Unsettling the Land: Ludwig Strauss's Journey from German Romanticism to Neoclassical Hebrew

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Introduction: From Germany to the Bay of Haifa

In 1934, just a few months after immigrating to Palestine, Ludwig
Strauss wrote his first poem in Hebrew. The result of a painstaking
process of self-translation between his native German and his newly
acquired Hebrew, "El ha-mifrats" (To the Bay) was one of two itera-
tions of the poem. The German version appeared shortly after its
completion in the volume *Land Israel* (Land of Israel, 1935), whereas
the Hebrew version remained unseen until 1951, the year Strauss's
first and only Hebrew poetry volume, *Sha'ot va-dor* (Hours and the
Generation), was published.[1] Other than one shared poem, these two
volumes have strikingly little in common. Whereas *Land Israel* offers
an idealized portrait of the Zionist landscape as imagined from afar,
Sha'ot va-dor responds to the horrors of the Second World War and

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[1]For translations of both versions of the poem and analysis of the role of self-translation
in Strauss's bilingual poetics, see my article, "The Middleman: Ludwig Strauss's German-
Hebrew Bilingualism," *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History* 32.2 (forthcoming).
Shimon Sandbank offers a thoroughgoing analysis of the poem's bilingual roots in
"Aryeh Ludwig Strauss: 'A Chapter of Psalms Returns to Home" in *Two Pools in the
Woods: Parallels and Connections Between Hebrew Poetry and European Poetry* [Hebrew] (Tel
Aviv: University of Tel Aviv, 1976), 83–102.

Arab-Israeli skirmishes that preceded Israeli independence. The linguistic and thematic shift is matched by a seemingly counter-intuitive progression from unfettered romanticism to restrained neoclassical forms reminiscent of Hebrew poetry from the medieval Spanish Golden Age; as Strauss's subject matter and language modernized, his engagement with form grew more traditional.

Why was Strauss's transition from German to Hebrew accompanied by the turn to neoclassicism, an aesthetic choice that was not only a personal departure for the poet but also anachronistic in the context of Modern Hebrew poetry? The most obvious explanation relates to the very fact that Strauss was a German-Jewish immigrant to Palestine—a *yekke.*[2] This biographical detail has significant practical and ideological implications. Strauss arrived in Palestine at the height of the Fifth Aliyah (1929–1939), the predominantly German wave of European migration that reached its height shortly after Hitler's rise to power in 1933. Yet he stands apart from the majority of German-Jewish migrant writers, such as Else Lasker-Schüler, who arrived in 1937 at the age of 77 and, despite the "hebraicized" German of her early work, failed to master the vernacular of her new home.[3] Notwithstanding his successful transition from German to Hebrew, Strauss likewise occupies an anomalous position among the Hebrew poets of his generation. Avraham Shlonsky, Natan Alterman and Uri Zvi Greenberg, three leading voices in Hebrew poetry of the day, left Eastern Europe in the early 1920s bearing socialistic values and the emotional scars of post-World War I violence.[4] These pioneering poets took the reins from the revivalist generation of Hayim Nahman Bialik to write poems about cultivating the land in a Hebrew infused

[2]Coined by East European Jews as a derogatory epithet for their German-Jewish counterparts, the term "yekke" is derived from the German word *Jacke* (jacket), an image that invokes formality, pedantry, secularization, assimilation, and difference. The term was re-appropriated and neutralized by Israelis of German origin, as the establishment in northern Israel of the so-called "Yekke Museum" (German-Speaking Jewish Heritage Museum), founded by German-born Israeli industrialist Stef Wertheimer, indicates.

[3]Lasker-Schüler claimed to have written her first volume, *Styx* (1902), in an "urlanguage (*Ursprache*) descended from the time of King Saul, the Royal Wild Jew," which she referred to as "mystical Asiatic" (*mystisches Asiatisch*). See Sigrid Bauschinger, *Else Lasker-Schüler: Biographie* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 40.

[4]The exception among this cohort is Leah Goldberg, who also had East European origins, but arrived in Palestine via Germany around the same time as Strauss, in 1935. Strauss and Goldberg formed a long-term friendship, and Goldberg succeeded Strauss at the Department of Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University. Strauss also translated a collection of Goldberg's poems into German. The volume, entitled *Lea Goldberg: Gedichte (1948–49),* has been reprinted in its entirety in Ludwig Strauss, *Gesammelte Werke Band 3.1: Lyrik und Übertragungen,* eds. Hans Otto Horch, Tuvia Rübner (Göttingen : Wallstein, 2000). [Henceforth cited as *Lyrik.*]

with new freshness and vitality. While Shlonsky penned earthy poems that sanctified agricultural labor, Uri Zvi Greenberg, taking on the role of modern-day poet-prophet, invoked the terror of pogroms and longing for national redemption with pseudo-apocalyptic urgency and expressionistic explosiveness. Strauss, by contrast, made his Hebrew literary debut in 1951, at a time when the revolutionary Zionist spirit was being quieted by the complex realities of statehood.

Despite the timing of his entry into Hebrew letters, Strauss cannot be counted among the so-called "Statehood Generation," the younger coterie of poets who began publishing in the 1950s, including German-born Yehuda Amichai and Nathan Zach, who arrived in Palestine as young children, quickly transforming from *yekkes* into *sabras* (native Israelis)[5] writing highly personal poetry with the facility of native sons.[6] Claiming to have "gained fluency" with his fourth Hebrew composition in 1940, Strauss learned Hebrew primarily from the Psalms and the poetry of Yehuda Halevi, which he studied with diligence befitting an assiduous German academic.[7] Although he achieved a level of virtuosity reminiscent of the Golden Age of Spain, his bookish precision signals a need to compensate for a general lack of ease with the modern vernacular. Reading Strauss's Hebrew poetry through a biographical lens suggests that the turn to a pre-modern, predominantly written Hebrew was bound up with the fact that he was a middle-aged German intellectual who learned the language relatively late in life and arrived in Palestine once the pioneering spirit of the Yishuv had begun to wane.[8]

But the practical explanation does not suffice. After all, Strauss's status as a *yekke* expresses more than simply a tenuous grasp of

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[5]The term *sabra* (*tsabar* in Hebrew) is widely used to designate a Jew born in Israel or, before 1948, Palestine. It alludes to a thorny desert plant, known in English as the prickly pear, characterized by a thick skin that conceals a sweet, softer interior. The cactus is compared to Israelis, who are supposedly tough on the outside but sweet and delicate on the inside.

[6]Yehuda Amichai mastered vernacular Hebrew to such an extent that he became Israel's national poet. According to Nili Scharf Gold, Amichai's development involved a "harrowing linguistic conversion" which concealed his German roots. Nili Scharf Gold, *Yehuda Amichai: The Making of Israel's National Poet* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2008).

[7]Strauss, "On the Composition of my First Hebrew Poem, 'To the Bay,'" in *The Human Being and Poetry* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1985), 115–119. Strauss wrote several important essays on both Yehuda Halevi and the Psalms, which were published in the monumental critical collection, *In the Paths of Literature: Studies in Jewish Literature and World Literature* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1975).

[8]The term "Yishuv," meaning "settlement," refers to the body of Jewish residents in Palestine prior to the establishment of the State of Israel.

spoken Hebrew. His turn to neoclassicism points to an ideological orientation stemming from a specifically Central European Jewish milieu. The process of self-translation between German and Hebrew constituted much more than the move between languages; it involved careful negotiation between a binational Zionist vision that Strauss took with him from Germany and the complex socio-political reality that he encountered in Palestine, a reality that did not live up to his earlier ideals. The aesthetic shift from romanticism to neoclassicism that accompanied his linguistic transition from German to Hebrew must be analyzed concurrently with the ideological development attendant to his temporal and geographical trajectory from interwar Germany to post-war Palestine/Israel. Exploring Strauss's Hebrew poetry therefore demands that we ask the following question: How did the German past inform his Hebrew present, and to what degree could his earlier ideology and aesthetics be translated, or *übertragen*, literally "carried over"?

Dreaming of a Binational Zionist Utopia in German

Like most German-Jewish immigrants to Palestine, Strauss left Germany in reaction to the rise of the Third Reich. In 1933, at the age of 41 and the height of a promising academic career, he was forced out of his position as *Privatdozent* at the Aachen Technical Academy by a policy requiring all "non-Aryans" to resign their posts.[9] Unemployed and without prospects, he traveled to Palestine to prepare for his family's immigration. By 1935, he, his wife Eva (the daughter of Martin Buber), and their two sons had arrived in Jerusalem, and soon settled in Kibbutz Hazorea. From 1938 until 1949, Strauss served as a teacher of literature and history at the Ben Shemen Youth Village, where he composed most of his Hebrew writings under the hebraicized name Arieh Ludwig Strauss.[10] He also played a leading role in establishing the Department of Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University, where he offered memorable lectures on biblical and medieval Hebrew

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[9]In 1992, the Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen (RWTH Aachen) established the position of Ludwig Strauss Professorship of German-Jewish Literary History to honor and commemorate Strauss's service to the university.

[10]Located near Modi'in in central Israel, the Ben Shemen Youth Village (*Kfar hano'ar ben-shemen*), still in existence today, was established in 1927 by the German educator Siegfried Lehmann with the aim of endowing children, many of them orphaned refugees from Europe, with both a humanistic education and agricultural training. Among the school's prominent alumni are President Shimon Peres and former Minister of Education Shulamit Aloni.

poetry and world literature to large audiences. Among the students in attendance were several leading poets of the Statehood Genera-tion, including Yehuda Amichai, T. Carmi, Hayim Gouri, Dan Pagis, Tuvia Rübner and Nathan Zach, to name just a few.[11] In 1949, due to failing health, Strauss resettled with his family to Jerusalem, where he remained until his death in 1953.

Although Strauss arrived in Palestine relatively late according to conventional Zionist chronology, his Zionist allegiance crystallized long before Hitler came to power. In 1924, exactly a decade before immigrating, Strauss traveled through Palestine for the first time, mar-veling at the landscape he had long only imagined. During this first visit, he recalls in his memoirs, he established with the exotic landscape "a relationship of passionate inwardness, which remained as good as mute."[12] "An den Berg Tabor" (To Mount Tabor), the only poem penned during this trip, can be read as a meditation on the poet's awe-struck silence as he encounters the great Galilean peak remembered in the Bible as an important tribal border. With its "sonorous curve" (*singender Bogen*), the beauty of the mountainside transmits the divine call (*Ruf*) synesthetically, bringing forth a humble response from the speaker that is akin to prayer—the inaudible beginning of a poem.[13]

It was only upon settling in Palestine permanently that the memory of this initial encounter re-emerged and Strauss's silence was broken. While overlooking the bay of Haifa, he recalled, "the first blessed touch of the genius of the Hebrew language was received."[14] This spontaneous linguistic transfer "loosened the tongue," allowing the poet to express his love for the landscape, at last, in German! Hebrew is imagined here as a recovered *Ursprache,* a lost primordial language that is reawakened through the immediacy of the poet's encounter with the language's indigenous landscape. Strauss's reminiscence con-tains an implicit response to the claim that German remains "alien"

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[11]Rübner served as editor of Strauss's collected German works, and wrote extensively about Strauss's influence on his own intellectual and artistic development in his auto-biography, *A Short Long Life* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Keshev, 2006). The novelist Aharon Appelfeld also mentions Strauss's influence as a teacher in his autobiography: "Leah Goldberg and Ludwig Strauss . . . had much to say about the dichotomy of having two languages and two homelands. They were poets and spoke like poets. From them I learned how to respond to a line of poetry and, indeed, to an individual word, and to understand that every sound has a meaning." Aharon Appelfeld, *The Story of a Life* (New York: Schocken, 2004), 149.

[12]Ludwig Strauss, *Dichtungen und Schriften,* ed. Werner Kraft (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1963), 699.

[13]For a translation and analysis of the poem, see my article, "The Middleman."

[14]Strauss, *Dichtungen,* 699–700.

to the Jewish writer, who is therefore incapable of producing original works of cultural value in German. Richard Wagner articulated this argument in an especially stinging manner in *Das Judenthum in der Musik* (Judaism in Music):

> Composing true poetry in a foreign tongue has hitherto been impossible, even to geniuses of the highest rank. To the Jew, however, our entire European civilization and art have remained a foreign tongue [*eine fremde Sprache*]; for just as he [the Jew] has taken no part in the formation of the one, so has he taken none in the development of the other; at most the homeless wretch has been a cold, indeed, a hostile onlooker. In this language, this art, the Jew can only parrot and imitate [*nachsprechen und nachkünsteln*]—not create a poem of his own words nor true works of art.[15]

Since, according to Wagner, genuine literary production can only be achieved in one's mother-tongue, the Jew is ipso facto barred from becoming a true German poet.[16] Strauss was acutely aware of this malicious charge, which persisted in the intellectual discourse of his own day, and expressed anxiety over the notion that he could not lay rightful claim to the only language in which he was able to express himself fully.[17] His was the insoluble quandary that Kafka famously described as "the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing German, the impossibility of writing differently."[18] The reminiscence summarized above simultaneously challenges and succumbs to the fantasy of linguistic purity by offering a parallel myth of origins. In a moment of unmediated inspiration, the Hebrew word is "received,"

[15]Richard Wagner, *Das Judenthum in der Musik* (Leipzig: J.J. Weber, 1869), 15, Web. (My translation.)

[16]The leading architect of a theory of literary monolingualism was Friedrich Schleiermacher, who argued that, "every writer can produce original work only in his mother tongue." For a cogent account of the "myth of monolingualism," which emerged in eighteenth century German thought to become a major structuring principle of modernity, see Yasimin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

[17]Strauss engaged in an open debate with the prominent German-Jewish literary and theater critic Julius Bab over this very issue. Echoing Wagner, Bab argued that the Jewish poet was inherently uncreative and thus constitutionally predisposed to serve as a "middleman" (*Mittler*) within German culture, that is, as editor, translator, collector or publisher, rather than produce original cultural works of his own. Strauss offered an indignant response to what he regarded as Bab's self-hatred, which bore the provocative title, "Ein Dokument der Assimilation" (A Document of Assimilation). The article puts forth the argument that German poetry written by Jews is qualitatively different from that of non-Jewish Germans and must therefore be adjudicated according to its own standards, something that Bab, as a hyper-assimilated critic, had clearly failed to do. For a detailed account of the debate, see my article, "The Middleman."

[18]Franz Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors,* trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken, 1977), 289.

and the German word subsequently revived. Hebrew becomes, as it was for Kafka (albeit in a purely symbolic sense), what Deleuze and Guattari famously described as the "nomadic movement of deterritorialization that reworks the German language" and then "reterritorializes" it by providing a spiritual and mythical link to the Near Eastern landscape.[19] Through its encounter with its Hebrew origins, Strauss's German, the "illegitimate" mother tongue, is "replanted" in the Land of Israel.

Yet this myth of romantic genius should not be taken at face value. What actually emerged from Strauss's visit to the Haifa bay was an arduous process of self-translation between Hebrew and German, the result of which was two versions of his ode "To the Bay"—and the beginning of a remarkable bilingual career. The German version soon appeared in *Land Israel,* Strauss's love letter to Palestine. Published in 1935, *Land Israel* reveals a profound debt to Friedrich Hölderlin's *Hyperion,* in which Greece is idealized as the site of primordial unity and purity.[20] Strauss portrays Palestine similarly as an imagined land turned real place, which nonetheless retains its messianic promise. But his vision of primordial unity brings together more than Promised Land and Chosen People: it includes another nation in their midst. "As the spiritual vision meets the concrete landscape," suggests Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer, "the promise of the land confronts the difficulties of settlement and coexistence with the residents."[21]

The first poem in the volume to address the issue of coexistence is "Orangenhain" (Orange Grove).

Orange Grove

Great golden fruits in the darkly lacquered crown of
Foliage hang and glow,
Glow in shade and glimmer in radiance and stir in wind
Slowly through dusk and effulgence.
Deep to the bed of the grove, like a small
Sun pressed intimately against neighboring suns!
True, the peel stores the cool, soaking fire,

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[19]Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 25.

[20]Strauss dedicated significant scholarly attention to Hölderlin in general, and to *Hyperion* in particular. His doctoral dissertation, entitled *Hölderlins Anteil an Schellings frühem Systemprogramm* (1929), was followed by a number of scholarly publications, most notably the monograph *Das Problem der Gemeinschaft in Hölderlins 'Hyperion'* (1933).

[21]Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer, "Wandlungen einer Topographie. Zu den Gedichten von *Land Israel,*" in *Ludwig Strauß, 1892–1992: Beiträge zu seinem Leben und Werk,* ed. Hans Otto Horch (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995), 40–41.

So that no spark may escape,
Yet with the light of its self-contained abundance
It looks at me calmly.
Whence comes such wonder? Has the silent, nurturing earth
So much luminous blood?
Sun hangs with sun, just as love lines up
Word by word, inexhaustibly:
Like a golden whisper passing from branch to branch
And from tree to tree.
O if only we knew the love-language of fruits,
The secret gold of heaven-enclosed earth
Might finally strike our eyes
And from the shielding foliage of our villages and cities
Fortune with fortune might ripen.[22]

Orangenhain

Große, goldene Früchte im dunkellackigen Kranz des
Laubwerks hängen und glühn,
Glühn im Schatten und glänzen im Strahl und regen im Wind sich
Langsam durch Dämmer und Glanz.
Tief bis zum Grund des Hains, wie innig nachbarlich kleine
Sonne zu Sonnen sich drängt!
Wohl, es verwahrt die Haut das kühle, tränkende Feuer,
Dass ihm kein Funken entrinnt,
Doch mit dem ganzen Licht der innen verhaltenen Fülle
Schaut sie ruhig mich an.
Soviel Wunder, woher? Hat die stumme, nährende Erde
Soviel leuchtendes Blut?
Sonne hängt bei Sonne, wie Wort an Worte der Liebe
Unerschöpflich sich reiht:
Wie ein goldenes Flüstern ergehts von Zweigen zu Zweigen und von Baume zu
*   Baum.*
O verstünden wir erst die Liebessprache der Früchte,
Uns auch leuchtete wohl
So in Augen das heimliche Gold der himmelumschloßnen
Erde, endlich auch uns
Wie aus hütendem Laub aus unsern Dörfern und Städten
Reif Geschick an Geschick.

Appearing in the first of the volume's two sections, *Landschaften* (Land-scapes), "Orangenhain" is at first glance a lyrical portrait of a kibbutz

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[22]Strauss, *Lyrik,* 340. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from German and Hebrew are my own.

orange grove. Upon closer inspection, however, an allegory of national coexistence emerges. The dominant image is that of oranges pressed up against each other with neighborly intimacy, *wie innig nachbarlich kleine Sonne zu Sonnen sich drängt!* (like a small sun pressed intimately against neighboring suns). Strauss replicates linguistically the image of the tightly packed grove through word choice and placement, beginning with the pairing of similar adjectives, *innig nachbarlich* (intimately neighborly), followed by the repetition of nouns: *Sonne zu Sonnen* (sun against suns). Strung together like beads in a necklace, words create the crowded yet cooperative atmosphere of the coppice: *Sonne hängt bei Sonne, wie Wort an Wort der Liebe unerschöpflich sich reiht* (Sun hangs with sun, just as love lines up word by word inexhaustibly). Emphasizing doubling and dialogue, the poem speaks in an idealized "love-language of fruits," projecting the dream of peaceful coexistence within the land, which will only be attainable, Strauss cautions, if its inhabitants internalize the message of tolerance contained in the grove. "O if only we knew the love-language of fruits"—with this turn to the subjunctive, the poem ends on a note of profound longing.

The second section of *Land Israel*, subtitled *Not und Hoffnung* (Need and Hope), reads as a quasi-messianic invocation of a future peace. "To the Neighbor," a cycle of three poems, conveys the tension between the dream of coexistence and a challenging civil reality. This tension is especially palpable in the second poem in the cycle:

> To the Neighbor II
>
> Two worlds—and no
> Sense shared by both?
> For me as for you this is suffering—
> Bear it with me!
> We need the burden;
> And if we falter under it,
> God give us the strength to be thankful
> That he bade us so!
>
> This I saw today:
> In nascent scaffolds
> On the narrowest precipice
> Two workers standing,
> One from your tribe, one from mine.
> Around them nothing
> But the mighty flame
> Of pure heavenly light.

While they speak two tongues—
The future house
Exhales a language
Which holds them
Entwined in dialogue:
As they fastened the beams,
Arm understood arm,
World understood world.[23]

Dem Nachbarn II

Zwei Welten—und kein Sinn
Gemeinsam beiden?
Mir ists wie dir ein Leiden—
Nimms mit mir hin!
Last ist uns not;
Und wenn wir drunter wanken,
Gott geb uns Kraft, zu danken,
Daß er sie uns entbot!

Dies hab ich heut gesehn:
In werdendem Gerüste
Auf schmalster Abgrundküste
Zwei Werker stehn
Von dein- und meinem Stamme
Und um sie nichts
Als puren Himmelslichts
Gewaltige Flamme.

Und reden sie zwei Zungen –
Das künftige Haus
Haucht eine Sprache aus,
Die sie umschlungen
In Zwiegespräch hält:
Wie sie die Balken banden,
Hat Arm den Arm verstanden
Und Welt die Welt.

The two workers depicted here come from different "tribes" (*Stämme*) and speak different "tongues" (*Zungen*). What would appear in Hebrew as a synonym for "language" (the Hebrew word *lashon* means both "language" and "tongue") stands out in German, which does not employ *Sprache* (language) and *Zunge* (tongue) interchangeably. In keeping

[23]Strauss, *Lyrik,* 356.

with his fantasy of simultaneous self-translation, the choice of the word *Zungen* suggests that Strauss composed the poem as though he were translating directly from the language of his own "future home," replacing the Hebrew word *lashon* with its literal German equivalent.[24] The language barrier that is resolved in the poem through messianic fulfillment is in a sense matched by the poet's bilingualism, which he likewise sought to overcome through a hebraicized reterritorialization of German. Language takes on a meta-linguistic function. It is not only the poet who finds himself "speaking in tongues," as it were, but also the two workers he depicts; though unable to communicate in a common language, the two subjects, Arab and Jew, are enveloped and united by a mode of communication that exceeds earthly language.

In a sense, Strauss communicates in the "language of the future home" through a particular mode of lyric speech. In keeping with the conventions of the romantic ode, the first stanza is composed in the intimate second-person *Du*-form as an apostrophe to an idealized neighbor. According to Jonathan Culler, the apostrophe, which literally means "turning away" (away from the present audience and toward someone or something that exists elsewhere) is a distinctive feature of lyric poetry itself because it resists being reduced to an imitation of a real utterance. For Culler, this mode of calling on beings that are absent or do not hear is "the pure embodiment of poetic pretension."[25] Since Strauss's addressee is a projected reality, presumably real yet remote and unknown, the mode of address surpasses ordinary speech. The apostrophic address reifies the strange, messianic tongue invoked by the convivial image of the two workers rapt in unspoken dialogue.

[24]Strauss's use of the word *Zungen* brings to mind a similar occurrence of hidden bilingual wordplay in the following inscription from one of his Hebrew notebooks: *ei hasafa ba abi'a et kol asher bi?/ shte sfatai hen zug sfatav shel libi.* The unpublished verse was translated into German by Martin Buber as follows: *Wo ist die Sprache [Lippe] in der ich alles sagen kann, was in mir ist? Meine zwei Sprachen [Lippen] sind das Lippenpaar meines Herzens* (Where is the language [lip] in which I can say everything that is within me?/ My two languages [lips] are the lip-pair of my heart). Like the word *lashon,* meaning both "language" and "tongue," the Hebrew word *safa* means both both "language" and "lip." As the untranslatable nature of the pun suggests, German and Hebrew are the inseparable lips with which Strauss's poetry is formed. The original Hebrew verse is taken from Lina Barouch, "Ludwig Strauss: Polyglossia and Parody in Palestine," in *Naharaim* 6:1 (2012): 121–47; p.121. Buber's German translation can be found in *Schriften*, 12.

[25]Jonathan D. Culler, "Apostrophe," in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 143.

Poetics and Politics

Strauss's persistent longing for peaceful coexistence found a practical correlate in his institutional activities. Over the course of the ten years between his initial visit to Palestine and his ultimate immigration he was affiliated with the binationalist Zionist organization Brith Shalom, founded in 1925 by a small cohort of Central European Jewish intellectuals. Among Brith Shalom's most prominent and influential members were Arthur Ruppin, Hans Kohn, Shmuel Bergmann, Gershom Scholem, Ernst Simon, and Martin Buber (Strauss's father-in-law and arguably his most important influence). With approximately 60 members in Palestine, and nearly a hundred more sympathizers abroad (primarily in Berlin and Prague), the organization was united around a single stated objective: "to arrive at understanding between Jews and Arabs as to the form of their mutual social relations in Palestine on the basis of absolute political equality of two culturally autonomous peoples. . . ."[26]

Historians agree that Brith Shalom's overarching ethical aim was shaped by the specific political conditions of Central Europe between the wars. In the midst of crumbling Empires and rising ethnic jingoism, Brith Shalom emerged not as a monument to liberal cosmopolitanism but as a reaction to the failure of this ideal, that is, as a product, in Zohar Maor's terms, of "post-liberalism."[27] As Yfatt Weiss has argued, Hans Kohn, the leader of the more radical of Brith Shalom's two factions, believed that German-Czech Bohemia had missed the opportunity for a binational solution, and thus "viewed Palestine in the late 1920s through his experience in Central Europe in the first quarter of the twentieth century."[28] Responding to the encounter with the ethnocentric German and Czech nationalisms aroused by World War I, members of Brith Shalom rejected what they perceived as a similarly chauvinistic Jewish nationalism taking root in Palestine. In their quest for a morally sound alternative, suggests Shalom Ratzabi, they took up the "Arab Question" as a "touchstone for the possibility

[26]Arthur Ruppin, et al., "Brith Shalom, 1925," in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History,* Third Edition, eds. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York, 2011), 675.

[27]Zohar Maor, "The Unattainable Land: On the Central European Roots of 'Brith Shalom,'" in *'Brit Shalom' and Binational Zionism: The Hebrew Question as Jewish Question,* Adi Gordon, ed. [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2008), 96.

[28]Yfatt Weiss, "Central European Ethnonationalism and Zionist Binationalism," *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 103.

of combining Zionism and humanism in particular, and nationalism and humanism in general."[29]

By the time Strauss settled in Palestine, however, the binational ideal was deemed an impossible pipe dream. Lambasted for being overly conciliatory, even traitorous, Brith Shalom's members encountered tremendous hostility in the wake of the so-called Western Wall riots instigated by the local Arab population in 1929 against the Jewish settlers.[30] In 1933, just eight years after its founding, the organization succumbed to political warfare and disbanded.[31] Throughout Europe, moreover, the multinational idea was reduced to a relic of nineteenth century liberalism quashed by the rise of ethnic nationalism. Strauss adjusted his poetics accordingly. If his German poetry of the 1930s reveals an attempt to reify a binational utopia by transplanting the German romantic tradition into the context of an idealized Jewish homeland, his Hebrew poetry of the 1940s, written after he had actually immigrated to Palestine, "unsettles" the poet's relationship both to the Zionist project, which had departed dramatically from his binational ideals, and to his native Europe, now in the throes of destruction.

Mourning the Binational Dream in Hebrew

Sha'ot va-dor (Hours and the Generation), Strauss's only collection of Hebrew poems, sheds the quasi-messianic invocations of a future peace between nations. Responding to the extermination of Jewish life in Europe, on the one hand, and to the violence that accompanied the project of Jewish statehood, on the other, the volume resists emotive outbursts in favor of a measured response to the events of the day. Strauss's emphasis on formal precision reflects an ethical stance against the unfettered Expressionism typical of nationalized poetry. As Dan Miron has shown, Hebrew poetry had already developed a tradition for expressions of rage, which were deployed in the name of national struggle. Prior to the revivalist generation of the fin-de-siècle, Hebrew verse was written primarily for didactic purposes, and

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[29]Shalom Ratzabi, *Between Zionism and Judaism: The Radical Circle in Brith Shalom,* 1925-1933 (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2002), xiv.

[30]Also known as the "Western Wall Uprising," the riots shook the country for one sweltering week in August, leaving 133 Jews and 116 Arabs dead.

[31]According to Ratzabi, the willingness of Brith Shalom's members to negotiate not only with the Arabs but also with British mandatory forces seeking to limit Jewish immigration (as laid out in the 1922 White Paper) "aroused public polemics accompanied by defamation of the society and its members, to the point at which doubt was being cast on their allegiance to the Zionist idea," Ratzabi, x.

thus remained in the neoclassical camp. For instance, Yehuda Leib Gordon, the leading Hebrew literary voice of the Russian Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), wrote highly ordered verse intended to teach and uplift the community rather than to express the voice of the individual. Bialik, who came to be regarded as Israel's national poet, was the first to introduce an autonomous speaker capable of articulating "the uncontrollable expression of a vision too overwhelming to suppress or structure."[32] Taking on the role of the poet-prophet, Bialik furthered "the dissolution of neoclassicism" and ushered Hebrew poetry into the nationalistic phase of sentimentalism, which in Hebrew poetry figured as the immediate precursor of romanticism. According to Miron, the pseudoprophetic mode inaugurated by Bialik "marked the ultimate front line at which Hebrew poetry involved itself with Zionism. . . ."[33]

By the late 1920s, however, Hebrew poets had begun distancing themselves from the pseudoprophetic voice. Several interrelated events and phenomena which plagued the Yishuv during the pre-statehood period—the severe political and economic challenges of 1926–28, the cessation of mass immigration and rising unemployment, awareness that the British government would renege on the Balfour Declaration, and increasing Arab unrest—sparked the need for a poetry that replaced the passionate voice of the national-subject with the autonomous lyrical I. As Miron succinctly remarks, "the very fact that Zionism was now a social reality rather than a utopian dream had a profoundly sobering effect."[34] Military, political, economic and social difficulties that accompanied the establishment of Israeli state-hood further delegitimized the pseudoprophetic mode, which fell out of vogue with the emergence of the Statehood Generation. Thus, although Strauss's Hebrew volume of 1951 stands apart from the con-temporaneous writing of Amichai and Gouri, poets who responded to similar events in much more personal and colloquial verse, it likewise reflects diminishing Zionist zeal and increasing anxiety over the real-ity of statehood.

The poems gathered in *Sha'ot va-dor* hearken back to the Golden Age of Spain with their focus on set rhythms and abundant orna-

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[32]Dan Miron, *H.N. Bialik and the Prophetic Mode in Modern Hebrew Poetry* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 47.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid, 31. The exception, Miron notes, was Uri Zvi Greenberg, who maintained the fire and brimstone style that Bialik had used to transform his rage over the Kishinev pogroms into a Zionist call to arms and adapted it to later events. Greenberg infused his impassioned responses to the Holocaust and to Arab-Jewish violence with messianic urgency.

mentation. This emphasis on form presents an obvious contrast with the romantic emphasis on the speaker's unique emotional situation, a mode that dominated Hebrew poetry of the 1950s. The volume's concluding section, entitled *meruba'im* (Quatrains), consists of a series of self-conscious compositions written in the form of the rubaiyat, a quatrain form that originates in Persian verse and became popular in medieval Hebrew and Arabic poetry. Deriving from the Arabic (and Hebrew) word for "four" (*arba'a*), the *ruba'i* (the singular form of the rubaiyat) was favored by Yehuda Halevi, whom Strauss extolled as his primary model. The series begins with the following stand-alone quatrain:

> The Quatrain
>
> The first directs the flow with freedom of the source,
> Imposing on the second boundaries to enforce,
> The third skips over borders and banks to its heart's delight,
> With thirst for freedom quenched the fourth gets back on course.[35]

> *Ha-merub'a*
>
> *rishon yekhaven zirmo be-ḥofesh ha-makor,*
> *ikhpeh 'al ha-sheni gadot bal ya'avor,*
> *shlishi yedaleg 'al gvul ḥovah li-netiv libo,*
> *sva' derekh dror revi'i la-ḥok yaḥzor.*

Line 1, 2 and 4 of the quatrain share a common end-rhyme and adhere strictly to iambic hexameter rhythm, with a caesura placed at the center of each line to create a natural pause, in keeping with the conventions of medieval Hebrew poetry. Line 3 is the only line to break with the a-a-b-a rhyme scheme, disrupting both rhyme and rhythm with an additional beat. Taken together, the four lines are likened to a river that flows freely but also remains contained, guided and controlled by its banks. Nature is vigorous yet ordered, never unbounded. A reflection on the formal composition of the quatrain itself, this short poem typifies the meta-poetic aspect of neoclassical poetry, providing the decorative expression of a simple statement rather than a unique subjective expression. What appears to be but a playful poetic exercise may therefore be read as Strauss's modest *ars poetica,* a cautious call for restraint—even in response to the most powerful emotion or experience.

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[35]Strauss, *Sha'ot va-dor: shirim* [Hours and the Generation: Poems] (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1951), 93. This is the only translation in which I was able to preserve (more or less) the rhyme and meter.

This is not to say that Strauss foregoes the personal for the sake of the mimetic. Most of the poems gathered in *Sha'ot va-dor* were written in response to the atrocities of the Second World War and to Arab-Jewish violence that preceded and immediately followed the estab-lishment of the State of Israel, and are therefore earnest and deeply mournful. Romantic motifs of rage and wildness inevitably crop up, yet form always dominates. Strauss's response to the major political events of the 1930s and 1940s offers a solemn statement of discontent with the political status quo, both at home and abroad. By reviving a pre-modern style stripped of emotive and pseudo-prophetic elements, he calls into question the assumed homology between Hebrew poetry and the nation-building project.

The distance between the projected ideal of Zionist "return" and the reality of settlement is the theme of the poem "Song of Songs." Longing vs. consummation, a tension that pervades the poem's biblical precursor, is transposed onto the relationship between the speaker and the Zionist dream. The first stanza concludes with a direct quotation of Song 1:13, spoken in the voice of the Shulamite woman:

> A sound comes like the tone of a flute
> From the mysterious night:
> My lover like a bundle of myrrh
> Languishes between my breasts . . . [36]

> *b'a kol kitzlil-ḥalil li*
> *mi-leyl mistorin:*
> *tsror ha-mor dodi li*
> *ben shaday yalin . . .*

The speaker assumes the role of the male lover as he encounters the voice of his beloved. In the next stanza, her identity is revealed as the "spirit" or "soul" of the nation (*nishmat 'ami*):

> So sings the spirit of my nation
> For thousands of years,
> Her love song surges brightly—
> An eternal river through the channel of time.

> They battered her and bruised her—
> She sings a lullaby.
> They burned her but she remains steadfast—
> Her dream is stronger than death.

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[36]Strauss, *Sha'ot,* 58–9. See the appendix for a complete translation of the poem.

nishmat 'ami ko sharah
zeh 'alfey shanim,
zimrat dodeyhah naharah—
nehar-'ad ba-'afik-ha-zmanim.

hikuhah gam petsu'hah—
sharah ke-shir namah.
sarfuhah velo' tazu'a—
'az mi-mavet ḥalomah.

The "spirit of the nation" (a feminine noun in Hebrew) has been "battered and bruised" just like the Shulamite woman in the Bible, who describes her violent treatment at the hands of the city watchmen: "They battered me, they bruised me" (Song 5:7). Yet the dream persists, as the biblical quote in the final line indicates: "Love is stronger than death" (Song 8:6).

In the second half of the poem, Strauss echoes the ambiguous polyphony of his biblical model by reversing the roles of the lovers. Invoking Song 5:2–7, in which the Shulamite narrates either an actual or imagined encounter with her lover, the speaker now takes on the role of the lovelorn maiden:

And I—when you knock I ask: "Who are you?"
Doubtful, I ask:
Who is it? My beloved
Or only the dream in my heart?

I dare not plead: "Come here!"
Rather: "Be as you will be!"[37]
Don the elusive mask
And let my joy hover over me!

va'ani—et tidfok ash'al: 'mi hu'?'
ki yish'al safek be-kirbi:
mi zeh ba' ha-dodi hu'
'im rak ḥazon libi?

hithanen lo' a'ez 'od: 'gash na'!'
'akh: 'heyeh asher li tehi!'
rak dmut hahomek levash na',
u-farḥah li rinah bahi!

[37]A variation on God's response when Moses asks for his name: "I am that I am" (*eh'yeh asher eh'yeh*) (Exodus 3:14). In the poem the phrase is a command rather than an ontological statement.

The section of the Song of Songs invoked here plays on the dichotomy of emotional longing and physical fulfillment. Based on the ambiguous language employed in the Shulamite's account, it is unclear whether the encounter with her beloved was indeed consummated or merely dreamt: "I am sleeping but my heart is awake" (Song 5:2), she exclaims at the beginning of the section, describing a kind of restlessness in which the mind remains alert in expectation.[38] Like the "lovesick" maiden, Strauss's speaker is caught in a state of unrest, suspended between the reality of the Zionist project and the unattained dream. The enigmatic phrase that concludes the second stanza, *farḥah li rinah bahi!* (my joy hovers on high), suggests that fulfillment remains beyond reach. But the word *farḥah* carries a secondary meaning, "blossomed" (i.e. my joy blossomed on high), which offers a sense of continued hope in the face of persistent doubt.

"Song of Songs" is replete with wordplay, which relies less on lexical innovation than on repetition and sound patterning. In this respect it departs from the trends of mid-twentieth century Hebrew poetry, in which wordplay and neologism were employed to enrich and display a burgeoning vernacular; the aural (as opposed to lexical) emphasis of Strauss's poem bears a stronger resemblance to biblical and medieval verse.[39] For instance, the final two lines of the second quatrain contain assonance and internal rhyme intended to highlight form over linguistic and thematic content: *Zimrat dodehah naharah—/ nehar-'ad ba-'afik-ha-zmanim* (Her love song surges brightly—/An eternal river through the channel of time). The juxtaposition of *naharah* (to shine bright) and *nahar-ad* (eternal river), an example of the medieval technique of *tsimud shoneh 'ot* (a near-homonym with the variation of one letter),[40] recalls the image of the quatrain as a mighty river in "The

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[38]Ariel A. Bloch and Chana Bloch, *The Song of Songs: A New Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*. 1st ed (New York: Random House, 1995), 180.

[39]In his well-known essay on biblical poetry, Strauss observed that the musicality of biblical verse is never purely decorative; repetition results from parallelism, a technique used exclusively for conceptual emphasis. Assonance and rhyme, achievable in Hebrew through morphological and syntactical variation, likewise serve the thematic focus. See Strauss, "Zu Psalm 131," *Gesammelte Werke Band 2,* 281–86. The essay also appears in Hebrew in Strauss, *In the Paths of Literature.*

[40]*Tsimud* is a rhetorical term used in the study of medieval Hebrew poetry, which refers to the juxtaposition of words that are either perfect homonyms or share similar sounds. Nine types of *tsimud* are identified and explained in Shulamit Elizur, *Secular Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain,* vol. 3 [Hebrew] (Ramat Aviv: The Open University of Israel, 2004), 127–30. Strauss was fascinated by the virtuosic displays in the medieval poets' use of this technique and sought to imitate them in his own verse.

Quatrain." Here, too, the "flow" of sound at once reinforces and transcends the dominant image. Similarly, the word *zimrah* (song/singing) at the beginning of the quatrain, an anagram of *zirmah* (flow/surge), conceals a covert water image that bolsters the poem's thematic and formal unity, a typical feature of neoclassical verse.

The tension between sober reality and nocturnal disquiet figures as a source of abiding anxiety throughout the volume. In "Shir layla" (Night Song), the speaker hears the soporific sound of the wind whispering through the branches of an olive tree, a symbol of the dominant ideology, which threatens to lull him into submission:

> The murmuring of the branch sings me a lullaby:
> 'Forget the destruction!'
> It is pleasant to rest
> In fragrant smell of the wind,
> Refreshing as an apple.'[41]

> *sharah ivshat ha-'afi li shir 'eres:*
> *shkaḥ et ha-heres!*
> *noaḥ la-nuaḥ*
> *be-reaḥ ha-ruaḥ,*
> *re-aḥ niḥoaḥ, ra'anan ka-tapuaḥ.'*

In Hebrew, the stanza reads like a soothing lullaby. Assonance and alliteration, produced through the constant repetition of the letter *ḥeth* (the voiceless uvular fricative) creates a mellifluous effect. But the speaker is not easily pacified:

> The song rocked me to sleep, but I refused
> To fall asleep and dream with the clouds.
> I got drunk on the wine of lies—had I slept,
> I would have been tricked by the clouds, the view, the dream
> Into saying peace. But there is no peace.

> *nidnedani ha-shir ha-meyashen, u-me'anti*
> *heradem va-ḥalom im ha-shaḥak ḥalom.*
> *yeyn ha-sheker shicarni, lu yashanti,*
> *ki yat'uni ha-shaḥak, ha-nof, ha-ḥalom*
> *le'emor shalom, ve-'eyn shalom.*

An additional line is tacked onto what would otherwise be a traditional a-b-a-b quatrain to produce a powerful concluding couplet: the word *ḥalom* (dream) in the penultimate line is rhymed with the conclud-

[41]Ibid, 62–4.

ing word, *shalom* (peace), which is repeated twice in the final line of the stanza in order to amplify the speaker's demand for peace while drawing attention to its absence. In spite of the soothing lullaby that engulfs him, the speaker cannot forget or disregard the "crises of destruction that flood every shore," a joint reference to the violence that ravages both Palestine and Europe. Alternating between destructive visions of uncontrollable waters and soft arboreal images, the poem remains suspended between romantic wildness and neoclassical order. This delicate balance is further supported by the unusual form: made up of dissimilar stanzas that alternate between an even and uneven number of lines, the poem moves from stillness (opening sestet), to chaos (middle section) before achieving the calm after the storm (final three quatrains).

Strauss's refusal to submit to mainstream Zionist ideology became an especially powerful theme in the wake of Israeli independence. May 15, 1948, the day the Israeli Declaration of Independence was signed, came to be known in Arabic as "the catastrophe" (*al-nakba*), commemorating the flight or expulsion of roughly 700,000 local Arabs. "Kfar shadud" (Plundered Village), perhaps the most powerful poem Strauss ever penned in Hebrew, offers a calm yet forceful response to this historical moment.

Plundered Village

I killed and took possession, woe upon my plunder.
The maw of my non-nation swallowed mother and child!
God's grief hovers upon the face of the village,
Upon His high places my nation's honor fell.

At midnight a bitter cry awakened the land,
The voice of a great mother bowing atop the mountain,
Woe to city and village, woe to nation and to nation,
To the son killed, to the tree uprooted.[42]

kfar shadud

ratsaḥti gam yarashti oy li mi-shalal,
ki lo'a lo' ami bal'a em 'al 'olal!
evel elohah meraḥef 'al peney ha-kfar,
al bamotav kvod ami nafal ḥalal.

[42]Strauss, *Sha'ot*, 107.

u-va-ḥatsot he'ir ha-'arets bekhi mar,
kolah shel em gedolah, kor'ah 'al rosh ha-har,
ve-hi al 'ir u-kfar, ve-ho 'al 'am va-am,
'al ben ki neherag, al etz ki ne'ekar.

In two tightly structured quatrains, Strauss offers a vehement response to the Deir Yassin Massacre. On April 9, 1948, members of the Zionist paramilitary unit known as the Irgun attacked the Arab village near Jerusalem, leaving over 100 villagers dead.[43] The following summer, the fledgling Israeli government formed a plan to settle several hundred Holocaust refugees in the abandoned village. Incensed by the plan, former members of Brith Shalom, led by Martin Buber and Ernst Simon, wrote a letter to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion pleading with him to keep the village in its plundered state as a tragic symbol of Israeli aggression. They called upon Ben-Gurion to "leave the land of Deir Yassin uncultivated and the houses . . . unoccupied, rather than to carry out an action whose symbolic importance vastly outweighs its practical benefit."[44] The letter went unanswered.

In just eight lines replete with biblical allusions, Strauss's poem reproduces the message of the Buber-Simon letter. The first three words—"I killed and took possession"—are a variation on the Prophet Elijah's reproach of King Ahab when he learns that the latter has killed a Jezreelite in order to appropriate his vineyard: "Have you killed, and also taken possession?" (1 Kings 21:19). Replacing Elijah's investigative query with a personal confession, Strauss deploys the verse as an explicit response to the pillaging of the Arab village. The first quatrain ends with an allusion to David's eulogy for Jonathan: "How are the mighty fallen in battle! Jonathan upon thy high places is slain!" (2 Sam 1:25). In the poem, it is the honor of the entire nation that has fallen from grace. The final reference is to the book of Jeremiah, in which the matriarch Rachel is described weeping for her children (Jer 31:15). "The great mother" stands for actual moth-

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[43]"Irgun" is an abbreviation of *Ha-irgun ha-tzvai ha-leumi be-eretz yisrael* (The National Military Organization in the Land of Israel). An offshoot of the larger paramilitary organization Haganah (literally "defense"), the Irgun was in operation between 1931 and 1948, at which point its members were absorbed into the Israeli Defense Forces (I.D.F.). Based largely on the Revisionist Zionist teachings of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the Irgun's activities often involved acts of terror and retaliation against both the British occupiers and the local Arab population. Two of the Irgun's most well-known operations are the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on July 22, 1946, and the Deir Yassin massacre of April 9, 1948.

[44]Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 393.

ers who lost children to the conflict, but also for the overall failure of coexistence. This idea is amplified by the concluding image of the "tree uprooted" (*etz ne'ekar*). The word *ne'ekar*, related to the biblical word for a barren woman ('*akarah*), is used repeatedly in the Talmud to refer to heavenly punishment and extreme divine justice.[45] But in the context of the poem, the *ne'ekar* also personifies the landscape, merging the fate of fallen sons with that of uprooted villagers.

Strauss modernizes the Bible, but not to nationalistic ends. His invocation of Elijah and Jeremiah is by no means visionary; rather, biblical allusions are woven together into a mournful lamentation of the existing status quo. As Yonatan Vardi observes, "the poem takes on the collective 'I' of the Book of Psalms rather than the 'I' that stands aside at the gate in protest, as in the books of the Prophets."[46] In other words, the lyrical "I" qua Zionist national subject is replaced with the "I" of collective responsibility. By cultivating a pre-romantic style stripped of messianic overtones, Strauss calls into question the assumed homology between poetry and the nation-building project. This implicit challenge is perhaps the most obvious reason why Strauss has been consigned to the sidelines of Hebrew literary history, which continues to emphasize the triumphs and trials of attaining Israeli independence, yet has only just begun to acknowledge dissenting voices that emerged as an expressly Jewish nation-state was being formed.

Conclusion: Toward a Poetics of Patience

Strauss's Hebrew poems demonstrate attention to detail, a desire for order and commitment to conscientious craftsmanship—three characteristics regularly invoked as the hallmarks of *yekke* culture. Of course, these characteristics also betray the rigorous training and self-discipline required of any writer who chooses to write in a non-native language, a process that by definition challenges romantic fantasies of organic literary creation. And yet, however "artificial" Strauss's relationship to Hebrew may have been, his grasp of the language was anything but tenuous. Notwithstanding practical factors that contributed to his stylistic development, discomfort with vernacular Hebrew does not sufficiently explain his affinity for neoclassicism. The aesthetic turn away from romanticism and toward more traditional forms must

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[45]For example: "Whoever puts the crown of the Torah to [profane] use, is uprooted from the world," Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Nedarim 62a.

[46]Yonatan Vardi, "On Aryeh Ludwig Strauss's Classical Poetry" [Hebrew], in *Makom leshira* no. 30 (May, 2008). Web.

be interpreted through the lens of his evolving ideology. Written by an adherent of binational Zionism during the tumultuous prelude and violent aftermath of Jewish statehood, Strauss's Hebrew poetry seeks an alternative to the nationalistic orientation of romantic and expressionistic poetry produced in Hebrew during the first half of the twentieth century. Thoughtful, precise and restrained, it expresses collective guilt and personal despair over a binational ethos that was never brought to fruition.

   In "To the Neighbor," Strauss called upon Jews and Arabs to accept the burden of coexistence as a joint mission: "For me as for you this is suffering./Bear it with me!" (*Mir ists wie dir ein Leiden –/Nimms mit mir hin!*). The notion of endurance as the foundation for mutual acceptance played a critical role both in Strauss's ideology and in his poetics. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word for suffering, *sevel,* is also the common root of the words for patience (*savlanut*) and tolerance (*sovlanut*). Carefully conceived and conscientiously crafted, Strauss's Hebrew poetry is the product of patience and of tolerance—literally a labor of love. Underlying the meticulousness of the German-Jewish poet is a powerful ideological position for the era of Jewish statehood: precision breeds patience, and patience breeds peace**.**

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