

**REPRESENTATIONS OF THE OTHER IN
MODERN HEBREW LITERATURE**

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I dedicate this work to the memory of my parents and Swami Nisreyasananda.

Representations of the Other in Modern Hebrew Literature

This study posits that the concept of the Other is central in modern Hebrew literature. It traces its beginnings in Jewish thought to the Bible, and connects the creation and Eden narratives to contemporary psychoanalytic thought on ego formation and the Other. It considers the importance of the figure of the talush to the focus on the Other in modern Hebrew literature and suggests that the conflicts of the collective versus the individual that are expressed in the early stages of the literature do not disappear as it moves into the present day, but are discernible in different guise and can be seen in the burden of group consciousness which besets Hebrew authors and vitiates their attempts to configure the unique. The feminized Other is seen as especially important in this regard because of the collective textual and thus social repression of women in the tradition. Its presentation is thus taken as a useful measure of the successful resolution of individual as opposed to group narration. The modern Hebrew texts analyzed, beginning with a poem by the late Haskhalah poet, Y.L. Gordon through D. Baron, M.Y. Berdichevski, A. Kahana-Carmon, S.Y. Agnon, A. Appelfeld and ending with a novel by the contemporary Israeli writer, D. Grossman, support this decision as the collective is subjugated only in Kahana-Carmon's text where the feminine is fully realized. The thesis examines the ways the eight narratives grapple with the awareness of the Other, and focuses on the aspects, including body, war and language, that are highlighted variously in each text. The struggles of modern Hebrew writers are also viewed as part of the difficulties entailed in the denotative endeavors of writing itself which strives towards the always elusive Other that predates ego-formation and thus individuality itself. It is proposed that this intensifies the tensions about the Other in modern Hebrew literature which derive from its specific cultural heritage.

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SUMMARY

This work examines representations of and interactions with the Other in modern Hebrew literature. The Other is viewed both as a philosophically/psychoanalytically and socially constructed notion, and is placed within the context of some Jewish perceptions of the Other and of Otherness. In its philosophical and psychoanalytic rendering, the Other is taken to portray the individual's sense of loss of Self which becomes especially searing at the first moment of self-awareness, which is an awareness of Self as separate, and thus object and Other. The idea posited here is that that sense of loss performs as a determinate throughout the life of the individual, where the ongoing desire is cathected onto the moment of separation, and is bonded onto the trace of the sense of the all-encompassing unity which predates that experience. The importance of this to the present study is the idea, appropriated from Lacan and later commentators on his work, that language is the marker of the final and most excruciating rent from the world of unity and wholeness. This is important in the present context inasmuch as the writing of texts is seen as an attempt to grasp at the sense of primal oneness by way of that which is most other to it, through language. The social construal of the Other is taken very much from within the world of Jewish thought, as its focus is on woman as Other, and on the Talmudic view of woman's voice as abomination or lewdity.

The first chapter is an introduction which explains the ways in which the idea of the Other is relevant to the study of literature in general, and to Jewish literature in particular. It mentions the texts that are explored in the work, and their relationship to the topic of the Other. The second chapter briefly positions the elements of the Other referred to above within

the Jewish world-view, beginning with a reading of the biblical creation and Eden stories. From there the work moves into analyses of various expressions of Otherness in individual modern Hebrew literary texts, starting from the late Haskhalah poetic saga *Qotzo shel Yud* by Y.L. Gordon, and ending with the contemporary novel *The Smile of the Lamb* by David Grossman.

Qotzo shel Yud, and its companion piece in this study, *Mishpacha* by Devorah Baron are seen as examples of the stilling of women's voices in traditional Jewish society, and their consequent oppression by the textually formulated world of dominant masculine religiosity. The novel *Miryam*, written by M.Y. Berdichevski, is a portrayal of the absence of woman's voice in the east European Jewish world. Miryam, the subject of the novel, is silent through most of the narrative, but even though she is silent and passive she has fearful effects upon many lives in the lustful male world around her. Miryam's silence and inaction combined with her effect serves as a statement about the intensity of masculine fears which initiated the suppression of woman's vocality. Amaliah Kahana-Carmon's *Ne'ima Sasson Writes Poems* depicts a young Israeli woman who comes to adulthood by learning to claim her own voice, and finally knowing that it is independent of the world of the masculine.

Shmuel Yosef Agnon's two works selected here are *A Guest for the Night* and *Ad Hena*. *A Guest for the Night* is the portrait of a disintegrating and misconstrued Jewish world in the wake of the upheaval of World War I. The novel illustrates the misconstrual in various shades of Otherness, beginning with the amputation of bodily parts, and right through the dissolution of traditional values. *Ad Hena* is the story of the narrator's adventures in wartime

Germany, though its temporality is deceptive, and its mode is full of deflection and transposition. In both stories woman is configured as a silent, but magical redemptive agency.

The next reading focuses on the Holocaust or, rather, on the ravages it wreaks on the lives of its survivors. Aharon Appelfeld's *Bartfuss the Immortal* is the story of a man who is all closed up, and tight, and almost inwardly dead, as he walks around and lives in Tel Aviv in the post-Holocaust period. The only succor he finds is in things that approximate the sense of primal Mother consciousness. His quelling of the horrors have repressed his whole being and the women in his life are useful or desirable only in so far as they are silent vehicles of receptivity. He is finally brought out of his stupor by a woman who is the antithesis of the murmuring inchoate female, a woman very much attached to the world of culture and separated from the consuming bonds of the desire for prelinguistic completeness.

The final text examined is David Grossman's *The Smile of the Lamb*. This novel brings to the surface the primary concerns of the study, as it deals both with story telling and fictivity, and with woman as a feminized presence of difference, albeit not fully realized in the work. The tensions in *The Smile of the Lamb*, between the nation and the individual, between competing nationalities and ethnic cultures, and modes of narration, as well as the striving to find a way to the 'truth' through the word, encapsulate in great measure the subjects of inquiry in this dissertation.

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**THE RENT IN THE TEXT:
THE OTHER AS LANGUAGE AND RUPTURE**

*The centre which I cannot find
Is known to my unconscious mind
I have no reason to despair
Because I am already there.*

"The Labyrinth" - W.H. Auden

As to the question of the nature and nascence of modern Hebrew literature, the present work shortcircuits it and chooses the simple statement that the 1880s are the beginning of modern Hebrew literature, and that *belles lettres* written from this time on in Hebrew are modern Hebrew (*belles lettres*) literature. This position takes S.Y. Abramovitch's successful return to writing his fiction in Hebrew (he had abandoned a similar enterprise in the 1860s), and the publication in the 1880s of works by writers such as Berdichewski, Frishman and Peretz who "molded the new era,(..) and pointed to the change that began to show itself in the Hebrew literature of the eighties,"¹ as the defining moment in the creation of this literature. In doing so, much that is important is discounted and many valid debates unacknowledged. The questions not accounted for here range from historical\cultural periodization (the advent of the Modern), to the continuity of Hebrew literature and the illusory notion of the specificity of its modern incarnation, to the similarly oft undesirable isolation of Hebrew literature from other Jewish literature, and the many further discussions begged by these issues in their turn. In that vein the concept of *belles lettres* is taken in its conservative meaning and is not destabilized or considered. It is the very complexity of the subjects of modern Hebrew

¹ Shaked, Gershon *haSipporet halvrit: 1880-1970*, v.1, *baGolah*, Keter and haKibbutz haMeuchad, 1978. p. 26.

literature and the construction of *genre* (even that a questionable term) that leads me to simplify the dating as far as possible and to use a falsely girded literary term in a work to which the debates surrounding them are not relevant.

Modern Hebrew literature, which is distinguished from its predecessors by its secular character and its absorption of European literary forms, began in central and eastern Europe in the 1880s.² It is the product of the Jewish Enlightenment, the Haskalah, which germinated in Berlin in the second half of the eighteenth century and spread eastwards reaching (in broad terms) the Russian domain by the 1830s and 40s. The distinctive feature of the Haskalah as an Enlightenment movement was its focus on communal education, which served as its ideological core.

This focus found its expression in the thematics of the new literature, where the early works drew on the school of Russian Social Realism as the formal vehicle for their didactically-directed social satire. But the communal concern itself speaks to a tension that is inextricably bound in the ideology of the Haskalah, and which continues in modern Hebrew literature right up to the present.

One of the central assertions of the Haskalah was that the nature of Jewish life under Rabbinic-religious rule, where the community was all and the individual counted for nought, was stultifying to the Jewish creative and vital spirit.³ It aimed to free the individual *qua*

² See first chapter here.

³ See especially Halkin, *op cit.*, pp. 74-99.

individual of the ropes of the communal.⁴ Yet its concern was framed within the community whose privilege it sought to overturn, and it was the group, or the many, that its discourse addressed. The early works of modern Hebrew fiction, then, spoke from within a mode of the general or representative. There was scant, if any, portrayal of the uniquely constituted or individual.

In a series of twelve lectures about the development of modern Hebrew literature, Simon Halkin⁵ speaks of the tension between the acknowledgement of the individual as individual, and the primacy of the concept of *Kenneset Yisrael* in Jewish life (The People of Israel as a whole, as an entity, and as a religious concept), where communal consciousness was entrenched in a culture whose cast was religious at base, as one of the great dilemmas confronting the new Hebrew writers. The Haskhalah, in whose spirit these authors wrote, called for the reemergence of the Jew of flesh, blood and feeling impounded up till now, in its view, by the hegemony of traditional (and sacred) texts on the community. Halkin says these are the texts of "A monolithic Jewry that speaks in the name of the entire group."⁶ The new literature, while not asking "the reader to forgo religious and traditional values" demanded nonetheless a recognition of the reader's own human value, without an *a priori*

⁴ For a discussion on "the process undermining Jewish exclusivism," see Michael Meyer *Jewish Identity in the Modern World*, University of Washington Press, Seattle & London, 1990, pp. 10-32 (the quote above, p. 17 there)

⁵ These were given at a Graduate seminar at the University of Tel Aviv in Winter 1973, collected by Zippora Cagan, and published in 1980 as *Conventions and Crises in Hebrew Literature* by The Bialik Institute.

⁶ *ibid.* : p. 21. The translations are my own.

reference to supreme powers." ⁷ Halkin adds that although this pressure (of hallowed past texts) is also, "the explanation of the conflicts of world literature (*sic*) since the Renaissance (...) In Hebrew literature this transition from the monolithic ...to the inner conflicts in man's own soul is much more difficult than in European literature (whose models were the classics, and thus not sacred)." ⁸ Halkin ends this part of the discussion with the sense that modern Hebrew writers might never free themselves of this conundrum because of the cultural axiom that says "I, as a person, as a Jew, am responsible for the communal. And thus for the survival of Jewish collective." Thus "Hebrew literature has been ceaselessly obsessed with the problems of the Jewish collective, and therefore it is difficult for it to part from the literary traditions of the past at whose core always lay the survival of the collective Jew."⁹

The closing years of last century, however, signalled a change of emphasis, heralded by the publication of M.Y. Berdichewski's two novellas - *מחנים* and *עורבא פרח*. ¹⁰ While still set within the social quests and questions of the time, these stories draw interior individual portraits that had been mostly absent from the literature until that time. ¹¹

⁷ *ibid.* : p. 22

⁸ *op cit.* Comments in parentheses are mine.

⁹ *ibid.* : p. 23.

¹⁰ Dan Miron sees these two works as a turning point in modern Hebrew fiction. See Miron, Dan *haMifne baSipporet haIvrit haHadasha al-pi "Mahanayim"* in Z. Cagan ed., *Hagut veSipporet beYetzirat Berdichewski*, Haifa University, 1981.

¹¹ Gershon Shaked, *haSipporet haIvrit: 1880-1970*, v.1, *baGolah*, Keter and haKibbutz haMeuchad, 1978, p. 167:

ברדיצ'בסקי תבע את עלבונה של הספרות היפה...ואת זכותו של היחיד, הפרט, להיות נושא ראוי של יצירה עברית. עם זאת יודע הוא מה קשה ליחיד, הקשור בטבורו לסביבתו ולמורשת-תרבותו, לעקור עצמו מהן.

Berdichevski's work led the way for many who followed him, and in the words of his younger contemporary, Gnessin, "described the rent (of the times) in all its force,"¹² which was the torn cry of the individual attempting to break the chains of the collective even while imprisoned in its grip. The knot at the core of the Haskalah came to expression in Berdichevski's writing, and continued as a thematic in the ensuing stages of modern Hebrew literature where for obvious reasons the communal was increasingly phrased in a locution of national politics.

For the Hebrew writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and their like-minded contemporaries, the oppression of the collective (within their own psyches and as an actual outside entity) was a lived experience. They were a small group which wrote for a small audience, and were abominated by the majority of their potential audience. Although the majority of adult Jewish males in eastern Europe was to some extent literate in Hebrew, their literacy was not sufficient to read the 'new' writing.¹³ Those who were able to read these works were, for a considerable period, the staunchly traditional and religious of the community who would not abide the use of the Holy Tongue¹⁴ for secular purposes, and indeed did not abide secularism at all. The *maskhilim* and those who later followed their

¹² *ibid.* : p. 205.

¹³ See notes on Jewish literacy in eastern Europe in the nineteenth century in Chapter Three here.

¹⁴ It is common belief, though extremely permeable as statement, that Hebrew was used for purely religious or pragmatic purposes from ca. 200 C.E. till modern times. In any case, it had the status of a Holy Language which would be revived only with the advent of the Messiah. Thus its use for mundane purposes was abhorred.

course were considered by the establishment with its religious authority as idolaters, were distanced from the community, and were often even chased away from the settlements. Often they left of their own free will seeking the 'fresh air' of an outside world. But the desired 'new world' was repeatedly unwelcoming and, in any case, they themselves were conditioned to collectivity and unable to forgo communal sanction, and were thus left in a state of limbo, suspended between all worlds, with the authors embodying their internal literary struggle. From this strife was created a figure that became almost ubiquitous in various forms in the new literature, the figure of the תלוש, the uprooted or dispossessed.

The figure of the תלוש¹⁵ as such has received much attention in Hebrew literary criticism,¹⁶ and especially by way of the work of Y.D. Berkowitz, where this representation is first defined.¹⁷ It is important in the current context inasmuch as it speaks of collectivity which was set against the ideological thrust towards individuality, and was opposed to the

¹⁵ The term is taken from the title of the short story, תלוש, Yitzchak Dov Berkowitz, first publication, Tsiyur Odessa, 1904.

¹⁶ For an example of the exposition of this figure see Simon Halkin, *Modern Hebrew Literature, from the Enlightenment to the Birth of the State of Israel: Trends and Values*, Schocken Books, New York, 2nd ed. 1970, pp. 87-88, and elsewhere.

¹⁷ For work relating directly to Berkowitz's *Talush*, see Avraham Holtz, *Isaac Dov Berkowitz: Voice of the Uprooted*, Cornell University Press, 1973, and מבוא: קוים בהתפתחות על יצירת י.ד. ברקוביץ הביקורת, pp. 7-52; Dov Sadan, המרחק הנורא, pp. 67-73; Simon Halkin, המשיח בימות, pp. 74-81, in *Y.D. Berkowitz: A Selection of Critical Essays on his Literary Prose*, ed. Avraham Holtz, Am Oved, Tel Aviv, 1976. See also Gershon Shaked, על ברקוביץ והסיפור הארץ-ישראלי התלישות החדשה: על, *Moznayim*, 11, 6 Cheshvan, 1960, pp.431-438. Holtz (1976) says:

The central issue that recurs in almost every critical essay or research that deal with Berkowitz's writing is the *telishut*, and by extension the *telushim*. It is not at all surprising for one of his most perfected works is called *Talush*. One can say that the term *talush* was received and accepted as a "technical term" in modern Hebrew literature, thanks to this novella and the criticism written about it. (p. 9)

construction and acknowledgement of the speaking subject as voice. The ideational ground on which the figure of the *talush* rests, has important implications for the perception and expression of otherness in modern Hebrew literary consciousness. It has at its base a wider notion of otherness which is an important structural element in the constitution both of this figure, and of modern Hebrew literature as a whole. Attempts at the integration of the 'other' comprise one of the building blocks of this literature, and are evident in its linguistic, formal and thematic concerns. They manifest throughout its history - in the Hebrew writings of the Yiddish-speaking Mendele and right through to the present-day, where they appear in the work of contemporary Israeli writers like Amalia Kahana-Carmon and David Grossman.¹⁸

For all the early and some of the later attention given the dispossessed, the תלוש, the Other, its most extreme example has more often than not been ignored in the literature. This prime exemplar is the Jewish woman whose voice and specificity have till very recently only sounded lightly in the new texts. Her absence is peculiar in a literature where the construct of the תלוש and its extensions is a recurring thematic, while she is society's most marginalized figure. She was dispossessed early on, way before the first *maskhilim* suffered the same fate. She was uprooted from communal discourse and authority, merely (despite all *apologia*) supplement and subject to, but was neither agent in, nor securely rooted in her status in the community.¹⁹ Arguably then, as voice and image she could have contributed

¹⁸ See Nurit Govrin in *Telishut ve'Hitchadshut: haSipporet halvrit be'Reshit haMe'a haEsrin bagolah u'v'Eretz Yisrael*, Tel Aviv, Misrad haBitachon, 1985, p. 21:

This figure not only did not disappear, but even became stronger, and appears in various incarnations, in Hebrew literature right to the present. (translation mine).

¹⁹ See Chapter Three, following.

to the new literature's engagement with the collective/individual nexus, as the textual *Knesset Yisrael* to which she was appended was not of her making nor did she partake of its elaboration, and in her oppression she may have therefore remained inwardly more free of its constraints. Yet woman is hardly given primacy in the new writing, and therein lies both a riddle and a testament to the efficacy of conditioning. The woman remained Other to the newly named Others.

The object of this study is to frame an underlying concept of the Other in modern Hebrew literature, to briefly define it in terms of its Jewish historio-cultural antecedents, and to see it as it weaves through the literature as the representation of the general in battle with the expression of the specific, the function of the representation of woman in this and especially as pertaining to the acts of language and writing themselves.

Though the research concentrates on the function of the psychological, linguistic and literary perspectives of 'otherness' in modern Hebrew literature, and sees the Other as an underlying assumption and psychological notion that is primary to the development of modern Hebrew literature from 1880 onwards, the conceptual emphasis of Otherness in Jewish consciousness antedates the modern period by many centuries. Otherness is fundamental to Jewish thinking, as an awareness of distinction forms the basis of its definition of the world. The order by which the world stands, the order by which it is created and upheld by its Creator, is contingent upon separateness and distinction. This separateness is repeatedly celebrated and emphasized in religious observances and ceremonies. God is blessed for separating the holy from the mundane, Israel from the nations, darkness from light. In echo of this Divine activity the life of the Jew is attuned to the celebration of division: The dietary

laws distinguish between the clean, and thus permitted, animals, and the unclean, and thus forbidden, animals; the ritual of the festivals focuses on the distinction of those days from all others, and the Sabbath, which is central to Judaism, is built upon a construct of difference in the continual pausing it imbues on the world of activity and ordinariness.

The Hebrew word 'other' in its plural inflection אחרים is emphasized in the Bible in its reference to 'following other gods,' signifying idolatry (*Deut.* 5:7; 6:14, and elsewhere). The term is mentioned by early Talmudic scholars, who appropriated the religious implication of the term, and employed it as an epithet for Elisha ben Abuyah, a Tannaitic convert to Hellenistic thinking, who for this heresy became known as אחר, or Other (*Hagiga* 15), and the term דבר אחר is used to refer to pig or pork (*Shabbat* 129). In later mystical writings the words אחרה אחרת, The Other Side,²⁰ denote that which is evil, wrong and other. The phrase is associated with the demonic. Thus the word Other - and with it the construct of Otherness - has a specific meaning in Hebrew which derives from its historical usage in Jewish literature. The religious semantic residue of its earlier incarnations still obtains as the literature moves into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and becomes secular modern Hebrew literature.

²⁰ According to Gershom Scholem, *Sefer ha-Bahir* categorizes the "*Sefirah Gevurah*, as "the left hand of the Holy One blessed be He," and as "an attribute whose name is evil" and which has many offshoots in the forces of judgement, the constricting and limiting powers in the universe." From this, via Isaac the Blind, "the doctrine gradually developed which saw the source of evil in the superabundant growth of the power of judgement, which was made possible by the substantification and separation of the attribute of lovingkindness. Pure judgement, untempered by any mitigating admixture, produced from within itself the *sitra ahra* ("the other side")" which is "the domain of dark emanations and demonic powers...(and) henceforth no longer an organic part of the World of Holiness and the *Sefirot*." (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, v. 10, Keter, Jerusalem, 1971, p. 583) The relevance of the *sitra ahra* to the present discussion will be elaborated in the next chapter.

As mentioned above, the Haskhalah, or Enlightenment, of which this secularized literature is an outgrowth, added a new dimension to the conceptual cluster of Otherness within the psyche of European Jewry that was both different from and kin to the original application of the term. Socio-historical economic circumstances had, throughout generations of residence in foreign majority communities, already rendered a pronounced 'us and them' awareness an axiomatic European-Jewish psychological construct. With the advent of the Haskhalah - which coincided strangely, or maybe not so strangely, with the rise of Chasidism,²¹ a new religious force which also had powerful implications pertaining to the comprehension and social statements of Otherness²² - a noticeable shift in 'us/them' alliances occurred: those who were swept along with the spirit of the Enlightenment became the new idolaters, who 'followed other gods.'

Chapter Two of this work examines the Other as it appears in what I call a mythico-elementary text - the Bible. The theme of exile is pivotal in Jewish consciousness, and the opening verses of the Bible and the stories examined in these chapters lay the groundwork as foundational tales of banishment and exclusion that repeat in protean guise in the historical and cultural narrative of Jewry. The world of will and action comes into being after the exile from Eden; Abraham's lived acceptance of the Creator begins when he leaves his homeland;

²¹ For accounts of the period, which comes in the wake of 1648-49, and the Sabbatean debacle, see Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, and elsewhere. David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*, Chapter Four, (Schocken Books, New York, 1986) sees the rise of Chasidism and the Haskhalah movement as a struggle for leadership in the mid and east European Jewish world.

²² In socio-religious terms the Chasidim became Other to normative Judaism: their religious practice was barred and seen as heretical, and they became societal outcasts.

the twelve tribes and the Israelite entity are structured by the Egyptian exile, and exile is implicated in many of the notable events in Jewish history.

But exile itself has a strong psychological component which the present study considers primary to the experience of being, and important to the act of writing. The presentation of the Eden story speaks to this notion of exile, while its relationship to the Other is explicated later in this chapter. Chapter Two constructs the Other in terms of theoretical material pertaining to the notion of 'otherness' in general. The readings operate in the realm of the a-historical, engaging the creation and the Eden story as they appear in the biblical corpus. Creation is seen as an account of primary soul exile, while the Eden tale is read not as a unique story, but the rendering of the repeated moment of Self/Other nascence of subjectivity, from which all sense of self, suffering and other originates. The notion of primary exile is especially interesting when reviewing the work of Jewish writers for whom exile is a cultural heritage and whose sense of historical and social experience is textually driven.

The analysis of modern Hebrew literature begins in Chapter Three with a late Haskhalah poem,²³ Yalag's *קוצו של יוד*, written in 1875, and *משפחה*, written by Devorah Baron in the 1930s. These texts look at the way in which the feminized Jewish Other is used to constitute and reinforce Jewish masculine identity, and its sense of potency, by means of a negating apposition achieved by the exploitation of accepted religious dicta that are framed as Halakhah, a collective and ongoing Jewish male enterprise, and readings of that Halakhah. As mentioned earlier, woman does not figure prominently in תלוש literature and criticism.

²³ Again, as I did in the opening paragraph for modern Hebrew literature, and for the sake of convenience in the present context, I take the position that Hebrew literature 1750-1881 is Haskhalah literature.

Yalag is the first to acknowledge the extent of her dispossession, in a work that determines her subaltern status ²⁴ the result of Halakhic declarations that are supported, manipulated and even subverted at the hands of Rabbinic scholars. Deborah Baron's story, written some sixty years later, addresses the same issues as the poem, but here the tone and its effects is subtler, smaller and almost deliberately restrained in a sound that is objective correlative to the silenced woman's voice within that Jewish world construction. Both protagonists, Bat-shua in the poem and Dinah in the story, are persecuted by the collective and their ends suggest there is no way out for the dispossessed. Bat-shua fortunes fall to utter penury so that she is left to the mercy of strangers for her meager livelihood, and Dinah is embraced by the fold when Halakhic prescriptions fell themselves and a letter on her Divorce Writ is fouled. Their stories are pertinent both to the depiction of woman as silenced Other, apart from the group, yet prey to it, and to the collective/Individual brace as metaphor for the *talush's* hapless quest which is answered both from within and without with the uncompromising collective cry of 'fit in or be forever damned.'

Other writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who specifically address peripheral woman include Ya'acov Steinberg ²⁵ and Micha Yosef Berdichewski. Berdichewski's last fictional output *מיראם* is the subject of the next analysis. The novel is interesting in view of the elusive yet dominant presence of Miryam, the subject of its title. Voiceless woman is expressed by way of a mediating and distanced narrative voice, and as an eventful, causative presence that prompts everyone's never-ending activities but her own,

²⁴ For an expansion of the position of the subaltern, see Chapter 3 following.

²⁵ "בת הרב; העוררת" and elsewhere.

which are merely an expression of her as subject ²⁶ in the subordinate legal sense. The narrative shape too, comprising compounded and fractured religious and folk-based narrative styles in an adapted Berdichevskian style, combines with Miryam's most present absence as illustrative statement of its own barred access to woman and her expressivity. Unlike the two earlier texts, however, *Miryam* ends on the beginning of a woman's note as Miryam, the subject, initiates an independent call for identity, when she goes to Dr. Koch, the town doctor and asks to work as his aide, thereby moving, albeit not in an altogether satisfactory manner, from mere marital commodity, to somewhat autonomous being, as we shall see below. ²⁷

While the novel, and especially in its relationship between content and form, voices Jewish woman's situation in a world of male textual hegemony, the heterogenous textual mode speaks too of the *talush's* need for innovative discourse that would break through the old. The voice of the collective need be at least fractured for the individual to show through its cracks. Variations on the theme of *telishut* and alienation weave through the tale, but no happy resolutions are presented. Dr. Koch is a Jewish doctor who stands apart from the collective as he was taken into the army as a young boy and is schooled neither in the texts nor in communal pressure. It is because of this that he is a suitable avenue for Miryam's escape from the community. On the other hand, Dr. Koch's own escape is neither achieved by an act of will, nor is it total. It is brought about by his subjection to another collective

²⁶ subject, adj. (often with *to*) under rule, government, jurisdiction, or control: owing allegiance; under obligation: subordinate: subservient: dependent: liable: exposed: prone, disposed: cognisable: dependent upon condition or contingency: (*Spens.*) underlying, spread out below: (*Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*, London, 1952, p. 1099)

²⁷ See analysis of the story, Chapter Four of this work.

(the Russian army), and his life is still involved with the community, if only in a professional capacity. Miryam herself follows the route of the *maskhilim*; a road not as closed to her as it is to the men in the community, for she is never sworn on Jewish texts. She finds the courage to make her move by reading Russian literature. In this she is foil to another character who plays a part in the novel's denouement, Batlon, the *maskhil*. He is a teacher of Russian, who through his association with her, goes quite mad and falls into a crazed state of linguistic incomprehensibility. The Jewish male figure who vows faithfulness to other texts loses textuality, while those same texts inspire the female figure to action, though they do not guarantee joyous freedom, as will be seen in the discussion on *Miryam*.

The third section that deals with the feminized Other looks at *Ne'ima Sasson Writes Poems*, a short story written by Amalia Kahana-Carmon in the early nineteen sixties. Viewed in a genealogical relationship to the three earlier texts, this work provides a culmination of the quest for woman's voice and identity formation. Right from the start the narrative utterance issues directly, and in the unmediated first-person, from the Ne'ima Sasson of the story's focus, herself an inscriber of words in the form of poetry. Though her story opens with a supposed romantic obsession, and continues with a presumed illness attendant on her infatuation with a male teacher, whose desired but withheld validation she sees as her sole strength and inspiration, it ends with her knowing what she had always known, "the secret that makes the fainthearted strong."²⁸ - That all he ever was to her was a reflection of herself, constituted by her best, repressed parts, the unadmitted shadow of the so-called

²⁸ *Nei'ma Sasson Writes Poems*, Amalia Kahana-Carmon, in *Ribcage: Israeli Women's Fiction*, ed. Carol Diamant and Lily Ratok, Hadassah, 1994. See the analysis of the story itself, Chapter Five following.

masculine (*animus*),²⁹ long appropriated in the world by male-identity claiming devices. Ne'ima emerges victorious; knows she is a poet and hears her own voice. Her victory is punctuated by the circularity of the printed text, where the end is the repeated retrospective first-person narration of the fictively present beginning, and in doing so opens the text to an altogether different reading. As the narrative turns in on itself, the repeated words spoken in the first person break the linear hierarchy with a new statement of agency, and propose a strong 'feminine,' or at least alternative, patterning.

This story, written in the by an Israeli-born writer in the sixties is interesting in its relationship to the dilemmas confronting the earlier, European-born, writers mentioned above. Ne'ima finds her own voice in a text made up of a good number of biblical borrowings, and punctuated by the insistent exultation of the Law - "For Thy Law in my delight," inscribed on her school gates. She does this despite the force of the collective. She encompasses the chaotic, and understands that the Law is hers and not an external thing. She can transform its words, as she does in her use of biblical usage, and use them as she will. Her creativity and her voice are her freedom, all the rest is subordinate. She incorporates the Other, and does not wage battle with either its external or internal manifestations. Whereas the *talush* hoped for some rational victory over the collective, this young girl manages to move beyond it. The solution in this story is achieved in the world of the personal, with little reference to the corporate. Ne'ima's tale is thus quite different. This representation of a young Sephardi girl consumed by the romance of wanting to write poetry in a religious single-sex high school in

²⁹ The terms *shadow* and *animus* are drawn from the work of Carl Gustav Jung. See C.G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, v.9., Part II, *Aion*, trans. R.F.C. Hull, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, 2nd edition, 1968.

the Israeli context of the sixties is an appropriate modern-day incarnation of the *talush*, complete with all the features of dispossession, succeeds where her predecessors did not because she is not fettered by the communal and does not logically conceive her battle, but learns to rest in the chaos, and comes to know the Law within her.

The remaining chapters in this work examine narratives about exile, war, death and disintegration. All respond to the demands of the collective, either speaking in its voice, cowering under its pressure or resisting it, or talking of its destruction and then ostensibly presaging its idealized recovery. The first two are written by Shmuel Yosef Agnon and are about the First World War and its effects.³⁰ The next text is by Aharon Appelfeld, and is about the effects of the Holocaust on its survivors, while the final one is by David Grossman and is about the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. In all these texts the feminine is set up as an Other who either participates in an otherworldly and questionable redemption (Agnon), thwarts and alternatively points the way to a type of individuation (Appelfeld), or even used as an emblem for the Ashkenazi-Israeli establishment (Grossman).

S.Y. Agnon's *A Guest for the Night* is a destabilized version of the tale of the prodigal son. The narrator, whose biography is melded with the author's, and who merges his identity with *Knesset Yisrael*, returns to his Galician birthplace, Shibush (a metathesized version of Agnon's home-town Buczacz), and stays there for almost a year. He finds his hometown and Jewish community in ruins. Everything is in a state of misconstruction brought upon, it would seem, by the war. He attempts to restore some of Shibush's remembered glory by

³⁰ This is only the apparent signified in *על הנגה*, where displacement takes place, and the War described is really WWII. See that chapter for an expansion of this theme.

revivifying its old *Beit Midrash*, but is unsuccessful whereupon, thanks to his wife who sends him a ticket, he returns to the Land of Israel, and the story ends by looking forwards to a perfected Messianic world when all Israel, its texts, people, places and artifacts, will be one in an idealized unity. Set against the perfection of the end, which enters the text as a *deus ex machina* and is mere vision, is the textual imagery of the fictive present in *Shibush*, which is replete with amputation, maladaptation, grafting, death and malappropriation. And despite the reiterated assertions in the novel about the desirability of the Land of Israel, one cannot forget that the narrator finds his way to his old home after the twice repeated destruction of his present home, which is symbolically linked to the destruction of the two Temples, and is thus connected to the Land itself.³¹ These factors do not suggest a harmonious relationship to the Jewish collective of this world.³² It seems that resolution can only be found in the realm of the otherworldly. His awareness of communal need keeps him from his work as a writer (although he is quite amenable to this escape), and communal need makes the very act of writing, which does not lead to any practical end, questionable. The narrator comforts himself saying that the redemption of the world is dependent on self redemption,³³ the intertextual reference assuaging any collective/self conflict.³⁴ His wife, who is not part of the *Shibush* world, is bound in his need for repair and reappropriation of home, community

³¹ For an exposition of this theme see Chapter Six here.

³² For an comment on Agnon's ambivalence to the Collective, see Gershon Shaked *hasipporet haivrit: 1880-1980*, v.2, *baAretz u'vaTefutza*, Keter and hakibbutz hameuchad, 1983, pp 230-1.

³³ Chapter Six here.

³⁴ "Whoever saves one soul saves the entire world."

and past perfection, which is realized through the narratological magic of the ending. She is part of the process of redemption, but is an undelineated, prototypic presence in the text.

Like *Ne'ima Sasson Writes Poems*, this novel is concerned with writing and literature. The narrator idealizes some form of writing in which community and individual are unified, and the author is the holy scribe (*sofer*) of old, servant to the Divine.³⁵ He exonerates his scribal activity by deciding that all vocations, and his among them, were indelibly fixed at creation. But this does not solve the difficulty of writing itself and the text grapples with the problems of language and expressivity, and is experimental and associative in form. Agnon blends religious texts in his narratives, but as Shaked points out, he bends them to his own purposes,³⁶ searching for a voice loyal to both the collective and the self.

Ad Hena, also written by Agnon, and the subject of the analysis in Chapter Seven, is the story of First World War Germany, though this temporality probably serves as displacement, standing as surrogate for the Second World War.³⁷ The narrator of this text is himself in a state of actual displacement, and the plot impetus spins on his ongoing search for lodgings in a world contorted by war's inversions. His quest for a place to live becomes bound with the need to find a home for a deceased friend's library, and both problems are ultimately solved, as in the previous work, by the twin constructs of woman and Eretz Yisrael. An idealized, redemptive feminine possibility hovers over this story and the narrator's pursuit of a place in the world. Although it does not materialize in the tale itself,

³⁵ This a recurring theme in Agnon's writing.

³⁶ *ibid.* : p. 166.

³⁷ See footnote 12.

this feminine is anticipated at the end as he builds a house in expectation of the arrival in Israel of a German Jewish widow (who in Germany was not a suitable companion because she was ill, but later, after his return to Israel, recovers) and her dead husband's library (for which he failed to find a home in Germany). Though the narrator's misadventures and their eventual resolution in this saga are his own, they clearly constitute a meditation on the state of the collective,³⁸ and the salvation for both resides in Eretz Yisrael. The happiness envisioned in the finale results from his return; it is there that he has the incentive to take things into his own hands and build a home large enough to house Dr. Levy's homeless texts and it is after this return that Mrs. Levy (the widow mentioned above) miraculously heals. The reference to Jewish collective in these is unavoidable: Homelessness and alienation are inevitable diasporic conditions. Only the Land of the Torah can house the Jewish people and its texts, and guarantee its continuation.

The analysis of *Ad Hena* focuses on Agnon's language, and poses the question whether language succeeds in crossing the borders of interpsychical translatability. This is compelling because of the complexities of author, writing and the Other which are discussed in the second section of this introduction, because it extends the discussion to include the reader. Agnon expands the associative components of language in a manner that subverts its seeming linearity and denotation. In this text he also uses dream, displacement and transposition as structuring devices to allude to a world that is entirely out of kilter. These techniques reach towards an expression of the other in their allusive possibilities. This study asks if the lack

³⁸ For a comment on the synechdocic relationship of the characters and German society in *Ad Hena*, see Shaked, op cit., 1983, p. 194.

of reader accessibility to an author's cultural repository renders a text unviable.

Chapter Eight discusses Aharon Appelfeld's *Bartfuss the Immortal*, which is grounded in the Holocaust, but located in post Second World War Israel. It is an account of the ways in which the experiences of an unknown, terrifyingly warped world settle on the bodies of those who have physically survived its trauma. The sense of self and Subject are frozen in an icy repression that creates a stultifying regression to anality. The only relative relief from this withholding is through the return to an approximation of the murmuring prelinguistic primacy of the Oceanic Self³⁹ which in this work takes the form of sea and rocking motion.

Bartfuss carries the burden of the communal. He is a legend in the survivor community. A symbol of survival itself. His body has been pierced by fifty bullets and he lives. But the communal imprinting deprives him of individuality, and imprisons him in the past. His journey towards himself is begun in the book by the pains of that legendary body that is group property, as it claims its individual existence, and is finally realized with the help of a woman. Bartfuss' relationships to the women in his life are determined by his regression, and become either retentive like him (his wife Rosa and Theresa, an acquaintance from the Holocaust), or are associated with formlessness and unable to express themselves (the most extremes examples of this is his silent, retarded daughter to whom he feels a closeness, but with whom he cannot communicate, and the woman, Marion, on whom he finally bestows the treasure he nursed all the years of his repression). But it also a woman that frees him of his collective burden by (re)introducing him to the world of forms and human culture.

³⁹ cf. Freud, via Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983, p. 155 and Lacan "l'hommelet" (loc. cit).

The last work referred to in this study is David Grossman's first novel, *The Smile of the Lamb*, published in 1983. The thematics of the four novels Grossman published between then and 1994 move from a representation of the group to the individual and illustrate, in miniature, the story of modern Hebrew literature as it battles for individual expression. This first novel is interesting as, despite its representative features which depict the social and political through its characters, it is also concerned with the idea of 'truth' in terms of the subject, with the difficulties of overcoming and translating difference, and with language itself. The novel is set in the realities of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in the early seventies. It is made of four narrative voices, with three voices representing features of Israeli society and an 'outside', exotic voice symbolizing an almost impenetrable Palestinian world. Playing political and social Other to the Israeli establishment is a persecuted, half-crazed, holy fool hunch-backed elderly Palestinian called Chilmi, who is also other to his own group which shuns him. The Israeli establishment itself is divided, and its ethnic and cultural differences are shown in the representative construal of its three exemplars, and in the stories they narrate. But despite their generalized features, the three Israeli voices issue from personalities that like Chilmi are alienated from their own circles. At the center of their narratives is a desperate search for truth. This is voiced variously by Uri, an Iraqi-Israeli who is the main narrator, by Shosh, an Ashkenazi-Israeli product of the Labor Zionist intelligentsia and the only female narrator, and by the military commander, Katzman who is a survivor of the war in Europe and the only fatality in the story, whose narrative alone is presented in the deflected form of a third-person voice. By contrast, Chilmi proffers his own truth by way of invention: he fabricates stories about things that were never there to make them more true.

His stylistically divergent mode of telling and getting at the truth of things emphasizes his difference, as well as the difficulties entailed in communion with the Other. The novel finally does not manage to portray individual sound, and this is illustrated in the voices given the societally marginal characters. This is particularly true of Shosh. As peripheral as Uri and Katzman are in their own society, they are still part of its masculine milieu and as such their language and modes of narration pose no problem as they do not require innovation. Chilmi - the male Other - is given his own style, although it is over-romanticized and sentimental. But with Shosh, whose gender, as opposed to anything else, makes her Other (she is the only female voice in the entire text, the other women mentioned are either mute or imaginary or are spoken of indirectly), it seems that no such attempt is made. She is given a voice blended of masculine conventions, and at the end of the tale is left to the protection of her drunken father and his inebriated, crazed ex-comrade at arms. Whether this is meant or not is uncertain. The present reading does not find any signs of intentionality, and thus concludes that despite the great care taken to represent the Other marked by political identity in this contemporary text, woman, like her predecessors in the early literature, is not (appearances to the contrary notwithstanding) deemed part of the national discourse.

The Other

Nowadays the term *Other* is widely used in scholarly and political writing. It has moved out of its earlier, fairly neutral ground and become encrusted with value in the intellectual world. The term is used extensively by a range of psychoanalytic, political and literary theorists.

Lacan, borrowing the idea of identity as reaction formation from Freud, posits the necessity of the Other in the constitution of a Subject;⁴⁰ Kristeva extrapolates on this in her discussion of gendered subjectivity.⁴¹ Edward Said adds a more specific historical nuance to the term,⁴² and the notion is central to the social and ethical thought of philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Buber, Levinas and Derrida.⁴³

The contemporary usage of *Other* often has a strong ideological component. It frequently appears in discussions on prejudice and discrimination, where it is used to denote some central vantage-point's definition of that which is peripheral and alien to it. It is employed as a substitute for the word object in its most negative and stereotypical sense. Its semantic component of difference in an undesirable attribution has been amplified.

Dictionary definitions of the word are unbiased. The 1952 edition of the Chambers Dictionary defines it as follows:

⁴⁰ See Lacan *Introduction of the big Other in The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvanna Tomaselli, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 235-247.

⁴¹ See Moi *Marginality and subversion*, in Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*, Routledge, London and New York, 1988, pp. 163-167, for a discussion on the possibilities of gendered subjectivity. For comment on the maternal body as "the embodiment of alterity within," and further Kristeva references, see Kelly Oliver, *Kristeva*, in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth ed., The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1994, pp. 445-447.

⁴² See Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York, 1979.

⁴³ See, for instance: Michael Theunissen, *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber*, trans. Christopher Macann, The MIT Press, 1984; Jacques Derrida, *Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas*, in Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, The University of Chicago Press, 1978, pp. 79-153 and Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, in *The Levinas Reader*, trans. Richard A. Cohen, ed. Sean Hand, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, pp. 37-58.

Other *adj.* (orig.) one of two: second: alternate: different: different from or not the same as the one in question (often with *than*): not the same: remaining: additional: (*Spens*, appar.) left. *pron.* (or *n.*) other one: another: (*arch.* & *Scot.*) each other. (... *n.* *otherness.* ...⁴⁴

The word stands within the realm of relationship. As an adjective its spheres of association are distributed along the sense of sameness/parity, duality/order, substitutability, difference, dissimilarity and relational quantity. As a pronoun/noun it is purely relational in the sense of alterneity, and in its archaic and Scottish noun renderings it is expressive of mutuality.

The noun *other* (as defined object) in the primary relational meaning of alterity and difference (to the subject), and as associated with consciousness and perception, is the point of departure of the present discussion. It is from this point that its additional, and finally negative, ascriptions derive.

The Other may be construed in many different ways that stem from the initial split of the Self from itself into the world of objects, in Kleinian terms,⁴⁵ or the world of language via *the Mirror Stage* in Lacanian terms.⁴⁶ The Self's ongoing quest is to find its way back

⁴⁴ op cit., *Chambers*, p. 758.

⁴⁵ Klein sees perception of the Other as beginning with "Infantile feelings and phantasies" that are "experienced in connection with external and internal stimuli. The first gratification which the child derives from the external world is the satisfaction experienced in being fed." Melanie Klein, *Weaning*, pp. 290-305, in Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation*, Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1975. Thus the "big Other" is the breast in Kleinian terms.

⁴⁶ Lacan on the Mirror Stage:
... the *mirror stage* is based on the relation between, on the one hand, a certain level of tendencies which are experienced...as disconnected, discordant, in pieces -

to itself. This is its ever unrequitable desire.

Birth, which is a separation from the embryo-foetal-matriachal unity, and a continued living, become almost inevitably the entry into the world of sense, object and event. Here there is no Self, only the perception of Self as self,⁴⁷ and thus as object, as Other. It is within the first movement that chaos yawns; at the point of primal differentiation, as separateness of structure is alluded by the first differentiated sense-awareness. Whether this is by way of vision (the mirror stage in developmental Lacanian terms)⁴⁸ or by way of any of the other of the senses, the reflection, outwardly formulated, determines the moment of loss. It is an auto-reflection: from here to out and then back towards again, to reflect upon itself. It is a mirroring, whether undergone by vision or sound or touch.⁴⁹ It is self-

and there's always something of that that remains - and on the other hand, a unity with which it is merged and paired. It is in this unity that the subject for the first times knows himself as a unity, but as an alienated, virtual unity. It does not partake in the characteristics of inertia of the phenomenon of consciousness under its primitive form, on the contrary, it has a vital, or anti-vital, relation with the subject.

A materialist definition of the phenomenon of consciousness, in The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II, p. 50. op cit. On language and the Other: "The subject is separated from the Others, the true ones, by the wall of language." ibid. p.244. These two concepts are expanded upon later in this chapter.

⁴⁷ I capitalize Self to refer to the all-encompassing Oceanic. The non-capitalized self refers to that which is associated with the states of consciousness, and finally the ego, i.e. subjectivity.

⁴⁸ Silverman, op cit., 157:

Lacan tells us that somewhere between the ages of six months and eighteen months the subject arrives at an apprehension of both its self and the other - indeed, of its self as other. This discovery is assisted by the child seeing, for the first time, its own reflection in a mirror.

⁴⁹ Although for Lacan the senses other than vision would seem to be more associated with the secondary Real (the formulation of "secondary Real" is mine, and is used to refer to the pre-mirror, but post-natal stage when, according to Lacan "the child's body undergoes a process of

conscious reflection, which would be more aptly termed an Other-conscious reflection.

The metaphor of sight will be useful for its definition; sight being so oft used as a metaphor for conditioned knowledge or understanding,⁵⁰ it provides an apposite explication of the moment and its processes. For that primal differentiation does become a moment; constitutes an entry into order and the notion of time. It is in this breaking with an a-everything and a beyond or even a-knowledge that nascence occurs: Order and time and difference and Other. And it is from here that knowledge and dominion is sought to assuage and "minorate (the) atrocit(y)ies"⁵¹ of rent into 'self as', which is unavoidably Self as Other.

From here ensue the categories, the orders. From here ensues the quest for Self in the world of Other. Yet it ensues precisely in terms of the world of Other. There is further differentiation, and further formation/s right up to the formulation of speech, which is the most constitutive of difference. Termed by Lacan as the Name-of-the-Father, inasmuch as for him it represents the Oedipal awareness of the split from and the unattainability of the

differentiation, whereby the erotogenic zones are inscribed and libido is canalized." - Silverman, *ibid.* p.155), while vision attaches to the second order, the Imaginary.

⁵⁰ And interestingly is associated with male potency. cf. Isaac in Genesis, and the case of Oedipus, cf. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, v.2., Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1955, p.124: Oedipus' remorseful self-blinding has been interpreted by psychologists to mean castration; but though the blindness of Achille's tutor Phoenix was said by Greek grammarians to be a euphemism for impotence, primitive myth is always downright, and the castration of Uranus and Attis continued to be recorded unblushingly in Classical text books.

For Lacan, the entry into culture is the entry into the world of the Phallus.

⁵¹ James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Penguin Books, 1968, p. 391.

mother.⁵² A more basic rendering of this is that it is the brutal rupture from the primal illusion of the likeness of the mother to the mother consciousness, embodied in the attachment to the actual mother, and entailed in the second or Imaginary Order.⁵³

Language comes, and its image is the Father who denies access to the world of the like - correspondence etc., associated with the Imaginary, and separates by his Law, further defining the split with the introduction of a Symbolic order. Thus for Lacan motivated sound is the third order of business in the journey out of Self, for journey it now is, and spatial nodes are already described.

Of all the cultural means by which the attempt to reassert or attain the uroboric⁵⁴ is

⁵² "In "Field and function of speech and language" Lacan attributes to the Oedipus complex the same determinative role as that of language in the constitution of the unconscious, subjectivity and the symbolic order.(...) Lacan indicates that the Oedipus complex do not merely resemble each other, but that they are "identical" (...) Lacan further consolidates the relationship between the Oedipus complex and language by defining the paternal signifier - what he calls "Name-of-the-Father" as the all-important one both in the history of the subject and the organization of the larger symbolic field. In short, he conceptualizes the Oedipus complex as a linguistic transaction." Silverman, *ibid.* p. 181. And "with the subject's entry into the symbolic the father quickly replaces the mother as the central object of desire. Lacan tells us that the child wants to be desired by the mother - that is it desires the mother's desire. The mother on the other hand, desires what she lacks, i.e. the phallus. Since she associates the phallus with the father, she consequently desires him. The child's desire for the mother is therefore displaced onto what she desires, and the paternal signifier emerges as the definitive one in the history of the subject." *op cit.*, Silverman, p. 190.

⁵³ Lacan's orders, which relate to the development of subjectivity: The first order is The Real = the foetal experience, prior even to sex differentiation, which causes a lack that removes the subject away from the Real. The second order is The Imaginary = entered into at the Mirror Stage, and "dominated by identification and duality...it not only precedes the symbolic order, which introduces the subject to language and Oedipal triangulation, but continues to exist with it afterwards." (Silverman:157) The third order is The Symbolic = the field of language and culture, where signification marks the "thing whose loss inaugurates desire." *ibid.*:183.

⁵⁴ The term *uroboros* and hence *uroboric* is used by Erich Neumann to refer to the "primordial Self that exists prior to the differentiation and development of the ego." It is based on the mythological world serpent - Midgarssnake - in Scandinavian mythology which in

contrived, language is therefore the most difficult. It is the final function of the Split. Form as in plastic art is iconographic and thus more full of trace, and in representation more whole and less different, albeit discrete, even in its most directly representational and thus delineating aspects. Non-word language sound - music - is the same, even in its most refined rendition. Although located in cultural discourse, and thus held in the Symbolic, these have more of Lacan's second order, the Imaginary, that works in the hopeful framework of correspondence and alliance. The ineluctable impossibility of the Imaginary too however (it cannot escape difference and the discrete), makes its nomination apposite. But with words the discrete is constitutive twice-over.

The difference entailed in verbal language makes its expressiveness more abstract in the paradoxical guise of assumed denotation in the apparent signifier/signified relationship. The fallacy of the presumed impermeability of denotation works doubly against itself. By taking on the sense of buttressed meaning, of absolute relationship, its creed is even more divisive by its statements of definition than the division held in its very existence as third order object which is divisive enough in itself. But even in its permeable, mutable and connotative aspects the path is illusory. It mostly points back to itself, even if in an ever-

"peaceful period(s)...assumes the character of the uroborus, encircling-the world with its tail in its mouth." Of the uroboric phase Neumann says "(it is) a mythological reality (...). The term uroboric has been selected for the initial pre-ego state, because the symbol of the uroboros, the circular snake, touching its tail with its mouth and so "eating" it, is characteristic of the oppositionless unity of this psychic reality. Thus the uroboros as the Great Round, in whose womb center the ego-germ lies sheltered, is the characteristic symbol of the uterine situation in which there is not yet a clearly delimited child personality confronting a human and extra-human environment. This undelimited state characteristic of the uterine embryonic situation is largely, though not fully, preserved after birth." Erich Neumann, *The Child: Structure and Dynamics of the Nascent Personality*, trans. Ralph Manheim, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1973, p. 10.

dilating spatiality of meaning, which can only be an accrual of the definitional. Though here meaning appears in undefined transmutive guise, ever differing and deferring,⁵⁵ it is still language-made, which of its substance (and the word is used advisedly) is manifold, removed and differentiated in ever greater complexity. Yet this is the mode to which the moment of attentive nascence has made the out-workings of consciousness most amenable. Maybe precisely because its constitutive effects ameliorate the chaos and horror induced by the fatal moment of self-sense and senses. The moment (space, movement, time) which sends us hurtling into the meaning-induced curvatures of time and space and causality.

Thus language is a paradox. As too is meaning *en tout* which is sought by both the second and third orders. Meaning is a standing alongside, and the filling up of a constructed Other, whose construal alone is a constitutive act, and thus an act of attribution of meaning by way of the construct of meaning, which itself is defined, and thus object and Other.

Writing is the most difficult task, for it engages the Other-consciousness most intently, and words are the enemy of union with that which is beyond chaos. Writing is another order yet. Words further distanced by the marks that bind them, created away from the immediacy of preprocessed absorption by the sense organs, achieved by manual manipulation and perceived through a prism of the learnt, and not within the primary or even secondary order. Writing and text are battle using the arm of the definitional, in an attempt to conquer the a-

⁵⁵ Taken from Derrida's use of *differance*, which courts each and both meanings. See "La differance", Jacques Derrida's 1968 lecture, reprinted in *Marges*, Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1962. (via op cit. Alan Bass, p. xvi.)

definitional by union.⁵⁶ Thus their use in the quest for merging, for getting at 'the core,' meaning and alliance can only mean betrayal and loss.

So what is a writer to do? This is how poetic and narrative devices, how thematics, enter the picture. This is where the ways of artifice originate. There is something paradoxical in this, and the paradox is embedded for the most part in the good sense it makes.

The expression of the ineffable is not a possibility. The expression of anything of even an approximate and assumed essentiality is impossible by way of the signals of language and word-thought. It is only in the emptiness of the dilations of compounded and mobile meaning, in the between-spaces, that some grasping at the inexpressible may be intuited and then explained to itself in terms of the verbal which betrays and demeans it. It can only be evoked and elevated again in a reconstructed, but different, ellipsis.

Thus intimations of immortality are in the ellipsi, and the ellipsi themselves are a reaching, a movement towards, and an expansion beyond the structures of language itself. And the paradox is imbedded in the crafting of an artifice within the margins of differentiating and constitutive language. Its good sense is entailed in the shifts that are created by the scrapings agitated by language formulated in complex conceptualities that are ever in movement and thus widen the sphere of sense beyond itself. Language working through itself to go beyond itself. The Other being 'othered' towards its limits so that it might once again become itSelf. Differentiation stretched ad nauseam (and often with that actual physical effect) to allude to Same. Categories refined, definitions embellished, the Symbolic made more so for the sake of the a-categorical and the a-defined Real.

⁵⁶ And thus overcoming loss and its attendant repression.

This work looks at texts in their connection to Self and Other, both in terms of the psychoanalytically conceived Other delineated above, where the desire for the Self/Other acts in service of that wish-fulfillment as agency, and spurs the act of writing, and in terms of their Jewish/Israeli cultural determination, in an extension of the dilemmas confronting the figure of the *talush*. It considers an account of the initial Self/Other split in a foundational Jewish text, the Bible and observes the meaning of the Hebrew word *acher* (other) as it moves through some later religious texts; the way the female Other is oppressed by men's possession and exploitation of language (Yalag and Baron); the attempt to create an 'other' narrative through the manipulation of masculine Jewish textual forms (Berdichewski); the uses of the gendered Other in the formation of subject identity (Kahana-Carmon);⁵⁷ expiation from the conflict of collective vs. individual by magical 'other' means, and trying to reach the Other by the use of other states of consciousness, away from the defenses of the waking-state Ego (Agnon); the delayed escape from the other world of the Holocaust and its collective dimension (Appelfeld) and finally, the quest for the expression of the actual and ephemeral Other (Grossman). But the underlying thesis is that texts, that of their 'nature' are located, have their starting-point and reference, in the world of categories, phenomena and culture, tend more towards the disorder of the ellipsis than to the words that create them when they try to engage with the Other, which has no expression. That texts themselves and writing are paradoxical and attempt to overcome themselves by attaching to an amplification of difference

⁵⁷ Toril Moi on Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*: "Beauvoir's main thesis in this epochal work is simple: throughout history, women have been reduced to objects for men: 'woman' has been constructed as man's Other, denied the right to her own subjectivity and to responsibility for her own actions." op cit., Moi, p. 92.

in the quest for redemption, and the intuition that writing is the door and the gate to some 'real' experience and expression, beyond conditioning and culture. It is in this context that the *talush's* struggle, no matter its specific determinants, is part of a struggle that is universal rather than unique, and the adversary is the collective repository that is necessarily entered into in the covenant of world and ego formation.

SELF/OTHER-PERCEPTION IN THE EDEN NARRATIVE AND BEYOND

In the past, Adam was created from the ground, and Eve from Adam; but henceforth it shall be, In our image, after our likeness (Gen 1, 26): neither man without woman nor woman without man, nor both of them without the Shekhina.

Genesis Rabbah 22:2

The idea of Otherness is not only outwardly or socially attributed in Jewish thinking. Split is the condition on which the oldest extant Judaic text of any length, the Bible, is built, and otherness is emphasized, with what have been considered disastrously negative effects, in its opening chapters.

To make a rather general statement about the underlying determinants of the Bible, or rather about Genesis, I would like to propose an awareness of differentiation as the prime structure of the discourse that ensues from the story of creation which, from its placement in the canon, is the *raison d'être* of the text. Although the story of creation¹ is not necessarily interpreted - even by traditional commentators such as Rashi - as the 'actual' revealed account of the order of creation, its textual positioning as well as the nature of the content, justifies the attribution of primacy to these narratives. I do not make inviolable claims about the biblical text/s, but rather wish to point to some of the oppositional components that operate as the basic agents in what may be construed as the 'basic biblical stuff.' As per the canonical embodiment and if only (and yet not only) by virtue of locative precedence, these opening sections are the fissures that make possible biblical subsequence which is contingent upon

¹ With reference to the two Creation stories.

(with some notable temporally unmarked exceptions) linear adduction.

This section looks at the Eden story as a developmental narrative, as an illustration of the movement out of uroboric consciousness, and into the split world of Self and Other. It also addresses some portions of the preceding biblical text (the creation story/ies) so as to leaven the suggested reading, by setting it within the context of an already existing exile that revolves upon the notion of substance and categories. Talmudic and Kabbalistic reference of the Other are also mentioned.

The story of creation is a story of separation, bounded by sequentiality and refracted in a prism of objectification. The One creates the many, creates an image of Itself that does not know its separation. The image then has vision of itself, and in its image dies.

Yet even the One of the creation story - both linguistically and conceptually - is not an unproblematic One without second. The Creator of Genesis I is accorded the plural appellation אֱלֹהִים right from the start of the narrative. This plural noun is the first nomination in the text, and appears as the referent for what is presumably the signification of all that substantively or maybe supersubstantively was/is. The words that precede this nomination are words of sequence ("in/at the beginning"), words of locus in time, which make possible the proceeding subject - "God", and action - "created".

The time/movement construal that signals the start of creation militates, right at the outset of the narrative, against the conception of a One-without-second whole subject, by objectifying the subject into a Creator who acts within the medium of existing time. Located in the primary place, the unit "בְּרֵאשִׁית", shows that a conditioning of the "all in all" has already occurred. Prepositions are markers of relationship, and relationship is dependent on

the existence of at least two entities which interact in some manner. The preposition כ (=*in/at*), placed in the first position, indicates the construal of a pre-existing medium in which the prepositional relationship occurs. That the quality of the pre-existent is temporal, is suggested by the signifying field of the noun ראשית. The verb (=movement), following the initial time marker ברא, projects towards a grammatical subject, which in terms of the unitary subject is derivative, and thus an object - אלוקים, who is the agent of the action and a discreet entity operating within an existing temporal substance. The objectification into conditioned stuff is sharpened by the use of the plural noun allotted this entity. Pluralization continues throughout the biblical first chapter. From verse 4 in the second chapter there appears to be an attempt to remedy or make whole the implication of the many contained in the plural marker ים in אלוקים, and the 'being name' - Y H W H - is appended to it.²

The pluralization is reinforced by the plural first person verb and pronominal suffixes the Creator uses to express the decision to create the first proto-human, Adam:

ויאמר אלוקים נעשה את האדם בצלמנו כדמותנו³

God's speech act, which in this case is the expression of intent, is introduced in the singular pattern - ויאמר, but the voicing of the intention to create, as well as the self-reference, are set in the plural form.

² For an alternative view of the אלוקים / YHWH question see Harold Bloom, *The Book of J*, Grove Wedienfeld, New York, 1990.

³ Genesis 1:26.

Rashi explained the use of **אלוקים** in the opening words of Genesis as the residue of God's decision to create the world first with the quality of mercy (which is denoted by that particular form of the Name) after coming to realize, contrary to a prior decision ⁴ (the notion of priority itself implies an earlier existent within an existing temporality, while mercy and law reinforce the idea of an existing quality, if not a substantiality), that the world would/could not be created on the basis of the quality of law or judgement (which is denoted by the being name). He explains the present plural speech presentation, indicated by the verb and pronominal suffixes, by suggesting that these words narrate not a Divine monologue, but a dialogue between God and the Angels. He says that this sentence illustrates God's modesty inasmuch as God turns to the Angels, who are created by the Divine in its own image, to ask for their permission, as it were, to make yet other beings that would be like the Divine. God's justification for this action, according to Rashi, is that if the Divine image were not present below (on earth) as it is above, a cause for jealousy would be inherent in the creation itself.

The attribution of the quality of mercy (perceived as potency - able to create) to the pluralized and thus substantive name, and of law (seen as impotence - incapable of creation) to the name that expresses being, is interesting, as it (like Rashi's explanation of the later text) contains assumptions about image and objectification. Being, without second, cannot create and is known only by the measure of created things. But a pluralized deity which has an image that can replicate itself is capable of creation.

⁴ Therefore pre the "beginning".

Rashi adds that having seen that law could not create, God put mercy first and then joined it to law. The combination of the two appears in Genesis 2:4, at the beginning of second rendering of the creation narrative:

אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם ביום עשות ד' אלקים ארץ ושמים

Image and replication suggest separation, and separation seems essential to creation. The interesting element in this creation story is the implication of separation right at the outset of the narrative, where a pre-existing temporality makes possible Divine agency and even being, and where this form of Divine manifestation (somewhat substantive by dint of number and form - however rationalized and abstracted) is given precedence over that which is One without second.

The valency of creation and separation is emphasized by the creation of Adam. The Creator separates to create. In creating the Human, the expressed intention is to create that which is not separate; to create - "בצלמנו כדמותנו." But this image (stamped by the preposition 'in') and likeness (analogized by the word 'like') seem to be 'in Our form', but only 'like Our quality.' The creative intention revolves upon a bifurcated Self-perception that distinguishes shape from quality. (cf. Rashi who explains צלם as imprint and דמות as "to understand and learn/become wise/have knowledge.") The use of the comparative 'like' would seem to suggest the withholding of some part of the perceived quality.

The intention to create 'in Our image' implies the wish for a unity contingent on identity; the comparative component of the reiterated phrase, however, is expressive of distinction and thus separation. By virtue of its placement, the second part of the verse:

וירדו בדגת הים ועוף השמים ובכל הארץ

- serves as an explanation of the quality intrinsic to the Divine imprint and likeness, which is contingent upon a project of domination. The insertion of domination here serves as an explicit statement of Divine self-perception as a perception of its own separateness to that which it dominates, and militates against Rashi's relating the plural אלוקים to the quality of mercy.

This notion of domination is repeated later, in verse 28, which describes the Divine blessing apportioned the created male and female.

פרו ורבו ומלאו את הארץ וכבשוה

God's creation of the Human - in Its perceived image - contains traces of both unity and separation: Unity by way of an identity which is itself dependent on separation (by way of the ׀ preposition), and separation because of the act of creation itself, and by the marking of degree (by way of the comparative ׃ preposition). The meaning and force of this degree, and the separation it entails, become apparent through the reading of the adjacent Eden narrative,

where separation and self-perception play into each other and reflect back onto these earlier portions of the text, constructing the arena for biblical sequentiality.

Before leaving these first sections it may be useful to mention some additional textual features:

The Two Creation Stories

In the first story God creates the human. The act is described as follows:

ויברא אלקים את--האדם בצלמו בצלם אלקים ברא אתו זכר ונקבה ברא אתם⁵

The verse may be divided into three sections and the following elements noted:

a. God creates Adam in His own Image

God, as masculine, creates Adam (singular), in what He considers His image. (God, can only perceive Its own image by way of pluralization, thus it is אלוקים who does the creating. But as God is the only being to whom perception is attributed at this stage, God, the singular - Y H W H, is the only possible perceiver of this image.)

b. In the image of God He created him

Adam (masculine singular) is the expression of God's auto-representation - the Other to the Self, i.e. the subjective-object or the objective-subject to the subject. The objectification is signified by the repetition of the connotatively visual root צ ל ך, which is strengthened by

⁵ Genesis 1:27.

repeated references to God apprehending the quality of creation by way of sight ראה.⁶ The presence of sight (of Self as image, and the visual perception of that image) is a marker of a separation that seeks identification, sought by the substantive Divine (אלוקים). Despite the plural nomination, there is no noun\verb agreement. The Divine is not attributed plurality, but is presented as singular masculine by the verb ברא, and the singularity is echoed by the creation of the masculine 'him' = אותו, despite the following cosexuality (זכר ונקבה).

c. Male and female He created them

Although the verb attributed to the Divine action is yet again singular masculine, the reiteration of human creation in the Divine image (which may be viewed as an extension of the first impulse or, at any rate, is imbued with the force of the צלם of the first clause by the adjacent textual placement) shifts and expands creation (and the Creator) into the plural (marked by the pronominal suffix ם), and the 'bi-gendered'.

Although this clause is independent and does not anaphorically repeat the word צלם, there is justification in reading it as a detailing of the earlier portions of the verse. The statement of singularity contained in the masculine marker - ך, followed by the pluralization of the masculine (inclusive?) - ם, is suggestive in its interweaving of unity and separation. The Aggada⁷ has the Human first created Janus-faced and then divided, and Rashi posits the following as the "plain meaning" or *peshat*: He says that the present text teaches that both female and male were created on the sixth day, but that the actual method and process of

⁶ וירא אלקים את-האור כי-טוב (Genesis 1:4), and throughout the first chapter.

⁷ *Berakot* 61:71; *Eruvin* 18:71 and *Bereshit Rabba* 8:1.

creation is described in the second story: that this is the principle, the 'what' and the 'when', which is explicated by the 'how' of the second story.

The Aggadic notion of division feeds into the Divine reflection on Adam's lone state in Gen. 2:18:

לא טוב היות אדם לבדו

- and harks back by way of a metathesized linguistic association to the creation of the world in the preceding chapter. The word לבדו, which stands in contradiction to the double-facedness of Chapter 1, prompts, in the present context, the creation of woman. It is used as the reason for providing Adam with that with which to unite. This declaration of separateness is given as the reason for creating/supplying identity. The root ל ב ד is a metathesis of the root ל ד ב (separation, distinction), which functions as a *leitwort* across the earlier verses where it is used repeatedly to describe separation as the operative element of creation:

ויבדל אלוקים בין האור ובין החושך;⁸ ויעש אלוקים את הרקיע ויבדל...⁹

ויהי מבדיל בין מים למים;¹⁰ הבדיל בין היום ובין הלילה¹¹

⁸ *ibid.* 1:4.

⁹ *ibid.* 1:7.

¹⁰ *ibid.* 1:8.

¹¹ *ibid.* 1:14.

The linguistic and conceptual nexus suggest an identity between God and Adam. In the creation of Adam there is at first, a unified, unseparated, though nonetheless somewhat bifurcated, whole (male and female), possibly analogous to the two names for the Divine. Later, in Chapter Two, after the mention of the second Divine name, there is a retraction of the above, and the negation of the whole, by an emphasis of the separateness (ל ב ד ל), which creates a solitariness (ד ב ל) that needs to be overcome by being replicated (or doubled). This idea also suggests an equivalence between the Divine (which creates the Other - Adam, the prototypical female\male Human - in Its own image) and the human (specifically the male of the second story here), who himself is replicated by God who replicated him from Itself.

The separation and objectification which are central to the creation stories, as well as the way in which they are expressed, extend and are echoed and expanded the story that follows them, and is really a third creation story - the Eden narrative.

The main element in the climax of the Eden story - Genesis 3:7 - is Self-perception. Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, "עץ הדעת טוב ורע," and come to full consciousness when "their eyes are opened and they know that they are naked.":

ותפקחנה עיני שניהם וידעו כי עירמם הם

This coming to knowledge, in the wake of eating from the fruits of a tree whose nature is

¹² *ibid.* 1:18.

dichotomous - the tree of knowing good and bad, has death as a consequence.¹³ When Adam is commanded, in Genesis 2:17, not to eat from it, he is informed by the Divine voice of the result of this potential action:

כי ביום אכלך ממנו מות תמות

The sexual overtones of the snake and the woman and the tree notwithstanding,¹⁴ the climax of the narrative is expressive, in terms of the present reading, of the rent from the

¹³ See Harold Bloom's remarks on the question of mortality in op cit., Bloom p. 186. Of the J narrative in this regard Bloom says:

J does not say that our mortality results from our disobedience and consequent expulsion from Eden. We have been created mortal: living beings, with clay sides and life's wind moving through us, but not likely to sustain that wind forever.

Of course the very fact that in addition to the Tree of Knowledge there is a Tree of Life speaks for human mortality. After the humans eat from the first tree God (as both names) decides to exile them from Eden saying:

Here the Human has become as one of us, knowing good and bad, and now before he send his hand and takes also from the tree of life and eats and lives forever.
(Gn. 3:22)

This rationale clearly indicates that the human did not have eternal life, for had it been so there would have been no justification for an exile from the tree's proximity.

One could argue against the above by saying that mortality only came to be as the result of the eating of the forbidden fruit, and this would be supported by God's warning: "For on the day you eat from it you will surely die." (Gn. 2:17) But in terms of a plain reading of the text this does not hold, for Adam and Eve do not die on that day, but go on to live for a long time.

The present interpretation sees the death of 2:17 not as mortality, but in quite different terms as will be shown below.

¹⁴ And they can easily be read in the text, and have been subjected to such interpretation many times and at length.

Eden of unaffected consciousness; of the split in psychic awareness between Self and Other or rather, the awakened consciousness that perceives Self as Other, and in its seeing dies.¹⁵

The verses are replete with resonances of duality and knowledge of duality. The snake tempting Eve to partake of the Tree of Knowledge tells her:¹⁶

כי ידע אלקים כי ביום אכלכם ממנו ונפקחו עיניכם והייתם כאלקים ידעי טוב
ורע

and God, in confirmation of these words, says after the event:¹⁷

ויאמר ד' אלקים הן האדם היה כאחד ממנו לדעת טוב ורע

But what does this knowledge consist of? What are the 'good and evil' that are now Adam and Eve's bounty?

A number of elements are noteworthy in the text in their intimation of the features of this clearly stated, yet simultaneously destabilized, dichotomy. The climax, as mentioned earlier, is directly associated with the fulfillment of the snake's promise, the opening of eyes, which amounts to vision or consciousness. The importance of vision is reiterated later in the

¹⁵ In this context it useful to note that the snake, biting its own tale is often representation of the Uroboros, and the tree is reminiscent of Yggdrasil, the ash-tree which, in Scandinavian mythology, "bind...(s) together heaven, earth and hell, and extending its branches over the whole world and above the heavens." (Chambers 1952:1294)

¹⁶ Genesis 3:5.

¹⁷ *ibid.* 3:22.

text where the result of the climax of Adam and Eve eating and then seeing, extends to the *denouement* of the adjacent, combinatory tale - the banishment from Eden (comprising God's discovery of the deed and its punishment), and revolves once again around the motif of seeing (subject/object), with its passive counterpart of being seen (object/subject). This banishment story, which follows the couple's active response to their newly acquired vision as they sew themselves loincloths with which to cover their nakedness, punctuates the primacy of vision as the discrete element in the ascription of dichotomous good and evil.

God, "מתהלך בגן לרוח היום",¹⁸ (a description which is redolent of dualistic implication in theological terms: God is anthropomorphosized and smaller than the world that contains His walking), calls to Adam (as He cannot see him!) asking "איכה?",¹⁹ and Adam answers:

את-קלך שמעתי בגן ואירא כי-עירם אנכי ואחבא

As he sees, Adam is afraid of being seen. Vision makes him aware both of his own image, and of the perceptibility of this image. The primary awareness of division refracts and becomes even more divisive and fractured. In perceiving Self as Other, Adam (in terms of this reading) perceives others both as images and as perceivers of images. It is then that exile from the Self becomes complete. The uroboric no longer obtains. Adam and Eve have moved from the Oceanic oneness to the mirror stage and into the law/Name-of-the-Father,

¹⁸ *ibid.* 3:8.

¹⁹ *ibid.* 3:9.

who exiles and makes them separate indeed.

The perception of Self as Other is, in effect, the perception of Self as image, which is Self image, that in turn becomes the perception of others as images, and the generalization of the world as image and separate. Image is possible only where there is, at least, duality, a split from the all, as the perceiver of the image and the image cannot be one and the same. Thus the Eden narrative is a story of most essential separation, where Self separates from itself, and in its separation dies.

This reading is reinforced by the predominance of the female element in the temptation (and banishment) story, as this element may be taken to denote the mother consciousness, or the state of undifferentiated awareness. I would like to suggest that the reading of the tale as prejudicial statement emerging from masculine fears of woman and sexuality (with temptation, snake, fruit &c. partaking of this cluster) be extended and that in place of emphasizing these features it may be useful to interpret Eve in a more encompassing aspect.²⁰

The knowing of good and evil (according to the simple logic of the text), is the seeing of one's image (and the first perception of image is the observation of one's own body). This knowing creates the awareness that others too may know (= perceive) and the consequence of

²⁰ There are many readings that address this subject. For important treatments see Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978, particularly pp. 72-143 (Tribble finally attempts to deny a textual valorization of Patriarchy); Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987, pp. 104-130 (Bal's chapter responds to Paul's words quoted in 1 Timothy 2:11-14, and peels the Eden text by addressing the modes of and approaches to characterization, while focusing on the process of differentiation), and Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible*, Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. 13-59 (Pardes provides an overview of feminist interpretations of the opening chapters of the Bible in pp. 13-38, and address the question of "Maternal Naming" in the following pages).

this knowing is the exile from Eden (to which are appended many pain-bearing punishments (for the man, as for the woman),²¹ of toil and travail till there is a return to the source, to a unity):²²

בזעת אפיק תאכל לחם עד שובך אל-האדמה כי ממנה לקחת

In this way the story may be seen as a depiction of the great feeling of loss and suffering attendant on the primary separation from all-cohering unity.

In the wake of these events, immediately following upon the Divine adduction:²³

כי-עפר אתה ואל עפר תשוב

- Adam names his wife, saying she is "Chava/Life-giver" to which is adjoined the narrative comment "כי היא היתה אם כל-חי"²⁴ The necessity he feels at this stage to name her, to signify her with a word, where the word itself depicts her as the source of all things, supports this reading of the text, and especially with the rather lengthy enumeration of pain bearing punishments which precedes these events.²⁵ Adam sees himself as separate to Eve after he

²¹ For a discussion of the punishments, their relationship to human reality, and the creation of character and sex difference, see Bal, op cit., pp. 125-129. Also Tribble, op cit., pp. 123-134.

²² Genesis 3:17.

²³ ibid. 3:19.

²⁴ ibid. 3:22.

²⁵ ibid. 3:16-19.

awakens to the divisive world of images (and God supports the separation by separating the pains of man and woman). His need to name her shows, in terms of what is said about naming in the opening portion of Genesis, the need to dominate, to have control over that which is other than him. He is encouraged by the Divine statement about woman's subjugation to man via her desire. Or he may be trying to get at its being by calling it (and here the "it" is embodied in the person of Chava) "the mother of all the living," as the closest expression to the mother consciousness of his desire. He has lost his home in the signified, which remains the node of his longing. He no longer has the uroboric bliss of unity and essence, but replaces it with a nominal signifier that can never satisfy, can never bind his exile into a return.

The Eden narrative ends with an ironic description of the perpetual attempt to reenter unity; a search that is doomed to forever toil on and with that which it desires, in its attempts to attain it.²⁶

וישלחהו ד' אלקים מגן-עדן לעבד את-האדמה אשר לקח משם

Adam is sent from the Garden of Eden to work the soil from which he was taken: In this reading the soil stands for the primal unity, the original mire, which he will spend his days battling in the attempt to reenter it.

Chava succumbs to temptation when she has vision, sees, knows "that the tree is good for the eating" and "desirable to the eye." Once more it is sight that leads the way to

²⁶ *ibid.* 3:22.

self/image/other consciousness: ²⁷

ותרא כי טוב העץ למאכל וכי תאווה-הוא לעינים

The snake promises her that the eating of the fruit will make her and Adam "like gods". This promise is echoed by God's dismay when discovering the deed: ²⁸

ויאמר ד' אלקים הן האדם היה כאחד ממנו לדעת טוב ורע

This notion derives from the perception of a God who is multiple, and aware of Its own multiplicity, as indicated by the plural affixation in "כאחד ממנו." This God is all-inhering (YHWH) and separate to Itself (as אלוקים). And this is a Creator who creates (by naming, by words - markers, in Its own words, of domination) with the desire to replicate Itself, and yet, threatened with full replication unhesitatingly separates from Its creation.

Chava's role in the Eden story is pivotal. It is her agency that makes this a third creation story, even, and especially, within the traditional, biblical framework of interpretation which anachronistically attaches the narrative to the fulfillment or lack thereof of positive and negative commandments, which are later Halakhic interpretations of biblical commandments. How are the man and the woman to know that it is good to hearken to God's voice, and without the power of an innate discrimination to see good and bad, to disobey and obey?

²⁷ *ibid.* 3:6.

²⁸ *ibid.* 3:22.

This is the contradiction which allows us to view the text as a creation story disguised.

God says (3:22) "Here the man has become like one of Us," i.e. a knower of distinctions, a self-conscious observer. From this derives the conclusion that because of Chava's eating and sharing the fruit, the exile from the Eden of unaffected and unaffected consciousness occurred. "And He exiled man..." (3:24) Here begins the entry into chronology, and the world of separate consciousness. And thus the world in which God's original words that created heaven and earth, and all the distinctions, appear as change and time, and are not bound up in the static splendor of perfection.

There is a Talmudic statement which says, "from the time the Temple was destroyed, prophecy disappeared and was put in the mouth of fools." (*Bava Batra* 12b) This may be appropriately applied to Adam as, in search of dominion over her, he names Chava. Whereas he meant that she would be the mother of all physical, animate being,²⁹ he unknowingly names her what she is: The mother of all, the mover and cause. It is she who completes the work of God's creation by setting it into motion. The paradox at the heart of the exile narrative teaches that this fact is not a mark of Chava's temptation and failure, but of her, and the world, coming to life. It is the act by which all is vivified, and moved out of discrete, but undiscriminated matter, and into the kinesis of individual consciousness. Chava eats from the tree and creates. This tale of eating of the forbidden is the third, and final, creation story. God created the world and the cosexual in Genesis 1:27 - "male and female He created them." That creation story is repeated in somewhat different form in Genesis 2, where, in an instance

²⁹ This is the reading to which Tribble, *op cit.*, and Bal, *op cit.*, address their texts.

of sexual differentiation,³⁰ Adam is created, and Eve built from his rib. The second story expresses greater distinction and difference, and moves further away from the stasis of unity. Since Adam and Eve had no wisdom prior to this event, how could they have known what was entailed in the fulfilling a commandment? The fulfillment of a commandment not conditioned on intentionality? Rashi says in his commentary on this section that their realization of their nakedness was the understanding that they had stripped themselves of the fulfillment of the first negative commandment, but it was precisely this disobedience that made possible the fulfillment of the very first positive commandment, "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."³¹ The third creation story, Eve's story, tells of the completion of a differentiated world, the creation of consciousness, and the beginning of a world-narrative. It was only after their acquisition of self-consciousness that "Adam knew Chava his woman, and she became pregnant, and gave birth to Cain." And it was Chava's awareness of the creative force of her act in the Garden that made her able to name her son Cain for, in her words, she "acquired (or created) a man with God."^{32 33} Indeed, she created worlds

³⁰ Bal sees this as the essential differentiation that culminates in the naming of Adam and Eve (p. 130), and as the beginning of character (not unlike my proposition of split consciousness):

The construction of character has followed a specific line in the story. First its existence was posited, but then it was not yet a sexual being. Then it was sexually differentiated, addressed, and successively endowed with different aspects of subjectivity. It became the subject of awareness, hence of focalization; of speech; of possible action; of choice; and of actual action. It was characterized by description. Then, and only then, it was named: Adam the man, Eve the woman. "Paul" entirely missed that construction. Hence he missed the point of the creation story. For that point is, simply creation, by differentiation - of humanity, of character.

³¹ Genesis 1:28.

³² Genesis 4:1.

with God.

Chava is the element that allows for humanity's entry into the world of individual being. This is the world of the Other, and it is the world that need be entered into as we move through the developmental stages. This rendering of the story is related to the mirror stage in its associations with visual self perception and reflection, but it holds more meaning than that. In psychoanalytic theories it is the Father or the Phallus that makes possible culture, that is associated with the world of language. Here it is Chava, the world of the all-inhering mother, who also is the active principle in the migration towards world, language and culture. Adam, for all his posturing and even usurping of language (in naming, without God's guidance in this instance), is merely her willing partner.

³³ Pardes, op cit., pp. 40-41, points to the importance of Genesis 4-11, to "an understanding of both the Priestly and Yahwistic treatments of femininity in Genesis 1-3." She notes that the "knowledge" (.y.t.) - thus especially as sexual), "is within human reach, (and) propagation takes place and a new mode of discourse arises: genealogy." In the realm of genealogy (which fills the proceeding chapters, and is masculine focused, she focuses on Genesis 4:1, and reading it with Cassuto as "'I have created a man [equally/together] with the Lord (1961:198),'" sees it as "setting the ground for maternal naming-speeches in the Bible. (and hence) naming...(becomes) not only Adam's pejorative...nor is it necessarily a paternal medium." She further cites Cassuto, p. 44, as he says:

The first woman...in her joy at giving birth to her first son, boasts of her generative power, which approximates in her estimation to the Divine creative power.

- and posits that:

Eve's naming-speech may be perceived as a trace from an earlier mythological phase in which mother goddesses were very much involved in the process of creation, even if in a secondary position, under the auspices of the supreme male deity.

This "trace" well fits the present proposition which sees her as co-creator of the historical world, even while archetypally serving as an image/allusion of the All.

The Kabbalah

*the root of evil is a principle within Ein-Sof itself, which holds itself aloof from creation and seeks to prevent the forms of light which contains thought from being actualized, not because it is evil by nature but only because its whole desire is that nothing should exist apart from the Ein-Sof.*³⁴

Jewish mystical writing such as that of the Gerona Kabbalists, and the text of the Zohar, related the אלהים אלהים to an essential separation that occurred in the story of creation, which was associated with the trees in the Eden story:

Another association, found in the Gerona kabbalists, and following them in the Zohar as well, is with "the mystery of the Tree of Knowledge." The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge were bound together in perfect harmony until Adam came and separated them, thereby giving substance to evil, which had been contained within the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and was now materialized in the evil instinct (*yezer ha-ra*). It was Adam therefore who activated the potential evil concealed within the Tree of Knowledge by separating the two trees and also by separating the Tree of Knowledge from its fruit, which was now detached from its source. This event is called metaphorically "the

³⁴ op cit. Scholem in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, v. 7 p. 587, speaking of Nathan of Gaza's interpretation of evil. This reading of the *sitrah ahra* is quite the opposite of the one quoted below, where evil is associated with separation.

cutting of the shoots" (*kizzuz ha-neti'ot*) and is the archetype of all the great sins mentioned in the Bible, whose common denominator was the introduction of division into divine unity. The essence of Adam's sin was that it introduced "separation above and below" into what should have been united, a separation of which every sin is fundamentally a repetition.³⁵

The idea that "'the cutting of the shoots" (*kizzuz ha-neti'ot*)" is "the archetype of all the great sins mentioned in the Bible, whose common denominator was the introduction of division into divine unity," fits well with the present interpretation. Here the "divine unity" is the uroboric bliss, the blended consciousness where no separation exists, and the division is the division into self-other consciousness in whose wake comes the profound feeling of alienation which is the price of individual experience.

The Hebrew word 'other' in its plural inflection אחרים is emphasized in the Bible in its reference to "following other gods,"³⁶ and it signifies idolatry. The act of idolatry reflects back to the Eden story inasmuch as it is associated with the making of "graven images," an act the Jew is expressly forbidden. These images are the signifiers of other gods - they are symbols of undesirable mediation. At this stage the one God becomes physically without attribute, could never be observed walking through a garden at the breezy-time of day; becomes One without a second, albeit distinct from the world of phenomena, or the world of image and name. The true name of this God is not to be uttered, nor yet is it

³⁵ Scholem, op cit., *Encyclopedia Judaica*, v. 7 p. 585.

³⁶ e.g. Deut. 20:3.

known to any but the High Priest who recites it but once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the day on which the Jew is most fervent in the attempt to repent. Repenting is, within the Jewish conception naught but return. The popular etymology explaining the English word Atonement is thus not as far off beam as one may assume, as at-one-ment is a return, and the return here is a return to the nameless and thus unmediated source which stands in opposition to the Other, featured and therefore distanced, because mediated, symbols of mediation.

The Talmud

The Hebrew term Other - is mentioned by early Talmudic scholars, who appropriated its religious implication and employed it as epithet for Elisha ben Avuyah who possibly was a Tannaitic convert to Hellenistic or Gnostic thinking, or who simply took to transgressing Halakhah. For this heresy he became known as אורא and was banished from the community of believers. The best known version of Elisha's heresy³⁷ is to be found in *Tosefta Hagigah* 2:3.³⁸ It reads as follows and has strong associations with the Eden story:

Four scholars entered paradise (i.e., engaged in esoteric philosophy), Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Aher and R. Akiva...Elisha looked (into the divine secrets) and

³⁷ According to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, v. 6 pp. 668-669 this is the most ancient tradition regarding his apostasy.

³⁸ Apparently there are "parallel passages in the Talmuds and in Song of Songs Rabbah 1:4," *ibid.*

destroyed the plants" (i.e., became a heretic).³⁹

The use of Paradise (the Garden of Eden) as metaphor for the realm of esoteric knowledge harks back to the pre-split state of Eden, and Elisha's activity there, קיצץ בנטיעות, more correctly translated as "cut at the plants," clearly echoes Eve's action in the biblical narrative. The Babylonian Talmud's explication of the content of the metaphor of cutting at the plants, that it refers "to a belief in two supreme beings, probably a kind of Gnostic dualism,"⁴⁰ strengthens the connections between the two texts in the present reading. The picking of the fruit and its consumption which bring into being an awareness of Other/Self dualism, may be viewed as analogous to the act of Gnostic dualism mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud.

The explanation of the name Acher in the Babylonian Talmud cites Elisha's meeting with a prostitute:

He found a harlot and solicited her. She said: 'Are you not Elisha b. Avuyah?'
But when he transgressed the Sabbath by plucking a radish and giving it to her,
she said: 'He has become Aher.'⁴¹

The plucking of the radish on the Sabbath by the past holy, now heretical Elisha, the proffering of it to the female prostitute, and her naming him in the wake of this incident,

³⁹ *ibid.* Parenthesized remarks there too.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.* *Talmud Yerushalmi* and *Hagigah*.

clearly echo the biblical Eden text, albeit in a degraded inversion. Here the fruit of the tree has turned into pungent root, the tempter is the fallen male sage and not Eve, and the namer is a harlot and not Adam.

The combination of the tale of Elisha's apostasy, with its direct reference to the *Pardes*, and the account of his acquisition of the appellation *Acher*, bind Elisha's act of heresy even more powerfully to the Eden story and the intertextual play suggests a relationship of valency where the narratives play one another around the themes of Self/Other and exile.

And After

Elisha ben Avuyah became a powerful symbol for the Maskilim and their followers. The title אָרַךְ was inherited across the centuries by Micha Yosef Berdichewski, who was the most influential figure in the modern Hebrew letters of the late nineteenth, early twentieth centuries in crying the call of the individual *qua* individual and in negating the notion of a monotheistic and monolithic Judaism which sought to subsume the sense of psychic Otherness under an umbrella of an autocratic and self-neutralizing Rabbinic authority.⁴²

The modern texts examined in this work all have the אָרַךְ as their thematic, and struggle with the Otherness of language and culture in order to express it. Gordon, Berdichewski, Baron and Kahana-Carmon rebel against the position of woman as the silenced subaltern in Rabbinic and contemporary society; Agnon, Appelfeld and Grossman wrestle with the alienation of the individual which results from ideology, where constructs of the

⁴² For further comment on this see, among others, op cit. Halkin, pp. 93-94.

אחר lead to war, death and destruction, and create victims who carry the mark of "otherness" on their body and being. All the works attempt in some way to speak with the voice of the Other, even while they grapple with the "otherness" of language itself, and its built-in inability to satisfy the aims of expressivity.

**TRACED IN INK: WOMEN'S LIVES
IN QOTZO SHEL YUD - YALAG, AND MISHPACHA - BARON**

*Behold her screaming in the night
in fettered chains that bind her plight
of demon breath, Meduza's eyes
And all around her fire flies
And flames just grow and blaze in bright
concentric circles around her might.*

*But you who keep her tight there know
That just for now you dim her glow
might hold it fast, and quell its charm
But never still, make weak, unarm
The Devil's tortured, Devil's heir
She'll come to you just as you scare.
She holds all life deep in her lair:
Her voice thus nakedness, lewd her hair.¹*

In the nineteenth century, if Hebrew literacy were taken into account, Jewish men were proportionately the most literate group in Eastern Europe.² Not so Jewish women, whose

¹ This is comment on *Berakhot* 24a.

² For a discussion on Jewish literacy in Russia see Joel Perlman, "Russian Jewish Literacy in 1897: A Reanalysis of Census Data," in *Papers in Jewish Demography 1993*, ed. V.O. Schmelz and S. DellaPergola, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University. Perlman's conclusion on a reevaluation of the 1897 census is that earlier analyses of this data, which rate Jewish male literacy much lower than expected, were biased in terms of their definitions of literacy inasmuch as literacy was defined as the ability to read Yiddish texts, while those Jewish men who could read the Siddur were not included in the 'literate' grouping. Perlman concludes that "substantial minorities of Jewish men apparently fell into a peculiar category with regard to literacy," and that "These men could not move from their ability to follow the Siddur to literacy in another medium." His closing remarks adduce that "In this interpretation, Russian Jewry was more literate than most groups before the transformations of industrialization, urbanization, and new forms of schooling fully affected them. And in this interpretation nearly all Russian Jewish males were characterized by the peculiarity of being able to read the Siddur. But that peculiarity

literacy, such as it was, was thus in Yiddish and whose lives were circumscribed by that high proportion of male literacy. The Hebrew and Aramaic letter in which Jewish Law is formulated, contributed to the domination of Jewish women and determined communal Jewish life in a median hold.³ The Law contained various items of legislation which were unfavorable to women and the language of the Law (Hebrew and Aramaic) was not taught to women. In principle all Jewish males were active participants in the life of the letter with which they engaged in active daily communion, if, most centrally, by way of pronouncement, decision-making and dialogue, or, more peripherally, by way of articulation and daily expression in prayer and ritual. Women, as a gender-bound constituency, were not even marginal to this word-constructed grouping. They stood outside of its community, yet were appended to and dominated by it. Thus Yalag's much studied poem "Qotzo shel Yud," and Baron's story "Mishpacha," which focus on the effects of Law and Letters on the lives of women, have added meaning in this context.⁴

The letter served as the main reference point for communal class structures of meritocracy. Thus women, who were allowed scant entry into the world of the letter, were set quite outside the class movements of the group, and were joined to it only by way of their fathers or husbands. This is equally true of women, who through no initiative of their own,

is different from being literate in the usual meanings of the term," which adduction supports the present discussion.

³ For a discussion of the normative character of Jewish society (which pertains equally to traditional societies of the later period) see Katz, Jacob. *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc, 1966.

⁴ For an alternative comparison of these texts, together with the stories "Fradel" and "Kritot" by Baron, see Nurit Govrin, *Ma'agalim* (Ramat-Gan: Sifriyat Maqor, 1975) pp. 280-287.

found themselves placed higher in the social order by dint of paternal financial success which bought them partners of more elevated social standing.⁵ Whatever level of literacy existed within the community of Jewish women,⁶ and if indeed that literacy expressed itself in women's liturgical creativity,⁷ it was a literacy and liturgy outside the bounds of the Hebrew letter with its class-determining consequences, and was sealed by its Yiddish and feminine character in a woman's capsule, and was without societal consequences.

But a no-class status did not mean freedom from the tyranny of class. Quite the opposite. Groups which cannot initiate their own class-mobility may be defined as subaltern.⁸ They are most vulnerable to the exigencies and dictates of the mainstream. The stasis imposed on them makes them victim to the caprice of anything that is capable of movement at all. They are most prey to those elements that are paramount in the fixing of hierarchical classification, which in this case were the written word of the sources, the later codifications of the Law and any contemporary decrees and responsa uttered in their name.

The letter's tyrannical status dominated its initiates as well as those it excluded. Yet

⁵ This comes more into play from the time of early modernity onwards as the result of a class intersection between intellectual determinants and material resources, brought about by changing economic conditions (which revolve both on impoverishment - and thus greater need - and an opening mobility - and thus the possibility of wealth accrual.)

⁶ And it is being examined and brought to the fore more and more at present.

⁷ For some discussion on women's prayers see Taitz, E. "Women's Voices, Women's Prayers", and Berger, Sh. Z. "Tehines: A Brief Survey of Women's Prayers" in ed. Grossman, S. and Haut, R. ed.s, *Daughters of the King*. Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1992.

⁸ For a definition of the subaltern see Spivak, Gayatri *Thinking Academic Freedom in Gendered Post-Coloniality*. 32nd T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture, Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1992:1. (And elsewhere.)

while the initiates had, by virtue of an available discourse, the ability at times to circumvent and manipulate the Letter's authority, the excluded (Jewish women) had no entry into this realm. A literal domination overarched their lives in a general way and chartered the conventions of their daily living. Its force could demote them to the nether reaches of society, putting them out in the cold and relegating them to their 'natural' level, quite outside the realm of community.⁹

This power of the letter is the subject of Y.L. Gordon's satirical poem "קוצו של יוד" and Devorah Baron's story "משפחה". From the perspective of this central theme, the two tales speak to each other with Baron's narrative serving as expanded commentary on Yalag's poem. In both texts a letter qua letter, placed in the hands of male representatives of the Letter, inscribes a woman's life: one with tragedy and the other with happiness. An interesting exchange occurs between the poetic saga, written by a man who was undoubtedly very sympathetic to women, and Baron's story written, around essentially the same topic, by a woman. The very different ways in which the two writers make use of the sources, name attribution, references to sexuality, love and woman's position in society, as well as their character choices and representations and their manipulation of literary devices serve, paradoxically, to bring their texts into closer alignment even while they are expressive of a discrepancy in sensitivity.

⁹ As their status was familialy derived and dependent on either parental or spousal standing, the loss of these (depending on the manner in which they were lost) could cause the woman to all but be excluded from society. This is especially true of the *agunah* and the woman divorced because of an attribution of barrenness.

Qotzo shel Yud

In the Summer of 1875 Yehudah Leib Gordon, arguably the most prominent Haskalah poet, withdrew to Marienbad where he completed what in Michael Stanislawski's words, "he - and hosts of later readers - would come to regard as his best poem, the mock epic "The Tip of the Yud" ("קוצו של יוד")."¹⁰ It is certainly his most famous poem, and its impact on the Jewish world was such that after its first appearance in *haShachar* in 1875¹¹ it was not only translated into Yiddish in 1904 (as "Iber a Pintele", by Yoel Linski), but crossed cultural boundaries and was translated into Ladino in prose form in Cairo in 1901.¹²

"Qotzo shel Yud" is the story of a beautiful young Jewish woman (Bat-shua), who is betrothed at the age of fifteen by her well-to-do father to Hillel, who excels in learning but cannot support his family. He leaves Ayalon (the location of the tale; its name a deliberate metathesis - because of governmental censorship - of Vilna) in search of a livelihood and disappears, leaving Bat-shua an *agunah*¹³ with two small children. She sells her jewelry

¹⁰ Stanislawski, Michael. *For Whom Do I Toil? Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry*. New York & Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988. p. 125.

¹¹ *ibid.*: 242 note 47.

¹² Note in appendix in Y.L. Gordon *Kitvei Yehudah Leib Gordon* (Hebrew) Jerusalem: Dvir, 1956:259. The translations are my own.

¹³ The *agunah* is somewhat analogous to the English 'grass widow', but only in the broadest terms. For the question of the *agunah* see *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971): 2:429-433. An *agunah* is defined there as a "married woman who for whatsoever reason is separated from her husband and cannot remarry, either because she cannot obtain a divorce from him...or because it is unknown whether he is still alive. The term is also applied to a *yevamah* ("a levirate widow"...), if she cannot obtain *chalitzah* from the levir or if it is unknown whether he is still alive (Git. 26b, 33a; Yev. 94a; and Posekim). The problem of the *agunah* is one of the most complex in halakhic discussions and is treated in great detail in halakhic

and opens a shop. Her father dies impoverished, but the newly constructed railway line in town brings a new man, Feibe, the railway supervisor, into her life. He contacts Hillel who is in Liverpool and pays him to grant Bat-shua a *get*. When the document reaches Ayalon four weeks later it is declared *pasul* [invalid] by the leading voice in the triumvirate of Rabbis in the local religious court, because he disagrees with the orthography used by Hillel, before a rabbinical court in London, in signing his own name. The matter cannot be remedied for in the intervening period Hillel has drowned at sea (being lost in 'waters without end', his death cannot be verified), and cannot sign another. Bat-shua accepts her fate, refuses Feibe's offers of help, falls sick as a result of the shock and thus loses her business. The poem ends with her utter impoverishment and destitution.

The story-line is framed by a lengthy opening chapter composed of cumulative adductions about the condition of Jewish woman which are proclaimed in a tone of sustained pathos. Within the plaintive cries of pity, whose melodramatic tenor and rhythmic regularity vitiate, to late twentieth century ears, the tragedy they contain, are enumerated, in detail, the ills a Jewish woman is heir to. These are presented by a thick overlaying of direct source references drawn from the Bible, the Talmud, the liturgy and later Rabbinic codifications and decrees. The allusions used and the customs cited are among the most potent examples of

literature (no less than six volumes of *Otzar ha-Posekim* are devoted to it." Despite all attempts to ameliorate the situation of the *agunah* and the potential *agunah*, this construction is one that has caused the most dire suffering to Jewish women. Important to the present poem is the statement that a husband cannot be declared dead if the husband has drowned "in waters that have no end", i.e. the ocean, unless a witness can testify to his burial or has found one of his limbs in the place where he went down, and that this is the one instance where the relaxation rules pertaining to witnesses, which are applied to the declaration of the demise of the husband to include the wife, does not apply. *ha'Intziqlopedia ha'Ivrit* (Hebrew) Jerusalem & Tel Aviv: Chevra leHotza'at Intziklopediyot, 1974 v. 26:722-724.

women's degradation in the tradition. Yalag dilates their effects by individualizing the quotes by way of direct address, by the addition of words more suggestively extreme than in the original and by means of proximity and layering.

The story of Eve and the snake, drawn from Genesis 3, is augmented by Talmudic explication (e.g. *Sotah* 9)¹⁴ in the verse - "רובצת זהמת הנחש מאז בד,"¹⁵ where woman's Primal Sin - which as narrated by the Bible, is the essential cause of humankind's misery and loss of Eden - is amplified in the later texts referred to in the poem, where the snake's primordial filth adheres forever to all women. The obvious sexual component of this construal is underscored by the hint at the bestial entailed in the verb רובצת and by the preceding question/answer line where, speaking in the voice of the Letter, the poetic voice turns to woman and asks "יזמה את כלך?" and in the same voice answers "חמת דם ופרש!" By coalescing filth, hot blood and excretions, all references to the concerns of religious texts pertaining to women, Yalag selectively points to a conception of woman which is clearly one of repugnance.

The Talmudic pronouncement "קול שבאישה ערוה" and its parallel "שיער שבאישה" ["A woman's voice is lewd" <or foul or unchaste; like nakedness>, and similarly a woman's hair] becomes personalized by the form of address derived by appending the second person pronominal suffix to "voice" and "hair" ["קולך ערוה ושיער ראשך מפלצת"],¹⁶ while the tradition's revulsion at woman's sexuality, evident the lines quoted earlier, is emphasized

¹⁴ See Gordon's comments on this in his note in op cit., Gordon : 350.

¹⁵ *ibid.* : 130.

¹⁶ *ibid.* : 130.

by the use of the word *מפלצת*, which makes her hair a hideous idol <or monstrous> in the present context and a taboo in terms of the Law.

The Mishnaic admonition to fathers: "Whoever teaches his daughter Torah, it's as if he taught her impropriety" <or folly; vanity; something unsavory> (*Sotah* 3:4), is turned into an address to contemporary women, "הן תורה לך תפלה", prefaced by the exclamatory "הן" (= surely; for indeed) whose axiomatic force undermines the Mishnaic text and points to its absurdity.

The liturgical statement of gratitude to the Divine, proclaimed by Jewish men daily, who assert the superiority of their Jewish and masculine form by thanking God with three negations: "for not making me a gentile, for not making me a slave, for not making me a woman", is presented in the poem in an inverted manner. The stanza in which it appears begins with two verses which at first glance apparently commend, albeit in a suspect and patronizing manner that leaves no doubt as to men's guilt in the matter, Jewish woman's exclusion from the world of the Letter:

טוב לך כי לא תדעי שפת אבותיך,

כי בית אלהיך בפניך נעלו

But the explanatory verses immediately following leave no doubt as to the actual tenor of the opening lines:

כי עתה לא תשמעי ברכת מנאציד

"שלא עשם אשה" יום-יום יתפללו,

כעכו"ם וכעבד את למו נחשבת¹⁷

- leave no doubt as to the accusatory tenor of the opening lines. The repeated use of the third-person plural pronoun, counterpointed by the singular second person address to the Hebrew woman of the poem, inverts the negative polarization of women in the prayer, by setting men on the negative pole.

The first chapter which began with the rhetorical sigh:

אשה עבריה מי ידע חייד? ¹⁸

- ends with the couplet:

אלה תולדות כל אשה עבריה -

אלה תולדות בת-שוע היפה-פיה. ¹⁹

Thus Bat-shua is fixed right at the start of the epic as a Jewish anywoman, and her story is the story of all Jewish women.

Bat-shua's flawless and unrivaled beauty, which pointedly contradicts the aforementioned examples about woman's impurity, is made much of in the poem. Alongside

¹⁷ ibid. : 130.

¹⁸ ibid. : 129.

¹⁹ ibid. : 130.

her complacency it is highlighted as her greatest virtue. Many stanzas are devoted to her external description, but they are not set in the form of plain and simple praises. Rather, they subvert their explicit statement by way of the allusive networks in the poem itself, by embodying little stings in their very own tails or by complex fields of meaning and context. Bat-shua's beauty is extolled with the love language of the Song of Songs,²⁰ where the biblical sentiments are quite the opposite of those mentioned in the first section of the poem. These are presumably anathema to Rabbinic attitudes which insist that men not look at women.²¹ Gordon sneaks in a reference to this prohibition when he says that Hillel and Bat-shua did not meet prior to their wedding, and speaking in the name of the Letter, offers as justification for this custom the case of Avraham and Sarah mentioned in the Talmud.²² The verse used to illustrate Bat-shua's perfection pronounces:

אבנים שלמות צלע זאת נבנתה

- where the metonymic item accorded her derives from a biblical assertion about woman's nascence which, viewed from a contemporary and non-religious perspective, is an inversion contingent upon naught but womb envy, and which carries with it a statement of the primary dependence of woman on her immediate vehicle of creation, man. Man was worthy of being created by God, in His image, woman - via man.

²⁰ *ibid.* : 131.

²¹ And note the persistent attempts to interpret this book allegorically.

²² *ibid.* : 350. See Gordon's note on this subject.

Just as she is a picture of physical perfection, she also incorporates all the gentle and genteel qualities of "pure and noble womanhood." A halo surrounds her, she is made in God's image purified seven-fold and all about her is innocence and spring. But her gentility is not so perfect for it reaches absurd proportions when, denuded of all at the end of the saga, she passionately declares in answer to a question asking if God wrought her awful fate:

- לא, אנשי חסד, לאל מעול חלילה:
הן כשרנות טבים חנני צורי שדי,
גם ההצלחה לי פעם פנים הצהילה,
כמעט הייתי בכל טוב אני וילדי
וכנשי התענגות חייתי גם אני -
אך קוצו של יוד הוא הרגני.²³

She cannot see that it is the men of the Letter who brought her to her end. She has so fully bought into the claims of the established authorities that they are equated with the Divine when she refuses Feibe's offers of help after the *ger's* invalidation, saying:

אם לא חפץ האל כי אחיה ממקור עמך
אדני הוא - הטוב בעיניו יעש²⁴

²³ *ibid.* : 140.

²⁴ *ibid.* : 139.

The only image which disrupts Bat-shua's angelic purity is powerful in its antithetical elements. It has her suckling at the breast of the she-wolf who nursed "רומול וכרש" the founder of Rome and the Emperor of Persia, respectively. This bestial (sexual) note is expanded by the comment that:

כי למד לבריאה אביה אלוה

היות אומנת טובה מאין כמוה.²⁵

One can only wonder at the intentionality inherent in calling up the image of the she-wolf, attaching it to figures emblematic of mighty foreign powers who have dominated Israel, juxtaposing it with the Oh so pure Bat-shua and then sanitizing it by the attribution of sublime and holy maternity to the she-beast. It could be read in two ways. The first reading would have the poet speaking these words as unmediated, albeit set in satirical intent. Here the verses would merely constitute an expansion on the work of hyperbole, satirical and excessive at core, but reliable within its own terms. A second reading would attribute a higher level of intentionality and suggest a deeper level of satire. Here the use of the bestial in apposition with Bat-shua, and the negation of this fabrication in the following couplet, could stand as a statement about the power and quality of woman's sexuality - even in so vanquished a person as Bat-shua - and the manner in which it is routinely neutralized into the motherly and sacred all at once.

The second reading would seem to better fit other parts of the poem. Speaking of

²⁵ *ibid.* : 131.

arranged marriages, arranged for the Jewish woman by "אלופה המזוג זוגים" ²⁶ forty days before her birth, the poem reiterates in a number of ways that "כי אהבה בלבב בת ישראל" "איין" in a stanza which ends:

אהבה מן הן לא ידעו אמותינו -
הכזונה נעשה את אחותנו?

where mother and whore are juxtaposed and both are placed under a biblical umbrella, with the allusion to the Matriarchs and to Dinah, who was raped by Shekhem. The echoes of the second reference are particularly harsh: Romantic love for the Jewish woman is so unthinkable that it is seen as a sign of profligacy. Yet the example of that profligacy - Dinah - was a victim, not a perpetrator. The echoes of the biblical story reverberate in the poem and make all Jewish women victims as well; victims of men's fear of them which deprives them of any autonomy. In another stanza even the ascetic - "the dry tree, steals a glance at her (Bat-shua) - for he too has, in secret, a lusting soul." And the couplet which responds to this says that, "and God's *Shekhinah* luxuriates on her, when her upright stance moves forward her legs." ²⁷ Again lust or desire, interwoven with religion, is imbued with the holy and thereby neutralized.

While Gordon's sympathies are not in question, and the revolutionary nature of his text is unquestionable, his choice of satire as genre and his manipulation of that genre for the

²⁶ *ibid.* : 130.

²⁷ *ibid.* : 132.

purposes of a tirade against the repressive hegemony of Halakhah, afford him a distance from its subject and compel him to lead his protagonist to her bitter end. His poem is as much a railing against Rabbinical oppression, and about the transition from medievalism to modernity (the building of the railway; the redemptive possibilities of the telegraph; Feibe - the modern man - as a figure of potential redemption), as it is a protest song about the lot of women in a traditional Jewish society constructed on the bones and sinews of ossified and over-dominant religious authority structures.

Bat-shua is the only individualized woman to appear in this text and she is cast in the mold of a "modest and compliant Daughter of Israel" and never oversteps its boundaries.²⁸ The depiction of her extreme submissiveness (see her refusal to accept Feibe's offer of support, and her closing remarks regarding the cause of her downfall, quoted above) is both parodic and satirical: God does not wish her to live with Feibe, but nonetheless will not abandon her and "Heaven forbend that there be any wickedness in God", for she was "slain by the tip of a Yud." Thus the *yud*, the Letter of the Halakhah, has an independent agency so powerful it is capable of overriding the positive power of the Divine.

But the greatest parody in the poem revolves upon the nature of Rav Vafsi's objection to the signature. Even in terms of the letter itself, his protest is untenable, and in this lies Gordon's ultimate sting. The first *lamed* in the name Hillel is written with a *dagesh forte* and therefore should not, in correct grammatical orthography, be preceded by a *yud*. Thus Vafsi's

²⁸ Despite any allusions to an unrealized sexuality, she only once acts out of character for "a pure daughter Israel." (This when she kisses Feibe when he asks her to marry him.)

conclusion, built on centuries of discussion on the subject, is entirely fallacious²⁹ and makes a mockery not only of him, but of all the Rabbinic debates on the subject. In a note he attached to the poem Yalag provides a summary of assorted opinions pertaining to the correct spelling of the name and then comments "Shame would cause anyone's heart to break on seeing our Great Lights fumbling around a simple matter that any toddler understands, viz. that the letters in the heavy paradigm take a dagesh in the second root consonant, and if this is the case there is no place for a yud; and it seems furthermore that they did not know that the name Hillel appears in the Bible (Judges 12:13-15)".³⁰ His charges are dire, and they suggest that he uses this specific name to illustrate his perception of Rabbinical inflation, which uselessly argues the unarguable as if in ignorance of the most basic facts.^{31 32}

²⁹ op cit., Michael Stanislawski : 127 argues that the debates about the Halakhic correctness of Vafsi's decree are irrelevant, but in the sense it is looked at here it is extremely important, as it leavens the satirical aspect of the poem by depicting (a) Vafsi's stubbornness, and (b) the contemporary power of a dominant and boorishly cruel personality in the application of the letter, where its authority supersedes both greater quality (the Ari and Caro) and larger quantity (the other two *dayyanim* and the Rabbinical court in London which had authorized the document). See note #30 below.

³⁰ op cit., Gordon, Y.L. : 350.

³¹ It is worth noting in this context that the authorities Vafsi invokes in support of his argument are the *Shulchan Arukh* and later commentators expanding on its codes, while the other two *dayyanim* quote the authority of the earlier and greater Ari and Joseph Caro (the writer of the *Shulchan Arukh* itself, who revises the discussion in *Bedeq haBa'yit*, an extension to the *Aruk*). The incident addresses the theme of spiritual and intellectual degeneration, which is buttressed by the introduction to Rav Vafsi. He is ushered in by a stanza which describes this process of deterioration in terms of the claims made by Rabbis as to their own greatness:

Before, in Israel, when the Torah was light,
And not used as an ax to grind, or a rod of pride,
There were a few Geonim in every generation,
All of them holy, their title glory;
Now - as many Rabbis as there are, so are there Geonim
Till even the young ones boast of the title,
And we even have a multiplicity of Geonim:

Gordon knits a matrix with the names in the poem which supports its conceptual weave. Vafsi's name is the name of the father of one of the twelve spies sent to investigate the Land of Israel in Exodus 13. The Talmud, in *Sotah* 34b, comments on this name, saying Vafsi "(was so named) because he suggested God(...) was weak" and "because he stepped over (*pasa*) the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He." The commentary interprets "stepping over" as misrepresentation.³³ The second part of his epithet הכוזרי fulfills a double function. It is a sound play, with Khuzari approximating the Hebrew אכזר [cruel] and is at the same time a reference to the Kuzars - many of whom converted to Judaism in the eighth century - who were considered cruel and evil by the Russians, whose own cruelty was legendary.³⁴ Thus Vafsi's character and behavior are embodied in his name.

The root of the name Chefer (Bat-shua's father) כ פ ח appears in verbal form in the

Real Geonim and Mighty Geonim
 And Geonic Geonim, and of the second and third degree,
 And Great Lights and Eagles, Pillars and Hammers.

As the claims grow greater and greater, so does the stature shrink and wither. Witness Vafsi himself who is introduced with a derision which marks him as an extreme example of this corruption:

And in Ayalon there is a Rav of superior standing,
 Not a simple Gaon but a Wondrous Gaon,
 Unique and special even among the few chosen
 and the name of the name of His Glory:

Rav Vafsi the Khuzari.

- and who cruelly and incorrectly quotes the Letter so as to assert thereby his awesome (and non-existent) competence.

³² For a comprehensive discussion on the name Hillel in the Talmud see Bar-Asher, M. *Qovetz Ma'amarim biLeshon Chazal*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1972: 12-13.

³³ Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein ed., *The Talmud*. London: Soncino Press, 1985. Glossary and indices, Rabbi B.D. Klein.

³⁴ op cit., Gordon : 360. (note)

same passage from *Sotah* that discusses the name Vafsi, as a quote from Isaiah 24:23, where it carries the meaning of eternal shame and the condition of being ashamed.³⁵

The name Feibe, accorded the representative of the modern world, who brings the light of modernity to the town (the railroad), and the light of possible salvation to Bat-shua, reverberates in a number of ways. Popular etymology has the name a Yiddish version of Phoebe Apollo, the sun god. As such it was associated with light, and light-giving, and often served as a synonym to Sheraga (Aramaic = candle, lamp) in the double-barrelled name Sheraga-Feibe. In its later form in the poem the name Feibish contains the semantic content of the Yiddish adjective פייביש, an appellation which no doubt would be deemed fitting in that society for a man who is sympathetic to women. Another reading has the name split in two, with פיי denoting a cry of sorrow, and ביש holding the meaning 'bad'.³⁶

Bat-shua's name means daughter of a cry or of a cry for help. The letters פ ו ש also stand as an acronym for the *Shulchan Arukh*. Thus the name represents her suffering and helplessness and is also a reference to the way her life is determined by the exigencies of Halakhah. Bat-shua is also the name of Yehudah's wife in Genesis 38, and is thus attached to the figure of Tamar, another woman who suffers by way of the dictates pertaining to women and marriage. She is a levirate widow, who is not given *chalitzah*, and her position therefore is much like that of the *agunah*. In contradistinction to Bat-shua though, Tamar takes matters into her own hands, and rebels by claiming her own sexuality, so foreign to Jewish women,

³⁵ Epstein ed. *The Talmud*.

³⁶ op cit., Gordon 261, where the name is explained in two ways: a. as a play on the words *vai* [a cry of distress] and *bish* [bad, in Hebrew <via the Aramaic>], and alternatively as *vaybish*, viz. one who has fallen into the hands of a woman.

according to Yalag's poem, when she seduces the patriarchal authority in her life, Yehudah, her father-in-law and oppressor. Furthermore, in Rabbinic terms the nature of their relationship is open to question: Firstly, Yehudah is Tamar's father-in-law. Relations of this type are forbidden, although her widowed state might ameliorate the *issur* [ban]. But even if the death of her husband renders the ban void, the fact that she has not been given *chalitzah* by Sheloh (her husband's younger brother), means that it is as if he were her husband and that her sexual relations with any other man fall under the forbidden category.³⁷ Thus the association with the Tamar story serves as foil to Yalag's Bat-shua in a number of ways by substrating her saga with a somewhat antithetical parallel, while at the same time highlighting the changes in perceptions of acceptability in the world of the Halkhah, which would choose to present itself as unchanging.

Bat-shua is also an alternate name given to Bat Sheva (Chronicles I, 2 and 3), who is associated with forbidden desire. In her case King David, the supreme emblem of male authority, overcomes any problems of עגיונות by energetically ascertaining that her husband is dead and is known to be dead. He abuses his patriarchal power in order to realize his sexual desires. This is the converse of Yehudah's (foiled) suppression of Tamar's sexuality, though the effects of both displays of male dominance are the same. They both result in copulation.

The title of Gordon's poem, which serves as its thematic kernel, is drawn from a Rabbinic source (*Menachot* 29a) which declares the importance of each little mark of Holy writing for "Rabbi Akivah would in the future extrapolate reams upon reams of Halakhah

³⁷ Rashi does not even mention this, while Nachmanides justifies the relationship by saying that in terms of levirate law, Tamar belongs to Yehudah.

upon each tip" and "each letter that does not have parchment surrounding it on all four sides is pasul" for "even the right hand tip of a yud that does not have parchment around it, is stuck to another letter" (Rashi) - "and is thus stuck to it and delays it."³⁸ The poem thus states its direct relationship to the Halakhah and to the Halakhah's obsession with the letter in its minutest traces. This relationship is reinforced by the mosaic made of abundant quotes from the sources which constitute, in great measure, the poetic weave. The text is replete with commentary, articulated in blown tones by the poetic voice. Given that the work is intentionally satirical, these forms are appropriate.³⁹

Qotzo shel Yud and Mishpacha

Devorah Baron's story "משפחה", first published in 1933, is, like Yalag's poem, the tale of a woman whose life is determined by ink in a *get*. Unlike the poem, however, this story has a happy ending. The locus of the story is a Shtetl, not the city. The story is Dinah's story. She is married off to Barukh, his father's only son, so that the male line of succession can continue. For ten years she does not bear a child, and a reluctant Barukh, as per custom, sets

³⁸ I. Epstein, ed. *The Talmud*.

³⁹ *op cit.*, Stanislawski : 126-127 stresses the satirical nature of the work, saying that "Gordon strove not to depict a typical, or even likely, scene in Russian-Jewish life, but to satirize the treatment of women in traditional Jewish society.", and calls the denouement "tragic, if avertible and nonsensical." While the satirical intent is not in doubt, and the tragic inflation of the text unquestionable, the active existence of the textual references in Jewish life, is likewise not in question. Their voice can be trusted as examples of direct representation, albeit quoted in the poem for unreliable purposes. The satiric tenor is more the result of phraseological cumulation and of the excessive bent of the fabula and its melodramatic expression in the poem.

out to divorce her. Just as the *get* is being inscribed, a letter in the document goes astray, skips out of the line, and the divorce is declared invalid. The couple stay together and within the year Dinah gives birth to a healthy male child. The story seems to end on a note of jubilant sentimentality.

Although the title of the story does not bear the mark of the Letter, the word "Mishpachah" is tinged with a dissident quality when it is subordinated to the notion of family in the story wherein, in biblical fashion, it denotes the line of male succession alone. The narrative opens with a reference to "שלשלת הדורות"^{40 41} represented in the Bible. This style of genealogical recounting is then exemplified in the text by a retelling of Genesis, with one male "begat" following another. The biblical form is then transferred to the Shtetl in the tale, where male names are repeated in the successive generations of one of its families. From the nominal chronicles of this family, the narrative moves to the family into which Dinah marries. Thus a line is drawn - much like the recurring refrain throughout the text that exhorts that the chain not be broken - from biblical male succession to the fictive present,⁴² and it is this line that, in society's view in the story, comprises Dinah's sole *raison d'être*.

⁴⁰ Baron, Devorah. *Parshiyot*. (Hebrew) Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1968:11. The translations are my own.

⁴¹ Dan Miron sees this genealogical account - and indeed the biblical references in Baron's stories in general - as expressive of Devorah Baron's perception of a cyclical and unchanging temporality, which imbues even apparently singular historical events with "mythological value". Miron, D. "Yetzirat Devorah Baron" in *Devorah Baron: Mivchar Ma'amarim al Yetziratah*. ed. A. Pagis. Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1974, and in Miron, D. *Khivvun Orot*. Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv: Schocken Books, 1979.

⁴² *ibid.* : 11-12.

The note of protest in "Mishpachah" is subdued and subtly drawn, but its presence is insistent. The women are more numerous than in Yalag's poem and they are certainly more active. But their activity seems, for the most part, to be the result of internalized gendering, where they buy into the status-quo and even trumpet its cause and abet it. Libke, the orphan girl who serves Dinah and Barukh, shamelessly throws herself at Barukh when she knows the time for his divorce is near. She does not question the justice of it all, but merely sees this as her chance to attain some borrowed status via a man. Batyah, the family matriarch, has learned from her father, a travelling *Maggid* [preacher], to speak in parables which she uses so cruelly against women (she compares Dinah, within her hearing, to a fruitless tree that must be felled).⁴³ She has appropriated the male voice *en tout*.⁴⁴

Unlike Yalag, Baron does not make any explicit statements about women being banned from study but elucidates this practice with repeated references to the scholarly tasks of young boys⁴⁵ who are mere children and are contextually counterpointed to the grown women who nurture and educate them, but do not have access to what they learn; and by inserting in the text a regression such as Dinah's memory of evenings in her father's house when, after cleaning - i.e. taking care of his needs, she sat listening to him examining her youngest brother's (his youth is emphasized) biblical knowledge.⁴⁶

Sexuality in this story is alluded to only in reference to child-bearing possibilities and

⁴³ *ibid.* : 29.

⁴⁴ Musha, who shows compassion towards Dinah, is an exception.

⁴⁵ "בני-מקרא, בני-עברי' ובני-אלף-בית" *ibid.* : 16 and elsewhere.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* : 18.

is transposed onto household objects and circumstances or expressed by similes drawn from the plant world. Libke is described as "נראתה כממלאה את כל המטה",⁴⁷ much as Batyah pronounces Dinah and Barukh's bedroom empty and notes that their house is too clean and shiny.⁴⁸ Seeds, plants, fertile ground, frozen rivers and thawing reeds appear in various places in the texts, at times as similes and at others as metaphoric transpositions signifying sexuality or emotions and events. Dinah's physical aspects that receive mention do so in conjunction with her orphaned (and thus deserted) condition. Her face is the face of "פני לא רוחמה",⁴⁹ her head - an orphan's head.⁵⁰ Womanly sexual features are hinted at delicately and subsumed under the mantle of motherhood, child-like vulnerability and domesticity. Despite a similar intertwining in Yalag's work, the harsh dichotomies - as in the reference to the she-wolf - are indicative of a very different sensibility which does not balk at excess in proffering its convictions.

Whether modesty and submission win Dinah's day, is open to question. If the words of the holy man she visits in search of a remedy for her barren condition are to be taken as prophecy, then in him the letter operates as oracle . When the entire narrative is taken into account, the advice articulated through his voice - that she further quell her almost non-existent voice; lower her kerchief even more; accept all insults that come her way and light a

⁴⁷ *ibid.* : 20.

⁴⁸ *ibid.* : 27.

⁴⁹ *ibid.* : 14.

⁵⁰ *ibid.* : 18.

third candle on the Sabbath ⁵¹ - adds to the parodic tone of the text by overenlarging the pathos appended to her. She who is already overly submissive is ordered an extra dose of submission as cure. It is as though it is all actually her fault and that she need repent for circumstances to change. As though only total passivity and absolute silence can save a Jewish woman from her travails.

"Mishpachah" is full of biblical quotations, but has scant Talmudic references. The voice that speaks the biblical phrases most often, using them as similes and metaphors for all and any situations, is the voice of the family elder, Shelomo. He is described as "A scion of Torah, who had the right verse for every event." ⁵² But at the end of the narrative his much lauded adeptness is shown to be not always intelligently applied, and as something he hides behind, his way of avoiding responsibility.

The story, unlike the poem, ends with the illusion of safety and with an apparent affirmation of religious bounty. Things turn out well for Dinah, who finds herself embraced by the warmth of family. An ignorant comprehension of the happy resolution is summarized by Shelomo in a statement couched in biblical terms, when he declares that:

נמלאה סאת צערה ... ורחם אותה האלהים. ⁵³

He seems incapable of posing the question that maybe it was not God who had mercy, but

⁵¹ *ibid.* : 28.

⁵² *ibid.* : 13.

⁵³ *ibid.* : 35.

society which was cruel? His proclamation is an example of Devorah Baron's quiet cry of resistance which is sounded throughout the text. The narrative comment which introduces Shelomo's announcement is wonderfully tongue-in-cheek:

והלה, בתום לבו, לא הראה כמעט סימני תמיהה.⁵⁴

Shelomo, the learned family elder, by whose sanction the *get* is initiated in the first place, is ascribed the virtue of integrity (which could also be read as mere boorish naivete), while what he is really doing is using religious statement to blind himself to the meaning of his own behavior and its consequences.

In the wake of her visit to the Holy man, after Batyah has insulted her in the synagogue, Dinah prays silently at home (after Barukh marks the appropriate passages for her in the correct order). Her manner of praying is likened to the childless Chana's prayers in Samuel I, 1:13: "Her lips move and her voice is not heard." Her agony thus becomes part of the age-old suffering of the childless Jewish woman, who is harassed and shamed by society for her barrenness.

Dinah offers to take one of Musha's girls into her home. This in itself is a condemnation of society. She wishes to express pure maternity, in whatever manner available, while society demands she herself give birth to a child, and preferably a son. By inserting this incident into the tale Baron highlights, by way of implied comparison, the ruthless nature of society's norms, which in this case are inferred from the Letter's mandates,

⁵⁴ *ibid.* : 35.

and take no account of individuals and feelings.

Baron's use of allusive names is not as evocative as Yalag's. It is worth mentioning though that Shelomo the Elder is anything but wise, that Dinah is a victim, that Batyah's lack of compassion is indicative of an essentially alien nature (the biblical *Bityah* [Chronicles I 4:18] is a foreign king's daughter, and not a daughter of the Divine) and that it is as if Barukh ben Neriyah, Jeremiah's scribe (Jer. chapter 36 and elsewhere) stretches out across the ages to lend Barukh his power which intervenes in the text, muddles the present scribe's hand and causes the wayward letter to lengthen.

The figure that is most clearly in sympathy with Dinah is the Rabbi, the narrator's father and this is in direct contradiction to Yalag's Rav Vafsi and the role he plays in Batshua's life. The Rabbi in this story is most fond of those passages in the Talmud which are compassionate towards women.⁵⁵ The narrator introduces this tendency of his by saying that the day before a *get* he would fast all day and pore over his books all night, possibly trying to ascertain names (his hesitancy in this opposite to Vafsi's bulldozing certainty) or maybe studying the matter of divorce in general, to which is added the narrative comment:

דעות הקדמונים הן, כידוע, שונות.

The attitude illustrated and the narrative aside voice a quiet indignation at the relativity of Rabbinic interpretation, whose dicta are anything but relative in their effects on the world.

⁵⁵ The night before he is due to officiate in a divorce he pores over the words of Rabbi Eliezer in *Sanhedrin* 22a: "For him who divorces the first wife, the very altar sheds tears...against whom thou has dealt treacherously..." Epstein ed., *The Talmud*.

Conversely, however, the fact that these passages contain the only direct Talmudic reference⁵⁶ in the story, seems to emphasize the possible flexibility of Rabbinic interpretation in a positive way which by way of inversion criticizes those who hold to rigid, one-dimensional, stringent explications.

Barukh, his weakness notwithstanding, is quite the opposite of Hillel, who escaped a wife and family. But in the story there is no potentially redemptive male figure such as Feibe, and no potentially redemptive power such as modernity. The text is contained in a time that is almost static, in a Shtetl life that seems to be unchanging.

The overt criticism in the narrative is saved for the women. It is most apparent when dealing with Batyah and her sharp tongue and malicious personality. Libke - who is also ascribed an innocence at the end of tale - attempts to stake her claim to Barukh in a brazen manner. Her action escapes direct comment, but she is depicted as "charging (הרסה)" towards Barukh to call him to dance.⁵⁷

In a reversal of the unvoiced woman in Jewish society, it is the women who have most voice in the text. Yet this reversal is illusory. Despite their overall absence, the men preside over the text, with their voices clearly entering it when it comes to matters which determine a woman's fate. Even Barukh's weak voice, which is heard only once, has a determining power over Dinah's life as it answers untruthfully in the affirmative that he is willing to grant the divorce. This power is emphasized by the fact that this is his one and only utterance in the tale. But the primacy of the written letter is demonstrated at the same

⁵⁶ See note #53 above.

⁵⁷ *ibid.* : 30.

time. Barukh's incorrect answer (the double yes) can be rectified, the misconstrued letter is irrevocable and cannot.

And finally, Dinah's happiness at the end of the story is contingent upon its fairy-tale ending which conjures up the birth of a son to continue the coveted male line that extends from Adam and Abel and Cain to Avner ben Barukh, her own son. But this happy ending might not be so happy if we consider Libke, for instance. She is relegated to the position of servant which, we are informed, "וַיִּזְוֶה קַבְלָה אֶת הַדָּבָר בְּשִׂמְחָה תַּמָּה." ⁵⁸ Thus the story ends with what looks like resolution, but is in fact merely a perpetuation whose marks can be discerned in the circularity of the text and the over-sentimentalized content of its closure.

Both texts stretch the construct of the submissive woman to parodic lengths, and both use manifold intertextual allusions. But whereas Yalag's satire derives in large measure from direct declarations that need be antonymically read, Baron's critique obtains in a delicately nuanced and modest satirical woof. And both texts, Yalag's poem and Baron's story, end with two women demoted by the vagaries of the Letter's hierarchical vicissitudes to the status of subaltern, from where movement, even in shadow, is well-nigh impossible.

⁵⁸ *ibid.* : 35.

**GENDERING A NARRATIVE: ON THE INTERPLAY OF PRESENCE
AND ABSENCE IN M.Y. BERDICHEWSKI'S *MIRYAM***

*The feminine has...had to be deciphered as forbidden...in
between signs, between the realized meanings, between
the lines.*

Luce Irigaray ¹

רע חלק הנשים בארץ,
גורלן בשמים מי ידע?

*Woman's lot is bad on earth
Her fate in Heaven who can know?*

Miryam - p. 286

Apparently in Jola, one of the languages spoken in Senegal, there is a pronoun for the Divine which is animate and beyond even the conception of bi-genderdness, yet in its signification is without the attribution of no-gender. Furthermore, this pronoun *emitai* is much in the vein of all Jola pronouns, which neither allude to, nor negate, gender. This transcendent inclusive-ness of gender, a type of meta-gender, which neither demotes the object by the exclusion of gender, nor struggles with gender specificity - is rare in our present day culture if not, for the most part, completely absent. The attempt to be all-containing is generally a struggle with the perceived opposites of what is, for us, an almost unavoidable, deeply ingrained construction

¹ Moi, op cit., p. 132.

of the binary² whose twined and thus merged expression can only be tapped by various modes of the allusive. Texts are infused with an influx of gender-construed bias, which dominates in various ways: In the conception of a text, in words and language, in narrative form and events which are dense with the suggestion of an underlying consciousness; in the attribution of narrative voice or a fictionalized consciousness³ which are the glidings in of what is often a substrated authorial presence; in the content itself; in explicit statement, marked ellipsis, blatant instances of absence or presence (in binary resonance); overtly and most obviously, in statements about gender, either prejudicial or affirmative, and in other ways. The actual valence of gender to all these is not the issue. What is at stake is perception and its cumulative construal which has, as presence, filled (up) items and signs with the accretion of a consensus of gender-grounded substantiality.

In this chapter I would like to suggest a gender-focused reading of Micha Yosef Berdichewki's last work: *Miryam*, finished (?) two days before his death.⁴ This reading intuits that Berdichewski reaches towards an attempt at meta-gendered expression; that he seeks access to this 'Beyond' by allusive structural contrivances, but that this non-referenced, and most probably not consciously realized reference, often empowers and sharply contours the (essentialist) expectations of the consciously held binary, so as to thoroughly gender the

² Alice Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity*, Cornell Univeristy Press, 1985.

³ This is especially so in fiction.

⁴ There is some debate as to whether the text of *Miryam* was actually ever finished, or if it ended as a result of Berdichewski's death.

narrative with the exigencies of its conventions even while striving beyond them. It is not surprising that Berdichewski - whose rejection of a monolithic Judaism and Jewry and emphasized the individual, as opposed to the communal, earned him the title *Acher* - wished to give voice to the voiceless, feminine Othered. It is also not surprising that he did this most expressedly in the closing days of his life as he felt life fading and himself slipping into the darkness of the most Other.

The narrative statement of the opening lines of *Miryam* carries the weight of authorial verisimilitude in its consonance with the biographical details of Berdichewski's life:

לפני שנים רבות רשמתי לי עלי גליון כל פרטי המאורע הזה, מאורע כולל בקרבו
 רומן גמור לכל תאיו וחדריו. את הכל ראיתי בחזון והצצתי לגלגלי המקרים
 ולארג המעשים ההם. אולם פגעי הזמן היו בעוכרי ונמנעתי עד עתה להוציא
 הגות שירי אל הפועל. והנה באתי בימים; עבר היום שניתן לבן-אדם ולתפקידו,
 וצללי-ערב באים מרחוק -- עוד שעל אחד אל הליל הארוך, שבו נלין כולנו עד
 תום כל-חי. הנני כותב עתה רק לאור הנר והעת דחוקה, על כן אקצר.⁵

Miryam, subtitled *A Tale of Two Towns*, is a twisting narrative that tells the story of both parts of its title. It opens on a genealogical-historical note that narrates the story of Miryam's family. Their story allows for a movement to the geographical placements of the subtitle,

⁵ M.Y. Berdichewski, *Kitvei Michah Yosef Bin-Gorion (Berdichewski)*, Dvir, Tel Aviv, 1965. p. 271.

which provide material for a large number of anecdotal stories about the towns' inhabitants, some of which have nought but a locative connection to the Miryam of the title. Miryam is a young Jewish girl living in the world of eastern Europe. Through a process of trial and tribulations in which she is mostly a passive participant, she finds her way towards an alleged independence and freedom from the societal constrictions laid upon her by the world of her birth. Her own story is almost hidden in the narrative accounts that fill the novel's pages, and is presented more by reflection, by way of her unintended effects on the lives of others who encounter her. The novel's narrative form has long been a subject of curiosity and has given rise to a number of speculations. In this chapter I shall look at two of these under the arch of a notion of gendered narrativity.

Berdichewski had, some fifteen years prior to writing this, his only novel, written a plan for a work called *Miryam*. There are some similarities between the original plan and the novel that finally emerged.⁶ The important differences for the present discussion are the considerable extension of its arena and more notably the movement from the proposed monogamous, cohesive linear and temporal development to the fractured, winding, multifaceted expansion of the novel. The important change in the fabula is Miryam's eventual fate.

The name of the novel - *Miryam* - is of prime significance. Berdichewski stresses the formative power of naming right at the outset of the narrative, in his first attribution of causality. Up till this stage - the beginning of the second chapter of the first book - the text

⁶ But this is not the place to enter into them.

provides, in a genealogical (masculine) fashion, with some narrative interjections, the historical details of Miryam's grandfather, Natan-Neta's, escape from the miserable poverty into which he was born. Chapter 2 begins:

הירושה האחת שנפלה בחלקו של נתן-נטע היתה זו, כי לא קראו לו שם אחד,
 כי אם שנים. ולו התהלך עלי אדמות אך בשם אחד לבד, כי אז היה נשאר איטר
 בחיים...⁷

This statement about Natan-Neta's inheritance and its bounty is comment on the active power of Logos, where the word becomes flesh, and echoes the power of the Divine voice in the opening chapters of Genesis, inasmuch as name is seen as equal to fate, form and function. In Natan-Neta's case, twice-named equals twice-born.⁸

Set within this framework, by naming the novel *Miryam*, Berdichewski transposes the formative power of Logos to woman who in the Jewish world of eastern Europe is excluded from language. This act has the following force: It endows her presence with active causality and admits her into the realm of the spoken and the speaking, but at the same time infuses her, by way of analogy, with Sameness, making her 'masculine' in her ostensible control of Logos. Thus the feminine is drawn into a territory delineated by the male world

⁷ Ibid. : p. 271.

⁸ See Robertson Davies, *The Deptford Trilogy*, King Penguin, 1983, pp. 230-231: "One always knows the twice-born. They often go as far as to take new names."

which determines the rules of naming and speech according to its profoundly binary excluding vision that proscribes its entry into this sphere. Woman, the feminized other, is unexpressed and unexpressing in this domain except as analogic antithesis of a male/female dichotomous dyad. What does Berdichevski do with this anomaly? Whether by conscious choice or inadvertent design, he suppresses the voice of the purported feminine axis of the tale. Miryam, as voice, is hardly discernible in the lengthy text. Rather, the narrative is controlled and punctuated by the recurring narrative intercessions of the masculine voice of its teller, whose declarations clearly announce its hold of textual domination and contouring function.

Miryam, subtitled *A Tale of Two Towns*, is also the story of two towns: Belz and Hunirad. The suggestion of the fictional Miryam as organizing fully singular subject, entailed in first part of the title, is undermined by the appended proclamation: Miryam, as name, has prominence by virtue of the prior placement in the title, but her formative dominion is shaken by the additional clause. Thus right from the start of the tale there is a shifting perception, a movement that makes unstable any notion of the firm ground of Logos, and those tremors reverberate variously through the ensuing patterns/non-patterns of the 'tale'. The tale or tales are a dilating account of the lives of many whose stories are told episodically and often with no particular connection or even easily accessible sense or point to them. Some analogies may be extracted along the multifariousness,⁹ but these do not explain the vicissitudes of the many anecdotes. Nor does it seem particularly productive an endeavor to do so in the present

⁹ Zippora Cagan, *Masorot Janariyot baRoman Miryam*, in *Hagut v'Sipporet biYetzirat Berdichevski*, Z. Cagan ed., Haifa University, 1981. pp. 53-64.

work as that would merely extend what Z. Cagan has already noted: that the analogy serves to highlight differences by way of the similar and thus limit Berdichevski's claim of the unique even within the confines of the communal. The main and important impact here is a diffusion of centrality, both centrality of structure and centrality of meaning.

In terms of the present reading, I suggest that this non-centrifugation - un-cohering and unintelligible in its effects - comprises an attempt at meta-gender: that Berdichevski tries to give voice to the voiceless Other, from within the boundaries of the masculine binary, in an attempt to subvert it, and present it as an expressed inexpressible whose vagaries, in terms of received language and formulated Logos, can only be elliptically grasped. I would thus suggest that the meandering of the textual expansion, whose conceptual certitudes are few, is movement towards the non-referencible reference. And this is especially so under the patronage of the entwined, yet free-floating engagement of the title and its explanatory clause.

As mentioned above, *Miryam's* form is a riddle that has been repeatedly addressed by its readers. Of the most useful explanations offered are those of Zippora Cagan¹⁰ and Yoram Kanyuk.¹¹ Cagan sees the tale/s as Berdichevski's attempt to create a poetics for modern Hebrew literature that is genealogically aligned with tradition. She explains the 'form' and content as mimetical of traditional literature and especially of the פנקס קהילה, the communal diary, which recorded the happenings and histories of communities, and also of Aggadic, Halakhic, homiletic and folkloristic, fragments and allusions. This explanation

¹⁰ loc cit.

¹¹ Yoram Kanyuk, *haDialog ben haMesapper leven Miryam*, in op cit., Cagan ed., pp. 67-69.

works well with the text and goes a long way in explaining its 'fragmentary' nature: the moralizing and the philosophizing (often falsely pious) digressions and the 'lapses' into the world of magic and the supernatural (or the non-rational). Kanyuk thinks the novel a dialogue between the narrator and Miryam. He notes that they are two peripheral characters in the story, who belong and do not belong in the tales; party to events, yet observers, watching through its fragments the longed for and feared demise of the abominated, beloved community. Within this framework of destructive desire, if my reading of Kanyuk is correct, Miryam stands as the affiliated object of desire.

Cagan's understanding of the text is extremely fruitful, and binds the narrative by affording it an ideological framework, as is Kanyuk's astute observation. But Miryam's latency, taken in relationship to the narrator's voice domination, cannot be overlooked. Miryam, the female presence who serves as the text's implicit structuring medium, is hardly given any voice or actual presence at all, and her vocal and actual absence calls for an extension of these readings. Miryam's presence/non-presence revalues the traditional forms displayed in the narrative. It broods over them and takes them out of the range of conventional value. This, combined with their unconnected cumulation in the text, places them in a limbo of deliberate incoherence.

The magical and Aggadic element may be viewed in terms of its allusion to the Other; in its echo of the unnamed and its association with the feminine. Natan-Neta's strange encounter early in the tale is an example of the depiction of the supernatural in the text. Miryam's grandfather is a successful merchant on his way to Volhin to buy his Winter

merchandise, when he reaches an unending, undifferentiated vista:

...ושוב הנך במישור בל-קץ, יפסיקו רק ערימת תבן או עץ בודד בירכתי הדרך.
הארץ כאן אינה גדורה עוד ואינה נחלה, שיש עליה שובר. העמים עוד לא נפלגו
ללשוונותיהם בגוייהם. היום הוא רק משעול לערב.¹²

On the plain [פשט] level the words denote the place and time of day in which the subsequent incident occurs. But the mode of description (the endless unbroken plain, the pre-Babel unity, and the connotative declaration of the sole purpose of day, which is said merely to provide the path to darkness and night) also speaks in allusive possibilities and in doing so acts as an organizing principle under whose governance, in homiletic fashion, the scene that follows operates as its exegesis:

הסוסים מפגרים לכת. העגלה מתהלכת בכבדות. וירד נתן-נטע מעליה וילך
רגלי. הוא אומר להתפלל תפילת המנחה ויט הצדה. הוא צעד איזה צעדים,
פנה מעט לימין ושוב פנה לשמאל, והנה נעלמה העגלה עם שיירתו והוא תועה
בשדה. וישא את עיניו והנה הוא רואה כעין צל מרחוק, כמו שרביט של אש
נוצץ באויר. השמים כברזל. איש כבן-ששים הולך כפוף ותכריכים לבנים נראים
מבין שולי מעילו השחור. נחש עקלתון מקיף את בטנו כחגורה; ועל שכם ההלך
טעון ילד מחותל. שוב נוצץ השרביט של אש; וקול איום הרעים וקורא: לך ואל

¹² op cit., Bin Gorion : p. 276.

תעמוד, נתנאל איש-הדמים! שערות נתן-נטע סמרו ועיניו בלטו מחוריהן. בודאי שמע על דבר מעשים כאלה נאמרו בספרים. אבל הוא עתה בשדה לבדו ואיש אין אתו, והוא רואה בחוש חזון מעולם-הפלאות. הוא נשאר ניצב כיתד ולא יוכל למוש ממקומו מרוב פחד. אבן מתגוללת לרגלו. האבן כמו מתנשאה מאליה, היא עולה ויורדת, עולה ויורדת. נתן-נטע מחזיק בציציותיו וקורא "שמע ישראל". וכרגע תם כל המראה. הוא רחוק כרבע מיל מהעגלה; והעגלון קורא לו: "רבי נתן, למה תאחר לכת ולא תעלה על העגלה?"

אל יחשבני הקורא לבעל-דמיון. הנני מספר לו מעשה שהיה ולא רק דברי אגדה ושירה.

בלי חפץ רב עשה נתן-נטע את דרכו הלאה. הוא בא לקריה האמורה, קנה שם את הסחורות הנחוצות לחנותו ל"זמן" הזה ושב אחר-כך לביתו בעגלה טעונה מכל טוב. אבל מהיום ההוא חל איזה שינוי במהלכו. הוא התפלל מאז בהשכמת הבוקר בציבור, ולא עוד ביחידות, אפילו ביום-השוק. בערב-שבת סגר את חנותו מיד אחרי הצהרים ולא איחר עוד בזה כמקודם. בשיחתו עם חתנו ישראל אמר לו מפורש שאינו מאמין עוד מאומה ב"רוח הזמן".¹³

This chance encounter changes Natan-Neta's behavior and moves him away from the world of free-thinking. The figurative content of the earlier descriptive narrative pronouncements is apparently verified by the vision itself, by the moral lesson Natan-Neta extracts from the experience, and by his subsequent actions: The untrammelled country-side, free of separation

¹³ loc cit.

and distinction (= here to the modern, heretical world which eschews the separation of the holy and the mundane), leaves him unprotected from the more powerful world of Heaven, which apports him a warning sampling of Its wrath in the shape of a frightening image, drawn from the supernatural - "עולם הפלאות" - that is full of bad portent and foreboding both in the imagery itself and in its intertextual reference.

Evening (= the darkness of the soul) descends upon him, with its associations of terror and danger, and he cannot protect himself. The Heavens become like iron.¹⁴ A figure, wearing a traditional black overgarment, yet covered beneath in a white death shroud, appears as his double ("like a shadow") in imitation of the paradox of his outwardly religious garb, and his inwardly wanton secularity (the death allusion). The primeval snake (a reference to the Leviathan promised to the righteous in the World to Come, but mentioned in the Bible only once, in a negative context of destruction)¹⁵ surrounds his middle body, in place of the belt which should be worn to separate the holy parts of the body from those organs associated with sex and elimination. The diapered child on the old man's shoulder doubles and reinforces the image of his shroud, and hints at the death not only of the past, but of the future as well. The man holds a burning staff. The portrayal invokes the prophet Moses in his two contradictory aspects - both suggestive of Natan-Neta's situation - which are associated with fire, and in particular with the staff (מטה) he carries: His holiness (for

¹⁴ This is a direct reference to *Parashat beChuqotai*, Lev. 26:19, and the punishment attendant on those who stray from God's commandments: "וַיִּנְתְּנִי שְׂמִיכָם כְּבַרְזֵל"

¹⁵ The only biblical reference to this term is in Isaiah 27:1, where the prophet warns that as punishment for the sins of Israel, God will destroy the promised Leviathan.

which he is granted sight and part of God's power - the burning bush, and is given the magical staff that alternately turns into a snake, brings the ten plagues upon Egypt and parts the Red Sea),¹⁶ and his lack of faith in the Divine power (as exemplified in his twice hitting the rock, when once would have sufficed, the action which bars his entry into the Promised Land).¹⁷

Thus does the vision (the tale) prove, as per the preceding pseudo-homiletic assertion, that unbounded day (with the light of day pointing to the Haskhalah's self-description) is "but a path to (the horrors of) evening (the dark night of the soul, the fate of the heretic)" and the ungirded (unseparated, not holy) - "לא גדרה" - is full of the promise of pitfall and tragedy. In this way the section can be read as an Aggadic extrapolation intended to ratify, in homiletic fashion, an invented maxim. But viewed within its textual setting something quite different emerges, and the revelation's connotative reference is overturned. It is followed, without a paragraph break, by a description of Sara's - Natan-Neta's daughter and Miryam's mother - sloth, which intensifies from then on. Her sloth is accompanied by the "non-fulfillment" of her wifely duties except at night, when she is a "true daughter of Israel." The chapter ends with the statement - "during the day she would not obey."¹⁸

Natan-Neta's meeting with the mysterious phantasm inspires in him a commitment to pious duty. His understanding of the event is conventional in terms of his orthodox

¹⁶ Exodus chapters 3, 11, 17 and elsewhere.

¹⁷ Numbers 20:11.

¹⁸ loc cit.

conditioning, and his reaction appropriate. The homily hits its target and has the designated pietistic effect. But Sara, his daughter who is not consciously connected to the incident,¹⁹ cannot be ignored, both because of her textual proximity and because she is as affected by it as her father, albeit in quite the opposite manner. She leaves the realm of day, of coherence, and plunges into the realm of the undefined, as represented by her stubborn negativity and lethargy.²⁰ Yet she still responds to the approaches of night and desire. Her exclusion from the event, coupled with her responsiveness to its effects, functions as comment on women's marginality, and the paltry paths of resistance available to them within the world of Jewish religious discourse, and points to an alternative reading of the magical interlude.

Reading back to the introduction to the anecdote, and interpreting it and the tale itself without the Judaically-based references, the content and imagery suggest quite the opposite of the above explication. The unending vista, the unbounded, unpossessed land and the human unity, intimate an idyllic world and untainted landscape, which is not in any way broken. This, of course, is an allusion to the unconstricted, undivided whole that Jewish ethos battles against. It is also associated with the formlessness of the feminine that is not cathected onto any one particular object, whose ubiquity is so frightening to the world of the masculine. The phrase, "The day is but a path to the night," is value free in this context. Night with its intimations of lack of light and thus the absence of discriminating vision (=the comfort of the

¹⁹ Not even by way of language. Natan-Neta tells Israel about his stance regarding the "spirit of the times," but at no time is there a statement about Sara's direct connection with the event, as addressee or in any other way.

²⁰ One of the only paths of resistance available to her.

Rational, as it were), and its suggestions of death and thus the cessation of particularity (of individual consciousness with its divisions and separations, is not threatening to an all-inhering, uncathected sense of unity. In this reading the word "only" is ameliorative, and functions as a pacifying emphatic, stripping events in the natural world of the terror attributed them by those who are exiled from Nature because of their monochromatic vision.

The figures in Natan-Neta's encounter with the world of the Other, reverberate very differently in this alternate reading. He stops to pray in a field, within the world of nature which in Rabbinic is often associated with the evil instinct. Appropriately then he loses sight of the 'real' or humanly created world. The wagon disappears from sight and he is lost. The shadow like figure that approaches him, his *doppelganger*, carries a flaming staff. The staff itself could be interpreted in crude Freudian fashion to the phallus, and thus to desire, and especially when coupled with its attribute of fire. The white shroud would then serve two purposes. In its association with the diapered infant, it could point to a child-like innocence and freedom, and stand as a symbol of purity which in this case would be the virtue and innocence of instinct and desire, which abide, the black coat notwithstanding. Cumulatively however it may accrue extra meaning and also allude to the death shroud inasmuch as it is chocked by the black coat of tradition. The primal snake wrapped around the waist, is again the phallic (in a Freudian reading), and a symbol of the uroboros (in Jungian archetypal terminology). Either way it is related to the world of desire, and in the Jungian aspect to the frightening world of mother consciousness. Here the diapered infant combines with the nexus of innocence (as in the shroud, above). And in this world the *doppelganger's* exhortation to

Natan-Neta to go and not stand still, may be egging him to consort with evening, the inevitable destination of day.

The notion of the homiletic works in a number of ways in this passage, and allows for an extension of Cagan's genre-based analysis. If the episode is understood in an unmediated pietistic reading, Natan-Neta responds to the dark threat of the formless and unknowable by trying to rationally thwart the threat of day turning into evening. He attempts to brighten his path by a stricter adherence to Halakhah, which he sees as the way of light and action. But if it is reiterated in the terms mentioned above, Natan-Neta actually descends into evening, does not escape the homiletic warning, and the evening into which he descends is not the evening of the all lauded by the second interpretation, but a descent into an undesirable evening (in terms of the *maskholic* world-view he rejects) which the darkness of religious superstition which stands in contrast to the Haskhalah which metaphorized itself as the light of the times. But Sara, who as woman was never the target of sacred conference is more firmly cast in night and desire and formlessness, in the wake of her father's experience with the world of the Other with which she is identified. Neither the light of the old tradition, nor the new light of the Haskhalah shine for her. Instead she is enveloped in the thick of undistinguished murmuring.

The passage encapsulates the text and its purposes in embryo. The battles between the expressed and the inexpressible are played out, and finally the unexpressed/inexpressible cannot be imprisoned by any of the expressor's cliched dicta which its state of marginality undermines. Sara subverts the ostensible cause and effect aims of the homily as they leave

no perceptible 'positive' trace in her changed behavior after Natan-Neta's encounter. She embodies its literal adduction and thus nullifies its force of traditional spiritual pedagogy: Her father's day turned evening quite simply turns into her night. Her reaction acts out woman's position in the world of Jewish texts, dramatizes the fact that she has no part in its structures. At the same time, in her inversion of its conventionally-read caution, but as proof of another veracity, she is more naturally allied to the simple homiletic content because she is stays in darkness, the destination mentioned, and will not obey commandments in the 'light'.

The legend and the magic in the text, that seem to be inserted to no apparent purpose in the greater design of the 'plot', are arched in a battle with the light of day, trumpeted in these pages by the recurring voice of the masculine narrator, with his unreliable disclaimers of night and legend and song ²¹ e.g.:

אל יחשבני הקורא לבעל-דמיון. הנני מספר לו מעשה שהיה ולא רק דברי אגדה
ושירה. ²²

The masculine narrator, engaging in a lengthy exposition of events from the world outside the domain of the 'masculine', feels impelled to use language to deny the magical, or 'feminine', constitution of the story he portrays. His protestations emphasize the very aspect he purports

²¹ Though this type of directive narrative intervention is part of the conventions of verisimilitude prevalent in nineteenth / early twentieth Hebrew literature as well.

²² loc cit.

to deny. Similarly, Natan-Neta's response to the Other, which is correct in a fallacious traditional translation, is not, in terms of Haskhalah ideology, a movement into the light or away from evening, no matter the seeming linearity of its process.

Thus the פנקס קהילתי and the homily, the pseudo-sacred, philosophic and Halakhic statements, and the quasi-Aggadic portions grapple together in an effort to sound the meta-gender, while still caught in the constraints of the binary. And grappling with them are the narrator and Miryam; the voiced and the almost voiceless who by way of their presence (the narrator) and absence (Miryam as voice and actor, but not as presence. Her effects, as presence, are potent and recurring in the tale though these are rarely connected to any action on her part. Men lose their sanity and even their lives by dint of their perception of her [this theme occurs with other women as well, though not as often or as intensely]) form the foundation of the narrative. Miryam is ever-present, presiding as half-part name of the tale, powerful in that presence and doubly powerful in her non-articulation and absence. She gives form to the narrative in this presiding, and in the near continuity of theme it provides, while her absence allows for the deflections and divergences that mark the text.

The narrator is ever-present with his incessant intrusions and explanations of the narrative form, which more often than not have authenticity only by way of negation, e.g.:

למזל רוב נתיבות, ואל ידרוש ממני הקורא לנהלו לאט לאט בכל הדרך, אשר
בו הלך וכבש לו הנער יסוד נאמן בחיים. לתכלית זו עלי יהיה לכתוב רומן

בתוך רומן. ולו אך מלאכת האחד אספיק.²³

Contrary to the declaration that he can only "manage" to write one novel, *Miryam* is indeed not a "novel within a novel," but many novels within novels, "רומנים בתוך רומנים." Verity resides in absence, in mendacious statement, and this is suggestive of the value to be placed on Miryam and her palpable absence. Miryam seems to be absent in the text. And in terms of voice and action she is not present. Yet this absence is fallacious. Absence is the only form her 'truth' can take as she, as woman, is voiceless. And this absence is a presiding absence whose effects are rampant in the narrative and are evident in Miryam's power over various characters and events, as well as in the overt narrative intentionality which names her protagonist of the tale. In this manner the text is, as Kanyuk said, a dialogue between Miryam and the narrator which, for its ambitious scope, may be called a kind of *multilogue* or better still,²⁴ a *multimorph* in intent, where forms are left to voice the voiceless, and silence to represent the unrepresentable.

But it is difficult to escape the binary, and its ineluctability is made clear by the ending of the novel. After life has moved Miryam from her parents' home in Belz to the home of a relative, Yechiel Eichenstein, under whose protection she is placed in Hunirad, she falls into the river after her legs give in, while hearing the love-crazed confession of Batlon, a local Maskil and an excellent teacher of Russian. As she has rejected Batlon's romantic

²³ *ibid.* : p. 271.

²⁴ If viewed as a clash with, and thus other than, Logos.

advances, he does not save her, though the text hints that he could have. She is saved instead by anonymous workers at an adjacent mill. When Yeziel, her relative and protector, hears this he has a heart attack and dies the following day. After Miryam rises from her sick-bed one month later she finds herself unprotected and with no particular chart to her life. She spends her time reading Tolstoy, and fills with compassion for humanity:

היא קוראה בספרי-דת-ומוסר של המספר טולסטוי ועולם חדש נפתח לפניה.²⁵

The novel ends with her arrival at the home of Dr. Koch, a Jewish doctor who knows nothing of Jewishness as he was taken into the army as a young boy, and who devotes his life unsparingly to the cause of giving relief to suffering humanity. She turns to him and says:

"אמתך אני. אהיה לעזר לשרת את החולים ואעבדך באמונה".²⁶

- whereupon Koch kisses her on her forehead, saying:

בתי את, גדול חסדך עמי". --²⁷

²⁵ *ibid.* : p. 317.

²⁶ *loc cit.*

²⁷ *loc cit.*

Miryam's formlessness is finally brought into the 'light', which is the masculine light of action and the light of reason - of the new world - achieved by way of language (Tolstoy), albeit specifically not the Sacred Tongue or its religious texts. And the man who enables her to live that light, although a Jew, is unconnected with traditional Judaism. But she needs masculine agency to achieve her 'light'. Tolstoy and the doctor bring it out in her.

The language used in her dialogue with Dr. Koch is replete with gender-based prejudice and conditioning, that manifest in Miryam's words which reflect a strong internalized gendering, and less so in Koch's response. She, in effect, offers herself to him in terms of servitude and sexual subjugation, using the noun אמה, which means maiden, handmaid and maidservant, inflected with the second person singular genitive masculine pronominal suffix - "אמתך". She also offers to be of "עזר" - help - to serve "לשרת" the sick. But the word עזר set within the context of male/female relationships, strongly reverberates in its famous biblical context where Adam is given Eve as an עזר כנגדו, a helpmeet. Serving the sick is a traditional female function, and this is what Miryam offers, this is the extent of her liberation. Furthermore, the verb שרת combined with the ideas of handmaiden, helpmeet and the final part of Miryam's avowal to Koch - "באמונה אעבודך" - which while they comprise the simple statement of a faithful potential employee, also smack of religious oaths of loyal worship in the service of some deity - combine to make her statement yet another instance of female prostration, and not a display of autonomy. Koch's response - "גדורל חסדך עמי" - gratefully acknowledges her favor, yet this gratitude is subsumed under an umbrella of benign patronage when he calls her his daughter.

Batlon, the Russian teacher and reader, has in the meanwhile become mad because of his guilt, has entered the realm of word salads and neologisms, the world of the unintelligible Other. The roles are reversed. The male (Batlon) has moved out of language, while the female (Miryam) has begun to adhere to its codes and to actively determine her life by it. Here, at the end of the tale, the binary most strongly obtains in its intended breach.

In the original plan for *Miryam*, the story ends with her suicide for the love of a man forbidden her (he is her best friend's husband). And although the earlier version does not grapple with the expression of gender the way the full version does, that ending - the suicide, but not its cause - might have gone further to escape the binary (in the most undesirable manner possible), by expressing the ultimate tragedy of woman's muteness, and would have relegated Miryam to death, the sphere of the Most Other - "in which we shall (formlessly) all rest till the end of all the living"²⁸ - where she is trapped even in her living.

Miryam, Berdichewski's last work and, according to Emmanuel Bin Gurion,²⁹ the culmination of his artistry, and also the culmination of his life itself, is a tale that struggles for the Beyond. It is not surprising that it finally recoils from that beyond as "the light of his candle dims." It is a novel written in Hebrew, a language to which its presiding subject or presence had no access, and it is written for the coterie of the comprehenders of this language, many of whom saw this (secular) form of usage as expression of ultimate otherness,

²⁸ *ibid.* : p. 271.

²⁹ Emanuel Bin-Gorion, *Miryam - Si Yetzirato shel Berdichewski veTachlitah*, in Micha Josef Berdyczewski (*Bin Gorion*): *A Selection of Critical Essays on his Literary Prose*, Am Oved, Tel Aviv, 1973. pp. 246-249.

as heresy and the abomination of sacred discourse, and the subversion of its authority, in which the אחר truly worships אלוקים אחרים, as formless, as woman, as the Great Void itself whose mysteries are not to be mined or asked after.

In a deflected interior-monologue in *Miryam*, set in blatantly gender-conscious language, Yeruham (the narrator's beloved friend, in whose cause and out of character, he touches the narrative boundaries, albeit peripherally), muses on Miryam, by way of the narrative voice, and says:

נערות כאלה נחוצות לבית-ישראל. אבל לא לנו הן... הנך רואה פרחים נותני ריח -- והגן סגור. לקורא העברי הנה אם יהודיה, נפשה משתפכת בתחנוני הסידור, אבל אין לו אחות עבריה. ואם המשורר ישיר שירי-אהבה, אהובתו את לשונו לא תבין. אין קישור בין נפשות שוות. יש תגבורת בספרות העברית ויש רצון להאיר, אבל חסר לה הרך והקישור המיני. אין אוזן לפה.³⁰

The words find no listener not only because of the lack of a "sexual connection" in Hebrew literature (and the "sexual connection" does not only mean the relations between the sexes, but an awareness of the gendered other), but because the targets of the "love poems" rarely have voice in that literature and seldom have access to the language. Women are so much the אחר, the Other, in the normative Judaic tradition that they are not even afforded the opportunity to peep at the Holy Orchard of לשון הקודש, its Holy Tongue; they are beneath

³⁰ op cit., Berdichewski, p. 301.

the sanctity of its articulation. The "garden is locked" not because of the sexual implication of virginity or chastity, but because it and its "fragrant flowers" have no voice. The feminine, as mother, has a Jewish voice - a fact emphasized by the apposition of "Hebrew reader" and "Jewish mother" and that voice "pours its soul" in the service of pathos, or the nameless void of supplicating piety. But, as woman who is not mother, the feminine is denied entry into the language that names and has dominion in its naming.

In this work Berdichewski invokes what looks to him like the possibility of a Jewish text in which there is hope for woman, even while he unintentionally recoils from the full expression of the feminine Other. In the world he creates in *Miryam*, She has little voice or autonomy. All the contortions of Jewish traditional forms do not avail her, while the outside texts, which are mentioned but not represented in the novel, allow her access and awaken her initiative. But finally she is left virtually silent, and in action remains dependant on the world of the masculine to which learnt female passively attaches as the only path to salvation.

THE OTHER AND/AS SHADOW IN NE'IMA SASSON WRITES POEMS
by A. KAHANA-CARMON

...archetypes are the among the inalienable assets of every psyche. They form the "treasure in the realm of shadowy thoughts" of which Kant spoke....To discard them as valueless would be a distinct loss. Our task is not, therefore, to deny the archetype, but to dissolve the projections, in order to restore their contents to the individual who has involuntarily lost them by projecting them outside himself.

Carl Gustav Jung ¹

The Other, as a construct of opposition, is the mode by which we enter into relations with the world: the so-called outside world and ourselves. It forms the basic structure of differentiation from the Great uroboric mother, the state of undifferentiated being into which all potentially separate consciousnesses are born. Thus the requisite of coming into being, self-awareness and self-knowledge is a dichotomy, a construct of Otherness. Relationship - whose articulation is possession - is formulated upon an awareness of duality. Engaging in or out of (association/dissociation); having knowledge of (and thus thought and language systems), are founded upon the doubled dualities of I as a separate, split-off entity, engaged in an Other - a process and/or thing. The splitting off of the I from the Eden of unaffected consciousness, from the immersion of experience in itself, is the constituent of identification

¹ C.G. Jung *The Collected works of C.G. Jung: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R.F.C. Hull, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, 2nd ed., 1968, v. 9, p. 84.

and thus the component of all that is experienced and known. But, concomitantly, this node of identification with, first the singularity, and later the cluster of the I, is the source of alienation of experience from the Real, which is unmediated/unmediating, non-distinguished/non-distinguishing being. That which allows experience denudes experience of itself, because the One is experienced only by way of division. This paradox creates a state of unsated and insatiable desire. This desire is insatiable because it can never be quenched; because its object is not an object, and because the desiring subject has subjectivity only by virtue of having objectified itself through the splitting off from the seeming object of its desire. Thus this object - and this relationship - is beyond the referentials which are engaged in a subject/object discourse. It is unattainable and unavailable, beyond the experience of the I.

The perception of Otherness is, therefore, dual in implication: Other is I as distinguished from the uroboric and, conversely, the unexpressed and inexpressible is other than I, other than all that I consciously experience myself as being. Arguably then, the whole experience of being is, in some form, an experience of the Other - an ongoing grappling with a sense of otherness, a perpetual alienation in constant desire. The sense of Otherness also pervades the relations of the Othered I with the external world. If I am a split-off thing, how much more so that which I perceive as other than myself. At the same time, however, the desire for oneness, for union, with that which I sense is my full nature, becomes my primal - acknowledged or, for the most part, unacknowledged - quest and is the formative element in my choice/rejection and interpretation of relationships. The desire for wholeness, for

redemption through the irredeemable, and my understanding of the measure to which this is or is not attained, prescribes my perception of the world which, in these terms, comprises a measure of Other or less Other. Thus my relations with the outside world may be determined as textual, with their essential linguistic content articulated by means of projection, a network of the complexities and refractions of the Other/I nexus. The undifferentiated all, the desired Other to my othered self, has been variously named and has often been termed the Unconscious. This designation, in the psychological meaning accrued it, will be suitable for the purposes of this chapter which looks at the ways the threatening parts of the unconscious are integrated to heal, in some measure, the primal split.

Amalia Kahana-Carmon's story *Ne'ima Sasson Writes Poems* is, on first reading, the story of a young girl's unrequited infatuation with her married male teacher. It is the story of her unsuccessful attempts to form a connection with him and his eventual rejection of her, expressed finally through his rejection of her poetry which she proffers him as a gift. It is a story told in retrospect, though its full retrospective quality is only learnt in retrospect, in the closing words of the narrative which affirm the continuance of Ne'ima's literary activity in their implication that the narrative is a story retold in the writing.

The story may be read in a number of ways: It may be seen as the story of a young girl coming towards the verge of adulthood through her first romantic encounter with a rejecting world of the masculine. Viewed from this perspective, Ne'ima's literary endeavor may be construed as sublimation: sublimation in place of the consummation of her relationship with Ezekiel, her teacher. This position is reinforced by her rather unsuccessful

attempts to sketch him, as these two creative activities have her striving to unite with him in some manner where full union is denied her. Thus too her acceptance, at the end of the tale, of her poetry/writing because of the non-viability of their relationship, may be seen as further sublimation and as a rationalization as well: her strength lies within, in her creative work. But this premise is negatively arrived at if a romantic perspective is taken. Here her writing is in place of (because of the non-availability of the male) - an 'instead of' compromise and compensation. The lesson learnt by the heroine in this reading is the lesson that you can't always get what you want and especially from the "hard" albeit of "extraordinary gentleness"² world of the masculine, and thus that woman must fall back on her own resources, whatever they are:

³ אתה איש קשה, אולם בעדינות יוצאת מן הכלל.

Added to this of course is a healthy modicum of Super-Ego rantings: her perception of Ezekiel as Law Giver, as setter of limits, a perception encouraged by him: "Limits are set. We are not living in the days when there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which as right in his own eyes. A certain N'ima Sassoon (sic), a certain Ezekiel Da Silva. Will

² Amalia Kahana-Carmon, *N'ima Sassoon Writes Poems*, trans. Arthur Jacobs in op cit., Diamant and Rattok ed.s., 1994.

³ Amalia Kahana-Carmon, *Ne'ima Sasson Khotevet Shirim*, in *biKhefifa Achat*, haKibbutz haMe'uchad, Tel Aviv, 1966, p. 136.

they please stick to the rules. That's how it is here. And that's how we want it." :⁴

היום זה בית-הספר. מחר החיים. שמעי וזכרי. מסגרת יש. לא איש הטוב
בעיניו יעשה. נעימה ששון אחת, יחזקאל דה-סילבה אחד, יתאימו עצמם
לחוקים בבקשה, ומרצוננו הטוב.⁵

- her adjacent associative memories of the advertisement for "The Taming of the Shrew," and a record album cover decorated with a picture of "a whip decked with roses";⁶ the Job quotation;⁷ the book-titles she notes in the staffroom cupboard - "The Duties of the Hearts," "The Book of Principles" &c.,⁸ all combine to trumpet forth this moral message: know your place, accept the limits decreed by a male world and make your space within it.

Within this conception Ezekiel is the kind but firm, mature male, Ne`ima the foolish, unrestrained "little girl"⁹ of his description. Within these terms she joyfully concedes to his superior constrictions, and the dictum filigreed over the arches: "For Thy Law is my Delight"¹⁰

⁴ op cit., Diamant and Rattok, ed.s, p. 64.

⁵ op cit., Kahana-Carmon, p. 149.

⁶ loc cit.

⁷ ibid. pp. 64-65.

⁸ ibid. : p. 65.

⁹ ibid. : p. 55.

¹⁰ ibid. : p. 56.

is, with the coming of her 'wisdom' (gained through his masculine insistence) her happily internalized motto, and is the light that he "who without meaning to ...serve(d) as torch...to show...(her) the way (to)." ¹¹ A variant reading could hold the tale in a somewhat different light, as the narrative of a young and eager girl offering the gift of her adulation and womanhood to an insensitive but well-flattered teacher who toys with her in an oblique and thus not readily exposed manner, until the game becomes too serious and is in danger of becoming public knowledge. Left bewildered by the double message relayed her Ne`ima, as a means of survival, makes her way to a rationalization that saves her from the world of uncertainty into which she has been flung by Ezekiel's ambiguous behavior. (She identifies with a madwoman ¹² in the street who purportedly denounces her as equally mad.) She finds refuge by attributing him all order, goodness and light - i.e. certainty, limits and containment - and deems this a lesson taught her by him. She thus considers him the instrument of her acquisition of "the secret that makes the fainthearted heroic." ¹³ In this reading Ne`ima's fantasies of rose-bedecked whips and gentle hardness contain a masochistic submission to the power of the masculine. Here her poetry, as her perception of Ezekiel may be seen as the transposition of the sexual, chaotic and unacceptable into a creative channel that is at once affirming and respectable. It is, in part, her way of attempting to curry favor with him; it becomes the vehicle for further self-abasement, till finally - in his total rejection

¹¹ *ibid.* : p. 52.

¹² *ibid.* : p. 55.

¹³ *ibid.* : p. 64.

of her - it coalesces with her understanding / interpretation of Ezekiel's behavior and, by a process of negation, she transforms the searing rejection of herself and her poetry into a lesson to be absorbed and narrated. This becomes "a moment of birth" (in the words of Ne`ima's interior monologue)¹⁴ and the answer (in the same passage) to "What has been born?" is to be sought in an endless realm of writing, for:

ואם יהיו כל השמים יריעות וכל העולם לבלרין וכל היערות קולמוסין אינם
יכולים לכתוב מה שלמדתי מרבותי.¹⁵

The above interpretations are not exhaustive and there are, to be sure, many other readings of the text. I wish however to suggest another approach to this story, founded on the nexus of I/Other. It will inevitably contain elements of the aforementioned suggestions and will no doubt refer to some other possible interpretations deriving from other approaches to the narrative. This is the unavoidable consequence of the global nature of the I/Other binary which becomes ever more encompassing as it moves through the complexity of its endless permutations. The justification for this analysis will hopefully emerge from its process.

As suggested earlier, the basic premise of an I/Other interpretation is the I's essential quest for the primal Self-Other, for its full, but always elusive, source. It is in this light that all relationships and especially desire are to be seen. Furthermore the dichotomy of I/Other

¹⁴ *ibid.* : p. 65.

¹⁵ *op cit.*, Kahana-Carmon, p. 150.

promotes recurring oppositional dyads whose bifurcation comprises the underlying structure of experience. Thus the text will be looked at in terms of some of these oppositions and the methods by which opposition - the experience of Otherness - attempts to integrate itself and reach a state of complementary resolution.

If *Ne'ima Sasson Writes Poems* is taken in an Other/I reading the story stands as the portrayal of the consciousness of a young girl before and at the moment of integration, when the I/Other fracture becomes somewhat lessened and she learns a method that enables her to remain in constant communion with, at least, the quest for the Other. Her discourse with the world may be seen as the language of her need for integration and thus her relations with this world are to be viewed as projections of this desire. Ne'ima's statement, at the close of the tale may be interpreted in this manner:

ועדיין החליל מרקיד. הנפש יוצאת להבין פשר המנגינה. אחי באפך, מתגי

בשפתיך, ועדיין הנפש נידונה להיות יוצאת.¹⁶

The haunting, elusive melody of the self has left its traces in the by-ways of her being. She knows it and wishes to understand its singing. "Her ring," or her imprint, is in "Ezekiel's nose," in the Ezekiel created by her desire. She has firmly fixed her mark there and possesses that which she has projected. Yet this is not the all. There is much further to go, and, as mentioned, no way or melody can lead there - "where the spirit strives." And yet it

¹⁶ *ibid.* : p. 150.

yearns, and yet it wants and remains entrapped by its unceasing, unrequitable desire.

A desire for the Other - the unfulfillable desire - has been equated in Lacanian terms to a desire for death.¹⁷ The Other is that which is preconscious I. Thus communion with that is equivalent to communion with the dead - with the death of the I. The poetic motto that introduces *Ne'ima Sasson...* is replete with allusions to death intermingled with intimations of desire: the heart, suffering and longing. Yehuda haLevi's *Lament*, which of its very genre is expressive of death, brings together many of the elements of the story that justify a psychological-archetypal reading:

הידעו הדמעות מי שפכם
וידעו הלבבות מי הפכם
הפכם בוא מאורם תוך רגבים
ולא ידעו הרגבים מה בתוכם.

I wish to suggest here that the Other/I split operates as an adjunct to the articulated structures of Jungian psychology. Papadopolous¹⁸ has called the notion of the Other in Jungian psychology a *theoria*; not an expressed or defined premise, but part of the wider intellectual context wherein his theory derives. By bringing together the notion of the Other and Jungian

¹⁷ See *Desire, life and death*, in op cit., Lacan, 1988, pp. 221-234.

¹⁸ Unpublished Doctoral dissertation. University of Cape Town, 1980. Lacan's comment on a *theoria*: "...an intuition, indeed contemplation, the exhaustive knowledge of which we assume would allow us to give an account of its entire past no less than its entire future." op cit., Lacan, p. 222.

psychology we may adduce the archetypal image and its associated variants the modes and symbols by which the I attempts to connect with the prelinguistic Other.

haLevi's poem is, of course, first and foremost a poem. It therefore has obvious relevance to a story whose most emphasized subject (as stressed most emphatically, even in the absence of any of the other of its numerous mentions, by the title and the closing words - which reflect back onto its beginning thereby emphasizing the activity even further) is the writing of literature and, more specifically, the writing of poetry. As mentioned, its subject is death - the state with which there is no communion, the state that seems to us to be the state of unknowing and is thus associated with the Unconscious. This death-poem actually contains a direct reference to not knowing. Death's locus hides all and yet, of itself is also in a state of unknowing, a state of unconsciousness. The turf, the dense, dark, opaque stuff, that covers the heart does not know what stirs it. It is activated by that of which it has no knowledge. These lines, therefore, contain a reference to Unconsciousness interwoven in a death picture. So on the one hand there is a reference to darkness, unconsciousness and death. Counterpointing this, however, is the mention of light, the active principle. That which does the tilling, the knowledge and consciousness entering the depths and acting there. The light belongs to the core - the heart, though the heart, because of its surrounding darkness, does not know that the light - which seemingly comes from the outside and thus appears other than it - is its very own. Coupled with this layered play of consciousness/unconsciousness within a death context, there is also, in these lines, a suggestion of sexuality. The tilled earth (in Freudian terms, but part of a long established and

accepted symbolism) is indicative of the sexual act. This reflects upon the tears which change value here and move away from the death/loss cluster to attain, however muted, the sexual significance that of water, liquid and, by extension, sperm. This association in the poem may be taken to stand as the summary of the story where the male stands, in a literal manner, as *logos spermatikos*, the fructifying word. This is the purpose that Ezekiel finally serves in that he is the archetypal representative of Ne`ima's shadow and animus that she manages to incorporate. She is fructified by this integration into the creation of words. Similarly, the death referred to in the poem is, as it were, analogous to Ne`ima's 'little death' - her 'little death' not in the consummation of the sexual act, but the death she dies in uniting with that heretofore dead - or unavailable - part of herself. As archetypal image of the 'male' part of herself that affords Ne`ima's entry into new knowledge, Ezekiel is associated - as is quite evident in his name - with light and electricity and illumination. The connection between the biblical Ezekiel of *Merkhava Mysticism* and Ezekiel da Silva is clearly delineated in the text:

המורה יחזקאל אינו בא. אף פעם אינו בא. אני מתקרבת אל הגדר. אל בין השמים והארץ מתחיל עולה מורה יחזקאל אחר. מלא עינים, עוטה שלמת שלהבת. ומדי לילה, למקרא האותיות האיומות הכתובות על הכתר שעל מצחו פג לבי, אני יודעת שהרגע בא והריני כנופלת על פני מתעלפת. המורה יחזקאל נעלם מאחרי הווילון בשמים. הגיע למקום שם התהילה לחם המתים. התוגה מימם. פלגי הסבל, עם עוני וצער שטים במ כרבואות עלים גדולים, גבולם. כל

זה אני נעימה ששון כתבתי במחברת שירי, ממנה שלחתי לעתון בית-ספרנו את השיר 'מורי היקר'.

ואילו בימים, בעינים כלות, אני כממלמלת לעצמי כל היום. וכל היום עמדו ממרחק. עתה המורה יחזקאל של בשר-ודם הוא זה. שם על מקומו. כמו בחלום: בא, יושב, עם הצלצול קם, הולך, עם הצלצול בא, יושב. מתנוועע בוודאות של סהרורי, בבטחון המדהים של אצה נגרשת בזרמים. אני מזמן כבר אינני יודעת מה נעשה אתי.¹⁹

Ezekiel of Above is the spirit of the lower Ezekiel. He is full of wisdom and light and sees all. (The all-seeing quality alludes to the "Eye of God," or universal awareness.) Ne`ima's mystical fancy has her believe she can comprehend Ezekiel's message to her (in our interpretation - his meaning for her as shadow and animus). On the edge of this realization she nearly falls into a swoon (loses consciousness) - she is not yet ripe for the revelation that 'Ezekiel' has in store for her: that she can have a major portion of herself returned to her; that her Ezekiel is naught but a part of herself. Just as the moment of swoon, the moment of union, is about to occur, "Teacher Ezekiel vanishes behind the curtain of the sky" and arrives at the place of the dead: he disappears behind the curtain of Ne`ima's unconsciousness. He goes to the place where there is no possible communication with him. The place of the dead is girded by "affliction and sorrow" - the suffering of all who cannot reach there. It is the grief of the unconscious upon which the Unconscious feeds. For that place, the place of the

¹⁹ op cit., Kahana-Carmon, p. 140.

dead (the Unconscious) is the object of strongest desire, a desire eternally denied. Its inaccessibility causes mortal sorrow and pain, for in its absence there can be no wholeness or completion. Ne`ima has tried, through the intimations of these images, to invoke this union in her poems. She has tried to read the inscription on Ezekiel's forehead and believes herself successful. Yet just then he disappears. She has tried, through her poetry, to cross the boundary, to follow him to the reaches of consciousness, yet has been unsuccessful in her attempt.

Ne`ima's vision leaves her in a state of semi-consciousness, which she describes as "blear-eyed." Her bleary-eyed state stands in opposition to Ezekiel's all-seeing vision, and thus may be seen as a depiction of ignorance or rather, a lack of consciousness, of which she is made aware, albeit in an unarticulated manner, in the wake of this vision. Intruding upon her projections of an all-knowing Ezekiel is the Ezekiel "of flesh and blood," the inspiration of her vision. The projective quality of this figure is illustrated in Ne`ima's perception of his movement. He seems to her move dream-like - "as in a dream...with the conviction of a sleepwalker, with the astonishing trust of a piece of seaweed flung around by the flow."²⁰ His movement is, in fact, prescribed by her perception of him. He does not have a 'concrete reality'. He does indeed move "as in a dream," for the dream is of Ne`ima's making and consists of all that she creates of Ezekiel. Thus he is like "a sleepwalker," lacking in conviction, for his reality is the reality infused in him by her consciousness - "the flow" - by which he is flung around like "a piece of seaweed."

²⁰ op cit., Diament and Rattok ed.s, p. 54.

The overarching textual statement about light and vision and their association with consciousness occurs as part of Ne`ima's reflections.²¹ This adduction is wound up with her ideas about writing which, in lieu of vision, makes the unconscious conscious:

ואני הרהרתי: טול רחוב. הוסף לו קורטוב. האומנם רק הכוח המבט מחזון
של תוחלת הדברים הסומאים, שאינם מהלכים בגדולות, שאפים לצאת מן
הכוח אל הפועל. אני כפרתם.

Vision/light is that which makes conscious all the teeming life. It is the "indefinable quality" of existence. Only this makes existence possible. It is to this that all "eyeless things" aspire, so that they may have existence. It is to this that Ne`ima aspires so that she may make the existence of the eyeless things her existence. Where she has not seen - nor they - she will atone for it in her writing. She will attempt to redeem them and make herself more whole through narration:

אני כפרתם. ואני הרהרתי: חיים חנונים. בסך-הכל הר. עם יהודים רוחשים.
כנמלים, נכנסות ויוצאות, עושות לביתן במעבה-האדמה. אולם כל אחד ואחד
יודע: כעיר שחוברה לה יחדו, בירושלים אני. מה מיוחד. מה נפלא. מה נבחר.
הקרוב ביותר אל איזה מרכז. מה גדולה הזכות. כל אחד בלבו את הפלא חש.
אולם אני, כשאהיה גדולה, אם ירצה השם אדע להביע את הפלא בכתב, את כל

²¹ op cit., Kahana-Carmon, p. 146.

הפלאים. אני מוכרחה. אחרת אין חיי חיים.²²

Jerusalem, the core - in an archetypal coding - is associated with the mother archetype, the uroboros, to which, in its positive aspect, are attributed:

...maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exultation that transcend reason; any helpful instance or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility.²³

and, more importantly here:

The place of magic transformation and rebirth, together with the underworld and its inhabitants, are presided over by the mother.²⁴

Jerusalem, as "the central pivot of things," a symbol of redemption, is the great Unconsciousness, the home, the miracle - its structure, "compact together." As she is physically situated in Jerusalem, the Heavenly Jerusalem merges with its earthly counterpart in Ne`ima's conception. A blend, once again, as with Ezekiel, of the upper and lower.

²² loc cit.

²³ op cit., Jung p. 82.

²⁴ loc cit.

When Ezekiel informs her, in response to her query about the poems, that he fell asleep after having read two pages,²⁵ Ne`ima falls into a state of regressive shock. In attempting to dissociate herself from the present, Ne`ima passes through a series of archetypal images that range from symbols of mourning "olive trees" and "cypress trees," to an illuminated apocalyptic vision - "The radiance of the End of Days," in the midst of which she senses:

אני לא אחזור בדרך הזו. לא אוסיף לראות עוד את ירושלים.²⁶

She fears dislocation from the mother, from unbounded consciousness. And yet, this moment is, her moment of rebirth, the beginning of her transformation. She indeed will not be the same after she abnegates her reliance on an external Ezekiel, but neither will she lose the core as a consequence. On an unconscious level, the statement "I shall not pass this way again" is accurate in its assessment. It heralds the beginning of Ne`ima's rebirth, her discarding of the old and incorporating her other part.

Counterpoised to the images of light are pictures of darkness, suggestive of the intermingling of the conscious and unconscious, the desirable and therefore admitted, and the undesirable and thus repressed and shadowy. In Ezekiel dark and light serve in unison:

²⁵ op cit., Kahana-Carmon, p. 146.

²⁶ ibid. : p. 147.

אנשים רואים: קלסתר של ירח שחרחר. העינים הירוקות בהירות מן
הקלסתר.²⁷

The turf, as already mentioned, is darkness pierced by light. An evening description of a
Jerusalem housing-estate has:

אורותיה כחורים מנוקבים להציץ בעדם אל האש מתחת לקליפת הארץ
הדקה.²⁸

And the Ezekiel of Ne`ima's visions passes blazingly through the night sky.²⁹ In her
eventual understanding, Ne`ima manages to incorporate into oneness the dark and the
shadow, the hard and the opaque. She no longer fears their uncertainty, as she does at this
stage, where her fear is evidenced in the final images of her apocalyptic vision where:

רק סוסי חושך סוסי צלמוות סוסי אפילה סוסי ברד סוסי ברזל סוסי ערפל.³⁰

- combine with the light and the flames into a tumultuous, energized mass that seems

²⁷ *ibid.* : p. 137.

²⁸ *ibid.* : p. 140.

²⁹ *loc cit.*

³⁰ *ibid.* : p. 147.

uncontrollable and is too awful, at this stage, to behold:

הדרך עברה את החורף. יצאה והגיעה אל הגשרים. צהרים. ושלהבתיות
מתגברות ועולות בין גשר לגשר, עם עשן רב ועפיפות של אבק גחלים. ידי על
עיני.³¹

Naked we cannot behold full consciousness. It is only later, when Ne`ima has encountered and integrated her shadow as Law- Giver, that she can face the coincidence of darkness and light and no longer fear the shapelessness of its mass. It is only knowing that "limits are set,"³² that the sea is "shut up with doors"³³ that she is free to explore the heights, freed of "the terror of soaring,"³⁴ so that:

האור אשר החל מפציע פעם, רך כאור הלבנה הברה, מתחזקת ועולה,
גבר עד לסמאון.³⁵

In the illumination of her knowledge Ne`ima knows that she need not fear a total immersion

³¹ loc cit.

³² op cit., Diamant and Rattok ed.s, p. 64.

³³ loc cit.

³⁴ loc cit.

³⁵ op cit., Kahana-Carmon, p. 149.

(and thus loss of identity) in the swirl of the formless Other. There are limits and there is constraint and these are within her, made conscious in her admission of the animus and of the Shadow, the unacknowledged part of her personality. The Shadow for Ne`ima is the Law, repressed because "Seen from the one-sided point of view of the conscious attitude, the shadow is...repressed through intensive resistance(...) The conscious mind is on top, the shadow underneath..." And yet, "all consciousness...seeks its unconscious opposite, lacking which it is doomed to stagnation, congestion, and ossification," for "Life is born only of the spark of opposites."³⁶

Ezekiel is Ne`ima's shadow. He is the embodiment of the Law in her experience. Because of his masculine character he also functions as her animus, with the notion of Law, limits and intellectual containment fitting an Archetypal image of the masculine. Till her realization Ne`ima is unbridled sentimentality; full of desire for poetry and fear of losing it and attachment to the mother. After the climax, however, after her transformation, her rebirth, she is free to follow the voice of her art purely by restraining it. She no longer need pray for the vision and hope that when she grows up she:

אולם אני, כשאהיה גדולה, אם ירצה השם אדע להביע את הפלא בכתב, את כל
הפלאים. אני מוכרחה. אחרת חיי אין חיים.³⁷

³⁶ C.G. Jung, *The Collected works of C.G. Jung: Two Essays on Analytic Psychology*, trans. R.F.C. Hull, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, 2nd ed., 1953, v. 7, p. 53.

³⁷ op cit., Kahana-Carmon, p. 146.

Now the "phantoms perform" in her,³⁸ and she need not strive to infuse them with the life they plead for, they come of themselves and she understands what needs to be done:

רק בי יצורי-רפאים מרקדים. עפים יחוגו, יעוגו - תמונה חיה אחר תמונה חיה
קמה, מתחלפת - באין קול, רק תנועה ומחווה, על נפשם יבקשו: את הלחץ,
הסנוורים וההילה הנוגהת, נשמת-אפו של הרגע החי. השותת. להציל. לפליטה.
למשמרת. בטרם יסוג הכול, נשמט מן האזור המואר אל אזור הצל.³⁹

What has been devoured (apparently by Ezekiel's rejection of her, but in fact, by the exclusion, the repression, the alienating, making Other of an essential part of her personality) is now made whole.⁴⁰ The madwoman of her nightmares (her unrestrained and thus unformed self; only the half of her, which is why this woman is her double and not her other half. She is mere repetition of the lack of order that has long dominated Ne`ima, in the absence of any whips, any taming.) is no longer her double. All Ne`ima need do is follow King David's example, do what he did to escape the prophecy of his death. While at midnight his lyre played itself as the North wind blew through it, he:

³⁸ *ibid.* : p. 149.

³⁹ *ibid.* : pp. 150-151.

⁴⁰ *op cit.*, Diament and Rattok, ed.s, p. 57.

והיה עומד דוד ועוסק בתורה עד שיעלה עמוד השחר.⁴¹

So she too, in the blackness of the evening can, by virtue of her redeemed self, her newly incorporated Shadow, impose and restrain and give literary shape to the melody the spirit strives to follow; the Other whose Otherness is beyond the reach of the "I", but by whose proximity the I is redeemed. Jerusalem, the core, slumbers, but all around her the phantoms perform and "plead for their lives, for the stress, the dazzle,"⁴² which is the articulation of the unutterable structures within.

In this story Kahana-Carmon has successfully given voice to a figure who is an extreme example of marginalization in Israeli society. Ne'ima is a young Sephardi girl placed in a religious school. She is of little account because of her youth, oppressed because of her ethnicity and suppressed by her gender, in a setting that is irrelevant to mainstream secular society because of its religiosity. She is a prime example of modern-day *telishut*, who overcomes dispossession from the inside. This is the only truly triumphant tale examined in this work where the individual is victorious and societal pressure rendered meaningless. The journey here is an internal it subordinates all else. This was the path the *telushim* not find because of their essential conditioning as males in the Jewish ethos, and this path is not easily accessible to their heirs, who are yet the inheritors, albeit in altered form, of those traditions. This move away from the collective is made by a woman writer, who has only a subjugated

⁴¹ op cit., Kahana-Carmon, p. 151.

⁴² op cit., Diament and Rattok, ed.s, p. 66.

relationship to their intellectual and psychic genealogy, who configures her vehicle in her own gender and painfully achieved freedom. And that is telling and need be noted as long as the tensions of group demands versus the search for individual voice continue.

**WAR AND REDEMPTION: A GUEST FOR THE NIGHT -
S.Y. AGNON**

The world of tradition which caused so much pain to the early writers of modern Hebrew literature, is often idealized by S.Y. Agnon. He tries to keep the faith and propose a glorious vision of what was the collective, and attempts to reinstate it in an all too unsatisfactory present. But just as it becomes clear that that past is mostly imagined, he becomes forward-looking and looks towards a nonpareil not yet been in the guise of Messianic perfection. Thus all the adulation notwithstanding, Agnon fights his own battle with the group and its conventions, even though these are cast in deceptive guise. He does so in the present text, *A Guest for the Night*, which appears at first to be the simple story of a man's return to his native town (Shibush) after a protracted absence. It describes the town and its inhabitants as they unfold to the narrator in his wanderings through its environs over the duration, just under one year, of his return. But the actualities of Shibush, the undesirable compositions of its hypothetical presents as perceived by the narrator, exfoliate across the text. The geographical and human components of Shibush expand beyond their immediate opacities, and span vast spatial and temporal distances to become representational, not only of their own time, but of times gone by, so that the narrator is forced, at the end of the novel, to anticipate a miraculous utopia to contain them.

The relationship between the mostly grotesque present, and the falsely imagined wonderful past, is passed to the reader by the use of various apparati. Agnon blends waking and dream, imagination and logic, present and past in the book, and introduces into the

limited world of the present it explores, a timelessness which extends its features. This is enhanced by the employment of such technical devices as analogy and parallelism¹ across characters, stories and situations - which dilate in their referential correspondences to create echoes that reverberate in a tenor more encompassing than any singular representation of the facts would allow. But most efficacious in the creation of a feeling of ubiquity is the structure of the tale, which is not a tale at all (in the sense of plot, central motif and sequential development), but a series of digressions spreading over a multitudinous array of events with an ever-shifting locus of narrative.

While the narrator's pilgrimage to the past with its accompanying motifs of the key and Beit haMidrash remain as the manifest purpose of the account they are essentially only the symbolic embodiments of the thematic concerns which are basic to the book.² These are centered upon both the separateness and the unity of all things. The apparently jumbled-structureless narrative mode faithfully explicates both its concrete and its conceptual intentions. It expresses the 'facts' of the story inasmuch as it creates a feeling of immediacy, of an approximate identity between narrative and narrated time, by its implication that the facts are being presented almost as they occur without the intervention of the time-gap that

¹ Gershon Shaked, *Omanut haSippur shel Agnon*, hakibbutz ha'Artzi, haShomer haTza'ir, Tel Aviv, 1973. pp. 47, 50-55, 233-239.

² For an exposition of the key as a central motif in *A Guest for the Night*, see Baruch Kurzweil, *Masot al Sippurei Shay Agnon*, Schocken Books, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1970, pp. 54-68. Kurzweil was the first to point to its importance. Also see Arnold Band, *Nostalgia and Nightmare*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968, pp. 316-317, and Shaked, op cit., pp. 242-243.

the ordering of them would demand. Similarly the frequent transitions between direct and reported speech, the changes in the pronouns used to denote one and the same speaker at one and the same time, the shifts in tenses within one episode are all apparently reflective of a true account of the vicissitudes of a receptive consciousness. The implicit statement of the book is likewise served by its form. Separateness is portrayed in its description of linear journey (the arrival of the guest, his stay, and his departure = the beginning, middle and end of the book, and even the progression of the words and sentences themselves) and by the cohesion imposed upon the tale by the existence of a central reference point (the Guest).³ The unity of all things is expressed in those factors mentioned in the remarks on pilgrimage and narrative mode. Gershon Shaked (via T.S. Eliot) appositely describes the function of the structure of the book as objective correlative to its concerns: the form accurately echoes the various thematic strands of its content.⁴

The notion of unity and separation gives rise to a great number of associated issues revolving upon the questions of opposites, complementaries and the ultimate resolution of apparently disparate elements in an all-containing union. *A Guest for the Night* deals with the tension which derives from the paradoxical relationship in which separate-opposite stands to merged-unity, and attempts to reconcile its inherent difficulties so as to arrive at a stand-point from which action is possible. The answer of course can never be simple or wholly rational.

³ Shaked, op cit., p. 247. Shaked observes that the main function of the narrator is that of witnessing.

⁴ *ibid.* : p. 233.

At the core of the narrator's journey to Shibush lies a desire to revive and recapture the past. He left the town as a youth and he returns to it some twenty years later as a forty-one year old man, prompted in his quest by the destruction of his home in Jerusalem which he has neither the strength nor the motivation to rebuild:

מה טעם אני כאן ואשתי וילדי במקום אחר? אחר שהחריבו האויבים את
 ביתי ולא הניחו לי כלום נכנסה בי עייפות יתירה ונתרשלו ידי מלהקים את
 ביתי, שנחרב חורבן שני.⁵

He looks to the past for sustenance and regeneration - perceiving it as an ideal in which to immerse himself. But despite the central intention underlying this journey, the enterprise is characterized by a lack of definite purpose and plan. Once the initial stages of the pilgrimage - the journey to Shibush and the acquisition of lodgings - are successfully traversed, the narrator enters a world which lacks definition. The desire to return which inspired him to assertive action is dissipated by its fulfillment which leaves him denuded of clear intention and therefore prey to whatever circumstances chance upon him. This is, however, as it should be; for, in aspiring to the world of the past, the narrator is attempting to actualize that which, in accordance with the linearity of the waking-state world, is irretrievable, incapable of repetition. By invoking the past he leaves the realm of the waking-state with its attendant

⁵ Shmuel Yosef Agnon, *A Guest for the Night*, in *The Collected Works of S.Y. Agnon*, Schocken Books, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, 1960, p. 193.

conditions of linearity, logic and intentionality and enters a world over which sequence, initiative and even individuality hold no sway.

Soon after his arrival, however, he is presented with a purpose within which is carried the embodiment of his pilgrimage. On Yom Kippur - or rather at the end of that day he suddenly finds himself appointed (albeit in a disparaging manner) as keeper of Beit haMidrash - as master of its key. Both Beit haMidrash and its key are laden with emotional value for the narrator. They fulfil a double function. They act as symbols - where the first stands as an emblem of Jewish life of the past, while the second symbolizes the means to its attainment - which also hold a literal value - Beit hamidrash is the place in which he studied in his youth, while its key was a greatly desired object in his childhood years. And his home, like the Temple, is twice destroyed.⁶ Thus these objects serve to connote the narrator's personal history, as well as the collective history of the nation. By this merging of both worlds - the individual and the communal - Agnon highlights a variation on the theme of unity and separation: the nation is composed of individuals, while the individual is the embodiment of the nation. Each contains the other.⁷

*Bloom was talking and talking with John Wyse and he quite excited with his dunduckety mad coloured mag on him and his old plumeyes rolling about.
-Persecution, says he, all the history of the world is full of it.*

⁶ *ibid.* : pp. 268-269, for Shaked's analysis of the two destructions.

⁷ *ibid.* : p. 236, for Shaked's comments on the commonality of the fate of nation and individual.

Perpetuating national hatred among nations.

-But do you know what a nation means? says John Wyse.

-Yes, says Bloom.

-What is it? says John Wyse.

-A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place.

-By God, then, says Ned, laughing, if that's so I'm a nation for I'm living in the same place for the past five years,

So of course everyone had a laugh at Bloom and says he, trying to muck out of it:

-Or also living in different places.

-That covers my case, says Joe.

-What is your nation if I may ask, says the citizen. -

Ireland, says Bloom. I was born here. Ireland.

*Ulysses - James Joyce*⁸

The Nation and the Individual

The identity of nation and individual is further explicated by a series of parallels between the narrator's experiences and the like experiences undergone by the inhabitants of Shibush.⁹

The immediate cause of the narrator's return is the violent destruction of his home in Israel.

Yet the first sight his home town reveals to him bespeaks much the same fate: Shibush is in ruins.

מן הבתים הגדולים של שתי קומות של שלוש קומות לא נשתיירו אלא

⁸ op cit., Joyce, pp. 329-330.

⁹ ibid. : p. 265. Shaked refers to these and to the biographical connection between Agnon and the narrator, but says this is of little consequence.

הדיוטאות התחתונות, ואף הן רובן חרבות. ויש בתים שלא נשתייר מהם אלא מקומם בלבד. אף באר המלך, היא הבאר ששתה הימנה סובייסקי מלך פולין כשחזר נוצח מן המלחמה, מעלותיה שבורות והטבלא שקבעו לשמו רצועה ואותיות של שמו שהיו עשויות זהב מטושטשות ועשבים אדומים כדם עולים מהן, כאילו שפסף בהם מלאך המות את סכינ¹⁰.

Similarly the narrator's spiritual crisis, which leads him to seek out the past, is echoed by the spiritual poverty that characterizes Shibush. Shibush is crippled in both its physical and metaphysical guises. Just as the narrator is incapable of movement so is the town suspended in a limbo of inaction and degeneration. War has wrought desolation over Shibush - nothing remains of her former glory but the shells of buildings echoing the skeletal remnants of her earlier religious urge. Similarly, the violent effects of politics have brought about the ruin of the narrator's home which in its turn is both representative of and cause of the spiritual desolation within him. Thus the physical objects of the book act as an objective correlative to the inner states of its inhabitants: and by the paralleling of these two sets of correspondences Agnon emphasizes the indissolubility of the individual and the nation.

The identity between the individual and the nation is echoed by the identity of the town and the nation. Just as the individual is the embodiment of the collective people, so is Shibush the metaphoric ubiety that exemplifies both its history and its present state of being. Shibush performs the function of surrogate world, both material and spiritual, of the Jewish

¹⁰ Agnon, op cit., p. 8.

People. These and the other correspondences in the book expand to lend range to its conceptual latitudes, creating a sense of ever-widening dimension by the undulating, elasticity of never-ending permutation. Even the name of the town is suggestive of a sense of upheaval of irreparable misconstruction, and may be seen as comment on the physical and the emotional-religious circumstances of the nation.¹¹

The name itself is of particular importance, it has a special sound which cannot be correctly articulated by any but its inhabitants. This is emphasized right at the start of the book where Gumowitz, the railway-clerk announces the train's arrival there:

בא לו הפקיד שנקרא שמו גומובייץ, שניטלה שמאלו במלחמה ועשוואה גומי,
 עמד מלא קומתו והניף בסודר שבידו וקרא, שבוש. זה שנים הרבה לא
 שמעתי שם שבוש יוצא מפי בן עירי. מי שנולד בה וגדל בה וחי בה הוא
 בלבד יודע להגות את השם הזה בכל אותיותיו.¹²

In isolating the town's name, by thus particularizing the successful uttering of it, the narrator brings into alignment the physical and human elements of Shibush. The exact expression of its name is dependent upon the internalization of its essence within the individual psyche and this is, in its turn, achieved only by birthright and by the collective continuing experience of

¹¹ Band, op cit., p. 290, refers to the meaning of the root ש ב ש, and to its being a metathesis of Buczacz, Agnon's home town.

¹² Agnon, op cit., p. 7.

its ambience. Thus the town-collective and the individuals of which it is comprised are fused into an inextricable whole and both are merged in the similarly isolated nation which is suspended in a limbo of suffering, exemplified in this passage by Gumowitz's rubber arm which replaces the one lost in the war.

The name Shibush creates yet a further echo which transcends the limits of the book: it is, almost an exact metathesis of the name of Agnon's birthplace - Buczacz and the very transposition of the sounds connotes, over and above the semantic reference of the word, the disordering and the disintegration that is its present fate. Thus even the form of this name acts as an objective correlative. Furthermore, by the introduction of this autobiographical note, Agnon places himself, the author - in whose consciousness the entire book is contained - within its context, and is thus contained by it - one with the narrator, the town and the nation. Shibush and its characters and, in fact, the entire book are thus imbued with an authenticity beyond the realm of the purely fictional.

A similar exploitation of name occurs in Chapter 40 where the names of Shibush personalities parallel names of Biblical figures akin to them in function. By this device a meaning is placed upon the present which ramifies beyond its domain and reaches to the historical antecedents of the nation, bringing them to bear upon twentieth century Europe. The family described in this chapter was once the town's leading family. Its male members were, appropriately, named after the fathers of the nation: Rabbi Abraham and Rabbi Ya'akov-Moshe whose widow is called Sara. The men of the family are dead as the result of either war or starvation and their widows live in considerably straitened circumstances, barely

able to survive. The outer form of the home they live in is analogous to the condition in which the family is situated. This reciprocal relationship is emphasized by the concurrence of these two elements within the same paragraph:

הבית חרב וראשו ניטל ממנו. אדם שניתז ראשו אינו חי, כיוצא בו בית. אף
 דיוטא זו שנשתיירה שם, בסיסו של הגוף, שבה היתה החנות הגדולה
 שנתפרנבו הימנה כמה משפחות, ספק קיימת ספק חרבה. אף על פי כן
 צימצמה שרה עצמה שם, היא וארבע גיסותיה, נשיהם של אחיו של בעלה,
 שקצתם נהרגו במלחמה וקצתם מתו ברעב.¹³

The identity between the names of Rabbi Abraham and his family with the Patriarchs and the Matriarch suggests not only a correspondence between these two sets of people - contemporary and ancient - but amplifies it into a total identity. The state of Rabbi Abraham's family thus becomes emblematic for the state of the nation for the original Abraham and his descendants are, in fact, nothing less than the source and the subsequent representation of the nation in its entirety. Thus the present condition of the Shibus family and its home may be seen as a portrayal of that of the nation itself and the narrator is therefore justified in the conclusion he reaches when visiting Sara's home:

נפל פסוק לתוך פי, היתה כאלמנה. כשראה ירמיה את החורבן הראשון ישב

¹³ op cit., Agnon, p. 216.

וכתב ספר קינות, ולא נתקררה דעתו בכל הקינות שקונן, עד שהמשיל את כנסת ישראל לאלמנה ואמר היתה כאלמנה, ולא אלמנה ממש, אלא כאשה שהלך בעלה למדינת הים ודעתו לחזור אצלה. כשאנו באים היום לקונן על חורבן אחרון אין אנו מספיקים אם נאמר היתה כאלמנה, אלא אלמנה ממש בלא כף הדמיון.¹⁴

and Shaked is likewise correct in asserting, by extension, that Sara's initiation of the transfer of the book "Yadav Shel Moshe" whose miraculous properties save mothers and their nascent offspring during difficult births - from Shibush to Israel, constitutes the nation's implicit recognition that the future of the Jewish people is incapable of realization in the Galut.¹⁵ The Galut, as expressed in Shibush is, at least at this stage of the story barren, both literally and figuratively:- for many years no child has been born within its confines.

The individual and the nation form an indivisible unity with each reflecting within the other a history which is one and the same with their own and therefore Yeruham Hofshi, engaged in the task of mending roads, may indeed be seen as fixing "an entire world":

יושב לו בחור מישראל בשוקי שבוש ורואה את עצמו כאילו מתקן עולם
מלא.¹⁶

¹⁴ loc cit.

¹⁵ Shaked, op. cit., pp. 54, 245.

¹⁶ Agnon, op cit., p. 55.

But not only do the approximately contemporary circumstances of the individual and the nation concur, but the history, long-past, of the nation reverberates across the centuries and is actively inherent within its individual members at all times causing the continuing repetition of its events both in the macrocosmic - collective - and microcosmic - individual - aspects of the nation. Thus Chava's succumbing to the temptation of the apple is reenacted in endless variations:

חווה הביאה מיתה אחת ואנו מביאים עלינו את המיתה בכל יום ובכל עת
ובכל שעה מתוך דברי הבל ורעות רוח.¹⁷

- and the declaration in Reb Shlomo's plea to his son for peace and harmony:

משיבו אביו ואומר, בני מלחמת גוג ומגוג, היא בכל דור ודור ובכל עת ובכל
שעה ובכל אדם ואדם, בתוך ביתו של אדם, בתוך לבו, בלבו ובלב בניו, שתוק
בני שתוק.¹⁸

- is accurate in its assessment. The effects of history are all- pervasive and are ever-present -
occurring in each and every generation, at every hour and in each person.

¹⁷ *ibid.* : p. 271.

¹⁸ *ibid.* : p. 40.

The coincidence between the narrator's return to Shibush with the Eve of Yom Kippur displays yet an additional variation of the synecdochic relationship between individual and nation. By placing its mention at the start of the book, Agnon immediately introduces the analogic tone which echoes through its pages. The narrator returns to his home-town on the festival of return, when most of its inhabitants are striving to achieve a return.¹⁹ As may be observed in his musings at the station on his arrival in Shibush the Guest just barely succeeds in arriving before the onset of the Holy Day.

פניתי לכאן ולכאן ולא מצאתי שום עגלה. אמרתי לעצמי, ערב יום הכיפורים
היום וכבר הגיע זמן תפילת מנחה ואין בעלי עגלות יוצאים לדרך, ואם אתה
רוצה להגיע לעיר טול רגליך ולך.²⁰

This is reiterated by the hotel-proprietor's reaction, to his appearance at the hotel, an hour and a half later:

אנשי המלון קיבלוני כאורח שבא שלא בזמנו, שכבר קמו מסעודה המפסקת
ועמדו לילך וחששו שמא יצטרכו להתעכב על ידי.²¹

¹⁹ See Kurzweil, *op cit.*, p. 235, on a flawed Yom Kippur, and further, pp. 272-273 on Yom Kippur, Return and the future. For the same theme, see also Band, *op cit.*, pp. 292-293.

²⁰ Agnon, *op cit.*, pp. 7-8.

²¹ *ibid.* : p. 10.

- and in the narrator's voluntary and considered abnegation of the final meal before the fast:

שקלתי אף אני בדעתי אם מותר אני באכילה, שהרי צריכים להוסיף מחול על
 הקודש ולהתחיל בצום קודם חשיכה. אמרתי לו, אין פנאי ליסב בסעודה,
 פתחתי את תרמילי והוצאתי מחזורי וטליתי והלכתי לבית הכנסת הגדול.²²

His timely arrival is tragically ironic for he is, in fact, an "אורח שבא שלא בזמנו." The time he attempts to reinstate in Shibush is long past and it is doubtful whether his idealized picture of it was ever a reality. The narrator's static view of Shibush is evident in his discussion with Elimelech who is of those of its residents who intend to depart to unknown destinations immediately after the festival of return:

אמרתי לו, היאך מניחים את הוודאי והולכים אחר הספק. אמר הוא, יש
 ודאי אחר שאין עליו ספק, כגון אנו שהיינו בצער פרעות, ודאי שאין אנו
 יכולים לדור כאן.
 אמרתי אני, מקום שדרתם בו אתם ואבותיכם מניחים אתם כך?²³

Elimelech stands in opposition to the narrator, yet, ironically, it is he who provides him with the Key to Beit haMidrash:

²² loc cit.

²³ ibid. : pp. 17-18.

אמר אלימלך קיסר, ניכר מר שאין לפניו אלא שמחתו של משיח, שמא ידור מר במקומו עד שיבוא משיח ויראה בשמחתו. ניענעתי לו ראשי ושתקתי. הראה אותו אדם עלי ואמר, מנענע ראשו ושותק, ראשו דובב ושפתותיו מחרישות. נתתי ידי על לבי ואמרת, ראשי ולבי שוים, אלא שעדיין לא הספקתי לחתוך הדיבור בפי.

ליגלג אלימלך קיסר ואמר, שמא מבקש מר רשות, הרינו נותנים לו. ואם רוצה נמסור לו את המפתח ויהא אדון על כל בית המדרש כולו. נענה אחד ואמר, אנו יוצאים מכאן ואין אנו צריכים למפתח, נמסור לו את המפתח ולא יתגלגל באשפה. גבאי, תן לו את המפתח ויחזיק בו. ראה הגבאי שידי פשוטה לקבל. עמד ועלה על המגדל והלך אצל שולחן הקריאה והכניס ידו אל תוך התיבה שבשולחן והוציא משם מפתח גדול של נחושת שחפיו של ברזל וירד ועמד על גב מעלה התחתונה שבמגדל והושיט לי את המפתח. זה המפתח הגדול שהייתי פותח בו את בית מדרשנו הישן בזמן שהייתי נער והייתי משכים ומעריב בתורה. זה כמה שנים לא ראיתיו אפילו בחלום, ופתאום ניתן לי לחלוטין בפרהסיא בבית המדרש ביום הכיפורים. נטלתי את המפתח בידי וטמנתיו בבגדי.²⁴

Elimelech is totally antithetical to the narrator. While he is an expression of the practical urge in humanity the narrator is the embodiment of its corresponding opposite which desires and reaches for the ideal. The gulf between them causes a lack of communication the extent

²⁴ *ibid.* : p. 20.

of which it portrayed in Elimelech's repentant but unsuccessful attempt at reconciliation with the Guest at the start of the book:

לאחר קדיש יתום בירכו הציבור זה את זה בשנה טובה ומבורכת. בא אצלי
 אותו קנטרן אלימלך קיסר ובירכני. ואמר לי, כמדומני שעדיין לא נתתי לו
 שלום, והושיט לי את ידו. החזרתי לו שלום והזכרתי לו ענין המפתח שבא לי
 על ידו. גימגם ואמר, נתלוצצתי לי, והרי אני מבקש שימחול לי. אמרתי לו
 אדרבא, מתנה גדולה נתגלגלה לי על ידו. אמר לי, מתלוצץ בי מר, אם כן
 אין לנו זה על זה כלום.²⁵

- and in the narrator's hesitation in positively identifying Elimelech at the station at the end:

הרכבת באה ועמה באו כמה נכרים ויהודי אחד, שהיה דומה לאלימלך
 קיסר, ואפשר באמת אלימלך קיסר היה, אלא שהיה זקן הרבה וכפוף.
 אפילו פריידא אמו עליה השלום בסוף ימיה נראתה צעירה ממנו.²⁶

The failure of these two to truly meet, even when in physical proximity of each other, is given dramatic substance by the clash in the geographical and intentional directions they take: they meet only in passing while moving in exactly opposite directions. The guest arrives in

²⁵ *ibid.* : p. 23.

²⁶ *ibid.* : p. 434.

Shibush seeking the past, just as Elimelech, in search of a future, is about to leave. He departs from it as master of the key to the future vibrant with its potential, just as Elimelech, defeated in his quest, returns to the static world of the past thwarted in his attempt to deal with the present. The key to the past with which Elimelech so derisively parted has, in its way, equipped the narrator to unlock the future.

And yet, antithetical though these two characters may be to each other, like all the opposites examined in this work, they are also, in a primary sense, identical. This is elucidated by the function which Elimelech's mother, Frieda Kaiser, fulfills in acting as surrogate mother to the narrator on his return to Shibush. It is chiefly through her that his real mother receives mention and it is she alone of all the characters in the book who has watched him grow to adulthood. When she is left childless, after Elimelech's departure, the narrator slips into the role of surrogate son, replacing his direct opposite in this task. And like Elimelech he too fails Frieda in his role as son for he is not present when she dies. Both abandon her to a burial unattended by her loved ones and therefore victim to that which she most fears:

אמרתי לה, פריידא אל תבכי, הרבה צפרים עשו להן כנפים ופרחו ולבסוף
 חזרו לקניהן. אמרה פריידא, מה אתה שח? הרי לכשיחזור בני אני מוטלת
 באדמה ועיני מכוסות בשברי כלי חרס ולא אראה אותן. אמרתי לה, סוף
 אדם למות ואין עצה כנגד המות. אמרה פריידא, אילו היה בני עוצם עיני
 הייתי שוחקת. אבל בני אדם זרים יעצמו את עיני, וכשזרים מעצמים עיניו של

מת, חושש המת בעיניו, שידו של זר יורדת בלא רחמים, ולכשיחזור בני ויעמוד על קברי לא אראה אותו, שאהא חוששת בעיני. ומה כשאני חיה איני רואה יפה - אחר מותי שיכסו את עיני בלא רחמים על אחת כמה וכמה.²⁷

And, though in actuality the narrator and Elimelech do not meet, they do so in the realm of the guest's imagination by way of an hallucination inspired by their common guilt:

כך נשלמו ימיה של פריידא. שבעים שנה ושנה היו ימי שני חייה של פריידא. בין לידתה למיתתה נישאה וילדה חמשה בנים ושתי בנות. בעלה מת על פניה וארבעה בניה נהרגו במלחמה ובפרעות ושתי בנותיה מתו בענין רע. לא נשתייר אלא אלימלך. השם יודע היכן הוא. אלימלך לא בא לעצום את עיניה. ואף אני לא הלכתי אחר מטתה. בדרך בעגלה ישבתי עם צבי מכפר עולים והנעמנו זה לזה בדברים בשעה שפתחה האדמה את פיה ובלעה את פריידא. ישבתי לי במלון ואכלתי את פתי וחשבתי עלי ועליך ועל פריידא ועל אלימלך. והדמיון הנטוע בלבו של אדם דימה לפני את אלימלך. לא יצאה שעה קלה עד שבא ועמד. בשעה שראיתי את אלימלך ביום הכיפורים בבית הכנסת היו עיני דומות לקליפת הצב שמוטלת בחמה והיה מביט בי מתוך שנאה, עכשיו לא היה בעיניו שמץ מזה, אלא הביט בי בעקשנות יתירה. השפלתי את עיני ונסתכלתי בנעלי. נעלי היו נקיות ושלימות. לעומתן עמד

²⁷ *ibid.* : p. 80.

אלימלך ונתן שתי אצבעותיו על גרגרתו ואמר, ובכן מה עלינו לעשות עוד?
מה עלינו לעשות עוד? משמע שכבר עשינו כל שהיה בידינו לעשות ואין אנו

חסרים אלא עוד.²⁸

Thus even two such disparate characters as these share a commonality capable of causing them, albeit temporarily, to merge.

*Muscle and pluck forever!
What invigorates life invigorates death,
And the dead advance as much as the living advance,
And the future is no more uncertain than the present,
For the roughness of the earth and of man encloses as
much as the delicatessen of the earth and of man,
And nothing endures but personal qualities.*

*What do you think endures?
Do you think a great city endures?
Or a teeming manufacturing state? or a prepared
constitution? or the best built steamships?
Or hotels of granite and iron? Or any chef-c'oeuvres of
engineering, forts, armaments?*

*Away! these are not to be cherished for themselves,
They fill their hour, the dancers dance, the musicians
play for them,
The show passes, all does well enough of courses,
All does very well till one flash of defiance.*

*A great city is that which has the greatest men and
women,
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in
the whole world.*

²⁸ *ibid.* : pp. 270-271.

The Glory that wasn't Shibush

Elimelech's role as foil to the narrator extends beyond the presentation of antithesis alone for, deriving from their diametrically opposed attitudes, is a congruence and a similarity of purpose. Both leave Shibush in search of a better life - of *lebensraum*. The narrator leaves as a youth. Motivated by a psychical dissatisfaction he finds the atmosphere of the town stifling and journeys in search of an ideal which he assumes to be located in a specific geographical ubiety.

Elimelech embarks on his journey as a fully grown adult. Spurred by the physical hardships and dangers presented by life in Shibush - the poverty and the pogroms - he seeks a practical alternative elsewhere where he may attain his livelihood in a noble manner, free of the constant pressure of potential persecution. Both encounter obstructions and both fail in their quests and return to the confines of Shibush markedly impoverished in precisely those circumstances of their lives which they sought to improve. The difficulties that confront them on their journeys are of a nature exactly akin to those they attempted to escape by leaving Shibush. The narrator is brought to a total spiritual stagnation by the twice-repeated destruction of his home. Elimelech suffers from persecution, humiliation and many different physical deprivations in his travels, so that by the time of his return one year later he looks

older than his mother did at her death:

אפילו פריידא אמו עליה השלום בסוף ימיה נראתה צעירה ממנו.²⁹

The theme of journey and return is not confined to the adventures of the narrator and Elimelech, but receives further dramatic explication in the histories - both collective and individual - of the inhabitants of Shibush. The town-collective was forced into exile during the war years when the men joined in the fighting, while their families (e.g. the Bachs and Zummers) fled to Vienna to escape the violence of advancing armies and the starvation resultant upon the prolonged hostilities. Most of the survivors return to Shibush to try to re-establish their lives there. The collective return is not, however, successful: The unyielding atmosphere of Shibush is stagnant and sterile. This is portrayed by the collective barrenness that overlays the town of which Daniel and Mrs. Bach's lack of employment is an expression:

ועכשיו במה הוא חי ובמה הוא ניזון, אוצר של עצים יש לו בדירתו לבנין
ולהסקה, ואשתו היא מילדת. לעת עתה אין אדם בונה בית חדש ואין אדם
מסיק את תנורו, אבל כשיגדלו התינוקות שאשתו מיילדתם עתידים הם
לבנות להם בתים חדשים ומסיקים את תנוריהם ופרנסתו מעופפת לו מכל
הצדדים. אלא זו צרה, מיום שחזרו מן המלחמה רבו פרושים בישראל שלא
לישא אשה ולהוליד בנים.³⁰

²⁹ *ibid.* : p. 434.

³⁰ *ibid.* : p. 31.

Neither birth nor building are features of contemporary Shibush whose chief characteristic - collective hunger, physical and spiritual starvation - is condensed in Elimelech Kaiser's bitter observation:

שמא אדם יודע במה ישבור צומרו?³¹

The individual accounts of journey and return, narrated in the stories of people encountered by the Guest during his stay in Shibush, comply with one another in their overall features. But the specific detail in which they differ is of importance to the book for it serves to introduce and expound upon various thematic strands pertinent to the concerns of the narrator in the process of learning he undergoes over the one year the period of his return. It also contributes to a primary aspect of the technique on which the book is structured: While the technical devices of analogy and parallel have already been dealt with, Agnon's exploitation of antithetical correspondences has only received brief mention in the discussion on the relationship in which the narrator and Elimelech stand to each other. This stylistic feature requires further comment as it resonates through the work giving dramatic actuality to the paradoxical tension in which unity and separation are attuned one to the other by accentuating the notion of unity in diversity and its complementary opposite - diversity in unity, with each informing the other by highlighting the identity and disparity between the items under

³¹ *ibid.* : p. 19.

consideration. The following descriptions are inserted to indicate the manner in which this method is employed.

Among the other characters whose experience of journey and return corresponds in some way to the narrator's are Mrs Schuster, Yeruham Hofshi, Rabbi Hayim and Reb Shlomo Bach, all of whom reflect different aspects of the dilemmas and revelations experienced by him.

Mrs. Shuster is exiled to Berlin as the result of the war. While residing there she loses her children and is stricken by an incapacitating case of asthma. She regards her exile, as the source of all these misfortunes while at the same time ascribing to Shibush's atmosphere magical properties capable of curing all ills:

נתחלחל שוסטר וביקש לקרות לרופא. אומרת אני לו, הנח את הרופאים.
 אומר הוא לי, אם כן מה אעשה? אומרת אני לו, מה תעשה, השיבני לשובש.
 נתחלחל שוסטר יותר וצעק, כיצד אחזירך לשובש והלוא...אומרת אני לו,
 כחה כחה כחה, לא שלוש פעמים אלא ארבע פעמים. אף על פי כן לא
 השגיח בדברי והביא רופא. אמר הרופא, חולה היא גברתי במחלת
 האסטמא. אומרת אני לשוסטר, עכשיו שוסטר החכמת יותר, שהרי למדת
 מלה גרמנית חדשה. אומר שוסטר, מה אעשה? אומרת אני לו, וכי לא
 אמרתי לך כחה כחה כחה, וכי לא אמרתי לך, שאני רוצה לחזור לשובש.
 אומר הוא לי, וכי לא אמרתי לך שדבר זה אי אפשר, משום ששובש חרבה
 ורוב יושביה מתו, מי במלחמה ומי בדבר, ומי בשאר חליים רעים. אומרת

אני לו, אבל אוירה של שבוש קיים. החזירני לשם ואשאף את אוירה, עד שלא אחנק כאן. לא היו ימים קלים עד שנענש ביותר על שלא שמע בקולי, שחלו שני ילדי בטיפוס הבטן ומתו. והם לא היו צריכים למות, שהם היו טהורים ונקיים כמלאכים. ולמה מתו, מפני שדרנו בארץ נכריה, ואילו הייתי דרה בעירי הייתי משתטחת על קברי אבותי ומהפכת שמים וארץ בקולי והיו הילדים חיים.³²

Her attitude is akin to the narrator's in that she sees Shibush - the past - as an ideal: it is the healer - the giver and the sustainer of life. It is the means by which all the sorrow of the present will be removed. But unlike the narrator she does not come to see the realities of present-day Shibush. These are not to be acknowledged: it is unimportant to her that the town lies in ruins, denuded of most of its sons. Mrs Schuster contents herself with believing that in the omnipotence which resides in the air of Shibush she will find her salvation. She deludes herself, in rather a pathetic manner, by insisting that the return has indeed been beneficial, as her assertion to the narrator in the following passage portrays:

אמרה לי אותה אשה, מחלה זו אינה באה כשאר התחלואים, שמתקלקלים כלי הדם, אלא רוח אחת יש בעולם ונטפלת לו לאדם שנתרחק ממקום לידתו, והיא באה ויושבת על פתחי לבו, ואין לו רפואה אלא עישון. כיצד, מביאים עשבים מעירו של אותו אדם, מאותם שגדלים סמוך לבית שנולד בו

³² *ibid.* : pp. 62-63.

ומשימים אותם במקטרת, ואין חילוק היכן נעשתה המקטרת, ומעשנים, והעישון מעמעם מוחה של הרוח ומיקל על הנשמה. אף היא הוקל לה הרבה. אלא שעדיין לא הוקל לה כל צרכה, עד שעמדה מעצמה על סוד הדבר, שריח העשבים מגרש את הרוח. והרי ידיעת המחלה היא חצי רפואה. ובאמת כבר נתרפאה חציה, שהרי בראשונה היתה מכעכעת כחה כחה של שלוש או של ארבע פעמים ועכשיו של שלוש פעמים, ופעמים של שתי פעמים.³³

But the return has in fact, not only not alleviated her condition, but has brought further hardship upon her: Her husband who is a tailor by trade, finds scant work in impoverished Shibush.

The narrator, in contrast to Mrs Schuster, gradually comes to accept the actualities of contemporary Shibush. He learns to discriminate between an imagined fancy, provoked by the nurturing of a favorite if somewhat distorted memory, and the facts of the situation as they present themselves. He comes to comprehend that despite the constancy of the smell that pervades the air of the town, which is symbolic of its ambience:

אבל ריחה של שבוש עדיין לא נמר.³⁴

- its essential atmosphere has changed, irrevocably. The glory of yore, if it were ever that

³³ *ibid.* : p. 64.

³⁴ *ibid.* : p. 8.

glorious, has disappeared never to return. And during the course of the book the narrator remembers that Shibush was not, in the past, entirely glorious to him. Its glory was, even in the pre-war years of his youth, moribund: its spirit had, even then, begun to stagnate, to degenerate into an earth-bound secularity which was evident even in Beit haMidrash, where people came not to study, but to discuss such topics as the price of meat and the conflict between the slaughterers and the butchers while they held their books open before them.³⁵ The eating of meat epitomizes, in the narrator's view, the opposite of that which is spiritually desirable. All in all the narrator found the Shibush of his youth stagnant and static:

הקיצור, לכל פנה שאתה פונה או שעמום או יגיעת דברים.³⁶

This memory eluded him when the destruction of his home in Jerusalem caused him to find the present too pressing a circumstance with which to cope. Thus Schitzling's remark:

אמר שילצינג, כשאדם רואה שאין מקום בעולם שחביב עליו הוא מדמה את
עצמו ואומר שעירו חביבה עליו.³⁷

³⁵ *ibid.* : p. 102.

³⁶ *ibid.* : p. 102.

³⁷ *ibid.* : p. 293.

- is a perspicacious analysis not only of his own thoughts but of the narrator's as well.³⁸ It is a mark of the understanding and honesty the Guest attains by the end of his stay that, when leaving Shibush for the second time, he notes its smell, as he did in the beginning,³⁹ but he does so this time with a dispassion, reacting to it in a merely sensory manner and no longer imbuing it with an emotional value. Unlike Mrs Schuster, the narrator realizes that Shibush no longer holds the power to sustain him and that it has not been able to do so for a long time. Ironically it is by this realization that he, unlike Mrs Schuster, is sustained and healed by Shibush. His pilgrimage to Shibush has enabled him to finally leave it; and the benefit he reaps by his sojourn there is punctuated by the recurring mention of its smell - the one consistent element - at the beginning and at the end of the book. By the device of repetition a single entity, Shibush is suspended in a timeless limbo which serves as a backdrop against which the linear progression of the narrator may be measured.

Among the characters whose experience of journey and return corresponds in some way to the narrator's, are Yeruham Hofshi, Rabbi Hayim and Reb Shlomo Bach, all of whom reflect different aspects of the dilemmas and revelations he experiences.

Yeruham Hofshi's journey to Israel and his subsequent return to Shibush are both parallel to and distinct from the narrator's. Inasmuch as his departure from the town received its impetus from the example of the Guest's departure some years earlier - which infused the possibility of settling in Israel with a reality it had, up till then, lacked:

³⁸ Shaked, op cit., p. 50.

³⁹ Shaked, op cit., p. 245.

אמר ירוחם, עד שלא עלית לארץ ישראל לא היתה לה לארץ ישראל בעירנו
מציאות של כלום.⁴⁰

- and, in that it is inspired by the Guest's impulse in leaving, the trace of which lingered in a poem "אהבה נאמנה עד שאולה,"^{41 42} written by the narrator - it is one and the same journey. But, whereas the narrator's return to Shibush is voluntary, Yeruham's is not, and it is in the divergent causes which prompt their return that the essential difference in their attitudes is embodied. The narrator leaves Israel to return to Shibush because of a spiritual crisis which he hopes to resolve by communion with the past. Yeruham is banished from Israel because of political causes - illegal immigration and an adherence to a Communist ideology - and returns to Shibush, to the past, because he has no alternative. Yeruham's political ideology is forward-looking and utilitarian at its base; the narrator's ideology is rooted in the past and is spiritual in character. Ironically it is Yeruham who establishes his life in Shibush while the narrator realizes that Shibush no longer holds anything for him, and moves on to the future. But Yeruham's life in Shibush is not a perpetuation of the past. it is instead an assertion of the possibility of the unfolding of the future within the confines of the

⁴⁰ op cit., Agnon, p. 87.

⁴¹ Shaked, op cit., pp. 265-266, for the relationship of the poem to Agnon's biography, its significance in the book, and Yeruham Hofshi's reactions to it and complaints about it.

⁴² Kurzweil, op cit., p. 306. Kurzweil comments on the poem and its implications for an integrated conception of Jerusalem - composed of ideal and reality - within the narrator's consciousness.

past. This positive statement is brought to full explication in Yeruham and Rachel's gift to the town in providing it with its first birth since the onset of the War. Thus, by the end of the book, the journeys of Yeruham and the narrator are once more merged, for they reach the identical destination: the narrator learns to accept the new, while Yeruham manages to integrate the past. Both face forward toward the future.

Rabbi Hayim's journey from Shibush differs from both the narrator's and Yeruham's but, implicit in his behavior on his return, is the seed of the realization the narrator arrives at by the close of the book. Rabbi Hayim is forced into exile during the war years by the Russians who take him as their prisoner. After his release he wanders around Eastern Europe for many years, finally returning to Shibush during the course of the narrator's stay there. Unlike the narrator he does not return in a bid to reclaim the past because he is not deluded into attributing it a glory it did not contain. In fact quite the opposite is true: Rabbi Hayim, who was one of the town's leading scholars, who so gloried in his knowledge as to seek recognition of it at the price of communal harmony refuses, on his return, to open a book claiming, falsely, that he has forgotten all he once knew. Rabbi Hayim renounces the past so entirely as to abnegate his rights as husband and father. Although the reason for his return is never stated, it is evident from the course of his action that his purpose is one of repentance - of true return. He comes to Shibush not in order to benefit or extract profit from it, but with the intention of giving, of compensating for his past misdoings. He has realized that the expression of worship is not confined to the scholarship obtained in the limits of Beit haMidrash, but that it entails a broader, more integrated approach which brings into closer

cohesion the word and the deed of which a true religious life is composed. But Rabbi Hayim never grasps the full meaning of his realization for, in his enthusiasm to correct the past he immerses himself in "the deed" to the detriment of "the word."

Albeit the zeal with which Rabbi Hayim applies himself to the task of repentance is somewhat excessive and at times rather blind - he gives the money he earns as caretaker to Beit haMidrash to Hanoch's family while his own daughter limps as the result of broken shoes -he does finally achieve a full return. He becomes truly righteous - is transformed into a true Zaddik - whose humility and faith do not fail him even at the final moments of his life. It is thus fitting that Rabbi Hayim's final request:

ז) אבל אני מבקש, שילמדו למנוחת נפשי פרק משניות. לשם זה אני מניח
 צרור כסף שהרווחתי בגופי. ואני מצפה לרחמי שמים ולרחמי הבריות
 שייטיבו עם נשמתי במיטב וילמדו משניות עם פירוש, וילמדו מלה במלה,
 ויאמרו קדיש דרבנן אחר הלימוד כנהוג וכמנהג. ואחר קדיש דרבנן יאמרו
 מזמור ק"ב תפילה לעני.⁴³

- is instrumental in awakening the narrator to a clear spiritual resolution which releases him from the bonds of the past. For it is while sitting in Beit haMidrash in compliance with Rabbi Hayim's wish, that the narrator comes to full realization of that which he has always

⁴³ Agnon, op cit., p. 406.

known but has never fully accepted: ⁴⁴

שאין תורה כתורת ארץ ישראל. ⁴⁵

- and becomes resigned to his impending and permanent (at least in terms of the pre-Messianic world) leave-taking of Shibush - of the past. His new-found understanding is portrayed in an imagined dialogue with the walls of Beit haMidrash:

מסתכל אני בכתלי בית המדרש הישן, ואומר להם, רואים אתם כבר הגיע
זמני שאעלה לארץ ישראל. מטים עצמם כתלי בית המדרש, כאילו מבקשים
לחבק אותי בזכות שאני עולה לארץ ישראל. אומר אני להם, רצונכם ואני
טוען אתכם על כתפי ומעלה אתכם עמי. אומרים כתלי בית המדרש, כבדים
אנו ואין כחו של אדם אחד לטעון אותנו על כתפיו. אלא טול את המפתח
ועלה, וכשתגיע השעה נבוא אחרוך. ⁴⁶

- where their response to his leaving is but a projection of his own stance. Thus, at first, Rabbi Hayim and the narrator stand in antithetical correspondence to each other, whereas at

⁴⁴ For the narrator's complex feelings and guilt about having left Israel, see Shaked, *op cit.*, p. 269, and Band, *op cit.*, p. 310.

⁴⁵ *ibid.* : p. 417.

⁴⁶ *loc cit.*

the close of the book their positions are synthesized: Like Rabbi Hayim the narrator no longer seeks the past - he knows it to be too heavy a burden for any one man to bear. The death of Rabbi Hayim is testimony to that.

Rob Shlomo Bach's successful journey represents the culmination of the position at which Rabbi Hayim arrives. Rabbi Hayim attains virtue, but a reconciliation with the past evades him because he is too fervent in his denial of it as his refusal to acknowledge both his scholarly ability and his role within his family portray. His past is too laden with guilt and the memory of it is too productive of pain to allow an admission of its reality. Yet it is incapable of dismissal; it cannot be demolished. The content of Rabbi Hayim's meditations at the edge of death testify to the insistence with which its sibilance has, through the years, resonated in him:

סבור הייתי שהוא ישן וראיתי שהוא מרחיש בשפתי. הטיתי אזני ושמעתי
 שהוא אומר ואלו כשרות בעוף, ניקבה הגרגרת או שנסדקה. כיון שהרגיש בי
 לחש לי, באותה הלכה התחילה המחלוקת.⁴⁷

Though he travels away from Shibush, Reb Shlomo, by contrast, does not attempt to deny the past. When he first arrives in Israel he continues, as before, in his study of the Mishnayot. But he is not so rooted in the past as to be shackled by it. The sanctity of the land soon prompts in him a new spirit. He finds a new form of worship which consists of the union of

⁴⁷ ibid. : p. 402.

spirit and matter. Reb Shlomo abandons the conventional study of the Mishna to work in the fields, for it is there that he finds that the essential content of the Mishnayot is revealed. He neither denies nor longs for the walls of Beit haMidrash. In Reb Shlomo the past and the present are fully integrated. In him the spiritual dilemma of the nation is resolved and he stands as an emblem of its hope, as the augurer of a free and glorious future.

It is small wonder that Reb Shlomo's peer-group on the Kibbutz look upon his activities with disdain for, despite their residence in Israel, they still inhabit the world of the past. Their approach to religion is fragmenting in its effects and consists of passionate arguments about the most petty and peripheral aspects of worship.⁴⁸ This attitude is but an echo of the religious atmosphere which prevailed over the Shibush of old, typified in the controversy started by Rabbi Hayim, the crux of which were the conditions pertaining to the Kashrut/non-Kashrut of birds, and the object of which was not spiritual refinement but personal vainglory;⁴⁹ in the division between the Hasidim and the Mitnagdim, and in the endless disputes, divisions and subdivisions between the numerous groups of Hasidim each declaring its ultimate and absolute claim to sanctity.⁵⁰ It is not surprising that adherents to such a posture are incapable of comprehending life as a unified whole: theirs is a fragmented intellect whose partite mode of functioning divides all that with which it is confronted. Their "spiritual" life consists of mere religiosity - not true religion.

⁴⁸ *ibid.* : p. 443.

⁴⁹ *ibid.* : pp. 148-149.

⁵⁰ *ibid.* : Chapter 43.

The religious position that Reb Shlomo achieves which recognizes the coherence of spirit and matter is portrayed in the book as the desirable one, in that the narrator has his most profoundly religious experiences in those moments in which nature, as exemplified in the mountain, and spirit, as exemplified in Beit haMidrash, are brought into alignment within his consciousness. An example of this may be found right at the start of the book, in Chapter 3, where the reciprocal relationship between these two elements is emphasized:

אור מופלא האיר מבית המדרש על ההר וכן מן ההר על בית המדרש. אור שכמותו לא ראיתם מימיכם. אור אחד היה ומאורות הרבה היו בו. מקום שכזה אי אתה מוצא בעולם. עמדתי לי והרהרתי בלבי, איני אז מכאן עד שיעלה רצונו לפניו ליטול את נשמתי ממני. ואף על פי שנזכרה לי מיתתי לא הייתי עצב. אפשר שפני לא היו שמחות, אבל לבי היה שמח. וקרוב בעיני לומר, שמעין זה לא הרגשתי זה שנים הרבה, שהלב שמח ואין הפנים משתפות עצמן בשמחתו.⁵¹

The narrator's attempt to revive the spirit of old Shibush is contrary to nature: it succeeds, or at least appears to, when nature is at her most hostile and dormant - in mid-winter - but spring - the time in which nature generates birth and all attains new being - heralds the failure and death of his endeavor. His unease at the first slight signs of warmer weather:

⁵¹ *ibid.* : pp. 16-17.

המולד נראה בעליל. האדמה הבהיקה מן השלג והצינה כאילו הפשירה קצת. דומה שהאוויר משתנה והולך. השם יודע אם לטוב ואם למוטב.⁵²

- proves to be valid: the arrival of the warm spring air renders visits to Beit haMidrash unnecessary to the citizens of Shibush who congregated there in colder days so as to enjoy the warmth of its fire.⁵³

Thus the nation's return, in the literal sense of the word - viz. to its former position, is not a desirable proposition, for its harmony and beauty have long since dissipated, - its strength exhausted. Just as Rabbi Hayim's death is rumored to have been directly caused by his attempt to rectify past mistakes:

אמרתי לה, ומה גרם לו שיחלה? אמרה צפורה, הדעות מחולקות. יש אומרים שהלך אצל הרב ליפטר ממנו והיתה שם גרגרת של עוף מוטלת לפני הפתח בחוץ והחליק ונפל. ויש אומרים אצל ביתנו עמד ונתקל שם בפריץ אחד שכור ונפל.⁵⁴

- so any attempt to correct the past while acting within its boundaries may be presumed to be destructive. It may be noted here that Rabbi Hayim's return is achieved, in part, by the

⁵² *ibid.* : p. 171.

⁵³ *Band, op cit.*, p. 317.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* : p. 393.

service he renders to Hanoch's family, and not to his own to whom his repentance is due.

This is paralleled by the narrator's 'making-right' his mistreatment of Hanoch by paying Rabbi Hayim a regular salary. Here the narrator's repentance reaches its true mark for Rabbi Hayim uses the money to support Hanoch's family.

But there is a return which is immensely desirable, for it comprises the ultimate union of the material and the spiritual, and that is the return undertaken by both Reb Shlomo and the narrator - the return to Israel, for - "אין תורה כתורת ארץ ישראל" ⁵⁵ This return is so desirable that even, nature expresses its striving to partake of it by leaning Eastward:

היום ירד וצללי אילנות ושיחים מתמתחים והולכים לצד מזרח.
 אין אני מן הרגשנים, אבל אותה שעה אמרתי, אילנות ושיחים שהם מן הדומם
 פונים כלפי מזרח ואני שהייתי במזרח פניתי לכאן. ⁵⁶

The return to Israel does not however of itself comprise a total return. It requires the emphasis of one of its supplementary aspects so as to bring the power of its positive agency to full fruition.

*We shall not cease from exploration
 And the end of all our exploring
 Will be to arrive where we started*

⁵⁵ *ibid.* : p. 417.

⁵⁶ *ibid.* : p. 268.

And to know it for the first time.

"Little Gidding" - section 4
T.S. Eliot

Bayit

The old way is played-out it no longer holds the potential for renascence. It has been impinged upon by too many confounding circumstances of which the war was but the final cataclysmic factor in contributing to its destruction. This situation and its logical corollary - the need to find a new way with which the old may be substituted - is reflected in the accounts described in the above section. Of these the two that stand out in the message of hope they provide and the viable alternatives they present are the stories of Reb Shlomo and Yeruham Hofshi. Reb Shlomo's transition from the old to the new is a smooth one though it is not entirely devoid of pain, for its antecedent conditions entail the death of one son - Yeruham - and the virtual loss of another - Daniel. His lack of sentimentality towards the past allows him to discover a new essence, a mode of redemption which is embodied in the land of Israel. Yeruham Hofshi, on the other hand, discovers a different means of salvation which is, in the final analysis, but the complementary correlate to Reb Shlomo's solution. While Israel lies at the core of Reb Shlomo's spiritual regeneration, the home and the family form the central focus of Yeruham's new-found resolution. However, as these two characters both represent the nation's successful passage into the future it is fitting that the life of each contain, as it does, not only the thrust of its own direction but traces of its complementary

correlate as well. Yeruham Hofshi has lived in Israel and silently longs to return there, while Reb Shlomo's Journey to Israel is prompted by family concerns.

The ironic correspondences between the lives of Reb Shlomo and Yeruham reveal the level of sophistication to which Agnon extends his technique of multi-layered analogy. Yeruham, who is orphaned in infancy, becomes the proponent of family life, while Reb Shlomo whose son loses his life in Israel, develops into an advocate of life there. Furthermore, the complementary nature of their respective earlier losses combines with the correlation and identity between their spiritual attainments to render Reb Shlomo and Yeruham in the symbolic relationship of father and son. This symbolic relationship is lent concrete credibility and emphasis by the following historical circumstances. When Yeruham is orphaned at birth it is Reb Shlomo's family who adopts him; Reb Shlomo's dead son was also named Yeruham and he and Yeruham Hofshi are close friends; Yeruham Bach dies at Ramat Rachel and, by his burial there, is united with it, his body contributing to the land's creative process of providing nourishment to Israel; Yeruham Hofshi marries Rachel Zummer and the result of their union is the creation of a new life which provides spiritual nourishment to Shibush and heralds the rebirth of the nation. The symbolic filial relationship in which Yeruham stands to Reb Shlomo, and the interdependence indicated thereby, corresponds to the supplementary position in which the ideal of "home" stands to the ideal of "Israel" and to the inextricability of these two concepts within the rising national *zeitgeist*.

The narrator's pilgrimage likewise portrays the valency of these two ideals, and the vicissitudes in which they are explicated therein serve to bring into cohesion the concomitant

issues of nativity, family and religious worship with which both the narrator and the nation grapple. The Guest's return to Shibush indicates that Israel is in itself, not sufficient to the task of abolishing spiritual stagnation but is in need of the accompanying ideal of "home" while Shibush's failure to fulfil that function asserts the impotence of mere nativity in this role. The narrator's recognition of Shibush's deficiency in this regard is suggested in his acceptance of the applicability of the epithet "Guest" as apposite description of his position in the town, e.g.:

לאחר התפילה בירכו המתפללים זה את זה בשבת שלום ומבורך והלכו
לבתיהם בנחת. אף אני הלכתי לביתי זה מלוני, שהרי גר אנכי בארץ וביתי
רחוק מכאן מהלך כמה מאות פרסאות ואיני אלא כאורח נטה ללון.⁵⁷

- and his awareness of the link between "Home" and "Israel" is expressed in Chapter 24 in his exposition of:

פתחתי חומש ודרשתי בפרשת השבוע בפסוק וייקץ יעקב משנתו וגו' ויירא
ויאמר מה נורא המקום הזה, אין זה כי אם בית אלקים. לא כאברהם
שאמר, בהר ה' יראה, ולא כיצחק, שנאמר בו, ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה, אלא
כיעקב, שקרא בית. ודרשתי בשלש בחינות של עבודת השם. בחינה אחת
שאדם מבקש לו דברים גבוהים בחינת הר, ומהלך כל ימיו במחשבות

⁵⁷ *ibid.* : p. 122.

גבוהות. בחינה שנייה בחינת חשדה, שדרכה של שדה שאורעים בה וקוצרים בה ויש לה ריח טוב, כמו שנאמר ראה ריח בני כריח השדה. בחינה שלישית, שהיא אהובה על הקדוש ברוך הוא ביותר, זו בחינת בית, שכתוב ביעקב אבינו המובחר שבאבות. ואף הוא יתברך משתבח ואומר, כי ביתי בית תפילה. מובא בזהר, בית לישראל למהוי עמהון כאתתא בבעלה בדיורא חד בחדוא. שהר ושדה הם מקומות דרור, אבל בית הוא מקום משומר ומכובד. מובא בספרים, שזכות שלושה אבות עומדת להם לישראל בשלוש הגלויות. זכותו של אברהם עמדה לנו בגלות מצרים, כמו שנאמר, כי זכר וגו' את אברהם עבדו ויוצא עמו בששון וגו'. זכותו של יצחק בגלות בבל. וזכותו של יעקב בגלותנו זאת האחרונה. לפיכך צריכין אנו לתפוס ביותר בחינת יעקב, בחינת בית יעקב לכו ונלכה באור ה'. ועליהם אמר יעקב, ושבתי בשלום אל בית אבי, ועליהם נאמר כל הפסוק כולו, והיה ה' לי לאלקים.⁵⁸

Thus his journey to Shibush may be seen to be at odds with the knowledge he already possesses. He leaves Israel - the true national home - and travels to Shibush an arbitrary geographical location which happens to be his birth place - abandoning his family - the human component and primary aspect of his individual home - in the process. But his voyage is, in fact, a voyage of confirmation for, in moving in a direction so contrary to his intellectual awareness, he arrives at a spiritual affirmation of its precepts, thereby attaining an integrated understanding which may be called revelation. His return to Israel at the close of

⁵⁸ ibid. : pp. 128-129.

the book is a threefold return entailing a return to his family - his personal home - a return to, Israel - the national home - and an inner return - to his essential home - arriving at his beginning and knowing it for the first time in its fullness. The narrator is able to finally leave Beit haMidrash the old house of worship - "ביתי בית תפילתי"⁵⁹ - for he has found his new center of worship in the synthesis of Israel and home. It is therefore apposite that it is his wife - the center of his familial home - who initiates and enables his return from the shapeless mazes of the past.^{60 61}

מציאות היא טרחה בלא חתונה ודמיון הוא חתונה בלא טרחה

Imagination and Logic

The Guest is in many ways neither of nor in his time - he is of all times and in none of them. He straddles the worlds of waking and dream, present and past, logic and intuition strandentwining them so that a conventional notion of reality ceases to hold any credence. His search for the spirit of his youth is based on an adherence to time as the all-containing

⁵⁹ p. 369.

⁶⁰ op cit., Band, p. 312. Band points out that it is the narrator's wife who urges him to leave the key in Shibush, and later to send it back to Shibush; that she also prompts him to return to Israel and sends him a return ticket. Furthermore, he observes that it is she who finds the lost key in his baggage while setting in order their home in Israel. These observations support the thesis forwarded in this chapter about the symbiotic function of Home and Israel in the redemptive process.

⁶¹ Kurzweil, op cit., p. 304, on the blurring of the boundaries between Shibush and Jerusalem, the home and the wife.

moment wherein all worlds and all perceptions of reality merge, though this stance is somewhat tempered by a concession to the concomitant inescapable linearity of life. This double-edged attitude is expressed in the following declaration:

הזמן מתחלק לכמה זמנים, לעבר ולעתיד ולהווה. כשאני לעצמי כל הזמנים
שוים בעיני. מה שהיה נאה בעבר נאה בהווה ונאה לעתיד, ובדבר זה
חולקים עלי חברי שאומרים, מה שהיה נאה בעבר טורח הוא בהווה כל שכן
לעתיד.⁶²

- where divided and concrescent time are considered side by side, and where ironically he exploits the notion of the all-containing moment to reinforce his approval of the past - "What was good in the past is good in the present and good for the future."

The tension between linear time and the eternal-now is most efficaciously exemplified by the river, which is both always and never the same: it is in a constant state of movement and change and yet it is always a river whose essential form is unchanging:

הלכתי לי אצל הנהר ועמדתי לי שם על הגשר, כשם שהיה אבא זכרונו
לברכה עושה בלילי יום הכיפורים, שהיה עומד על הגשר שעל הנהר, שריח
המים מפשרים את הצמאון ומביאים את האדם לידי תשובה, שהרי המים
הללו שנראים לך עכשיו עדיין לא היו כאן קודם לכן ולא יהיו אחר כן, כך

⁶² *ibid.* : p. 373.

יום זה שניתן לנו לשוב בו מעוונותינו עדיין לא היה בעולם ולא יהא עוד
 בעולם, ואם אין אתה שב בו נמצאת מאבדו בלא כלום.
 מים הולכים ומים באים, וכשם שבאים כך הולכים וריח טהרה עולה מהם.
 דומה שמיום שעמדתי כאן עם אבא זכרונו לברכה לא נשתנה כאן כלום ולא
 ישתנה כאן כלום עד סוף כל הדורות.⁶³

It is ironical that the most stable, tangible feature which the narrator encounters in Shibush is the river which, viewed from one angle, is an ever-changing entity, whose content is water which has no shape of its own, but assumes the shape of the vessel in which it is contained.

The conscious faculty by which the boundaries of linear time are traversed is the imagination. It is a realm in which almost all is possible; the limits imposed by a solid material world are entirely transcended in its region. It is ruled by the power of thought which is well-nigh almighty in its capability and omniscient in its range. It can wander to the ends of the world and return again to create an infinite number of worlds - an ever-expanding universe over which to roam in endless exploration. It stands in contradistinction to the manifested world which appears to our limited powers of perception - imposed by the confines of our five senses and conscious intellect - as bound by the laws of time and space and causality. In the course of our lives we alternate between these two regions, which are in constant communication - with the one creating the other - between which exists a constant tension that motivates us to action. This relationship is adduced by the narrator in a

⁶³ *ibid.* : p. 11.

discussion with Hanoach:

אומר אני לחנוך, יודע אתה חנוך מה זה דמיון? אומר חנוך, איני יודע. אומר אני לחנוך, אם כן שב ואפרש לך. דמיון דבר הוא שכל באי עולם מתקיימים על ידו, אני ואתה וסוסך ועגלתך. כיצד, הרי שאתה יוצא לכפר לפי שאתה מדמה שפרנסתך מוכנת לך שם. כיוצא בכך סוסך, כיוצא בו עגלתך. שאלמלא כח המדמה לא הייתם יוצאים כלל. הוא שאמרתי, אלמלא כח הדמיון אין העולם מתקיים. אשרי מי שמשתמש בכח דמיונו כדי לפרנס את ביתו ואוי לו למי שמשתמש בכח דמיונו לדברי הבל.⁶⁴

But, despite their reciprocity, an absolute identity between the two spheres is not possible within the confines of waking-state verification. Though their divisibility is essentially illusory it is also, as indicated by the Guest's discovery on his arrival in Shibush, very real:

כל המקומות כולם נשתנו. ואפילו האוירים שבין בית לבית נשתנו. לא כמות שראיתי אותם בקטנותי ולא כמות שהראום לי בחלום סמוך לחזירתי.⁶⁵

Neither his memory nor his dream can bring to full manifestation that which has passed or

⁶⁴ *ibid.* : p. 109.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* : p. 8.

visualize the empirically verifiable present which mutates in accordance with its own laws. Thus the imagination is not omnipotent for it is, in its turn, limited by those very boundaries of the waking state it transcends. It cannot fully penetrate or absolutely impose its will upon them. Yet this limitation does not nullify the validity of the expanded vision which transcends the boundaries of logic. Mind encompasses both the realm of the linear-logical and the expanded-imaginativeness which are but complementary opposites that combine to create the total gestalt of being. However due to the apparently impenetrable solidity of the waking-state world it is this sphere to which the term "reality" is generally applied and whose causality is generally acceded to. But the chains of cause and effect that are extracted from its framework are not necessarily reflective of the actual state of things. These sequences are merely the impositions of a fragmented waking-state intellect which seeks to order chaotic reality into a recognizable linearity that concords with its own essentially linear mode of functioning. They constitute a splintered world-view.

One of the central statements of *A Guest for the Night* explicated in Agnon's technique, in the narrator's reflections and in the lives of the Shibush residents - is the refutation of a simplistic one to one cause/effect approach. The lack of coherence of plot, the anecdotes which by their myriad deviations detract from its primacy and render it unimportant testify to an admixture of existence incapable of being unravelled and accurately comprehended by an easy formula of direct cause and effect. The narrator's explanation of his presentation of double causality to each situation he encounters and describes:

מה טעם מחלק אני כל דיבור ודיבור לומר ראשית ושנית. וכי מפני שאנשי שבוש מחלקים את דבריהם לראשית ושנית, או מפני שאני נתון בשני מקומות, דר אני בחוצה לארץ ורואה חלומות בארץ ישראל.⁶⁶

- is in itself an acknowledgment and a portrayal of the uncertain and multi-faceted nature of causality. His stated reasons for suggesting double causation for every event are in themselves double, and the conditional "or" separating each clause indicates the potential validity of both suggestions and hints, by extension, at the existence of yet other equally valid possibilities. Both the form and the content of this confession attest to the inadequacy of our logic in the analysis of causality.

This stance is reiterated by the many instances where the apparently irrational mode of dream expounds upon waking reality. Later in the book, a rather cynical statement about humanity's disavowal of the limitations of its intellect denigrates this unfounded arrogance:

איני אומר שמקרה היה שנושעו הנשים על ידו, אלא ודאי סיבה אחרת היתה ואיני יודע מהי, שכבר למדתי מן הנסיון שאין מקרה בעולם. שכל המעשים מסיבתו יתברך, אלא שבני אדם בדו להם מלה זו, כדי שלא יצטרכו ליתן שבח והודיה למסבב הסיבות.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *ibid.* : p. 91.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* : p. 372.

Such ignorance glibly dismisses all that cannot be rationalized into a comprehensible logical sequence as the workings of irrational chance.

An adherence to the autonomy of a waking-state fragmented logic, gives rise to a simplistic religious stand which perceives a one to one relationship between cause and effect; between a deed and its consequence. In accordance with its tenets the righteous are rewarded while the wicked are punished. This attitude is expressed by various characters throughout the book of which Krolka's (the Zummer's maid-servant) explanation of Rachel Hofshi's difficult pregnancy is an extreme example:

עכשיו נשאל אנו לשלומה של רחל. אפשר שקרולקה יודעת יותר ממה שגילתה לו למר זומר. נתאנחה קרולקה ואמרה, מה אומר ומה אספר, קשה עליה על מרת רחל צער ההריון. ומאחר שקרולקה הספיקה לסיים כל מלאכתה בבית הבישול ואין לה מה תעשה עמדה וסיפרה לי דברים שידענו, כגון שכל העולם היה סבור שאדון ירוחם חפשי בעלה של מרת רחל ישא את מרת אראלה ב"ח, זו המורה המלומדת בתו של שכננו מר ב"ח, שהואיל האדון האלקים ליטול ממנו רגל לאחת, ומאחר שמרת רחל נתנה עיניה בבן זוגה של חברתה והוציאתו מידה, לפיכך האדון האלקים מעניש אותה ומקשה עליה את ההריון.⁶⁸

But, even in the absence of any overt statement to the contrary, this simplistic stance is

⁶⁸ *ibid.* : p. 343.

revoked with a Jobian intensity by the events described in the book. The havoc wrought by war upon the collective life of the community, which affects an array of characters both good and bad, is in itself adequate refutation of its bias. And Frieda's lonely death; the theft of the *Kvutza's* hard-earned festival meal; Hanoach's death; the tragic killings of Schutzling's daughters; the physical incapacity and suffering of Rafael Bach - an exemplar of innocence, are but some of the other instances which combine in a denial of this superficial approach.

A technical device suggested by Shaked,⁶⁹ which contributes to its refutation is the implication of a third element which intervenes and disrupts many of the actions enumerated in the book. And though its appearance is apparently purely random and phenomenologically based it is causal in its effects.⁷⁰ The chief characteristic of this third element is its impersonality. It is indiscriminating, striking where it chooses with effects that are, as may be observed above, at times good and at others tragic. While agreeing with Shaked in attributing it a chronological and character specificity - i.e. seeing it as a portrayal of the cruel and random fate that is a feature of this specific period in history - I feel that it also stands as a wider statement, pertinent to all times, and as an evocation of a causality beyond human comprehension. It stands as a reinforcement of the narrator's declaration quoted earlier:

⁶⁹ Shaked, *op cit.*, pp. 235-236.

⁷⁰ Some examples cited by Shaked (*loc cit.*) in this regard are the German Lieutenant who nullifies the army surgeon's Herculean efforts to save the maimed soldier; (Agnon, *op cit.*, p. 383) the old man in Vienna who cheats the Zummer family by selling Mrs Zummer a sack of stones in the guise of potatoes; (*ibid.* : pp. 124-126) the soldier who by tempting Frieda's hungry daughters with a bag of raisins is the direct cause of their rape (by his friends) and by extension of their subsequent death; (*ibid.* : p. 81) and Mr. Sholkind who provides for the Bach family while they are in exile. (*ibid.* : pp. 138-142)

שאינ מקרה בעולם, שכל המעשים מסיבתו יתברך.⁷¹

the extension of which is:

אם כן נמסור עצמנו בידיו של העושה ומעשה ולא נשאל בכל עת מה לעשות עוד. יעשה הוא בנו את שיעשה, שהוא היודע והוא העושה והוא המעשה.⁷²

The "third factor" - or as it may be retermed - "the unstipulated" is revealed not only through a retrospective analysis of the incidents narrated in the book, but is also more immediately represented by the action of the hypothetical present of the tale. The narrator's intention is often thwarted by chance meetings - the unstipulated - which impinge upon his daily life and result in the apparently structureless-structure of the book. The Guest's reaction to Schutzling's tireless badgering of him is not only a comment on the content of the narrative, but is also a description of the form of the book which is deflected from its apparently linear purpose:⁷³

אלף פעמים אמרנו נחזור לענייננו ולא חזרנו. בתוך כך הסחנו דעתנו

⁷¹ Agnon, op cit., p. 372.

⁷² ibid. : p. 271.

⁷³ Shaked, op cit., p. 50.

מעצמנו, ואין אנו יודעים מה ענייננו ומה לא ענייננו. פתחנו באורח ובמפתח
 בית המדרש והנחנו את האורח ואת בית מדרשו וטיפלנו באחרים. נצפה
 ליום מחר שילך שיצלינג לדרכו ואנו נכנס ונלמד דף גמרא, ואם יסייענו השם
 נלמד עם תוספות.⁷⁴

But just as the book is a statement about the extended multi-layered nature of being, it is also an expression of the inescapable linearity of life. Linearity is an essential condition of the waking-state world, to which the very sequence of life is testimony. Linearity is the order imposed upon chaos. It is the means whereby things are brought forth and given-form from the formless totality. Events must be unravelled in some sort of sequentiality so as to be given a recognized existence. In the absence of the limitations of ordered time and encapsulated space there is no separation but merely an indistinguishable whole total being which cannot be comprehended because it is not expressed. In the absence of divisions there is nothing to be expressed for there is no second element to comprehend any expression. In our condition - as divided waking-state beings - linear order is essential for our expression and for our mutual recognition. This necessity is indirectly adduced in the narrator's comment on the sighs of the community in Beit haMidrash on Yom Kippur:

אנחות שלא נצטרפו לשום דיבור ולשום לשון התחילו עולות. רק היודע

⁷⁴ *ibid.* : p. 308.

- the understanding of the ineffable existence is in the reach of the all-pervasive alone.

Agnon's use of the central figure of the narrator by whose linear progress the tale maintains a coherency is an admission to the primacy of sequence in the creation of meaning. The function of the narrator as the cohesive factor is given dramatic explication by the functions of the postman and the street which parallel it:

נושא המכתבים חזר מעבודתו ונרתיקו הריק מתנדנד אליך ואילך. הרחוב
הזה אפילו דברים שאין בהם שום קישור וחיבור מצד עצמם מתערבים זה
בזה ומפרסמים את מציאותם. מלבד דברים שהזכרתי כאן נראו דברים
הרבה שלא הזכרתי אותם, שהווייתם היתה ניכרת.⁷⁶

The linearity of the street, like the narrator's personality, acts as the central reference point which brings about the bonding of many disparate elements.⁷⁷ The postman's occupation of moving along it corresponds to the narrator's progressive movement during his stay in Shibush.

⁷⁵ *ibid.* : p. 21.

⁷⁶ *ibid.* : p. 376.

⁷⁷ Shaked, *op cit.*, p.232.

And, although the recurring double-edged explanation of each fact suggests an ever-widening level of causality, the employment of its logical, albeit arbitrary, mode of conception and the overtly sequential order in which it is presented - "ראשית...שנית..." - indicates the necessity of overlaying the world of infinite possibility with an ordered linearity so as to make sense of it, though it forms the concomitant admission that this process is never accurate in its assessment.

Just as Agnon invokes the use of a symbolic familial relationship to illustrate the relationship between "Israel" and "Bayit" so does he employ a real family relationship to explore the connection between linearity and all pervasiveness. Rafael Bach is most representative in the book of the world of the intuitive. He indiscriminately spans the worlds of waking, dream, imagination and hallucination. He cannot distinguish between the "real" and the "unreal". His sphere of being consists of a confluence between the two. No boundaries encase him - he flows freely between the living and the dead:

שאל התינוק את אמו, והיאך אנו יודעים מי חי ומי מת?⁷⁸

- over vast spatial and temporal distances:

אמר התינוק...כל המקומות באים אצלי.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Agnon, op cit., p. 146.

⁷⁹ ibid. : p. 147.

- and between his own consciousness and that of others. Rafael's movement is unlimited in the unlimited world of thought. But like that world whose representative he is, he cannot penetrate and act upon the solid world of manifested reality. He is limited by its limits - his appropriately unformed body is incapable of autonomous action:

והרי מיום שנולד לא זז ממטתו.⁸⁰

Arela Bach, Rafael's sister, is the proponent of the spirit of rationality in the tale:

הביט בה אביה בנחת ואמר, אראלה בתי הולכת לשיטתה, שכל דבר שהוא למעלה מן השכל אסור להשתמש בו, אף על פי שהיא יודעת שיש בו תועלת לרבים, כמו שראינו בסגולת הספר שכמה נשים נושעו בו. אמרה אראלה, מה תועלת יש כאן, שמולידים בנים שילכו אחר ההבל. החליק ב"ח את רגלו התותבת ואמר, אראלה בתי ראצונליסטית היא.⁸¹

She is entirely capable of action within linear time. Her occupation - she teaches children Hebrew - is a portrayal of her linear base. She is directly involved in the processes of development and growth.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* : p. 231.

⁸¹ *ibid.* : p. 234.

Thus it is fitting that Rafael and Araela's parents, Daniel and Mrs Bach, who are both agents of the creative process - he sells building materials and she is a midwife, a mediator between the states of pre and post-creation - bring logic and imagination into cohesion as concomitant aspects of existence.

With his usual touch of irony that serves to neutralize the polarity of opposites and to avoid the statement of any type of absoluteness by spinning a web of endlessly shifting possibility, Agnon shows Arela's cold rationalism to be imbued with emotion:

ואפילו אראלה אחותו שמשתבחת ואומרת, כל לדבר שאין לו להסבר על פי השכל אין לה עסק עמו, מראה את חיבתה לאחיה יותר משיכולה להסביר בשכלה.⁸²

- and Rafael's illogical-logic to be irrefutable:

שאל התינוק את אביו, והוא רואה את ירוחם דודי? אמר לו אביו, הרי הדוד כבר מת, והיאך אפשר לראותו? אמר התינוק, ואם מת כלום אין רואים אותו? אמרה אמו של התינוק, לא אפרוחי, אין רואים אותו. שתק התינוק שעה קלה וחזר ושאל, למה לא מת הערבי, הלוא הערבי אינו אדם טוב, הרי הוא הרג את הדוד. מה זה מת? אמרה לו אמו, יש מהם שמתו ויש מהם שחיים. שאל התינוק את אמו, והיאך אנו יודעים מי חי ומי

⁸² ibid. : p. 131.

נתאנחה אמו ואמרה, אל תזכיר אפרוחי את המתים. - למה? - שמא יראו את עצמם לפניך בחלום. - אם רואים אותם סימן שהם חיים? אמא, וכי אף ירוחם חפשי כבר מת? - למה? - מפני שאיני רואה אותו.⁸³

- portraying the relationship between logic and imagination is one of undeniable co-existence.

But action in the waking world is dependent upon linearity for at the core of action lies purpose, its initiator, whose basic tenet is one of sequentiality. Purpose is a causal element which assumes the unfolding of its effect across the unravelling blank tape of time. As mentioned above, by entering the world of the past, the narrator becomes devoid of purpose for in this action he revokes the structure of linear time. Thus his activities in Shibush are, for the most part, passive. He does not act, but is acted upon by chance events beyond his design (e.g. the acquisition of the key) and by people who initiate their will upon him. His lack of purpose troubles him intensely. His repeated awareness of it, expressed at various stages throughout the book, suggests that this is not a new source of concern, specific to his time in Shibush:

כל שאני גדל מלה זו גדלה עמי. כשהייתי תינוק והייתי משתעשע עם חברי,
שמעתי שואלים והתכלית מהי. התחלתי כותב שירים, שמעתי מליזין עלי
ושואלים סוף סוף תכלית דבר מהי? עליתי לארץ ישראל אמרו, כלום זה

⁸³ ibid. : p. 146.

תכליתו של אדם בחור? ואין צריך לומר שכל השנים שישבתי שם היו קובלים
 ואומרים, שאין רואים שום תכלית. מתוך כך עברו רוב שנותי ועדיין לא
 באתי לידי תכלית.⁸⁴

Imbedded in the notion of purpose is the question of utility which is a source of moral dilemma in the narrator for in it is implicated his anxiety about the morality of his profession. He is a writer whose life is therefore aesthetically based. He does not contribute to the immediate survival of humanity: He neither produces foodstuffs nor does he participate in the creation of living environments. This dilemma is elucidated by the apposition of allusions to "purpose/end" in the book, with the appearance of those characters whose occupation is most expressly utilitarian, accompanied by references to the narrator's occupation. This appositional device - some examples of which are cited below - serves to externalize the narrator's - and by extension Agnon's - confusion about the validity of his vocation. This last-named assumption is based on the biographical similarities between the two.

In a reaction to the Guest's fine clothes he is dismissed by a farmer as idle or, at best, of useless occupation:

הציגו אותי הבחורים לפני בעל הבית שלהם, אכר למעלה מחמשים, ששערו
 מיושר וקטוע כלפי מצחו ופניו כעין הטיט. נסתכל בי האכר בפנים זעומות
 ואמר להם לבחורים, זה אינו כמותכם. אמרתי לו, על סמך מה אתה אומר

⁸⁴ ibid. : p. 276.

כן? הראה בידו על בגדי ואמר, וכי אף בגדיהם נאים כשלך? מי שעובד אין לו בגדים כאלו. אמרתי לו, מנין לך שאיני עובד? התגרד בפדחתו ואמר, אפשר שאתה עובד ואפשר שאין אתה עובד. מכל מקום אין עבודתך עבודה. אמרתי לו, כל אחד עובד על פי דרכו, אתה על פי דרכך ואני על פי דרכי. הניח האכר שתי ידיו על ברכיו ונסתכל באדמה שלפניו ואמר, יהא כך. אבל אני אומר לא כל דרך מביאה לידי תכלית.⁸⁵

And the intensity with which this charge affects him is suggested by the resonance with which it resounds within him:

כיוצא בהם אותו אכר, שמדבר על התכלית ועל לחם ועל אדמה.⁸⁶

Yeruham Hofshi's passive hostility towards him during the initial stages of their acquaintance provokes the narrator's deprecating dismissal of Yeruham, whose occupation is not only utilitarian but is also expressedly linear - he mends roads, as a "common laborer" in contradistinction to himself:

ירוחם חפשי פועל פשוט ואני ברוך השם בעל בית בישראל ואיני נזקק לו. אפילו עכשיו שביתי חרב איני מחליף בירוחם. שולחני ערוך ומטתי מוצעת

⁸⁵ *ibid.* : p. 261.

⁸⁶ *ibid.* : p. 356.

ובגדי נקיים ואשתי וילדי שבעים, אף על פי שאיני מנקר באדמה ואיני מתקן
את הדרכים.⁸⁷

In Chapter 49 which, as its name "תכלית ומציאות" indicates, deals directly with the issues of Purpose and Reality, the aesthetic and utilitarian views are brought into juxtaposition by a series of associations in the narrator's thought. These culminate in a philosophic resolution of "purpose" which is punctuated both by an action whose sole intention is *joie de vivre* - a celebration of the narrator's intrinsic view of purpose - and by an accompanying obedience to the urgency of linear purpose. An analysis of the manner in which this process is achieved will serve to elucidate the manner in which Agnon spins networks of associated ideas that bounce off one another to reverberate in an ever-deepening resonance creating depths that extend beyond the linear structure of the lines, paragraphs and chapters of the book.

The narrator moves from the limitless world of (his own) thought:

בשעה אחת טסתי מסוף העולם ועד סופו⁸⁸

- to the specificity of a waking-state focus:

כדי למלט עצמי מן הערבוביא נתתי דעתי על חברי שבכפר שעשיתי עמהם

⁸⁷ *ibid.* : p. 85.

⁸⁸ *ibid.* : p. 275.

את חג השבועות.⁸⁹

- to the question of linear purpose suggested by the reference to Yeruham which is achieved by the repetition of a passage appearing earlier in the book:⁹⁰

ולענין תיקון עולם, אדם מתקן את עצמו מתקן עמו את העולם.⁹¹

- to the legitimacy of expanded cumulative purpose:

ואפילו אם לא יעמדו בהם ויעשו כמעשה ירוחם חפשי. מעשיהם שעשו
בינתיים מצטרפים למעשי אחרים. משל לחילותיו של מלך, זה משמש בצבא
שנה וזה שתי שנים וזה שלוש שנים, מתוך כך יש לו למלך צבא תמיד.⁹²

- all of which lead to a justification of the apparently amorphous purpose of his lifestyle by bringing into cohesion all those elements he considers as standing in condemnation of him:

כל זה לא אמרתי כדי ללמד זכות על עצמי לומר שיצאתי ידי חובתי בשנים

⁸⁹ *ibid.* : p. 275.

⁹⁰ *ibid.* : p. 84.

⁹¹ *ibid.* : p. 275.

⁹² *ibid.* : p. 275.

שעבדתי. יודע אני שעדיין לא עשיתי כלום, והרי אני מוסיף ועושה על פי דרכי.

כל אדם עושה לפי דרכו ואף אני עושה על פי דרכי. להוציא מלבו של אותו ערל שהטיח עלי ואמר לא כל הדרכים מביאים לידי תכלית.⁹³

A contemplation of the elements in the present that deny the validity of his mode of purposeless-purpose evokes in him the memory of past events that were similarly judgmental. This reverie culminates in the observation "ועדיין לא באתי לידי תכלית" whereupon he remembers and finds refuge in the Rambam's philosophy:

הרמב"ם ז"ל במורה נבוכים אומר, תכלית זו המציאות.⁹⁴

- but this comfort is short-lived for its base does not correspond to his immediate problem:

כוונתו שם לענין מציאות הבורא ולא למציאות הפשוטה. אם כן חוזרת הקושיא למקומה, מה תכלית מציאות זו שאנו מצויים בה.⁹⁵

At this stage the pressure of self-analysis bears upon him too heavily whereupon he leaves

⁹³ *ibid.* : p. 275.

⁹⁴ *ibid.* : p. 276.

⁹⁵ *loc cit.*

Beit haMidrash and goes for a walk so as to actively move away from the inner world of self. In the external world he finds the inhabitants of Shibush in a pleasurable purposeless inaction. No-one is attending to his livelihood, i.e. his purpose. Even Ignaz the Beggar - whose persistency in begging shows great purpose - lolls in the sun deflected from his usual activity:

איגנץ נסתמך על מקלו, וכמדומני שנתנמנם קצת, שבשעה שעברתי עליו לא
קרא לא פיינינדיזי ולא מעות.⁹⁶

He makes his way to the forest and thanks God for instilling in him the wisdom not to waste this beautiful day as he would do were he intent on purpose:

ומהולל שם ה' שנתן חכמה בלבי שלא נתעכבתי בעיר, אלא הלכתי ליערה של
עירי, מקום שהיום נאה ביותר והאוויר טוב ביותר. יודע אני שאין זה תכלית,
אבל מאחר שאיני בעל תכלית חזרתי ועשיתי מעשה שאינו מביא לידי
תכלית.⁹⁷

The last paragraph is a humorous and ironical reflection on his critics, the men of purpose, who in their purposefulness are unreceptive to and therefore waste the purpose for which the day was created. He, of undefined purpose, as opposed to them, is the one:

⁹⁶ loc cit.

⁹⁷ loc cit.

The passage also comprises an affirmation of the Rambam's aphorism for it concedes to the purposefulness of all things - of reality in its wider sense.

The river which runs through the forest confirms this approach. It was once of utilitarian value, exploited by men of purpose. Those men have died but the river perseveres. It still runs its course, despite its apparent uselessness in the absence of practical utility:

בשולי היער נמשך לו הנהר, נהר סטריפא, ואף הוא דומם. לשעבר בזמן שהעיר היתה מיושבת כולה ובני אדם בעלי תכלית יושבים בה העמידו בתי רחיים ומימי הסטריפא היו מגלגלים את הרחיים וטוחנים קמח. משחרבה העיר ונפטרו בעלי התכלית, מה תכלית יש לנהר ולמימיו? או אפשר אף על פי כן יש לנהר ולמימיו תכלית, כשם שיש לאילנות תכלית, אף על פי שאין קוצצים אותם ואין עושים בהם סחורה, כמו שאמר הרמב"ם ז"ל שם לענין המציאות, דע שאין דרך לבקש תכלית לכל המציאות, לא לפי דעתנו וכו' ולא לפי דעת אריסטו.⁹⁹

His enjoyment is total. His grateful reflection that this pleasure is provided by his senses which prove useful by serving a purely aesthetic end, reinforces the absurdity inherent in an

⁹⁸ loc cit.

⁹⁹ ibid. : p. 277.

exclusively utilitarian approach to purpose:

ואני שמח שכל החושים כולם תועלת לי מהם.¹⁰⁰

But his subsequent extended gratitude at the beauty of all creation whose purpose and utility is directed solely towards the provision of his pleasure, leads him to think of Beit haMidrash, bringing him back to his starting point:

ומאחר שחשבתי על כל מה שנברא להנאתי חשבתי אף על בית מדרשנו

הישן.¹⁰¹

Ironically, practical purpose deflects him from a more elevated purpose. For:

אלמלא בית המדרש הישן הייתי נשאר עומד ביער ומוסיף שבח והודיה למי

שככה לו בעולמו.¹⁰²

But the insistence of the thought forces him into the realms of linear-practical purpose - he is guardian of Beit haMidrash and is therefore responsible for it - and intervenes to demand its

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* : p. 278.

¹⁰¹ *loc cit.*

¹⁰² *loc cit.*

fulfillment. He heads back to the town:

עכשיו נחזור ונראה אם בית המדרש עדיין קיים. החמה שקעה ואני

חזרתי לעיר.¹⁰³

Thus by the end of the chapter he has come full circle and, despite earlier realizations to the contrary, he reverts to his earlier position of uncertainty as to the constituents of valid purpose. His uncertainty is expressed both by the conditional particle *אלמלא* preceding his adherence to the demands of practical purpose and by his submission to the pressure of these demands.

But the commitment of his linear purpose is dissipated by the appearance of Yeruham at the beginning of Chapter 50. On his way back to the town the narrator meets Yeruham and succumbs to his fervent insistence that he return home with him. Thus, in this section, Yeruham fulfills the functions of the third, unstipulated variable which intervenes to thwart the assertions of linearity.

In its reaching across the chapters this web of association serves to expound the fallibility of purpose in its narrow and simplistic guise. It does so by undermining the integrity of each of the chapters - a chapter is purportedly the expression of an idea whose conclusion is heralded by the start of a new chapter by commenting on and retrospectively solving the narrator's doubts regarding the validity of the Rambam's statement that - *מציאות* -

¹⁰³ loc cit.

are shown to be one and the same, for the intentions of the linear 'plain reality' - are disrupted by the motives of a more encompassing reality. Thus finally all that may be said is that "reality is purpose" and is comprised of the cumulative combination of the results of both linear and expanded intention.

The underlying logic of the section cited above may be condensed in the Hasidic aphorism - "As above so below." And it is by an extension of this view that the narrator finds indirect justification for his anxiety about his trade. Earlier in the book he comments on the virtues of human creativity given to humanity so as to enable it to reenact the Divine creation and employ it in the service of its comfort:

מילאתי את המנורות נפט והעמדתי שני נרות במנורה שעל גבי התיבה
 וחשבתי מחשבות הרבה, על החמה שברקיע ועל התנור שבבית מדרשנו הישן,
 על הנרות ועל הכוכבים, ואמרתי לו לחנוך, כל מה שעשה הקדוש ברוך הוא
 בעולמו יפה עשה, ואחר שכלה כל מלאכתו נתן דעת בבני אדם לעשות מעין
 דוגמא של מעלה. ברא חמה לחמם בימות החום, נתן דעת בבני אדם לעשות
 להם תנור שיתחממו בימות הקור. תלה לבנה וכוכבים להאיר בלילה, נתן
 דעת בבני אדם לעשות להם נרות ומנורות שיאירו להם בבית.¹⁰⁴

The writer who creates a fictional world in his world actively utilizes this divinely given faculty - thereby fulfilling its purpose. He participates in the action of the Creator whose

¹⁰⁴ ibid. : p. 114.

nature it is simply to create for his own pleasure and expression and to no other logically discernable end.

אם נסתכל בפנימיות הענין הרי כל אותן הבריות הם רעיון
ולא סתם בני אדם. אורח נטה ללון - ש"י עגנון

Weave, weaver of the wind.
Ulysses - James Joyce.¹⁰⁵

Unity and Separation

But the narrator's dilemma about the meaningfulness of his craft is not so easily solved. The various references in the work to literature and writers serve to develop this topic by exploring its different facets as they relate to aspects of the narrator's work. Lebtche Bodenhaus is presented as an example of the aesthetic in literature at its most absurd. We meet him while he is engaged in the erstwhile, not to mention laborious, task of translating the Bible into rhyming German verse - after the manner of Schiller's style - so that it, like Schiller's work, may become easy to remember. The extent of the narrator's subliminal waking identification with him is explicated in his dream imagery. He dreams that Gundel, Schitzling's sister, mistakes him for Lebtche and that Lebtche builds a Sukka - representative of house which is symbolic of soul - next to his own, and that the two structures are

¹⁰⁵ Joyce, op cit., p. 31.

indistinguishable.¹⁰⁶

The book "Yadav Shel Moshe" is representative of a different type of literature: It is of immediate practical usefulness. It is an ethical book written by Rabbi Moshe whose holiness was such that it became infused with supernatural powers that it still aids mothers and infants during difficult birth. Its power does not therefore appear to be contained in its literary merit so much as in its atmosphere. But, ironically, the manuscript purchased by the narrator is not the autograph it purports to be but a transcript written by a scribe. Yet despite this deceit the manuscript still retains its miraculous properties and, furthermore, proves to be of very direct utilitarian service: It saves Sara and her sisters-in-law from virtual starvation.

The narrator's writing also has effects discernable in the external world: His poetry is active in inspiring Yeruham Hofshi's journey to Israel. His books are the means whereby he supports his family, though during his stay in Shibush they fail to provide him with a livelihood. When he runs short of the money he arrived with - obtained in compensation for the destruction of his home - he approaches two of his publishers for the payment due him. The one does not reply at all while the other retorts that the narrator actually owes him money. This last-named circumstance has arisen because, as the narrator reflects:

מנהג הוא אצלנו שרוב הקוראים תובעים מן הסופר את ספריו בחנם, ופעמים

שיוצא שכרו בספרים שנותן.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Agnon, op cit., Chapter 62.

¹⁰⁷ ibid. : p. 419.

- the nation obviously does not consider writing a serious occupation.

Each of these references to literature reflects a different approach to the topic.

Lebtche's literary work involves stylization alone; Rabbi Abraham's book is essentially ethical, directed towards religious problems; the narrator's work is emotional and imaginative.

Lebtche's book is neither creative nor original, thus though it is based on the Book of books, it is as meaningless as its opposite, the theater, which errs by an excess of inventiveness.¹⁰⁸

The ethical content of Rabbi Abraham's book is valuable and its value is expressed in its effects on the world. The validity of the narrator's writing remains an open-ended question - it is both effective - like Rabbi Abraham's work, and useless - like Lebtche's.

The narrator's reluctant and apologetic admission of the nature of his employment occurs for the first time near the close of the book. It is accompanied by an exposition of his views as to what constitutes worthy literature and, by extension, a valuable writer. This unfolded in a synopsis of trends in Jewish literature, beginning with the Bible - the word "*sofer*" originally denoted biblical Scribes alone - to the various poets who followed them since that time. The writers who receive his approbation are those whose attention is directed towards the concerns of the nation - who either identify the sufferings of the nation with their own, or who include their own sufferings in the sufferings of the nation, or who through their faith sing of redemption - individual and national. Thus, although he says of his work:

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.* : p. 109.

אין בידינו לא מכח מעשיהם של אלו ולא מכח מעשיהם של אלו¹⁰⁹

- this analysis indirectly expresses an implicit approval of this book in which the individual and the nation are one - with each containing the other.

But as the statement of this book is not didactic but descriptive, the narrator's final justification of his craft is not a moralistic and causal one but is simply stative:

אלא כתינוק שטובל קולמוסו בדיו וכותב מה שרבו מכתוב לו. כל זמן
שכתב רבו מונח לפניו כתבו נאה, ניטל כתב רבו או שמשנה אין כתבו נאה.
תנאי התנה הקדוש ברוך הוא עם כל מה שנברא מששת ימי בראשית שלא
ישנה תפקידו, (חוץ מן הים שיהא נקרע לפני ישראל וכו') והכתב והמכתב
בכלל מעשה בראשית היו.¹¹⁰

It is significant that he does not write during his stay in Shibush. The stated reason for this phenomenon is:

שאני שונא ריח הדיו.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.* : pp. 419-420.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.* : p. 420.

¹¹¹ *loc cit.*

He writes only under compulsion when thoughts and emotions evoked in him are insistent in their demand for expression. Yet he later admits that:

אותם הימים שעשיתי בעירי באו דברים הרבה והקישו על לבי. כיון ששלחתי
אותם הלכו להם ולא חזרו אצלי.¹¹²

- so it may be posited that the force of the pressures of linear purpose underlying writing, and the intrinsic linearity of the task - even words themselves are linear - are capable of evasion in the expanded atmosphere of Shibush.

Books are essentially linear in nature. On their most microscopic level they are comprised of language which is indisputably both linear and logical, and their infrastructure is likewise linear. They are composed of pages which run in a sequential order; they have beginnings and they have ends. Yet, in substantiation of his underlying thematic statement in this book, Agnon transcends the demands of the linearity while at the same time acceding to their inevitability. Much of the manner in which this is achieved has been discussed earlier in the chapter, but the subject is in need of further development here.

Rafael Bach's confusion as to the difference between fictional tales and accounts of reality - which is a function of his conception of all-embracing reality - is reflective of the technical and textual components of the book, and is comment on the narrator's attitude to literature:

¹¹² loc cit.

אמר אביו לתינוק, בקש מן האדון שיספר לך סיפור נאה. אמר לי התינוק, אתה יודע לספר סיפורים. אם כן ספר לי מה עושה סבא בשעה זו. אמרה אראלה, דבר זה אינו בגדר סיפור. אמר התינוק, אלא מהו? אמרה אראלה, לכשתלמד תורת הספרות תדע איזה סיפור ואיזה אינו סיפור. אמר התינוק, ומי שאינו לומד תורת הספרות אינו יודע סיפור מהו? אמרה אראלה, ודאי שאינו יודע. אמר התינוק, ולמה אין את יודעת לספר סיפורים, והלוא למדת תורת הספרות. אמרה אראלה, אבל אני יודעת מה סיפור ומה אינו סיפור. אמר התינוק, ומה שסבא עושה אינו סיפור? אמרה אראלה, דבר זה אינו סיפור. - ומהו? אמרה אראלה, זה נכלל בכלל הידיעות. במה דברים אמורים, אם הן חשובות, אבל אם אין חשובות אין ולא כלום. אמר התינוק, אם כן יספר לי אדון לא כלום. תלתה אראלה משקפיה בתינוק ואמרה בתמיהה, מה פירוש לא כלום, אם אין כלום אין מה לספר. אמר התינוק, הסבא עושה דבר, אם כן יש בזה כלום. ספר אדוני מה עושה זקני בשעה זו.¹¹³

Not only does the narrator include waking, dream and hallucination in his narrative, but he also alludes to fictional characters, created by Agnon in other stories, as real. He tells Rachel the tales of Yael Hayot and Ruhma haKetana¹¹⁴ as though they were - in contradistinction to the legends mentioned in the same section - real, factual happenings. He refers to Bluma

¹¹³ *ibid.* : p. 230.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.* : p. 75.

Nacht¹¹⁵ as an important and real character whose lengthy story is in need of telling. All of these figures are not people in the hypothesized real world of Shibush but are of fictional substance alone. By imbuing them with a "reality" - which is achieved by the narrator's guileless mention of them - Agnon intrudes upon the narrative and, on the one hand, disputes its reality, while at the same time he infuses it with a greater reality. The story cannot be real if it acknowledges the absolute reality of fictional characters as equal to its own yet, in a sense, its events achieve a more concentrated reality by the reader's attributing a fictional essence to the events beyond its circumference. For the reader's dismissal of these fictional characters as unreal coerces him into the implicit recognition of the authenticity of the fictional happenings of Shibush. This device combined with references to real events - the war; the similarities between the narrator's and Agnon's biographical details; traditional folklore; creates a multi-layered hierarchical reality in which the only certain realities that remain are the author and the reader.

The narrative mode itself also contributes to the creation of this effect. The story is presented as a first person narrative with the narrator as its most important reference point. Its style is extremely self-conscious:

במה נהרהר עכשיו, שמא על רחל וירוחם. ירוחם ורחל שכבו לישון. אל
 נבלבל אותם במחשבות שלנו. אם כן נהרהר ברבי חיים...או אפשר נהרהר
 בשבוש עצמה...או אפשר לא נהרהר כלום, אלא נלך ונחזור למלון ונשכב

¹¹⁵ *ibid.* : p. 308.

It is confessional in tone, loaded with self criticism, apology and self-reflective humor:

אותה שעה נכנסה בי עצבות גדולה. התחלתי מצטער שאני עצוב. ובשביל
שנצטערתי שאני עצוב הוכפלה עצבותי.¹¹⁷

Yet though it is essentially a first person narrative, the narrator often refers to himself in the third person - "אותו אדם"¹¹⁸; "אותו אורח אני הוא"¹¹⁹ which serves to imply a shift in the locus of narrative distancing it to an agent beyond the narrator and suggesting the author as its center.

At other times the use of first person plural inflections:

עכשיו נסתכל במעשיו של דן.¹²⁰
למעלה אמרנו.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ *ibid.* : p. 211.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.* : p. 21.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* : p. 121.

¹¹⁹ *loc cit.*

¹²⁰ *ibid.* : p. 115.

¹²¹ *ibid.* : p. 126.

- brings the reader into an active participation in the narrative and by admitting her into the world of Shibush infuses her with a fictional reality. This is reinforced by explicit suggestions like the one below:

נכנסתי לחדר והדלקתי נר. הבטתי במראה לראות אם אני עצב, אבל אני
לא הייתי עצב, אדרבא הייתי שמח. ואם אין אתם
מאמינים לי שאלו את המראה אם לא ראתה אותי צוחק.¹²³

The hypothesized identity between narrative and narrative time suggests that the narrator, and not the author, is the true storyteller, or that they are, in effect, one and the same presence. Yet the authenticity of this suggestion is subverted by the very device which suggests it. The narrator confesses in Chapter 33 that:

כאן המקום לספר קצת על בנותיו של רבי חיים. באמת צריך הייתי לעשות
כן בתחילת פרשת רבי חיים, אלא שלא היו הדברים ידועים לי כל צרכם.
עכשיו שהובררו לי אנסה להעלות אותם על הכתב.¹²⁴

¹²² *ibid* : p. 173.

¹²³ *ibid.* ; p. 75.

¹²⁴ *ibid.* : p. 175.

Yet later, in Chapter 73, he confesses that he has not written a word during his stay in Shibush.¹²⁵ By this glaring contradiction the audience is forced to enter into the narrative so as to unravel its insinuations, and the hypothesized narrator is removed from his purported realm to admit the presence of the true narrator who is the author.

Thus the realities of the narrative are stretched in many directions which extend it beyond its purportedly linear proposition. The longitudinal style of the tale is subverted by the confluence of dream and reality; memory and action; past and present. It is also undermined by the networks of association which, as mentioned in an earlier analysis, expand across the pages of the book, bounding forward and rebounding again to create a resonance of depth, expansiveness, and an inter-connectedness and integrity which defies the necessity for linearity. And the style of the writing as well as the microcosmic technical devices employed join with these methods in their formulation of the book's endlessly reverberating echoes.

Agnon's language is almost as concentrated and loaded as the language of poetry and does, in fact, use many of its technical devices. His play on words that are similar in sound - e.g. "...רגיל שהיה רגיל" ¹²⁶ - creates a tonal sibilance by the tenor of the sounds bouncing off one another.

Examples extracted from the following passage will reveal some of the mechanisms by which the most microscopic elements of the book are manipulated to serve the expression of a never-ending multi-dimensionality:

¹²⁵ *ibid.* : p. 420.

¹²⁶ *ibid.* : p. 298.

לאחר שנפטרה ממני והלכה לה עלה על דעתי ללכת לבית הקברות. לא צפיתי שאמצא שם את הספרים שנעלמו מבית המדרש, אלא הלכתי כאדם שנזדמן לעיר בית קברות אבותיו והולך להשתטח עליהם. בית הקברות שלנו שופע ועולה, שופע ויורד, וכל שיפועיו מלאים קברים שנושכים זה בזה. שלושה נוטלים בשופע ונותנים בשופע, הארץ והמלכות וכו'. את שנוטלים רואין בחוץ ואת שנותנים רואים בבית הקברות. נוטלים חיים ונותנים מתים. ממש קבר בקבר מגיע. לא כהעיר שמקומות הרבה פנויים שם בין בית לבית. אוי לי אם אומר, יפה עשו אנשי בית המדרש הישן שיצאו את העיר, שכבר נתמלא בית הקברות ולא נשתייר בו מקום לקבר חדש.

מהלך אני בין הקברים ואיני חושב מאומה. אבל שני שלוחי הלב, אלו שתי עיני, צופות ורואות. העינים הללו ברשותו של לב הן, והלב ברשותו של ממיית ומחיה. פעמים הוא נותן רשות להסתכל באלו שחיים ופעמים באלו שמתו.

אלו שמתו קידם למלחמה ואלו שמתו במלחמה ואלו שמתו אחר המלחמה מונחים להם כאחד, כאילו אין חילוק ביניהם. כל זמן שהיו קיימים אלו היו מצטערים של ימים שעברו ולא יחזרו ואלו היו מצפים לימים שיבואו. כיון שנעשו מתים אבד סברם של אלו ובטל צערם של אלו. כל מדותיה של עין יש להן קצבה, ואין אדם רואה אלא כשיעור עיניו. ואילו המתים אפילו אתה משכיב עיניך זו של גב זו הם באים ועומדים לפניך

The passage deals with the concepts of life and death. It contemplates separateness as the condition of life, and merging as the condition of death. Yet at the same time it attributes life with the characteristics of death and infuses death with the features of life. The notion of a cemetery is in itself somewhat anomalous, especially if the Hebrew term *Beit haKevarot* is applied. The dead do not exist in the corporeal world that the living inhabit and are therefore not in need of a material home as the living are. The body is merely the casement in which the soul or spirit lives. It is discarded at the time of death. It has no value of its own, for in the absence of the binding life-force it disintegrates. The soul does not live in a particular location, in a confined corporeality, but exists in an unlimited infinite realm. Its ultimate residence is not in any particular place, but is in the all-pervasive place. Thus the narrator's appreciation of the sense of economy of those living who left Shibush as having done so "because the cemetery is quite full" - expands upon and exploits the absurdity inherent in the concept "cemetery". Death does not require a living space. A further irony derives from the narrator's superimposition of the concept of *dedensraum* over the idea of *lebensraum*. The emigrants leave Shibush in search of *lebensraum* despite the abundance of actual free space in the town. Thus the living are in search of a metaphorical living space, not a material one. Unlike the cemetery, Shibush has many spatial- expanses, yet these are not sufficient to contain her living sons who, because of their defined corporeality, need wider ephemeral

¹²⁷ *ibid.* : p. 82.

areas in which to survive. By contrast the dead are apparently enclosed in a very tight living-space, though in reality they are totally free and do not need actual space.

The passage is built upon the presentation of antitheses which so correspond to one another by the dilations of their mutually anomalous connotations, that they are conceptually brought into a synthesis. The synthesis is not however achieved only through their conceptual associations. It is also implied stylistically by the manner in which these opposites are adduced. The most outstanding feature in this section, as in the rest of the book, is one of balance. Opposites are presented in an absolutely balanced manner which affords them an equivalence of weight which suggests an ontological equivalence. They are furthermore supplemented by precisely the same words, a device which serves to bring them into cohesion and to suggest a total identity.

Some examples of this mechanism will be cited in the following: The cemetery is described as - "שופע ועולה שופע ויורד"; the graves are laid out as follows - שלושה נוטלים - and: ונותנים בשופע" "בשופע

את שנוטלים רואים בחוץ ואת שנותנים רואים בבית הקברות.

The word "שופע" - serves by its punning to further bring into synthesis the diverse elements of this passage. It denotes a delineation in actual space, as well as a swelled up state of expansiveness. It provides a double-edged description of the cemetery which both slopes in space and is overflowing with the dead. And it also brings the aspects of linearity and

expansiveness into alignment. Word repetition - "שופע; נוטלים; נותנים" - combines with the word play and with the conceptual acrobatics to create numerous everfluxing mutations of tone.

A further aspect of style in need of elucidation is the deployment of a type of stream of consciousness network throughout the book. This device spreads across the pages, creating a sense of immediacy by its authentication of the 'narrator as narrator' thesis. An example of its operation may be derived from an analysis of the following paragraph:

דניאל ב"ח מפסע במקלו ומתלה ברגלו התותבת. זה כמה חדשים אין אדם נכנס ליקח עצים ואין אשתו נקראת אצל יולדת. עוד צרה אחת יש בתוך ביתו של זה, זו צרת הבת. אמת אראלה מרוויחה כדי פרנסתה ומסייעת להוריה, אבל היא בגרה וחתנים אינם נראים. סבורים היינו תחילה שירוחם חפשי ישא את אראלה, והלך ונשא את רחל. אף אותו חנווני שפשט את הרגל והיינו סבורים שעשיר חדש צומח בשבוש העלה חרס בידו. פרקליטו של הסוכן שעמד לו לריגל לפטרו מאשתט פשט בו ידו והוציא את הסחורה מידי מחנונית וחוששני לה מבית האסורים.¹²⁸

Daniel Bach enters the narrator's consciousness and the thought of his wooden leg prompts the narrator to contemplate his lack of employment - no one is buying wood. The thought of Mr Bach's lack of employment leads to the memory of Arela Bach's problems. She should

¹²⁸ *ibid.* : p. 341.

have married Yeruham, a circumstance which might have allowed her mother to practice her profession. His thought moves on to Yeruham and Rachel who are in the process of providing Mrs Bach with employment. The thought of these two leads him to think about the bankrupt shopkeeper. This occurs via an indirect association, the chain of which runs as follows: Rachel - Babtchi, Rachel's sister - Rigel, Babtchi's suitor - Rigel's employer, who is the shopkeeper's creditor - the shopkeeper. The thought of the shopkeeper and his problems leads onto the thought of the attorney - Zweirin - employed by Rigel so as to obtain a divorce, who also subverts Rigel's efforts to claim the debt owed to his employer, and is also Babtchi's suitor. Two lines of thought run alongside one another in this passage and both are united in the person of Rigel. The one is the question of livelihood and the other comprises the issues of romance and marriage. Rigel's connection to livelihood is quite apparent, but his association with the question of romance is more subtle than is immediately apparent. Rigel's unrealized designs on Babtchi act as foil to the narrator's unfulfilled desire for Rachel, Babtchi's sister. Thus the narrator's disappointment may be seen as the unconscious agent from which this entire thought sequence derives.

The relationship between name and form, discussed earlier in this chapter, is in need of reemphasis here for it serves to highlight the undeniably tragic elements of the book. Shibush is, as its name implies, misconstrued. And, as Shibush is emblematic for the nation, the nation is likewise in a state of misconstruction. Thus, by extension, the disrupted linear mode of the work may be seen, not only as an exposition of a philosophic proposition, but as the portrayal of a ruined society as well. The book is therefore also an historical statement

which, by breaking the code of linearity, faithfully serves the essentially linear demands of history, in that it accurately describes a disintegrated civilization.

The final resolution of the tale is punctuated by an admission to, and a dramatization of the dictates of linearity. The narrator is finally able to act upon the world because he concedes to the inevitability of linearity: He accepts the irretrievability of the past, moves into the present and thereby advances to the future. The culmination of this process is reached in his journey away from Shibush on a train, whose progress is nothing if not linear. This climax is echoed in Shibush's release from its static condition. Shibush's saviours are Yeruham and Rachel Hofshi who both represent the potential of the future. Yeruham's idealism is forward-looking though it is not devoid of spirituality as his abstinence from the eating of meat indicates. Shibush's freedom is heralded by the linear passage of a child into life - a passage which is not only linear in itself, but which also delivers its passenger to the dictates of linearity.

These two journeys - the child's and the narrator's - are brought into explicit cohesion by a number of circumstances: the narrator performs the role of Sandak at the child's Brit-Milah; the child is named after the narrator; the narrator gives the child the new key to Beit haMidrash which he no longer needs,¹²⁹ only to find the old key in his possession when he arrives back in Israel. Thus the narrator's spiritual rebirth receives dramatic support from the actual birth of the child, and Israel receives affirmation as the binding center of worship by

¹²⁹ Band, *op cit.*, pp. 317-318, notes that the key is given in "anticipation of the child's eventual settling in Eretz Yisrael."

the reappearance there of the historical key.¹³⁰

But though the action of the story ends in an affirmation of linearity and its inevitable effects, its conceptual latitudes sentimentally anticipate a finer all-encompassing reality. This is to be attained at some future time - with the advent of the Messiah, when all creation will merge in a joyous undivided unity. Thus the original key waits in Israel to be reunited with Beit haMidrash at the end of the days, the narrator joins with Israel in longing for that time when all will be immersed in the unity of creation, when name and form will be perfectly one and will reveal their inherent perfection:

התורה שלימה, אלא שהארון שנתונה בו שבור. הכיסופין הללו שאנו
נכספים יביאו אותנו לקבל את התורה שנייה, זאת התורה הנצחית שאינה
נחלפת לעולם לא במסיבות הזמן וחילופי העתים.¹³¹

- wholly merged and beyond all separation, wholly cleansed of the grit of time itself, where presumably the clamour of the collective will be still in a choir of angels.

¹³⁰ Kurzweil, op cit., pp. 304-305, sees the doubling of these circumstances as a resolution of the old and the new.

¹³¹ Agnon, op cit., p. 253.

INVERSIONS OF BATTLE IN S.Y. AGNON'S *AD HENA*

When considering the question of writing, the usefulness of the symbolic - language and cultural signs - need be viewed not only as pertaining to the act of writing, but also in relation to the process of reading. The question I wish to explore here is the extent to which "reader aptitude" ¹ is created by a suggestive use of language and culturally-coded references. *Ad Hena* is a particularly useful text for this purpose. Like all Agnon's texts it is dense with linguistic and cultural encrustation, and even exposes its own play with these items in a more obvious manner than usual. It is particularly interesting as it is also contrived of psychoanalytic devices such as dream and displacement that associatively reach towards the world of the Other. This chapter addresses the issues of language, culture and transmissibility, and considers their implications. This is an attempt to observe the linguistic and tonal density in Agnon's texts and note if these are of relevance to reader participation in his work, and examines the extent to which this stylistic feature is crucial to reader identification. The analysis looks at the relationship between Agnon's style and the content of his narratives which are thematically linked to the discussions about the Other in the preceding chapters, and especially echo the topics in *A Guest for the Night*.

In her book *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, in a chapter dealing with the text and the process of reading, comments on the relationship between the text and the reader as follows:

¹ See immediately below.

Just as the reader partakes in the creation of the meaning of the text, so does the text mold the reader. On the one hand it "chooses" the reader suited to it, builds an image of such a reader by means of its specific linguistic code, its style, its storehouse of knowledge ("encyclopedia") and implicitly assumes his existence (Eco 1979 : 17). On the other hand, just as the text assumes that the reader brings with him from the outside certain (prior) qualifications, so in the process of reading it develops in the reader a specific aptitude which he needs in order to enter its density, and it often even encourages him to change his earlier assumptions and to qualify his views. And thus, the reader is both a reflection of certain aptitudes which the text demands be brought to it, and, at the same time the manifestation of this aptitude within the text. ²

This statement is particularly apposite in relation to the work of S.Y. Agnon and especially so as pertaining to the dense linguistic weave of his texts.

Agnon is not a writer of poetry, but his language has in it some of the character of the language of verse, which I define here as an intensity of intentionality that often pertains even to the smallest linguistic elements and manifests in Agnon's writing in the repeated use of common sound bases, word-play, semantic acrobatics, connotative manipulations and source-

² Shlomit Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, trans. Hanna Hertzig, Sifriyat Po'alim, Tel Aviv, 1984, p. 112. The original, English version, of this book was unavailable to me. This quote is my own translation from the Hebrew.

allusions.³ Agnon's linguistic intensity is, one presumes, "a truth universally acknowledged."

It is a process which often reflects upon itself in his narratives. For our purposes it is useful to look at the linguistically and culturally derived textual dilations that are prominent in his work because of their self-conscious and directive status there. Dov Sadan said of S.Y. Agnon:⁴

Those who see only the language in Agnon's writing, see nothing ... It is true that at times the language seems in excess of the vehicle, and the dress of the other aspects ... but finally the author conquered himself as he was able to overcome the difficulty, affixing the correct (linguistic) proportion, which he created in obedience to the demands of the content.⁵

What need be considered is how far Agnon's language is allied to the content of his stories and the extent of narrative assumption of reader aptitude entailed in the efficient deciphering of the texts.

In *Ad Hena*, a story whose focal impetus is the concern with cause and effect, and the ways in which they wind and rewind themselves, the central locus of function is a town

³ Syntactic and tense formations and nuances are excluded from this discussion, despite their undeniable import.

⁴ E. Aphek, *Mikra'ot Milim*, Dekel, Tel Aviv, 1970, p. 9.

⁵ The translation is mine.

named *Grima*. In echo of the content, the centrality of the town is not quantitatively evident in the narrative: it is a place but briefly visited by the narrator during his somewhat misbegotten wanderings in Germany during the First World War, though it stands as stated cause - *Grima*, of these travels and of further ones yet.

On the face of it *Ad Hena* is a rather strange tale which narrates a series of to and fro movements across a barren landscape of wartime desolation whose emotional pulse and physical feature are best summarized by the narrator's observation of train stations:

בית הנתיבות הגדול מרעיש והולך. קרונות יוצאים וקרונות באים, גלגלים
מקישים וקיטור קוטר ועולה. משרתי הרכבת ממהרים ורצים ממסילה
למסילה ומקטר לקטר, מתכסים בעשן ועולים ונבלעים בקיטור, וחוזרים
ומתגלים ועולים מבין גלגלי הקרונות. דומה בית הנתיבות לעיר של ברזל,
שבתיה ברזל ושמיה עשן, ועומדים להם אותם הבתים על גלגלים של ברזל
ומתגלגלים ורצים ומשמיעים קול ברזל. וכבית הנתיבות כך כל אדם שם. רץ
ונושף ונושף ורץ. מרוב אדם לא רואים פני אדם.⁶

and trains:

חזרתי לבית הנתיבות ונטלתי את מאוודתי ודיחקתי עצמי לתוך הרכבת

⁶ Shmuel Yosef Agnon, *Ad Hena*, in *Kol Sippurav shel Shmuel Yosef Agnon*, Schocken Books, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1977, v. 7, p. 13.

הגרימאית. קשה היתה הנסיעה מברלין ללייפציג, קשה כפליים מלייפציג לגרימה, קשה מהן כניסתי לגרימה. הימים ימות מלחמה וכל איש בריא נלקח לצבא, נלקחו כל משרתי הרכבת ונמסרה הרכבת בידי נשים. ראתה הרכבת שנשים משלו בה, עמדה ובטלה רשותן מעליה. היתה צריכה לעמוד בבית הנתיבות ועמדה ארבעים חמשים מטרים רחוק הימנו. ביקשו הנשים להזיזה ולא זזה. נתכעסו וחירפו וגידפו. נתנה עליהן קול ונישפה בהן את עשנה השחור. נתמלאו עיניהן דמעות, והיא לא נתמלאה עליהן רחמים, לפי שלבה לב ברזל. עומדים היינו רחוק מבית הנתיבות, בלא סבל ובלא מי

שיעזוב עמי.^{7 8 9}

These descriptions are, in embryo, projection of his perception of his stay in Germany. He is in a merciless, ugly land of ceaseless, useless activity - in which he partakes - while a mass of people and events whirl all around him and he does not see any human face amongst them. His journey is a difficult one and women seem to have sole provenance over his way. But they never fully dominate, nor do they truly manage to bend him or events to their will: Brigitta Shimirman does not succeed, in the early stages of the story, in getting him to the Lion's House for lunch; he does not sort out Dr. Levy's books - though he briefly tries to, in

⁷ *ibid.* : p. 25.

⁸ These are my translations.

⁹ Page numbers have been converted from Hebrew (as they are numbered in the Agnon text) to Arab numerals throughout this paper.

compliance with the widow Levy's request, and although he accepts the liver his relative presents him - even though he does not eat meat - he passes it on to the Golem. The one instance when he fully actualizes a woman's desires - when he unknowingly returns Hanecsan, the Golem made zombie-like by the war, to Mrs. Trotsmiller - he does so in response to a dream and not to a direct request: It is related to the realm of wish and not will, and is realized not through a positive act of will, but in its absence.

A lack of will permeates the entire tale. Though the narrator becomes involved in a series of movements which give him no rest, it is not as the result of his own - or owned - will that these movements are initiated. His departure from Berlin, at the start of the tale - which is cause of his subsequent wanderings - is inspired by Mrs. Levy's request:

מי יודע כמה הייתי שרוי בברלין זו בחדר זה בחשיכה זו באבק זה בצנה זו,
אלמלא אלמנתו של דוקטור לוי שזימנה אותי לעירה ליעץ אותה על ספרים
שהניח לה בעלה ואינה יודעת מה תעשה בהם.¹⁰

- which causes him three days later to bring Hanecsan - Mrs Trotsmiller's son, lost in the war - back to his family thereby losing his own room (and this as a result of Brigitta Shimirman's insistence that he travel to Berlin from Leipzig with sister Bernardina and the wounded soldiers).

¹⁰ *ibid.* : p. 7.

Even his present involvement with Brigitta is a consequence of his being acted upon by circumstances - it occurs when he is forced to spend time in Leipzig because of the time lapse between the arrival time of the train there from Berlin and the departure time of the train to Grima. His perceptions of his relationship to the world - even when he does achieve full action - are perceptions of passivity, of victimization:

מצאתי לי חדר. או אינו אלא החדר מצא אותי, כדי לענותני ולהרבות את

יסורי.¹¹

And the greater cause of all his misadventures is purportedly instanced by events outside himself - by the war which ostensibly prevents his leaving Germany. Thus the lack of porters at the Grima station - a lack which is echoed variously throughout the story - is relevant, but its full implication is gleaned if the text by way of a fair portion of connativity. The textual surface easily provides an understanding that the repeated absence of porters to carry the narrator's luggage is of significance to the tale. The frequency of this condition aligns with the narrator's feelings of isolation and travail so that it becomes appended with a force of the symbolic: having so much to carry, to move around, the narrator has not the strength to do so on his own.

The textual wobblings in the passage's are emphasized and stretched through the denotations of the Hebrew root ל ב ט, which are:

¹¹ *ibid.* : p. 99.

1. לָבַט: to suffer, bear, endure; to carry a burden, bear a load, to tolerate (also) to carry on a tradition. ¹²

2. לָבַט: to send gifts (to one's betrothed i.e. groom to bride). ¹³

3. לָבַט: suffering, pain, burden load: endurance, tolerance and patience. ¹⁴

All these meanings expand the reference of this recurring circumstance within the conceptual field of the story. Not only is there no-one to help the narrator bear the pain - his load - but that load itself is no longer merely a bag of personal suffering, but also reflects upon tradition. Thus the narrator carries, with suffering, the weight of tradition - of Israel and of books - which neither Mittel, the bibliographer - who is not pro-Zionist, has been a socialist and has all but given up on life and the acquisition of new books - nor Nahum Berish the Rabbi - who is avaricious and in the past was puzzled by the narrator's refusal of payment in return for his services to the Beit Din in the matter of divorces - nor Alter Eilbreit the Shochet, who together with Berish and Bider and Kitzingon plots to acquire Dr. Levy's books for financial gain, nor any of the Jews of Germany bear with him. Dr. Levy - who was his only partner in this endeavor - is dead. The oblique reference to marriage is, though not as directly and immediately, also significant for, as we shall see presently, the lack of a partner and the desire for female companionship, are apparently an overriding element in the

¹² Reuven Alcalay, *The Complete Hebrew English Dictionary*, Massada, Ramat Gan, 1981, p. 1721.

¹³ loc cit.

¹⁴ loc cit.

narrator's dissatisfaction and feelings of rootlessness. The meanings of suffering, pain and tolerance are productive of expansion upon the theme of having a load to bear which is burdensome and almost intolerable. But possibly more expressive of the essence of the story is the meaning of passivity associated with the root סבל (סביל - passive, tolerable bearable) which encapsulates the core of the narrator's experience of his life during this period.

The permutations of meaning of this example of a single word in the text leaven an understanding of the narrative. An awareness of them strengthens and aids the comprehension of the underlying connections in the tale, although this need not occur on the conscious level. Just as the narrator repeatedly reconstrues the chains of events that have occurred, thereby reiterating and highlighting the convolutions of causality in the story, while at the same time imposing linear order upon associated events that are only joined "as in a dream,"¹⁵ so does he, by means of repetition of key words - like the one mentioned - and through their semantic echoes, imply and focus the main thematic concerns of the story.

An important word, which recurs numerous times throughout the text, is דירה (apartment, dwelling) and the semantically allied חדר (room) and בית (house). Aphek and Tobin in an article dealing with the intranslatability of the Hebrew text, speak of Agnon's use of word-systems which they define as follows:

A macro-stylistic phenomenon composed of a matrix of words with a common-denominator which may be conceptual, phonological, etymological, folk-

¹⁵ Agnon, op cit., p. 88.

etymological, associative, and/or semantic which serves as a junction where the plane of plot and ideas converge with the linguistic plane.¹⁶

In *Ad Hena* the words referring to dwelling places form a word-system: i.e. a semantic cluster of thematic force. And the story is replete with their mention (though frequency is not a pre-condition of a word-system).

Most of the activity of the tale revolves upon the search for suitable accommodation. The opening lines of the tale are a statement of locus, which situates the narrator's living quarters:

בימות המלחמה דרתי במערבה של ברלין. בפנסיון קטן ברחוב הפסיונים.¹⁷

This statement is enlarged upon across the first pages of the narrative. Words deriving from the root דור (dwell): דרתי, מדורי, שבעה מדורי, דרתי, דרים, דר, דרה, דיירי, דירה, בית-דירה, ובתדר, חדרה, החדרים, חדרי, החדר, חדר (גיהנום) the noun חדר in various forms and inflexions; and the words פנסיון, גאזטרא, and the words פנסיון, גאזטרא abound in these passages so that their prominence in the tale is alluded to right at the start of its unravelling.

The cumulative effects of word-repetition in the text reinforces and intensifies the

¹⁶ E. Aphek and Y. Tobin, *The Means is the Message: on the intranslatability of a Hebrew Text*, in *Meta* VIII, 1, 1983, p. 57.

¹⁷ Agnon, *op cit.*, p. 5.

products of their repeated sounds. Some portion of the heaped recurrence is resultant upon the root-bound nature of Hebrew, where verbs and nouns are often identical in base. An English translation would possibly render the verbs of the root ד ו ר "to dwell", to express בית מדור and even בית דירה as "dwelling place", but might be hard-put to sustain the tight tenor of the following:

קטן היה החדר, כיוצא בו הגאזטרא, אבל אדם שכמותי שיודע לצמצם עצמו
מוצא בהם בית דירה. כל הימים שדרתי שם לא סחתי לא עם בעלת הבית
ולא עם דיירי הבית.¹⁸

But, more importantly, the entire venture of unsuccessful search for accommodation is related to another issue - and here reference must be made to the cultural sediment which operates in concert with the narrator's linguistic assumption and focus, which derives from the frequent appending of the adjective נאה (pleasant, good-looking) to the words חדר and בית and to the landladies (נשים), that rule over them.

This combination first occurs in the second paragraph of the tale where the narrator justifies his mention of the other inhabitants of the pension and, by the presumed presence elsewhere of this desirable quality - נאה, indicates its absence in his present residence:

ולמה אני מזכיר אותם, כדי להסביר לי מה טעם לא החלפתי את חודרי בחדר

¹⁸ loc cit.

Shortly thereafter - two pages later - the adjective recurs as retrogressive and therefore negative description of his landlady, Mrs Trotsmiller:

בנערותה ודאי נאה היתה ואפשר שהיתה נאה הרבה²⁰

To the culturally identified reader, the apposition of these two sets of statement has an associative force arising from their linguistic resonance with the Talmudic saying:

שלושה מרחיבין דעתו של אדם: בית נאה, אישה נאה וכלים נאים.

- and there is no doubt that this association is intentionally created as these phrases and their conceptual and linguistic surrogates reappear in various places across the text and finally expand into the full-blown phrase itself, articulating an essential thematic aspect of the tale: that the narrator's search for lodging is primarily the search for a wife who, by the association of another phrase - ביתו זו אשתו - which occupies a central position in the novel *A Guest for the Night*, is embodiment of home with all that the sense of subjectivity the term implies. In *Ad Hena* - as in the novel - the home is inextricably bound with Israel (as a symbolic locus) and is not attained outside it. In the novel, however, the narrator acquires both home and

¹⁹ *ibid.* : p. 6.

²⁰ *ibid.* : p. 8.

wife when he returns to Israel, while in the present story the wife is merely an implied component - and not a literal element - which is possibly attained with the acquisition of the home, or possibly yet remains to be attained.

The link between wife-woman and home in *Ad Hena* is not specifically stated except by the reverberations of the Mishnaic aphorism in the tale. In his search for new accommodation, after Hanescsan's return, the narrator either finds desirable houses or desirable landladies, never the two together:

יש שבעלת הבית מסבירה פנים ואין החדר מסביר פנים ויש שהחדר מסביר
פנים ואין בעלת הבית מסבירה פנים.²¹

He eventually finds a room which he describes as follows:

החדר היה קטן ותנאיו מרובים.²²

The word תנאים evocative of the marriage ritual. Just when he settles down in this place - which turns out to be pleasing in many ways - he is forced to move once more as the landlords sell their house to a group of newspaper publishers.

Once again in search of a living space he comes across an acquaintance with whom he

²¹ *ibid.* : p. 89.

²² *ibid.* : p. 90.

once shared a house. He tells him of his problem and the man responds with the admonition:

אומר הוא לי, יותר מדי אתה מחליף את דירותיך²³

When he later wishes to send regards to his friend's wife, the friend informs him:

מתכווין אתה לאו שהכרת אצלי, היא אינה אשתי, גרשתיה ונשאתי אחרת.²⁴

- which causes the narrator to consider:

הרי שיכול הייתי לומר לו יותר מדי אתה מחליף את נשותיך, אלא שאין

הדברים שווים, שהרי הוא מצא אשה אחרת ואני לא מצאתי חדר.²⁵

- where the connection between the two דירה and אישה - which reveals the inner content of the narrator's quest - is limned by way of a humorous antithetical parallelism.

The next room the narrator finds is described as:

²³ *ibid.* : p. 95.

²⁴ *loc cit.*

²⁵ *loc cit.*

החדר גופא נאה וכליו נאים²⁶

Even the landlady is a nice-looking woman, though she is married and thus belongs to someone else. But this room is contaminated by the smell of blood from the butcher downstairs and the noise of the tram station beneath his window.

These outside circumstances which possibly derive from his landlady's marital and religious status - she is married and only half-Jewish - finally send him yet again in search of lodgings:

לילה אחד כשחזרתי לחדרי ולא מצאתי שינה מחמת שאר טעמים שגרם לי
המקום באתי לידי מסקנא לעקור את דירתי.²⁷

His new, nightmarish room is in a - בית נאה - which he finally escapes because of the pressure of all the non-Jewish women who, for one reason or another, seek his company there.

In the next room, which is better in aspect than any other he has occupied in Berlin:

...חדר נאה ומרווח במקום נאה באויר נאה בין כלים נאים.²⁸

²⁶ *ibid.* : p. 99.

²⁷ *ibid.* : p. 104.

²⁸ *ibid.* : p. 127.

Here, however, the group of women admirers is exchanged for a multitude of dogs his new landlady breeds. She is somewhat grotesque in appearance and makes her husband's, and by extension the narrator's, life a misery, thereby spoiling the advantages of the room. The narrator's comment on this situation:

זה מצא אשה ולא מצא טוב וזה מצא דירה ולא מצא טוב.²⁹

- again refers to the connection between woman and home, a reference which in this section becomes progressively more explicit:

לא אפליג בשבח חדרי וכליו ולא ארבה בגנות בעלת הבית. ברם דבר זה
אומר, שפעמים כדאי להעלים עין ממדותיה הרעות של בעלת בית קשה
בשביל חדר נאה וכלים נאים. על דרך ההלצה אמרתי, שלושה דברים
מרחיבין דעתו של אדם, אשה נאה ודירה נאה וכלים נאים, ודיו לדייר עראי
שכמותי שזכה לשני דברים.³⁰

- and the underlying content of his unsuccessful search for lodgings is revealed by the full expression of the saying that contains it.

²⁹ *ibid.* : p. 133.

³⁰ *ibid.* : pp. 161-162.

From this stage on, matters go from bad to worse. For a while the narrator falls ill and is temporarily freed from the trials of landladies and rented rooms. And then the war ends and he returns to Israel where, for lack of rented lodgings, he acquires some ground and builds his own house of many rooms. In the earlier phases of the story, the narrator insists that he is caught in Berlin and thus forced into the ignominy of being a tenant, because war has prevented his return to Israel. In the closing pages, however, he changes his story entirely.

When he reconstructs the causality of events that led him back to Israel, he claims that his misadventures and failure in finding a room prompted his return which in consequence provided him with a home in Israel:

בשביל פיסת חדר קטן שלא מצאתי בחוצה לארץ זכיתי לשיבת ארץ
ישראל.³¹

and:

ובכן בשביל שלא מצאתי חדר בחוצה לארץ הוכרחתי לחזור לארץ ישראל.

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This later attribution of cause is lent credence by the alliance of woman and home and the central role women play in the narrator's loss of lodgings. He left Berlin for Grima at the

³¹ *ibid.* : p. 167.

³² *ibid.* : p. 168.

behest of Dr. Levi's widow; this circumstance brought him to Leipzig where Brigitta's insistence that he tarry a while caused him to lose his room, which caused further sojourns in many other rooms one of which he leaves because of the persistence of women admirers.

His fascination with Germany - and thus his stay there - seems bound up with a fascination for German women, and Brigitta Shimirman in particular - "lovely Brigitta" ³³ - who is an אישה נאה, is central to his loss of dwelling place and is not only German, but is also another man's wife. It is sometime during his stay in Leipzig, when he discovers through Sister Bernardina that Brigitta is the daughter of the Christian scholar Nadelschteicher, who is cause of his return to that city (he brings the professor's massive hat there so that he will be able to lecture) and is a fraud in his great Biblical scholarship (he knows but few words of Hebrew and is lost in the face of an unvocalized text), and when, coupled with this, Sister Bernardina wishes to show him some poetry so as to prove to him "how fine a German woman's heart is" ³⁴ that his fascination ends and he realizes the trouble it has caused him and takes - in some measure - charge of his fate by returning to Berlin without seeing Brigitta.

The opposite occurs with Mrs. Levy, Brigitta's counterpart in the primacy of their effect on the narrator's experiences. Mrs. Levy serves, in many respects, as foil to Brigitta. Where Mrs. Levy is Jewish, Brigitta is Christian. Whereas Brigitta is married and is thus morally unavailable, Mrs. Levy is a widow though her sickness - a physical circumstance -

³³ *ibid.* : p. 167.

³⁴ *ibid.* : p. 158.

renders her an inviable companion. After the narrator tries to help Mrs. Levy with her husband's books, fails because of her illness, does not persist in the attempt and decides not to stay in Grima, he complies with Brigitta's request and stays in Leipzig as long as she deems it necessary. Mrs. Levy - the Jewish woman - sent him on his journey, but was both physically and psychically absent on his arrival, thus leaving him prey to the mercy of whatever might befall him. Brigitta - the Christian woman - prolonged his journey and was thus instrumental in causing the subsequent troubles that came upon him.

Just as Brigitta is absent at the start of his travels, so does she form no part of his final destination. When he returns to Israel, Germany and all its inhabitants recede from the narrator's consciousness:

מחמת שמחת ארץ ישראל הסירותי מלבי שאר כל העניינים, את גן החיות
 ואת אלופי ומיודעי הממונה על חיות הטרף שבגן. אף את אותו
 הביבליוגראף הגדול דוקטור מיטל ואף את בריגיטה החמודה שהייתי משוך
 אחריה כל הימים שדרתי בחוצה לארץ הסחתי מדעתי.³⁵

He had earlier, while still in Germany, left all thought of Mrs. Levy behind:

ואין צריך לומר את אלמנתו של הדוקטור לוי שכבר הפלגתי דעתי ממנה

³⁵ *ibid.* : p. 167.

קודם לכן, מיום ששמעתי עליה שהיא חולה שאין לה תקנה.³⁶

But when he is in Israel she miraculously recovers:

אבל אותה אישה שהכל נתייאשו ממנה נסי נסים נעשו בה. חזרה

לבריאותה, כמות שהיתה קודם עד שלא חלתה.³⁷

- and insists herself into his consciousness and his life when she writes to say she too is coming and is bringing her husband's books with her.

It is in anticipation of this event that the narrator does not make do with merely one room and builds himself a sizable house, thus obtaining a home:

ובכן בשביל שלא מצאתי חדר בחוצה לארץ הוכרחתני לחזור לארץ ישראל.
ומאחר שהארץ היתה חרבה ולא כל מי שעלה לארץ מצא בה דירה, לקחתי
לי פיסת קרקע ובניתי לי בית של כמה חדרים. כשאני לעצמי דיי בחדר אחד,
אם כן חדרים הרבה למה, אלא מקום הכינתי לספריו של הדוקטור לוי...³⁸

Mrs. Levy, the essential but absent mover of his experiences during the course of the

³⁶ loc cit.

³⁷ loc cit.

³⁸ ibid. : p. 168.

narrative, reinstates herself in his life at its end and provides him with the home he has so desperately searched for, whose reality is finer and more expansive and more happily located than any he envisaged or sought for himself. Mrs. Levy who, at the start of the tale, shook him out of his inertia by indirectly forcing him to change his unsatisfactory room, is finally the Goddess of Plenty who makes all his wishes come true and enables him to find new faith with which to assuage the bitterness of the iron-hearted nightmare of Berlin.

The talmudic allusion is therefore of dramatic significance in the narrative inasmuch as it extends the meaning of the narrator's struggle, and explains - in some measure - the core of his restlessness, as well as its ultimate resolution. Its mishnaic origin reflects ironically on his ardor for Christian women who were certainly not the target of a Talmudic aphorism prescribing the conditions that lead to satisfaction and contentment. Thus the patronage of this saying itself is anticipatory in its implications for the negative outcome of the narrator's quest in Germany. It is not there, in the company of foreign women, that a desire for peace and happiness is to be fulfilled.

Many of the associations of the above would undoubtedly be lost to the non-identified reader - despite the Freudian connotations of room (receptacle etc., denoting the feminine), which incidentally are strengthened by the denotation of רחם (womb) and חדר (room) and would need to be explained in direct contradiction to the careful way in which they are woven into the Agnonic text, where the connections are hinted at, toyed with, subtly accumulate and are only retroactively explained. This is not an insurmountable problem but it is indicative of the impoverishment of the text resultant upon the absence of and cultural

aptitude without which the delicate interweaving of language and content cannot be properly understood.

There is a passage in *Ad Hena* in which Agnon's word-play and intentionality are amplified in by way of narration:

הרעב הציק לי מבפנים והמטה הרעועה העיקה לי תחתי והרהורי עתידות קשים היו מן הרעב ומן המטה. בקשתי להעביר ממני 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. וכשאתה מקמץ את התיבה בשני קמצים הרי בקר מלשון נבוכו עדרי בקר. וכשהיא ננקדת פתח וצרי הרי בקר, לא יבקר בין טוב לרע, ובלשון חכמים שהה כדי ביקור וכן כל שאינו מבקר את החולה כאילו שופך דמים. וכשאתה הופך את התיבה הרי רקב, כמו שאתה אומר הרקב לבית יהודה. ואם אתה מסרסה הרי קרב, לעת צר ליום קרב מלשון קרב ומלחמה. או קרב ונפש כי יקריב קרבן מנחה לה'. או קרב מלשון את החלב המכסה את הקרב. או קרב מלשון כי קרוב הוא. או קרב מלשון קרובה. ואם אתה חוזר ומסרסה הרי ברק, ברוק ברק ותפיצם. לשון אחר ברק, חרב חרב פתוחה לטבח מרוטה למען ברק. לשון אחר ברק, קום ברק ושבה שביך. ואם אתה מוסיף עליה תיו הרי ספיר נפך וברקת. ואם אתה חוזר ומסרסה הרי רבק, מלשון עגלי מרבק, ולבסוף קבר.

אחר אותן האותיות נטלתי שורש אחר.³⁹

In this passage the narrator (and through him Agnon) reveals his fascination with the semantic movements of Hebrew roots whose sound combinations are finite in possibility and whose limited tri-radical system is productive of great lexical flexibility. This is one of the passages cited by Aphek in support of her thesis of Agnon's word-systems.⁴⁰

Having finished with ברק the narrator moves onto other letters:

אחר אותן האותיות נטלתי שורש אחר. אחר כך נטלתי כמה תיבות
שנקראות ישר והפוך, כגון ליל מום. אחר כך נטלתי את התיבות ענג שפע
שפר רצה, שבסירוסן הן נגע רפש פרש פשע צרה. אחר כך נטלתי את התיבות
אמת חסד צדק, שלעולם הן עומדות באמיתותן ובחסדן ובצדקתן, ואם אתה
מהפך אותן אינן ולא כלום. כנגדן רשע שקר שעושות לקשר רעש עשר. על יד
על יד התחילו עיני מתקשרות בשינה מתוך האותיות חלם, שהפכו עצמן ונעשו
לחם מלשון מלחמה.⁴¹

The combination of לחם, חלום and מלחמה, in conjunction with מחלה - not mentioned in this passage, but central to the tale - comprises one of the conceptual axes of the story and

³⁹ *ibid.* : p. 27.

⁴⁰ E. Aphek, *op cit.*

⁴¹ Agnon, *op cit.*, pp. 27-28.

hints at its most essential content.

The plot of *Ad Hena* is set against a background of war - purportedly the First World War - which the narrator would have concertina and pass quickly, as in a dream:

משנשמעה קולה של המלחמה שבתו כל מעשי ולא היה בי אלא רצון אחד,
לקמט את הימים עד שיבוא יום שאין בו מלחמה.⁴²

War has led to food shortages so that allied to his desperate search for a room, is the narrator's constant concern and quest for food. When he arrives in Grima he finds that, as a result of Mrs. Trotsmiller's dream, he has travelled there without an official meal ticket:

מחמת חלומה של בעלת הפנסיון שכחתי לבקש הימנה את כרטיס המזונות,
ומאחר שלא היה בידי כרטיס המזונות לא נתנו לי לחם ולא שום דבר שמזין
חוץ מפירות מתולעים.⁴³

When he returns to Berlin and is compelled to find new lodgings (in the wake of the realization of Mrs. Trotsmiller's dream), the battle for food becomes a fairly permanent feature of his existence. Thus a dream, חלום, dreamt as a consequence of war, מלחמה, intervenes in the waking-state and deprives the narrator of food, לחם (basic sustenance). So,

⁴² *ibid.* : p. 6.

⁴³ *ibid.* : p. 28.

just as the narrator wished, dream does invade the waking-state, but not only does the time-scale of war not concertina itself as a result, but the insistence of dream in the waking-world dilates its time-perception by the misfortune it entails.

The sound connection between the three words - which appear many times throughout the text sometimes singly and often in pairs - is idiosyncratically Hebraic, and the subliminal associations are unavoidable. The link between war and food-shortages is conceptually decipherable, but what of the relationship between them and a dream? On the conceptual level Agnon does explicate their bond, but the phonetic similarities themselves, which resound, re-echo and create a common sediment.

The words 'dream' and 'war' are primary to an understanding of the text. As Arnold Band pointed out,⁴⁴ the story was published in 1952, and it is rather strange that the war described is World War I. Band also speaks of the strange structure of *Ad Hena*⁴⁵ which he sees as not artistically comparable to the careful structuring of say, *A Guest for the Night*⁴⁶ which is also descriptive of the ravages of war though, as he notes, unlike the novel, *Ad Hena* directly describes war and not its after-effects.

Ad Hena is a direct description of war, but it is not the direct description it overtly claims to be. A careful reading of the text unravels the mystery of its strange form: *Ad*

⁴⁴ A. Band, op cit., p. 348.

⁴⁵ *ibid.* : pp. 353, 356.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* : p. 347.

Hena is not the story of the First World War, it is, rather, a transposition, as in a dream, of the Second World War onto the arena of the earlier war. The linear demands of history have become unbearable: a new language - form - must be found to express the horror, as Brigitta Shimirman's words suggest:

כשיבואו ההיסטוריונים לכתוב על מלחמה זו ולא יתשלו מלשנות מן
הטרמינולוגיה שלהם, כל מקום שנוהגים להזכיר בני אדם צריכים הם לכתוב
בעלי מומים.⁴⁷

The narrative solution is the use of the defense mechanism of dream and of transposition which is one of its modes. The use of this form is alluded to by the narrator in his references to causality and narrative selection - e.g.:

מניח אני את הדברים שבאים בהיסח הדעת. עושאם בלבד הוא יודע לשם מה
הם באים. אני איני יודע. פעמים דומים הם כדמדומי דברים שמקשרים חלום
בחלום, שמשתכחים והולכים מוך כדי הווייתם ונמצאים הנו רואים את
חלומותינו כאילו אין להם קישור וחיבור. ובכן מקפל אני לאחרי כל שאין לו
לכאורה חיבור לעצם המעשה...⁴⁸

⁴⁷ op cit., Agnon, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁸ ibid. : p. 88.

and is evident in his imposing secondary elaboration - a post-dream reconstrual mechanism - as focusing device throughout the story, by which some apparent concession to linearity is made - e.g.:

כדי לקצר לי את הזמן לקחתי לי מחשבה אחת לחשוב בה. ואתם הלוא ידעתם את דרך המחשבות. מחשבה יולדת מחשבה ומחשבה מחשבה והן פרות ורבות תוך כדי לידתן ואין ידוע מי ילדה את מי. אנסה לסדר אותן, אם לא לפי השתלשלותן, הרי לפי סדר המעשים. ולא אתחיל מבראשית, שאין ראשית לראשית, אלא אתחיל בימות המלחמה שפגעה בי בברלין. דר הייתי בחדר דחוק שלא ראה חמה. ביקשתי לעקור דירתי ולא עלתה בידי. בא מכתב מאלמנתו של הדוקטור לוי שביקשה להתייעץ בי על עסקי ספריו שהניח לה ואינה יודעת מה תעשה בהם. לא שהייתי הרבה ונסעתי אצלה. בדרך בלייפציג מצאתני בריגיטה שימרמן וזימנה אותי לסעוד עמה. ועד שלא הגיע זמן סעודה הלכתי אצל הדוקטור מיטל. וכשעמדתי לילך אצל בריגיטה שימרמן נתעלם ממני מקומה ולא ידעתי היכן היא שרויה. נסעתי אצל אלמנתו של לוי ונתלבטתי עמה כך וכך פעמים ולא הועלתי כלום. בחזירתי מצאתי את מקומה של בריגיטה שימרמן ונסעתי אצלה. אחר כך חזרתי לברלין עם סיעה של חיילים, ובתוכם בחור אחד בנה של בעלת הפנסיון, שהיו סבורים עליו שאבד, ולבסוף חזר עמי אצל אמו. נדחקתי על ידו מחדרי והתחלתי נודד ממקום למקום ומחדר לחדר. אירעוני דברים הרבה, בהם מאורעות החוזרים ונשנים, ובהם דברים שהיודע תעלומות הוא

בלבד יודע לשם מה צירפם לי. דומני, שסידרתי את סדרי המעשים יפה ממה שעשו מחשבותי, שאפילו אינן שוכחות דבר הרי דרכן לבוא בערבוביא.⁴⁹

But the linearity is only apparent and the narrative structure itself is composed of frequent occurrences of this dream-related mode.

That the narrative is a depiction of the later war is supported in the text by, for example, Dr. Mittel's declaration:

אילו כתבתי סיפורים הייתי כותב סיפור של עתידות. ...אלא אומר לך סיפור אינו סוגיא בגמרא שצריכין שתהא מבוצרת מכל צדדיה. אלמלא אתה בהול הייתי מצייר לפניך כל פרטי הדברים. ... לכאורה סיפור בדוי הוא כשאר כל סיפורי עתידות ובאמת אמת הוא.⁵⁰

The notion of surrogacy - a primary dream technique - fills the pages of the tale. The narrator speaks of surrogate waiters, and Mittel says of modern inventors and their inventions:

ועכשיו הרי נתרבו הממציאים. זה ממציא תחליף לאותיות הישנות וזה ממציא תחליף למזונות, וזה ממציא תחליף לידים ורגלים, והמלכות ממציאה חיילים

⁴⁹ *ibid.* : pp. 124-125.

⁵⁰ *ibid.* : pp. 23-24.

- to which he adds a statement that could stand as explication of the narrative technique of *Ad Hena*:

ואף אני יקירי דומני שמצאתי תחליף לעיקר העניין.⁵²

The word חלום is therefore of both structural and thematic import in the story. Its function becomes apparent through its association with the phonologically allied מלחמה for, the sound commonality of the two words provides the clue needed to comprehend the transposition upon which the tale is constructed, which explains both the true nature of its content and the strange shape of its form.

The word מחלה is not explicitly indicated as belonging to this cluster, but partakes of it through phonological identity. Mrs Levy - the first cause - is sick and thus unconscious i.e. in echo of the narrative itself, she exists 'as in a dream' and not within the waking reality wherein she is depicted. Her illness deters the narrator from staying in Grima and is thus responsible for his subsequent strange experiences. It also blocks his interaction with her husband's books. Later, at the nadir of his ghastly adventures, the narrator himself falls ill and is thus freed from possible re-enlistment. After he returns to Israel when the war - מלחמה -

⁵¹ *ibid.* : p. 19.

⁵² *loc cit.*

and nightmare - חלום - and food shortages - לחם (as in the shortage of bread) - are over, Mrs Levy miraculously revives or achieves a state of גרם = strength and her return to health causes - גורם - the full release of the narrator: the books are coming to him and in their wake he obtains *lebensraum*.

A word play of another kind which is both humorous and thematically relevant is Agnon's manipulation of a homophonic word across its three denotations. He imbues it with a symbolic significance which obtains from its semantic force as it moves across a field which stretches from mere nominal signification to antonymic opposition.

When the narrator visits his relative in Lulendorf she presents him with a most desirable parting gift - a freshly-slain goose-liver (כבד). The narrator is a vegetarian and is repulsed by meat-foods but has not the heart to refuse this treasured war-time delicacy. He is thus forced to make his way back to Brigitta's clinic laden with the heavy burden (כבד) of the liver - the כבד, with which his relative has sought to feed and honor him - לכבד אותו - which is dripping blood. He comments:

מהלך לו אדם וכבדו בידו, זה הכבד שבא לו שלא מרצוני. כל אוכלי בשר
ודאי שהיו מתקנאים בי. אני איני מתקנא בי, שבינתיים התחיל הכבד שותת
דם ומלכלך אותי. הריחו הכלבים בדם והתחילו רצים אחרי. הרכנתי עצמי
ונטלתי אבן לזרוק בהם. עמדו וברחו.

מהלך אני וכבדי בידי ומהרהר עלי ועל הכבד.⁵³

⁵³ *ibid.* : pp. 44-45.

He does not know what to do with it. It now is not only dripping blood but it seems to pulsate as well. He cannot throw it away as his relative has sacrificed much in giving it to him instead of sending it to her husband or son who are away fighting the war. He finally finds one of Brigitta's war wounded who, at this stage, he knows only as the Golem, and gives him the liver and is thus freed of its burden. Thus alleviated he reports:

בלב קל ובידים ריקות חזרתי לבית המחסה.⁵⁴

- thereby humorously exploiting, by way of opposition, a third denotation of כבד, heavy.

The irony is that the recipient of his food is also the inheritor of his room - Hanecsan - whose appearance has made his burden heavier yet - a fact that is yet to be revealed.

The above are but a few examples of the instances where the density of Agnon's language interacts with the content of his narratives in ways that are impossible to translate. The conscious understanding of these linguistic acrobatics is not crucial to the content that in their absence the tale is all but lost. They are, however, productive of an important dimension to the understanding of what are often somewhat difficult plot contortions.

Agnon's use of sound-repetition - which is sometimes cumulative and sometimes related to word-play - is one of the obvious aspects of his language style. I would like to mention one or two examples in *Ad Hena*. The first pension in which the narrator resides is located in *Rechov haPisyonim*. The tonal similarity between pension and *Pisyon* is evident.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* : p. 47.

Pisyon, however, has a meaning in Hebrew - that of spreading and extension,⁵⁵ but specially in reference to some plague of pestilence or negative thing.⁵⁶ This sound-play and others like it are more peripheral in their adherence to the content, but are nonetheless humorous and ironic in their effects and thicken the narrative weave.

The name Grima was referred to earlier, but is in need of further amplification here. As mentioned, Grima (גרם), in the sense of cause) stands as the essential impetus of the activity of the story. It is the immediate cause of the narrator's departure from Berlin, which causes him to bring Hanecsan home, which loses him his room and thus initiates the entire series of strange events which eventually causes him to return to Israel. And even in Israel Grima is the cause of his obtaining a home. Thus the narrator is correct in his perception of Dr Levy's books when he says, early in the story -"אלא ודאי ספריו גרמו למה שגרמו" ⁵⁷

He does not return to Grima in the story but at the close of the tale he anticipates Grima coming to him and forcing him "to finish (לגמור) with the matter of the books," for:

הולך אדם לעשות מעשה ואינו גומר מצריכין אותו לחזור למקום המעשה עד
שגומר כל המעשה כולו. אינו גומר פעם שניה מחזירין אותו פעם שלישית
ורביעית ויותר. ⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Alcalay, op cit., p. 2068.

⁵⁶ Even Shoshan, *Milon Chadash*, Qiryat haSefer, Jerusalem, 1962, p. 310.

⁵⁷ Agnon, op cit., p. 31.

⁵⁸ *ibid.* : p. 162.

Grima is therefore a cause which language - by way of metathesis (=גמר) - empowers with an active force that ensures the desired and finished result.

The narrator's stay in Germany which - without over-extending the tonal play - with some slight manipulation viz. the dropping of the *n*, somewhat echoes the name Grima and is thus allied to its causal force, is imbued with Satanic elements by means of a biblical reference. When he arrives in Grima and asks for directions to Mrs. Levy's home, he is answered:

רבים המשוטטים בארץ וכל מי שחושש לעצמו סוגר את ביתו.⁵⁹

The phrase המשוטטים בארץ is reminiscent of the description of Satan's activity at the beginning of the book of Job, and the narrator's denial of the wickedness - which he equates with lack of purpose - of his own actions,⁶⁰ is refuted by him, himself, later in the story when he repeatedly applies the same phrase in description of his activity. Like the resonance of the Mishnaic phrase referred to above, this biblical association colludes with the word-motifs in creating inter-textual allusivity. This is undoubtedly a level of comprehension which is lost to the culturally unadept reader of Agnon.

The cultural literacy necessary to fully absorb the textual connections is not only related to Hebrew or purely Judaically bound. In *Ad Hena*, for example, the narrator's last

⁵⁹ *ibid.* : p. 29.

⁶⁰ *loc cit.*

and worst landlady is Mrs Blatwerm (the German version of Mrs. Leafworm). Like the leaf worm, Mrs Blatwerm is a devourer - of things both physical and psychical. And much like the nakedness of a branch stripped of its leaves in the wake of the visitation of the leaf worm, so is the narrator's aesthetically pleasing room in her house denuded of its finery when the narrator returns there after his final visit to Leipzig.⁶¹

As Sadan said, Agnon's writing is not merely bound in his language: it is far greater and extends to the structures, the ironies, the narrative voice and a myriad of other aspects which cannot all be defined. However, the linguistic allusiveness and association are part of the thematic, and the cultural references mould them. But since nothing is fixed, and meaning often resides in the ellipsi, how important are they?

A quote from Gershom Scholem, given in answer to Dan Miron in a videoed interview

⁶¹ The leaf worm is a common symbol in 17th century Dutch still-life painting where it signifies *vanitas* - the vanity and transience of life. The need for such a symbol arose as a result of the loss of religious faith in the wake of the major schisms of the time. The emotional content of this symbolism is despondency. All of these significations pertain to Mrs Blatwerm whose entire being is the antithesis of religious faith. She is filled with a despondency at the loss of her son and when his creditors come clamoring for recompense, she attempts, by her own unsuccessful action, without taking any refuge in religious faith and acting on the assumption that this is all that is left of her son, to salvage his belongings. Her lack of ethical behavior also bespeaks the absence of any religious adherence. Similarly, she inspires despondency in the narrator and in her husband.

The symbolic force of the leaf worm and the historical association of the symbol with the art of visual aesthetics are also pertinent to the story. The narrator is deprived of the former beauty of his room in Mrs Blatwerm's abode and beauty thus proves to be all too transient. This reflects back to his desire for 'a beautiful woman' and the concomitant 'beautiful home'. The unstated lesson, contained in the use of this symbol, is that the only enduring beauty that can exist is that which is allied to religion and religious faith. This beauty, of course, can only be found in Israel. Thus the symbolism of Mrs Blatwerm's name reinforces the central adduction of *Ad Hena*: A beautiful woman and a beautiful home are not within the domain of Germany.

about Agnon that was transcribed in *haAretz* - 5.2.82, summarizes the benefits of reading, even with cultural gaps. Miron's question refers to Agnon's Hebrew readers but has wider application, and relates as well to the problems of translatability, and thus to reader-identification. Professor Miron asked Scholem what he thought about the contemporary and future readers of Agnon. Would Agnon, Miron asked, be understood and correctly interpreted? Scholem answered:

My dear friend, your question is exactly the same question that could be asked about Shakespeare. To-day's generation does not understand at all the literary allusions from the mythological stories which abound in Shakespeare. What is left? I once heard an excellent lecture of George Steiner's in Canada which was called "Shakespeare Tomorrow". He posed this question which one can, with the same seriousness and the same justification, ask of Agnon. Steiner asked: How will they read him, what will be left of Shakespeare when no one in the coming generation will be familiar with all the mythology without which Shakespeare cannot actually exist. Because he assumed that his theater audience knew it. That is exactly your question. For all the Jewish learning / knowledge which the full enjoyment of Agnon is dependent upon is disappearing. Will they, in our day, return to the primary and secondary sources and not (only read) the belle lettres. This is an apposite question. But who can answer what will be with Shakespeare tomorrow, and who can tell what will happen with Agnon tomorrow. It seems

that things have the ability to change form. These great metamorphoses take place with great authors. To the reader of Dostoyevsky, the reader of Balzac and even more so to the reader of Flaubert - there are a thousand things which today are totally foreign. Besides this, Agnon is not the only one. He is merely the most obvious example in our literature of someone who is derivative. Yes, but take some author with ... take Goethe. There are endless things in Goethe which no one can understand today.

Miron: And still, their artistic strength carries them.

Scholem: That is something that happens. I think it is the only answer one can give. Agnon's artistic greatness is authentic and its authenticity is felt even after the removal of this important aspect which is important to those who are well-versed. Something is still passed on.⁶²

The associative quality of Agnon's writing, the manner in which he defies the apparent causal, the suggestiveness of his work, its layering and encrustation, assure that "something is still passed on," if only in the fissures between knowing. If Agnon has problems with the collective as the abstracted group outside, he manages to dip deep towards the expression of the all-containing oceanic self.

⁶² This interview has been translated by me from the Hebrew.

THE BODY AND REPRESSION IN AHARON APPELFELD'S
THE IMMORTAL BARTFUSS

(We are) up against a barrier of a common language
Dylan Thomas

The Holocaust, is a story of the murder of millions. The story of millions is difficult to transmit, and can only be counted, spoken of and categorized in generalities. It cannot be easily told with a cognisance of the many. But the many are always there making up the ground, even in fictional narrations that speak through the medium of the few, or the individual. The stories of the actual horrors in the camps and outside them recoil from description. Language seems inadequate; the circumstances are too extreme for naked expression. *The Immortal Bartfuss* by Aharon Appelfeld offers some ways with which to wrestle with a depiction of the Holocaust and its effects. It is included in this study because the plot itself is constructed by the tension between the national and the personal. The protagonist, Bartfuss, is singled out by the community and claimed as its legend. He has no sense of his individuality, and lives in a withholding pattern of regression. As the story progresses he is released from this unstated collective grip only to be released from that stasis into a sleep that has up till then eluded him. Bartfuss, the Other who experienced a world which was horrifically other, finds reward in the suspension of consciousness. As communal symbol he can have no life of his own, and his greatest act as an individual is sleep. So the question is if he can live at all.

Aharon Appelfeld is a survivor of the Holocaust who, in his own words, has "inclined" by fate for "some reason," to literature. He tries to speak, as he says, of the "individual. The individual whose mother and father gave him/her a name, to whom they taught their language, gave of their love and bequeathed of their belief. This individual who, because of the many, has been obliterated and become one of the many,"¹ "this (...is the) individual whose essence is the core of the literary vision", according to Appelfeld.² It is this individual he feels compelled to speak of for, in his words:

at the moment that simple truth is revealed to you, you are no longer free to deal with the grand and the lofty; you learn to inquire modestly about this individual whose soul you would touch or, to be presumptuous about it, whose essence you would reach.

and, he adds:

This individual is a Jew. Willingly or unwillingly he is a Jew.

One of Appelfeld's Jews - Bartfuss - is the subject of the present chapter. A Jew, perhaps an individual, or maybe one of the many, immortalized in the tale *The Immortal Bartfuss*. What

¹ Aharon Appelfeld, *Masot beGuf Rishon*, haSifriya haTziyonit, Jerusalem, 1979, p. 90. The translations of this text are mine.

² loc cit.

is he, this human, this immortal that all survivors claim him? Is he an individual, or is he representative of the many, collected in him into a type of individual form? ³

³ Joseph Cohen, in his book *Voices of Israel*, State University of New Press, Albany, 1990, notes that:

At the time *The Immortal Bartfuss* was published, Philip Roth in an interview with Appelfeld asked him the same question Bartfuss asked Sylvia's (see following pages) ex-husband: "What have the Holocaust survivors done and in what ways were they ineluctably changed?" Appelfeld replied that he had tried to answer that question in *The Immortal Bartfuss*, adding that "The Holocaust belongs to the type of enormous experience which reduces one to silence. Any utterance, any statement, any 'answer' is tiny, meaningless and occasionally ridiculous. Even the greatest of answers seem petty." He then offered two examples and a concluding statement, which, because of their relevance and insight into the fundamental question underlying the novel, deserve to be quoted here:

The first [example] is Zionism. Without doubt life in Israel gives the survivors not only a place of refuge but also a feeling that the entire world is not evil. Though the tree is been chopped down, the root has not withered - despite everything we continue living. Yet that satisfaction cannot take away the survivor's feeling that he or she must do something with this life that was saved. The survivors have undergone experiences that no one else has undergone, and others expect some message from them, some key to understanding the human world - a human example. But they, of course, cannot begin to fulfill the great tasks imposed upon them, so theirs are clandestine lives of flight and hiding. The trouble is that no more hiding places are available. One has a feeling of guilt that grows from year to year and becomes, as in Kafka, an accusation. The wound is too deep and bandages won't help. Not even a bandage such as the Jewish state.

The second example is the religious stance. Paradoxically as a gesture toward their murdered parents, not a few survivors have adopted religious faith. I know what inner struggles that paradoxical stance entails, and I respect it. But that stance is born of despair. I won't deny the truth of despair. But it's a suffocating position, a kind of Jewish monasticism and indirect self-punishment. My book offers its survivors neither Zionist nor religious consolation. The survivor, Bartfuss, has swallowed the Holocaust whole, and he walks about with it in all his limbs. He drinks the "black milk" of the poet Paul Celan, morning, noon and

Bartfuss. The name (=family heritage) is immediately striking. Divided into two German constituents and the result is *bart fuss* = beard foot. Turn the whole thing around, cognizant of Appelfeld's bilingualism (for how could one not be, with this construction embedded in a Hebrew text?), note the potential bilingual retrogress and divide the name once again into two, only to recombine it, aware of vocal assimilation, and you are left with בר דפוס as in 'son'/owner/'bearing' or 'outside of' (בר) 'the printed' or 'the fixed in shape/formed' (דפוס) or, in another reading, the immortal 'non-prototype' (outside the fixed and outside formed convention).

What do these readings yield? As Bartfuss - hairy foot, beard foot - the name echoes the late eighteenth century German custom of naming Jews by absurd names. In this context it is a name redolent of antisemitic practice. Not a name given by a mother and father "in their language," but a name forced by strangers on a mostly helpless population. An act not executed in kindness or loving bequest, but in unrequited cruelty. It speaks volumes in presaging the sadism beyond naming, perpetrated in much later generations, by the

night. He has no advantage over anyone else, but he still hasn't lost his human face. That isn't a great deal, but it's something.

In his weaving of the individual and communal aspects of Bartfuss in particular, and the other characters as well (for some detailed analysis of these see Gila Ramras-Rauch *Aharon Appelfeld: The Holocaust and Beyond*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1990, pp. 115-124), Appelfeld depicts the ways of living various survivors have chosen in order to adapt the life's demands. The people illustrated in the book are representative of different solutions to the immediate problem of living, and may therefore be codified into individualized presentations of the group, and thus crystallize into the communal, even while there is a nod to their individual (name and form) reality.

descendants of those same Medieval namers on the descendants of the named. And this while the victims still bore the inscription of their earlier persecution.

In this reading the name connotes the historical continuity of progressive antisemitic practice. Append the adjective "immortal" here and it resonates in two ways: Bartfuss - the immortal, suffering and guilty, Jew (cf. Ahasuerus), and as a representation of the immortal, not novel, but prototypical, and by no means unique expression of antisemitism. Either way Bartfuss is taken out of the realm of the individual and placed in the communal and the representational.

If the *gestalt* is inverted to foreground the Hebrew, and the German left as backdrop, the communal still pertains in the rendering of בר as 'son of', 'bearing' דפוס = 'fixed form' or 'prototype'. And if דפוס is disentangled from its prototypic / formal denotation what is left is 'that which may be printed,' that which may be represented, eternally (*The Immortal*). The implication of eternity here suggests repetition, even if not of the exact essence, then at least of intent, so that the story is one that repeatedly recurs and may eternally be printed, written and inscribed. And in another reading, 'son of', that is fruit of, the printed, which is the text, literature and finally the author.

If the Aramaic portion of the construction is re-rendered, something quite different emerges. If בר is taken as 'outside of' or 'on the outside', the name changes once again and becomes 'outside the realm of print' or 'representation' or 'beyond the prototype' and thus unable to be contained either in words or within any prehension of the known or represented. Thus, eternally elusive, evasive, untappable. Beyond even the notions of individual and

community or so individual, so unique (although not in terms of the individual per se) that no known cliches or schooled expressions express it.

In this text Bartfuss is called immortal by his comrades at suffering and smuggling because he has taken fifty bullets in his body.⁴ There is thus a very concrete and particular reason for his immortality which removes him from the domain of the communal, of **דפוס**. And where does it reside? It is embedded in his very body, the most visible, observable mark of self-identity and individuality.

We are told - either by way of the narrative voice, or via Bartfuss' deflected inner monologue - that he is spoken of with awe and referred to as immortal because even survivors need grand heroes:

גם להם נחוצות אגדות, גיבורים, מעשים מפוארים. כדי שאפשר יהיה לומר,

גם כאלה היו.⁵

But this is immediately followed by a comment applicable to the construction of heroes in general:

⁴ Aharon Appelfeld, *The Immortal Bartfuss*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, New York, 1988, p. 62.

⁵ Aharon Appelfeld, *Bartfuss ha-Al-Mavvet*, in p. 122.

לאמיתו של דבר, לא ידעו הרבה על ברטפוס. ברטפוס נמנע בקפידה מדיבור
על הימים האפלים. אפילו לא רמז.⁶

Thus despite his singularity, despite any actual physical imprint that inscribes him with a uniqueness, Bartfuss' immortality in the tale is an immortality inscribed on him by the actions or consciousness or needs of others. Bartfuss' immortality, the result of the need for heroes, is stamped upon him. This uniqueness is not his own, it is the property of the many, part of communal consciousness, coerced by a covetousness of heroism.

How far is that heroism actually expressed in the text? Is Bartfuss, undoubtedly a legend, a hero too? Do the perception and his action align? And if so is that person contained in the narrative? Does he bear expression? Prototype or person? And how is he each?

The first sentence of the book reiterates and affirms the title, while the ensuing paragraphs contain much of the thematic kernel of the tale. The first thing we are told in a short three word phrase which comprises the opening statement of the narrative is a positive descriptive statement:

ברטפוס הוא בן אלמוות.⁷

⁶ loc cit.

⁷ ibid. : p. 87.

- but the reason for this 'immortality' is only explained much later. At this stage the passage continues as follows:

במלחמת העולם השנייה היה באחד המחנות הקטנים, הידועים לשמצה. עכשיו הוא בן חמישים וחמש, נשוי לאשה שבשעתו היה קורא לה רוזה, שתי בנות, אחת נשואה. יש לו דירה לא גדולה בקומת הקרקע, ששני עצים צומחים לפתחה. (...)

בכל יום הוא קם בשעה קבועה, בשעה חמש פחות רבע. (...) הוא שותה קפה ומיד מדליק לו סיגריה. הסיגריה הראשונה מייטיבה עמו מאד. שעה רבה הוא יושב ליד החלון וקולט את הזעזועים הקטנים של הבוקר: זקן הולך לתפילה, משאית פורקת ארגזי חלב. המראות הזעירים הללו משובבים כנראה את עיניו.

בשעה שש הוא קם על רגליו, מדליק לו סיגריה שניה ומגלה להפתעתו כמה שיירים בלתי נעימים בכיור. מיד עולה בו הרוגז הישן. אך אין הוא מרשה לרוגז להשתלט עליו. הוא עושה העוויה חדה, בצוארו משום מה, ומחניק אותו באבו. מיד עובר לחדרו.

חדרו מנוער מכל. רק מיטה כיסא וארון. (...) בשעתו ניסתה רוזה להלביש מעט את הקירות, אפילו שולחן וכסאות הכניסה. הדבר היה לפני שנים רבות, כשעוד דיברו. ברטפוס פינה אותם מיד, במו ידיו.

מאז עומד החדר מנוזר מכל לבוש.⁸

⁸ loc cit.

The quite extraordinary (in semantic terms) opening sentence is flanked by some minimal historical data and then followed by a rather pedestrian description of the fictive present, which leads into a detailed, and by contrast, microscopic depiction of the tight assuefaction of Bartfuss' everyday activities. Thus the extraordinary receives scant mention, while the mundane spreads, at great length, across the passages. The narrative representation at the beginning of the book is emblematic of Bartfuss' existence. Much in the manner of the text, his life consists of painstakingly observed minor rituals designed to lessen the repressed but ever-present historical atrocity, minimally detailed, but indelibly marked, not just on his body, but on his whole being.

As indicated by the title, the book is a story about Bartfuss. He acts as the axis of the narrative, with his feelings or rather, his abhorrences, sensations, denials and evasions, serving as its core. But despite his focal function, and in consonance with his psyche, little of an inner world is expressed. Instead, the text includes an collection of his reactions to the world: reactive thoughts, presented in a deflected manner by way of the narrative voice, or reactive action, which is usually the response of the perceived demands of others and to the threat their intrusion entails. If intentionality is the acid-test of individuization, Bartfuss does not pass it.

Bartfuss is a survivor. He lives in Jaffa in a "not large apartment" with his wife and has two daughters (Paula and Bridget). His life at the outset of the book comprises a perpetual attempt at fending off ("He nips his anger in the bud"). He fends off the avaricious advances of his wife ("the woman he used to call Rosa," stripped by him now of her name),

who is greedy to get her hands on the treasure he hugs unto himself and hides in the cellar. This 'treasure', which is a compact point in Bartfuss' life, is really not much of a treasure at all. It consists of a few thousand dollars, some gold and some objects of sentimental value, but Rosa does not know this and it becomes an instrument of withholding for Bartfuss. Rosa imagines it contains fortunes of unimaginable bounty and he does not disabuse her of this notion. Bartfuss also fends off his daughter Paula (whose approaches are also related to the treasure) and he fends off society at large. Like the treasure in the cellar, he hugs himself to himself ("goes straight to his room") whenever the world seems to come too close to him. But most of all he fends off words and his life is insulated in a silence he has created. He speaks to almost no one except cafe owners and waiters/waitresses when he orders food and drink (he eats out all the time, does not take nourishment at home); bus drivers (on his night rides to Netanya) and presumably to those with whom he has business dealings when he does his buying and selling. It is not clear what he buys and sells and precisely how he makes a living. In the time after liberation, in his idyllic days as a Displaced Person on the beach in Italy, he was a smuggler and it seems his 'work' in Israel is a legal(?) continuation of this.

Bridget, Bartfuss' younger daughter, is retarded. She is not much given to language and is totally under her mother's domination, so that she thinks of Bartfuss as a nameless "he" and is quite terrified of him. She is the one with whom he feels most affinity, but Rosa has blocked his way to her. She has cut him off from both her daughters and set them against him. But Bartfuss is hardly blameless in the matter. When some lame attempts to establish a relationship with them in their youth fail, he easily gives up the endeavor.

There are only a few things which Bartfuss actively seeks out: the sea and bus rides. And sometimes, though infrequently now, desultory, wordless liaisons with strange women on the beach. He has removed himself from language and chooses instead to immerse himself, whenever possible, in the womb-like sensations of inchoate sound and rocking movement. But although he seeks solace in a prelinguistic, pre-formed world, he avoids the total unconsciousness of deep sleep. He struggles with it perpetually, so that part of him is always awake and aware; always watching for intrusions from the outside and especially guarding against Rosa and her curiosity.⁹

Near the start of the narrative, in Chapter Five, Bartfuss' life begins to change. He is seized one day with chest pains and hospitalized. This event sparks off the beginnings of a new process in him where he slowly begins to relate in some small measure (if it may be called relating) to the world around him. His new 'openness' is reinforced when, sitting at a cafe, he sees a woman from his past. She is Theresa, whom he met on his way to "that little camp known for its horrors."¹⁰ They had spent the night together discussing *The Brothers Karamazov*. She is the only person he remembers as separate to the rest among the sea of faces that passed him that whole year. Seeing her - the distinct and individuated - evokes in him memory and the wish to remember and discuss the past. By contrast she neither wishes to remember nor discuss anything other than the present and claims not to know him. Her

⁹ Appelfeld, op cit., 1988, p. 57.

¹⁰ *ibid.* : p. 48.

attitude has a paradoxical effect on him where, set against her refusal to remember, he enters memory and lives the past as he had never lived it before:

הוא חי עתה את המסע הנורא ודורפנציל כפי שלא חי אותו מעולם, בפרטי
פרטים, מתוך איו דבקות חזותית. על פני הסבל הרב, הקולקטיבי, הבהיקה
עתה איו נקודת זוהר.¹¹

Theresa redeems memory for him, redeems him:

וחייו של בארטפוס כמו עגנו רגע במזח חדש זה, לא מזח מרהיב עין אבל
מעורר תקוות רבות: תרז.¹²

He decides that survivors need work for the common good; need have "generosity" and "mercy". He forms a relationship with a woman called Sylvia. She too is a survivor. She dies shortly thereafter, but not before she shows him his lack of generosity. Finally, at the end of the tale, Bartfuss gives away bills of money to a woman - Marion - who, like his daughter Bridget, is semi-retarded. Marion is also a survivor. In earlier days she was pretty and gave herself to any man in exchange for gifts that helped her survive. The book ends at this point. Bartfuss goes home and we leave him on the brink of the relief he has denied

¹¹ Appelfeld, op cit., Hebrew, p. 118.

¹² loc cit.

himself all these years: having entered the world of words and definition, he releases his anal hold on his treasure, by giving it to a surrogate Bridget, he is about to fall into a deep sleep.

The book may be seen as a struggle for expression with a concomitant denial of words and language, and with it, a denial of and struggle against history. The denial of history extends from a denial of history in a very personal sense - as in Bartfuss' own history - to a wider arena. The greater aspect cannot be evaded because of Bartfuss' experience of the Holocaust; willy nilly he is only part individual, an 'accident' of history decrees that. And yet he can only find his way to history by way of the personal. It is Theresa's individuated form that creates for him "the point of light" into which the "orangish spot before his eyes"¹³ - sign of his impending illness - changes. And yet it is only the retrieval of the personal which allows Bartfuss reentry into the communal. Note his visits to the "H. M." or "Holocaust Memorial"¹⁴ and his decision after seeing Theresa that:

הוא לא ידע בדיוק מה יעשה, אבל הכוונה גמלה בו; והרחוב שאך אתמול נראה לו צר ומעיק ובוסס באיזו תפלות עכורה, כמו שטף אותו גשם מטהר. לא עוד רוזה, פאולה ובריגיט, עוולות וסלידות, אלא אדם קם בבוקר ויודע מה עליו לעשות. כולו ברשות הרבים. למען הרבים. כל העינוגים והיסורים נראו עתה בעיניו כאיזו השחתה מכוונת. עתה הוא יהיה ברשות הכלל.¹⁵

¹³ Appelfeld, op cit. 1988, p. 48.

¹⁴ ibid. : p. 76.

¹⁵ Appelfeld, op cit. Hebrew, p. 132.

Thus history - communal and individual - reasserts itself in Bartfuss' consciousness by way of an individual presence in the shape of Theresa's body. Her body (= her presence, her identity) operates on him in an opposite way to the manner in which his body affects the rest of society. His body, marked as it is by a personal exposure to a communal experience, has become a general symbol of hope immortal:

"ממנו אני מצפה לגדולות".¹⁶

- says an observer. His body has become the property of the many and stands as a quasi-individuated, yet representations expression of the Jewish people: fatally wounded many times, but still alive.

When thinking about the Holocaust we inevitably remember the many and thus think in terms of the many and thus in terms of the abstract or symbolic. We lose sight of the very personal experience of the physical degradation and pain of its victims. Stripped to the bare essentials of survival, all that is left is the body, its sensations and suffering. The state this experience brings a person to is, in a sense, regressive as, like the infant, the victim's focus becomes aligned with an intensity of bodily consciousness.

When the infant is in this state, it is still prelinguistic and is, as yet, without separate identity, existing in a sea of sameness, not knowing the difference between body/self and other bodies/outside world. In this universe it experiences movement (most often the mother's

¹⁶ *ibid.* : p. 122.

movement, often a rocking movement) and inchoate sound. When sound becomes more coherent and is sensed as a mark of difference, the process of identity formation begins. It entails a separation from the mother. When the sounds become words, become language, the sense of separation becomes more acute. This phase - The Law of the Father, has the father as object entering as language to deny the child the all-pervasive harmony of total union with the mother. Functioning adults cannot regress so far as to reenter the initial prelinguistic condition. But it is possible that, in being forced to live with an excess of bodily consciousness, the adult with early, albeit unconscious, memory of that state will be thrown back towards it and actively desire its comforting incoherence. This is the case with Bartfuss. Although his connection with the sea may be explained in terms of his personal history (the stay on the beach in Italy), and similarly the need for the rocking motion of the bus may be associated with the year long trip to the camp, they also reflect his need to return to a primal oneness.

That those years of being starved and cramped:

מורעבים ודחוסים בקרונות משא...¹⁷

- in a way that deadened and repressed feeling:

בזה אחר זה קהו ההרגשות.¹⁸

¹⁷ *ibid.* : p. 114.

¹⁸ *ibid.* : p. 118.

- where all that remained was the proximity of body, which drew the map of Bartfuss' subsequent desire. This may be seen in the type of sexual liaisons he chooses, which accord with a prelinguistic form of desire. Note his first dalliance with Rosa:

הוא אמר לה, בואי והיא קמה והלכה אחריו. וכך היה למחרת. היא לא
שאלה. (...)
אפילו לשמו לא שאלה. (...) שעה או שעתיים היו מתעלסים. לאחר מכן היה
פורש ממנה בלא להניח לה אפילו מלה אחת.¹⁹

He likes her at the beginning because of her silence - "her silence charmed him."²⁰ Later, in Israel, his casual sexual interludes with others follow the same wordless pattern. Bartfuss' desires strive towards the prelinguistic wholeness of the infant's world.

But Bartfuss is an adult who cannot fully achieve this state. And thus alongside this form of regression, he is fixed in the later developmental stage of the anal. This is the mechanism by which he protects himself, as far as possible, from the invasion and intrusion of a world of which he is all too conscious. His anal aspect is expressed in his withholding and negating behavior and language:

¹⁹ *ibid.* : p. 95.

²⁰ Appelfeld, *op cit.* 1988, p. 18.

במשך השנים יצר הוא איזו לשון סירוב קצוצה, הברות מגן, שמלוות היו בהעוויית כתף שמאלית, שכל כולה אמרה: הניחי לי.²¹

It is most evident in the way he nurtures the treasure he hides. It is noteworthy that he hides the treasure in the dark and damp of the cellar, underground, as if in the recesses of his consciousness.

The treasure gives his existence meaning:

אלמלא המחבוא, שלו היה מקדיש הרבה מחשבה, אלמלא האוצר, היה הנכר גם שממה. האוצר כלל שלושים זהובים, חמשת אלפים דולר, שני רבידים, כמה שעוני זהב, תמונות אחדות של אמו, תמונת פספורט של אביו, ותמונה קטנה, מבית הספר כנראה, של אחותו. נכס זה היה קרוב לו ביותר. לו היה מקדיש את הנעימות שבמחשבותיו, כלאשה אהובה.²²

His treasure comprises artifacts from his past. Holding onto them, desiring them as a beloved woman and keeping them hidden, indicate the need to regress, to return to the past and hold it fast.

Bartfuss becomes set in a mixture of prelinguistic and anal regression in Italy, soon after Paula's birth, when she is struck with dysentery and battles with death for a fortnight. In

²¹ Appelfeld, op cit. Hebrew, p. 94.

²² ibid. : p. 112.

Paula's illness he is faced with the dramatization of the threat of the death he escaped in the camps, and recoiling from it, he imprisons himself in non-language and suppression:

באותם ימים קודחים גמלה ראשית שפתו, שפה ללא מלים, שפה שהיא
ציתות, דריכות חושים ורשמים. כבר אז למד להפוך כל רושם לאלם. אך
יותר מכל אי-מחשבה.²³

The retentive crystallizes in him when Rosa announces she is pregnant again.²⁴ Birth and death evoke in him the fear and anger of the Holocaust he has denied, and cause him to regress to earlier developmental stages. The second birth, to a retarded (not fully formed in normative forms) girl firmly establishes Bartfuss' regression.

It also might be productive to view this regression in its association with his relationship to the women in his life. This will be developed following. While the text does not describe the bodily experience of the Holocaust itself, the traces of this experience can be observed in the recurring references to the body in the post Holocaust world. People are usually described in terms of their bodies. The survivors have, for the most part, changed in physical aspect. Most of the women in the story (as well as some of the men) have become fat. While this condition may be seen as a natural consequence of aging, and as a change

²³ *ibid.* : p. 98.

²⁴ Appelfeld, *op cit.* 1988, p. 22.

wrought by living in a peaceful world, its repeated mention seems to imbue it with extra meaning.

Rosa becomes fat after the birth of her daughters, just when her silence breaks into insistent, nagging and demanding speech. Her broadening is associated with her entry into motherhood and into language. Her thickening is inscribed upon her by the Holocaust, and more specifically is a response to Bartfuss' ongoing, repressed experience of the Holocaust. It is the result of a development of the acquisitive in her which arises as a result of Bartfuss' anal denial of her and her needs. She becomes somewhat anal as well and garners her own treasure - her daughters who become almost exclusively hers - which she withholds from Bartfuss.

Inasmuch as she becomes the mother of specific children, Rosa ceases to be the inchoate murmuring representation of the all-encompassing undefined mother who is but the extension and base of Bartfuss' consciousness and becomes specific mother and specific voice. It is at this time that he recoils from her and even tries to escape her and the children. From now on he finds her repugnant. He shudders at her description of her daughters as "nature girls" (with the sexual implication of the term) and is repulsed by her use of cosmetics. She can no longer be desirable to him and the nameless female turned mother (entering to a world of family culture) turned 'whore' (with her cosmetics, the adornment of her body associates her with gender and body specific culture, which is a reminder of the indignities heaped upon bodies and gender constructions in the Holocaust) becomes for him the ultimate symbol of all he need gird himself against.

Theresa too has become fat. Her fat may also be seen as a protective mechanism, a fortressing of devised boundaries. When she and Bartfuss met in the transit camp she was thin. She was the one face that stood out on the "long road" to the camp:

ובעוד הכל נעול וחשוך הפציעו פניה של תרז. היו שם פנים רבות, רזות ומעונות אבל על פניה של תרז חפה איזה אור נקי, מיסוד התכלת. וכל אותו לילה הם דיברו על האחים קארמזוב.²⁵

Then Theresa stood out in her association with language, now she is fat and does not want to remember or speak to Bartfuss. Fat, also a form of garnering, has replaced her language. But despite her present condition and because of her earlier individuated form, she inspires in an already prepared Bartfuss (his chest pains could be seen as a mark of the opening up of his solar plexus = his feelings) the wish to remember.

"רציתי להחליף כמה זכרונות".²⁶

- he replies to her inquiry when she asks what he wants.

It is after seeing her and after remembering that Bartfuss begins to release the hold of the anal and moves away from the early, primitive psychological structures. He begins to

²⁵ Appelfeld, op cit. Hebrew, p. 115.

²⁶ ibid. : p. 120.

think in terms of abstract qualities, now desirous of an altruism and aware of his meanness and withholding, and defines generosity in terms of a post-Holocaust communal obligation:

"הייתי צריך להיות נדיב יותר. אנשים שהיו בשואה צריכים להיות

נדיבים... " ²⁷

And together with this statement comes the admission that language is unavoidable now in his later years, is more than a repressed substratum:

"בשנה האחרונה אני מרגיש איזו חולשת דעת לא מובנת. כל השנים מנעתי

עצמי מן הדיבור. כבר באיטליה הייתי עקבי וחד. אבל בשנה האחרונה

שוטפים אותי הדיבורים. מלים. אינני יודע למה. סלח לי שאני מספר לך

זאת. מעולם לא הרשיתי לעצמי לספר זאת. כשלעצמי איני אוהב

כשמטילים עלי דיבורים. אני שונא דיבורים. אבל בשנה האחרונה הם

שוטפים אותי... " ²⁸

It is at this time too that he begins to move away from his former refuge, the sea. ²⁹

²⁷ *ibid.* : p. 131.

²⁸ *ibid.* : p. 130.

²⁹ Appelfeld, *op cit.* 1988, p. 74.

It is now that he makes contact with Sylvia, the woman who provides him refuge and teaches him the meaning of generosity. Sylvia, in contrast to most of the other women in the tale, is thin, and thus ungirded and undefended:

...אשה רזה, חצופה ובלא שום תו של רוך.³⁰

She is very much in the realm of language. She graduated from a Hebrew high school, loves Jewish Law and modern poetry:

עתה שקועה בעצמה ומעשנת בלא הרף, הפילה היא על בארטפוס אותו סתיו

איזה תחושה כי יש בידה מלים כדי למשותו מתוך מיוון שהוא שקע בו.³¹

She helps him into the world of forms and human culture, and she does this by way of words.³²

She echoes his present sentiments about generosity, telling him he should be more generous.

³³ Thus it is that a woman, who is not inscribed by Bartfuss' dual reactions to the Holocaust - she is not fat and is thus neither formless mother or retentive withholder - operates here

³⁰ Appelfeld, op cit. Hebrew, p. 145.

³¹ ibid. : p. 145.

³² Appelfeld, op cit. 1988, p. 97.

³³ ibid. : p. 98.

much in the manner of the Law of the Father: she brings him back towards the adult world of social relationships and of ethics and she does this by acting as individuated sound.

Bartfuss finally gives expression to that which Sylvia has taught him, albeit in a somewhat distorted manner. Near the end of the book he partially unburdens himself of his accumulated riches when he forces his money on impoverished Marion, who is fixed in withdrawal and entrapment. She too has become fat and does not remember anything of the past.

Thus is Bartfuss finally released from his stasis. He is finally redeemed from the tyranny of his body. His senior years accord him his secret hope:

בסתור לבו קיווה כי הימים יזמנו לו מעשים, הקרבה, איזו צלילה אשר תטהר

את גופו.³⁴

At the end of the tale, when Bartfuss releases his hold on the body and its psychic memories and allows them to enter language and concept, he undergoes a process of individuation and enters into the world of adulthood. It is just when he abandons his will that was formerly all focused on withholding and repressing and protecting the self and its material possessions in a shell of exclusiveness; as he exchanges this strongly maintained will for willessness, and as a result enters into the oblivion of deep sleep, that he becomes individual, a separate identity,

³⁴ Appelfeld, op cit. Hebrew, pp. 98-99.

and the twin regressive cores that are inexorably bound to the Holocaust evaporate and allow for a more mature ego-formation. Bartfuss is now freed of the immortality imposed on him by communal will. He is no longer a fallacious answer, a living emblem of survival. He can enter the forgetfulness first of sleep and later of individual death.

**THE GASH IN THE FLESH WHERE THE PAIN COMES OUT:
STORIES OF THE OTHER IN D. GROSSMAN'S *THE SMILE OF THE LAMB***

Lamb is an anthology, a Rosetta stone, of secret languages, symbolic systems of communication.

John Leonard in "The Nation" - May 27, 1991.

Born in Jerusalem in 1954, David Grossman belongs to the first generation of post-Independence, post-Holocaust Israeli writers, whose whole experience - political, cultural, psychological and social - is of the Israeli nation-state that came into being six years before his birth. Shaked, in an article addressing Israeli writing in the 90s, proclaims him - "a legitimate heir of the New Wave writers (as) he took up the heritage and rebelled from within,"¹ by "transcend(ing) the boundaries...(and) struggle(ing) against...norms and remold(ing) them."²

The story of the battle for individual versus group expression in modern Hebrew literature can be traced in the four novels David Grossman has written to date. His first novel, *The Smile of the Lamb*, (1983) addresses the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also deals with the idiosyncratic and psychological. The second novel, *See Under: Love*, (1986) is a story of childhood, and of a writer's coming into being, while its thematic kernel is the

¹ Gershon Shaked, *Darkness Under the Sun*, Modern Hebrew Literature, Autumn/Winter 1993, p. 5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Holocaust and its effects on the second-generation Israeli. By the third novel, *The Book of Intimate Grammar*,³ (1990) the stress moves almost entirely to the personal, albeit with a modicum of leeway which could allow for a symbolically associated reading of the national. The book is a portrait of a male child's arrested development at puberty, which he is not able to overcome, and which leads to his possible, though unintentional, self-inflicted demise. The chronological setting, Israel in its puberty of the 1960s, and the father's tale of escape from a concentration camp in Europe, allow for the national dimension. The fourth novel, *The Zigzag Child*, (1994) breaks with the thematic of the national. It is the story of an individual, a young boy coming to manhood (in Jewish terms, reaching the age of thirteen), when he discovers his heretofore unknown and uniquely personal history.

This chapter focuses on Grossman's first novel *The Smile of the Lamb*, on its melding of the personal and the national, and its attempts to find expression for both in language and the act of writing.⁴ The backdrop of the novel is the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land

³ Shaked, op cit., p. 5:

The Book of Internal Grammar - the story of an introverted child growing up in Jerusalem on the eve of the 1967 Six Day War - is committed to place and time, without pretending to represent them. But in contrast to *See Under: Love*, here Grossman is more concerned with the effect of the personal, psychological past on the character in the present than in a historiosophical summary of a collective problem.

⁴ Gila Ramras-Rauch, in *The Arab in Israeli Literature*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1989, pp. 188-192, concludes that the book "is about self-estrangement in psychological time, and how people can victimize others by means of love and hate; it is about psychological and political violence," but adds that, "above all this is a story about stories and texts. The inclination to see life as literature gives outline and structure to existence." (188) (In this context see my remarks about the formal structure of the text as a

in the West Bank in the early 1970s (1972). The characters in the book embrace a representative spectrum of Israeli society, while the Palestinian world finds its voice by way of a rather uncommon and romanticized exemplar, and the small cast of characters, real and imagined, introduced by him. Nurit Gertz says of this work:

...the novel succeeds in extricating itself, to a large degree, from the old stereotype as it moves beyond the conventional reversal of (Jewish/Arab) roles. It does not merely reverse the positions of Jew and Arab within the same hierarchy; nor does it simply exchange one hierarchy for another. Rather, it destroys all categorizations. In effect, it turns the very collapse of the hierarchies into a theme.

whole.) She also quotes Grossman (192), talking about the relationship between this book and a later text *The Yellow Wind* (1987), a collection of essays on life on the West Bank:

Seven years ago, I felt I had to write something about the occupation. I could not understand how an entire nation like mine, an enlightened nation by all accounts, is able to train itself to live as a conqueror without making its own life wretched. What happened to us? How were they able to pass their values on to me during these years? For two years I sat and worked out those thoughts and dilemmas of mine. I wrote a novel, *The Smile of the Lamb*, and the more I wrote, the more I understood that the occupation is a continuing and stubborn test for both sides trapped in it. It is the sphinx lying at the entrance to each of us, demanding that we give a clear answer. That we take a stand and make a decision. Or at least relate. The book was a sort of answer to my riddle of the sphinx.

Years passed, and I discovered that one does not have to battle that sphinx. That you can go mad if you allow it to torture you with questions day and night. And there were other matters, and other things to write about and do. Because there are other sphinxes as well.

The last paragraph explains the progression of his literature from themes of the national to the individual.

Having disposed of the dichotomy that posits the Jew against the Arab, *The Smile of the Lamb* does not construct another opposition but rather devises a pluralism of identities and viewpoints. Thus *The Smile of the Lamb* embodies a new direction in Hebrew literature...of an open culture that recognizes the other as an other and does not try to turn it into an "I".⁵

The representational and often stereotypic attributes of the characters in the book are ameliorated by their personality traits which are highly idiosyncratic, and by their ongoing strivings to reach an inner truth. Hierarchies are somewhat disrupted, but their structures still obtain. Gertz notes, that "the dichotomy of Arabs and Jews...(is) replace(d)...with one of daydreamers and realists, between outsiders and members of the collective, and that, "The collective is juxtaposed to the world of the outsider."⁶ This is a multi-voiced text, made up of memory and difference, whose intricacies are often beyond strict dichotomy, though differences still suggest themselves in the form of dyadic opposites, despite an impressive kaleidoscopic play which searches an impossible redemption through language and does not find it.

⁵ Nurit Gertz, *Grossman's The Smile of the Lamb: In Quest of an Authentic Humanity*, *Hebrew Studies* 34 (1993), pp. 80-81. The final sentence of the quote is actually Gertz's summary of Foucault's vision of an "open culture," taken from the same paragraph in Gertz.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 89.

The Gash

The movement of the tale is channeled through the journey to, and arrival in, a colonized, and thus forbidden and negated, terrain. The traveller is a young Iraqi-Israeli soldier named Uri (root=light) and the destination is a cave next to the West Bank village - Andel (root=to embellish). Uri's self initiated mission is to tell Chilmi (root=dream - heb.; setting right; patience; composure; quality of thinking {also 'dream'} - arb.), an old, half-blind, smelly and, by societal norms quite crazy, Palestinian who has become Uri's spiritual father, of the death of Chilmi's adopted and favorite son Yazdi at the hands of an Israeli military unit. Uri, has escaped military detention (he is detained because he overturned a table full of food on an officer who refused to respond to two Arab women whose house had been violated) in the camp where he has been serving under the command of his Polish-born friend, Katzman. These altruistic, if somewhat impetuous, actions are spurred by his despondency at discovering three days earlier a terrible deceit perpetrated on his marriage by his golden-haired, Ashkenazi-Israeli psychotherapist wife, Shosh.

When Uri arrives at the cave, Chilmi immediately knows what happened. His knowledge and pain invert his whole being, so that he, who but the day before had admonished Yazdi for his association with Fatah, saying that might was not the way to overcome the Israelis, but weakness, which is:

- לא לשתוק; להיות חלשים מנוצה. שבירים מביצה להיות.⁷

for -

- זו תהיה מלחמה אחרת. ארוכה וקשה. וכלי הנשק יהיו בה העקשות

והסבלנות והחולשה האין-סופית. הם לא יעמדו בכך.

- now takes up a weapon, Yazdi's gun, and threatens to kill Uri, his beloved surviving son, if all Palestinian land is not vacated by the next dawn.

Katzman arrives in Andel with a group of soldiers to save Uri. Against the advice of one of his officers, who is convinced they have stumbled on a nest of terrorists, he refuses to contact Headquarters and goes up to Chilmi's cave on his own. There on a ledge he and Uri discuss the situation while Chilmi looks over them, gun in hand. The soldiers in the village below become restive and steal their way up to the three. Chilmi realizes it is all over and raises the gun to shoot Uri. Katzman stands between them, and Chilmi realizes that Yazdi (=Uri) cannot die all over again, and shoots Katzman instead. Thus Katzman dies on his 39th birthday, and the tale ends with Chilmi physically overcome by the soldiers, who lead him and Uri away from his beloved Andel, while:

⁷ David Grossman, *Hiyukh haGedi*, Siman Keri'a and hakibbutz hameuchad, Tel Aviv, 1983, p. 31.

...הרחק משם, בעיר ירושלים, ממריא מסוק, ואצבעו של הנווט מגששת בין

המשבצות הזעירות על המפה הצבאית שלפניו, מחפשת את ענדל.⁸

This is the core tale, and its geographical loci are two points in the Occupied West Bank - Juni (the military camp) and Andel (Chilmi's village).

A parallel tale, set at the same time, takes place in the geographically close, but experientially distant, Tel Aviv. The carrier of the Tel Aviv story is Shosh, Uri's wife, who sits in the Hillman Institute for problem boys where she works, trying to unravel a crime she has committed (she seduced one of her charges - Mordi - who subsequent to her later sexual rejection of him, committed suicide) by speaking into a tape-recorder, to "get past the steely core of (her) lie"⁹ and looking "to find the way back to herself."¹⁰ She is finally released from this task by her father, Avner, the Labor-Zionist leader, and the old man, ex-Partisan fighter in the Holocaust, Zusia, who lives in her parents' house and is her alternate father/mother/grandfather, who have become worried about her and come to take her home. This tale ends with the three leaving the institute after a battle between Zusia and the Institute goose, Sigmund, who is heard rustling around outside, so that they are all convinced that

⁸ *ibid.* : p. 281-282.

⁹ David Grossman, *The Smile of the Lamb*, trans. Betsey Rosenberg, Washington Square Press, Pocket Books, New York, 1990, p. 267.

¹⁰ Grossman, *op cit.*, 1983, p. 8.

some dangerous presence threatens them, and Shosh is sure "Someone's been spying on (her) all evening." ¹¹

While these two story lines are clear of themselves, they by no means account for the 'whole' of the narrative, but are rather a map over which is spread a narratological extravaganza. *The Smile of the Lamb* is a weaving of many tales which spiral in endless directions and into which intrude times, places and events, actual, possible and fantastic, in a ceaseless and detailed telling of tales.

The most present feature of this book, by its very nature an ink-written, paper-inscribed, bound text, is the animation of voice and the suggestion of boundless possibility. And yet, much as the bound book encapsulates and holds as one the strated monologues within, so does a very stringent formal control chart a course between them, with a simplifying structural imposition similar to that overlain on the variegated terrain by the pilot's military map at the narrative's end. The book is a collation of narratives dominated by a perfect formal symmetry, and more subtle, but evident, strings of thematic echoes (such as surrogacy, doubling and transposition) running through it, which both shift and connect meaning.

The text is laid out in the form of a number of narrative cycles, with each cycle comprising three or four voices. The whole is symmetrically arranged and there is a congruence between the thematic content and the narratological formulation. Each chapter is accorded one voice, and the voices are those of the main characters in the story/ies - Uri,

¹¹ Grossman, op cit., 1990, p. 308.

Katzman, Chilmi and Shosh. There are, in all, seven narrative cycles, and one external chapter that forms the end of the text and the *denouement* of the tale. The narrative arrangement is so stylized that two 'whole' (four-voiced) cycles embrace the three defective (three-voiced) cycles on either side. The main voice is Uri's, who most markedly carries the impetus of the plot and binds the two connected 'present' stories in the most obvious way. His central position is marked by the following structural elements: His voice creates the first narrative, and his voice is present in every narrative cycle, whereas the other three voices, which belong to the more subsidiary character constructions in terms of an overarching narrative, each miss a turn in the defective narrative cycles.

Uri and Katzman are placed at the two edges of the macro-narrative, in whose terms (by way of the *fabula*) they function as antagonists to each other where the oppositional placement is a formal expression of their function as actors in the tale.

Similarly three of the voices (Uri's, Chilmi's and Shosh's) speak from within the first-person mode, while Katzman's is expressed in an impersonal third-person narration. This more distanced representational fashion presages his final distancing at the end of the tale when he is killed. And there is an array of characters (Avner, Zusia, Leah [Shosh's mother], Yazdi and Mordi are the most important among them) who are historically causative, but are not actors in the immediate gesture of the story lines, and thus, despite their operative force, are not given the immediacy of their own narrative. The thematic knit which both holds and moves meaning derives from repeated patterns of surrogacy, doubling and transposition, that correspond yet create ongoing motions of difference.

War and suffering close in all around the story, as do prejudice, hope and fabrication. Uri is a first generation Iraqi-Israeli, his parents and grandfather are Iraqi Jews. His father and uncle are caught by the Jordanian military in the War of Independence. Only his father returns, filled with hatred for the Arabs, so much so that he composes prayers and גימטריות for their downfall and destruction, which he publishes as a special Siddur. He exiles Uri's grandfather (who spent the war hiding under his bed) to a shed in the yard, calling him a "coward and deserter."¹² Grandfather Amram regresses on his son's return, reverts to speaking Arabic and spends his days deciphering messages emitted by the ants who make their home in his little shack, and telling Uri their "real stories." He shrinks physically, calls Uri strange names, puts notes in his mattress and:

...ומגלה לי על עצמי דברים שלא ידעתי, כי לא לי קרו.¹³

- yet Uri understands:

ואני תפשתי בשכל של ילד את שצופן המשוגע של ההזיות שלו, כאן-יא-מא

כאן, היה, היה איש בישראל...¹⁴

¹² Grossman, op cit., 1983, p. 14.

¹³ ibid. : p. 15.

¹⁴ loc cit.

Amram stretches across the years and portends Chilmi who enters Uri's life some twenty four years later. Chilmi too is physically shrunk. He too deciphers messages written with leaves and twigs and insects left him, in his opinion, in tree-trunk cracks by his idiot son, Yazdi. And he tells Uri stories about himself that didn't happen to him, and sometimes calls him Yazdi. He speaks in a language that others don't understand, and lives in a cave outside the village, exiled from his immediate community. And like Uri's father he composes and invents texts to sustain his obsession. But whereas Laniado senior's creations derive from hate and are printed, Chilmi's stories are told often told in silence:

...ומצייר בהבל פי חלומות על עלעלי העפעפיים שלו.

- with some hostility towards words and a total dismissal of writing:

כמה מעט דיברנו. אולי שלושה סיפורים סיפרתי לו בכל שנות אהבתנו. אולי ארבעה. אינני סבור שעמדו בינינו יותר ממאה מלים. אבל הן היו היפות, הנכספות שבמלים, בכל קפל שלהן נעו החיים. וכעת-כל-כך הרבה מלים יש לנו, ואיננו אומרים דבר.

and:

ורק שכעבור כמה חודשים כבר היה הקסם נפוג. החיים היו נקרשים על פני
 התינוקות, ונעשים לאותיות מתות. למכתבים חסרי-חיים שנשלחו ביד
 רשלנית. איש מהם לא נמלט מכך, והרעיון החי שהולידם, היה מתעמעם
 והולך במהירות, ונעלם כליל כשאך למדו לומר את מלותיהם הראשונות.¹⁵

When the word "traitor" is painted in red on a rock outside his cave, he does not erase it but
 paints over it with green, even though he is told what it says (he is illiterate). Uri asks him
 why he so carefully has painted over the exact shapes of the letters, he answers that:

הרי את האותיות הוא ממילא לא קורא, ולכן כיסה רק את הטפשות ואת
 השנאה שהיו בצבע אדום, כעת זה אפילו נעים להסתכל. כמו קישוט, ואיך
 אני לא מבין את זה.¹⁶

Chilmi's stories are told to remember, but they tell a fancied and beloved past that did not
 happen. And Uri, an adult now, understands the code of Chilmi's fantasies, just as he
 understood grandfather Amram's in his youth.

Chilmi becomes surrogate father and grandfather to Uri, and Uri whose father too
 thought he could become "אידיוט נהדר,"¹⁷ becomes son to Chilmi, and finally a transposed

¹⁵ *ibid.* : p. 33.

¹⁶ *ibid.* : p. 46.

¹⁷ *ibid.* : p. 49.

idiot Yazdi. When Yazdi runs off with Fatah (the gang of reciters, in Chilmi's words), he abnegates the divine idiocy Chilmi has toiled so to cultivate in him. In an antithetically parallel manner, Uri's father "הגלה אותי לפנימיה החקלאית" ¹⁸ for fear of his talent for idiocy. Thus Chilmi and Uri meet and join by dint of their common need, and are united by the tendencies and history they share.

Chilmi too is unsatisfied with his parentage and invents for himself a loving father - Darius, and then another, glorious father - Sha'ban ibn Sha'ban - after egging his hostile and distorted biological father, who has banished him and left him bound - עקוד, to suicide. ¹⁹ Darius is a savior, wise-old man figure, and Sha'ban ibn Sha'ban a brave and lusty lion-hunter who lives in a country without lions. The lion-hunter and Greek monk (Darius) combine to create for him a wonderful past. Darius teaches Chilmi about another, invented Andel, almost an ענדל של מעלה, and Sha'ban affords it an earthly glory. ²⁰

Uri who was a lonely marginalized child with only a rather unfortunate red-eyed dog for a friend, also lives in invention. His one love prior to Shosh was a woman named Ruti with whom he came into contact through an exchange of letters during his time in the army. When he insists on meeting her it turns out that she is an invention, created by his fellow

¹⁸ loc cit.

¹⁹ For an analysis of the story of the *akeda* and the novel, see Yisrael Bermah, *Khemo Milim al Chut Til*, in *Moznayim*, January 1984.

²⁰ The lion motif is interesting in its relationship to the Lion of Judah.

soldiers in mockery of him. He severs the relationship, but never ceases to regret having done so.

There are countless permutations such as these in the novel, and they turn in on themselves with ever greater complexity, so that the reader too is thrown into the web, searching for the core of the lie, looking for the elusive symmetry or meaning of things, leaving us ever-vigilant, like Katzman:

...קשוב תמיד לאלה העשויים לחיות ולהסתתר מתחתיו, במעבה האדמה או

המחשבה.²¹

The Smile of the Lamb is a tale of distance in many ways. It is a text woven of many types of distance - between people, between nations and the most searing of all, intrapsychical distance. Its weave is made of the distance between expression and its impossibility; of various types of expression that are not only often mutually unintelligible, but which for the most part do not understand themselves. Set within the tightly constructed narratological framework is the expression of chaos seeking order, or in Katzman's words, in search of - of things; a symmetry misleadingly provided by those formal features mentioned above which serve as apparent markers that hint at some fixity which is only illusory.

²¹ *ibid.* : p. 20.

In the interior monologue (his voice enters his narratives directly at pivotal points, so that the interior monologues change from deflected - by way of their third person construction - to direct), preceding his intuition of the magical nature of symmetry, Katzman muses that "a birthday is a landmark...that hints at consistency":

...ציון דרך, וציון דרך מרמז על קביעות, על חזרה ומימוש של סימטריה
תובענית כלשהי שבשורשי הדברים כולם.²²

This conclusion is undermined by the words immediately following:

קצמן היה חוקר נלהב של הסימטריה הזאת, משום שהטילה בו פחד. אפילו
להגדיר אותה לא הצליח העולם. יכול היה לומר עליה לשוב דברים
מעורפלים, כגון שהיא כמין חשבון אחרון ומאוזן-סוף-סוף של כל המעשים.
אבל בהסבר הזה לא היה די. כדי להכיר את הסימטריה המאגית הזאת
היה צורך בחוש מיוחד: מעין משוש פנימי דק. קצמן יכול היה לדמות אותה
לעצמו כשלווה גדולה, ועם זאת כביטוי של עונש אכזרי הממתין לו. את
הסתירה שבכך לא ידע ליישב. הוא היה מחפש אחריה בכל התרחשות, עורך
נסיונות זעירים ואינסופיים כדי לגלותה בחייו שלו. מעולם לא הצליח בכך.
אם אמנם היה היגיון סמוי כלשהו בטבע הדברים קצמן לא חשף אותו. הוא

²² ibid. : p. 21.

מצא שהוא גורם סבל לאנשים שחיבב. שדווקא אבזרים ופרטי מציאות יומיומיים צופנים עבורו איום שאינו מתקחה כלל. הוא ידע שנחוצה לו עבודת איסוף כבירה, כדי שיוכל לאתר את חוט ההיגיון החמקני, לגעת בו לרגע, ואולי - להיוושע מעט. משום כך, אולי, היה צורך בקדחנות, באלימות כמעט, את האנשים הספורים שעימם היה לו קשר כלשהו. כל אחד מהם היה רמז. כיוון למחשבה. אבל לו היה דרוש יותר מזה: ידיעת הפרטים כולם, כל קטעי הפסיפס; מבט שיצלוף בכל החי בהעלם אחד, ובכך יאיר לו, לפחות, את ההיגיון הסימטרי המונח בשורש חייו של אדם אחד. הוא היה נבון דיו לוותר על התקווה שיכיר את עצמו אותו מבט.²³

- where Katzman's conclusions and desire stand as an articulation of the meandering and detailed narrative concoction that wrestles with the fallacious overlying formal and thematic order of the book, and which is the expression of *The Smile of the Lamb* itself.

Most of the characters in the text seek order in different ways, yet order here does not mean an hierarchical hegemony of logic, but rather sense in the meaning of understanding (or a *fiat*), or the resolution that getting beyond the promise of:

...השקר (ה)מצמיח על עצמו את שכבות העור של החיים.²⁴

²³ loc cit.

²⁴ ibid. : p. 12.

These searches are not only individual, but are culturally coded and historically determined as well. They are enmeshed within the varieties of Israeli culture, and subtend towards a less time-bound and more figurative notion of Arabic lore, which serves in this text both as an expression of difference, and as an idealized-aesthetized escape from the constraints of West Bank as well as Israeli reality.

Uri, the ethnically "eastern" Israeli, tries to look for himself through an identification with others. He first allows himself to be absorbed by the Ashkenazi Avidan family in his search for narrative. Yet through them he sees not himself but, the already Ashkenazi, Shosh. His return to Chilmi constitutes a return to his ethnicity, to a world represented here as magical, imaginative and arabesque-like.²⁵

The European-born Katzman, looks for himself mirrored in Uri's faithful listening, by pouring his words into him:

עד שקצמן חש שהמלים שלו הן ריח חיים שהוא נופח בבשרו ובדמו של

הקשב הזה.²⁶

Shosh's search is institutionally bound. Her connection with the psychological, and thus personal, even while caught within the institutional, is an echo of the position of modern

²⁵ It should be noted that he is first absorbed into paternal relationships in the Avidan household; with Avner (as father figure) and Zusia (as grandfather figure).

²⁶ *ibid.* : p. 22.

Hebrew women authors. Whereas the tension of the individual and the communal is an emphatic feature of male writing, the many find little representation in women's writing, though the intensity of the political reality in Israel grasps even the most private parts of life in a societal hold.

Shosh looks for herself through the framework of Viktor Frankl's *logotherapy*, which holds meaning as the important key to things,²⁷ and whose name itself denotes words and their meaning (although Frankl speaks of the inefficiency of language in and of itself).²⁸ Partner to her discourse is the magnetic tape, which moves through time in a mark of linearity, and onto which she attempts to spew her outpourings. Unbeknown to her all her thoughts remain inside and she does not voice them, so that the tape does not record anything. The inefficacy of empty language is emphasized as she searches the endless written pages in Mordi's file for an answer, for exoneration, knowing all the while that:

וכבר כעת, עוד לפני שהתחלתי לעלעל שוב במאות העמודים הרשומים בכתב
ידי, בשלשלת הפנינית, המזויפת, של האותיות המוכרות לי, כבר אני יודעת

²⁷ See, among other places, Viktor E. Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning: Psychotherapy and Humanism*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1978. Frankl, on Logotherapy, *ibid.*, p. 17: "Here man is revealed as a being in search of meaning - a search whose futility seems to account for the many ills of our age." And, *ibid.*, p. 19: "A literal translation of the term "logotherapy" is "therapy through meaning." Of course, it could also be translated as "healing through meaning,""

²⁸ *ibid.* : p. 89:

Unless it has a message, language is not really language. (...)

Language is more than self-expression. Language is always pointing to something beyond itself. In other words, it is always self-transcendent.

שלא אגלה שם דבר חדש. 'א' יוליד לב' ו-ב' ל-ג', ובסוף הדרך ימתין לי, כמו
מסקנה של מטורף, מותו של מורדי...²⁹

- and that she'll never be able "to bridge the apparently transparent distance between herself and that conclusion."³⁰ Revision, reconstruction, recitation avail naught, and she is vanquished in her attempts by the arrival of the somewhat inebriated Avner and Zusia, and by the interference of Sigmund himself, who stands for that which is beyond the apparent logic of consciousness.

Katzman, Uri and Shosh form a triangle or, rather, a *menage a trois*. Uri is married to Shosh, and is Katzman's close friend. One of the few he has ever had in his entire life. Katzman is very attractive to women, and is attracted to them in turn. He tries to avoid forming a relationship with Shosh. The only place he has ever felt at home, if only for a few moments, is inside a woman, where the sense of containment is evocative of his earlier home in a hole of the ground, where he lived while in hiding during the Holocaust. But however much he is attracted to women he finds that he is soon disenchanted, and drops them. Willy-nilly he becomes involved with Shosh. This time however he finds himself more caught up and more a victim of the relationship than ever before. The reason for this is Shosh's connection to Uri, who matters to him much more than Shosh. He sees himself (the European-born Jew) as pouring life into Uri (the Israeli-born, Arab Jew), and that life

²⁹ *ibid.* : p. 37.

³⁰ Grossman, *op cit.*, 1990, p. 37.

(=sperm = his words = *logos spermatikos*, the fructifying word) becoming their children and making them unable to part:

...ולו רק מתוך אחריות לרכים האלה.³¹

There is a peculiar sexuality that overarches the entire text. It is in a way about relationships of power and violence. Uri is cuckolded by Katzman in an utterly shameless and humiliating manner. But Katzman's physical penetration of Shosh is really a penetration of Uri, perpetrated on Uri's marriage bed. He also invades Uri's house and becomes a fixture there. The real relationship is between him and Uri.

But his penetration (his words) is meaningless, and its lack of efficacy is brought to a head at the end of the tale when he is impaled, as it were, on the gash of Uri's mouth. The gash is the mien of Uri's smile, the (silent) smile of the lamb (so called by Shosh and repeated by Katzman)³² which at the end Katzman sees as:

...מין מסכה ערמומית ומרושעת, קללה חרישית שאורי מטיח בו, באין בו כוח

לומר את המלים.³³

³¹ Grossman, op cit., 1983, p. 23.

³² *ibid.* : p. 18.

³³ *ibid.* : p. 280.

The smile thus described by Katzman contains the violence of passivity and sacrifice. In a complete reversal of convention it is this passive smile that penetrates Katzman's consciousness (hypnotizing and thus immobilizing him), and ends his life via the retort of Chilmi's gun. Chilmi's gun becomes the penetrating counterpart of Uri's receptivity (= the frozen gash or smile on Uri's face); and much as Katzman sees Uri's features and the new malice etched upon them as expression of his very own evil and thus as an extension of himself and his own action (=activity), it is in fact Uri's type of action (=passivity, an analogy of Chilmi's earlier exhortation to Yazdi) that is the stronger, all-embracing and more potent. Katzman is finally penetrated and overcome by Uri via Chilmi's agency, when Chilmi is overcome by Yazdi's weapon, which strips him of the strength of his endless patience and infinite weakness.

The Smile of the Lamb is a fictional text that parades its fictional nature, and in the flaunting, negates it. The text spreads its invention over layers of extension and retraction, and so colonizes the expressivity of the fabula and overrides it. And yet the countless assertions of fictivity that pepper the text and repeatedly adduce fabrication, are themselves configured as narrative voice, of itself a fiction. Adductions of fictivity thus express and subvert themselves in recurring cycles.

The text of *The Smile of the Lamb* opens with a double negative: .ל.ל. ³⁴ The doubled negation is emphasized by the twice-occurring isolation of the most simple signifier of negation in Hebrew which is isolated in both instances by comprising a sentence *en toute*.

³⁴ *ibid.* : p. 7.

The semantic valencies which attach to this repeated and emphatic negation are denial, recoiling and protest. The visual effects of the repeating, short bi-consonantal word, contained and halted by way of two periods, are stark and jarring because they are clipped and unexpected. The surprise element of this primary structure in the text derives from its force of extra-textual referentiality, and plates the novel with its protest.

The double negation reflects both forward and backwards. The backward impetus contains the weight of an earlier presence. It confers upon the opening of the novel an implication that this is not the beginning of a text, but rather the continuation of some kind of discourse. Yet the leaf which precedes these words is unmarked and comprises an absence of visible text. But the absence is refuted by the imputation carried by the backward refractory of the first two words of the text, which render this visually empty page anything but blank. It is instead:

...החללים הריקים שאת הגנבת פנימה, גם הם כעת אותיות עם המון

משמעות.³⁵

- imbued with implicit possibility, with the blankness containing an intensity of murmuring of hidden words. Like a great thickness of sound which manifests as silence, this text's primary retrogressive referentiality spills backward and reverses its fictive present onto the depth of an unexpressed past.

³⁵ *ibid.* : p. 53.

The tension between what is, what is recorded and printed, what appears in and as words and the potentiality of words as yet unspoken and unrecorded or already spoken and not recorded; and words and the ways in which they are expressed, the material on which they are recorded, and the concomitant magnetism of that which is and that which is not, form the nexus from which this book widens in its many directions and to which unspecified point it retracts. This point, which is far from any point-material, is sung in the narrative by the repeated refrain - set in the words of Uri, the speaker of this opening doubled negation: - "כאן-יא-מא-כאן." The phrase is the Arabic equivalent of the English "once upon a time" or the Hebrew "היה היה." But whereas the English equivalent denotes a specificity of time, thereby according that which follows the quality of the actual, and the Hebrew equivalent seems to refer to some ontological actuality, whatever non-actual signification has attached to these conventions, the Arabic quite clearly denotes both non-existence and existence, by declaring that "it was or it wasn't."

The Smile of the Lamb's opening declarative is an avowal of "it was and it wasn't." The convention itself appears only at the end of the first paragraph, but the entire text preceding its statement serves as its exposition:

לא. לא. אני המצאתי את כולם. אני רוצה שתאמין לי, חילמי. ככה יהיה
 קל יותר לשנינו. את שוש שאהבתי, ואת שוש שעזבתי לפני שלושה ימים, ואת
 קצמן שנשאר רחוק-רחוק, באיטליה, וגם את הנער שמת מאהבה, שאפילו
 את השם שלו לא ידעתי. כולם. אפילו אותך, חילמי. ותדע, שכדאי לך

להיות הזיה שלי. שאצלי שקט ובטוח, והדברים הם בדיוק כמו שהם נראים.
 אין הפתעות בכלל. כמובן שלא הייתי מציע לך להיות חלק מהחיים שלי.
 שם מסוכן נורא, וערמומי, ושום דבר הוא לא כמו שהוא נראה. אבל בתור
 סיפור, חילמי, בתור כאן-יא-מא-כאן?³⁶

The opening doubled negative is clothed in the potentially uncomplicated and unmediated form of direct speech and set, it seems at this stage, within a dialogue of some kind. But the simplicity of this form is deceptive (in the present context) as it soon becomes apparent that the person addressed is enveloped in the self-conscious fiction of the address itself, and is himself part of a sheltering *kan-ya-ma-kan*, where it's "quiet and secure and not dangerous." But its shelter is given the lie to throughout the book, where fabrication often equals deceit, and things being not what they seem cause pain and even death, like Uri's smile which is finally poison to Katzman.

The fictionalized or real interlocutor in the opening paragraph is Chilmi, King of -כאן, *כאן-יא-מא-כאן* whose medium and order is the fantastic, or dream = *חלום*, used by him to escape the hurts of body and soul to a truth more noble in its invention; Chilmi who is finally snared by the slings of an insistent "it was." Yazdi is dead, and Chilmi's killed Katzman. Action and events cannot be escaped and do not lead one back to oneself. Rather, like the military map, they colonize and rule, not the land but the soul. And the inscription that binds is:

³⁶ *ibid.* : p. 7.

(ה)מלה שיש לה תרגום רק בגוף...³⁷

- which spurs the only attainable quest - "the confused and desperate search for the gash in the flesh from which finally the pain will depart":

זה חיפוש מבולבל ומיואש אחרי הפתח בבשר ממנו יצא סוף-סוף הכאב.³⁸

At the end of the macro-tale (Uri, Yazdi, Chilmi, Katzman) it is unclear who is finally the lamb that is sacrificed. Katzman is lacerated by Uri's frail receptivity; Chilmi is bound (עקוד) by the frustrated violence he courted as splendor and as wish-fulfillment in creating Sha'ban ibn Sha'ban, the Lion-hunter in the land without lions,³⁹ which has led him to the attempted sacrifice of his only surviving son - Uri, who like the biblical Isaac is saved by a surrogate, who in this instance is Katzman; Katzman, who is the ram; Yazdi, the favorite son, pierced by the worn recitations of Fatah, that find their idiom in the Israeli soldiers who kill him, or Uri, who is left without father or love, hanging without resolution or succor.

³⁷ *ibid.* : p. 8.

³⁸ *ibid.* : p. 16.

³⁹ For a reading of Chilmi's constructed fathers, see Gertz, *op cit.*, p. 86.

The Tel-Aviv Story: Shosh's Tale

האם חייכת אלי, פרופסור פרנקל שעל הקיר? האם ראיתי זיע
 קל חולף מתחת לאגוגית משקפיד? הרי נדמה לי שאתה רוחש
 לי חיבה. אין לך בעולם כולו תלמידה שביצעה את תורתך
 בדבקות כזאת כמוני. שידעה את הזולת בפנימיותו בדרך כזו
 של אהבה. אתה שותק. אתה זהיר כל-כך. האדם - כך אתה
 אומר תמיד - משמעות הוא מחפש, בורא לו צעצועים על פני
 הדף החלק של חייו. מנפח בלון ועף עימו. אבנר, אבא שלי,
 אומר לעומתך - האדם מחפש מילים. מה נותר לנו, הוא
 אומר, אם לא לתאר כהלכה את מה שאיננו יכולים לעשות
 היטב. מלים, שנוכל להציב עליהן לרגע רגל עייפה. מלים,
 כמו אבנים, באפיק נחל זורם.⁴⁰

David Grossman reaches towards the unsayable, and is in battle with words, looking for some truth, some authentic signified. The repeated refrain in this work, its chorus, if you will, is the grasping at expression, and the attempt to make language a meaningful sign-post, so that its parts are - "Words on which we can set, for a moment, our weary feet."⁴¹ This section looks at Shosh's story where the wrestling with words in search of a plausible truth on which to rest, is dealt with at greater length and more explicitly than elsewhere in the text.

Shosh's story accounts for the feminine narrative voice in *The Smile of the Lamb*. Her narratives are the longest in the book and, despite her absence from one of the story cycles, her voice is accorded the most space in the text. Hers is the only unmediated feminine voice, and its bulk stands in contrast to the absence of any other direct female articulation in the tale/s. (Her mother's voice is represented in a deflected manner; Chilmi's granddaughter,

⁴⁰ *ibid.* : p. 43.

⁴¹ The translation is my own.

Najach, is mute.) But the voice she uses is not really her own. She is rather a conductor of a number of other voices that play within her, she is their orchestrator, and is never able to authentically sound her own language.

Uri talks of Shosh's story-telling, and her capacity for fabrication and lies, in the first paragraphs of the book, where his opening remarks to Chilmi⁴² provide the rationale for the entire tale. He presents Shosh and the Tel Aviv story as yet another fiction-making ephemeral fictivity within the fiction/truth of the entire saga. After speaking about Chilmi's *kan-ya-ma-kan* and its relationship to legend, he says:

ואני חשבתי תמיד שדברים כאלה אפשריים רק ליד עץ הלימון שלך. בחשכה
 שבמערה שלך, בין המנופים הקטנים וגלגלי השיניים והמחיצות שעשויות
 מקורי עכביש. רק בין הקדרות שעשויות חרס, שאותן תמלא יום אחד אוויר
 קל במיוחד, ותנסה שוב פעם לעוף למקום אחר. ככה חשבתי תמיד, ומתברר
 שטעיתי: שיכול להיות כאן-יא-מא-כאן תל-אביבי,⁴³ באור חזק של שמש,
 באור בהיר של ניאון, בחדרים נקיים וצבועים לבן, במקומות שבהם מקליטים
 כל מלה שאתה מוציא מהפה, ואחר-כך רושמים אותה, גם שם.⁴⁴

⁴² See the comments on the opening paragraphs earlier in this chapter.

⁴³ The emphasis is mine.

⁴⁴ Grossman, *op cit.*, 1983, p. 7.

Uri thus includes not only Shosh, but all she represents - all the voices within her, which are the voices of the Israeli establishment - under the same umbrella of their seemingly opposite Other: The Palestinian world as embodied in Chilmi's eccentric and extreme configuration. The carefully detailed opposites: Tel Aviv's blinding sun and its searing neon lights, the sanitized whiteness of the Hillman Institute, and modern technology as represented by the tape-recorder, as against the darkness of Chilmi's cave, "with the little gears and cranes and cobwebby curtains, and the earthen jars,"⁴⁵ are opposite no longer.⁴⁶ There is a boundless possibility of invention and no actuality in all worlds, and words are not stepping stones on which to rest amidst "the flowing river."

Shosh works backwards, archaeologically, looking for truthful words. She tries to excavate and clear off the layers of the deception she longs to escape, but finds herself forever trapped in falsehoods, in circular dead-ends set "in the shape of the ring." Her voice is presented as a feminized presence of difference in the novel, but the difference is somewhat illusory, and is finally not a difference at all. The questions she poses in her talk are mainly questions of cultural determinism, in which are imbedded elements of national, socio-relational and intra-psychical concerns. Shosh is very much part of the Israeli establishment. Her parents are stalwarts of the old Ashkenazi mainstream. The family looks like an ideal family portrait of the latter-day Labor-Zionist movement. Avner, her father, is

⁴⁵ Grossman, op cit., 1990, p. 4.

⁴⁶ For an excellent and detailed commentary of the breakdown of opposition and dichotomy in *The Smile of the Lamb*, see Gertz, op cit.

full of party-line mottos. He preaches to Israeli youth to revive quickly fading ideologies, and struts out ideological slogans in articles he writes for party publications. Leah, Shosh's mother, performs good works for the country and its people. She organizes outings for the old, toys for hospitalized children, and provides a stable home-base from which her ideologue husband can pursue his altruistic mission. Shosh is their perfect daughter, "ממש הילדה",⁴⁷ in their words. In her early teens she writes an essay on "the youth's desire for values,"⁴⁸ which is published in the Party's internal press.

But things are not what they seem. Reflecting backwards Shosh says:

ושׁוב ושוב אתמה: הרי תמיד הייתי סבורה שאנחנו אבני הבניין הבאנאליות
ביותר, ועל כן גם המאושרות שבנמצא.⁴⁹

The Avidan household is full of hidden contradictions, secrets, and lies. Avner, the paragon of Labor virtue, drinks from morning to night, and Leah, who spreads her charity across "the People that lives in Zion,"⁵⁰ has no intimate relationships,⁵¹ resents the cost of Avner's idealism (his ongoing travels, his rejection of a diplomatic post in London), and repeatedly

⁴⁷ Grossman, op cit., 1983, p. 42.

⁴⁸ *ibid.* : p. 38.

⁴⁹ *ibid.* : p. 107.

⁵⁰ *ibid.* : p. 107.

⁵¹ *loc cit.*

recounts his wrongs as against her long-suffering martyrdom to Shosh, but never mentions the drinking. Both Leah and Avner act out their lives for the public view, as if it were the blueprint for a Party manual. And they do that even in their own home when no-one is looking. Leah deludes herself that they are living out a rational, humanistic ideal. She does not permit emotional outbursts, and will not admit to the shadows in their lives. Avner, on the other hand, keeps his shadows well hidden from societal eyes, relegating them to the numbness that comes with drink, and to writing perfectly structured sonnets, which explode with dark feeling, under a *nom de plume*. Underneath the balanced surface, seethes a fair amount of darkness and despair.

Zusia, the European-born survivor, the fourth member of the Avidan household, hovers around and in their lives as an expression of the undefined malaise that surrounds them. Zusia hardly speaks, and when he does, his words are not always clear or correct. He "was swept along" to Israel, via Sweden, during the War of Independence, having survived the war in Europe fighting with the Jewish Lithuanian Division. As he arrives in Israel, he is taken off the boat, dressed in a "too small military uniform, armed with a weapon he didn't know how to use," and is sent "to be killed in some (battle)field," and "there," says Shosh in Avner's words, "he died."⁵² He is Avner's drinking-buddy, helps Leah around the house, and was a somewhat bumbling, shadowy, alternately father, mother, grandfather to Shosh when she was growing up, providing her with the only familial warmth she's ever known. Not that her family life made her capable of it. In her words, "I think I was too suspicious a

⁵² *ibid.* : p. 78.

girl to love.”⁵³ Zusia’s inarticulateness stands in stark contrast to the Avidan family, as does the heavy smell of women’s perfume that clings to him at work and permeates the atmosphere of the orderly Avidan home.

At age twenty six, Shosh sees herself as dead as Zusia:

אני הייתי אדם חי. לפני שנים רבות מאוד. אני - היה הייתי, שוש אבידן,
הבת של אבנר ולאה, נובטת בכל עוצמת החיות של הדק שבעלעלים מבעד
לגושי העפר המתהדקים עליו: 'תיכף רואים שזאת הבת של האבידנים' (...)
ואצלנו מלחשים שאבידן שלנו מגדל בסתר ביתו יורשת אמיתית, והוא עצמו
אומר שהיא תאפיל עליו בכל, גם בחריפותה גם בחוסר הפשרנות שלה, ואולי
זאת הישגו הגדול ביותר של אבידן, שעלה בידו לעצב את בתו זו בדמותו,
וכבר שמענו של מחנכי דור בשיעור קומתו, שנכשלו כישלון חרוץ דווקא בתוך
ביתם שלהם: ומתחת לכל אלה היה העלעל הדק מפלס את דרכו והופך
לילדה זעירה, ממושקפת, גשר מתכת מתקמר על שיניה בכל התצלומים,
והיא מושכת אחריה את זוסיה העייף, הכבד...⁵⁴

The question is though, whether she were ever alive. In her own words she was - "Shosh Avidan, Avner and Leah's daughter." The "delicate leaf" has been long covered by "the clods of earth that attached themselves to her."

⁵³ *ibid.* : p. 82.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* : p. 38.

The earthen clods that choke Shosh's vitality are the words and repression layered on her at home. Avner "molds her in his image," so that as an adult, a psychotherapist of the Frankl's *logotherapy* school, she can find no words that are her own, let alone words that have meaning. A repressed and repressing Leah has stifled Shosh's emotions, oppressing them with repeated recitations of her lackluster credo:

שגם בעת סבל גדול אין צורך להתבהם.⁵⁵

- and overlaying Shosh with the identity of her own self-ideal, not wanting her to be anything but an imprint of her own fantasies:

הרי היא בדיוק כמוני, גם אני הייתי ככה.⁵⁶

Shosh is left sitting in the Hillman Institute, devastated in the wake of Mordi's suicide and her undeniable role in it, looking for even a trace of her own identity, sifting through the words whirling in her, and the appellations accorded her:

⁵⁵ *ibid.* : p. 80.

⁵⁶ *ibid.* : p. 38.

אולי הייתי עשוייה ליפול סוף-סוף אל תוך המנהרה החלולה שאורבת בי,
וללמוד כך, בצניחה נכנעת ומתוקה, את שמי האחר, הצרוב בתוכי, את
הגלעין האחרון.⁵⁷

But it is not only the meaningless words that form a barrier in Shosh that does not allow her to reach herself. All those words emptied into her would have been blockage enough and deceitful enough of themselves, but there is much worse than that. Avner has also trapped Shosh in the world of literature, and the snare he has half-unwittingly laid for her is all the more powerful for its subterfuge.

When Shosh is fifteen, at the height of her adolescent confusion, and self and sexual searching, desperately probing for authenticity and meaning to her life, she clings to a voice that speaks as her own. This voice "sears" her, and makes her "feel herself the way she is," and assuages her new "moist soft secrets and sense of ancient pain,"⁵⁸ in a way that none of the young boys with whom she experiments sexually can. It is the voice of "some desirable poet," whom she discovered at the early stages of her puberty. This discovery, and her sexual attachment to the poetic voice, change her inner-life in unimaginable ways, and form possibly the most important nexus and lock within her entire psyche.

The significance of the event is contained in the words used to describe it:

⁵⁷ *ibid.* : p. 42.

⁵⁸ *ibid.* : p. 38-39. The last part of the translation is interpretive.

אני, בת שתים-עשרה ידעתיו לראשונה. והיה זה באוטובוס, ומולי ישב גבר זקן, לא-מגולח ומצחין, שהקהיל סביבו עדרי סלים גדושים, ובסל שנשען אל רגלי היה דג עטוף בנייר עיתון, ואני, שקוראת כל מה שעניי נופלת עליו, אספתי לי אותיות בהפזלת עין, ועדיין ללא הבנתי מהו הדבר, אבל מין כמיהה משונה עלתה בי, לחה ואפלה ונוסקת, קול לחש ואדווה, ואני נעניתי לה כאילו ידעתי שתבוא בי פעם, והבטתי בעיתון המוכתם בדם ובקשקשי דג, וכבר מן השורה הראשונה של השיר ידעתי ששוב לא אהיה כאשר הייתי, שהבטחה גדולה או איום אכזרי נצפן עבורי שם, לרגלי, ורכנתי מעט להיטיב ולראות, ושם שברי מלים נוהמות סכנה, ואותיות טרף עומדות על רגליהן האחוריות ושרירי ירכיהן רוטטים ממאמץ, ויכולתי לחוש בתוכי את צליפת השוט של המאלף העלום, את הקסם האכזרי שהוא משגר אלי, ופתאום נסתמנה תנועה קלה, כמעט בלתי-מורגשת, מתחת לנייר המלוכלך, השקוף למחצה, ואני ראיתי שהדג עדיין חי, וכל חייו הספיקו לו רק כדי להניע פעם אחת את זימו, ועינו נתבלטה במאמץ, ואני גחנתי עוד אל ריחו הימי, המלופף באצות, אל חייו המורקים בעווית לתוך השיר, ובאוטובוס, בלב היום התל-אביבי הבהיר, זע בי המפתח השירי, והיה זה - אז עדיין לא ידעתי - שירו

שלו.⁵⁹

The passage is replete with primordial and sexual suggestion, beginning with the dramatic stylization of the opening shot: "I, at age twelve, knew him for the first time." The

⁵⁹ *ibid.* : p. 263.

prominence and emphasis of the first person pronoun "I", that is isolated by the comma which follows it, combined with use of the root יָדַע , with its biblical reference to copulation, associated with the beginning of puberty, and adult sexual awakening, and the appended third person singular masculine pronoun in this pithy sentence, overlays the mini, one-paragraph story with an aura of the momentous, the mysterious and libidinous. The sense of drama is heightened by the passage's syntactical arrangement, the cumulated conjunctives "ו" and "ש", combined with the choice of theatrically phrase-initiating temporal markers, "וזהיה זה"; "ופתאום," and oppositional words - "אבל," and in the many heaped short phrases that form the second, and final, lengthy sentence in the paragraph.

The section spills over with intimations of the erotic, and with a violent and sadistic carnality. From the first verse she reads, Shosh feels a "strange...moist and dark and sharp (biting)" longing; the predatory letters have thigh muscles that "tremble," and she is filled with "the lash of the anonymous tamer's whip," and the "cruel magic that it transmits to her." The poem is written on newspaper stained with blood and fish scales, the blood an allusion to the onset of her menses and womanhood, and the palpitating, dying piscatorial figure, wrapped in slimy sea-weed, evocative of the male sexual organ in the final stages of post-ejaculatory pulsation.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ And in religious terms suggestive of fertility. It was customary for Jews to eat fish for the Sabbath night meal as they were considered a symbol of fecundity.

The sexuality in the depiction of Shosh's first encounter with the unknown poet, and the central image of the unshaven, smelly old man,⁶¹ with his laden baskets, and the newspaper-wrapped, almost dead, moist, bloody and staining, straining fish, casts itself backwards, and brings together important elements in the story Shosh has already told. When Shosh speaks of Avner, or addresses him in her inner-monologue, she often refers to him as "a fish," as she does, for example, on p. 108 where she calls him "דג גדול וזהיר שכמותך."

The reason for the use of this epithet is unclear until the incident on the bus, which provides a direct causal connection between Avner and the fish. The poet whose words cover the paper that shrouds the moribund fish, is the unknown Aviv Raz, who it turns out is none other than Avner Avidan himself. His choice of *nom de plume* is entirely fitting in terms of Shosh's relationship to this aspect of his persona. The first name, Aviv, which is constructed of letters borrowed from his first and last name, corresponds to her pubescence, while the second name, Raz, serves as apposite expression of the way in which he and Leah kept his poetic life a secret from Shosh until her fifteenth birthday.

When Shosh turns fifteen, an excited and giggling Leah and Avner offer her this piece of information as a gift of her new maturity.⁶² The revelation cores Shosh's budding

⁶¹ While I do not intend expanding this reading to the Jungian archetypal system, it is worth mentioning his commentary on "the old man" archetype. For an extensive analysis of this see Jung, op cit., 1969, pp. 217-242, and especially p. 229, where Jung uses an analysis of a fairy-tale to exemplify the archetypal image of the old man as a representation of Woman's *animus*.

⁶² *ibid.* : p.235.

maturity and her first steps towards adult identity that are dependent in great measure on the poet's words:

שרק באמצעותו ניתן לך לגשר על החללים העצומים המשתרעים בין
הכדוריות הזעירות, הבודדות, של האמת שלך⁶³

It causes a massive repression and dissociation, where she is thrown into "reconstructing (herself)...as she were supposed to be,"⁶⁴ so that she is forever reaching towards the appeasement of a desire that can never be sated, but can only search for its gratification through a destructive network of surrogacy:

שתמיד מאורע אחד משמש הסוואה למאורע שני, ואדם משמש כלי לאחר,
ואין דבר שהוא כלשעצמו, וכך - תאווה שנועדה לקצמן נמסרה מדי פעם
לאורי, כיסופים שעורר בי אורי תורגמו בזדון לשפת הדיבור שלי עם מורדי,
ונתפענחו בדרכם על לשונו העצבנית, וצריך אולי להזכיר, שאבנר כתב פעם
סונטה יפה להפליא על יהודה איש קריות אשר נישק את ישו כדי לרמוז
לכהנים שזה האיש שעליהם לצלוב, ואני עצמי למדתי איך הופכים את
הנשיקה לכלי⁶⁵

⁶³ *ibid.* : p. 232.

⁶⁴ *loc cit.*

⁶⁵ *ibid.* : p. 233.

The sexual contents of the event notwithstanding, the Oedipal bind into which Shosh is flung is far-reaching and archetypal in its effects.⁶⁶ Avner and Leah's silence, and later disclosure, have sentenced her into perpetual exile from herself, forever trying to assuage and contain the pain that arrives in its wake with words:

ופירוש הדבר ש...את כבר אינך מה שסבורה היית שאת, שגם אליך כבר נשמע
 קול צונן ואכזרי האומר שלכי לך מארצך וממולדתך, והיי גולה כמו כולם,
 ונסי לתפור בחוט תנועותיך בעולם את הקרעים שלך, והאמיני לרגע שהשמות
 שאת מדביקה לסופות נותנים לך שליטה כלשהי עליהן⁶⁷

Shosh is exiled into the world that represents her betrayal, the world of language and literature in which she is stuck, with no escape. It is this stasis that makes her see truth as circular, as "set in the shape of the ring." This world entraps her in webs of lies, and half-truths, and sends her running to the fifteen year old Mordi's silent world, only to betray him in the end, much as she was betrayed by Avner at the same age. In this sense, Mordi's suicide is merely an outward manifestation of her own inner death at age fifteen.

Avner's writing and sonnets pursue her with no reprieve. Sitting down to begin her self-examination at the start of her story, Shosh cynically objectifies herself saying:

⁶⁶ The reference to Judas is obvious in its reference to love and betrayal.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* : p. 232.

זו היושבת כאן מיד תאזור כח. היא תכתוב את עצמה כסונטה צלולה,
 ארבע-עשרה שורות וחריזה קבועה, וצינה של מוות מרחפת על פני המילים.⁶⁸

Avner himself has taught her well in this regard. Shosh is cast as a feminized presence of difference in the text inasmuch as she voices a despair about language and literature, and their deadening effects. While Chilmi distrusts words and clings to silence, he is quite content with his linguistic invention and meandering tales; Uri is an absorber of words and stories, who finally vanquishes the story tellers with his silence, and Katzman, whose voice is heard in the first person but once in the book, is a crucible of words in search of an audience. Shosh struggles against the lack of meaning in words and especially in formalized, high flown language and literary concerns. In her early years she is the victim of aphorisms, and later, after the Raz\Avner event, and thanks to some additional instruction from Avner, she is felled by them, utterly.

The art and uses of narration take up much of her conversation, and block her communion with her pain. Thinking of how Avner, her mentor figure whose force cannot be overcome by Frankl and his theory of meaning, would deal with her present task, Shosh knows it is via the devices of story-telling. He uses the framework of literature as a defense mechanism, its forms and the sense it lays over chaotic life and its passions, to check his ardor and reinscribe the confusions with "the dust of logic":

⁶⁸ *ibid.* : p. 36.

ואבנר היה אומר כאן: נסי להביט על זה כעל סיפור, שוש, כמה דמויות, כמה תשוקות ותקוות שנצרבו בגוף האנושי, ובחולפן בו הפיקו חום ומתיחות, ואם כך תראי זאת ודאי תסכימי איתי שנחוץ לנו פה מספר חכם, שישזור את כולנו זה בזה, וימצא בנו צד זכות, ואם אפשר - גם אבק של היגיון; שיכיל את כל התמיהות וכל ההפכים, ואת מסקנות המטורפים.⁶⁹

Shosh adds that Avner "too knows that this (finding a clever narrator) is too much to ask for."⁷⁰

Later, as she speaks to the tape-recorder she contemplates the question of audience and listener which punctuates her monologue even though "the answer is already known." It is clear that she addresses her words to Avner.⁷¹

Trying to unravel the Mordi story, she stops to listen to her inner narrative, and disparagingly turns on herself, deriding the purple quality of her idiom:

את שומעת? הקשיבי למלים המשויפות האלה: 'צדק פיוטי', 'שמך הצרוב', הוי לכל הרוחות, שוש, הרי את משחקת כאן משחק מלים מיופיק⁷²

⁶⁹ *ibid.* : p. 37.

⁷⁰ *loc cit.*

⁷¹ *ibid.* : pp. 103-104.

⁷² *ibid.* : p. 42.

Shosh's directives to herself throughout her monologues illustrate the process by which the story teller recoils from honestly contrived language. Thinking of her culpability with regard to Mordi she calls it murder, saying, "גם לאחר שרצחתי אותו,"⁷³ and immediately recoils:

No no. Don't use that word. After all no direct connection has been found, and so on, and we are trying to find some sort of logical explanation, and there's no use in childish outbursts. There are words whom silence suits best. That change the composition of the air itself when they leap from the mouth, and taint all the innocent words. And now tell us about something else, here, about kites, for instance, you haven't spoken.⁷⁴

- directing her narration away from the pain and the truth, and onto the incoherent world of Zusia and his kites. Even her three thick files about Mordi are phrased in a literary language that distances as far as possible direct expression, which serves as "word barriers that...(she's) set up."⁷⁵ She speaks of Katzman in terms of the "worst chapter headings of himself."⁷⁶

Shosh stands as a sign of difference in the text, but she is not an independent speaker. Even while she searches for her perfect audience, she knows that the best narrator and perfect

⁷³ *ibid.* : p. 85.

⁷⁴ *loc cit.*

⁷⁵ *ibid.* : p. 178.

⁷⁶ *ibid.* : p. 112.

audience of her story are one and the same, her father Avner, who is the poet Aviv Raz. Her voice is colonized by Avner, with whom she is locked in an unresolved and convoluted Oedipal complexity, and her passion is dammed up and snared in the tumult hidden by the cold formalism of Raz's verses.

Unlike Ne'ima Sasson, in Kahana-Carmon's story,⁷⁷ she does not find her own voice, though she struggles for it ceaselessly, but poetry seems to be her undoing and not the making of her. The shadows in her life, and her own shadow, that hover all about her story (there are repeated references to shadows) remain elliptic, but unincorporated, outside of her, she does not know how to own them:

כמה הרבה יכול להיות מונח בצל הזעיר שבין שתי מלים. ואני מבקשת כעת
לספר על צל חדש. על מעשה רקמה מוצללת ונפלאה, על אבנר הכותב שירים.⁷⁸

At the end of her story, Shosh remains mired in the same quandary in which she began. Her final actions have her locking the gate of avoidance over her pain and her seeking. She removes Mordi's T-shirt that she had put on earlier, covers herself in a sweater, rolls the rest of his clothes in brown paper, and hides the bundle behind her books, commenting "No one will notice that something has been moved here." She closes the door on all that by locking her office, and leaving with the somewhat inebriated, and psychically numbed, Avner and

⁷⁷ See Chapter Five here.

⁷⁸ *ibid.* : p. 231.

Zusia, while Sigmund, the unruly goose - and somewhat obvious reference to Dr. Freud and the unconscious - is left behind in the room with her books and her guilt and the picture of Viktor Frankl.⁷⁹

Shosh represents difference in the text, but her difference works allusively. Her voice is made up of a cacophony of political ideology, Ashkenazi-Israeli culture, and literary truisms. In a reversal of the norm this male clamor is set under the patronage of a feminine guise. But it is only a guise, because Shosh's language in this book is not an alternate female language, not a language written in milk's white ink, but a masculine language of Zionist ideology, a group language, and the language of a writer caught within the phallogentricity of 'western' literature, who feels imprisoned by that literature, and uses the vehicle of voiceless woman, and the Other (Chilmi as well) as emblem for his search for transcendent sound.

⁷⁹ *ibid.* : p. 273.

**THE OTHER IN MODERN HEBREW LITERATURE:
EPILOGUE**

*How much can be laid in the tiny shadow between two words -
The Smile of the Lamb*

The concept of the Other in social and psychological terms may be usefully applied when we look at modern Hebrew literature. In the phenomenological world the word covers the feeling of alienation that dogged writers of modern Hebrew literature from the outset, when they stood outside the consensual world of traditional texts and created a secular literature in a language determined holy and unusable for mundane purposes. The sense of otherness the early writers felt came from inside themselves as they struggled with their own conditioning, and was reinforced by external censure. This stemmed from the tension between the societal emphasis of European Jewish culture and Jewish tradition at large, and the Haskhalah aspiration to free the individual from the collective. The conflict was already imbedded in the very idea of a secular Hebrew literature by the collective-religious value placed on the language. The works of these writers, as they set out to express the individual in a strong literary tradition that is so focused on the group, are framed by this friction from the beginning by the linguistic medium itself. But as we have seen in the preceding chapters the pressures do not disappear even after the Jewish collective is 'normalized' to the point of claiming its own state with Hebrew as the national language.

The works of modern Hebrew literature examined in this thesis were chosen for the specific ways they confront the problem of the Other, and because they represent writers from the late-Haskalah period to the present day, cover major events in recent Jewish history, and span the worlds of Europe and of Israel. Gordon was a Haskalah poet; Berdichewski, one of the first writers of modern Hebrew fiction; Baron, probably the most important woman writer of Hebrew prose in the pre-State era, and like Agnon, a bridge between European Jewish life and Jewish life in Eretz Yisrael; Agnon, a link between Europe and Israel, but also a signal bearer in terms of narrative experimentation and writing; Appelfeld, European-born, child survivor of the Holocaust who lives in Israel, but writes about the effects of the Sho'a; Kahana-Carmon, born on a Kibbutz in the pre-State era, and the most influential woman writer of the New Wave,¹ and Grossman, of the first generation of State-born writers. The power of the communal and the struggle against it is common to the works, despite the temporal and geographic disparities of the authors, and the different settings of their fictional worlds. They try to break through the demands of the group and speak for the individual. Because of the force of Jewish male textual collectivity that excludes women, the feminized Other is the vehicle through which this striving is expressed. The readings here look at the ways this feminized Other is counterpoised to the collective in the texts.

The negation of woman is deeply entrenched in Jewish tradition. The Talmud calls woman's voice an abomination or lewdity. One of the distinctions for which orthodox men

¹ See Shaked, *op cit.*, 1995.

bless God daily, is for not making them female.² Woman is thus repeatedly designated an undesirable category of being, and traditional readings of the Eden tale make her the culprit of man's fall from initial grace. The negative evaluation has been added to by layers of religiously construed misogyny over the centuries, so that by the time modern Hebrew literature comes into being in Europe, She is silenced and pushed beyond Jewish textual margins. Her social and linguistic exile fit nicely into Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, where Phallus³ is Culture and Language, and its absence diffused silence, and woman "the dark continent." The first chapter mentioned the ways in which the idea of the Other is relevant to the study of modern Hebrew literature, and introduced the idea of the Big Other and its relationship to writing. The second chapter positioned the primal Other within a Jewish world-view, beginning with a reading of the biblical creation and Eden stories, and touched on the ways in which the word *acher* (other) moves through the later literature. The Other proposed in the second section of the introductory chapter and in the Eden reading is a construal made up of loss and desire that come into being as infant consciousness begins to have knowledge of itself as separate to the all-containing sea of uroboric bliss. The separation becomes all the more searing by the encounter with the Symbolic Order of the

² Which is placed after expression of gratitude for not having being made a Gentile or a slave.

³ Although Lacan denies the relationship of identity between Phallus and the actual male organ, Phallus is inevitable reference to culture which, in his reading, is male created. That culture as it stands is explicitly patriarchal is undeniable. But its creation and subsistence are not so well girded that Woman is not a presence there, and not only as a representation of the unrepresentable and the feared lack.

world of culture and language, and the sense of alienation grows exponentially in its wake. Consciousness is split from itself and forever seeks a way back. Yet individual consciousness is caught in the Imaginary and the Symbolic which are fragmentary and do not have access to an all-pervasive unity. The individual is thus destined to live in an ongoing state of insatiable desire, that can only be requited with the death or absorption of individuality, when there would be no awareness or gratification. This paradox reflects back onto the struggle of the *talush* who, in the name of truth, seeks individual freedom. It also mocks the quest for truth in the writer's art which battles it with the elusiveness of language.

The relationship of Judaism to separation, and to the Other, is contradictory. The biblical story of creation begins with a separation of the Divinity, and expands into the Eden narrative, which is read as a depiction of the primary individual split from an all embracing Edenic Self into the world of self and Other. Judaism does not always see separateness in a positive way, it venerates distinction and still deplores it. The divisions between things are celebrated, but that which is seen as truly different is abhorred. All that is undesirable is subsumed under the category of Other, even while God is blessed for creating distinctions. The second chapter looks at separation as basic to the primal myth from whence these positive and negative attitudes derive: Creation is dependent on separation, but separation also means unbearable loss.

Qotzo shel Yud, and its companion piece in this study, *Mishpacha* by Devorah Baron describe the stilling of women's voices in traditional Jewish society and their oppression by the textually formulated world of dominant masculine religiosity. They speak of the

subjugation of woman at the harsh hands of the Letter and the Law to which she has no entry and thus no recourse. Gordon's Bat-shua, and Baron's Dinah, have voices that are domesticated to the economy of Shtetl society, and are alternately mute and submissive. The novel *Miryam*, written by M.Y. Berdichevski, is a portrayal of the absence of woman's voice in the east European Jewish world and even while the text itself exemplifies this absence, the very absence itself gives voice to the male fears which inspired the suppression of female vocality, as Miryam, the subject of the novel, has fearful effects upon many lives in the lustful male world around her. The female hero of Berdichevski's *Miryam* has very little actual voice in the novel, and her powerful effects are exposed not by her presence, but in her absence, and in the compounded heterogeneous narratives that make up the textual weave. Amaliah Kahana-Carmon's *Ne'ima Sasson Writes Poems* depicts a young Israeli woman who comes to adulthood by learning to claim her own voice, and finally knowing that it is independent of the world of the masculine. Kahana-Carmon's *Ne'ima* wins ownership of her voice through a psychological struggle with her *animus*.

In the next three texts, with their emphasis on exile and misconstruction, woman is limned somewhat differently. These narratives are not concerned about the inclusion of woman or her voice. She operates as a convenient dimly seen Other, who promises hope and offers magical deliverance. The two Agnon stories tell of war and its devastating after-effects against which woman is counterpoised as a silent symbol of redemption. She is textually repressed, but stands as the wonderful signifier of a wordless salvation in a romanticized and diminishing manner. *A Guest for the Night* is the portrait of a disintegrating Jewish world in

the wake of the upheaval wrought by World War I. The novel illustrates misconstrual in various shades of Otherness such as the amputation of bodily parts and the dissolution of traditional values. *Ad Hena* is the story of the narrator's adventures in wartime Germany, though its temporality is deceptive, and its mode is full of deflection and transposition.

Aharon Appelfeld's immortal Bartfuss walks around sunny Tel Aviv like a dead man in the post-Holocaust period. The only succor he finds is in things that approximate the sense of primal mother consciousness. He feels persecuted by female voices and the women in his life are desirable only in so far as they are silent vehicles of receptivity. But he is finally brought out of his stupor by a woman who is attached to the world of culture and is not associated with the desire for prelinguistic completeness.

With Grossman's *Shosh* we come full circle. *Shosh's* story is the unrealized version of Ne'ima Sasson's. Ne'ima learns to own her voice, *Shosh* never finds hers. Her story is also Miryam's story in the Berdichevskian novel, the story of a presence that does not appear in the fictive spatiality of the story's plot, yet whose being itself serves as the plot's incentive. Unlike Miryam she seems to have endless recourse to voice, but her voice is never her own, it is merely the expression of the desires other have poured into her in an ongoing maze of surrogacy. *Shosh's* story is also a form of Bat-shua's tragedy. While Bat-shua is and remains subaltern in societal terms, and *Shosh* is a modern woman in contemporary Israeli who has class mobility, the latter is nonetheless dominated and colonized by the linguistic prescriptions of a male elite. This novel brings to the surface the primary concerns of the study, as it deals both with story-telling and fictivity, and with woman as a feminized presence of difference.

The tensions in *The Smile of the Lamb*, between the nation and the individual, between competing nationalities and ethnic cultures and modes of narration, as well as the striving to find a way to the 'truth' through the word, summarize the subjects emphasized in this dissertation.

Finally, overarching the thematics of the Other as exile and dispossession, and subtending from the concern about woman as other, and the problems in her representation, is the question of writing which is the ultimate challenge of the Other. The greatest problems with which the writers wrestle are the shortcomings of language and the failure of the Symbolic Order as they reach towards a union of signification to write, as Joyce suggests in *Ulysses*, "I said I." This quest is not unique to modern Hebrew literature, or to literature itself. The individual's sense of loss of Self which begins with self-awareness is an awareness of Self as separate, and thus object and Other. That sense of loss acts as a lifetime determinate with the ongoing desire cathected onto the moment of separation and bonded onto a trace-sense of the all-encompassing unity which predates that experience. The importance of this to the present study is the idea, appropriated from Lacan and later commentators on his work, that language is the marker of the final and most excruciating rent from the world of unity and wholeness. The premise in this work is that the writing of texts is an attempt to grasp at primal oneness, and heal the pain of the separation from Self, by using the medium most Other to it. Thus it is that the freedom so desired by the *talush* seems an impossible dream and yet, to quote Grossman "... much can be laid in the tiny shadow between two words."

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