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Research Article

Nationalism and Monolingualism: the "Language Wars" and the Resurgence of Israeli Multilingualism

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With the establishment of a Jewish settlement in Palestine in the early 20th century, and a Hebrew culture with it, furious debates arose among Jewish writers about the future of Jewish literary multilingualism. Until this period, the idea that Jewish monolingualism was a preferred mode of cultural existence or that a writer would have to choose between the two primary languages of European Jewish cultural production was a relatively new one. Polylingualism had been characteristic of Jewish culture and literary production for millennia. But in modernity, Jewish nationalist movements, particularly Zionism, demanded a monolingual Jewish culture united around one language. Nonetheless, polylingual Jewish culture has persisted, and despite the state of Israel's insistence on Hebrew as the national language, Israeli multilingualism has surged in recent years. This article surveys a number of recent developments in translingual, transcultural, and transnational Israeli literary and cultural forms

Key words: translingualism, nationalism, multilingualism, Jewish culture

Introduction

In 1927, the celebrated Yiddish writers Sholem Asch and Perets Hirschbein visited Palestine. They were feted with a reception at the Association of Hebrew Writers in Tel Aviv, at which Chaim Nachman Bialik, considered the father of modern Hebrew poetry, gave the keynote speech. Like most Jewish writers of his generation, Bialik was multilingual and wrote in more than one language. However, he was also an ardent Hebraist and promoted Hebrew monolingualism among the Jewish community, known as the *yishuv*, in Palestine. In his remarks, he offered a conciliatory view, calling the relationship between Hebrew and Yiddish "a marriage made in heaven" [1; 2]. While it was clear from this metaphor and his speech generally that he considered Hebrew the preferred and superior Jewish language, he nonetheless acknowledged the historical entanglement between the two languages.

His remarks elicited a swift negative response from militant Hebraists and younger Hebrew writers like Avraham Shlonsky, the founder and editor of the Hebrew literary

journal *Ketuvim*, which set the norms of Hebrew literature, especially poetry, of this period. Writing in the journal, Shlonsky repudiated Bialik's moderate affirmation of Jewish multilingualism: "We did not accept the match between the languages as a marriage made in heaven. ...[W]e view this catastrophe of bilingualism as we would view tuberculosis, gnawing away at the lungs of the nation. We want Israeli [*yisre'elit*] breathing to be entirely Hebrew, with both lungs!" [2. P. 106]. Shlonsky's almost violent response — which echoed a common characterization of the Jewish diaspora, and everything attached to it, including languages, as diseased — is an indicator of the viciousness of the debates around Jewish multilingualism that arose with the establishment of a Zionist settlement in Palestine and the development of a Hebrew culture with it.

Until this period of early-twentieth-century Jewish settlement in Palestine, the idea that Jewish monolingualism was a preferred mode of cultural existence or that a writer would have to choose between the two primary languages of European Jewish cultural production was a relatively new one. Up until the late nineteenth century, and even as late as the beginning of the first World War, a tradition of bilingualism or polylingualism flourished among European Jewish writers [3—5]. Historically, many Jewish writers did not see one language as their first and the other as their second, one authentic and the other adopted, but both as their own, native mode of expression. As the Yiddish literary critic Shmuel Charney[1] noted of the period in which Yiddish came to be a literary language, in the Middle Ages, "...when people began to write in Yiddish, this did not bespeak a switch from an alien language to a language that was one's own. No, here it was a case of a desire to add a second language of one's own to a first" [4. P. 17]. Such iconic writers as S.Y. Abramovitsh (Mendele Mokher Sforim), Y.L. Peretz, and even Chaim Nachman Bialik himself wrote extensively in both languages and even translated their own works between the two. Many writers also wrote in third or fourth languages, such as Russian and Polish.

Indeed, Charney traced Jewish polylingualism all the way back to the ancient period, asserting that Jewish literature had always been written in vernacular, as well as specifically Jewish, languages. Looking back to the Aramaic and Hebrew literature of the biblical and post-biblical periods, Charney declared that "the Jewish cultural tradition is bilingual" [4. P. 42]. At the 1908 Czernowitz Conference, convened to address Yiddish and its role in Jewish life, most prominent Yiddish writers expressed support for the continued use of both Yiddish and Hebrew as essential to the perpetuation of Jewish culture, and in the end participants adopted a resolution that Yiddish was *a* national language of the Jewish people, rather than *the* language of the Jewish people. And in 1918, the Yiddish writer Bal Makhshoves acknowledged that "In recent years it has come to be required that a Jewish writer, just like a correspondent in an office, must know at least *two* languages in order to create freely" [5. P. 72].

And despite Avraham Shlonsky's assertions regarding the purity of Hebrew literature in Palestine, even modern Hebrew itself would not exist if not for Jewish polylingualism. Hebrew literature has always depended on other languages in its development into a

[1] I have chosen to use Charney's given name, rather than his pen name, because his pen name has a history as a racist slur. See Eli Bromberg, "We Need to Talk about Shmuel Charney", In Geveb (October 2019), accessed Nov. 4, 2019.

mature literary language. When modern Hebrew literature arose in the nineteenth century, Hebrew was not a vernacular language, and lacked both modern vocabulary and the particular syntax necessary to represent dialogue. Various writers contributed to the construction of a modern Hebrew idiom through literary and linguistic experimentation that often relied on the grammar and vocabulary of other languages, including Yiddish, Russian, and German. S.Y. Abramovitz, who created the definitive *nusakh*, or style, of modern literary Hebrew, drew on various temporal layers of Hebrew from the ancient and medieval periods, the inflections and syntax of Yiddish, and literary influences as varied as Dickens, whom Abramovitz had read in translation, and Gogol [6]. The influence of European language and culture also made its imprint on modern Hebrew through literary innovation. Uri Nissan Gnessin coined the modern Hebrew word for "consciousness", *hakarah*, by turning to the root for "knowledge", because both German and French derive their words for "consciousness" from "knowledge". And Robert Alter notes that the Hebrew writer Micha Yosef Berdichevsky had a "predisposition to make Hebrew work as though it were a dialectical variation of standard literary European" [6. P. 48]. The style of early modern Hebrew literature was also indebted to a multilingual Europe, and as Shachar Pinsker has shown, the urban centers of Europe were the birthplace of modern Hebrew literature, and its emergence was facilitated by contact with modernist literatures in other European languages, including Russian, Polish, German, and English [7. P. 107—108].

If, as Shmuel Charney claimed and later scholars have confirmed, Jewish literature has historically been inherently multilingual, then what changed? How could Avraham Shlonsky claim, by 1927, that Jewish polylingualism was a disease eating away at the heart (or lungs) of Hebrew literature? Niger attributed the decline of Jewish Hebrew-Yiddish bilingualism after World War I to the forced migrations of the period that disrupted Jewish continuity and required adaptation to new cultural milieus. At the same time, the development of a Jewish settlement in Palestine, on the one hand, that advocated for Hebrew monolingualism and, on the other hand, the Soviet Union's push for Yiddish monolingualism polarized an increasingly politicized world Jewry. Hebrew monolingualism in Palestine became the hallmark of the Zionist movement, as evidenced by Shlonsky's response to the idea of continuing Hebrew-Yiddish bilingualism. Liora Halperin notes that Zionism was "a fairly typical late-nineteenth-century linguistic nationalist movement, one appealing to cultural and ethnic bonds through the strongly romantic and gendered rhetoric of the mother tongue" [8]. In this ideological formulation, Hebrew was the only legitimate literary language, privileged because of its association with the land of Israel and in contrast to the devalued languages of the Jewish diaspora.

Jewish nationalism may have demanded Jewish monolingualism, but the long history of Jewish polylingualism nonetheless persisted. Benjamin Harshav notes the difficulty of imposing a monolingual framework on a historically polylingual culture: "...nation-state ideology promoted the ideal: 'One nation, one land, one language' (and one leader). Forces of power and/or cultural authority worked to enforce this unity, identifying the ethnic and political boundaries with language borders. And if this national unity did not match the facts, it was imposed upon deviant persons or groups" [9]. However, despite the imposition, multilingualism persisted in the pre-state Jewish settlement in Palestine and the state of Israel. The attempt to cleanse nascent Israeli culture of anything but

Hebrew was always complicated by the continued persistence of literature in, cultural references to, and linguistic remnants from other languages.

Discussion

For many years, this subaltern multilingualism has existed at the margins of Israeli culture. Of the early generation of Hebrew writers, Naomi Seidman noted, "The Hebrew writers of the *moderna* (the Hebrew modernist generation) perceived their greatest achievement as the creation of a monolingual, 'natural' Hebrew, one that could express their new environment without undue self-consciousness or linguistic borrowing. But the margins of this literature attest to the strain of defending the borders of this monolingualism and reveal the traces of what was suppressed in the creation of modern and of modernist Hebrew literature". These traces are evident in the persistence of certain Israeli writers who do not conform to the Hebraist-Zionist model: Karen Alkalay-Gut, an American-born Israeli poet who publishes in English; Ida Fink, the celebrated Polish-language author of stories with Holocaust-related themes; and Yosl Birstein, the son of the eminent poet Melekh Ravitsh who became a kibbutz shepherd and a Yiddish storyteller, among others. However, these writers have historically worked in the shadows of Israeli, and Jewish, literature. Ida Fink, for example, found it difficult to find a publisher for her work for many years, and Israeli literary prizes are generally reserved for Hebrew writers only[1].

In the last decade, abetted by globalization, the internet, and cultural movements linked to post-Zionist politics, a revivified a transnational Jewish culture, animated by polylingual Israeli literature, has arisen in quarters as distant as New York and Berlin. A number of literary works and cultural projects of the last decade consciously revisit the era of Jewish polylingualism and explore its possibilities through translingual, transcultural, and transnational forms. Although there are many examples, and more being created every day, here I will discuss three loci, not necessarily geographical, of this new polylingual and transnational Israeli culture: translingual Israeli literature in English, transcultural Hebrew literature produced outside of Israel, and the transnational cultural innovations of Israeli expatriates in Berlin.

Translingual Israeli Literature in English

The writer and activist Rela Mazali was perhaps the first to confront the connections between genre, language, and nation through translingual writing. Mazali, who is known primarily as a political activist, is the founder of the Israeli feminist organization New Profile, which works to demilitarize Israeli society, and Gun Free Kitchen Tables, which aims to increase gun control and reduce the number of firearms in Israel and the occupied territories. Her unusual 2001 book *Maps of Women's Goings and Stayings* is about movement and travel, deterritorialization and transcultural exploration. Mazali notes the importance of language to her project from the outset, writing, "All those who come to the talking house understand and speak English. No coincidence; it's the most commonly used world map, almost obligatory for travel" [10]. However, Mazali constantly calls attention to

[1] And, as I will discuss below, for Hebrew writers living only in the state of Israel as well.

the artificiality and choice involved in her language of composition. Even the title reflects a certain awkward English syntax that draws attention to itself as a possible "bad" translation from another language. At the same time, the title's awkward syntax privileges the act of going rather than staying; that is, it expresses no loyalty to the here of the homeland, to nation or national language.

Likewise the strange and sometimes awkward prose of the book, part of which records verbatim—including, as Mazali writes, "all the stutters, all the tangled sentences sidetracked along the way and left unending, all the uhms, the I means, the you knows" [10. P. 34] — conversations with actual and fictional women about their travel experiences. This has the effect, she notes, of making the prose foreign and contrived, "a visible veil through which you're aware, on and off, that you're peering, as you piece together a recounted reality, palpably non-real" [10. P. 34]. Thus Mazali preserves a sense even within English of the Hebrew (and other languages) that lie behind her language of composition, and the artificiality of language itself. She calls attention to her translations from Hebrew to English and back again, writing of one of her transcriptions, "This section of the notes is written in my Hebrew. Maria was speaking her excellent Swedish English and I was taking it in and recording it in Hebrew, which I write quicker than English. Now, in the absence of her exact words on tape, I'm translating back into English" [10. P. 134]. Mazali draws back the curtain on the wizard of language, revealing the utilitarian mechanisms behind it and demystifying its connection to identity and home.

A similar mechanism is at work in two more recent translingual works by Israeli writers, Ayelet Tsabari's *The Best Place on Earth* and Shani Boianjiu's *The People of Forever Are Not Afraid*. Each uses linguistic techniques to denaturalize the language and remind the reader of their status as a kind of translation-language. Boianjiu inflects her English with a Hebrew syntactical accent, often using literal translations from Hebrew that sound slightly foreign or unusual in English. One character explains that for breakfast, "my mother *organizes* a tomato and tea for me", another "lives *in* Jerusalem Street 3" [11]. She uses literal translations of Hebrew idioms rather than an equivalent English expression, as when the protagonists' hometown is described as having "a view of the entire world and its sister". While these linguistic tics could at first seem accidental, Boianjiu calls attention to them herself, emphasizing their intentionality. In one of the interlocked stories that make up the novel, Boianjiu uses the phrase "machine automatic gun", which seems to be a reference to rules of Hebrew syntax, in which the adjective follows the noun. But in this case it amounts to mere confusion, because it simply reverses the two adjectives modifying "gun", rather than placing them both after it. At the same time, it is clear that this awkward phrase does not actually refer back to any Hebrew original, because in Hebrew, "machine gun" is rendered as a single word, *maklea*. In effect, Boianjiu creates her own non-standard English, inflected by a general foreignness that seems both connected to and disconnected from Hebrew at the same time, calling into question the very notion of an authentic original source language.

Tsabari uses a slightly different linguistic technique to mark her English as something other than standard. Rather than Hebraizing her English, Tsabari frequently imports Hebrew (and occasionally Arabic) words into the text, often translating them simultaneously. This tactic has the effect of locating her English outside of Hebrew, a place into which Hebrew must be imported, and in which it is always slightly artificial, requiring translation

and explanation. In stories that are focused largely on Israel and Israeli characters, this denaturalizes and deterritorializes Hebrew, reorienting it to its polylingual origins. In just the first few pages of the first story in this collection, we encounter "dossit", slang for a religious woman; "ir lelo hafsaka", the city that never sleeps, to describe Tel Aviv; and "pigua", the word for a terrorist bombing (the story is set during the second intifada) [12]. These Hebrew terms are translated within the narrative, either directly or indirectly, a recognition of their illegibility in the context of the English text. The main character in "Tikkun", the first story, tells us that he "had been dreaming about getting away, wishing I could afford a flight somewhere" [12. P. 10]. Many of the characters in Tsabari's stories are trying to escape — through drugs and alcohol, sex, travel, immigration — which parallels the book's own attempt to escape, in its way, through English.

Mikhail Bakhtin recognized the power of what he called "linguistic consciousness", the self-consciousness of language to which Mazali referred, in demystifying the connections between language and nation. In a cultural realm in which this self-consciouness does not yet exist, "the objects and themes are born and grow to maturity in this language, and in the national myth and national tradition that permeate this language" [13]. But through linguistic consciousness, the ability to see language from outside of the monolithic linguistic framework that formed it, "Language is transformed from the absolute dogma it had been within the narrow framework of a sealed-off and impermeable monoglossia into a working hypothesis for comprehending and expressing reality" [13. P. 61]. Crucially, he notes, it is "polyglossia", the presence of other languages of speech or composition within the culture, that "fully frees consciousness from the tyranny of its own language and its own myth of language" [13. P. 61]. The polyglossia of translingual literature thus has the function of deconstructing monoglossic links between language and national myth.

The national myth at stake here is the same one that Avraham Shlonsky vigorously defended in the pages of his literary journal: the idea that Jewish national identity, and later Israeli identity, was premised on Hebrew monolingualism. The challenge to this mythological notion of Jewish nationalism is accomplished here by recalling the diaspora history of Hebrew language and literature through translingualism and linguistic experimentation. It insists on the multilingual, diaspora origins of Hebrew literature and its "marriage", in the words of Bialik, to other Jewish and non-Jewish languages of the diaspora. Translingual Israeli literature demonstrates the extent to which Israeli culture has always been "intertwined with the cultures of Jews and non-Jews abroad, as well as the non-Jewish and non-Zionist populations of Palestine itself". By writing in an English consciously inflected by or entwined with the echoes of Hebrew, these writers situate their work within the context of the multilingual, diaspora history of Hebrew and recover the complex literary languages overwritten by the cultural dominance of Hebrew monolingualism.

Transcultural Israeli Literature

In 2015, the Hebrew writer Ruby Namdar was awarded the Sapir Prize for Hebrew literature for his novel *HaBayit Asher Nekhrav* (The Ruined House), making him the first recipient of the award who was not a resident of Israel. While written in a rich, resonant Hebrew, Namdar's novel takes place in New York and focuses on an American Jewish

professor, making its setting and themes uniquely diasporic. A few months after Namdar was awarded the Sapir, the prize rules were changed to exclude from eligibility writers who reside outside Israel. Although the prevailing argument of the prize committee was that the change was made because of the difficult economic conditions for writers living in Israel, it is hard to see the modification of rules as anything other than a response, even a backlash, to Namdar's win.

Aside from the reality that Namdar's primary residence remains outside the state of Israel, which itself violates Zionist mythologies that privilege Israel as the only Jewish homeland, the novel itself plays with Hebrew language in a way that challenges norms of Hebrew monolingualism. Through techniques of citation and translation, the novel challenges and confounds simple equations of language with culture and place. By incorporating texts, both real and imagined, external to the novel itself, Namdar exposes the synthetic nature of modern Hebrew and peels away the layers of its diaspora history, destabilizing the Zionist narrative that associates Hebrew with Israel and Israel with Hebrew. Several techniques employed in the novel call attention to Hebrew's diverse and complicated origins, as well as its polyphonous history: the long sections of a partially invented sacrificial service that end each section of the book; the epigraphs that appear at the beginning of each book; the incorporation of translated popular songs into the text; and the translation and transliteration of place names.

The first layer of this linguistic pastiche lies in a text that appears in sections, a few pages at a time inserted into the novel at the end of each book, which function as sections of the larger narrative. This text is the "Seder HaAvodah", or the "Order of the Ritual" for the sacrificial service, that details the process of the high priest preparing, performing the sacrifices, and entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. However, the text that appears in the book is not the text that appears in the High Holiday liturgy, but rather one of Namdar's own creation, cobbled together both from existing sources and the imagination. The text details the sacrificial rite through the long *piyyut*, or devotional poem, written in alphabetical order, composed by the 11th-century poet Meshullam ben Kalonymous[1]; excerpts from the Mishnah and Talmud that describe the Yom Kippur sacrifice; parts of the the 16th-century kabbalistic text *Sha'ar Hagilgulim*, by Rabbi Chaim Vital, a disciple of the kabbalist Yitzhak Luria; the third-person narrative of the priest's activities drawn from standard liturgies; and a long narrative of Namdar's own creation detailing these events through the experience of a common priest observing and participating in the ritual.

Setting aside the links this invented text has with the rest of the novel and its function in relationship to the plot, it highlights certain elements of language that relate specifically to Jewish polylingualism. Crucial to this unusual makeup of texts is that it represents the many temporal layers of Hebrew language, from the biblical through the modern period, as well as the varieties of religious expression for which Hebrew has been used throughout its history. It also reveals the polylingual history of Hebrew itself, specifically through the use of mostly Greek loan words common in rabbinic Hebrew. All of the texts use common classical Hebrew vocabulary derived from Greek, words like *palhedrin* (also *parhedrin*),

[1] This section was not translated into English simply because of the extreme difficulty of doing so. Personal communication from the author, June 15, 2018.

which refers to the counselors to the high priest; *istnis*, Greek for "delicate", used to describe the high priest's constitution; and the adaptation *hediyot*, a layperson or a lay priest, derived from the Greek *idiotes*, or "commoner" (and also, of course, the source of the English word "idiot"). The use of these etymologically Greek words in the Hebrew of the description of the holiest service in Jewish religious tradition indicates the extent to which Hebrew, at its very core, has always been influenced, and even constructed, by its contact with non-Jewish cultures and languages. The fact that these Greek words were used to describe a specifically Jewish rite shows that even the most vital Jewish religious and cultural elements — like the priesthood or the sacrificial rite — cannot be described except through language derived and adapted from the surrounding culture.

The literal flip side to the device of the fabricated *seder ha'avodah* are the epigraphs that appear at the beginning of each book, as the seven major sections of the novel are called[1]. While the *seder ha'avodah* appears at the end of each book, the epigraphs appear on the other side of the page (or the next one). These epigraphs are chosen from a variety of sources, including Hebrew poets, the German psychoanalyst Carl Jung, and American and British poets. Again, this choice of sources reveals the fundamentally absorptive nature of Hebrew and its dependence on outside influences, Jewish and non-Jewish, for its vitality. In addition, the epigraphs and their authors reflect not only on the subject matter of the individual books and the novel as a whole, but also on the history of Hebrew language and literature.

In particular, the choice of Hebrew poets reflected in these epigraphs point to the complex polylingual and diasporic history of Hebrew literature. One of the writers quoted in an epigraph is Gabriel Preil, an American Hebrew poet who bridged three languages and cultures. Yael Feldman has noted that to write in Hebrew Preil "had to cross two language barriers: Yiddish, his European mother tongue, which continued to be the language spoken at home throughout his life, and English, the language he acquired in his new home-country and which soon became a rich literary source for young Preil" [14]. Again, Preil's presence here recalls the multifarious history of Hebrew literature as both an Israeli and a diaspora phenomenon, as well as an American one. In addition, his proximity to Yiddish and his incorporation of English literary influences suggest, like the composite faux-liturgical texts, the extent to which Hebrew is not a purely Jewish or solely Israeli language, but has always been dependent on other cultural and linguistic influences.

These Hebrew epigraphs function as "paratexts", which can serve "as a means of directing our attention to the very processes by which we understand and interpret the past through textuality" [15]. In this case the paratexts work to recall Hebrew's transnational and polylingual history. The epigraphs also reference the poetry of John Berryman and

[1] These epigraphs appear only in the Hebrew edition, largely because Uri Tzvi Greenberg's poetry is considered nearly untranslatable, and Namdar felt there was "no need to add yet another layer of alienation between the novel and the American reader", who would have had no touchstone for understanding Greenberg's work in the context of the history of Hebrew literature. This again points to the complex position of the novel with regard to language and place, as even though it is focused on its American setting, its English version cannot necessarily faithfully represent all of its innovations of language. Personal communication from the author, June 15, 2018.

William Butler Yeats, who wrote in English, as well as a psychoanalytic text of Carl Jung, originally in German. The inclusion of these texts, like the linguistic mixing of the *seder ha'avodah*, underlines the notion of Hebrew language and culture as dependent on non-Jewish and non-Hebrew influences for its dynamism.

This absorptive quality of Hebrew is also reflected in the novel's use of translation and citation in its narrative sections, set in contemporary New York. One example is the use of popular American songs to evoke particular moods or periods. For example, one afternoon the main character, Andrew Cohen, takes his young daughter to visit his elderly mother, who is now confined to a nursing home. As they sit with her, Andrew has a powerful memory of his mother when she was much younger, singing to his older daughter when she was a baby, 25 years earlier. The song Andrew remembers, not identified by name in the text, is "I've Told Ev'ry Little Star", from the 1932 musical *Music in the Air*, with music by Jerome Kern and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II. In the text of the novel, part of the song is reproduced in a Hebrew translation that is faithful to the meaning of the song without perfectly preserving the rhyme scheme.

I've told ev'ry little star	לַיָּרֵחַ וְגַם לַכּוֹכָבִים סִפַּרְתִּי
Just how sweet I think you are	נֶהֱדֶרֶת אַתְּ כַּמָּה
Why haven't I told you [16; 17].	הָצוֹלָם לְכָל סִפַּרְתִּי
	לָךְ סִפַּרְתִּי לֹא לָמָּה?

What is preserved in the text is a popular American song from the generation of Andrew's mother Ethel, which Andrew is remembering in English, translated into Hebrew, in a novel about an American Jew in New York written by an Israeli expatriate.

In this case, the translation demonstrates the way that Hebrew can and does absorb, as well as appropriate, not just linguistic but cultural influences from surrounding societies. It is no accident that the song is written by a famous American-Jewish songwriting team that deeply influenced an era of American popular culture[1]. Hana Wirth-Nesher has written of the tendency among American-Jewish writers to expunge traces of Jewish languages or accents from their writing in order to assimilate [18]. Here we have a contemporary inversion of this theme, in which English is elided from an Israeli Hebrew representation of American Jewish life. In a sense, the novel "claims" this popular American song (an American-Jewish song, if we consider its authorship) for Jewish culture through its Hebraization. At the same time, the novel legitimates American culture as a site of Hebrew culture or acculturation, linking Hebrew with both America the place and with a specifically American culture in English.

The novel's emphasis on linguistic and cultural mixing is one element that characterizes it as transcultural literature. At one time Jewish literature itself was defined by its transculturality, as "a literature of migration, the literature of a transplanted nation" as Benjamin Harshav has called it [9]. However, Harshav represents a Zionist notion of Israel, and Israeli Hebrew culture, as the teleological end point of this migration and transplantation when he goes on to note: "Because of that centrifugal movement away

[1] Although Hammerstein was raised as an Episcopalian, his father was Jewish and his biography, even or especially his parents' intermarriage, reflects some of the typical patterns of 20th-century American Jewish life.

from the source, it could not survive in the long run, except in the state of Israel. Yet it left a great, highly complex and contextually bound literature in our libraries" [9]. This sense of diaspora Jewish literature, polylingual Jewish culture, and diaspora Hebrew as having been completed with the establishment of the state of Israel is precisely the idea that *The Ruined House* works against. In the words of Haim Weiss, who helped to edit the novel, "The isolation of a language, and the self-isolation of a culture, is a death sentence. Such a culture will wither and become devoid of meaning" [19]. By reinscribing a polylingual history into contemporary Hebrew, The *Ruined House* is an attempt to re-animate Hebrew language and literature by rejecting Jewish monolingualism.

Transnational Israeli Culture

Beginning in the late 2000s, Israeli Jews began immigrating — some temporarily and some permanently — in measurable numbers to Germany, most settling in or around Berlin. This trend is prominent enough that it has visibly impacted Berlin's local culture. Larissa Remennick notes, "The general feeling is that the presence of Israelis in Berlin's ethno-cultural mosaic is constantly growing: the sounds of Hebrew are commonly heard on public trnasport and in cafés, clubs, and other city venues" [20]. The incursion of Hebrew into the public spaces of Berlin is all the more remarkable given the history of hostility and suspicion with which the nascent Israeli state viewed all things German for decades after the Holocaust. Although many immigrants to the pre-state *yishuv* spoke it, there were strong taboos against the use of German, and German language instruction was banned at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel's flagship institution of higher education, between 1934 and 1953 [21]. For eight years after the establishment of the state, it was forbidden to enter Germany on an Israeli passport, which contained the admonition, "Good for all countries but Germany" [22]. The Holocaust, conceived as a defining event not just of Jewish history but also as a crucial catalyst in the realization of Jewish sovereignty, drove a deep wedge between Israel and Germany both practically and imaginatively.

However, in the last decade, Israeli migrants to Berlin have created a thriving Hebrew culture in Berlin: a Hebrew library; an online Hebrew magazine, *Spitz*; a series of lectures and seminars at Humboldt University called the Gymnasia Project; as well as community organizations and Hebrew-language classes for children. In addition, an artistic and scholarly community has sprung up that has developed new modes for artistic expression in Hebrew and in collaboration with other ethnic and linguistic communities that specifically references Hebrew's diasporic history, as well as integrating Mizrahi Israelis into a multi-ethnic European culture. At the same time, German writers have also experimented with writing about Israel. As Rachel Seelig and Amir Eshel note, "The increased mobility of Germans and Israelis and attendant decline of inherited stigmas have facilitated new forms of bilingual exploration and expression. For these cultural nomads, the relationship between German and Hebrew is no longer confined to conventional binaries of victm/perpetrator and exile/homeland, but rather serves as a source of creativity and transnational identity" [21. P. 9].

One of the primary projects of the Israeli diaspora in Berlin has been to create a new culture of what has been called "diasporic Hebrew". This phrase was first used by Tal Hever-Chybowski, one of the driving forces behind the Hebrew renaissance in Berlin

and the rest of Europe. Hever-Chybowski, in the inaugural issue of *Mikan ve-eylakh* (From This Point Onward), a Hebrew journal published in Paris, defines "diasporic Hebrew" as "a minor, hybrid, heterogenous Hebrew" facilitated by "the *duality* between the local presence and the trans-local presence of Hebrew" [23]. Elsewhere, Hever-Chybowski connects this contemporary movement for the creation of a diasporic Hebrew culture to the history of Hebrew culture in Berlin, which in the modern period had always been one of the main centers for the creation of Hebrew culture [24]. The function of diasporic Hebrew in Berlin, according to Hever-Chybowski, "is not only an instrument for remembering that which has been forgotten, but also for fundamentally resisting the historical forces which sought to remove Hebrew from this place. Reclaiming Jewish diasporic languages and literatures (and this holds for Yiddish as much as it does for Hebrew) in Berlin is an act of historical defiance" [24. P. 59]. The Holocaust destroyed Jewish culture in Germany, but the revival of Hebrew in Berlin can be seen partly as a mode of remembering, or even recuperating, that history, as well as a political tool for reinstating Jewish history and culture into the troubled space of Germany.

Another political possibility envisioned by the current revival of Hebrew in Berlin is manifest in the participation of Berlin's Hebrew writers in an ongoing project of Arab-Jewish dialogue. In 2015, the poet Mati Shemoelof and the artist Barak Moyal, both Israelis living in Berlin, hosted the first "Poetic Hafla", an evening of literary readings, music, and performances in Hebrew, Arabic, German, and English. The term "*hafla*" is an Arabic word for a party or celebration, and points to their intention to create a space of collaboration rather than conflict, as well as a place to acknowledge shared histories and languages, particularly for Mizrahi Jews whose families originated in Arab lands. Shemoelof has noted that the *haflot* are intended to celebrate a pan-Middle-Eastern culture that encompasses both Hebrew and Arabic, and connects Israeli Jews with Arab roots to Palestinians and other Arabs also living abroad.

The creation of a space for the meeting of Middle Eastern cultures in both Hebrew and Arabic, as well as a space for the acknowledgment of a dual Arab-Jewish identity, recalls the concept of Levantinism, articulated by the Israeli writer Jacqueline Kahanoff in the 1950s. Kahanoff herself, born in Cairo, never wrote in Hebrew, only English and French, and before settling in Israel had lived in both the United States and France. Using her cosmopolitan upbringing in prerevolutionary Cairo as a model, Kahanoff posited a pluralistic Levantine culture that would reflect the historic multicultural, polylingual, and diverse religious composition of the broader Middle East. She saw Israel as part of this Levantine culture, and particularly saw Israeli Jews with origins in the Middle East as an integral part of establishing Israel as part of the Levant. Whereas Levantine, or oriental, culture had been viewed as inferior to the Western-oriented Israeli culture Zionists wanted to establish in the new state, Kahanoff advocated for Levantinism as a postive value, encouraging a more pluralistic understanding of Israeli culture as comprising multiple cultural influences and as belonging to a broader multicultural regional civilization.

Likewise, other literary experiments among the expatriate community in Berlin, in collaboration with German locals and other immigrants, seek to re-establish a vibrant polylingual, transnational Jewish culture. In 2016, the German writer Hanno Hauenstein, who had studied in Tel Aviv, published the first (and so far only) issue of a bilingual

Hebrew-German literary magazine called *Aviv* ("spring" [the season] in Hebrew). The journal published a number of texts by Israeli and German writers, in both Hebrew and German, interspersed with photography and art. Hauenstein wrote, "As a journal that aims to provide a platform for writers and artists from different backgrounds, and to constitute a critical mass against expressions of racism, we see bilingualism as a gift, and our work is the result of a process whose point of departure is the understanding of the breadth of latent possibilities in linguistic variety" [25]. The goal of the project, like the poetic *haflot*, was to create ties between German and Hebrew, among various artistic media, and between writers from Germany and Israel of multiethnic backgrounds. The journal takes bilingualism as a starting point for an expansive view of culture and nation. In his introduction, Hauenstein links the appearance of the magazine to the refugee issue in Europe, an indication of the connections between a re-animated Hebrew, and Jewish, polylingualism in Europe and contemporary geopolitical questions about the opening or closing of national borders.

The poet Mati Shemoelof, one of the founders of the poetic *hafla* movement in Berlin, writes of the potential inherent in this new polylingualism in his first book of Hebrew poetry written and published while living in Germany, *Ivrit mechutz le'ivreha hametukim* (Hebrew Outside Her Sweet Insides). One of the poems, "Ich bin yuden dichter", is a mix of Hebrew and German written in Hebrew characters [26]. Perhaps more than any other, this poems speaks to the revival not just of Hebrew in Germany but also of the return to multilingualism as a mode of expression. The poem begins with a line in German transliterated into Hebrew characters, "Ich schreibe hebraisch", meaning "I write Hebrew", followed by a Hebrew line: "Ish kotev ivrit", or "A man writes Hebrew". The lines are connected by the play on "ich/ish" (I/man) — pronounced nearly identically and spelled the same way when the German is transliterated. This slippage between the languages, as well as the near-translation of these opening lines, connect the two languages and model the intermixture of the languages in the German context.

It also plays with the languages to create a secret or hidden narrative that suggests the invisibility of minority languages, as well as those who speak them, within the dominant culture. In answer to the question of why the poet writes in Hebrew in Berlin, the narrator answers first in German: "Ich kann nich (sic) schreiben gut Engliz (sic) oder/naturlich kein gut Deutschen" (I cannot write English well or/native good German). But the next line, in Hebrew, seems addressed to a different audience, those like him, whose German is not native but whose Hebrew is: "Ve'ani ger becha" — and I am a stranger within you. Although the "you" addresses itself to the Berliner German-speaking community, it functions as a Hebrew aside, an inside commentary for those who can understand. At the same time, though the narrator insists that he writes in Hebrew, and the mistakes in the German indicate that his self-assessment of his language skills is accurate, he is still writing in German here. Yet the German itself is transposed into a Hebrew context, transliterated such that a German reader could not understand it. This has the effect of both claiming German — even bad German — for the Hebrew poet, while at the same time alienating German from German readers, rendering the familiar foreign and the foreign familiar.

The self-conscious project to revive a Hebrew culture in conversation with other languages and national cultures represents both a look back to a polylingual Jewish

European history but also a look forward to a pluralistic future for Jewish and Israeli culture. It reflects a desire for Hebrew, and Israeli culture, to be more fully integrated into European, and global, cultural movements that foster a multicultural and multiethnic ethos, and serve as points of connection for otherwise disconnected, and sometimes hostile, communities of people. In this, it represents an embrace of the "marriage" of Hebrew not just to other Jewish languages, but to the European vernaculars that were integral to its creation and flourishing as a modern literary language. In the contemporary world, that marriage also reflects a political reality of porous national borders and a cultural reality of porous linguistic, literary, and artistic borders facilitated by globalization and the internet.

Conclusion

In some ways, the contemporary decentralization and deterritorialization of culture enabled by these phenomena have simply opened the space for a reclamation of the Jewish multilingualism of the period before the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel, two historical events that contributed heavily to a shift toward monolingualism. In his 1918 article on bilingualism the Yiddish writer Bal Makhshoves explicated the link between land, language, and literature:

> [T]he literature of oppressed peoples has always been their own territory, where they feel entirely at home. At the very least it has proved a kind of ex-territoriality, something like Franz Josef's palace or an English embassy in a foreign land. On the threshold of the building the foreign country's authority ends. Behind the walls of such a building, be it in Turkey or Persia, a man could live as if he were entirely at home, with no one having any power over him except his own national community....our earth, our very home, has always been literature [5. P. 75].

Contemporary Israeli translingual, transcultural, and transnational literary movements have shifted the ground of home and homeland away from territory and toward culture. The linguistic diversification of that culture reflects both a desire to reclaim a lost or destroyed history as well as a forward-looking movement toward the opening of borders both political and artistic. While Bialik's metaphor of the marriage between Hebrew and Yiddish may be outdated, with its gendered and hierarchical implications, there is no doubt that the potential of partnerships with other languages reflects an interest in breaking down monolithic and monolingual notions of Jewish identity and replacing them with multivalent conceptions of Jewish national culture that can include both Israeli and diasporic voices, spaces, and languages.

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Научная статья

Национализм и монолингвизм: «языковые войны» и возрождение многоязычия Израиля

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С созданием еврейского поселения в Палестине в начале XX века среди еврейских писателей возникли яростные споры о будущем еврейского литературного многоязычия. До этого периода идея о том, что еврейский монолингвизм является предпочтительным способом культурного существования или что писателю придется выбирать между двумя основными языками европейского еврейского культурного производства, была относительно новой. Полилингвизм был характерен для еврейской культуры и литературного производства на протяжении тысячелетий. Но в настоящее время еврейские националистические движения, особенно сионизм, требуют, чтобы одноязычная еврейская культура объединилась вокруг одного языка. Тем не менее многоязычная еврейская культура сохранилась, и, несмотря на то, что Израиль настаивает на иврите в качестве национального языка, в последние годы многоязычность Израиля резко возросла. В этой статье рассматривается ряд недавних событий в области языковых, транскультурных и транснациональных литературных и культурных форм Израиля.

Ключевые слова: транслингвизм, национализм, многоязычие, еврейская культура

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