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BUT AT NIGHT, AT NIGHT, I STILL DREAM IN SPANISH THE MAP OF THE IMAGINATION OF ISRAELI LITERATURE: THE SOUTH AMERICAN PROVINCE

DREAMING IN SPANISH

I think and I write Hebrew without difficulty
And love to love you in Hebrew alone.
It's a wonderful language, I will never have another
But at night, at night, I still dream in Spanish.

Lyrics: Ehud Manor
Music: Shlomo Yidov

I

Nationalism, as Benedict Anderson argues in his influential book, *Imagined Communities*[21], is not another ideology, like socialism or fascism, but a self-generating phenomenon, a product of the act of reimagining the nation that involves the development of methods of production and communication. This act of reimagining is carried out through the renewal and/or the invention of internal tradition, due to the conscious-emotional need to present the new nation as an ancient one that is being renewed[22] and also because of the necessity, pointed out by Mircea Eliade[23], of creating a mechanism of repetition of the founding moment of the nation, that is, the establishment of a ritual event devoted to confirming the primary physical and metaphysical covenant between community members, the land, and their gods.

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[21] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 2006.

[22] See, among others, H. Trevor-Roper, *The Highland Tradition of Scotland*, in: *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 15–42; L. McMurtry, *Inventing the West*, in: *The New York Review of Books*, August 10, 2000, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2000/aug/10/inventing-the-west/?pagination=false.

[23] M. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History*, trans. W.R. Trask, Princeton: Princeton University Press; M. Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, trans. W.R. Trask, New York, San Francisco, and London: Harper and Row, 1965 [1954].

But the act of reimagining a nation cannot be based solely on the inwardly directed creative observation of the reserve of traditions and images of the community itself, rich and diverse though it may be. This act of re-imagination is also based on outwardly directed creative observation, an act mainly based, as Edward Said[24] pointed out, on a subjugating projection of the Other, which is always also, as his successors and critics[25] have demonstrated, a projection subjugated by the Other. Thus, for example, Europe, "the Old World," imagined itself through subjugating and subjugated projections of America, the "New World"[26], in turn, imagined itself through parallel projections of the "Old World," of "the European mother countries"[27].

The phenomenon of modern Jewish nationalism can also be described as the product of a dual act of imagination: the renewal of internal traditions and the subjugating and subjugated projections of Others. This act of imagination was repeatedly realised in hundreds of texts that were intended to achieve a twofold goal: to present the philosophy of an old-new national space – *Altneuland* (old-new land), and to outline the engineering of a new man – *Altneumann* (old-new man). Naturally, this corpus was influenced by the utopian genre, which experienced an amazing boom, as Rachel Elboim Dror[28] aptly explains, during the second half of the nineteenth century. The most prominent pioneer of this trend, Avraham Mapu, re-imagined the Eretz Israel, which he never got to see with his own eyes, in all of his books, particularly in his foundational work *Ahavat Zion* (*The Love of Zion*) (1853) perceived at the time as a cult text, much like a new Bible.

From the perspective of Mapu and his contemporaries, and from the point of view of the writers and poets of the *Hibbat Zion* movement, who followed them, there was no doubt regarding the identity of the "place" where the process of the renaissance, the rebirth would take place, or, in the words of Zali Gurevitch and Gideon Aran[29], "the place," that is, the space that represents in the best possible way the regulative idea of the nation, the focus of its identity, and its specific uniqueness. In this context, Mapu and his successors, the people of the Haskalah and Hibbat Zion, went the way of their predecessors. They took upon themselves the direction of the vector of national desire, which had developed in exile and found its most refined expression in Yehuda Halevi's renowned poem "My Heart is the East and I in the Uttermost West." They lived in Lithuania, in the towns of the Pale of Settlement in Ukraine and elsewhere in Eastern and Central Europe

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[24] E. Said, *Orientalism*, London: Penguin, 1977.

[25] See, for example, H.K. Bhabha, *Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition*, in: *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, eds. P. Williams and L. Chrisman, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, pp. 112–123.

[26] See J. Baudrillard's wonderful book, *America*, trans. Ch. Turner, London: Verso, 1988. See also, M. Hermoni, *All Rivers Flow to America: On the Role of the New World in the Literature of the Renaissance Period* [in Hebrew], Doctoral Dissertation. Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (manuscript), no date.

[27] This is apparent, for example, in some of the essays in the anthology *Visions of America: Personal Narratives from the Promised Land*, ed. by W. Brown and A. Ling, New York: Persea Books, 1993.

[28] R. Elboim-Dror, *Yesterday's Tomorrow* [in Hebrew], Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 1993.

[29] Z. Gurevich and G. Aran, *On Place: Israeli Anthropology* [in Hebrew], *Alpayim* 4 (1991): pp. 9–44.

and created for themselves and their readers "a promised land"[30], an imagined Land of Israel, which was based on a melange of slivers of information from books by travellers to the Land of Israel, popular geography books, the realisation of fragments of Bible verses, the landscape that surrounded them, and the landscapes of the magical places familiar to them from the literature that shaped the dreams of their youth[31].

The exclusivity of the Land of Israel as "the place" was undermined in the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. This undermining, the deviation from the traditional direction of the "vector of national desire," which could have changed the map of the national imagination as a whole, had it been more solidly and deeply based, was, as Benjamin Harshav noted[32], the product of an enormous cultural and political revolution, primarily, but not only, among the Jews of the Russian Pale of Settlement, a revolution whose results were, he claimed: "The greatest contribution to our culture since the Bible"[33].

This cultural and political revolution, claims Harshav, was not marked by one historical-ideological process, Zionism, but rather by a modernist revolution, of which Zionism – that is, the Zionists' declaration of the exclusivity of the Land of Israel as the focus of the vector of national desire – is only one derivative. This was, according to Harshav, a comprehensive, dramatic change that took advantage of the dynamic opportunities of the modern world in Europe and the United States, giving rise to what appeared at the time to be a Jewish people different from its predecessor, built on an axis with two heads, each with a different nature: Israel and the new Diaspora[34]. By "new Diaspora," Harshav meant the massive settlement of Jews in the United States of America at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. But, of course, the massive settlement of some quarter of a million Jews during the very same period, in various places in Latin America, mainly in Argentina, in accordance with the vision of Baron Hirsch, must also be included in it.

In this context of the emergence of two heads with different natures, Israel and the "new Diaspora," due to the modern Jewish revolution, Harshav adds,

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[30] See E. Shavid, *Homeland and a Land of Promise: The Land of Israel in the Philosophy of the Nation of Israel* [in Hebrew], Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1979.

[31] See in this context: T. Cohen, *From Dream to Reality: Eretz Israel in Haskalah Literature* [in Hebrew], Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1982; S. Werses, *Ways of Telling in Abraham Mapu's "Ahavat Tzion"* [in Hebrew], *Fiction and its Roots: Studies in the Development of Hebrew Prose* [in Hebrew], Ramat Gan: Agudat Hasofrim Haivriim Be-Israel, Masada, 1971, pp. 46–59; D. Miron, *The Glowing Cover: The Poetic Art of Abraham Mapu in "The Love of Zion." Between Vision and Truth: The Buds of the Hebrew and Yiddish Novel in the Nineteenth Century* [in Hebrew], Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1979, pp. 15–151.

[32] B. Harshav, *The Rebirth of the Land of Israel and the Modern Jewish Revolution: Thoughts on the Situation* [in Hebrew], in: *Observation Point: Culture and Society in the Land of Israel* [in Hebrew], ed. N. Gertz, Tel Aviv: The Open University, 1987–88, pp. 7–31. An expanded version of this article appears in Harshav's books *Language in Time of Revolution*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, and *The Meaning of Yiddish*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990, pp. 139–156.

[33] B. Harshav, *The Rebirth of the Land of Israel and the Modern Jewish Revolution: Thoughts on the Situation*, in: *Observation Point: Culture and Society in the Land of Israel*, ed. N. Gertz, Tel Aviv: The Open University, 1987–88, p. 16.

[34] Ibid., p. 11.

the accepted history of Modern Hebrew literature has been distorted. This is a "historiography of winners," in which the history of literature is described from the end to the beginning, from the stage perceived by (Zionist) historians as a victory for Zionism, and back. This approach resulted, he claims, in a distortion of historical truth, a reduction of the literary corpus, and a diminution of the richness of the reciprocal relations between writers and their works.

Harshav's strong words must be qualified, in this context, regarding two points. The first of these qualifications is that it is easy to see that positioning the Land of Israel as "the place" constituted a conscious decision on the part of many writers and thinkers "from the beginning" – from the eighteen eighties at the latest – and, accordingly, the exclusion of the "new Diaspora" was also a conscious decision "from the beginning." In other words, what we have here is not only a "historiography of winners," but also an *ab ovo* move, from the beginning, a calculated and deliberate move that succeeded, at least for several decades.

The second qualification is that at the formative time that Harshav is discussing, a cultural-linguistic phenomenon that we can call "territorial diglossia" became permanently fixed. Most of the writers who chose to write in Hebrew chose the Land of Israel as "the place," while most of the writers who chose Yiddish, English, Spanish, and so on, chose the "new Diaspora" as "the place." This is not a surprising phenomenon. Authors who chose a different path, for example, the Hebrew poets in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, created a heroic, but somewhat bizarre corpus[35], while many Hebrew writers who came to Eretz Israel carried on "secret affairs" with the languages of the lands of their birth[36].

We can learn much about the validity of both parts of the first qualification I presented, the existence of the early decision regarding the exclusivity of the Land of Israel as "the place" and the parallel existence of the early exclusion of places that competed with the Zionist option, from the opening chapter of *Altneuland*, Herzl's foundational book[37].

The chapter opens with a description of the book's protagonist, Dr. Friedrich Loewenberg, who "was sunk in deep melancholy"[38], that is, "spleen," the disease of that generation of "detached" Central European Jews. Loewenberg spends most of his time sitting in a Viennese café. There, he ponders the existential possibilities open to him, and dismisses them one by one:

> ...once upon a time, there had been lighthearted talk. Now only dreams were left, for the two good comrades with whom he had been wont to while away the idle, pleasant evening hours at this café had died several months previously. Both had been older than he, and it was, as Heinrich had written to him just before sending a bullet into his temple, "chronologically reasonable" that

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[35] See A. Mintz, *Sanctuary in the Wilderness: A Critical Introduction to American Hebrew Poetry*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

[36] See on this matter N. Scharf Gold's pioneering study, *Yehuda Amichai, The Making of Israel's National Poet*, Waltham, Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 2008. See also N. Rachel Scharf Gold, *The Betrayal of the Mother Tongue in the Works of Hoffman, Zach, and Pagis* [in Hebrew], in: *Mikan* 12 (2012), pp. 5–27.

[37] Th. Herzl, *Old-New Land*, trans. L. Levensohn, New York: Bloch, 1941 [1902].

[38] Ibid., p. 3.

they should yield to despair sooner than he. **Oswald went to Brazil to help in founding a Jewish labour settlement, and there succumbed to the yellow fever**[39].

Herzl rules out the option of settlement in South America, that is, the settlement enterprise that was the brainchild of Baron Hirsch and his ilk, with the same stroke of the pen with which he rejects the option of suicide, as if these options are of equal status and significance. Later, he also rejects the option of the intellectual and detached European Jew and the option of bourgeois Judaism in its nouveau-riche version.

To these disqualifications, we can add the option of emigration to the United States of America, whose absolute negation is presented by Loewenberg's benefactor, the industrialist Kingscourt. There supposedly remains only one suitable existential option: settlement in the old-new country, the Land of Israel, represented by David Litvak, a Jewish boy from a poor Eastern European home. Loewenberg is charmed by Litvak and his commitment to the idea of the revival of the nation in the old-new country, and helps him in his studies, through which the boy, the son of a notions peddler, will eventually become the president of the "new society" in Israel. Loewenberg himself is found to be worthy of the "winning" Zionist option only after he goes through a lengthy "process of repair," both physical and psychological, on an isolated island in the Indian Ocean.

The choice of the Land of Israel as "the place," as the ultimate destination of the vector of national desire, underwent a process of institutionalisation and became permanently fixed in the prose and poetry written by most of the poets and authors who settled in the Land of Israel in the three great waves of Zionist-pioneering immigration (1882–1928). These writers, who took upon themselves, in different ways, the "Zionist narrative," privileging the Land of Israel while negating the Diaspora[40]: Moshe Smilansky, Joseph Luidor, Israel Zarchi, Joseph Aricha, S.Y. Agnon, Y. Brenner, Aryeh Arieli-Orloff, Aharon Reuveni, Haim Hazaz, Yehuda Yaari, Natan Bistritzky, and many poets, raised the banner of the old-new Land of Israel and negated the Diaspora, both old and new.

Nonetheless, we must note that the adoption of the "Zionist narrative," on the one hand, and the rejection/negation of the narrative of the Diaspora, on the other, were never unidirectional or unambiguous. There is not a single text by a Hebrew writer that is not "infected" by ambivalence regarding these two narratives, each of them separately, and both together, due to the pain of "cutting off one's roots," the disconnection from family (among the writers of both the Second Aliyah and the Third Aliya who came to the Land of Israel alone and among writers who came alone to the Land of Israel before and after the Holocaust, and whose families were murdered in Europe), the yearning for childhood landscapes, and so on, as well as due to the extreme difficulties of adjusting to a new climate, physical work, illness, poverty, and so on, that burst forth, here and there, even in the most conformist stories, and all the more so in stories that conceal more than they reveal. Nonetheless, and this is a fact that cannot be ignored, the two existential-territorial versions of the Zionist narrative: facing the Land of Israel/homeland and turning away from the Diaspora/native land was a pre-

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[39] Ibid. (my emphasis).

[40] See Y. Schwartz, *Do you Know the Land Where the Lemon Blooms?: Human Engineering and Designing the New Space* [in Hebrew], Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2007, pp. 159–183.

ponderant theme in the overwhelming majority of the works of writers who came to Israel, whether they "made aliyah" or just immigrated to it.

The preeminent status of the existential place of the Land of Israel on the map of the imagination of the Hebrew writers who settled there began to be undermined in the late nineteen forties, in the writings of the "Palmach generation." These writers, among them Moshe Shamir, Yigal Mossinson, Shlomo Nitzan, Nathan Shaham, and others, were born in Israel or came to the country as young children. They realised the "Zionist dream" in the stories of their lives, but also dreamed of places outside the Promised Land. One of these places was, as Nurith Gertz[41] demonstrated, the American Wild West, which served as a site of desire of the "silver platter youth," mainly mediated through the books they read, and especially through the films they watched. Gertz notes that we can learn about the place of a western in constructing the contemporary ethos from, among other things, songs that featured fighters as horsemen riding alone in deserted areas, from street posters that told the stories of brave warriors in the form of the wanted men from westerns, and even from a joke that was prevalent at the time according to which two people founded the Palmach, Yitzhak Sadeh and Gary Cooper[42]. Another site of desire through which the "Palmach generation" constructed its national identity was the Russian space, including the "Wild East" of Asian, "Cossack"[43] Russia, and the cultural space of revolutionary Russia[44]. Other sites of desire for the members of this generation were England and its culture, as we can see, for example, in the late work of S. Yizhar, *Tzalhavim*[45]; Paris, to which those who felt that the state that had been established was not in line with their dream of it thronged, as we can see, for example, in Hanoch Bartov's *Ha-Cheshbon Ve-Ha-Nefesh* (*The Reckoning and the Soul*)[46], as well as Germany, as we can see in Dan Ben-Amotz's *Lizkor Velishkoach* (*To Remember, To Forget*)[47].

Another objection, far more radical, emerges in the writings of "the first Israelis." I refer to the group of writers known as the "generation of the State," born in Israel and outside it in the nineteen thirties, which largely determined the

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[41] N. Gertz, *Motion Fiction: Israeli Fiction in Film* [in Hebrew], Tel Aviv: The Open University, 1993, pp. 70–82.

[42] Ibid., p. 71.

[43] The figure of the Cossack, and, similarly, the figure of the "Bedouin" as models of identification were inherited by the "Palmach generation" from the generation of the Second Aliyah, which created, to a large degree, the identity paradigm that the members of the "generation of the State" implemented in their bodies and souls. See also in this context I. Even-Zohar, *Israeli Hebrew Literature: A Historical Model* [in Hebrew], in: *Hasifrut* 4:3 (1973), pp. 427–440 and I. Bar-Tal, *Cossack and Bedouin: Land and People in Jewish Nationalism* [in Hebrew], Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2007, pp. 68–79.

[44] This was mediated by two foundational books, among others: *An Anthology of National Poetry: Russian Poetry* [in Hebrew], ed. by A. Shlonsky and L. Goldberg, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Haartzi and Hashomer Hatzair, Bialik Institute, 1942, and *General Panfilov's Reserve*, by A. Bek, which were said to have been carried in the pocket of every Palmach fighter. *General Panfilov's Reserve* was also a foundational book of the Israel Defense Forces, and was required reading in officers' courses.

[45] Y. Yizhar. *Tzalhavim*, Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1993.

[46] H. Bartov, *Ha-Cheshbon Ve-Ha-Nefesh* (*The Reckoning and the Soul*), Merhavia: Hakibbutz Haartzi Hashomer Hatzair Sifriat Poalim, 1953.

[47] D. Ben-Amotz, *Lizkor Velishkoach* (*To Remember, To Forget*), Tel Aviv: Amikam, 1968.

characteristics of Israeli identity. This group includes Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, Aharon Appelfeld, Yehoshua Kenaz, Ruth Almog, and Haim Beer.

A typical characteristic of the fiction written during this period, particularly the fiction of Amos Oz, who is perceived as the most typical "first Israeli," is a dramatic change in direction of the vector of national territorial desire. The place of the Land of Israel as the ultimate destination of sovereign national desires is overtaken by "another place" (as in the Hebrew title of Oz's first novel, published in 1966), a "new-old" destination – Europe.

Thus, it is precisely in the stories of "The First Israelis," who began writing after the establishment of the sovereign Jewish State – for the first time after the Jewish-modernist revolution of the late nineteenth century, as Benjamin Harshav pointed out – that the automatic correlation between writing in Hebrew and the concept of "the Promised Land" was broken down.

The undermining of the Land of Israel as "the place" created a serious vacuum in the national imagination, a vacuum filled at least partially and for a limited time by Europe. The position of the Land of Israel as "the place" and the position of Europe as "the alternative place" began to be filled from the early nineteen eighties onward by places that had been marginalized until then. One of those places was the South American province, which gradually came to occupy an important position on the map of the national imagination of Israelis.

II

The South American province fulfils several functions on the map of the Israeli imagination. Some are not very significant, while others are more so. I will present some of them here, in ascending order of importance.

For some writers of the "generation of the State," South America appears mainly as an image of extreme human situations. This kind of situation is a desperate yearning for an "authentic" way of life that would allow indirect contact with the "pristine era" of the Yishuv in the Land of Israel before the "shock of statehood"[48]. A typical example of such a situation can be seen in the "South American" chapters in *Al Tagidi Laila* (*Don't Call it Night*, 1994)[49] by Amos Oz. Theo, the protagonist, abandons Israel, sails to South America, and wanders from place to place, developing for the "locals" "a few models of rural areas that suited the tropical climate and were not at odds with the existing way of life"[50].

Alongside his development work, which takes into account, of course, both the environment and the human landscape, Theo occupies himself mainly with

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[48] See Y. Schwartz, *Le choc de la création de l'État* (*The Shock of the Creation of the State*), *Yod: Revue des etudes Hébraïques et Juives 14*, Paris: Inalco, 2009, pp. 13–30.

[49] A. Oz, *Don't Call it Night*, trans. N. de Lange, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997 [1994].

[50] Ibid., p. 98. Compare this to the opening of Oz's first novel, *Elsewhere, Perhaps*, which includes detailed settlement planning, except that there he is talking about a kibbutz, a pioneering socialistic Zionist settlement in northern Israel, and here he is talking about random sites in South America. *Elsewhere, Perhaps*, trans. N. de Lange. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1973 [1966].

wandering – he is a kind of adult backpacker – always alone. This aloneness is interrupted by two kinds of events – encounters with "the place" and local women ("Women were easy to find, like food, like a hammock to spend the night in, all lavished on him everywhere out of curiosity or hospitality"[51]) and "conversations late into the night [...] with strangers or chance acquaintances"[52].

The meetings with "the place," the nature scenes, and local women have a clear colonial character:

> He despatched most of his monthly salary to a bank in Toronto, because his expenses were negligible. Like a traveling artisan he wandered in those years from one godforsaken place to another that was even more so. He stayed in wretched villages at the foot of extinct volcanoes and once he saw one of them erupting in flames. Sometimes he journeyed under thick canopies of ferns and creepers through sensuous jungles. Here and there he would befriend for a while a desolate river or steep mountain range that the forest seemed to be invading with the savage claws of its roots. Here and there he would stop for a couple of weeks and surrender to total idleness, laying in a hammock all day watching birds of prey in the depths of the empty sky. A girl or a young woman would come in the night to share his hammock, bringing huge earthenware cups of coffee for them both[53].

The landscapes here are designed like the backdrops of an African film shot in Hollywood. The details that are supposed to represent the South American space, "wretched villages," "volcanoes," "forests," "ferns," "creepers," "desolate river[s] or steep mountain range[s]," play, first and foremost, a figurative-emotional role. The extinct volcanoes mark the situation of Theo's libidinal passions, which awaken from time to time and erupt like the volcano he sees "erupting in flames." Ferns and creepers are important because they create "canopies," which hint at Theo's solitary nature. The forest "seems to be invading [the steep mountain range] with the savage claws of its roots," in order to express indirectly, in a "natural," male-female way, his detachment and emotional sterility, and so on. The sexual encounters themselves bring to mind the women of Gauguin's paintings from his Tahiti period. But here, the strong plasticity, so present and vital in Gauguin's paintings, is lacking.

Another example of the use of the South American province as an image that represents an extreme existential situation can be found in the novella *Dromit Le-Antartika* (*South of Antarctica*, 1990)[54] by Reuven Miran. At the centre of the book is the story of the total, vital, and, at the same time, destructive relationship of a man and woman, "the Italian" and "the Frenchwoman," two mysterious protagonists, probably spies. The high points of the story occur at their last meetings in two geographical extremities that have obvious symbolic existential value. The first: "the edge of Patagonia, at the jagged rim of the Land of Fire"[55], symbolises in the book the bounds of human existence. The second, "the 70th parallel south"[56], symbolises the place of the material stripped down to pure spirituality and also the realisation of the existential paradox that serves as the novella's metaphorical lock, and these two things are connected, since,

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[51] Ibid., p. 98.
[52] Ibid., pp. 98–99.
[53] Ibid., p. 99.
[54] R. Miran, *Dromit Leantartica* (*South of Antarctica*), Jerusalem: Keter, 1990, pp. 108–109.
[55] Ibid., p. 94.
[56] Ibid., p. 96.

according to the "Italian": "When you are here ... the North is any place except the place you're stepping on. You can't go any further south. What more do you want, damn it? You won't be able to lose the North[57] even if you have to make an effort"[58].

Smadar Hersfeld, too, in her book *Tachat Shmei Meksiko* (*Under the Sky of Mexico*, 2001)[59] relates to the South American space as an image that represents extreme human situations. There is, however, a remarkable difference between her book and those of Oz and Miran. The protagonists of Oz and Miran are momentary tourists-crusaders who do not undergo any real spiritual process in the South American "space of extremity," but rather use part of its customary inventory of images of "the edge of the world," "the simple life," "outside of modern civilisation," and so on) to sketch and determine their existential identities. Hersfeld's female protagonists in the two novels included in the book (*Under the Sky of Mexico* and *Yeshu Hashachor* [*Black Jesus*]) are wanderers, at least for a certain period of time[60]. They disconnect from the "mother base" (Israel) and experience the new space over time, in the most intensive way. The two novellas describe personal travel stories, for the most part universal, whose goal is to extricate the protagonists from the modern vale of tears and to bring them to spiritual redemption, which entails sexual redemption that has sado-masochistic characteristics, on the one hand, and lesbian characteristics, on the other. These stories are arranged in a combination of two narrative formats that at times coexist harmoniously, at least partially, and at times clash with one another intensely and gratingly. These are, on the one hand, the "salvation through the gutters"[61], format, with its connection to the literary tradition of confession and the picaresque and to the offspring of these two traditions in Israeli literature (Pinchas Sadeh, Yitzhak Orpaz-Auerbach, Binyamin Shvili, and others) and, on the other, exotic versions of "the story of revelation/epiphany," a story at whose centre is a figure who is "lost on life's paths" and is being helped by a local "mentor," a "native," who is close to "Mother Earth" and "the spirits of the ancestors," the format on which the books of Carlos Castenada, for example, are based.

Other functions that the South American region serves on the map of the Israeli national imagination are related to two events that seem very distant from one another, at least at a superficial glance. One is an extra-literary event, the return of the Sinai Peninsula, which was occupied by Israel between 1967 and

[57] In Hebrew, the expression "to lose the North" means to become totally confused, to lose one's mind, or to get lost.

[58] Ibid., p. 97.

[59] S. Hersfeld, *Tachat Shmei Meksiko* (*Under the Sky of Mexico*), Jerusalem: Keter, 2001.

[60] On the differences between the tourist-crusader and other different and similar types of traveling protagonists see H. Naveh, *Women and Men Traveling: The Travel Narrative in Hebrew Literature* [in Hebrew], Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Press, 2002. pp. 107–108; Y. Schwartz, *Vantage Point: Issues in the Historiography of Modern Hebrew Literature* [in Hebrew], Or Yehuda: Dvir, 2005; S. Manzurul Islam, *The Ethics of Travel from Marco Polo to Kafka*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996.

[61] In the novella *Black Jesus*, the protagonist reports: "I thought of a Torah, Yehudit, that wanted to find salvation in the gutters. That's what I'm doing, I thought. Looking for my salvation in the gutters." S. Hersfeld, *Tachat Shmai Meksiko* (*Under the Sky of Mexico*), Jerusalem: Keter, 2001, p. 172.

1982, to Egypt. The second event is intra-literary: the publication of the Hebrew translation of the monumental work of Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in Israel in 1972[62].

In the nineteen fifties, and until the Six-Day War, many young people dreamed of going to the Red Rock, the Nabatean temple on the other side of the River Jordan. Some of them, including, for example, Meir Har-Zion and Rachel Savorai, even fulfilled that dream. At the time, the Red Rock functioned as a magical place on the map of the Israeli national imagination, the product of an ancient civilisation, the secret of whose charm also lay, without a doubt, in the fact that it was a dangerous site[63]. Literary expressions of this phenomenon may be found in Oz's *Menucha Nechona* (*A Perfect Peace*, 1982)[64] and Ayelet Gundar-Goshen's book *Laila Echad, Markovitch* (*One Night, Markovitch*, 2012)[65].

After the Six-Day War, the place of the Red Rock on the map of the Israeli national imagination was inherited, in a different version, by the Sinai Desert. This huge area, especially its eastern shore from Eilat to Sharm el Sheikh, was perceived by many Israelis as the ultimate realisation of borderless free space, and blending into it was in line with the hippie spirit that arrived from the West after 1968. The return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt wounded the Israeli national imagination, much in the same way that it was wounded with the declaration of the establishment of the State, an event that brought about the destruction of the culture of the Yishuv in Eretz Israel. After the evacuation of Sinai, nostalgic literature that mourned the "lost place" and the "time that would never return" was written, as it had been after the establishment of the State. The writer who expressed this phenomenon most convincingly is Tsur Shezaf, in his book *Namer Be-Harim* (*Panther Trap*), published in 1988[66].

The function of the space of absolute freedom, with all its components, including liberation from everyday troubles and the pressure of the security situation and the economic situation, as well as the connection to spiritual experiences, drug use, sexual freedom, and so on, which Sinai had performed, was fulfilled from the late nineteen eighties and early nineteen nineties by parallel spaces outside of Israel's borders and the Middle East, which have appeared since then in dozens of literary works[67]. I am referring to books that focused on South America or India[68] and on other countries in Central and

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[62] G. García Márquez, *Mea Shanim Shel Bedidut*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1972 (published in English as *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, London: Pan Books, 1978).

[63] Haim Hefer wrote a well-known song titled "Red Rock" in the nineteen fifties. The tune was composed by Yohanan Zarai, and it was performed by a singer Arik Lavi. According to Hefer, he demanded that the song stop being played on the radio, because he was afraid that it was encouraging young Israelis to make the dangerous journey to Petra. And, indeed, on 30 July 1958, the song was banned from the radio, a decision that remained in force for decades. See also: Oz Almog, *The Sabra: A Profile* [in Hebrew], Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997, pp. 268–288.

[64] A. Oz, *A Perfect Peace*, trans. H. Halkin, London: Chatto and Windus, 1985 [1982].

[65] A. Gundar-Goshen, *Laila Ehad, Markovitch*, Or Yehudah: Kinneret Zmora-Bitan, 2012 (published in English as *One Night, Markovitch*, trans. S. Silverstone, London: Pushkin Press, 2013).

[66] T. Shezaf, *Namer Beharim* (*Panther Trap*), Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1988.

[67] A foundational book in this context is Y. Ghinsberg's *Be-chazara me Tuichi: Sipur she Haya*, Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1985 (published in English as *Back from Tuichi*, New York: Random House, 1993), which elicited many responses at the time of its publication.

[68] The most significant book in this context is Azriel Carlebach's *Hodu, Roman Drachim* (*India: Account of a Voyage*), published by Ayanot in 1956. Carlebach sums up in it his travels in India

Eastern Asia[69] and Africa[70], as well as less "spiritual places," such as Australia[71], North America[72], and New Zealand[73].

Eshkol Nevo addresses the nature of the relationship between the status of the Sinai Peninsula (mainly its eastern coast) and that of the South American space in his book, *Neuland* (2011)[74]. The narrator, Dori, searches all over Latin America for his father, who has disappeared. He is impressed by the "breathtaking landscape"[75] revealed to him through the wide window of the vehicle in which he is travelling. A landscape open "...to infinity, and in the middle it's not split even by an interchange, or a new city with high-rise buildings, or a line of vehicles with four-wheel drives"[76].

Nevo's protagonist asks himself "when the last time was that such enthusiasm for beauty had caught in his throat"[77]. And he replies: "In Sinai, apparently"[78], adding: "But they killed Sinai for him, too. Two years ago, when the first images of the attack arrived and he realised that it had happened on 'his' beach, he began to cry. Strange. Even at his mother's funeral he hadn't cried. But when he saw the destruction in Ras al-Satan – the huts that had collapsed, the shattered dishes – his shoulders began to shake"[79]. And to his wife he explains: "I had

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in 1954 from an original and personal angle. The book, which became a best-seller, is still popular among young and old travellers. Another book that is important in the context of our discussion is the novel *Hodu Tohav Oti* (*India Will Love Me*, 2002), by an anthropologist and a sociologist Daria Maoz. Maoz conducted research on the phenomenon of female Israeli backpackers in India and wrote about it in the framework of her doctorate.

[69] See also in this context H. Beer, *El Makom Sheharuah Holekh* (*To Where the Wind Goes*), Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2010; Y. Zur, *Im Tom Ha-Monsoon* (*The Monsoon's End*), Tel Aviv: Sifriat Maariv, 1989, and *Tzarot be-Gan Eden* (*Troubles in Paradise*), Or Yehudah: Kinneret Zmora-Bitan, 2011; A. Gavron, *Min Beveit Ha'almin* (*Sex in the Cemetery*), Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 2000.

[70] Uri Schwartzman's books are particularly notable in this context. Schwartzman is an Israeli physician who worked in remote places in Africa and was captivated by its charms. *Isha shel Ohr Yareach* (*Moonlight Woman*), Kfar Saba: Aryeh Nir, 2002; *White Doctor, Black Gods: Western Spiritual Medicine in the African Jungle* [in Hebrew], Tel Aviv: Aryeh Nir, 2007; and *Kfar Hamechashefot* (*Village of the Witches*), Tel Aviv: Babel, 2012.

[71] I refer, for example, to the impressive way in which Amos Kenan makes of the imagined Australian space in his novella *Machol Cherkesi Besidney* (*A Circassian Dance in Sydney*), which is included in his novella collection: *Tzvivonim Achinu* (*Tulips our Brothers*), Jerusalem: Keter 1989, and to Irit Dankner-Kaufman's moving use of an imagined Australia in her book *Australia* [in Hebrew], Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2005.

[72] I refer here mainly to N. Semel's *Israel* (*IsraIsland*), Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2005. The book was written in the spirit of the vision of Mordechai Manuel Noah, who sought to establish a homeland for the Jewish people on Grand Island, a Native American island near Niagara Falls. The book is in conversation with the visions of Herzl and Baron Hirsch, as well as with a long list of utopian and dystopian works written in this same conceptual field in the last one hundred and fifty years.

[73] S. Horn, *The New Zealand Experience* [in Hebrew], Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2008. Horn wrote another book in the same vein on her experiences in Japan, *The Japanese Experience* [in Hebrew], Tel Aviv: Sifriat Maariv, 1992. China joins the list of exotic lands that serve as spaces of liberation from restrictions of the crowded, noisy, troublesome Israeli space in Yarden Katzir's *Ha-Hatoteret shel Ben ha-Kesar* (*The Hunchback of the Emperor's Son*). Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1988.

[74] E. Nevo, *Neuland*, Or Yehudah: Zmora Bitan, 2011.

[75] Ibid., p. 70.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., pp. 70–71.

one place, Ronnie, you understand? One place I could escape to. I haven't gone there for years. But I knew that if I needed to, the mountains would be there. The water"[80].

Thus, the South American space fills, along with several other sites far from Israel in terms of mentality and geography, the role of space of ultimate freedom, which the Sinai Peninsula once filled on the map of the Israeli national imagination, especially of the young, but also of a certain group of adults. A similar place on the literary map of the national imagination has been occupied since the early seventies by South American literature.

Despite the fact that this is an elusive spiritual process, it is relatively easy to point to the moment that instigated it. I refer to the event of the publication of the Hebrew translation of the monumental work of Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Published in Buenos Aires in 1967, the novel was an astonishing success worldwide. It was translated into Hebrew by Yeshayahu Austridan and 22,500 copies were printed in February 1972. In July of that year, 4,000 additional copies were printed, and five years later 80,000 more copies. In total, approximately 150,000 copies were printed in the nineteen seventies and eighties, an astoundingly staggering number relative to the size of the local community of readers, and certainly for a translated work[81].

In retrospect, it is possible to say that the Israeli literary imagination was thirsty for an intoxicating liquid of the sort Marquez and his South American magical realists offered in abundance[82]. This richly imaginative boundary-breaking, almost hallucinatory literature offered Israeli writers a liberated, joyful, winged,

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[80] Ibid., p. 71.

[81] Eitan Glass wrote in this context that "the literary world in Israel is split into two, more or less, those influenced by Gabriel García Márquez, on the one hand, and those influenced by Keret-Auster-Vonnegut, on the other." See also E. Glass, *Book Review: "Sex in the Cemetery" – Straight and Real* [in Hebrew], *Ynet*, 4 July 2000.

[82] The depth of the need of the Israeli literary establishment for a South American "version" was expressed then, for example, in the establishment of the *Sidrat Latino* (*The Latino Series*), edited by T. Nitzan. It included Hebrew translations of the following books, among others: *The Holy Innocents* by M. Delibes (2003); *Finished Symphony* by A. Monterroso (2003); *On this Night, in this World: A Selection of Poems and Diary Entries* by A. Pizarnik (2005); *The Other Sky* by J. Courtazár (2006); and *The Olive Labyrinth* by E. Mendoza (2007). Another Israeli writer who is devoted to enriching the dialogue between Israeli literature and culture and Central and South America is Yaron Avitov. Avitov published many reports following his travels in South America and visits to book fairs. Lists of books by South American writers were published in Hebrew as well as interviews with South American writers, and so on. In addition, he published literature, concerned, for example, with life in Cuba and South America, including, among others: *Ha Laila Shel Santiago* (*Santiago Night*), Hod Hasharon: Astrolog, 2001; *Yuma*, Binyaminia: Glory, 2004; and *Haorot Shel Miami: Novella Vesipurim* (*The Lights of Miami: Novella and Stories*), Jerusalem: Emda, 2005. In addition, he published three books from Ecuador, to which he added a preface or afterword: *Sipurim Me'emtza Haolam: Antologia shel Sifrut Ecuadorianit* (*Stories from the Middle of the World: An Anthology of Ecuadorian Literature*), ed. C. Aulestia, trans. M. Ben Harosh, Jerusalem: Carmel, 2005; *Yerushalayim Shel Ha-andim: Ecuadorim Kotvim al Yisrael* (*Jerusalem of the Andes: Ecuadorians Write about Israel*), ed. Y. Avitov and J. Passos, trans. L. Frishberg and T. Avgar, Jerusalem: Carmel, 2008 (which also included one of Avitov's stories); and *Indiani al ha-Har: Sipur al Nachlat Damim* (*Indian on the Mountain: An Inheritance of Blood*), trans. Y. Meltzer, Jerusalem: Carmel, 2009. He also published several anthologies of Israeli literature in South America. The books of Nahum Megged also contributed significantly to the intercultural dialogue on the ancient cultures of South America, shamanism, and magic in Central and South America.

and sometimes crazy way out of the terribly serious literature of the West. They found an escape route from social-moralistic realism, the legacy of "Mother Russia," the disciplined, Kafka-style, stern hyperrealism and the intense, sometimes suffocating, stream of consciousness of Faulkner and his ilk. Moreover, the colorful South American family sagas allowed them to "rethink" Jewish historiography from a liberated position, without fear of judges, prophets, rabbis, commissars of all the ideologies of all the Zionist movements, and so on – in short, without fear of the judgmental eyes of the current representatives of "the watchman over the House of Israel." Two books that express this move are: *Zelig Mainz Vega'aguav El ha-Mavet* (*Zelig Mainz and His Longings for Death*, 1985)[83], Itamar Levy's first book, and *Roman Rusi* (*Russian Novel*, 1988)[84], Meir Shalev's first novel (translated to English as *The Blue Mountain*).

In *Zelig Mainz and His Longings for Death*, Itamar Levy wrote an imaginary alternative historiography of the story of the Jewish people. The illogic of the plot, the strange dynasties, and the syntactic tapestry are all in conversation with the school of magical realism, especially with the exciting option offered by Peruvian writer Manuel Skorza in his book *Drums for Rancas* (published in Hebrew as *Trua Lerancas* in 1975)[85].

Meir Shalev's book creatively uses similar artistic tools perfected in the same school. He paints the period of the founding of the Zionist project, the days of the Second Aliyah, with two kinds of brushes, a precise realistic brush and a frenetic imaginary brush. This combination was made possible for him, no doubt, due to his exposure to the works of García Márquez, first and foremost, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which allowed him to probe and thoroughly search the inner workings of Zionist mythology without shattering it[86].

III

The writers whose works I have discussed here drew from the South American province without referring to the hundreds of thousands of Jews who

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[83] I. Levy, *Zelig Mainz Vega'aguav El ha-Mavet* (*Zelig Mainz and His Longings for Death*), Tel Aviv: Sifriat Hapoalim, Hakibbutz Haartzi, 1985.

[84] M. Shalev, *Roman Rusi* (*Russian Novel*), Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1988 (published in English as *The Blue Mountain*, trans. H. Halkin, New York: Harper Collins, 1991).

[85] M. Skorza, *Trua Lerancas* (*Drums for Rancas*), trans. Y. Dayan, Tel Aviv: Dora Publishers, 1975. The book addresses the history of a violent struggle that took place in the Central Andes between poor Andean villagers and wealthy estate owners and other well-to-do people, which ended in the annihilation of the Rancas community by the Peruvian assault forces with the assistance of the estate owners' people.

[86] In this context, see also: S. Shiffman, *On the Possibility of Impossible Worlds: Meir Shalev and the Fantastic in Israel Literature*, in: *Prooftexts* 13.3 (1993), pp. 253–267; R. Alter, *Magic Realism in the Israeli Novel*, in: *The Boom in Contemporary Israeli Fiction*, ed. A. Mintz, Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 1997, pp. 17–34. By the way, the translation to Hebrew of *The Garden of Forking Paths* by Argentinean author Jorge Luis Borges had a real, though modest and subtle, cultural and literary influence in the 1980s and 1990s. J.L. Borges, *The Garden of Forking Paths* [in Hebrew], trans. Y. Bronowsky, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, The Local Council for Culture and Art, and the Project for Translating Exemplary Books, 1975.

went there in the framework of highly significant historical and ideological processes. The author who broke through this egocentric-Zionist concept was Gabriela Avigur-Rotem. Avigur-Rotem was born in Buenos Aires and immigrated with her parents to Israel, but decided, in her first novel, *Mozart Lo Haya Yehudi* (*Mozart Was Not a Jew*, 1992)[87], to grant a renewed mandate to what Harshav called the "new Diaspora".

Avigur-Rotem's novel opens at the outbreak of the Jewish-modernist revolution in the late nineteenth century in the Pale of Settlement in Russia, and from there the vector of desire of its complicated, two-tracked plot is aimed not toward the Land of Israel, and not toward the United States of America, but rather toward Latin America. She unfolds the chronicles of two Jewish immigrant families in early-twentieth-century South America. One of these settles in Buenos Aires, the other in Mar de Oro. Blood ties are formed between the two families, but, in accordance with the best of the traditions of South American magical realism[88], spiritual, mysterious ties are formed as well. The novel's plot is made up of the daily trials and tribulations of raising sons and daughters, educating them, and providing for them. But beneath the sane, realistic-social-psychological textures, a dark and unknown force occasionally emerges, causing night wanderings and performing miracles, wreaking damage, and making music.

The book opens with an attempt to trace the nature of the obscure force that is shaking Aryeh-Yehuda Leib, one of the heads of the two main families in the novel, "from glorified Odessa ... [and] taking hold of him to move him to the other side of the world to seek a dimmed land between sun and shadow at the edge of the anticlinorium of the ocean"[89]. The book follows the growth of Aryeh-Yehuda Leib's magnetic intention to go to South America, and associates it with Abraham's intention to go to the Land of Israel and to the event of the Binding of Isaac, whose meaning Zionist literature transformed from an event that marks the covenant between man and "the place" in the theological sense to an event that marks the covenant between man and "the place" in the territorial sense[90].

> Sometimes he [Aryeh-Yehuda Leib] dares to enter the *biblioteca*, where he finds the great globe leaning on its side, and he reaches out, touches it, and the ball spins seas and lands and mountains and rivers under his finger-tips. **Get thee out**, whispers a voice in his heart, **get thee out**, and the dizzy ball freezes when his fingers rest on a distant land in the shape of a salamander, and his head leans to the side, and his lips pluck the syllables of the sound playing on his tongue, Tierra del Fuego. Go, go, the voice throbs, and the drumming of his finger teaches its lesson: "**Here I am**"[91].

Avigur-Rotem's pioneering literary initiative in *Mozart Was Not a Jew* to try and track the attempt to realise the vector of desire for South America, which had

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[87] G. Avigur-Rotem, *Mozart Lo Haya Yehudi* (*Mozart Was Not a Jew*), Jerusalem: Keter, 1992.
[88] See in this context also Avigur-Rotem's excellent article *On "One Hundred Years of Solitude" by Gabriel García Márquez* [in Hebrew], in: *Akhshav* 39/40 (1979), pp. 351–361.
[89] G. Avigur-Rotem, *Mozart Lo Haya Yehudi* (*Mozart Was Not a Jew*), Jerusalem: Keter, 1992, p. 15.
[90] See also on this matter: Y. Schwartz, *Vantage Point: Issues in the Historiography of Modern Hebrew Literature* [in Hebrew], Or Yehuda: Dvir, 2005. pp. 25–49.
[91] G. Avigur-Rotem, *Mozart Lo Haya Yehudi* (*Mozart Was Not a Jew*), Jerusalem: Keter, 1992, p. 16.

been foiled for decades due to the literary-ideological censorship of the dominant vector of desire, has only recently been followed. Now, in the last several years, three books that address this issue intensively have been published. Two of these were written by Ilan Sheinfeld: *Ma'aseh Be-taba'at* (*A Tale of a Ring*, 2007)[92] and *Keshe ha-Metim Chazru* (*When the Dead Returned*, 2012)[93]. The other is Eshkol Nevo's *Neuland* (2011). These three books, it should be noted, attracted a great deal of public attention.

The Tale of a Ring deals with a sad case in the history of the Jews of South America. The protagonist, Esperanza Ganz, reveals her secret to her daughter: she, her mother, and her grandmother were Jewish prostitutes and their lives were bound by the passing of a magic ring from mother to daughter. The book is based on the true story of the Jewish pimps' organisation Zvi Migdal, which operated in Buenos Aires from 1870 to 1930[94].

When the Dead Returned is a Jewish fantasy of the return of the messiah to the people of Israel – a messiah of the flesh, a messiah against his will, who does not even know what he is going to cause to happen. The book begins with a description of the history of an extensive Jewish family in a town in Poland. It continues with the description of the various incarnations of some of the family members in Argentina and several places in Peru. In one of them, Iquitos, at the edge of the Amazon forest, a baby is born, and the inheritance of his fathers and the influence of the forest turn him into the Messiah. The book ends in the Land of Israel, where, before our eyes, a grotesque version of the end of days is realised.

At the centre of *Neuland* is the story of a father and a son. The son travels to South America to find his father, who has disappeared. The father, shell-shocked from the Yom Kippur War, has given up the path of implementing the Zionist project, and decides to rebuild Herzl's vision precisely in the place that Herzl rejected: the province in Argentina where Baron Hirsch founded his own Jewish outposts.

These three books, all products of the spirit of the transitional period between the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, are linked by several significant similarities. First, all three continue along the path of Avigur-Rotem, return to the starting point, the modern Jewish revolution of the late nineteenth century, and grant a renewed mandate to the South American version of the "new Diaspora." In addition, in all of them, Baron Hirsch's option is rejuvenated after more than a hundred and twenty years of exclusion.

Second, in all three of these novels there is a clear deviation from Avigur-Rotem's path, which provides a realistic and vital fullness to the Jewish life in South America; the settlement option serves primarily as a reflection of the Zionist option, which was implemented in the Eretz Israel and strayed, in the views of Nevo and Sheinfeld, from its original purpose. This phenomenon is particularly evident in *Neuland*, where South American Judaism is represented

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[92] I. Sheinfeld, *Ma'aseh Be-taba'at* (*A Tale of a Ring*), Jerusalem: Keter, 2007.

[93] I. Sheinfeld, *Keshe ha-Metim Chazru* (*When the Dead Returned*), Or Yehudah: Kinneret Zmora-Bitan, 2012.

[94] See also H. Avni, *Unclean: White Slavers in Argentina and in Israel* [in Hebrew], Tel Aviv: Yedioth Aharonoth Books, 2009 and I. Vincent, *Bodies and Souls: The Tragic Plight of Three Jewish Women Forced into Prostitution in the America*s, New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

as "archeological" and nothing more; the father in the novel establishes his "Neuland" community on the ruins of one of Baron Hirsch's settlements. In other words, the South American option has, in these books, the important status (and again, this is especially obvious in Nevo's book) of a "mirror story," a story that makes it possible to represent, using different comparative techniques, the dystopian nature of the main story, the Zionist story, to which it is subordinate and which it serves.

Another common denominator of these books is their authors' use of the toolbox of the magical realism school in order to re-imagine Jewish historiography, in particular its Zionist chapter. In this they follow the footsteps of their literary predecessors: Meir Shalev, Itamar Levy, and Gabriela Avigur-Rotem. I agree with Sheinfeld, who said in this context:

> The subject that interests me in my writing in general, and in this novel in particular, is the construction of Jewish collective memory and the way in which personal memory conducts itself. For me, this matter [the story of the Jewish pimps' organisation, Zvi Migdal] allowed me to sail to the provinces of imagination and magic and attempt to reconnect my life and Israeli existence to provinces that once existed and no longer do[95].

Sheinfeld's comments on the possibility that opened up and allowed him to "sail to the provinces of imagination and magic and attempt to reconnect [his] life and Israeli existence to provinces that once existed and no longer do" are connected to two additional and particularly interesting similarities that link his novels to Eshkol Nevo's *Neuland*.

In Avigur-Rotem, the Russian Pale of Settlement serves as a womb out of which the South American Jewish option bursts. In contrast, in the works of Sheinfeld and Nevo, the South American Jewish option, the one that existed, or more accurately, the one whose existence Sheinfeld restores, and the one that Dori's father reinvents and attempts to implement in an area previously acquired by Baron Hirsch, serves as an alternative womb. In both, the land of the South American province serves as a fertile surrogate mother, having the role of re-germinating the Zionist option, whose growth medium in Israel has been destroyed. The climax in this context is the identity of the connection that becomes clear in the three novels, which were written, we should note, by two Israeli authors, one born in 1960, and the other born in 1971, when we attempt to clarify what for them makes the South American province such a suitable womb.

One factor is, as mentioned above, "historical justice," righting the injustice inadvertently and/or intentionally inflicted on the Jewish settlement in South America, which was marginalized in the Israeli national imagination. Other very significant factors are, as noted, "the borderless space" and magical realism. But these factors, each on its own and all together, could not fulfil their mission in the novels of Nevo and Sheinfeld without the inclusion of another, surprising factor, shamanism.

When we examine the life stories of the protagonists of the two books *Neuland* and *When the Dead Returned*, it turns out that both Dori's father and Solomon, Sheinfeld's messiah, are shaped in the tradition of the genre of

[95] See the site "Text": www.text.org.il/index.php?book=0701051.

the legend, a genre of stories of sanctification that Christianity inherited from the pagan religions, and then cultivated and enhanced[96].

These two protagonists have very different biographical backgrounds; one is a "standard," shell-shocked sabra, the other – the son of a Jewish father who grew up in Poland with a Gentile family and a mother who may be Indian or Jewish. They are sanctified for their roles – messiah and prophet – by means of "qualified" shamanic mentors. These shamans serve as life guides in every respect, and they play the role performed by all such life guides in Zionist utopias and dystopias[97]. This means that the place in Zionist fiction of the life guides, who lead the protagonists to the old-new land with the power of the vision of the prophets and modernist progress (and a perfect example in this regard is David Litvak, the young, educated, enthusiastic Zionist who serves in *Altneuland* as a life guide to Friedrich, the "Diasporic Jew"), is taken over in *Neuland* and *When the Dead Returned*, both of which straddle the line between utopia and dystopia, by shamans, reminiscent more than anything of Don Juan Matus, the old Mexican wizard and sage, who serves as a life guide to the Peruvian-American author Carlos Castaneda in twelve books, two of which, *Journey to Ixtlan* (1972)[98] and *The Lessons of Don Juan* (1969)[99], were translated to Hebrew and enjoyed great success.

Furthermore, the literary historical process that I have presented here also has an interesting circular logic. Herzl signified the Diaspora as *Elend*, a not-place[100], in the framework of which the South American province was a place of death. And now, a hundred years later, the South American province is perceived in Israeli fiction as an alternative to the space of the Land of Israel, a place by means of which Jewish nationalism can survive, live, and thrive.

This power is attributed to the Southern American province due to a strange and fascinating combination of several factors: "virgin space," which replaces the pre-State Land of Israel and the Sinai Desert, an alternative space in which it is possible to talk about the Israeli experience and space indirectly[101], Jewishness that managed to escape, at least partially, the major traumas of the twentieth century, including the Holocaust and Israel's wars, and, as mentioned, a new spirituality, influenced by the power of shamanism, which completely deviates from the Jewish rabbinic tradition.

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[96] A.M. Kleinberg, *Saints*, in: *The Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, Vol. 2, ed. R. Wuthnow, London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 664–667.

[97] See R. Elboim-Dror, *Yesterday's Tomorrow: The Zionist Utopia*, Vol. 1 [in Hebrew], Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 1993, p. 71. See also L. Hadomi, *The Utopian Novel and the Zionist Utopia*, in: *Bikoret Ufarshanut* 13–14 (1979), pp. 131–168.

[98] C. Castaneda, *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan*, New York: Washington Square Press, 1972.

[99] C. Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969.

[100] "And all that time Judaism had sunk lower and lower. And it was an 'Elend' in the full sense of the old German word that had meant 'out-land,'—the limbo of the banished." (Th. Herzl, *Old-New Land*, trans. L. Levensohn, New York: Bloch, 1941 [1902], p. 252.

[101] In an interview with Moshe Natan, when asked why he did not write about Israel in his plays, Nissim Aloni replied: "Who doesn't write about his own place? I don't write about my place? I come from a little neighborhood in Tel Aviv, no? But I cannot write about the Land of Israel directly." See also M. Natan, *Magic against Death: The Theater of Nissim Aloni* [in Hebrew], Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1996, p. 42.

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MAPA WYOBRAŹNI LITERATURY IZRAELSKIEJ: AMERYKA POŁUDNIOWA

Streszczenie

Artykuł prezentuje stadia konstruowania mapy mentalnej twórców literatury izraelskiej. Pierwszy etap tego procesu wyznaczają pisarze-pionierzy wielkiej narracji syjonistycznej od pokolenia Avrahama Mapu do rówieśników Szmuela Josefa Agnona. Usiłowali oni stworzyć filozofię starej-nowej przestrzeni narodowej (*altneuland*) oraz wykreować zamieszkującego ją starego-nowego człowieka (*altneumann*). Drugi etap związany jest z dokonaniami pisarskimi tzw. pierwszych Izraelczyków, czyli pokolenia Amosa Oza. W perspektywie tych autorów miejsce Izraela jako ziemi ostatecznej realizacji suwerennych pragnień narodowych zostaje zastąpione „innymi miejscami" – jak proponował Oz w tytule swojej pierwszej powieści z 1966 r. – usytuowanym gdzieś w nowej-starej przestrzeni Europy. Ostatni etap to twórczość pokolenia Eshkola Nevo, które projektuje miejsca alternatywne, nienaznaczone piętnem przemocy. Autor dowodzi, że podważenie statusu ziemi Izraela jako „miejsca" stworzyło swoistą próżnię w wyobraźni narodowej, przez pewien czas częściowo wypełnioną przez Europę. Na początku lat osiemdziesiątych XX w. pozycja ziemi Izraela jako „miejsca" i pozycja Europy jako „alternatywnego miejsca" zaczęła być jednak zastępowana przestrzeniami do tej pory marginalizowanymi. Jedną z nich była Ameryka Południowa, które zaczęła zajmować coraz ważniejsze miejsce na mapie mentalnej Izraelczyków.

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