

28.

The Emergence of a Native Hebrew Culture in Palestine, 1882–1948

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During the hundred years of new Jewish settlement in Palestine, whose starting point is conventionally assigned to 1882 (and commonly called "the First Aliyah"),¹ a society was produced whose nature and structure proved to be highly fluid. The periodic influx of relatively large groups of immigrants continually disrupted or disturbed the apparent ad hoc stability of the community insofar as its structure, demographic consistency, and salient characteristics were concerned. Each new wave resulted in a restructuring of the whole system. It is, however, commonly accepted that around the time of the establishment of the State of Israel, in 1948, a relatively crystallized Jewish society existed in Palestine with a specific cultural character and a high level of self-awareness, as well as established social, economic, and political institutions. It differed, culturally and otherwise, from the old Jewish, pre-Zionist Palestinian community, and from that of Jewish communities in other countries. Moreover, this distinctiveness was one of its major goals, involving the replacement of the then-current identifications "Jew" and "Jewish" with "Hebrew."² But with the founding of the State of Israel and the massive immigration which followed, what appeared to have been a "final," stabilized system was again subjected to a process of restructuring. The distinction between Jewish and Hebrew cultures has become secondary and eventually obsolete. Hebrew culture in Palestine has become Israeli, and although the latter definitely springs from the previous stage, it seems very different from it. Thus, as a working hypothesis for this

study, it would be convenient to accept 1948 as a more or less imprecise termination of the period which had started in 1882. An adequate description of the development of the thirty years since, that is, subsequent to the establishment of the state, will not be possible without first providing a description of the longer and more complicated period which preceded, and thus laid the foundations for what followed.

The early waves of the new Jewish immigration to Palestine, at least until the early 1930s, seem to be different from other migrations in modern times, including those of later periods. From anthropological and sociological studies on immigration, we know that the cultural behavior of immigrants oscillates between two poles: the preservation of their source culture and the adoption of the culture of the target country. A rather complex mechanism eventually determines, for any specific period in the history of an immigrant group, which option will prevail. The value images of the target country as compared with those of the source country can constitute an important factor in determining the direction of cultural behaviour. Most migrations from England tended to preserve the source culture. European immigrants to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century, on the other hand, left their home countries with the hope of "starting a new life in the new world"—a slogan of highly suggestive potency. Its effect was to encourage the replacement of the "old" by the "new" and often engendered attitudes of contempt towards the "old." Such replacement assumes, of course, the existence of an available cultural repertoire in the target country, and when this is the case the major problem of the immigrants is how to authenticate acquired components so that they will be considered "not foreign" by members of the target community. What actually takes place in the process of acquiring target cultural patterns need not deter us at this point. What is important is only to emphasize the necessity of the existence of an *alternative system*, that is, an aggregate of alternatives, and it is precisely here that the case of immigration to Palestine stands in sharp contradistinction to that of many other migrations. A decision to "abandon" the source culture, partially or completely, could not have led to the adoption of the target culture since the existing culture did not possess the status of an alternative. In order to provide an alternative system to that of the source culture, in this case East-European culture, it was necessary to *invent* one.

The main difference between most other migration movements and that of the Jews to Palestine lies in the deliberate, conscious activity carried out by the immigrants themselves in replacing constituents of the

culture they brought with them with those of another. This does not mean that it is possible to establish a full correlation between the principles which apparently underlay the search for alternatives and what ultimately took place in reality; but there is no doubt that these principles were, in fact, decisive—both for the deliberate selection of possible items and the presence, post factum, of those items pressed into the cultural system by the operation of its mechanism. Zionist ideology and its ramifications (or sub-ideologies) provided the major motivation for immigration to Palestine as well as the underlying principles for cultural selection, that is, the principles for the creation of an alternative culture. This does not imply the existence of any kind of bold cultural pattern during this period, nor the acceptance by the immigrants themselves of these principles, either in part or in full, in a conscious fashion. But a schematic examination of the period in retrospect will reveal that the governing principle at work was “the creation of a new Jewish people and a new Jew in the Land of Israel,” with emphasis on the concept “new.”

At the end of the nineteenth century, there was sharp criticism of many elements in Jewish life in Eastern Europe. Among the secular, or semi-secular Jews, who were the cultural products of sixty years of the Jewish Enlightenment, the *Haskala* movement, Jewish culture was conceived to be in a state of decline, even degenerate. There was a notable tendency to dispense with many of the traditional constituents of Jewish culture. The assimilationists were prepared to give up everything; the Zionists, in the conceptual tradition of the *Haskala*, sought a return to the “purity” and “authenticity” of the existence of the “Hebrew nation in its land,” an existence conceived according to the romantic stereotypes of contemporary (including Hebrew) literature, exalting the primordial folk nation. It is interesting to note that both assimilationists and Zionists accepted many of the negative Jewish stereotypes, promulgated by non-Jews, and adapted them to their own purposes. Thus they accepted at face value the ideas that Jews were rootless, physically weak, deviously averse to pleasure, averse to physical labor, alienated from nature, etc., although these ideas had little basis in fact.

Among the numerous ways manifested for counterposing “new Hebrew” to “old Diaspora Jew” were the transition to physical labor (mainly agriculture or “working the land,” as it was called); self-defense and the concomitant use of arms; the supplanting of the old, “contemptible” Diaspora language, Yiddish, with a new tongue, colloquial Hebrew (conceived of at one and the same time as being the authentic and the

ancient language of the people), adopting the Sephardi rather than the Ashkenazi pronunciation;³ discarding traditional Jewish dress and adopting other fashions (such as the Bedouin-Circassian, notably among the youth of the First Aliyah and members of *Ha-shomer*, the Watchmen's Association); dropping East-European family names and assuming Hebrew names instead.

The decision to introduce Hebrew as the spoken language of the community was not accepted or agreed upon even by those most active in the creation of modern literary Hebrew. Nor did it immediately appeal to members of the First Aliyah. On the contrary, there were objections to giving Hebrew pride of place in the new colonies, and practical knowledge of the language was quite limited. Furthermore, the adoption of Sephardi pronunciation cannot be explained either by the fact that Sephardi circles in Jerusalem supported the idea of Hebrew as a spoken language or that Eliezer Ben Yehuda was convinced by a Christian priest (while he was lying ill in a French hospital) that Sephardi pronunciation should be preferred. After all, even in Eastern Europe, the Sephardi pronunciation was considered to be the "correct" one, but this did not prevent any Hebrew poet from late nineteenth century until the early 1930s from using the Ashkenazi variant, even in Palestine itself, where it contravened the prevailing Sephardi pronunciation (see below). The most important element in the twin decisions to speak Hebrew and speak Sephardi Hebrew stemmed from their qualities as *cultural oppositions*: Hebrew as against Yiddish, Sephardi as against Ashkenazi; in both cases, new against old. This outweighed any principle or scholarly discussions about "correct" pronunciation (although the latter were often conducted in such terms).

Thus, the establishment of the new Jewish community in Palestine involved a series of decisions in the domain of cultural selection, and the ideology which permeated this project (i.e., Zionism) made explicit decisions compulsory. It was urgent to provide at least a few conspicuous components for an alternative system, for an aggregate of new functions. In some instances it was not even *alternative* extant functions that were needed, but *new* ones, dictated by new conditions of life. A long retrospective view seems to point to the fact that experiments were continuously carried out in Palestine to supply the components necessary for the fulfillment of the basic cultural opposition *new Hebrew—old Jew*. It was not the origin of the components which determined whether or not they would be adopted, but their capacity to fulfill the new functions in accordance with this opposition. Green olives, olive oil and white

cheese, Bedouin welcoming ceremonies and *kaffiyehs* all acquired a clear semiotic status. The by-now-classical literary description of the Hebrew worker sitting on a wooden box, eating Arabic bread dipped in olive oil,⁴ expresses at once three new phenomena: (a) he is a worker; (b) he is a "true son of the land"; (c) he is not eating in a "Jewish" way (he is not sitting at a table and has obviously not fulfilled the religious commandment to wash his hands). Or we have the typical village elder in Yitzhak Dov Berkovitz's novel *Days of the Messiah* (1938). He builds a house for himself which he considers to be like a *khata* (in Russian—a peasant's hut) "painted white, with small windows, a yard, a gate and a small bench by the gate."⁵ His neighbors in the same village, actualizing the same function for themselves, construct houses like those of "Polish noblemen, with high windows." The village elder dreams of Hebrew farmers who will eat "kasha and sugar," and deplures the fact that he cannot obtain "crude galoshes, like those worn by our Ukrainian farmers." The Baron de Rothschild's version of the Jewish farmer in Palestine, on the other hand, was the "authentic" French model: a semi-literate who kept only the Bible on his table. The dominion of such components was short-lived and they gave way in the course of time and in the wake of experimentation to other cultural options. As mentioned before, their survival or disappearance depended on their ability to fulfill a function in accordance with the new ideology of national revival.

Specific materials often mislead those observing them years later. For instance, what precise meaning can be attached to the adoption of items of food and clothing from the culture of the Bedouins and fellahin, first by members of the First Aliyah, and later by those of the Second, most notably among them the tight-knit Watchmen's association, *Ha-shomer*? There can be no doubt that nineteenth-century Romantic norms and "Oriental" stereotypes (including the identification of Bedouin dress with that of our Biblical ancestors, so readily inferred from numerous illustrations of the time) were central factors.⁶ They constituted a ready-made model for generating positive attitudes towards these items and, further, for identifying them with the realia of the population and the landscape. All this notwithstanding, this was not a case of non-mediated contacts with a neighboring culture. It was rather a case of reality being filtered through a familiar model. Certain components of that model were fairly well known through the general stereotypes of the "Orient" (through Russian poetry and, subsequently, Hebrew poetry as well). But in fact, one could say that what was taking place was an act of "translating" the new reality back into an old, familiar, traditional cultural

model, specifically that which had crystallized in Russia towards the end of the nineteenth century. In this manner, the data of the new reality and the new experience could be understood and absorbed. For neither Bedouin nor fellahin was an unequivocal concept: on the one hand, they were heroes, men of the soil, dedicated to their land; on the other, inferior and almost savage. Again—on the one hand their food, dress, behavior, and music expressed everything alien to the Jew: courage, natural nobility, loyalty, roots; on the other hand these expressed primitiveness and cultural backwardness. This example offers us a simple, uncomplicated “translation” of a familiar East-European model, in which old functions, namely, the Ukrainian peasant and the Cossack, are transferred to new carriers. The “heroic Bedouin robber” replaces the Cossack and the fellah the Ukrainian peasant. The *kaffiyeh* takes the place of crude galoshes and the Palestinian Hebrew song “How Beautiful are the Nights of Canaan” that of a sentimental steppe song of the Don Cossacks.

I said before that the source of the constituents is of secondary importance in the new cultural system-in-the-making. This does not mean that the material aspect of the constituents themselves is neutral. From the point of view of the mechanism which either accepts or rejects them, they may (in principle) be considered neutral. But this is not the case with regard to their availability. The desire to actualize a cultural opposition generates the search for alternative materials able to fulfill the desired functions; but “the-people-in-the-culture” can seek alternatives *only where they are likely to find them*, which means, generally, in nearby or accessible contexts. This is what made the transfers from adjacent systems possible: from the Russian, Yiddish, Arabic, or any construct (imaginary or credible) formulated, at least on an ideological level, as an option within culture. For instance, the desire to discard Yiddish, to give it up as a spoken language, has led to the choice of Hebrew as a replacement. But Hebrew, of course, had been an extant, established phenomenon within Jewish culture during *all* the centuries of dispersion. It was only the option of *speaking* it that had not been actualized and even seemed impossible. Similarly, the desire to discard the most conspicuous features of the European Diaspora led to a decision to drop Ashkenazi pronunciation: it reminded one too much of Eastern Europe and Yiddish. Hence, the popularity of Sephardi pronunciation. But the latter had been an *existing* option even in the repertoire of *Haskala* culture in Eastern Europe, only it had never been actualized in Hebrew *speech*. The desire to dress as a “non-Jew” popularized the

kaffiyeh and the *rubashka* (a Russian shirt) adorned with a cartridge belt; these were the options that an adjacent, accessible culture provided. Accessibility alone could not have determined the selection. For example, constituents belonging to the English culture were at the time gradually becoming accessible in Palestine, but they were not adopted by the local Hebrew culture because they could not fulfill the functions needed for the cultural opposition.

The deliberate struggle for the massive adoption of new constituents does not, however, ipso facto annihilate all the constituents of the "old" culture. And no system which maintains an uninterrupted existence is able to replace all its constituents. Normally, only the center of the system changes; relations at the periphery change very gradually. From the point of view of the people who in their behavior and existence actualize what we call, in the abstract, "systemic relations," even a deliberate decision to change behavioral constituents will lead to changes only in the most dominant constituents, i.e., those in which there is a high degree of awareness. But in areas such as proxemic relations, body movement, etc., in which awareness is low and not easily governed by deliberate control, even deliberate decisions will fail to produce change. Nevertheless, since "culture" is not merely the existence of one system attaching to a homogeneous group, but rather a heterogeneous system, one member-group in the culture may be impelled by certain factors, while another is not. Yet both exist simultaneously and are unavoidably correlated with each other within the same polysystem. Thus, only a pseudo-historical idealization would confer on the First Aliyah a homogeneity capable of creating "a new Hebrew people" according to the tenets of a specific ideology. Recent studies and numerous documents from this period clearly demonstrate that there were very few among the first settlers who were even familiar with this ideology and even fewer who identified with it and took it upon themselves to actualize the cultural opposition.

In other words, side by side with the penetration of new constituents, there remained a substantial mass of "old culture." As a result, the cultural opposition to it probably constituted one of the important factors in that system which, in retrospect, must now be recognized as the central, the "official" one. Yet the cultural opposition of the "new Hebrew" was both conditioned by and correlated with other factors operating within the polysystem, some of which supported it, while others neutralized it to a greater or lesser extent. Among other factors which determined (to an extent that still requires further investigation)

the penetration of new constituents into the system and its reorganization at each subsequent phase, the following should be considered:

1. The predominance of constituents from one particular source over the entire society. (An example of this—as an illustrative hypothesis only—would be the predominance of the Lithuanian high norm of intonation and vowel quantity over the official norm of Hebrew. For more explanations see below.)
2. The penetration of constituents from other cultural systems as a result of “normal” contacts (such as the continued penetration of Russian models into official, “high” Hebrew culture up to the 1950s, at least).
3. The neutralization of certain features as a result of the impossibility of unilateral domination (for instance, on the phonetic and intonational features of spoken Hebrew).
4. The emergence of local, “native,” constituents as a result of the dynamic operation of the repertoire beginning to crystallize, in accordance with the three foregoing principles (e.g., new body movements, neologisms, verbal constituents with pragmatic functions, development of various linguistic registers, such as slang, etc.).

The perseverance of old constituents, both items and functions, is no less important for the dynamics of a system than the penetration of new ones. This principle can be called the “inertia of institutionalization.” Established constituents will hold on as long as possible against pressures which try to force them out of the center onto the periphery or out of the system altogether. Many constituents persevered in this way inside the new cultural system in Palestine, either in their original form or by transferring their functions to new forms. For example, with regard to the perseverance of form, Hebrew became institutionalized rather painlessly in the registers of formal, public, and non-intimate communication. But in intimate, familiar, or “popular” language, even among fanatic Hebraists, Yiddish (or rather fragments of Yiddishisms) persevered. Thirty years ago, it was still relatively simple to record macaronic discourse in colloquial Hebrew. Today we are forced to reconstruct it, partly from written testimony, partly from the macaronic speech observable among old-timers still with us.⁷ On the other hand, as regards the transfer of functions, this was carried out by domestic carriers. On the linguistic level, to take one instance, this procedure was based on providing loan-translations (calques). Pattern transfer, though, seems to have been possible more in “low profile” areas: in intonation rather than lexicon, gesture rather than morphology and the like.

The inertia of institutionalized constituents can also explain behavioral differences between various sectors of the emerging culture. There were certain areas, for example, where new functions were needed not to replace old ones, but simply to fill slots where there were no old functions to begin with. Here the complex play between selection factors from existing repertoires and the element of creativity was less constrained than in those highly institutionalized areas where quick replacement was impossible because those principles were not valid for them.

We can see this at work in the case of language and literature. The canonized patterns of Hebrew literature and the Hebrew language which had crystallized in Eastern Europe maintained their central positions in these systems throughout the entire period discussed here and even later. The new, "native" constituents, which could have provided alternative options, were forced to remain at the periphery of these systems, penetrating the center only in the late 1950s. Let us look a little closer at these matters.

The process by which Hebrew became a modern language during the nineteenth century and the dominant native tongue later in Palestine illustrates many of the points mentioned above. Hebrew had to mobilize all of its resources to meet the need which arose for writing secular poetry, narrative prose, journalistic non-fiction, and scientific prose. At the same time it had to maintain the existence of the cultural oppositions emerging from the respective ideologies of each phase of development. At the beginning of the *Haskala*, the need to create a language in counterposition to rabbinical vernacular resulted in the rather fanatical reduction of Hebrew exclusively to its Biblical variety. When that need weakened in the face of the greater need to counterpose the accepted form of early *Haskala* prose, many features of rabbinical language were reintroduced, though now with different functions. This process was particularly notable in the language of literature, and was determined by literary requisites. For Mendele Mokher Sfarim (1836?-1917; a founding father of modern Hebrew and Yiddish literatures), for example, the language of the most appreciated writer of the Enlightenment period, Abraham Mapu (1807-1867), was stilted and artificial, especially in dialogue, and totally incompatible with the type of reality he was interested in describing (Mapu's novels described life in ancient Biblical times). Consequently, he introduced various constituents of post-Biblical Hebrew. Moreover, Mendele unhesitatingly turned to Yiddish for further options. It was socially, though not linguistically, the repertoire closest to Hebrew. He borrowed from the Yiddish not words, not even calques, but those linguistic patterns of which there is a very low level of

awareness: syntax, sentence rhythm, and intonation. By doing this he achieved an unprecedented effect of naturalness of speech in a language which was confined to writing, thus opening the way for the later development of both literary and spoken language. The effect of naturalness can be understood only if we keep in mind that Mendele's readers were at home in *both* languages and thus able to appreciate his singular achievement by juxtaposing them.⁸ Other writers followed suit.

In observing the history of new *spoken* Hebrew (for which, unfortunately, we have only partial documentation),⁹ two things become clear: first, an enormous revolution was needed to turn it into a secular tongue for daily use; secondly, the linguistic and paralinguistic phenomena which perforce accompanied its revival had no connection whatsoever with any kind of ancient historical situation. I refer here to those linguistic features the conscious control of which is very difficult, even impossible, and whose penetration into the system of spoken language is absolutely unavoidable: voice quality, the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of sounds, sentence rhythm and intonation, paralinguistic phenomena accompanying speech (hand and head gestures), onomatopoeic sounds and interjections. In all these areas, Yiddish and Slavic features massively penetrated Hebrew, dominated it for a long time, and can still be observed in part today. Clearly, the so-called Sephardi pronunciation actualized by natives of Eastern Europe was quite different from that employed in Palestine by non-Europeans. What was actualized, in fact, was only the minimum necessary to establish it in opposition to Ashkenazi pronunciation.

Yet one of the most conspicuous phenomena in the area of pronunciation was the gradual rejection of the various foreign linguistic and paralinguistic features and their replacement by a very characteristic and unmistakable native-Hebrew sentence intonation. The most drastic departure from the effects of the interference of other language systems probably took place in the area of voice quality and verbal sounds. Furthermore, contrary to expectations regarding language acquisition, the pronunciation of native Palestinian Hebrew speakers was not in imitation of their parents' pronunciation but appeared rather to follow a neutralization procedure: it sought the common denominator of all pronunciations (of those brought from Eastern Europe, not from Middle-Eastern countries!) and rejected all exceptional features. No existing inventory could have dominated the actual speech of native Hebrew speakers (although it could and did dominate the canonized pronunciation of specific sectors, such as the Hebrew theater, see below). This is a

common procedure for a lingua franca. Clearly no new inventory of *sounds* has been created but rather a local *phonological* system. Neutralization on the level of sound *per se* is not a defensible notion. One must say rather, and at a higher level of abstraction, that whatever was *unnecessary* for the phonological system in terms of phonetic oppositions was in fact eliminated.¹⁰

How did the development of "native Hebrew" influence Hebrew culture in Palestine? It turns out that in spite of the ideology of "the new Hebrew man/woman" and the subsequent adoration of the native-born *sabra*¹¹ all of whose linguistic "inventions" were zealously collected, neither native phonetic norms nor the majority of other native verbal phenomena were accorded *official* recognition.¹² They did not become central to the cultural system, nor did they constrain the norms of its written texts. Ultimately, they began to penetrate the center through the classical process by which phenomena on the periphery move towards the center, and even then, arduously and without "official" sanction. Thus, when the Palestinian Broadcasting Service was opened to Hebrew broadcasting, no "native" pronunciation was heard there. What one heard was either a "Russian-Yiddish" Hebrew or an attempt at "Oriental" pronunciation, i.e., actualizing some of the guttural consonants as they were *supposed* to be pronounced—in imitation of the equivalent *Arabic* sounds. Both endeavored to maintain the canons of classical Hebrew morphology, that is, in accordance with the canonized "vocalization" system (the so-called Tiberian tradition which crystallized in the city of Tiberias by the Sea of Galilee in the tenth century), as interpreted by later generations.

Similarly, until the 1940s native Hebrew did not have any position in the language of the theater, since the latter was an official cultural institution. The acting and textual models of the Hebrew theater in Palestine were perfectly compatible with the conventions of Russo-Yiddish pronunciation. This included quite a large range of phenomena: phonetic features pertaining to vowels and consonants and voice quality (tone, timbre, stability of voice versus vibration), rhythm, fluency of speech, and intonation. The *Habima* theater, founded in Moscow in 1918 and transferred to Tel Aviv in 1926, perpetuated Russo-Hebrew speech the same way it perpetuated Russian acting conventions and *mise-en-scènes*, at least until the beginning of the 1960s; only with the foundation of the *Cameri Theater* in Tel Aviv in the early 1940s did one get the opportunity to hear a different kind of Hebrew—not exactly native, but relatively liberated from Russo-Yiddish features. Actually,

the characteristics of native spoken Hebrew were not only ignored, but even strongly opposed. Native Hebrew was—and still is in certain areas of the establishment—conceived of as an ephemeral phenomenon, which if ignored would gradually go away. This attitude is further reinforced by the school system at all stages by its emphasis on “correct” usage and classical grammar. The various functions required by a colloquial Hebrew and therefore introduced into the language by native speakers, either through transfers or exploitation of indigenous “reserves” of Hebrew, were conceived of as errors.

The official guardians of the language appeared to be impervious to the needs of a living language. To sum up, one may say that native Hebrew assumed in fact the position of a non-canonized, non-official system. Only through a complicated and prolonged process did it begin moving into official culture. Naturally, the generation shift contributed to the acceleration of this process, but the generation shift *per se* is not sufficient to explain this. The acceptance of canonized norms totally opposed to those of common usage is quite common in most cultures. In Palestine, native speakers learned to speak in *Habima* (and the other theaters imitating it) with a Russian accent; on the radio they acquired the habit of pronouncing many features completely absent in their actual speech.¹³

Let us turn now to a consideration of the system of written texts. This is the most highly institutionalized system within culture and as the bearer of official recognition has the central function of generating textual models. Within this system, literature often assumes a central position. In modern Hebrew culture, literature definitely had such a position and such a function, and it makes no difference whether the models adopted by society came directly from Hebrew literature or were mediated by texts such as social, political, and critical writings. The fact that Hebrew developed into a modern language during the nineteenth century in a written form, and further that its long tradition had been primarily literary, enables us to understand why written models had priority over any alternative oral options which might have crystallized during that period. The system of East-European Hebrew literature in Palestine functioned in a manner similar to that of architectural and paralinguistic phenomena by resisting the penetration of native cultural constituents. At least until the end of World War I, the canonized literature produced in Palestine was peripheral to the mainstream of Hebrew literature in other parts of the world; the various types of texts published in Palestine, whether “high” literature or sketches, poems,

letters, diaries, etc., disclosed a very strong affinity to earlier stages in the history of Hebrew literature and not to what was the dominant norm at the time in Europe. Therefore, in Palestine not only were new models for Hebrew literature not generated (neither "native" nor any other kinds), with the potential of providing an alternative option; Palestinian Hebrew literature constituted rather a conservative sector within the totality of literary taste and literary activities. On the other hand, when the center of Hebrew literature was transferred to Palestine by means of immigration in the 1920s and early 1930s, it was already an institutionalized system with clear decision-making mechanisms, i.e., clear procedures for employing existing options or finding new ones. The contacts with Russian literature as the available source for alternative options at critical junctures were perpetuated in Palestine at least until the middle of the 1950s.

The gradual rise of Sephardi stress as the metrical norm for Hebrew poetry illustrates the extent to which the institutionalized literary models were closed to the penetration of existing native constituents. For several decades after Sephardi pronunciation dominated spoken Hebrew in Palestine, it still had no impact on the norms of poetic language. Sephardi stress in poetry began to appear in the official sectors only at the beginning of the 1920s; it became the central, dominant norm only at the beginning of the 1930s. This was the case not only with the older generation, but even with poets partly educated in Palestine before World War I, such as Avraham Shlonsky (1900–1977) and his generation. Similarly, when the new "modernist" school of Hebrew poetry emerged in the late 1920s, the models they employed as alternatives to those of the previous generation were based on a massive adoption of Russian constituents, including the rhythm, intonation, word order, rhyming norms, vocabulary, inventory of possible themes, etc., most of which had little connection with local, native constituents. As noted before, the Hebrew poetry created in Palestine before the rise of modernism, as well as the Hebrew prose which had made a certain attempt to deal with the local scene on the thematic level were not considered—nor could they have been—alternative options for introducing change in the literary norms. It was a literature based upon models too old-fashioned for the tastes of the new writers.

Even in the narrative prose written by native Hebrew speakers towards the end of the 1940s, writers who hardly knew any foreign language and who were assuming positions at the center of the literary system, one finds amazingly few constituents of native language. Much

of the work of that generation was based on Russian-Hebrew models in accordance with those traditional decision-making procedures which had established themselves in the Hebrew literature of Eastern Europe before the migration to Palestine. Thematic structure, modes of description, narrative composition, segmentation and transition techniques, in short, the entire narrative repertoire of the texts of this generation leaned heavily on both classical Russian and Soviet-Russian models. One may say with justification that in all these areas a vacuum existed in the Hebrew system, and the young writers found the model they needed in the profusion of prose translated from Russian, especially by Shlonsky and his school. Naturally, these texts are not monolithic, and the so-called Russian-Hebrew principles prevailing are not homogeneous; certain local elements are recognizable. But what is decisive here is the fact that the role of native Hebrew was by no means dominant. The conception of what a story would be, the elaboration of narrated reality, the ways of reporting the speech of characters all were linked to a very strong literary tradition, by no means native, the result of the penetration of constituents through contacts with another literature. Only in later texts did native language penetrate narrative prose written by some of the writers belonging to "the generation of the 1940s." Even there it was not quite authentic. Others, who probably had difficulty moving from traditional stylized literary Hebrew, eventually found it easier to write historical novels: in such novels they could employ the "make-believe" literary language with more apparent justification. Furthermore, these phenomena were not exclusively characteristic of the generation in question; they appeared among other groups of writers at the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, the so-called "Canaanites," who favored the total separation of native-born Palestinian Hebrews from the Diaspora Jews. This clearly illustrates the principle that institutionalized options within a cultural system are often stronger than ideologies. True, some of these "Canaanite" writers objected strongly to "non-native" literary Hebrew, and subsequently introduced new language into their journalism. But this was not the case with their literary prose or poetry. Again, we see that new constituents can penetrate the periphery more easily than they can the more official sectors of a system.

Finally, it would be interesting to observe what took place in literature aimed at Hebrew-speaking children. It would be naive to suppose that the situation here would be radically different. Children's literature usually assumes a non-canonized position within the literary polysystem, adopting models that have undergone simplification, or perpetuating

models which occupied the center when they were new. Hebrew children were obliged during the period under consideration to read literary translations in an elevated, sometimes pompous literary language, some of which was a stylized Russian-Hebrew, some of which employed the norms of previous stages in the history of literary Hebrew, norms long and far removed from the center of adult literature. These included various components of the literary model such as strophic matrices, composition techniques, thematic and plot models, and so on. The mild attempts of certain writers to alter the language of children's books were considered almost revolutionary, and never became generative for the production of textual models for children. So, the idea of the "new nation" notwithstanding, there was no room for native constituents in the various sub-systems of the culture. Native constituents which could have constituted alternative options found their way only into the periphery. Here, at least, there was not too much opposition. Here conventional constraints which prevailed in canonized literature hardly applied, or did not apply at all. In these texts, often written by amateurs, various native constituents did penetrate, not homogeneously, but as part of a conglomerate of diverse and contradictory features. The texts best known to us of this kind are the short detective novels and the dime novels of the 1930s,¹⁴ but there were other peripheral texts. As for canonized literature, it was only in the mid-1950s that a change took place, and it took place first in poetry where the option of employing the existing and available repertoire of the native system was introduced. The Russian-Hebrew word order, rhythm, and intonation were replaced, in varying degrees, by local Hebrew features. Changes also occurred on more complex levels of the poetic model, such as the phonetic structure, the use of realia materials, and so on. Analogous processes took place in narrative prose too, but these were much more gradual, and have hardly been finalized to date. (For some recent discussions of these problems see Gertz 1983;¹⁵ Shavit 1982.¹⁶)

NOTES

1. "Aliyah" in Hebrew means "ascending." It indicated going to Jerusalem during the high holidays in Biblical times, and in later times going to (the Land of) Israel. In modern Hebrew, it means immigrating to (the Land of) Israel. "The First Aliyah" is the name given to the groups of immigrants who founded the first modern colonies in the 1880s.
2. Thus, during the period under consideration, "Hebrew," as both noun and adjective, had a very precise meaning within the emerging culture, a meaning which no longer

carries much weight in contemporary Israel. It was used in the sense of "a Jew of the Land of Israel," that is, a *non-Diaspora Jew*. One spoke of the "Hebrew (not Jewish) Community [Yishuv]," of the "Hebrew workers," of the "Hebrew army," etc. In Israel's Declaration of Independence, the Arab states are urged to cooperate with the *Hebrew* nation, independent in its land, while the State of Israel appeals to the *Jews* in the Diaspora.

3. "Sephardi" (*sefaradi* in Hebrew, from *Sefarad*, the traditional Hebrew name of Spain) means Hispanic, referring to the large Jewish communities originating in Spain and Portugal (and having spread throughout North Africa, the Balkans, Turkey, Palestine, England, The Netherlands, etc.). The pronunciation current among these communities—and others which have adopted it—differs quite considerably from the pronunciation(s) that have prevailed among the Central and East-European communities, commonly called "Ashkenazi" (from *Ashkenaz*, originally referring to medieval Germany), as well as other communities, such as the Yemenite community, which have perpetuated a similar tradition. It has always been considered "superior" by non-Jews, as well as by the Jewish intelligentsia of the Enlightenment movement, though without immediate implications. It was not at all a commonly accepted decision to adopt Sephardi rather than Ashkenazi pronunciation in the 1880s. (The names of Jewish settlements founded in those years, still pronounced with salient Ashkenazi rather than Sephardi features, are relics of this indecisiveness.) The Ashkenazi pronunciation, probably originating in a different geographical part of ancient Palestine, is still current among non-Israeli Jews opposing the State of Israel, or is used in combination with Sephardi features. It is thus identified by Jewish Israelophobes as "Israeli" rather than traditionally "Sephardi."
4. For the Arabs, this was the regular sort of bread produced, consequently called *khubz*, the normal word for "bread" in Arabic. In Hebrew, however, a new word had to be invented. As with many other cases, the Aramaic equivalent—*pita*—was introduced as a new designation. The adoption of this item has been so thorough that the hebraicized Aramaic word has now become known in the West, rather than the originally authentic Arabic one, probably through the propagation of food items by the Israeli emigrants in the United States and Western Europe. (The other popular items, however, such as *humus*, *tahina* or *falafel*, still bear their Arabic names.)
5. In the opinion of Benjamin Harshav, the notion of the *khata* here stems not from the reality of village life in Russia (or rather the Ukraine), but rather from literary descriptions.
6. On romantic stereotypes of this period, see Gorny, Yosef 1979. "Romantic Elements in the Ideology of the Second Aliyah." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 13: 73–78. (An abridged version of Gorny 1966, in Hebrew).
7. This kind of macaronic language is characterized by the insertion of Yiddishisms when the Hebrew elements are felt by the speaker to be insufficient or inadequate to express emotivity. Thus, even such phrases as "vos iz dos" (literally "what is this"), meaning "what does it mean," "what is the meaning of all this," may be considered more expressive than "ma ze" ("what is it") or "ma perusho shel dabar" ("what is the meaning of this"). Also, established narremes may also under such circumstances be considered more effective than their Hebrew equivalents, conceived of as detached and "high" by the originally Yiddish speaker. Thus "zogt er/zi" ("he/she says") as an interpolated reporting speech device in daily narrative can be heard rather than "hu omer/hi omeret," their established literary equivalents. On top of this, a host of unique Yiddish expressions (such as *nebekh*, *gevald*) or morphemes (mostly for diminutives: *-le*, plural *-lakh*) penetrated more massively, some to stay, at least in some registers. Such familiar designations as *aba* for *papa* and *ima* for *mama* were introduced from Aramaic, since the Hebrew words *ab* (father) and *em* (mother) belong to

- the more official register (i.e., "father" and "mother"). But even these often were felt as stilted, subsequently taking the Yiddish diminutive suffixes, thus generating such forms as *aba-le* and *ima-le*. (The Russian *papochka* and *mamochka*—diminutives of *papa* and *mama*—may also have served as a model in such cases.) It is indeed very unfortunate that the living performers of such a macaronic speech are still not recorded. Although their actual speech today cannot possibly be taken as a fully authentic preservation of macaronic speech in previous decades, the categories of Yiddish insertions must be roughly the same.
8. For a discussion of this issue, see Perry, Menakhem 1984. "Thematic and Structural Consequences of Auto-Translations by Bilingual Yiddish-Hebrew Writers." *Poetics Today* 2, 4:181-92; also Shmeruk, Khone 1978. *Yiddish Literature: Aspects of Its History* (Tel Aviv: Porter Institute); and Even-Zohar, I. and Kh. Shmeruk, 1981. "Authentic Language and Authentic Reported Speech: Hebrew vs. Yiddish." *Ha-Sifrut*, 30/31: 82-87. (Hebrew; English version in Even-Zohar, Itamar 1990. "Polysystem Studies." *Poetics Today* 11, 1:155-63).
 9. A rather representative collection of official and public documents is available in English (Saulson, Scott B. 1979. *Institutionalized Language Planning: Documents and Analysis of the Revival of Hebrew*. The Hague: Mouton).
 10. We must recognize, however, at least as a theoretical option, the possibility that rather than through an internal process of neutralization it was the adoption of a ready-made repertoire that actually took place. Such a repertoire seems indeed to have been there, namely the so-called Lithuanian norm. This norm is markedly different from all the rest of East European norms in its middle-length vowels, which, moreover, are very similar to the Sephardi ones, and its relatively even intonation (in contradistinction, for instance, to the conspicuous "sing-song" of Galician Yiddish or even "rural Lithuanian"). If this is true, the process here termed neutralization did not occur in Palestine, but had been finalized in Lithuania. Unfortunately, there is no research available which would justify our preferring this hypothesis over the neutralization hypothesis. It is, however, clear that the Lithuanian norm, already considered superior prior to the Palestinian development, might have contributed to the preference for the kind of neutralized features which might have developed. One could argue that, had it been the other way round, a non-neutralized, sing-song norm could have been considered "better" or "more beautiful" rather than the "dry" accepted one. (Obviously, the "neutralized" norm is aurally "poorer" than the non-neutralized ones from the point of view of variety of features.)
 11. A popular appellation during this period of (Jewish) Palestinian-born people, borrowed from the Arabic word denoting cactus tree. The idea was the image of the *sabra*, who like the cactus, is prickly on the outside but sweet on the inside. The word *sabra* has been replaced with the Hebrew *sabbar* (pronounced "tsabbar"), now almost obsolete.
 12. The native-born Hebrew *sabra* evoked—and perhaps still does—an ambiguous response: on the one hand, he is strong, brave, somewhat coarse and outspoken; on the other hand, gentle, childish, and uncultivated. Alter Druyanov collected anecdotes and jokes in *Jokes and Witticisms* (Jerusalem 1945), among which is the following (no. 2636): "Tel Aviv, Herzl Street. A group of children pour out of the Herzlia Gymnasium. Two famous Yiddishists are passing by, having come to visit Palestine [probably just before or after World War I], and the greater Yiddishist says to his junior colleague: 'The Zionists boast that Hebrew is becoming a natural tongue for the children of Palestine. I will now show you that they are lying. I will tweak one of the boys' ears and I promise you that he will not cry out *ima* ["mother" in Hebrew], but *mame* [Yiddish]." So saying, he approached one of the boys and tweaked his ear. The boy turned on him and shouted: 'Idiot!' [*hamor* ("donkey") in Hebrew]. The famous

Yiddishist turned to this friend: 'I am afraid that the Zionists are right.' " The point of this anecdote is not only that the "children of Palestine" were actually speaking Hebrew rather than Yiddish, but that they reacted not at all in the manner supposedly typical of Jewish children. This is, of course, a double disappointment for the famous Yiddishist, as the "new language" also represents a "new (and not familiar) behavior."

13. Some of the most conspicuous features of this kind are still two gutturals ([ʔ] and [ħ]), dental [r] (rather than native velar), shifting stress, and [e] ("schewa mobile"), where speech has a consonant cluster. (For instance, such forms as "kfarim," "pqidim" are thus pronounced "kefarim," "peqidim.")
14. See Shavit, Zohar and Yaacov 1974. "Hebrew Crime Stories During the 1930s in Palestine." *Ha-Sifrut* 18/19:30-73 (English summary: iv).
15. Gertz, Nurit 1983. *Generation Shift in Literary History: Hebrew Narrative Prose in the Sixties*. (Tel Aviv: Porter Institute and Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuchad). (Hebrew)
16. Shavit, Zohar 1982. "The Literary Life in Eretz Israel, 1910-1933," *Poetics Today* 11:1 (1990), 175-91. (Hebrew)