purified air there was noble loneliness," Ruth observes the falling leaves and exclaims,

וכשיצאתי מן הדמדומים הירוקים של עולם הדגים בטירגרטן,
כיתרוני השלהבות המעופפות של עלי השלכת בטירגרטן. באוויר
המזוקק והרם הייתה בדידות נאצלת. נזכרתי במשורר שלי:
Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr,
Wer jetzt allein ist, wird es lange bleiben,
Wird lesen, Wachen, lange Briefe schreiben."
ואתה תהיה הקורבן."

"I remembered my poet:

Whoever has no house now, will never have one.
Whoever is alone will stay alone,
Will sit, read, write long letters through the evening.
- And you will be the offering (*Korban*)"[200]

Goldberg does not provide the reader with Rilke's name but merely refers to him as "my poet" (*hameshorer sheli*), marking a sense of intimacy while concealing the identity of the poet from the reader. Once again, the German poem marks a moment of untranslatability. But is it only the poem

[199] From 1933 Jews had begun to lose their rights gradually. In 1935, the two Nuremberg Laws were unanimously passed: The Law for Protection of German Blood and Honor, which prohibited marriage between Jews and Germans, and the Reich Citizenship Law, which stated that all Jews were no longer citizens. See: Yfaat. Weiss, *Etniyut Veezrahut: Yehude Germanyah Viyehude Polin, 1933-1940* (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at sefarim magnes, hauniversiṭah ha'ivrit, 2000).

[200] *Mikhtavim*, 34.

that cannot be translated or also the theme of autumn, and the sense of decline it symbolizes?

The answer to this question appears in Lamed's prologue, which suggests that some words—and forms of life—can never be properly translated, and are, in fact, lost. In an attempt to explain the content of Ruth's letters to Emanuel, Lamed incorporates a French word that most closely expresses what Hebrew cannot:

> יש מילה צרפתית המבטאת קצת את אופי המכתבים האלה: Causerie. תרגומה העברי כבד ומעליב ("פטפוט"? שיחה נאה"?) – לא לאלה נתכוונתי. הרי Causerie היא במקצת גם אותה המלודיה עתיקת-היומין שיד איזו סבתא אצילית פרטוה על פסנתר ישן ומתאנח.
>
> There is a French word that expresses to some extent the nature of these letters: *Causerie*. Its Hebrew translation is heavy and offensive ("chatty"? (*pitput*) "a nice conversation"? (*siha na'ah*)) - these are not what I mean. Because Causerie is somewhat also the ancient, gentle melody that the hands of a noble grandmother played on an old, moaning piano."[201]

This passage pertains to the tension between two kinds of untranslatability: one, the inability to translate into Hebrew because the emergent language does not yet possess a word that suffices; the other, the notion that some ideas can only be captured in a particular language. Perhaps the choice of the word "causerie" can clarify what is at issue for Goldberg, as the nature of the word speaks to the fluidity of conversation, which allows for the macaronic needed to alternate between languages. In the case of Rilke's poem, there are strong reasons to think that Goldberg deliberately chose to include the German original, rather than merely acquiesced to a linguistic necessity. Goldberg's Hebrew translation of "Autumn Day" appeared in the newspaper[202] in 1939 and was later posthumously reprinted in her collection of poetry translations in 1975.[203] In addition, two

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[201] *Mikhtavim*, 8.

[202] Rainer Maria Rilke, "Yom stav," trans. Leah Goldberg, *Hashomer hatza'ir*, no. 48, 14.12.1939, 9-10.

[203] Leah Goldberg, *Kolot Reḥoḳim Ukerovim: Targume Shirah* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1975), 130. Numerous publication of the poem appeared since the 1980's, for example, Moshe Atar (1976), Moshe Haneomi (1980), Moshe Singer (1987), David Gil'adi (1997) Shimon Sandbank, Chana Khahana (2011), to mention a few. Rainer maria Rilke, "Yom Stav," trans. Leah Goldberg, *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, December 14, 1939, 9-10. Quoted in: Leah Goldberg, *Yoman*

undated versions of her Hebrew rendition of the poem can be found in the Gnazim archive.[204] While we have no way of knowing the exact date of the translation, we can assume that Goldberg had both the linguistic and poetic capabilities to translate it in 1936.

Goldberg previews her translation to Rilke's poem in a *reshimah* (a feuilleton) entitled "October," published in October 1938 under the pseudonym Ada Grant.[205] In this piece, Goldberg describes Rilke's writing as 'private,' 'individual' poetry that is nonetheless doomed to be politically relevant ("אקטואלית"). She allegorizes autumn to capture the existentially homeless state of the Jewish people:

> נדמה, כי מעולם, מעולם, בכל הסתווים שעברו עלינו, לא היינו בודדים כמו היום. נדמה, כי אוקטובר זה קיפל בתוכו את כל העלבונות של אותו בן-בלי-בית נצחי אשר שמו **העם היהודי**. סתיו בעולמנו. ועל ראשנו אין גג – זהו **האוקטובר שלנו**.[206]

> Seemingly, in all the autumns we have undergone, we have never been as lonely as we are today. Ostensibly, this October has embodied all the insults of that eternal son-without-a-home (בן-בלי-בית) whose name is the **Jewish People**. Autumn in our world. No roof above our heads – this is **our October**.

Sifruti: Mivhar Reshimot 'Itonut, ed. Goddon Ticotsky and Hamutal Bar-Yosef (Bene Berak: Sifriyat po'alim, 2017), 297; 510. Goldberg's Hebrew translation of the poem follows the grammatical structure of the German original and emphasizes the temporal dependence between present and future. She adheres to the verbs that indicate action, yet, interestingly, she changes the order of actions. Rather than beginning with "lesen," she starts with "Wachen," which is translated into "tidad shnato" - not being able to fall asleep, and then writes "yikra, yikhtov yigeret." (will read, will write a letter). Goldberg sets the atmosphere first – the image of the sleepless subject – and only then provides the actions of reading and writing that fill the mise-en-scène. Rilke, in contrast, locates the sleepless-awakening moment in between reading and writing.

[204] Both versions are undated and can be found in Gnazim archive file no. 274, document 250566. One constitutes a "clean" copy and includes the translation that Goldberg will publish in 1939. The second seems to be an older draft which includes multiple changes, scribbling, and revisions.

[205] Goldberg, *Yoman Sifruti: Mivhar Reshimot 'Itonut,* 295-297. This short essay was first published under Goldberg's pseudonym Ada Grant, *Turim*, Year 2, Vol 26-27, 19.10.1938, 1. Throughout her career as a journalist, Leah Goldberg used two pseudonyms: Ada Grant and Log. On Goldberg's usage of these pseudonyms see: Gordinsky, "Bein ha-politi la-sentimentali" in: *Bisheloshah Nofim: Yetsiratah Hamuḳdemet Shel Le'ah Goldberg,* 75-101.

[206] Goldberg, "October" in: *Yoman Sifruti*, 297.

In both the short essay “October” and in the novel, which takes place in the month of October, autumn becomes a metaphor that points not only to natural decline, but also to the moral decline of Europe and the dangers lurking in the shadows of this season for Jews in Germany. In the novel, Ruth encounters these shadows time and again, and responds to them via an intertextual dialogue with literary figures from the German canon. In a similar vein to the intimacy she establishes with Rilke, she conjures a kinship with E.T.A Hoffmann, who, in turn, becomes her Doppelgänger, as someone who oscillates between native and foreign. In the chapter “A Letter on the Coffee Shops and E.T.A Hoffmann,” Ruth goes to a coffee shop in Berlin to distract herself from thinking about Emanuel and his relationships with other women. In determining which café she should visit, Ruth soon realizes that being a Jew in Berlin in the 1930s limits her access to public spaces. She finds a spot in Café Quick, a coffee shop “our brothers the Israelites still enter.”[207] While sitting there, Ruth goes on another imagined journey—spatial, temporal, and intertextual—among Berlin’s most famous literary coffee shops including Lutter und Wegner, Romanisches Café, Café des Westens, Lunte Café, and Café Josty.

Among these coffee shops, she gives pride of place to Lutter und Wegner, both for its association with E.T.A Hoffmann and for the “brown uniforms”[208] currently occupying it. The space of the literary café links past and present and symbolizes the change in the political climate. Unlike her intertextual relations with Rilke and Kästner, in this instance Ruth does not quote Hoffmann directly. Instead, she provides an account of his literary oeuvre and fictional characters to underscore authorial kinship, referencing his interest in monstrous figures and his poor reception

[207] *Mikhtavim*, 22.

[208] *Mikhtavim*, 27. Earlier in the chapter she specifies that the nobility of the Nazis have taken over Lutter und Wegner, which, consequently, became very expensive. See page 22.

in Germany. For Ruth, Hoffmann represents the ability to see human monstrosities and embodies the figure of the humanist who would have followed moral codes:

> "What would Hoffmann do tonight in Berlin? Surely, he would not have enough money to sit by Luther Wanger, the wine house that Hoffmann and the name of the Jew Heine made famous. Surely, he wouldn't have wanted to sit in Wilhelmshallen in the shadow of the brown uniform. The newspapers in "Romanisches" would have not speak to his heart also. —He would, surely, come up here, to the modest "Quick," get a place by the window, look toward the evening in the street and think about everything that of which one should not think—like me."

> מה היה עושה הופמן הערב בברלין? בוודאי שלא היה מספיק כספו כדי לשבת אצל "לוטר וואגנר", בית-יין זה ששמו של הופמן ושם היהודי היינה גרמו לפרסומו. בוודאי שלא רוצה היה לשבת גם בוילהלמסהאלן בצל המדים החומים. גם העיתונים ב"רומאנישס" לא היו כנראה מושכים את לבו. - הוא היה, בוודאי, עולה הנה, אל "קוויק" הצנוע, קונה לו מקום ליד החלון, מביט אל הערב ברחוב וחושב על כל מה שאין לו צורך לחשוב - כמוני."[209]

At the end of this chapter, Ruth imagines how Hoffmann would have chosen Café Quick over all other coffee shops. Unlike Ruth, who is excluded because she is Jewish, Hoffmann would have been welcome in those other spaces. Yet, for Ruth, Hoffmann represents the humanist who would have stood together with the outcasts under such horrifying socio-political circumstances. By means of spatial proximity and a shared openness to perceiving human monstrosities, Ruth claims kinship to Hoffmann and sets up an imagined scenario in which they are in the same café. But in this imagined scenario, Hoffmann does not join Ruth in the coffee shop, but rather takes her place. In occupying her place by the window and usurping her gestures, Hoffmann becomes Ruth's Doppelgänger—an interchangeable figure. In this imagined scenario, they are united into one figure located on the margins, looking through the window from the outside in, observing the monstrosities to which the people in the center are blind.

[209] Goldberg, *Mikhtavim misesi'ah medumah*, 27.

The various intertextual ties with Kästner, Rilke, and Hoffmann provide Ruth as a means of claiming kinship to German culture and to Berlin, the city she once loved. She weaves this web of relations with these figures, their texts, and the German language to claim her belonging in the German speaking sphere. In recognizing Berlin's rejection of her as a Jew, Ruth turns to literature, which her novel transforms into a portable homeland through which we can carry our "entire world." In this world, the boundaries between the real and the imagined fade and textual creations are as memorable as real life events. As Goldberg would state years later, in a personal traveling journal found in the archives: "I am not a historian. I do not have a system. I travel through history as in a series of images—an image that leaves its impression stops me and stays in my memory. As for all other images, I can go on without even seeing them."

Multiple Returns: Standing at the Threshold

The end of the novel depicts Ruth in her room planning to leave. Triggered by the desire to depart, she imagines herself in her letter on the shores of Marseilles about to sail away. Scholars are unanimous in reading the ending of the novel as demonstrating a homecoming to Zion.[210] The novel, however, offers no evidence that Ruth sails away, or, for that matter, that she had ever left her room in the small Eastern European town to begin with. The novel does not end in Zion, but with a letter that Ruth locates on the shore of Marseille, in a state of in-between:

> There is much I have written to you about my path [...] I have written to you about my dreams, about feelings already known to you, about yearning and thoughts that could have, perhaps, appeared if I were sitting in my room, a hundred steps from your apartment and place of work. You may not believe that I have journeyed, and yet by now I am far away from you. And you were far away from me even before—

[210] For readings suggesting Ruth arrives in Palestine see: Hess, "“Pri Bdidutah: ’al Siah Haohavim Haepistolari BeMikhtavim Minesi’ah Medumah"; Gordinsky, *Bisheloshah Nofim: Yetsiratah Hamuḳdemet Shel Le’ah Goldberg*; Ticotsky, "Aharit Davar: ‘Hanishkhahot - She’yi Efshar Lishkhoah.’"

> perhaps always. And now, before me are the sea and big monstrous ships, and I begin to comprehend the meaning of the world 'sailing' (*haflagah*).[211]

Given what we know of Goldberg's biography, it is tempting to read this moment as demonstrating a farewell to the *galut* (diaspora) and a homecoming to Zion. Indeed, there is a shelved chapter in the archives in which Lamed, the narrator, arrives at "the white city," i.e., Tel Aviv because of its Bauhaus architecture.[212] This, however, is a temptation we should resist. Two fundamental issues are at stake here. First, Goldberg chooses to omit the chapter on the white city, and has the reader depart from Ruth while she is still on the shore. Second, the "white city" does not constitute the final point of arrival. As Lamed walks and sees the white building, she compares herself with the city:

> It [the city] is very much like me. Because it knows something of my soul, something that I do not know. Maybe it knows that one day I will also depart from this place, from this white city?[213]

Even if it refers to Tel Aviv, the white city constitutes neither an arrival nor a return but rather joins the series of European cities through which Ruth has travelled. Thus, we need not fall into the trap of reading the end as biographical, but should rather detect in it the boundary between literature and biography and the multiple forms of homecoming the novel can simultaneously express.

Rather than limiting the notion of homecoming to Zion, the novel opens additional trajectories of (be-)longing for Hebrew literature that do not negate one another. It portrays a literary tradition that acknowledges the intertwined worlds of the diasporic and the national, the ancient and the modern, the foreign tongues (*la'az*) and the emerging colloquial Hebrew. The

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[211] Goldberg, *Mikhtavim misesi'ah medumah*, 116.

[212] Maoz Azaryahu, *Tel Aviv: Mythography of a City* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2007).

[213] Goldberg, *Mikhtavim misesi'ah medumah*, 130.

shore, I suggest, constitutes a threshold, a geographical marking of the multi-directional longing and belonging negotiated in the novel, . It constitutes a liminal space between departure and non-arrival, which replicates Ruth's letters to Emanuel in the sense that they depart by being written and by being presented to the reader, and yet never arrive at their addressee. Exemplifying a celebration of polyphony and ambivalence, the novel embodies neither a farewell nor an arrival, but rather a threshold that opens a space for literature to carry "the entire world."[214]

Mikhtavim misesi'ah medumah is set on the threshold between Europe and Palestine and concerns itself with the very essence and trajectory of Hebrew literature as a possible form of expression, pointing to multiple homelands. It deals not only with the idea of Hebrew as an emerging national literature, but also with what writing can do to make a political claim on the world through various forms of intertextuality. Goldberg's use of intertextuality moves beyond Biblical allusion as means of claiming a belonging to Palestine. Instead, it allows for a "mosaic of citation" made up of Jewish and non-Jewish literary systems alike to reveal meaningful points of contact, such as bringing together Erich Kästner's poetry and the book of Jonah. At the same time, this application of intertextuality unravels the illusion of cultural hybridity and untranslatability. Pushing against the ideology of authorship and translation within cultural Zionism, the novel underscores the ways both languages and cultures as an expression of home can never be fully translated. It results in a sense of belonging that remains at the threshold, in a literary space that can carry multiple homes, languages, and histories.

The novel, then, complicates the notion of homeland and shows the concurrent existence of multiple homelands: the cultural homeland (Germany), the mythico-ideological homeland (Zion), the geographical homeland (Lithuania). These all come together within a novel that

[214] Goldberg, ibid, 9.

challenges the elasticity of language and of representability, and asks whether literature can function as a solid (traveling) place to call home. The novel further offers an alternative model of Hebrew literature as a system that oscillates between the national and the diasporic and resists the Zionist notion of *shlilat hagalut* (the negation of exile). This is of special importance, as it speaks to the debates concerning the ideological and stylistic traits of Hebrew literature that were taking place in the 1930s. To celebrate this hybridity, *Letters from an Imagined Journey* exhibits two contradictory trajectories of belonging: the physical journey toward the shores of Marseille (and presumably from there to Palestine) and the intertextual journey toward Europe and its literary genealogy. We must keep in mind, however, that "Europe" for Goldberg is not so much a geographic repository of foreign languages as a celebration of textual hybridity, multiculturalism, and multilingualism. I would further suggest that by staging this hybridity, what is at stake for Goldberg is not fitting her novel into a Zionist ideology, but rather asking what literature and writing can do, what forms of agency they provide, and how the novel operates in the diasporic Hebrew context.

For Goldberg, the novel offers the possibility of negotiating her sense of belonging to—and experience of rejection from—Germany in the 1930s. Europe's rejection of her as a Jew pushes her to redefine her notion of homeland and choose, above all, literature as her portable homeland and the epistolary novel as the form that can carry "the entire world."

> The cities of which Ruth writes are merely soap bubbles that come into being in the mind, while the temperature of the soul rises to 39,9 C. In every soul there is a collection of old wood engravings that are safe-kept since childhood—images of dream-cities, dear and far. It makes no difference whether one has or has not seen all those cities after collecting these wood engravings within one's soul—it does not change the image: it [the image] is not tied to reality. As a matter of fact, for us, the entire world is a primitive, a not so large wood engraving—a drawing of an imaginary city—because otherwise, how could we carry within us the "entire world" with all its disparate details?

> הערים שרות כותבת עליהן הנן רק בועות-סבון הנולדות בדמיון בשעה שהטמפרטורה של הנפש עולה עד 39,9 C. בכל נשמה יש אוסף פיתוחי עץ עתיקים, השמורים בה מימי ילדות – תמונות ערי חלום, רחוקות ויקרות. ואחת היא, אם ראה ואם לא ראה האדם את כל הערים האלו אחרי שאסף את פיתוחי העץ בנרתיק נשמתו – אין התמונה משתנה על ידי כך: אין היא קשורה במציאות ובעצם, הרי בשבילנו כל העולם הנו פיתוח עץ פרימיטיבי ולא גדול – ציור עיר דמיונית – כי אלמלא כן, איך יכולנו לשאת בתוכנו את ״כל העולם״ על פרטיו השונים והרבים?[215]

This passage suggests a worldview according to which the ‘entire world’ is carried via texts and literature across languages and culture. It pushes against the Zionist notion of the land as home, and the Talmudic approach that sees the sacred book as the portable homeland. Instead, Literature, always but a piece of a broader textual and cultural genealogy, is the vehicle that holds together memories, either real or imagined, and can carry the feeling of home across time and political borders.

The geographical and linguistic threshold suggests that Goldberg imagines Hebrew literature not as exclusively tied to Zion but as an in-between space in which the home is functions as a series of binaries. It consists concurrently of Hebrew and German, Palestine and Europe, and ultimately, the national and the diasporic. In *Mikhtavim misesi’ah medumah*, Goldberg affirms the novel as a polyphonic site engaged with a threshold that marks linguistic and geographical hybridity and exchange, of being at home and homeless at the same time.

[215] *Mikhtavim misesi’ah medumah*, 8-9.

Chapter 3

The Wandering Library: S.Y. Agnon Between Hebrew and *Weltliteratur*

Introduction

Theorizing intertextuality as an expression of liminality, the previous chapter focused on Leah Goldberg's epistolary novel, highlighting how different types of intertextuality operate in negotiating cultural, linguistic, and geospatial Jewish belonging in Berlin in the 1930s. This chapter is also rooted in Berlin but turns to the trope of the library to examine the relationship between Jewish literature and *Weltliteratur* in the fiction of S.Y. Agnon (1888-1970), the recipient of the 1966 Nobel Prize for Literature Award. The Nobel Prize situates Agnon between these two modes of belongings, as he enters the canon of world literature through the merit of his Jewish writing in the Hebrew language. As this chapter will show, this dual sense of aspirational belongings is crucial to understanding Agnon's work. Agnon aspires to belong to the spheres of *Weltliteratur* but at the same time perceives himself to be a Jewish author in the Hebrew language. How should we understand the relationship between Agnon's Hebrew writing and the library of *Weltliteratur*? Focusing on Agnon's novella, *Ad henah* (*To this Day*, 1952), which is set in Germany, this chapter examines the various facets of the library—as a physical place housing book collections, a spiritual-cultural tradition, and a "living library" producing new books—in the Jewish imagination of at-homeness.

The novella *Ad henah* (*To this Day*), initially titled *In the Days of War* (*Beyemot hamilchamah*), explores the place of the library in the Jewish imagination of home. The library in the novella is not, as might be tempting to think, a pre-determined figure. Instead, it should be understood as a cultural trope—a subject of interrogation—oscillating between German literary

traditions and the Jewish *Aron hasfarim.* In the Jewish tradition, *Aron hasfarim* is twofold: it is the physical ark housing the Torah in the temple and a metonym for the Jewish canon of sacred texts. Reimagining Berlin of the early Weimar Period in 1952, Agnon centers the novella around the library belonging to a certain Dr. Levy, who has died, leaving his wife to determine the fate of his book collection. Although the fate of the library is at the heart of the narrative, it appears to the reader of the novella a purloined letter that is visible for everyone to see but whose contents are unknown. Occupying two rooms, the details concerning the library – the kinds of books it holds and in what languages – remain obscure.

Reimagining Berlin of the early Weimar Period in 1952, Agnon reconfigures the library, turning it into a liminal space emerging through the essence of *tshukah* (denoting both longing and desire) as a mechanism of deferral that links, sustains, and nurtures the intermediary space between Palestine and the diaspora. In this multifaceted context, Agnon's project revolves around the creation of a literary space that is not a geographical place - for example, a representation of the *Shtetl* - but rather a movement toward a library standing at a transcultural threshold between Germany, Eastern Europe, and Palestine. By attending to the notion of the library, I suggest that for Agnon, the imagination of Zion is dependent upon the diaspora conceived as a spiritual space for Jewish culture, even after the State of Israel is established. Agnon thus offers a reconfiguration of the Zionist homecoming, suggesting that the Jewish home consists of a series of geospatial inbetweenness encompassing Zion and the diaspora, as well as a traveling literary caught, like Dr. Levy's library, and like Agnon himself, between departure and non-arrival.

Published in 1952, the *Ad henah* tells of a young Eastern Euroepan author, Shmuel Yosef, who arrives to German from Palestine and wanders around pensions Berlin, Leipzig, and Grimma during World War I. Drawing on Agnon's life experience as a wandering migrant in Germany, the novella's style corresponds with what Barbara Foley calls documentary fiction.[216] In the context of this dissertation, I consider the genre of documentary fiction as another expression of liminality, creating another lever of narration surrounding the literary negotiation of spatial and linguistic belongings. The tension between the fictional and the biographic constitutes a threshold, as a Bakhtinian concept, linking between the text and its social-historical worlds by corresponding with the author's biography. Written in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the novella's depictions of war evoke the imagery of the relatively recent World War II. The fragmented structure of the novella should be read in respect to the fragmented post-Shoah state, precluding the possibility of a stable Jewish home in Germany. In this sense, Shmuel Yosef journey is that of a non-Bildung, as he demonstrates a circular movement rather than undertaking a path of moral growth. The novella opens with a journey toward a library, when Shmuel Yosef receives a letter from a Dr. Levy's widow, asking for his help in determining the fate of her deceased husband's "two rooms filled with books". Upon her request, Shmuel Yosef travels to Grimma (through Leipzig) to assist the widow only to discover that she has fallen ill. He finds the house – and Dr. Levy's library – locked, and learns that the widow is at the hospital on her deathbed, unable to recognize her surroundings. In between his visits to the hospital, he stays in

[216] This definition draws on Glenda Abramson's classification of *Ad henah* as documentary fiction in her study of Hebrew literature of World War I. For Abramson, this genre supports Agnon's endeavor to critique the notion of war, loading the story with a personal account of a historical event. Glenda Abramson, "Ad Hena: S.Y. Agnon in Berlin," in *Hebrew Writing of the First World War* (London; Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), 148 ; Barbara Foley, *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 195. In her dissertation, Anna Band shows the biographical connections between the novella and Agnon's life events, showing that the pensions in the novella are, in fact, the pensions at which Agnon stayed as a young man (dissertation chapter in the making).

Leipzig, where he meets many people he knows, many of whom are involved in the book industry, and speaks of his unfinished manuscript *Sefer hamalboshim* (*The Book of Clothing*). After failing to speak with dying widow and access Dr. Ley's library, he returns to Berlin. On his way back to Berlin he encounters a wounded soldier, a kind of Golem, who, as the reader later discovers, is the son of the owner of the pension where Shmuel Yosef had been staying. Now that the son has returned, the protagonist no longer has a bed, and another circular journey begins. This time, this circularity takes the form of wandering from one pension to another in Berlin. As a kind of anti-Bildungsroman, the novel concludes with a miraculous return to Jerusalem, afforded to Shmuel Yosef not because of his own merits "but because of Dr. Levi's books that needed a home." It ends when Shmuel Yosef walks around outside an empty house in Jerusalem which he imagines will be filled with Mr. Levy's library. His own Opus Magnum, *Sefer hamalboshim*, remains incomplete.

Reimagining a Germany that no longer exists, Agnon revisits his life experiences in Berlin and Leipzig during World War I. Agnon was born in Buczacz, Polish Galicia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, now in Ukraine. Raised in a traditional Yiddish speaking Jewish family, the young Shmuel Yosef received Orthodox schooling in Hebrew. He learned German from his mother, a proficiency that would later grant him access to the canon of world literature in translation. At the age of twenty, Agnon went to Palestine and settled in Jaffa. While there he published his first story and quickly became a rising luminary in the Hebrew literary sphere. In 1912 Agnon traveled to Germany with Arthur Rupin, where he would later meet and marry Esther Marx. During his twelve years in Germany, he lived in Berlin, Leipzig, and Bad Homburg. As we will see later in more detail, Agnon was embraced by figures from the German-Jewish intelligentsia including Gershom Scholem, Martin Buber, and Franz Rosenzweig. He was

also part of the flourishing Hebrew literary center that emerges in Berlin and Bad Homburg in the Weimar days, notable by the arrival of H.N. Bialik.[217] As he recounts in his Nobel Prize speech, which I will return to later in the chapter, in 1924 Agnon's house in Bad Homburg burnt to the ground and he lost his entire library, including 4000 Hebrew books, an unfinished novel, and an anthology of Hasidic tales co-edited with Martin Buber. He interpreted this event as his punishment for having left Palestine. Shortly thereafter, he resettled in Palestine with his wife and two children, this time in Jerusalem, where he lived until his passing in 1970.[218]

Agnon is regarded as having transformed Hebrew literature and having created a uniquely "Agnonian language," an idiolect within the modern Hebrew language and literature. This distinctly recognizable Agnonian style is a combination of a Hasidic melody, Biblical grammar,[219] and poetic techniques such as onomatopoeia, chiasm, repetition, and rhythm. Broadly speaking, his rich oeuvre is typically discussed according to five main categories: tales set in Eastern European (typically taking place in Shibush/ Buczacz), stories of Eretz Israel, stories of Vienna, the surrealist-Hasidic collection of *Sefer Ha-ma'asim* (*The Book of Tales*), the collection titled Poland Stories, and his German tales.[220] Taken together, these different aspects of his work create not only a "Jewish town," but also a living corpus, consisting of reappearing

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[217] On the Hebrew literary centers in Berlin see: Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe*. Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*.

[218] For further reading of Agnon's life see: Dan Laor, *Haye 'Agnon: Biyografyah* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1998). Dan Laor's biography of Agnon remains the most comprehensive document portraying Agnon's life and work, tracing the publication history of his oeuvre and the biographical connections embedded in his work.

[219] For example, the Vav conjunctive (ו' החיבור) used in the Bible is not used in modern Hebrew vernacular and literary text. It is representative of the Agnonian style.

[220] Notably, Dov Sadan, Baruch Kurzweill, and Gershon Shaked are central figures in Agnonian scholarship. See : Dov Sadan, *'Al Shai Agnon* (Tel Aviv: Hakinbutz hameuhad, 1978); Baruch Kurzweil, *Masot 'al Sipurei S.Y. Agnon* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1965) ; Gershon Shaked, *Omanut Hasipur Shel Agnon* (Tel Aviv: Sifrayat Poalim, 1973). See also: Arnold J. Band, *Nostalgia and Nightmare: A Study in the Fiction of S.Y. Agnon* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1968).

For further exploration on Agnon's Shibush stories and his hometown, Buczacz see: Alan Mintz, *Ancestral Tales: Reading the Buczacz Stories of S. Y. Agnon* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017).

characters and an unmistakable style of narration, The scholarly literature on Agnon is extensive and multifaceted, and it would be impossible to account for all that has been written on the "Agnonian library" and its impact on shaping Hebrew literature and the Hebrew revival project. Notably, studies have focused on issues of Jewish intertextuality, Kabbalah, the figure of the protagonist-author, the image of the Shtetl, and modernization.[221] It is Agnon's canonical status as a pillar of the Zionist Hebrew revival project that makes it difficult for scholars to recognize some of his unique ideas on world literature and homecoming, as they appear in his work.

A Visible Library, Invisible Books

Ad henah first appeared in the newspaper on the eve of Rosh Hashanah in 1952. Shortly thereafter, Baruch Kurzweill wrote a letter to Agnon, positing that although he had read and reread the text, "the entire narrative remains fragmentary, notes, as if it were an epic extension of the *Book of Tales* and something was missing!"[222] Three months later, however, Kurtzweil retracted his initial statement and published two long articles, arguing that the fragmentary aesthetic of *Ad henah* is, in fact, not a weakness but key to understanding the fragile state of its protagonist in a time of war.[223]

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[221] Additional studies that have shaped the discourse surrounding Agnon's work include: for a consideration of the figure of the author see: Michal Arbel, *Katuv 'al 'oro shel ha-kelev: 'al tefisat ha-yetsirah etsel S.Y. 'Agnon* (Jerusalem; Be'er Sheva: Keter; Merkaz Heksherim: Universitat Ben-Gurion ba-Negev, 2006).

For an elucidation on Agnon's Jewish intertextuality see Yaniv Hagbi, *Lashon, He'eder, Mishak: Yahadut ve-Super Structuralism Bapoetika Shel S.Y Agnon* (Jerusalem: Hotza'an Karmel, 2007). For further reain gon expression exploration of Kabbala in Agnon's fiction see: Tzahi Weiss, *"Mot ha-shekhinah" bi-yetsirat S.Y Agnon : keri'ah Be-arba'ah sipurim uvi-mekorotehemtle* (Ramat Gan: Hotza'at Bar Ilan University, 2009).

[222] A letter from 9/15/1952 in: *Kurzweill, Agnon, Uri Zvi Greenberg, Hilufei Igrot* (Bar Ilan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1986), 34. Quoted in: Haim Be'er, *Hadarim Mele'im Bi-Sfarim*, 2017, 7.

[223] Baruch Kurzweil, *Masot 'al Sipurei S.Y. Agnon* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1965), 161-162. The essays were first published in two parts in "Tarbut ve-sifrut," *Ha'aretz*, December 12,1952 ; January 9, 1953.

Whether a strength or a weakness, the novella's fragmentary structure and incoherent plotline pose a scholarly challenge, specifically with respect to how to interpret the multiple journeys the novella sets forth. The primary journey, which serves as the engine of the plot, is Shmuel Yosef's departure from Berlin to Grimma through Leipzig. "Who knows how long I would have remained in this Berlin in this room in this darkness in this dust in this coldness if it were not for Dr. Levy's widow who summoned me to her city to consult with her regarding the books her late husband left her, with which she does not know what to do."[224] Departing from Berlin, Shmuel Yosef leaves the pension in which he has been staying and embarks on a secondary journey that revolves around finding a room in first Leipzig and then in Berlin upon his return. Baruch Kurzweil was the first to claim that what is at stake in the novella is the protagonist's search for a room, which for him symbolizes the figure of "the wandering Jew" in search of a home.[225] Matti Meged instead reads the protagonist's wandering as representing the condition of the modern-universal man, who is fundamentally "dislocated" from home.[226] Nitza Ben-Dov suggests yet another interpretation, that the search for a room conceals an alternative plotline in the story, which is the protagonist's pursuit of the forbidden Brigita Simerman, a German actress. In her account, the erotic longing described in the text as a represents the protagonist's more profound desire for Europe, its language, and its culture.[227] While Shmuel Yosef has a shared past with Brigita, there is no indication that he had any romantic feelings for her. As he recalls, he knows her "from her stage days. At that time, I was already at work on the

[224] Agnon, *Ad henah*, 7. All translations of the novella are mine unless otherwise noted.

[225] Kurzweill, *Masot 'al Sipurei S.Y. Agnon,* 161-162.

[226] Matti Meged, "Hasofer Be-'enei Atzmo," *Masa*, December 11, 1952.

[227] Nitza Ben-Dov, "Dreams and Human Destiny in Ad Hena," *Prooftext* 7, no. 1 (1987): 53–63. Nitza Ben-Dov, *Ahavot Lo Meusharot: Omanut ve-Mavet Biyetzirat Agnon*, Sifriyat Ofaḳim (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997), 43.

history of clothing of all generations and all humankind, and hearing of my expertise, she made me her advisor, and would consult with me regarding her costumes."[228] Clothes, as well as the performative aspect of the link they provide between Brigita and Shmuel Yosef, epitomize the threshold between the what is visible and what is concealed. He further mentions the foolish seamstresses, "who suspected I was a secret prince providing her with all of her clothes."[229] Enjoying the false pretense, Shmuel Yosef does not correct the seamstresses' mistaken impression. Ironically, Brigita, as a performing artist, "would not have exaggerated her theatrical presence and would show herself as she was," whereas Shmuel Yosef appears to prefer the cover of both people and books. He is fascinated by the "lack of theatricality" in Brigita's appearance and is preoccupied by her clothes, and the ways in which her stylistic choices had shaped the fashion scene in Leipzig. Ironically, Brigita does not remember what she wore and how other people copied her. Tracing Brigita's personal history of clothing, Shmuel Yosef draws connections between clothes and their social impact.

Haim Be'er suggests the primary journey on which the protagonist embarks pursues neither the room nor the beloved but rather Dr. Levy's library. Marking the library as the protagonist's object of desire, Be'er focuses on the manifestation of what he calls the "literary republic" industry in the novella, and specifically the sub-group of the "Jewish-Hebrew literary republic." This "literary republic" unfolds in relation to various figures engaged in the development of both libraries and the texts they would contain: Lichtenstein the book collector, the bibliographer Dr. Yizhak Mittel, the Hebrew font designer Mr. König, the Biblical scholar Professor Nadelschticher, a group of Jewish opportunists trying to get their hands on Dr. Levy's

[228] Agnon, *Ad henah*, 15

[229] Agnon, ibid, 15.

library, and finally, B. H., the author of the book *The Biology of Events*, who serves as the protagonist's alter ego.[230]

Indeed, the notion of the library is central to our understanding of the story. These previous readings, however, cast different objects – the room, woman, German culture, or the library – into the allegorical role of the object of desire; in so doing, they all nonetheless seek an object, a signified. Rather than focusing on such an object, I suggest that what is at issue for Agnon is the very essence of *tshukah* (denoting both longing and desire) as a mechanism of deferral that links, sustains, and nurtures the intermediary space between Palestine and the diaspora. *Tshukah* is in this sense akin to what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the "machine of desire," namely a productive self-sustaining force, an engine of the plot in the novel.[231] The library is integral to this mechanism in that it stands at the threshold not as an object of desire but as a literary trope through which the Hebrew sense of belonging to the German-speaking sphere is negotiated. Instead of attempting to decipher what the novel is "about," I turn to the trope of the library as a liminal space of belonging, attending to the materials of which this home is made (or lost): the physical library in a residence, the intertextual library carried within, and the incomplete manuscript of *Sefer hamalboshim* (*The Book of Clothing*)—the protagonist's magnum opus, which attempts to explain human history in relation to clothing.

Mirroring *Sefer hamalboshim*, the novella itself consistently explores the relation between forms and their meanings: clothes and the self, bodily gestures and linguistic expression, as well as history and storytelling. Taking a cue from Agnon, I approach the library as *Aron hasfarim*, which is both the holy ark or cabinet (*teyvah*) of the Torah in the synagogue

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[230] Haim Be'er, *Hadarim Mele'im Bi-Sfarim*, 11-12..

[231] Gilles Deleuze and Pierre Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Polan Dana, (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 3-4.

and a synonym for the library in the sense of a cultural canon. The word *teyvah* is of special importance to the issues at hand, as it not only refers to the holy ark where the scrolls are kept but also means "chest" and "word." As an overdetermined signifier, the word *teyvah* sustains the feature of having space to house matter and meaning alike. It further corresponds with Noah's Ark, as a provisional home that provides shelter and safe haven at a time of extreme crisis. It is not by chance, perhaps, that within the word תיבה (*teyvah*) we also find the same letters of the word בית (*bayit*), which means home, house, and stanza[232]. The library, then, is tied to the home as a sacred space, a linguistic sphere, and a physical place that can take multiple forms. While the protagonist returns to Palestine at the end of the novel, Dr. Levy's library has yet to arrive, and we find the protagonist standing in between two empty rooms waiting to be filled with books. My reading of this concluding scene locates the library in the interstice between departure and non-arrival. Like Goldberg's final scene on the shores of Marseilles, the empty rooms symbolize the desire and anticipation of arrival, as well as the uncertainty that the library will ever arrive. How, then, should we understand the traveling library in the novella? To address this question, we must take into account the conversation surrounding the library as universe, to borrow an image from Jorge Luis Borges, and the ways it encompasses geographical, linguistic, and cultural thresholds. But before moving into the exploration of the library in the novella, we need to consider Agnon's depiction of the libraries that have shaped his writing and worldview. He addresses these issues publicly in his Nobel Prize speech, attending to the various libraries he had earned and lost. This speech underscroes the liminality of the library and demonstrates Agnon's understanding of it in a threefold manner: as a physical space that was burnt, as a

[232] For a brief consideration on the dual meaning of Bayit see: Vered Shemtov, "Dwelling in the Stanzas of the Text: The Concept of Bayit in Hebrew Poetry," *Shm'a: A Journal of Jewish Responsibility*, (2012): 4–5.

corpus of sources of influence that is carried within, and as as the books that he himself has written, which metaphorically "build" the library of the emerging modern Hebrew canon.[233]

Agnon and the Library of *Weltliteratur*

In 1966, Agnon received the Nobel Prize in literature, which he shared with the German-Jewish poet Nelly Sachs.[234] The Nobel Committee's decision to split the prize between these two writers underscores the relation of interdependence between Hebrew and German writings in portraying the modern Jewish experience. In his Nobel Prize speech, Agnon recounts his sources of influence. Conceding that "[N]ot every man remembers the name of the cow which supplied him with each drop of milk he has drunk," he nonetheless identifies two libraries from which he was nurtured. The first is that of the ancient Jewish texts from the Bible through Maimonides; the second, the European canon in German translation. This latter library, he exclaims, is rooted within him:

> When I first began to combine letters other than Hebrew, I read every book in German that came my way, and from these, I certainly received according to the root of my soul (*mishoresh nishmati*).[235]

German is foundational for Agnon not only because he learned it from his mother but also because it enabled him to access a cannon of world of literature (*Weltliteratur*) and build his personal library collection during the twelve years he lived in Germany. In this context, the

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[233] On a comprehensive discussion regarding the Hebrew revival project as creating a "new" Hebrew literature see: Dan. Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp.3-19.

[234] Dan Laor, *Ḥaye Agnon: Biyografyah* (Jerusalem: Shoḳen, 1998), 551-609.

[235] All translations of the Nobel Prize speech are quoted from the official Nobel Prize archive. See: https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1966/agnon/speech/

library of one's home represents a sense of at-homeness and, importantly, rootedness. The term "*mishoresh nishmati*" (literally, "from the root of my soul") further demonstrates the ambiguity of Agnon's relation toward roots and rootlessness. In Hebrew, the word "roots" (*shorashim*) not only serves as a metaphor of belonging that draws on the organic conception of roots in nature, but also refers to the linguistic system of roots in Semitic language. While I discuss these connections more closely later in the chapter, suffice it to say that the place of the library—and its loss—locates Agnon in a liminal space, one that oscillates between established roots and a state of rootlessness. Agnon's speech demonstrates this ambiguity by addressing not only the libraries he had gained but also those that were lost in a series of fires: his father's library that was incinerated during World War I; the Nazis' ignominious immolation of books and people; and the burning of his own home along with his personal library in Bad Homburg in 1924.

The idea of the library as a symbol for what is rooted in one's soul points to the complexity of the spatial, cultural, and linguistic belonging we have been considering. Drawing on the motif of the burning library, Agnon constructs an amalgamation of losses at once cultural and personal, of both the Jewish archive and his erstwhile home and library in Bad Homburg. According to his account, his library housed four thousand Hebrew books; an incomplete project of Hasidic tales on which he was working with Martin Buber; and a manuscript of an unfinished novel titled *Eternal Life*.

Agnon was known for his tendency to mythologize the details of his life in symbolic, often ironic, ways.[236] Whether historically accurate or not, the title of Agnon's lost novel *Eternal*

[236] For example, Agnon would say he was born on August 8, 1888, on the ninth of av (Tisha b'av), which is the annual Jewish fast day in commemoration of the destruction of the First and Second Temple. Even though August 8, 1888 was not the same day as Tisha b'av, Agnon adhered to his story, especially since according to tradition, the messiah will be born on Tisha b'av. According to official documents, however, Agnon was born in August 8, 1887, which was the eighteenth of av. Recovered by Dan Laor, these official documents include Agnon's

Life (*bi-tzror ha-chaim*) foregrounds the notion that a book can be mourned, as if it were a living object. The title alludes to the phrase used to bless the deceased, “Tehi nishmato tzrurah bitzror ha-chayim” (may his soul be bound up in the bond of everlasting life), and conjures an image of souls linked in the eternal bond of life. As a physical object, the novel that carries this title undergoes personification to join other ensouled Jewish texts that were lost to the flames. This blessing draws on a verse from Samuel I, when Abigail says to King David “And if anyone sets out to pursue you and seek your life, the life of my lord will bound up in the bundle of life in the care of the Lord; but He will fling away the lives of your enemies as from the hollow of a sling.”[237] The book’s title, then, composes literary genealogical kinships across time in a twofold manner: first, the Bible as a timeless text preserving a conception of the Jewish home; and second, the time-bound and physical library of books decimated by fire during *Kristallnacht*, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Binding together such divergent conceptions of books put to fire, Agnon weaves his personal loss into a collective Jewish library, inscribing his own writings in this tradition. This intertextual reference also plays on kinship with the house of David, from which, according to tradition, the messiah will come. Through this title, Agnon positions himself as belonging to the eternal library of lost Jewish books, and at the same time as a Jewish writer whose Hebrew writings inscribe his place in the living library of World Literature, either real or imagined. What is this library for Agnon? How does it intertwine with the notion of Jewish

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Moralitätszeugnis (moral certificate) dated 1908 and his Polish passport from 1923. Laor, *Haye Agnon: biyografyah,* 19.

[237] 1 Samuel, 25: 29 in: Eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

וַיָּקָם אָדָם לִרְדָפְךָ, וּלְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת-נַפְשֶׁךָ; וְהָיְתָה נֶפֶשׁ אֲדֹנִי צְרוּרָה בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים, אֵת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, וְאֵת נֶפֶשׁ אֹיְבֶיךָ יְקַלְּעֶנָּה, בְּתוֹךְ כַּף הַקָּלַע

The chapter begins with death and ends with marriage. It starts with the death of Samuel and concludes with the marriage of Abigail to David, as well as Michal’s liberation from David and her marriage to Palti, son of Laish.

multilingualism and the Hebraic presence in the German-speaking world? What makes Agnon's Hebrew and depictions of Jewish life a gateway to be recognized as an author of *Weltliteratur*, demonstrated by the Nobel Prize?

To address these questions, I explore the kinds of libraries imagined in the novella, paying particular attention to the ways the library transforms into a liminal space oscillating between at-homeness and rootlessness. This liminality is demonstrated in a threefold manner: the physical library that departs from Germany and never arrives in Palestine, the Jewish library that is carried within, and the single book *Sefer hamalboshim*, which pertains to the history of clothing and whose writing is forever deferred.

The Wandering Library: Agnon Between Hebrew and German

Agnon's dominant style, paired with the discussions surrounding his biography, have often challenged scholars' attempts to interpret and situate his work. Indeed, from a historiographical point of view, it is difficult to place Agnon. This is firstly due to the fact that he does not belong to a distinct literary generation in Hebrew literary historiography. Secondly, he created a distinctive style within modern Hebrew, emphasizing the Biblical and Midrashic roots of his modernized Hebrew while also attending to and deromanticizing popular themes such as love, marriage, migration, assimilation, and secularization in modern Jewish life. Within historiographical accounts, Agnon's "German period" and the stories that address Jewish life in Germany remain understudied. Michal Arbel's book, for example, discusses the figure of the protagonist-writer but fails to include the figure of Shmuel Yosef from *Ad henah* and the author-

protagonist from the novel *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, both set in Leipzig and Berlin.[238] Scholars present varying reasons for their decisions to omit these works from their analyses. In relation to the German context, critics have also expressed dissatisfaction with Agnon's disengagement from the Holocaust. However, while Agnon does not address the Holocaust directly, his depictions of World War I, published only seven years after World War II, makes it inevitably present for the reader.[239] It is not surprising, then, that critics of the 1950s were hesitant to embrace a story that considers Germany as a Jewish home and mourns its loss. In the 1990s, there was a limited interest in these works, which focused on Agnon's biography and the portrayal of German Jewry.[240] In recent years—perhaps sparked by the rise of Hebrew-German studies as a sub-field—scholars' interest in Agnon's life in Germany has been freshly kindled, and some studies have examined how literary depictions of his German period correspond with his early and later work.[241]

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[238] Arbel, *Katuv 'al 'oro Shel Ha-Kelev: 'al Tefisat Ha-Yetsirah Etsel Shai 'Agnon*.

[239] Dan Laor posited the question of whether Agnon write about the Holocaust, offering it as an inconclusive notion. Dan Laor, *S.Y. Agnon: Hebetim Hadashim* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Poalim, 1995), 60-97. Since this publication, scholars have addressed the presence of the Holocaust in Agnon's work. See: Hillel Weiss, "Ad Henah Ke-Mavo La-Sho'a," *Bikoret Uparshanut* 35–36 (2002): 111–46; Yaniv Hagbi, "Aspects of 'Primary Holocaust' in the Works of S.Y. Agnon," in *Agnon and Germany : The Presence of the German World in the Writings of S.Y. Agnon*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Becker and Hillel Weiss (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2010), 451–72. Maya Barzilai, *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

[240] Dan Laor, "Agnon in Germany, 1912-1924: A Chapter of a Biography," *AJS Review* 18, no. 1 (1993): 75–93; D. Miron, "German Jews in Agnon's Work," *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 23, no. 1 (January 1978): 265–80; Dan Miron, "Ashkenaz: Ha-Chavayah Ha-Yuhudit Germanit Be-Kitvei Agnon," *Tzafon* 3 (1994): 73–79.

[241] In 2013, the journal *Prooftexts* published an issue devoted to the German-Hebrew encounters. See: Eshel and Rokem, "German and Hebrew: Histories of a Conversation." See also: Amir Eshel and Na'ama Rokem, "Berlin and Jerusalem: Toward German-Hebrew Studies," in *The German-Jewish Experience Revisited*, ed. Steven E. Aschheim and Vivian Liska (Berlin; Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2015), 265–71; Eshel and Seelig, *The Hebrew-German Dialogue: Studies of Encounter and Exchange*.

Notably, in 2010, an essay collection about Agnon and Germany was published, which was the result of a German-Israeli research group. See: Hans-Jürgen Becker and Hillel Weiss, eds., *Agnon and Germany: The Presence of the German World in the Writings of S.Y. Agnon* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2010). See also: Maya Barzilai, "S.Y Agnon's German Consecration and the 'Miracle' of Hebrew Letters," *Prooftext* 33, no. 1 (2013): 48–75.

Arriving in Germany in 1912, Agnon attracted immediate curiosity among the German-Jewish intelligentsia. At that time, Berlin was taking shape as a flourishing intellectual space for Hebrew writers, marking a prologue to the even stronger community that would emerge in the Weimar period.[242] This Hebrew circle would reach its peak in the early 1920s with the arrival of H. N. Bialik, and became *the* center of Hebrew literature between 1920-1924, linking Berlin and Bad Homburg. Bialik's circle upheld some cultural connections with German Jewish intellectuals but, as Michael Brenner notes, "most Hebraists of Weimar Germany had little contact with or interest in their German surroundings," and "had no idea what was going on in the flourishing intellectual atmosphere of the Weimar days."[243]. Arriving prior to World War I, Agnon presents a different case. While he was acquainted with a handful of the Hebrew writers living in Berlin, he was most welcome among the German-Jewish intelligentsia.[244] As a representative of an "authentic" form of Judaism, Agnon quickly became a celebrity in this new milieu. "For us," writes Gershom Scholem in his memoir, "every Eastern Jew was a carrier of all

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[242] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 198. For example, the first Conference for Hebrew language and Literature took place in Berlin in 1909. Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), especially pp. 100-120.

[243] Brenner, Ibid, 202. On the Hebrew circle in Berlin (and its extension in Bad Homburg) see pp. 197-211.

For further reading on the Hebrew presence in Berlin during the Weimar period see: Shachar. Pinsker, "Berlin: Between the Scheunviertel and the Romanisches Café," in: *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2011), 105-143; Rachel Seelig, *Strangers in Berlin: Modern Jewish Literature Between East and the West, 1919-1933* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

In addition to the literary circle, there was also a flourishing theatrical life in Hebrew. See: Shelly Zer-Zion, *Habima be-berlin: misudo shel theatron zioni* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2015).

[244] Andrea Weilbacher, "Agnon and the Jewish Renaissance ," in *Agnon and Germany: The Presence of the German World in the Writings of S.Y. Agnon*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Becker and Hilel Ṿais (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2010), 17–40. As Maya Barzilai has traced, "during World War I, Agnon mainly revised stories he had written in Palestine in Hebrew. For instance, the story "Tishrei" became "Giv'at haÿol" ("The Hill of Sand") and "Hanidaÿ" ("The Banished One") was completed and later published in 1919. In July 1917, "Agadat hasofer" (The Legend of the Torah Scribe) was translated by Max Strauss and published in Buber's Der Jude as "Die Erzählung vom Torahschreiber." Barzilai, "S.Y Agnon's German Consecration and the 'Miracle' of Hebrew Letters," 71 (footnote 10). This story "The Legend of the Torah Scribe" shares the themes of writing and clothes also present in *Ad henah*, especially in relation to protagonist's magnum opus *Sefer hamalboshim*. However, Agadat hasofer engages with the notions of purity and flesh, and I will not be able to discuss these aspects in this chapter.

the mysteries of Jewish existence, but the young Agnon appeared to us as one of its most perfect incarnations."[245] This sentiment of authenticity was linked to Agnon's Yiddish-inflected German. Whereas (or perhaps because) from Mendelssohn's time onward Jewish speech in German writing was stereotypically considered a linguistic impurity, *mauscheln*, it also carried particular appeal for Scholem and his milieu. As Scholem recalls, "Obviously we spoke German with him at that time even though Agnon's German was somewhat peculiar, spoken as it was with a Galician accent and the intonation of Hasidic anecdotes."[246] This linguistic "impurity" is also evident in Agnon's correspondence with his publisher and life-long patron, Salman Schocken. As Maya Barzilai has shown, when writing to Schocken in German Agnon used Yiddish words and grammar, replacing the indefinite *ein* with the Yiddish *a*. "Agnon was self-conscious of his 'odd' and non-idiomatic use of the language, apologizing to Schocken for writing to him in 'German' (quotation marks in the original)."[247]

But it is exactly this particular intonation, or Hasidic melody (*nigun* in Hebrew) that places Agnon at a unique spatio-lingustic threshold, encompassing not only the archetypical *Ostjude* but also the Hebraic figure coming from Palestine. Moving among these worlds, Agnon's figure and distinct melodic literary style set him within a liminal space, one evinced in his Hebrew and in the German translations of his works. Agnon's stories were translated by Gershom Scholem, Max Strauss, and others, and were included in two important anthologies published by Der Jüdische Verlag in 1916. The story "Der Licht der Torah" ("The Light of the Torah") appeared in the volume, which Agnon also coedited, *Das Buch von den polnischen*

[245] Gershom Scholem, *Dvarim bego* (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1976), 463. English translation is quoted in: Dan Laor, "Agnon in Germany, 1912-1924: A Chapter of a Biography," *AJS Review* 18, no. 1 (1993): 75–93 [78].

[246] Gershom Scholem, *Judaica* 2 (Frankfurt am Main: S Suhrkamp, 1995), 124.

[247] Barzilai, "S.Y Agnon's German Consecration and the 'Miracle' of Hebrew Letters." [52]

Juden (*The Book of Polish Jews*; 1916).[248] Two additional stories, "Aufstieg" ("The Soul's Ascension") and "Totentanz," ("Death Dance") appeared in the volume *Treue*.[249] This publication marked Agnon as an ultimate narrative authority on Jewish life, his emerging reputation owing in part as well to Martin Buber's support. Buber expressed his admiration for Agnon in a public letter titled "Über Agnon," addressed to Leo Hermann, the editor of *Treue,* pointing to Agnon's position between Jewish spheres:

> Agnon is consecrated to all matters of Jewish life […] This consecration (*die Weihe*) is neither cerebral nor sentimental; it is passionate and firm […] That is Agnon. His vocation is to become the poet and chronicler of Jewish life; of the life that is dying today and being transformed, but also of the other life, the unknown one that is coming into being. Galician and Palestinian, Hasid and pioneer—in his true heart he carries the essence of both worlds in the balance of his consecration.[250]

Buber's praise for Agnon as a chronicler of Jewish life is tied not only to Agnon's oscillation between Galicia and Palestine but also to his ability to introduce these worlds to German Jewish readers. For Buber, the translations of Agnon aimed to introduce and draw readers toward the Jewish library (*aron hasfarim*), a corpus constituted by the intertwined worlds of sacred texts, Hasidic tales, and modern Jewish life. For Agnon, however, these translations operated in an opposite direction, providing him access to the library of the German-Jewish intelligentsia and—thorough his Hebrew distinctiveness – to the translated library of *Weltliteratur*. In other words, Buber was preoccupied primarily with how German-Jewish readers would approach Agnon's texts in order to learn something about the authentic Jewish world of Eastern Europe. For Agnon,

[248] Agnon coedited another collection titled Had gadiah (1916), which included his story "Der Seder," first published in Hebrew in Jaffa. For a detailed account of Agnon's translations see:

[249] Leo Herrmann, ed. *Treue: Eine jüdische Sammelschrift* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1916)

[250] The full letter in translation in quoted in: Dan Laor, "Agnon and Buber: The Story of a Friendship, or: The Rise and Fall of the 'Corpus Hasidicum,'" in *Martin Buber: A Contemporary Perspective*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr (Syracuse [N.Y.]: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 53-54. Herrmann, ed. *Treue: Eine jüdische Sammelschrift*, 59

the translations were a vehicle for reaching a new readership and gaining a place among the translated works that he himself was reading in German with Schocken's help.

Why does Agnon understand *Weltliteratur* as the corpus of texts translated into German? Although *Weltliteratur* by definition, consists of texts in various languages, coming from all over the world, a closer look at the Jewish context in which Agnon writes might provide some needed clarification. First, unlike the limited translations into Hebrew and Yiddish, the canon of *Weltliteratur* was available to Agnon via its German translation. Moreover, for Agnon, German was not merely the language of cultural mediation but rather a language that was at the heart of the production of *Weltliteratur*. In this sense, Agnon adopts Goethe's understanding of *Weltliteratur* "highlighting Germany's central role with respect to European geography and its undisputed centrality with respect to the mediation of culture through translation."[251]

Indeed, Agnon's encounter with his lifelong publisher and patron, Salman Schocken was instrumental in bringing Agnon's writing to a German readership, ultimately leading Agnon's recognition as an author of *Weltliteratur* via the Nobel Prize.[252] The relationship between the two men was also crucial to the formation of Agnon's own library, both physically and metaphorically. Schocken's interest in the library was threefold: to create a library by publishing

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[251] John Pizer, "Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Origins and Relevance of Weltliteratur," in *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, ed. Theo Dhaen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir (Boston, Massachusetts: Credo Reference, 2015). See also: David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018), espectillay pp. 7-36.

Agnon's understanding of *Weltliteratur* is also related to the idea of German as a central language for Jewish writers. In revent years there has been a growing interest in the idea of Jewish literature as world literature. In 2017, the journal *Prooftexts* published the special issue Jewish Literature/World Literature. See: Lital Levy and Allison Schachter, "A Non-Universal Global: On Jewish Writing and World Literature," *Prooftexts* 36, no. 1–2 (2017): 1–26. In this issue see especially Na'ama Rokem's analysis of the image of Heine in relations the Jewish/world literary ambiguity: Na'ama Rokem, "Questioning Weltliteratur: Heinrich Heine, Leah Goldberg, and the Department of Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem," *Prooftexts* 36, no. 1–2 (2017): 217–39.

[252] At a dinner celebrating Agnon's Nobel Prize, Gershom Scholem specifically notes that it was Agnon's German translations that made this possible. See: Gershom Scholem, "Yamei Agnon Be-Germaniah," *Davar*, December 9, 1966. On the Nobel Prize as representative to *Weltliteratur* see: Venkat Mani, *Recoding World Literature: Libraries, Print Culture, and Germany's Pact with Books* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), pp.137-147.

books, to build libraries that would house books, and to collect books to fill his private library.[253] As Agnon's patron, Schocken provided him with funds and other material necessities that served him for both writing and for purchasing books for his own library, which he lost, as noted above, in a fire in 1924.[254] For Schocken, Agnon's writing participated in the creation of the German-Jewish library of Jewish culture. "I would like to do anything in my power to support Agnon. He is a great epic writer,"[255] said Schocken to Kurt Blumenfeld, a prominent Zionist leader. In addition to providing financial support, Schocken also sent Agnon books on a regular basis. These books, as we learn from their written correspondence, included writings by Balzac, Flaubert, Dostoyevsky, Zola, Goethe, Keller, and others.[256] By sending him books, Schocken built for Agnon a library of world literature in German translation, deepening and expanding his cultural literacy and expertise. In this sense, Agnon undergoes a process of *Bildung* and becomes a citizen of the republic of *Weltliteratur*. This republic forms a crucial backdrop to *Ad Henah*.

In the context of the library as a liminal space between Jewish and world literature, the German translations of Agnon should be understood as a means of asserting Hebrew's status as a language belonging to the European sphere, and as a way to position Agnon's writing in the canon of world literature (*Weltliteratur*). Whereas Bialik and others were interested in

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[253] In 1933 he launched the series er Bücherei des Schcoken Verlag, consisting of selected Jewish writings of acute importance. Producing a German library of Jewish culture, the series included 92 volumes published between 1933-1938, and featured works by S.Y Agnon, Martin Buber, Franz Kafka, Franz Rosenzweig, Gershom Scholem, and others. Second, in 1935 the Schocken library in Jerusalem was opened, which housed books Schocken sent from Germany for the sake of their preservation

[254] Both Agnon and Schocken collected books for their private libraries. In the early years of their acquaintance, Agnon's job description included searching and purchasing rare books for Schocken's private libraries.

[255] Quoted in: Laor, *Haye Agnon*, 106.

[256] *Agnon-Schocken: hilufei yigrot (*Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1991), 37. See also: Dan Laor, S.Y. *Agnon begermanyia*, 14. On the impact of western canon on Agnon's oeuvre see: Gershon Shaked, *Hasiporet ha-'Ivrit, 1880-1980*, Vol 2 (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz hameuchad and keter, 1983), 167-169.

establishing Hebrew publishing houses in Berlin, Agnon was committed to publishing his Hebrew stories in German translation.[257] This endeavor of translating modern Hebrew writing into German was uncommon among Hebrew writers, who were, for the most part, committed to translating the canon of world literature into Hebrew. In the Zionist context, importing these texts into Hebrew was considered a sacred duty that would develop, deepen, and enrich the emerging Hebrew literary sphere in Palestine[258]. If translation —a library-building practice— epitomizes a vector of desire, to use Yigal Schwarz's terminology, from the diaspora toward Palestine, then Agnon's enterprise of translation reconfigures these spatial paradigms, rooting Hebrew in the German sphere, and inscribing himself within the library of world literature.

"Two Rooms Filled with Books": The Library between Jewish and *Weltliteratur*

Dr. Levy's library is central to the plot in that it triggers the protagonist's journey from Berlin to Leipzig and back to Berlin, offering a series of scattered encounters with characters in various places. Ironically, despite the library's significance, the narrative provides little to no details regarding the content of Mr. Levy's book collection. Occupying the space of two rooms, it is unclear what kind of books it contains, in which languages these books were written, and what their value is. We get a sense that the library is valuable only because other characters are so interested in it. The conversation among the four Jewish book traders implies that what makes this collection appealing is the unique editions it houses rather than those editions' particular

[257] While in Berlin, Bialik was a publisher rather than a poet. He established two publishing houses: *Devir*, which still exists today as a sub-entity under within Israel most prominent publishing house Kineret-Zmorah-Bitan, and Moriah, in partnership with Jakob Seidmann and Tom Seidmann-Freud, who was Sigmund Freud's niece. In: Michal Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1996), 204.

[258] On the ideological significance of translation as a Zionist doctrine see: Na'ama Sheffi, *Germanit Be'ivrit: Targumim Mi-Germanit Be-Yishuv Ha-'ivri, 1882-1948* (Jerusalem: Yad Yizhak Ben Zvi; Mekhon Leo Baeck̦, 1998); Jacobs, *Strange Cocktail Transl. Mak. Mod. Hebr. Poet.*

contents. Even this detail is but hearsay, for the library is only discussed; it is present but not visible. In this sense, the library in the novella constitutes a kind of purloined letter: it holds great significance, but its content is never revealed. Its hidden content, paired with its public visibility, increases its value and its control over the narrative.[259] I propose that we consider the "two rooms filled with books" to which the protagonist bore witness two years earlier in terms of *teyvah* (both ark and word). This term elevates the conception of a library as a container as opposed to an accumulation of content. As discussed above, *teyvah* is also an ark designed to hold books in the sense of the Jewish *aron hasfarim*, in this manner preserving the physical book, the tradition of the past, and the knowledge to be carried into the future.

This understanding of a library as something spatially finite but historically indeterminate brings to mind Jorge Luis Borges' short story, "The Library of Babel." (1941) In this story, Borges' narrator describes "a universe (which others call the library), composed of an indefinite, perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries."[260] This library is infinite but well-ordered according to a mathematical rule:

> Each wall of each hexagon is furnished with five bookshelves; each bookshelf holds thirty-two books identical in format; each book contains four hundred ten pages; each page, forty lines; each line, approximately eighty black letters. There are also letters on the front cover of each book; those letters neither indicate nor prefigure what the pages inside will say.[261]

[259] In using the notion of the purloined letter, I follow Lacan's argument that the content of the letter in Poe's story is irrelevant. See: Jacques Lacan, "Le seminaire sur 'La Lettre volee,'" from *Ecrits* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966), pp. 11-61; trans. Jeffrey Mehlman as "Seminar on "The Purloined Letter,'" in *French Freud: Structural Studies in Psychoanalysis, Yale French Studies* , No. 48 (1972), pp. 38-72. See also: Françoise Meltzer, "Laclos' Purloined Letters," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 3 (1982): 515–29.

[260] Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel," in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Viking, 1998), 112.

[261] Borges, ibid, 112.

Well-ordered, this library contains all possible books, but there is no way to tell the content of each book from its cover. This library thus offers access to all of world history and knowledge but with no means of locating a specific book. In a manner akin to the Agnonian library, the content of a book is secondary to its shape and economic value. Whereas Borges' narrator describes an infinite library-universe through which one must journey, Dr. Levy's library—present yet invisible—occupies just two rooms. Recalling the days he had spent in Grimma, Shmuel Yosef sees an image of himself "wandering among Dr. Levy's two rooms of books."[262] Like the Borgesian library, these rooms and the unspecified collection they house render a space that expands beyond what the eye sees, inviting readers to travel within it. because we do not know any details about the content of this library, it contains everything and nothing. may Thus, borrowing the Borgesian metaphor, this library may contain books in all languages and narratives of histories of both the past and the imagined future.

At the same time, however, Borges' library is limited to twenty-five orthographical symbols consisting of the space, the comma, the period, and the twenty-two letters of the alphabet, resembling the Hebrew alphabet in the number of letters:

> the Library is "total"-perfect, complete, and whole-and that its bookshelves contain all possible combinations of the twenty-two orthographic symbols (a number which, though unimaginably vast, is not infinite)-that is, all that is able to be expressed, in every language.[263]

Borges's library consists of mathematically finite word combinations but infinite meanings.[264] The idea of creation via letter combination is also foundational in the study of Jewish mysticism,

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[262] Agnon, *Ad henah*, 5

[263] Borges, "The Library of Babel," 115.

[264] We will return to this point later when discussing Shmuel Yosef's use of letter combination. In addition, the study of Kabbalah suggests that word combination in the Hebrew language conceals mystical and magical powers.

the Kabbala. According to *Sefer Yetzira* (*The Book of Creation*), God created the universe using the ten spheres and the twenty-two Hebrew letters. *Sefer hazohar* (*The Zohar*) offers the study these mystical divine spheres, consisting of cryptic letter combinations that tells of the origin and structure of the universe.[265] These echoes of the Jewish scriptures also relate to the title of Borges's story, "The Library of Babel," alluding to the Hebrew Bible and its presence in the Western context.

Published in 1941, in the midst of World War II, Borges' text raises not only philosophical questions about the library but also corresponds with the concerns of German Jewish intellectuals regarding how to preserve their libraries and textual traditions. As Reingard Nethersole notes, in most European languages the idea of the library as a recognizable site of books and stories derives etymologically from liber (Lat.: book) and bibliothēkē (Greek: bookstacks).[266] In Hebrew, the etymological connection between the book (*sefer*) and the library (*sifriya*) is inherent, as both derive from the root *samekh-pe-resh* (ס.פ.ר). Further, the same root is used for the words author (*sofer*) and narrative (*sipur*). Thus, linguistically, the library (*sifriya*) contains the intertwined worlds of the book (*sefer*), the author (*sofer*), and the narrative (*sipur*). For Agnon, the figurative library is a *teyvah* or ark, echoing both the Jewish *aron hasfarim* and the multilingual library of *Weltliteratur*. He positions the "Agnonian library" at the threshold between these traditions, inscribing his work onto the Jewish archive and into the canon of world literature. Circling back to the book burning of which Agnon speaks in his Nobel Prize, the loss

[265] For further discussion on the novella's intertextual relations with Sefer ha-yetzira see: Hagbi, *Lashon, Header, Mishak: Yahadut ve-Super Structuralism Bapoetika Shel S.Y Agnon*.

[266] Reingard Nethersole, "World Literature and the Library," in *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, ed. Theo D'haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir (Boston, Massachusetts: Credo Reference, 2015).

of the library has been central to exiled thinkers both Jewish and non-Jewish, including Eric Auerbach, Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, and others. Highlighting the various practices surrounding the library—collecting, sorting, cataloguing, trading, and shipping—the novella evokes a Benjaminian mode of thinking surrounding the unpacking of books, the portability and immobility of libraries, and translatability. Providing for the ambivalent senses of at-homeness and homelessness in wartime, the image of the library is twofold: an external structure and a tradition carried within[267].

Wandering among cities and rooms in wartime, Shmuel Yosef is in a state of exile. The sense of homelessness and rootlessness is demonstrated by the novella's epic structure, which consists of episodic journeys and encounters among cities and people. As indicated above, the story follows the experiences of Shmuel Yosef during World War I, but there is no particular order or sense of causality to the events. As in Borges' architectural universe, the city-space in the novella has borders but is comprised of indefinite possible random encounters, equally important and insignificant.

> The cacophony in the large train station increasingly grew. Trains came and left, hissing and clanging. Porters and conductors ran between the tracks and locomotives, covered in clouds, vanishing in steam, reappearing among the wheels of the locomotives. The train station was like a city of steel, with steel houses that ran on steel wheels with a clatter of steel beneath a sky of smoke. The whole station was on the run; no one stopped to catch his breath. You couldn't make out a face amid all the faces. (מרוב אדם לא רואים אדם)[268]

The portrayal of the masses as moving bodies without faces highlights a recurring aesthetics of nondescript shapes as well as the metaphorical relationship between the book and its cover. This

[267] Mani, *Recoding World Literature: Libraries, Print Culture, and Germany's Pact with Books*.

[268] Agnon, *Ad henah*, 13.

aesthetic is linked to Baruch Kurzweil's observation regarding the novella's epic structure,.[269] The vocabulary of *Sefer hamalboshim* of "dressing" shapes, meaning, people, draws a connection between the invisible face, the person's appearance, and its recording in a history book. It emphasizes the impact of the masses, linking between an assembly of people, and the collecting of books.

Unpacking his Library: Hebrew Roots and Jewish Rootlessness

Through a series of events related to the image of the library, Agnon exhibits the literary negotiation of Jewish belonging in three facets. In the first instance, he draws on a mastery of the Hebrew Semitic root system as a means of putting down roots in Germany. The library's second aspect is distinguished by its portability, illustrated by the example of the book that the protagonist is writing and carries with him on his journey, *Sefer hamalboshim*. This unfinished manuscript contains world knowledge of the shapes and forms of clothes of all people and generations. The third aspect of the library is its association with the place of home, which plays out in the physical—and unseen—library of Dr. Levy, which oscillates indefinitely between Germany and Palestine.

As we have seen so far, Hebrew for Agnon is a language of both sacred texts and an emerging modern canon and opens the possibility of belonging to a broader library: that of world literature. In Agnon's understanding, world literature is European literature translated into German. Whereas *Ad henah* is written in Hebrew, the protagonist speaks German with his

[269] I have argued elsewhere that Agnon's epic style of narration should be understood in relation to Bertolt Brecht's notion of epic theatre. See: Michal Peles Almagor, "'Hapesimizem Shel Ha-Yintelekt, Ha-Optimizem Shel Ha-Ratzon': Kriah Dramatit Be-Sipur Pashut Le-Agnon" (Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2014). On Brecht's notion of the epic see: Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willett (New York; London: Hill and Wang; Methuen, 1964); Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: NLB, 1973) .

acquaintances. As in Vogel's *Haye nisuim,* the Hebrew narration erases traces of dialects and accents and linguistically levels the relation between the foreign *Ostjuden* and the native German speaker. The *Ostjude* is no longer distinguishable by means of the Hasidic melody with which Scholem is enchanted in his memoirs. Instead, this unique melody, which by the 1950s Agnon's writings had elevated into a recognizable mode of "Agnonian speech," dominates all aspects of the narrative, eliminating dialects among the various native German-speaking characters of his works, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Narrated in the first-person, *Ad henah* evinces little to no distinction between the protagonist's register and those of the characters with whom he interacts. All instances of narration—dialogues, descriptions, and streams of consciousness—are dominated by a distinct Agnonian Hebrew granted precedence over the imitation of spoken German dialects.

Unlike Vogel, who writes in a Germanized Hebrew by mimicking German grammar and inserting German words like "Kino" and "Strasse" in transliteration, Agnon purposefully translates these German names into Hebrew, providing for numerous instances of ironic wordplay. For example, Brigita Shimerman invites Shmuel Yosef to eat lunch with her and her husband at *Maon ha-arayot* (The Lion's Den) by Das Rosental, which Agnon translates as *emek hashoshanim* (Valley of Roses). In Hebrew, *Maon ha-arayot* evokes the overlapping letters and homophony of the Hebrew term for Lion—Aryeh—and the loaded ethnic term "Aryan." In *Ad henah*, this ethnic category is identified with Brigita herself, the native German woman and her elevated genealogy. The irony intensifies when Shmuel Yosef cannot find this restaurant, which does not even appear in the Leipzig phone book. *Maon ha-arayot* is reserved for the elite, namely, the city's native Germans inhabitants. One can access it only by invitation, and even then, it is not easy to find. Agnon's playful narrative leads Shmuel Yosef to encounter the

restaurant by chance three days later, identifying the place by the Lion statues guarding the building, only to learn that the Shimermans had waited for him and that he had missed the fine meal for which he had hoped.[270]

Dependent upon this anticipated meal for his sustenance, Shmuel Yosef had not eaten the entire day. Upon arriving at the boarding house where he takes up lodging for the night, he realizes he has forgotten his food stamps in Berlin. Struggling with hunger and preoccupied with his troubling physical state, he takes to combining letters from Hebrew to distract himself from his hunger. He chooses a Hebrew root (*shoresh*) and turns its letters in a manner both serious and playful:[271]

> הרעב הציק לי מבפנים והמטה הרעועה העיקה לי תחתי והרהורי עתידות קשים היו מן הרעב ומן המטה. בקשתי להעביר ממני את אימת ההרהורים ונטלתי שורש עברי להפך באותיותיו, כמה תיבות מסתעפות מהן. ומחמת שהיה הלילה קשה נטלתי תיבת בקר בבקר תאמר מי יתן ערב ובערב תאמר מי יתן בקר.[272] וכשאתה מקמץ את התיבה בשני קמצים הרי בקר מלשון נבוכו עדרי בקר.[273] וכשהיא ננקדת פתח וצרי הרי בקר, לא יבקר בין טוב לרע,[274] ובלשון חכמים שהה כדי ביקור וכן כל מי שאינו מבקר את החולה כאילו שופך דמים.[275] וכשאתה הופך את התיבה הרי רקב, כמו שאתה אומר הרקב לבית יהודה.[276] ואם אתה מסרסה הרי קרב, לעת צר ליום קרב ומלחמה.[277] או קרב ונפש כי יקריב קורבן מנחה לה׳.[278]

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[270] Maya Barzilai points to another instance of a Hebrew-German wordplay in the novella. She points to the ways Agnon uses the street name *Fasanenstrasse*, translated as *rehovh hapasyonim* (the street of the pheasants) to evoke “the passion or *pasyon* of Christ,” and to critique the “costly synagogue constructed by the Reform Jewish community.” Barzilai, “S.Y Agnon’s German Consecration and the ‘Miracle’ of Hebrew Letters,” 63.

[271] I am grateful to Jeffery Stackert, Chloe Blackshear, and Haim Weiss for their thoughtful reflections on this passage.

[272] דברים כ״ח, סז

בַּבֹּקֶר תֹּאמַר מִי-יִתֵּן עֶרֶב, וּבָעֶרֶב תֹּאמַר מִי-יִתֵּן בֹּקֶר--מִפַּחַד לְבָבְךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּפְחָד, וּמִמַּרְאֵה עֵינֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה

[273] יואל א׳, 18
מַה-נֶּאֶנְחָה בְהֵמָה, נָבֹכוּ עֶדְרֵי בָקָר--כִּי אֵין מִרְעֶה, לָהֶם; גַּם-עֶדְרֵי הַצֹּאן, נֶאְשָׁמוּ .
[274] ויקרא כ״ז, ל״ג
לֹא יְבַקֵּר בֵּין-טוֹב לָרַע, וְלֹא יְמִירֶנּוּ; וְאִם-הָמֵר יְמִירֶנּוּ, וְהָיָה-הוּא וּתְמוּרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה-קֹּדֶשׁ לֹא יִגָּאֵל.
[275] התלמוד הבבלי, נדרים מ א
[276] הושע, ה, י״ב
וַאֲנִי כָעָשׁ, לְאֶפְרָיִם; וְכָרָקָב, לְבֵית יְהוּדָה.
[277] איוב ל״ח, כ״ג
אֲשֶׁר-חָשַׂכְתִּי לְעֶת-צָר; לְיוֹם קְרָב, וּמִלְחָמָה.
[278] ויקרא ב׳, א׳

או קרב מלשון את החלב המכסה את הקרב.[279] או קרב מלשון כי קרוב הוא. או קרב מלשון קרובה. ואם אתה חוזר ומסרסה הרי ברק, ברוק ותפיצם.[280] לשון אחר ברק, חרב חרב פתוחה לטבח מרוטה למען ברק.[281] לשון אחר ברק, את רוצי המדבר ואת הברקנים.[282] לשון אחר ברק, קום ברק ושבה שביך.[283] ואם אתה מוסיף עליה תיו הרי ספיר נפך וברקת.[284] ואם את חוזר ומסרסה הרי רבק, מלשון עגלי מרבק,[285] ולבסוף קבר.[286]

Hunger bothered me from within, and the unstable bed burdened me from beneath, and thoughts of the future were more troubling than either the hunger or the bed. Seeking to push away the horror of my thoughts, I took a Hebrew root to turn its letters, how many words (*teyvot*) branch out of them. And as it was a troubling night, I took the word (*teyvah*) bkr (*boker*, morning). In the morning you shall say, If only it were evening, and in the evening you shall say, If only it were morning.[287] And when you provide (*mekametz*) the word with two *kamatzim* (vowel for a sound) it is *bakar* (cattle) like [T]he herds of cattle are bewildered.[288] And when it is with

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וְנֶפֶשׁ, כִּי-תַקְרִיב קָרְבַּן מִנְחָה לַיהוָה--סֹלֶת, יִהְיֶה קָרְבָּנוֹ; וְיָצַק עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן, וְנָתַן עָלֶיהָ לְבֹנָה
[279] ויקרא ג׳, ג׳
וְהִקְרִיב מִזֶּבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים, אִשֶּׁה לַיהוָה--אֶת-הַחֵלֶב, הַמְכַסֶּה אֶת-הַקֶּרֶב, וְאֵת כָּל-הַחֵלֶב, אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַקֶּרֶב.
שמות כ״ט, י״ג
וְלָקַחְתָּ, אֶת-כָּל-הַחֵלֶב הַמְכַסֶּה אֶת-הַקֶּרֶב, וְאֵת הַיֹּתֶרֶת עַל-הַכָּבֵד, וְאֵת שְׁתֵּי הַכְּלָיֹת וְאֶת-הַחֵלֶב אֲשֶׁר עֲלֵיהֶן; וְהִקְטַרְתָּ, הַמִּזְבֵּחָה.
[280] תהילים קמ״ד, ו׳
בְּרוֹק בָּרָק וּתְפִיצֵם שְׁלַח חִצֶּיךָ וּתְהֻמֵּם
[281] יחזקאל כ״א, ל״ג
וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם, הִנָּבֵא וְאָמַרְתָּ כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה, אֶל-בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן, וְאֶל-חֶרְפָּתָם; וְאָמַרְתָּ, חֶרֶב חֶרֶב פְּתוּחָה לְטֶבַח מְרוּטָה, לְהָכִיל, לְמַעַן בָּרָק
[282] שופטים ח׳, ז׳
וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן--לָכֵן בְּתֵת יְהוָה אֶת-זֶבַח וְאֶת-צַלְמֻנָּע, בְּיָדִי: וְדַשְׁתִּי, אֶת-בְּשַׂרְכֶם, אֶת-קוֹצֵי הַמִּדְבָּר, וְאֶת-הַבַּרְקֳנִים.
[283] שופטים, ה, י״ב
עוּרִי עוּרִי דְּבוֹרָה, עוּרִי עוּרִי דַּבְּרִי-שִׁיר; קוּם בָּרָק וּשְׁבֵה שֶׁבְיְךָ, בֶּן-אֲבִינֹעַם
[284] יחזקאל כ״ח, י״ג
בְּעֵדֶן גַּן-אֱלֹהִים הָיִיתָ, כָּל-אֶבֶן יְקָרָה מְסֻכָתֶךָ אֹדֶם פִּטְדָה וְיָהֲלֹם תַּרְשִׁישׁ שֹׁהַם וְיָשְׁפֵה, סַפִּיר נֹפֶךְ, וּבָרְקַת וְזָהָב; מְלֶאכֶת תֻּפֶּיךָ וּנְקָבֶיךָ בָּךְ, בְּיוֹם הִבָּרַאֲךָ כּוֹנָנוּ.
[285] מלאכי, ג׳, כ׳
וְזָרְחָה לָכֶם יִרְאֵי שְׁמִי, שֶׁמֶשׁ צְדָקָה, וּמַרְפֵּא, בִּכְנָפֶיהָ; וִיצָאתֶם וּפִשְׁתֶּם, כְּעֶגְלֵי מַרְבֵּק.
[286] Agnon, *Ad henah*, 27.

[287] Deuteronomy 28:67. “In the morning you shall say, “If only it were evening!” and in the evening you shall say, “If only it were morning!”—because of what your heart shall dread and your eyes shall see.”

[288] Joel 1:18. How the beasts groan! The herds of cattle are bewildered Because they have no pasture, And the flocks of sheep are dazed.

patah and *tzerey* (vowels) then the baker, he may not pick out the good from the bad,[289] And in the words of our sages (*leshon chachamim*), stayed for a visit (*bikur*), because anyone who does not visit the ill, it is as though he is spilling blood.[290] And when you turn the word then to *rakav* (rot, decay), as you say decay to the House of Judah.[291] And if you turn it then to *krav* (battle), for a time of adversity for a day of war and battle.[292] Or *karev*, as a person who presents an offering to the LORD.[293] Or *kerev* (entrail) as the fat that covers the entrails.[294] Or *karov* (close) as he is nearby. Or *karov* (close) as relative. And if turned again then to *barak*, make lightning flash and scatter them.[295] Another way put barak, O sword unsheathed for slaughter, polished to the utmost, to a flashing brilliance.[296] Another way put barak, upon desert thorns and briers (*barkanim*).[297] Another way put barak, Arise, O Barak; Take your captives.[298] And if you add the letter ת (*tav*), then sapphire,

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[289] Laviticus 27: 33. He may not pick out the good from the bad, or make substitution for it. If he does make substitution for it, then it and its substitute shall both be holy: it cannot be redeemed.

[290] Nedarim, 40a (Babylonian Talmud)

[291] Hosea 5:12. For it is I who am like rot to Ephraim, Like decay to the House of Judah

[292] Job 38:23. Which I have put aside for a time of adversity, For a day of war and battle?

[293] Leviticus 2:1. When a person presents an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of choice flour; he shall pour oil upon it, lay frankincense on it

[294] Leviticus 3:3 He shall then present from the sacrifice of well-being, as an offering by fire to the LORD, the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is about the entrails;

Also: Exodus 29:13. Take all the fat that covers the entrails, the protuberance on the liver, and the two kidneys with the fat on them, and turn them into smoke upon the altar.

[295] Psalms 144:6. Make lightning flash and scatter them; shoot Your arrows and rout them.

[296] Ezekiel 21:33. Further, O mortal, prophesy and say: Thus said the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites and their blasphemies: Proclaim: O sword! O sword unsheathed for slaughter, polished to the utmost, to a flashing brilliance!

[297] Judges 8:7. “I swear,” declared Gideon, “when the LORD delivers Zebah and Zalmunna into my hands, I’ll thresh your bodies upon desert thorns and briers!”

[298] Judges 5:12. The song of Deborah. Awake, awake, O Deborah! Awake, awake, strike up the chant! Arise, O Barak; Take your captives, O son of Abinoam!

turquoise, and emerald (*borkat*).[299] And if you turn it again, then *rabak* as stall-fat claves (*'eglei marbak*),[300] and at the end *kever* (grave).

In this enigmatic and playful passage, the author plays with the very materiality of the Hebrew language: its words, letters, and roots. The passage consists of seventeen variations of the root *bet-kof-resh* (ב.ק.ר) each rooted in a Biblical or Talmudic reference. For the protagonist, this game serves as distraction from a state of hunger and worry. Moreover, in light of his want for food, the substance of the words, the letters of the roots that can be shaped and reshaped, offer some sustenance. But rather than offering "food for thought" in the sense of providing a meaning or spiritual fulfillment, the game emphasizes the importance of form, of the word as *teyvah* (chest) that constitutes a space in which words letters are placed, replaced, and redirected. In this instance, *teyvah* thus points to its dual meanings of both word and chest, and to the fact that the word in itself is a chest, a vessel that hosts meaning(s) through diverse letter-combinations and vowels.

In this passage, Shmuel Yosef demonstrates his virtuosity with the Hebrew root system as a linguistic form, as well as his mastery of referencing and intertextuality. In referencing sources, he draws on verses not limited to the Torah (the Pentateuch) but from the entire Tanach (Bible) as well as Midrash (the Talmud). In so doing, he illustrates the image of a library carried within, available to him whenever it's needed. Before addressing the significance of this library in *Ad henah*, it is important to note that Agnon often weaves Biblical and Midrashic intertextuality into

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[299] Ezekiel 28:13. You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your adornment: Carnelian, chrysolite, and amethyst; Beryl, lapis lazuli, and jasper; Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald; And gold beautifully wrought for you, Mined for you, prepared the day you were created.

The Biblical form Borkat is synonymous to the modern form Bareket, both mean Emerald.

[300] Malachi, 3:20. But for you who revere My name a sun of victory shall rise to bring healing. You shall go forth and stamp like stall-fed calves.

his narrative, creating layers and depths of meaning. Indeed, the richness his library of sources is captivating, and has frequently enchanted readers and scholars, inspiring them to embark on an intertextual journey to discover the text's "hidden meaning," only discoverable through the undertaking of additional textual journeys. Oscillating between morphology and intertext, this library in *Ad henah* is transformed into a liminal space, hinting toward a hidden meaning while also experimenting with the plasticity of the root, as if mixing water into clay. Such intertextual journeys resonate with the indeterminate wandering suggested by Borges' library, with its hexagonal rooms, replete with finite combinations and infinite meanings.

The tension between organization and arbitrariness that plays out in Shmuel Yosef's extended language game breaks down the relationship between the signifier and the signified, demonstrating the ways in which form dictates meaning while also taking forms apart. Beginning with "boker" (morning) and concluding with "kever" (grave), the text hints that there is a kind of order or system according to which the quotes are organized. It portrays the image of a structured bookshelf from which the protagonist can draw his sources, illustrating the cycle of life. This circular sense is also reflected in the chiastic structure of the first reference of the passage, which, as noted above, alludes to Deuteronomy 28:67 :

> In the morning you shall say, "If only it were evening!"
> and in the evening you shall say, "If only it were morning!".

בַּבֹּקֶר תֹּאמַר מִי-יִתֵּן עֶרֶב,
וּבָעֶרֶב תֹּאמַר מִי-יִתֵּן בֹּקֶר

The chiastic structure of this verse reinforces the idea of a well-organized life cycle while highlighting the spatiotemporal threshold and a sense of timeless circularity and reversal. At the

same time, there is no identifiable system surrounding the sources. Rather, the entire passage consists of a collection of verses tied together through a string of associations. This connecting thread is derived by the etymology of the root system. This craft of root-play mimics the practices of Chazal (חז"ל, literally, Our Sages z"l)—the authoritative Jewish sages of the Mishna, Tosefta, and Talmud—who applied the rules of Talmudic hermeneutics and philological close reading to interpret and determine Jewish laws. Practicing this erudition, Shamuel Yosef performs varying strategies of wordplay: switching consonants, changing vowels, combining letters, and building new nouns by adding formative letters to the beginning of the word (***m****arbak*) or to its ending (*bareke****t***). In so doing, he sets up in his room an infinite metaphorical Jewish bookshelf to which he has unlimited access and is able to take whatever book he needs.

As if unpacking his library, to use Walter Benjamin's term, Shmuel Yosef lines up a series of books and specific references that help him get through the night. Each quote constitutes a gateway to an infinite library of the past and at the same time marks its absence. This "unpacking" of his library expresses an ambivalent sense of at-homeness. The extreme situation of lodging in a provisional room in a random pension in a state of extreme hunger leads Shmuel Yosef to the Hebrew language. To reiterate, even though the novella is written in Hebrew, we can assume that the characters are speaking German, especially those who are not Jewish. German is the language dominating the public sphere, even though it undergoes an Agnonian "translation" process into Hebrew, only to be later translated back into German. In this moment, however, Hebrew is not only the language of the narrator, who tells of his German past, but also the language present in the text. Unlike Goldberg's Ruth, who turns to Kästner in her moment of horror, quoting his poem in German, Shmuel Yosef withdraws inward, secluding himself among Hebrew roots. In state of utmost rootlessness, he unpacks his library, putting

down Hebrew roots and using language to create a sense of belonging, even if it is only temporary.

Whereas Goldberg's claim to German kinship manifests through modes of macaronic intertextuality, Agnon commits to the purity of Hebrew language, reshaping it into an Agnonian vernacular, consisting of a poetic rhythmic melody, Biblical and Midrashic intertextuality, episodic side narratives of characters, dialogues, and a storyteller commenting on the events. As noted earlier, Agnon translates all the names of places, Hebraicizing and thus verbally appropriating the German city space. The library is a mediator through which he claims kinship to the German-speaking sphere. Rooted in wordplay and irony—between linguistic roots and a state of rootlessness—this scene highlights moments of untranslatability, derived from the roots of Hebrew as a Semitic language foreign to the German sphere.[301] In this sense, Hebrew, like the figure of the Jew, belongs to Europe and interrupts the German space with its foreignness as a language at once Jewish and Semitic. As Michael Brenner notes, "[I]t took an East European Jew [Agnon] to accomplish what German-Jewish writers failed to achieve: a portrayal of the varieties of Jewish life in Germany, without bias."[302] The seed planted metaphorically in the provisional room between Berlin and Grimma, representing the possibility and impossibility of making a

[301] On lost ironies in Agnon translations see: Barzilai, "S.Y Agnon's German Consecration and the 'Miracle' of Hebrew Letters.". The passage surrounding the Hebrew roots, for example, presents extreme difficulty and raises salient questions about translation practices and studies. In the English edition translated in 2008, the translator modified the passage, sustaining the circular movement from morning to grave:

"And as if the bed beneath me and the hunger inside me weren't enough, I now began to worry about the future ahead of me. To take my mind off it, I tried thinking of different combinations that could be made from the letters of Hebrew roots. Since my main worry was getting through the night, I chose the letters *bet-kuf-resh*, which spelled *boker*, morning. Switched them arounds and they spelled *rakev*, rot. Switch them again and they spelled *krav*, battle. Switch them one more and they spelled *kever*, grave." In: *To this Day*, trans. Hillel Helkin, 2008.

[302] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 209.

home in Germany, would later grow strong literary roots, awarding Agnon the Nobel Prize and inscribing his writings into the canon of world literature.

But in this scene, the Hebrew language falls upon the hard earth of a small, dilapidated space, one associated with a state of starvation and mental disruption. After tilling this unwelcome ground with the letters of the root *bet-kof-resh*, Shmuel Yosef continues to explore the relationship between form and meaning, singling out three words (*teyvot*) that do not combine in other ways: truth (*emet*), grace (*hesed*), and justice (*tzedek*). Rhetorically, this points to the way some words can only hold one immutable and transcendental meaning. The relationship between word and meaning as Agnon explores it here brings to mind H.N. Bialik's notion of the word (*teyvah*) as an empty vessel that each generation fills with a new meaning. In his important essay "Revealment and Concealment in Language" (1916), Bialik reflects on the "revival" project of modern Hebrew, expressing his concerns regarding the loss of sacred meanings. At the same time, Bialik sees this process of casting new meaning into existing words as the engine of the Hebrew revival process. In his formulation, words maintain their forms while their meanings change.[303] In Agnon's case, however, form changes rapidly. His verbal transformations point to two concurrent systems: a diachronic system that begins with "morning" (boker) and ends with grave (kever), and a synchronic system that assembles all meanings of the root *bet-kof-resh* into concurrent existence, while setting up layers of concealment. Agnon's explanation for each application of the Hebrew root in this passage operates as a process of

[303] H.N Bilaik, "Revealment and Concealment in Language" in: *Revealment and Concealment: Five Essays* (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2000). Bialik's essay was first published in 1916 in Hebrew, expressing both fascination and concern about the processes of moderanization and secularization of the Hebrew language. He alerts that speaking Hebrew without knowledge of the words' sacred meanings is like walking over an abyss. The metaphor of the abyss to describe the theological dangers inherent to the secularization of the Hebrew "revival" project will resurface in Gershom Scholem's famous letter to Rosenzweig (1926). On the linguistic and theological links between these two texts see: Galili Shahar, "The Sacred and the Unfamiliar: Gershom Scholem and the Anxieties of the New Hebrew," *Germanic Review* 83, no. December 2013 (2008): 299–320.

philological translation, journeying from the word's root, through its linguistic expression in the Bible, and arriving at its modification and inclusion in modern literary verse. Using the Jewish sources to sooth his hunger, Shmuel Yosef imposes a type of translation to redress the sources, fitting them into the modern Hebrew novella.

This should be understood in relation to Benjamin's notion of translation, in which translation encompasses the original meaning while simultaneously resisting it, expressing "the innermost relationship of languages to one another."[304] As Walter Benjamin suggests, "the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds. For it signifies a more exalted language than its own and thus remains unsuited to its content, overpowering and alien."[305] Benjamin's metaphor of the robe is of particular importance, as it offers an image of an expanse of cloth covering an undefinable intent behind the word, and at the same time suggests that this encapsulated meaning can somehow be extracted.

Agnon, I suggest, pushes against such an approach in this novella, and focuses on the concealing, even mystical, aspects of language, that do not aspire for meaning but rather explore the impact of form on everyday life and narrative. Concealing, in this sense, is not synonymous with non-revealing but rather an alternative paradigm, a mechanism that pushes things forward. This mechanism is demonstrated by modes of concealment in the novella, tied to the notion of the *malbosh* (clothes) as a threshold between the inside and the world, primarily explored through the protagonist's magnum opus, *Sefer hamalboshim.*

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[304] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," In *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 75

[305] Benjamin, ibid, 75.

Between Deferral and Preservation: *Sefer hamalboshim*

As noted, departing Berlin for Grimma, Shmuel Yosef takes along the incomplete manuscript on which he has been working, titled *Sefer ha-malboshim*. In the context of the library, this manuscript is representative of the physical book as a kind of catalog – in this case, a single text supposedly containing the history of all humankind, unfolding according to the form and shape of people's clothes. The details surrounding this manuscript, including its length, language, and how long the protagonist has been engaged in writing it, are vague. We only learn that it concerns the history of clothing and that it is an incomplete manuscript the writer has abandoned writing due to the war but still carries with him. The presence of this deferred Magnum Opus calls into question the intertwining worlds of books and clothing and how they relate to the notion of the threshold surrounding the library in the novella.

Upon their encounter in Leipzig, Brigita Simerman asks Shmuel Yosef what prompted his interest in the history of clothing. To that he replies:

> I said to her, I was a young man, and my eyes were filled with the forms of all generations, and I wanted to put them on paper [picture them], and I said, I must first dress them according to their time, their place, their tribe. I began looking at the history of the clothing of each and every generation, nation, and tribe. That is how I have invested myself in matters of no use. Now I seek to preserve my manuscript, keep it safe from the moth. But I do not have the antidote to protect it [from the moth].

> אמרתי לה, אדם צעיר הייתי ועיני מלאות היו צורות צורות של כל הדורות והייתי מבקש להעלותן על הנייר ואמרתי צריכני להלבישן תחילה לפי זמנן לפי מקומן ולפי השבט שלהן. התחלתי מסתכל בתולדות המלבושים של כל דור ואומה ושבט. כך שיקעתי את עצמי בדבר שאין תועלת ממנו. עכשיו אני צריך לשמרו מהעש, ומהיכן אקח כל כך הרבה סם שכנגד.[306]

[306] Agnon, *Ad henah*, 47.

Sefer hamalboshim is inspired by a range of shapes moving before the protagonist's eyes. Illustrating the image of people and bodies as shapes moving before him, Shmuel Yosef's account suggests rethinking the question of *what* one sees and replacing it with *how* one looks, highlighting a multi-layered gaze. Even though it is not stated explicitly, it is implied that these diverse shapes are, in fact, human bodies that the protagonist attempts to dress. For Shmuel Yosef, these garments serve both as a cover that conceals what is beneath it and an exhibition of belonging to a certain tribe, peoplehood, and generation. The surface of the garment constitutes the threshold between the interior shape and its appearance, underscoring its dual trajectory: covering what is within, in both senses of hiding and protecting, and choosing the clothes with which a person appears in public. In the Jewish context, this brings to mind the tradition of the *Anusim* movement, Jews who had to convert to Christianity or Islam and eliminate their Jewish appearance, but at the same time continued practicing Judaism in secrecy. In this sense, the garment calls into question the ways clothes offer an authentic interpretation of the people wearing them. How does the garment – as a liminal object mediating between interiority and exteriority serves both as an opportunity and an impasse? Why does the protagonist need to dress these people in order to write about them?

"Dressing" the shapes before writing about them further demonstrates a dynamic of deferral dominating Shmuel Yosef journeys. The unfinished *Sefer hamalboshim* reappears in Agnon's novel, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, set in Leipzig during World War I and published posthumously in 1974. In the novel, the protagonist confesses that he had never – and would never – finish writing this book, and reveals another facet of *Sefer hamalboshim*, positing that working on this book led him to start smoking and skipping lunch. Writing and sewing are both related to the body's physical needs:

> When I lived in Berlin I used to smoke. I smoked because of my work. Devoting myself to the study of *Malboshim* led me to smoke. --- every day I would go the house of books (library)[307] from its opening at 9 am until its closing at 9 pm. I would sit between two piles of books, studying the shapes of clothes of all generations and all countries since the day Adam and Eve sewed a fig leaf and made themselves belts. And because the garments changed across countries among the goyim (non-Jews), there was much work. I thought I would leave this world before I had finished my book.[308]

In the Jewish tradition of Kabbalah, the garment represents the threshold between the body and the spirit, as a cover both separating and connecting inward and outer spheres. Dimensions of Kabbalah appears in *Ad hanah* have discussed by at length in studies by Tzachi Weiss, Yaniv Hagbi, and Elchanan Shilo.[309] Drawing on clothes as liminal objects, I propose redirecting this liminality from mysticism to performance. Another way put, For the protagonist, clothes have a significant role in identification, especially in light of processes of modernization and secularization. A Jew is identified first and foremost by his *kippah*, *teffilin* (phylacteries), and *payot (peyas)*. Leaving the Shtetl and moving to the city, many Jews – including Shmuel Yosef – changed their appearance, rendering themselves unrecognizable as Jews in public. As Shmuel Yosef cousin from Leipzig comments:

> 'You're dressed modern now,' (*nochri*) she said. 'But I can remember you in Jewish clothes, with your curly ear-locks bouncing up and down. I always felt sorry for your cheeks. Because they couldn't get your ear-locks to lie flat. How smooth they were […] I never put much stock in the Hasidim who curl their ear-locks and think it makes them better than other Jews, but to tell you the truth, I'd

[307] "House of bools" (beit ha-sfarim) is a synonym for library. It is an uncommong phrase n Hebrew as well as in English .Since it's an odd syntax in the original as well, I chose to translated it literally into "House of books" and not figuratively.
[308] Agnon, *Ad henah*, 24.
[309] Weiss, *"Mot Ha-Shekhinah" be-yetsirat S.Y Agnon : keri'ah be-arba'ah sipurim uve-mekorotehemtle*; Elchanan Shilo, *Ha-kabbala beyetzirat Agnon* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2011); Hagbi, *Lashon, he'ader, mishak: yahadut ve-super structuralism bapoetika shel S.Y Agnon*.

> rather live with them than with German. It's an odd thing. When I was in Galicia I wanted to live in Germany, and now that I am in Germany, I wish I were back in Galicia."[310]

This detachment between appearance and identity troubles Agnon, especially in relation to the place of Jew within the German-speaking world. Ironically, German Jews – who saw themselves as German patriots – preserved the library of German culture, while in Germany, people "only think of bread. Houses of wisdom and books that were left for the Germans after the war were transformed into residentials […] and if they find a book or an artwork, they make a fire to keep warm and cook their food."[311]

Whereas in interwar Germany books are used to light fire to keep people warm, Shmuel Yosef carries and preserves his manuscript of *Sefer hamalboshim*, even though he does not plan to complete it. To make it lighter, he trims away the edges of its pages, but at the same time he protects it from the moth, protecting the pages' content and the product of his labor. This traveling book operates as a mechanism of deferral that circles back to the Borgesian ambiguity between the finite and infinite. The book—in the sense of *teyvah*, an ark for words—is a finite space. At the same time, Shmuel Yosef's investigation of the clothed forms of all humankind turns out to be infinite, endlessly deferred. This deferral is twofold: it prevents the completion of the book while at the same time sustaining its physical continuity, represented by the protagonist's persistence in holding onto the manuscript. He carries it from place to place and renders it present in telling the story of his time in Germany. The unfinished book conveys a

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[310] Agnon, *Ad henah*, trans. Hillel Helkin, p. 53-54.

[311] Agnon, *Ad henah*, 24

sense of a portable home, oscillating between the Jewish and world history of clothes, marking its beginning with Adam and Eve.

Engaging with themes of clothes and procrastination, the novella upholds intertextual ties with Agnon's short story "Hamalbosh" ("The Garment,"), published a year earlier (1951), and later included in the collection of *Ad henah.* Demonstrating an aesthetic of deferral, the story tells of a Jewish tailor who is asked to sew a garment for a minister. The minister and his servants await the finished product, but the tailor defers the work time and again, using food and wine as a distraction. In contrast to *Ad henah*, where the aesthetic of deferral is linked to the lack of food in wartime, in "Hamalbosh" the tailor's deferral is expressed through his uncontrollable gluttony and intoxication, leading him to feast in proximity to the unfinished garment and eventually damaging it. As a last resort, he washes the garment in the river, where a large fish eats it, and the tailor, in pursuit of the fish, drowns in the river.

In both texts, an inability to complete a desired product is linked to the intrusion of bodily needs in extreme modes of either unbearable hunger or ungovernable gluttony. The tailor is supposed to take an existing piece of cloth give it a form that would serve the minister. As in *Ad henah,* there is neither a physical description of the minister nor any detail about the kind of garment he had requested, underscoring the interest in questions of representation. The tailor's inability to complete his assigned task of making the garment for the minister echoes Shmuel Yosef's project of *Sefer hamalboshim*, which also revolves around clothing and remains incomplete. Rather than a garment, "Hamalbosh" ultimately depicts a piece of cloth – dirty and shapeless – that turns into food for the fish. In this sense, "Hamalbosh" suggests that the garment– as means of identifying social status and belonging – fails to represent the shape it aims to cover. On the level of the narrative, the desire for the garment moves the plot forward,

but at the same time it results in its absence, and the death of its creator. Unlike the tailor, Shmuel Yosef does not attempt to create new shapes but rather to record and make sense of existing forms. In so doing, he assembles this knowledge - sewing together episodic shapes – attempting to organize it into a new narrative within a book. But ultimately, the project of organizing the shapes into book form fails, mimicking the epic structure of the novella itself. For Agnon, the narrative comes to life by "dressing" words, transforming language into a literary form: "Language and words require a form. You give them form; they live. Without form, they resemble the dead."[312]

Shmuel Yosef's investigation of form prevents him from compiling a historical narrative, lending itself, as we have seen, to an ultimate deferral. This is further emphasized via the analogy with B. H., the narrator's friend and alter-ego, who writes his own magnum opus entitled the *Biology of Events*. Whereas B. H. attempts to find patterns in historical events, Shmuel Yosef's project constitutes an anti-narrative endeavor in which form precedes content. *Sefer hamalboshim* does not attempt to convey a causal narration but weaves historical shapes together in an indexical manner.

At the Threshold: The Library between Departure and Non-Arrival

Haim Beer's book *Hadarim Meleim bisfarim* (*Rooms filled with Books*) pinpoints a clear destination for Mr. Levy's book: Shmuel Yosef's empty rooms. His analysis assumes not only that Mr. Levy's library has left Grimma but also that it will arrive in Palestine. For Be'er, the books' arrival symbolizes hope, affirming the protagonist's successful return to Palestine, his true home. Agnon's empty rooms bring to mind Micha Ullman's renowned installation "The Empty

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[312] S.Y. Agnon, *me'atzmi el 'atzmi* (Jerusalem; Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1975), 259

Library," located at Bebelplatz in Berlin. In reference to *Kristallnacht*, this artistic monument exhibits an empty library, commemorating the burning of the books, both Jewish and non-Jewish, that took place there in 1939. The empty bookcases render the books that were lost virtually present, inviting the viewers to reinstate them in their minds. In light of the horrors that as of that night had yet to occur, *Kristallnacht,* the Empty Library symbolizes not only the books that were incinerated but also the people, evoking the place – and the loss – of the Jew in the European literary tradition.

Whereas Ullman's library must remain empty, scholars have typically interpreted the concluding scene of Agnon's novella as fulfilling a narrative of return, pointing not only to the arrival of the protagonist but also to the miraculous recovery of Dr. Levy's widow. According to Shmuel Yosef, he is granted return to Palestine not due to his own actions but "because of Dr. Levy's books, which needed a home." It will be remembered, however, that the story concludes, however, with the protagonist standing between the walls of two empty rooms, awaiting the library's arrival. The meaning of these empty rooms, I propose, hinges on the books' *absence* and the library's tension between departure and non-arrival. This indeterminate liminality of the library caught in between Palestine and Germany resists the Zionist notion of "the negation of exile, demonstrating the kinship between the spheres. The library's position in between Israel and Germany portrays a twofold relationship: the books needed a new home because they could not have stayed in Germany but at the same time they never arrive, sustaining an breakable connection with place from which they came. Whereas the German-Jewish home, like the city of Berlin in which much of the novella takes place, was violently destroyed, the novel reconstructs a literary account of a Jewish belonging to Germany, one brought into being through the image of the library standing at the threshold.

The rooms in Jerusalem symbolize not an "epic of return," to invoke Sidra Ezrahi's term, but an ironic reproduction of Dr. Levy's library and the rooms in Grimma. The library is moved from Germany to Jerusalem, metaphorically duplicated through the representation of the empty rooms that await it. Whereas the rooms symbolize the library's promised arrival, they nonetheless highlight its absence. Their arrival would further fulfil a (promised) union between the protagonist, the land, and the book. The image of the empty rooms undermines this union, which is central to the Zionist narrative of return, in the sense of futurity and continuity. As a metonym for the entire house, these rooms are not only devoid of books but also residents, in particular a family with children that might ensure the continuity of Jewish life. Though Dr. Levy's widow miraculously recovers, she is not portrayed as a potential match for Shmuel Yosef. The absence of children in this text is crucial, as it relates to a broader phenomenon present in Agnon's oeuvre: whereas the Eretz Israel stories and novels portray a narrative of return – a "vector of desire," in Yigal Shwartz's terms – these narratives do not allow for offspring and continuity.[313] In contrast, the stories taking place in Eastern Europe and Vienna offer diverse possibilities for romance, family, and the establishment of a new generation. Whereas Agnon's depictions of Jewish life in Europe—replete with instances of greed, mental illness, violence, and betrayal—might trouble the reader, the characters in these narratives nonetheless have children, signaling the continuity of Jewish life.[314]

As Alan Mintz has shown, the literary image of Buczacz in Agnon's writing serves as means of "building a town" to commemorate the past.[315] Whereas the Jewish community of

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[313] A prime example is Agnon's first story "Agunot" (1908) – which also awarded him his name – that centers on the notion of the *agunah*, a Jewish woman who can never remarry and have children.

[314] Examples include: Agnon's *A Simple Story*, "In the Prime of Her Life," "A different Face," *A Guest for the Night*, among others.

[315] Mintz, *Ancestral Tales: Reading the Buczacz Stories of S. Y. Agnon*, 1-31.

Buczacz no longer exists, Agnon's stories emphasize the futurity of the Jewish town in the diaspora, represented by the next generation of children. Ironically, those of Agnon's characters that arrive in Palestine, including Shmuel Yosef, unite with the land but do not have children. In this sense, I understand Agnon's "Jewish town" as a project that does not locate Jewish life in one geographical home – either Buczacz or Eretz Israel – but rather offers the library of collected stories, both old and new, as a portable homeland. Thus, Agnon's oeuvre does not portray the Zionist doctrine of "the negation of exile" (*shlilat hagalut*). Instead, it offers a mutual dependency between Palestine/Israel and the diaspora, suggesting a diversity of Jewish life.

The sense of a "Jewish town" in Agnon's fiction is further demonstrated by his use of recurring figures, including Shmuel Yosef and *Sefer hamalboshim*, which reappear in the novel *Mr. Lublin Shop*.[316] Like Dr. Levy's traveling library whose arrival is indefinitely deferred, Agnon's characters migrate among his stories, constituting a liminal "Jewish town" gathered together with a finite – and infinite – library. Agnon's "Jewish town" in this sense is not a geographical location but a compilation of stories. Rather than an inanimate object, this traveling library emerges as a living and breathing collection through people's written tales and oral stories. Circling back to the sources of influence of which Agnon speaks in his Nobel Prize speech, he lists the Jewish scripture and commentators and books in the German language rooted in his soul (*mishoresh nishmati*). He then adds a third component, filling out the portrait of the author as collector:

> There is another kind of influence, which I have received from every man, every woman, every child I have encountered along my way, both Jews and non-Jews. People's conversations and the stories they tell have been engraved onto my heart, and some of them have flown into my pen.

[316] Shmuel Werses, "Dmuyot Ve-Nosyim Hozrim Be-Kitvei S.Y. Agnon," in *S.Y. Agnon Kepshuto* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2000), 36–54.

These three facets of Agnon's travelling library – the Jewish texts, world literature translated into German, and people's stories – do not merely preserve an existing library but warrant the creation of new literary forms. Although the project is rooted in Hebrew, the creation of these new literary forms ultimately awarded Agnon the recognition of an author of *Weltliteratur*, conferred by receiving the Nobel Prize. Whereas Agnon's speech evokes the image of books put to fire, his library is located elsewhere. It is neither an empty bookcase buried under the ground like Ullman's nor an architectural space in Jerusalem, like the library Schocken built in 1935. For Agnon, the library constitutes a liminal space, encompassing the movement between longing and belonging. The library is a wandering figure, and two empty rooms ready to house books do not ensure its arrival. Instead, they highlight the dependency between Palestine and the diaspora and the liminal space emerging between the departure of Dr. Levy's library and its non-arrival.

Conclusion

Towards Linguistic Homelands

In 2014, Reuven (Rubi) Namdar, an Israeli novelist based in New York, received the prestigious Sapir Prize for Literature for his book *The Ruined House* (*Habayit asher harav*). Based on the Man Booker Prize, the Sapir Prize is the most lucrative literary prize in Israel awarded to authors who write in the Hebrew language. As a result of this selection, the following year the rules of the prize changed, determining that only residents of Israel are eligible to submit their books for nomination. The decision to territorialize the prize triggered a fierce national debate concerning the borders of the Hebrew literary book republic, either real or imagined, and its political implications. According to Dror Mish'ani, an author, scholar, and editor, "the prize is for Hebrew literature, but Hebrew literature was not "born" in Israel. Its center today is in Israel … but … the center of Hebrew literature is language rather than geography." In a similar vein, the Publisher Hillik Nadav added that S.Y. published his pioneering collection *At the Handle of the Lock* (*'Al kapot hamn'ul*) while living in Germany, proposing that "the wholeness of Hebrew literature as a language of culture exceeds beyond geographical borders and spreads on the arch of human existence, from the East to the uttermost West."[317] Hiilik Nadav's statement evokes Yehuda Halevi's well known poem "My Heart is in the East and I in uttermost West," discussed in the introduction. Alluding to this poem underscores two crucial issues that have been at the heart of our discussion: first, Hebrew literature written outside of Israel is foundational for of the contemporary literary canon; and second, Halevi's poem represent the trajectory of longing from the diaspora to Zion, determined by cultural Zionism over a century ago.

[317] https://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/literature/.premium-1.2646511

Whereas Namdar, like Yehuda Halevi, is located in the diaspora, his novel does not share the same trajectory of longing – the vector of desire - toward Eretz Israel. Narrated in Hebrew, the plot is set in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, New York and tells the story of a Jewish-American protagonist, a Professor of Comparative Cultures, who suffers from reoccurring dreams about the Jewish past. Highlighting a non-Israeli characteristic of the Hebrew language, the intertwined sub-plot in the novel is written in Midrashic Hebrew, describing the work of the sacrifice at the Temple. While the characters speak English, the novel oscillates between ancient and modern Hebrew, emphasizing the multi-and-inter-lingualism nurturing Jewish life in the diaspora. The drama of this event underlies the ways in which the Hebrew novel continues to impact public discourse surrounding the relationship between language and territory, and to challenge modes of Jewish and Israeli belongings.

The authors at the center of my project – David Vogel, Leah Goldberg, and Shmuel Yosef Agnon - are writing at the threshold, interlinguistically between Hebrew and German, and geospatially, between Palestine and the German speaking world. The threshold – as a Bakhtinian concept – marks an unfinalized point, both spatial and metaphorical, designing particular areas as liminal places, conjoining two different spaces. In reading these novels, the notion of the threshold offers a reconfiguration of the spatial paradigms determining the relationship between Israel and the diaspora, and the dynamics between Hebrew and German. Rather than a longing toward Zion, the novels in this dissertation demonstrate an attachment to the German speaking world. By so doing, these novels do not follow the so called "negation of exile," which is the Zionist doctrine asserting the inherently complicated idea of "one nation, one language, one land." This framing sets forth a different set of questions concerning Jewish belonging that is not about "being at home" but rather about journeying between places, grappling with the possibility

of home-making that is situated at the threshold between diverse languages, cultures, and geographies, both real and imagined.

To understand the dynamics of the threshold in relation to the German-Hebrew interplay, each chapter attended to a foundational trope and novelistic genre through which the Jewish home is imagined: the metropolis and the urban novel, intertextuality and the epistolary novel, and what I call the library novel, that centers of the relationship between Hebrew and *Weltliteratur*. In interrogating this threshold in between Hebrew and German, we have seen that each of these authors asserts different linguistic constellations in their literary negotiations. David Vogel writes in a Germanized Hebrew, meaning, he transliterates German words into Hebrew and mimics German grammar. Leah Goldberg, on the contrary, situates Hebrew and German in proximity to one another, demonstrating moments of untranslatability. In a different way, Agnon offers the possibility of "purifying" Hebrew, meaning, he translated German names and places into Hebrew, only to be later translated back into German as a way to enter the canon of world literature.

My curiosity about the making of home in relation to Jewish longings and belongings began in many ways – not through literature - but in my grandmother living room. My grandmother, a Jewish-Polish refugee from Warsaw, was a seamstress, a skill that saved her life during World War II. After the war, she and my grandfather came to Israel not because they were Zionists but because they had no other home to go back to. They lived in a small apartment in Tel Aviv, where my grandmother's clients would come to have their measurements taken. After they were done, the ladies would stay for *kuchen* and tea, transforming in those moments the plain living room into a multilingual Salon. A mixture of Polish, Yiddish, Russian French, English, and German would fill the air, creating a European island at the center of the scorching

Tel Aviv. Ironically, the only person to whom they spoke Hebrew was me, the monolingual Israeli. In that salon, I would see my grandmother come to life. Suddenly, she was no longer an illiterate immigrant struggling with the Israeli heat and making ends meet, but rather a sophisticated woman immersed in languages and cultures I knew nothing about.

When I moved to Chicago, I began exploring this discrepancy between language and place not only intellectually, but also from the perspective of my own my migration. Like my grandmother, I live in between worlds, languages, and geospatial belongings. I am raising a child whose mother tongue is different than mine, working daily to instill in her the love of the language that is home for me, seeing how it changes for her through multilingual interactions. Like the authors whose novels I examine, I, too, needed to travel, to "self-exile" and distance myself from the national context, in order to understand the possibilities of Hebrew to live – and flourish – in the diaspora, reconfiguring not only the concept of home but also the very questions pertaining to geospatial and interlinguistic modes of belonging in the Jewish and Israeli imagination of home. In this sense, this study participate in the same discourse it aims to explore, underlying new kinds of inquiries surrounding the impact of Hebrew as a deterritorialized language.

My aim in this project, as I hope to have shown, is to push against the notion of arrival embedded in Zionist thinking. The idea of arrival imagines home as a finite point, a place one come to rest at the end of a journey. These novels, however, offer a different configuration of home, where the liminal space between departure and non-arrival constitutes the force that pushes life forward. Through this lens, the possibility of arrival does not mark an end. It is only the beginning.

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