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STAMMERING HEBREW: Y.H. BRENNER'S DEFERRED
BEGINNINGS IN THE NOVEL *ME-HATHALA*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the representation of Hebrew speech in Hebrew literature during the first decades of the twentieth century by focusing attention on Yosef Hayim Brenner's novel, *Me-hathala (From the Beginning)*. The novel, situated in a Jewish colony in Palestine, was written at a time when Hebrew was only emerging as a spoken vernacular and the text repeatedly engages the act of stammering. Drawing on current work in dysfluency studies, I demonstrate that such an attention to stammering was a tool employed by Hebrew authors to present an ambivalent relationship to the transforming language. Reading Brenner's novel, which mocks its protagonists' ineloquent Hebrew, the article suggests that Brenner's literary poetics be considered as a poetics of stammering, which demonstrates an iterated enactment of transition and negotiates contradictory drives in the fantasy of a national and linguistic revival.

KEYWORDS: modern Hebrew literature, stammering, dysfluency studies, Yosef Hayim Brenner, language politics

In his book *Stutter*, exploring the phenomenology of speech disorder through a series of encounters with stuttering cultural figures ranging from Hamlet to Porky Pig, Marc Shell dedicates an extensive discussion to biblical Moses. In order to adequately perform his role as the Hebrews' monotheistic legislator and alphabetical scribe, Shell argues, Moses had to be a stutterer.¹ In Shell's account, stuttering serves as a way of negotiating the contradictory divine imperative to reproduce the tablets of the law while at the same

time obeying the prohibition (included within this very law) against graven images. According to Shell, the multilingual Moses had to maintain both the pictographically hieroglyphic Egyptian and the nonwritten Hebrew in order to inscribe the law and in the process formulate the Hebrew alphabet.² The paradoxical nature of this act lies in the contrast between an assumed dynamic, ever-changing oral law and a static, eternal graven image. Shell suggests reading Moses' alleged stutter—for its repetitions, hesitation, and delay—as evidence that captures and displays this very theological tension.

Modern Jewish thought has long been engaged in an ongoing discussion on the relationship between these two forces within Jewish tradition, their opposition as well as proximity, as reflected in the similarity of terms often used to designate this tension, *harut* (engraved law) and *herut* (freedom). The traditional premise that oral and written Torah were given to Moses on Mount Sinai simultaneously evokes various questions regarding the complex dynamics between the two. Could the principle of interpretative innovation, fundamental to oral law, be maintained alongside the concept of a predetermined, rigid written law? And how can these two contradictory systems coexist?

The debates on the revival of the Hebrew language in the beginning of the twentieth century resonate with similar questions, though in a somewhat inverted fashion. Within Hebrew revival literature, early attempts at spoken Hebrew in the Jewish settlement in Palestine (the *yishuv*) were often represented as a rigid, artificial, and mechanical utilization of the language, as opposed to the more dynamic, innovative, and even authentic Hebrew expression, which was attributed to the realm of literature and written texts. This article explores that peculiar inversion of hierarchy between oral and written language. It does so first and foremost through the evocative category of stammering, which recurs throughout early twentieth-century Hebrew literary debates.³ Equipped with the insights of critical dysfluency studies, I show that in the discussions of Hebrew revival, stammering was repeatedly employed by authors and thinkers to capture the intricacies and problematics involved in the early endeavors to insert Hebrew (a largely nonspoken language before the twentieth century) into the realm of everyday life.

In the work of the prominent Hebrew author Yosef Hayim Brenner, stammering takes an interesting turn; it becomes a way to explore modernist poetic possibilities, while indulging in its liminality as a not-yet-fully-formed vernacular. Through a reading of Brenner's novel *Me-hathala* מהתחלה (*From the Beginning*), which portrays the life of Hebrew-speaking youth in a Jewish colony in Palestine, I argue that stammering is presented simultaneously as a playful, frivolous, and bodily enactment of language, entwined with the emerging sexuality of its speakers, and as corruptive and degenerate. Yet

although the narrator in the novel brutally denigrates the young speakers for their artificial Hebrew “stammer,” the rhetoric and poetics of the novel allude to an alternative view of stammer as a critical tool, which exposes an inherent failure of all speech, and thus shatters the illusion of normal talk.

Discussions on the revival of Hebrew in the early twentieth century often pertained to the language's ability to be at once the remnant of an ancient ideal expression of Jewish life and the herald of an agile new Jewish subjectivity. These contradictory facets had to be contained within Hebrew in order for it to be designated as a national language.⁴ And yet, for many Hebrew writers, that liminality was perceived as what generated the enormous poetic potential of the language, and therefore had to be safeguarded. At the turn of the century, revival literature writers had already managed to harness Hebrew for the purpose of creating modernist literature precisely by way of exploring the tensions latent in the idiom's displacement and migration between contexts. Modern Hebrew, which emerged out of a multilingual environment and largely drew from the languages that surrounded it, bore a foreign quality, an alienating dimension that was often exploited in literature as a modernist tool itself. Hence the very “difficulties” in the attempt to revive an ancient language, proved, in fact, to be a creative, productive force in the establishment of Hebrew literature.

For the central modernist writers of the time, however, a danger lurked elsewhere. Beginning in 1887, schools within the *yishuv* started to employ “the natural method” (*ha-shbita ha-tiv'it*), also known as “Hebrew in Hebrew,” namely, using Hebrew pedagogically to teach both Hebrew and a variety of other subjects, while abandoning the more traditional way of teaching Hebrew in translation, mostly via Yiddish.⁵ This was an innovation advocated by the organization *Safa Brura* (Clear Speech) and the Committee of Literature, who declared their aspiration to turn Hebrew into a single, formal language of the *yishuv*, and by extension, into a native language for future generations.⁶ With the second *Aliyah* (the second wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine), teaching Hebrew in Hebrew became even more widespread, accompanied by an active effort to also teach Hebrew to adults.

Within the Hebrew literary discourse, questions and concerns were raised regarding these developments and their potential implications. Could Hebrew become a language of colloquial conversation? Should the language be “forced” into the classroom as a spoken language? Could it be “artificially” renewed and modernized or should it rather evolve “organically,” from within itself? Furthermore, what would happen to Hebrew's poetic registers once the language was put in the service of a nation-state, as the sole language of an entire generation?⁷ The responses to this debate were diverse, often

ambivalent. However, from the perspective of many in the intellectual elite, entrusting the “national treasure” of modern Hebrew—until recently, accessible only to a minority—to a public domain was a threatening precedent. In the discussion about Hebrew’s vitality, colloquial Hebrew spoken in schools was often perceived as an obstacle. Ironically, it was this image of a premature, artificial spoken language, taught by dysfluent teachers (lacking in vocabulary and quick to adopt “foreign” idioms), that was attributed a static mode, while true dynamism was believed to lie in the poetic realm.⁸

This article explores the ways in which Hebrew literature constructed the oral sphere as “stammering.” It begins with a theoretical overview of the critical field of dysfluency studies, followed by a sketch of the typical intellectual debates on the question of the emerging Hebrew speech within the *yishuv*. I later delve into Brenner’s ambivalent approach to Hebrew speech, first in his critical essayistic work, then in his novel *From the Beginning*. Dwelling on Brenner’s poetics, I show how on the one hand, he condemns Hebrew speech for being meager and dysfluent, and on the other hand, he exploits dysfluency via his rhetoric, style, and narration techniques in order to ground his understanding of literary representation and articulate his own response to revival. Finally, I suggest reading Brenner’s poetics as poetics of stammering that display an incongruity between language and self and question the possibility of sincere representation. My reading shows that in early twentieth-century Hebrew revival literature, stammering reflects a contradictory desire to sustain Hebrew’s transitional and transformative state and hinder its fixation as a fluent language of the future nation-state.

Dysfluency Studies and the Critique of Normal Talk

Within the debates on the revival of Hebrew and particularly within Brenner’s oeuvre, stammer is commonly employed as a descriptive category—at times explicitly metaphoric, at other times literal—attempting to capture a particular shared relation to language.⁹ With the spread of Hebrew speech in early twentieth-century Palestine, the revival of Hebrew gradually became a problem that concerned the Hebrew-speaking body. The common descriptions of nascent Hebrew speech as a form of stammer underscored the link between the sociolinguistic transformations of the emerging vernacular and the Zionist wish to transform the Jewish body and generate a new Hebrew subjectivity. It was through Hebrew speech that

Jewish immigrants to Palestine were expected to transform and dismantle their diasporic identity. At the same time, major Hebrew authors who, in their work, represented Hebrew speech as inauthentic or mechanistic and referred to it as “stammer” repeatedly signaled the problematics of these endeavors.

Studies in literary theory that discuss stammer have recently been gathered under the title *Dysfluency Studies*. In a recent edited volume, literary theorist Chris Eagle broadly defines *Dysfluency Studies* as a field that seeks to challenge the normalization of fluent talk and to destabilize rigid notions about language and speech, such as the assumption of mastery over one's language.¹⁰ Various theoretical references to stammer can be found in the work of many prominent thinkers, both within literary studies and beyond. For instance, Gilles Deleuze famously uses this category to characterize a poetic operation, describing stammer as a way of placing language in a state of constant disequilibrium. Deleuze argues that great writers make “language as such stutter,” by way of becoming foreigners in their own language. They thus enact the language's own powers of bifurcation and variation.¹¹

Other thinkers of dysfluency place greater emphasis on the phenomenology of stammer, and point to the many ways in which stammer involves a series of gestures that can be thought of as literary techniques. Shell, himself a stutterer and a polio survivor, mentions the use of synonymy, a transition between languages, or a play of “identity exchange” (playing a role, singing a song, or using some kind of a dummy or proxy), as substitution techniques inevitably employed by stutterers.¹² These substitutions, which are summoned precisely in order to “overcome” stuttering, call into question the coherence of both speech and identity, as well as the very continuity between the two.

Haviva Pedaya similarly refers to stammer as designating a type of split within the self. Pedaya discusses the Hebrew word *gimgum* (stammer/stutter), pointing to its distinct four-letter root and breaking it down to the two syllables *gam ve-gam* (literally: both). Stammer, she argues, embodies at once two extreme states of the self. It opens and reflects an experience of otherness within the self, a different utterance that traverses one's “own” speech, causing an interruption, and in so doing also pointing to the mechanism and raw material of speech itself.¹³

This interruptive quality of stammer can be said to have a performative effect. Not only does it surface the bodily dimension of speech, but it underscores the difference between language and the subjects who speak it. In her discussion of the performative, Judith Butler contends that the possibility of an act or an agency within language is dependent precisely upon that difference. Following Shoshana Felman, Butler argues that every

speech carries with it an incongruity of the speaking body, a discrepancy between body and speech in which “the body exceeds the speech it occasions; and speech remains irreducible to the bodily means of its enunciation.”¹⁴ Stammer illustrates that discrepancy in the extreme. The bodily excess that stammer entails summons the possibility for a performative utterance that exceeds the limitations of its prior context and may assume new significations.

In an essay dedicated to glossolalia, Michel de Certeau invokes similar notions. According to de Certeau, glossolalia (which is characterized by largely unintelligible speech that mimics coherent speech) isolates and enhances a phenomenon that is in fact inseparable from any ordinary conversation: “bodily noises, quotations of delinquent sounds, and fragments of others’ voices punctuate the order of sentences with breaks and surprises.”¹⁵ De Certeau locates this “waste” of language in the realm of conversation, which, he argues, “reopens the surface of discourse to these *noises of otherness*.”¹⁶ He thus focuses on the kind of speech that is open to an addressee. Some studies on speech disorder indeed stress the fact that stammer necessarily involves an interpersonal interaction; that it is, in fact, an experience shared by both the speaker and the hearer.¹⁷

However, de Certeau also points out that glossolalia authorizes a space in which a simulation of speech is produced. It inaugurates speech as imitation, a repetitive enactment of the very transition from muteness to speech.¹⁸ The same thing can be said about stammer. Stammer could be read as a type of theater embodying a *beginning to speak*, and marking simultaneously a lack of words or an inability to speak, a need to speak, and the very passage between the two. The repetitions, breaks, prolonged syllables, and superfluous sounds manifested in stammer gesture to this type of iterated beginning. They crack the surface of ordinary conversation, discharge language of its communicative attribution, and point to the imitative dimension of speech.

In Brenner’s novel *From the Beginning*, the representation of dysfluency often conveys such breaks in signification that undermine the assumed normality of speech, as well as the attempts to normalize the Hebrew language. Stammer, my reading of the novel suggests, not only captures early hesitant attempts to “revive” a nonspoken language. Nor does it function solely as a derogatory name expressing the revulsion of an intellectual elite from an irresponsible, premature attempt to revive Hebrew speech. It rather stands for an experience of an iterated enactment of transition, negotiating contradictory drives within the attempt of a national and linguistic revival.

The Chains of Hebrew Speech: Early Responses to "Hebrew in Hebrew"

Before attending to Brenner's complex relationship with spoken Hebrew, it is important to examine some other common reactions to the early appearances of colloquial Hebrew speech. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the languages spoken in Palestine were diverse, ranging from Arabic, Yiddish, and Ladino, to Russian, German, and French. With the first waves of Zionist immigration to Palestine, however, and among the language wars and the political linguistic debates of the time, calls to limit the cultural scope of the Jewish settlement in Palestine to the Hebrew language were widespread among Zionist leadership, and Hebrew was increasingly adopted as a language of pedagogy and of the formal Zionist institutions of the *yishuv*.¹⁹

At the same time, among the intellectual circle of Hebrew writers who indeed advocated for the revival of Hebrew, doubts were cast in regard to the notion of a strictly Hebrew pedagogy, and the gradual increase of Hebrew speakers throughout the *yishuv* was often perceived as a curse rather than a blessing. Many writers strongly objected to the Ben-Yehudian approach, which advocated expanding the language by way of systematically instituting new vocabulary. Central figures, such as Ahad Ha'am, Mikha Yosef Berdichevsky, Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, and Hayim Nahman Bialik, openly criticized this technique (although for different reasons and from differing perspectives), expressing their reservations about Ben-Yehuda's "factory of words."²⁰

In 1893, Ahad Ha'am published the second essay in his series of essays "Emet me-erets Israel" "אמת מארץ ישראל" (A Truth from Erets Israel). Like his first essay in the series (which in 1891 introduced to the Zionist population in Eastern Europe the existence of an "Arab problem," assessing the stakes of Palestinian Arab presence for the Jewish settlement in Palestine), the second essay contains the structure of an assumed gap between expectations, as they appear "from afar," and a truth rooted in the land, revealing a different narrative:

From afar, it is all beautiful and pleasant. But as one hears in his own ears how teachers and students alike stammer together, for lack of words and accents, one senses immediately that this "speech" will not be able to awaken in the heart of either the speaker or the listener, any respect or love for the limited language; and the young mind of a child . . . would sense, with even greater strength, the artificial chains of Hebrew speech coerced upon him.²¹

Ahad Ha'am's view—which framed Hebrew speech as a pale, reduced, and prosaic version of Hebrew, one that had a restrictive effect on its young speakers—was echoed by many who considered themselves active participants in the project of revival. Even the greatest adversaries of Ahad Ha'am's approach to Hebrew literature, such as Berdichevsky, shared similar sentiments when it came to the newly evolved Hebrew speech. Berdichevsky strongly argued against the pedagogical method of “Hebrew in Hebrew,” accusing its advancers of completely abandoning any trace of “the language's spirit.” He understood this sort of interpretation of revival as terribly misguided, and perceived spoken Hebrew as artificial, disconnected from its origin and utterly lifeless: “Everything that has grown within the realm of the Hebrew language and is all-Hebrew is lacking a living heart and living words. It lacks the thought of life and the ways of life; nothing but birds speaking the language of man.”²² Berdichevsky supported, instead, the kind of method that prevented students from immersing themselves in Hebrew.

Whereas pedagogues within the *yishuv*, such as Yitzhak Epstein, maintained that the only reasonable way to teach Hebrew was first to establish Hebrew speech, and only then move on to read classic Hebrew texts,²³ Berdichevsky insisted that in Hebrew alone, the book must be learned first. This was the only way in which the true spirit of the language could be captured:

Those people who learned Hebrew without “methods,” without systems, those who learned to know the Hebrew book before learning the Hebrew language and who were remote from Hebrew in Hebrew, they are the ones who later penetrated into the language's depth and into the language's spirit.²⁴

In other words, a certain distance between the language and its users had to be maintained. A true recognition of Hebrew entailed struggling through the classic text without learning, first, to enunciate basic Hebrew words. For Berdichevsky, the language had to remain foreign, at least to some extent.

Epstein found this approach to be bizarre and unnatural. For him, teaching Hebrew in Hebrew was fundamental to the future of the nation, as it meant bringing Jews closer to the realm of practical life by abolishing the “iron wall,” which stood between them and their language, and thus turning what used to be a “foreign language” into a familiar, living tongue that could be used naturally and immediately.²⁵ Berdichevsky, like some other Hebrew writers at the time, believed this familiarity to be destructive.

Whereas Epstein maintained that stammering was a mere phase in the process of learning Hebrew in Hebrew (“A few weeks will pass, and your students will start to stammer in the taught language, several months will pass—and they shall speak”),²⁶ Berdichevsky warned that such Hebrew stammering would lead to the decay of thought, and would eventually result in muteness:

As the boy wishes to utter to his friend . . . one of his thoughts, or depict a vision that impressed his soul, and he lacks the words to express it all, he begins to stammer, etc. And when he realizes his work was in vain, he smothers his thought and restrains himself from speaking. Thus, his thought gradually atrophies and his speaking competence turns mute.²⁷

The vocabulary of stammer, muteness, speech disorder, and silence, around which this debate so often centers, is crucial to the understanding of the notions at work within the discourse of Hebrew revival. As we begin to discern in Berdichevsky, stammering Hebrew functions as a twofold figure. It renders a flawed reality and at the same time demands a suspension of or break in the ongoing effort to turn everyday spoken Hebrew into concrete reality. In a performative manner, the description of spoken Hebrew in Palestine as a form of stammer affixes Hebrew speech as insufficient and questions its authenticity while demanding its delay.

Brenner's Tongue and the Question of Spoken Hebrew

Brenner, an influential author, editor, translator, and a renowned cultural leader, was both an active participant and a witness to the processes of the colloquialization of Hebrew. Upon first immigrating to Palestine in 1909, he was rather skeptical about Hebrew's prospects for becoming a spoken language.²⁸ In the years to follow, however, he noticed the sociolinguistic changes that the *yishuv* had undergone, especially due to the intensifying efforts to turn Hebrew into a formal language. Despite recognizing this change, Brenner never seems to have fully embraced the spread of spoken Hebrew throughout the *yishuv*. Whenever referencing spoken Hebrew in his essays, he either stresses the fact that, for the majority of Jews living in Palestine, Hebrew was not a natural spoken language (as opposed to the vernaculars of Yiddish, Arabic, Russian, or Ladino), or else he highlights

the contrast between the supposedly large community of Hebrew speakers and the disappointing lack of great Hebrew literature produced within the *yishuv*. In an essay published in 1913, he asserts:

Although, supposedly, one cannot deny—and I indeed don't deny—that Hebrew speech and Hebrew literature have greater presence here [than in the Jewish centers in Europe] . . . when we ask for the essence, the internal, the roots, upon which a language and a literature are fed and from which they draw life—the difference is not so significant. The language of those living in the land, of the prime, simple immediate life, of everyday life . . . this language is not Hebrew.²⁹

In explicitly admitting that Hebrew is not the language of everyday life within the *yishuv*, Brenner alludes to the issue of misrepresentation of linguistic reality in Hebrew literature. As Allison Schachter argues, Brenner did not join the Zionist efforts to ground Hebrew as a natural language of the *yishuv*. Instead, his work underscored the many tensions and difficulties involved in the attempt of Yiddish-speaking immigrants to adapt to the linguistic demands of the *yishuv's* formal institutions.³⁰

It is clear from the quoted paragraph that while seemingly dismissing the binary opposition between Jewish life in “Erets Israel” and in the Jewish centers in Europe, Brenner in fact validated this opposition by rendering the “Erets Israeli” failure unique. Although the difference between the essential cultural production in Palestine and in Europe was, according to Brenner, not as significant as many tried to present it, he nevertheless implied that it *should have been* different. For Brenner, the impact of such insufficient Hebrew literature—a lack of both a satisfactory readership and a worthy literary production—was much greater within the discursive realm of the *yishuv*. So much so that in an earlier essay he warned that “even the Hebrew writers from abroad who come hither might turn mute.”³¹ For within the landscape of “Erets Israel,” the diasporic experience and the unfulfilled potential of Hebrew creativity were no longer tolerable. “Here,” Brenner argued, a new, lively expression was necessary, and if the Hebrew writer could not attain it, if he “cannot find a place to renew his youth—he better sit alone and be silent.”³²

But Brenner was critical not only of the lack of great Hebrew literature and Hebrew speech in Palestine. He also rejected the type of Hebrew that *was* spoken there: “Only men of letters and younger students speak Hebrew sometimes. And their Hebrew, for the most part, lacks any natural phrases of a living tongue. Foreign, insipid Hebrew, that lacks any spirit, any basis in

the soul, any intimacy.”³³ Even when Hebrew was actually spoken, Brenner found it to be insufficient. His description of this restricted speech echoes his brutal criticism of the Jerusalem literary style (associated primarily with the Ben-Yehuda family), which was found in most daily Hebrew newspapers published in Palestine at the time. In both cases, Brenner considered the Hebrew that was apparently most common in the *yishuv* to be inauthentic, unnatural, and detached from its origins. It follows, then, that in Brenner's view, natural, living spoken Hebrew did not stem from the people who actually spoke it. The notion of the “natural,” or “authentic” seems to have lay beyond the everyday experience of ordinary people. Hence, according to this logic, when it came to a literary representation of spoken Hebrew, the dialogues in the book were considered more authentic and genuine than the language heard on the streets.

This precise idea is echoed by Ya'akov Fikhman, who claims that Brenner's writing contains “perhaps the most *natural* Hebrew at a time that preceded the Hebrew speech.”³⁴ Fikhman asserts that Brenner's literary style expressed “a thirst for the *ephemeral* utterance, for the first slip of the tongue he happened to encounter, provided that it will contain the vivaciousness of a colloquial *conversation*.”³⁵ On the one hand, Fikhman stresses that Brenner was highly attentive to spoken tongues and his work often sought to mimic them. On the other hand, what Fikhman recognizes as the vivacious and ephemeral in Brenner's style somehow surpasses the realm of everyday conversation. The resulting “Brennerian tongue,” as Fikhman calls it, seems to involve an elusive negotiation whereby the author's own vernacular traverses concrete spoken Hebrew, absorbs it, and at the same time transcends it. Hence, the notion of “natural Hebrew” is molded as an ideal that is beyond the reach of the public, beyond everyday speech, and something that must be given to the people from above.³⁶

We can therefore say that after arriving at what *should have been* the promised land of Hebrew creativity but which was in fact revealed to be yet another figuration of the diaspora, Brenner did not become “mute.” Instead, he found “a place to renew his youth” via a simultaneous appropriation and creation of what was gradually becoming the ambiguous concept of an authentic, natural Hebrew tongue. The nature of this unattainable authentic tongue whose trace might only be found in literature remains a question. In what follows, we shall further explore its aesthetic and ethic principles, as well as its embodiment or absence. For that purpose, it is imperative to turn to Brenner's literary work, where his excessive sensitivity to accents, speech impediments, and different forms of talk are embodied in their full complexity.

Brenner's ambivalent relation to spoken Hebrew is perhaps most evident in the short novel *From the Beginning*, a late work published posthumously. The novel is often associated with Brenner's experiences as a teacher.³⁷ Despite his reservations concerning spoken Hebrew, in 1915, Brenner accepted a position teaching literature at the Hebrew high school Gimnasya Herzeliya in Tel Aviv. The institution was renowned for its Zionist tendencies and its devotion to the "Hebrew in Hebrew" method.³⁸ For a couple of years, Brenner taught eighth and ninth graders. When he later wrote *From the Beginning*, he attempted to incorporate into the novel some of his students' awkward, colloquial Hebrew phrases. Within the vast arena of Brenner scholarship, which has devoted a lot of attention to novels such as *Mi-kan u-mi-kan* מִכָּאן וּמִכָּאן (*From Here and There*) and *Shkhol ve-kishalon* שְׁכוּל וְכִשְׁלוֹן (*Breakdown and Bereavement*), *From the Beginning* remains relatively neglected. I argue, however, that this late novel provides a particularly compelling example of Brenner's complex attitude toward the Hebrew speech that was gradually evolving within the *yishuv*.

From the Beginning: "Youngsters with No Language At All"³⁹

The novel *From the Beginning* is set in a Jewish colony in Palestine, where a group of students at a Hebrew high school live and study in an exclusively Hebrew environment. The narrative follows the course of one school year, from late summer to early spring, and revolves around the tensions between boys and girls, students and teachers, and "immigrants" and "native residents."⁴⁰ We soon learn that those referred to by the narrator as "native residents" are neither Sephardic Jews of the old *yishuv* nor Palestinian Arabs, but rather the sons and daughters of Eastern European Jews who are themselves recent immigrants to Palestine. Hence the novel forms a distinction between "older" and "newer" immigrants, whereas other social groups (mostly those of non-Europeans) are pushed to the margins. At the same time, the "nativeness" of those who are referred to as "natives" is called into question.

The focus on high school students who symbolize the nascent society of a new Jewish community in Palestine stands out in Brenner's literary corpus. Turning his gaze from the common figure of frustrated European Jewish intellectuals, who have abandoned their traditional background in favor of a modern secular world, in this late work, Brenner introduces to his readers a subsequent generation, a supposedly new, early embodiment of a Zionist Hebrew subjectivity grounded in Palestine.⁴¹ Unlike his typical protagonists, these characters

are significantly younger and spend the formative years of their adolescence in a Jewish settlement in Palestine, immersed in the Hebrew language.

Indeed, the “older” immigrants are characterized by having Hebrew names (Evyatar, Hulda, Drori) and by speaking no language other than Hebrew. The “newer” immigrants, on the other hand, have ironic names, such as Ben Zion (son of Zion) and Nehama “Litayit” (Nehama the Lithuanian, or “Lithuanian consolation”), and their Hebrew is far from being fluent. These, for the most part, are youngsters who immigrated to Palestine themselves, leaving their families behind.

The narrative opens with Ben Zion, a devoted student who at the beginning of the school year aims to excel in school. Soon after, however, he announces his wish to become a laborer, but then quickly changes his mind and acts as an aspiring poet and literary editor. Ben Zion wanders between different “stations” in a sequence that could be considered a typical experience of a second *aliyah* immigrant. Yet in childishly mimicking this experience, swiftly shifting from one aspiration to another, Ben Zion also ridicules and parodies the Zionist immigrant archetype. Mimicry emerges as an important trope throughout the novel. To the eyes of the external narrator, the young protagonists enact a theater of adulthood. Their behavior is often described in terms of imitation or mechanical repetition.

The novel largely explores what the narrator calls “their beginnings,” marked first and foremost by their evolving sexuality. Sexuality and gender are portrayed in the text as unstable grounds of confusion and torment, where experiment, imitation, and violence are in constant play. In a Purim masquerade, for instance, the 13-year-old Yael, who is not wearing any costume, spontaneously decides to disguise herself as a boy. The nuance of her boyish look attracts Ben Zion’s attention. Similarly, Nehama the Lithuanian, whose appearance (1749) “עושה משום מה רושם של גיורת” (“leaves the impression of a proselyte”) keeps repeating verses from the canonic modern Hebrew literature and copying them into her diary, while changing the gender of the narrators from male to female.⁴²

Another dimension of “beginning” is revealed in the protagonists’ awkward, clunky Hebrew speech, which is a central theme in the novel. Their speech demonstrates a beginning to speak Hebrew, as well as a beginning of a new stage in the life of Hebrew as a modern, spoken vernacular. Throughout the novel, sexuality seems to be embedded in the practice of Hebrew speech. Speaking Hebrew albeit stammering it out is inherently intertwined with an expression of Eros. Like sexuality, spoken Hebrew too appears to be a site of confusion and fluidity. However, while often a source of frustration, it simultaneously functions as a fertile plain for experiment and play.

Hebrew appears to be “lacking” in vocabulary and grammar, and both students and teachers often hesitate and get entangled in their own clumsy choice of words. This provides the youngsters with a repertoire of possibilities to charge the language with erotic overtones, and their dialogues are filled with sexual references. Here is a clownish dialogue that takes place in geography class. One student imitates the geography teacher, while another interferes and exploits the confusion of terms (the uncertainty as to which verb and preposition are appropriate) to insert a “dirty joke”:

– תור-פ-יה... האירופית?.. גובלת?.. בין... מוטלת?.. על... מונחת?.. עם... הים השחור!
 – שוכבת! – מתערב דרורי.
 – עם?..
 – הים השחור!
 – עזוב! – גוער בו בן-ציון. (1747)

(“Tur-ke-y . . . The European? She [Turkey] borders? Between . . .
 Cast? Upon . . . Placed? With . . . The Black Sea!”

“She *lies!*” Drori interferes.

“With?”

“The Black Sea!”

“Cut it out!” Ben Zion tells him off.)

The student Drori uses the grammatical gender of the word “Turkey”⁴³ to allude to a nonsensical image, in which the “feminine” Turkey has sex with the “masculine” black sea. Elsewhere, Yael unsuccessfully recites a poem by the national poet Bialik. Her mistake is given a sexual interpretation:

– רימון-פז... יש לי... ואין מי... – הסתבכה בשיר.
 – יש או אין? – שאל דרורי – אני צריך לדעת!..
 – ואין מי שיברך עליו! – קראה יעל כמתעקשת.
 – ואת רוצה לכבד אותי... בברכה? – מצמץ דרורי בעיניו – אני מזחנך לך! – גמר
 בלגלוג של ארס. (1790)

(“A pomegranate bright . . . I have . . . And there is no one . . .”

She got entangled in the poem.

“There is or there isn’t?” Drori asked, “I need to know!”

“And there is no one to bless over it!” Yael cried, insisting.

“And you want to give me the honor . . . with a blessing?”

Drori batted his eye lids, “I pine for you!” He concluded with a poisonous scorn.)

Confusion and dysfluency are exploited in these dialogues not only for the purpose of joking or teasing. The youngsters tend to dwell on their own choice of words, turn each word, and examine it closely, taste and unpack it, while stumbling and stammering in their conversations. This constant play often leads to awkward compounds, but at the same time it signifies possibilities of expression that appear to be almost beyond the reach of the experienced and well-articulated narrator.

It is perhaps surprising to discover that Brenner, who worked in the Gimnasya Herzeliya only for two years, kept with him a myriad of personal letters, diaries, and even notepads and scraps of papers written by his former students. These, for the most part, were not addressed to the esteemed teacher, but were instead personal property of the students, which somehow found their way into Brenner's archives, and, as it were, became an important resource for him as he was working on the novel.⁴⁴

While Brenner seems to have been fascinated by these experimental forms of speech, the narrator in the novel expresses deep suspicion toward such spontaneous linguistic behavior, and it is often presented as bearing destructive implications. About halfway through the novel, the reproaching intervention of an external voice is suddenly heard. The interruptive speech of a narrator, who up to that point remained a silent observer, presents the characters' spoken Hebrew in a new, severe light:

החבריה של אביתר היא דוברת עברית, השפה השוררת בבית-הספר, אבל היא אינה דוברת; היא מגמגמת. זוהי חבריה של צעירים אלמים כמעט, צעירים בלי לשון כלל. יוצאים מפהם מיכנית איזו צלצולי הברות, הדומים לעברית החדשה, אבל בלי קשר, בלי טעם. מלה עברית, שיודעים אותה, משתמשים בה, בה בלבד או בצירוף עם עוד מלה, אבל מבלי לבנות מן המשפטים הקטועים שום מאמר שלם. התפתחות... בשביל ההתפתחות... לא היה התפתחות... הזמן שהתחיל ההתפתחות... (1777)

(Evyatar's gang speaks Hebrew, the language spoken at school. But it doesn't speak: it stammers. This is a gang of almost mute youngsters, youngsters with no language at all. Their mouths mechanically evoke chimes of syllables, similar to New Hebrew, but disconnected, distasteful. A Hebrew word, if they know it, they use it, alone or joined with another word, but without being able to structure from these fractured sentences a complete expression. Development . . . For development . . . No development . . . The time when development began . . .)

In this moment, the narrator's scrutinizing gaze and heightened attentiveness to the youth's garbled expression are revealed for the first time.

He is akin to an ethnographer recording the behavior of tribe members. The group of youth is utterly foreign to him, and his description is stricken with dismay. The narrator names the collective pathology of this group: “stammer.”⁴⁵ His sudden appearance in the middle of the narrative and his severe tone serve as a reminder that beyond the playful atmosphere of adolescence what is at stake here is the future of the Zionist vision.

The group’s stammer is presented as a type of social disease; clearly a pathological disorder, but at the same time almost a cultural state of mind. More than an individual psychological struggle, stammer is at its full destructive force when they all come together as a group: “כל אחד ואחד מהם כשהוא לעצמו הוא או בעל-נפש קצת (לעתים רחוקות), או רגיל, או גרוע. ואולם כולם ביחד, בצותא, ובפרט במילולם היעברי, הם עושים רושם של אי-חשיבות גמורה.” (1781) (“Each one of them on its own is sometimes slightly a person of quality (seldom), or ordinary, or bad. However, all of them together, and particularly in their ‘Hebrew’ mumbling, make the impression of complete unimportance.”). According to the narrator, the youngsters’ stammer is devoid of any significant content. Stressing the potential multiplicity that lies in each and every word, their use of the language disrupts meaning and sabotages the fluency of communication. But the narrator also implies that the Hebrew they converse in gets them further and further away from an ideal pure language, a language whose words bear the weight of presence. Yet, interestingly, this emptiness—(1778) “הדלות הנוראה בביטוי” (“the dreadful poverty of expression”), as he calls it—is somehow the result of a movement of surplus proximity, which once again echoes an erotic implication. Here too, a discussion that at first glance appears to revolve around the question of Hebrew speech very quickly turns into a manifesto against reckless sexual behavior. The narrator shifts between the two issues almost seamlessly, complaining that while the youth’s language skills are utterly lacking, their “inexpressible emotions” are much too developed: (1779) “הספר זר – אבל המיניות שבו דלוייה, דלוייה עד הטיפה האחרונה.” (“The book is foreign—but the sexuality it contains is exhausted, sucked dry to the very last drop.”).

The narrator does not seem to differentiate between the youngsters’ stammering Hebrew speech and their faulty relationship to Hebrew literature. On the one hand, he accuses them of not being able to penetrate the language of Hebrew poetry, asserting that זרה לנכרים “המילה העברית נשארה” (1778) (“The Hebrew word remained foreign to these gentiles: it doesn’t connect, doesn’t elevate, doesn’t say a thing.”). On the other hand, he attacks the hasty, premature immediacy reflected in their affinity to the language and to their peculiar spoken tongue. The narrator describes an ongoing struggle between the students and the

teachers, in which רוצים להשתמש בכוח נתנית הדיפולום עד כמה שידם מגעת, למנוע את הנתינה עד כמה שאפשר, דורשים 'בחינות', 'ידיעות', 'חזרות', 'בשעה שהם, המגמגמים ("The teachers want to fully exercise their authority and withhold giving a diploma for as long as they can: demanding 'exams,' 'learnings,' 'repetitions,' while they, the stammerers, want to 'tear the ropes'—that is, to unleash the chains)."⁴⁶ Paradoxically, it is the teachers who demand "repetitions" and delay, while the actual "stammerers" are the ones described as breaking loose.

When the narrator's speech about the youngsters' Hebrew stammer diverts into the issue of their sexual deviance, he cites a few examples of their literary interest, including some highly misogynistic remarks (supposedly translated from Russian literature): "את האהבה צריך לחמוס בכוח! בלי שום פקפוקים, בלי גישוש באצבעות, לא להסתובב כחתול מסביב לשומן חם, לא! בגאון ובהכרה. (Love should be robbed forcefully! No hesitations, no fingers groping, no hovering like a cat around the warm fat, no! It should be overcome with pride and recognition.>"). These are the types of literary sayings that captivate the imagination of the youngsters. They are defiantly spontaneous, decisive, and violent, as opposed to Brenner's former protagonists, who are typically described as hesitant and weak. When later in the novel Ben Zion wants to kiss Yael, he is torn between his hesitant tendencies and the will to overpower. He ends up kissing her anyway, leaving her with an ambivalent feeling of mixed thrill and emptiness, described in the very same words used to capture the youths' Hebrew stammer: "בלי טעם" ("meaningless"/"distasteful").⁴⁷

Hypersexual desire is devalued in the narrator's speech. But what is truly disastrous, he asserts, is the role verbal depiction plays in stimulating this desire. The real disaster is located in the realm of language: "המיניות שבכתב . . . מסייעה לדבר ומחדשת את הדבר, מפנה את הלב מדברים אחרים, מעוררת לחיקוי . . . heightens and assists, diverts the heart from other things, evokes mimicry and takes life away." (1780). An assumed appropriate balance is distorted through this immediate relation to language, to literature and to sexuality. The youngsters are awkwardly straightforward, but at the same time cannot obtain control of their spoken language. Their linguistic behavior appears as an empty, mechanical repetition, which is simultaneously theatrical and eccentric.⁴⁸

Throughout the entire narrative, there appears to be a recurring tension between this movement of immediacy and surplus proximity, and the request to delay and suspend, or keep a safe distance. The latter is mostly demonstrated by the immigrant students, particularly in the behavior of Nehama the Lithuanian, an outsider to this group. Nehama, with her appearance

“of a proselyte” and her deep interest in Hebrew literature, stays away from the “gang” and does not participate in their shenanigans. She is introverted and barely ever speaks: שִׁתְקוּנָתָהּ שֶׁל נַחְמָה נּוֹבַעַת כְּאִילוּ מִתּוֹךְ פֶּחַד לַחֲלֹל אֶת קְדוּשַׁת הַדִּבּוּר” (1749). (“Nehama’s silence seems to derive from fear of desecrating the sacredness of speech.”).

The rest of the students, however, that is, “Evyatar’s gang,” are wild and obscene. Those “natives,” born in Palestine, who speak no language other than Hebrew but whose Hebrew is equal to “no language at all” are particularly troubling for the narrator. Their Hebrew stammer is spread and scattered not only in speech, but also in endless notes and scraps of papers constantly passed from one to the other.⁴⁹ A sense of careless defilement accompanies their dialogues and actions.

The native Drori (whose name, derived from the Hebrew *dror*, means freedom), for instance, inadvertently inserts Arabic and Russian words into his colloquial Hebrew: לְמִרְוֵת הַיּוֹתוּ מִיִּלִּידֵי הָאָרֶץ, לְמַד מִפִּי הַתְּלִמִּידִים הַגְּדוּלִים יוֹצֵאִי “(Although he is one of the natives, he had learned from the older students, the ‘Muscovites,’ some Russian words, which he pronounces in an Arabic accent.”). (1753). The narrator describes this native Israelite’s expression as “foreign,” and his appearance as “דּוֹמֵה לַגְּרוּזִינִי אוֹ אֶרְמֵנִי קָטָן שֶׁנִּשְׁבַּח בֵּין עַם אֲחֵר.” (1768). (“Resembling a Georgian, or a small Armenian held captive among another people.”). Drori’s sense of liberation, which allows him to appropriate both Russian and Arabic, is presented as unconstrained and dangerous. Having been born in Palestine, he lacks the type of cautious inhibition that seems to largely determine the behavior of the immigrant students. The narrator’s remarks make it clear that he despises Drori. Early on, it is said that (1750) “הַמִּזְרָח נוֹתֵן בּוֹ אוֹתוֹתָיו אוֹתוֹת” (“The east leaves its marks on him”), a negative characteristic in Brenner’s often ethnocentric idiom. Drori, as the entire “native” gang, is an embodiment of what Brenner imagines as the inevitable—somewhat startling—outcome of a Zionist, Hebrew-speaking settler society grounded in Middle Eastern Palestine. Here it becomes clear that what Brenner considers a perverted, surplus proximity to language, designates—at least to some extent—a proximity to both Arabic and “the east.”

And yet the fact that “the east” leaves its marks on Drori also reveals that the narrator surely does not perceive this so-called native as “an eastern.” Drori, the son of the former East-European Yeshiva student Mendel Frieman, represents a type of mixed identity—neither “eastern,” not quite “western,” a settler who is not an immigrant. What mostly differentiates him from characters such as Nehama and Ben Zion are his exaggerated

self-confidence and sense of ownership that conceal a potential violence, at once despicable and alluring for the characters that surround him.

Up until here, the binary opposition traced throughout the novel is typical of Brenner's work: an opposition between the cautious and the careless; the silent and the boisterous; those who are weak and ask to delay, repeat, maintain distance; and those who act powerfully and exercise ownership. It is largely agreed among Brenner scholars that for Brenner, truth usually lies on the side of the former, that is, with the uncertain and the hesitant, and with what is whispered, stammered, or can hardly be put into words.⁵⁰ And yet, in *From the Beginning*, we may discern a slight deviation from that familiar dichotomy. First, there is a sense of contradiction in the kind of accusation directed at the students. While self-assured, confident speech is usually a clear notorious characteristic in Brenner's conception, here the students are attacked for *not* truly owning or penetrating the language. But even more striking is the fact that in *From the Beginning*, both sides of the divide seem to lead to a very similar end. All attempts to speak Hebrew fluently result in stammer. Hesitation and delay prompt stammer just as does the pretension to speak the language confidently, without any hindrances. As fluent Hebrew speech ceases to be attainable, we are left with nothing but a Hebrew stammer. And while fragmentary tongue is usually elevated in Brenner's work, in *From the Beginning*, the narrator presents the students' stammering Hebrew as a distorted trace, an echo of a language that is said to be full and complete but is never actually revealed as such.

Throughout the novel, communication never appears smooth or goes unnoticed. The pathos attributed to the youths' utterances has to do precisely with that opaque dimension of communication. Very often, words themselves become a source of frustration for them. Yet, for the most part, it is not the meaning of a word, but rather the elusiveness of meaning that causes them suffering: "מה ההבדל בין 'צער' ו'יגון'?. . . היא מדברת ומדברת, וגם היא גם בן-שיחתה: "What is the difference between *sadness* and *sorrow*? . . . She talks and talks and neither she nor her addressee understand clearly the meaning of her words."); "ה'פרצדנט' – . . . מילה סתומה. . . שאת פירושה היתה צריכה לשאול מבן-ציון לו דיברה אתו – קילקל את עולמה." (1808). ("The 'precedent'. . . this ambiguous word—she would have asked Ben Zion for its meaning were they still talking—ruined her world."); (1813) "נ'טרפו מלים במוחו" ("Words got intermingled in his mind."). Words act, but their force is enigmatic precisely because their meaning cannot be pinned down or controlled. Speech therefore reflects a dissonance from the self.

As previously mentioned, the category of stammer is deployed in the novel to capture a collective experience; a shared relation to language. This relation impoverishes speech, deprives it of its usual privileges. Devoid of its precedence, speech is rendered in the novel as necessarily imitative (and therefore derivative) activity. Spoken language is seen as neither authentic nor natural. On the contrary, in the very pretention to speak freely, the youths' gestures are revealed as *already* mechanical. As Pedaya argues, stammer constantly points to the mechanism of speech. While stammer reflects the disassociation of language from the self, it also materializes language, displacing speech from the sphere of the spirit to that of the body and the senses.

Within Western thought, features such as the bodily and the material are traditionally attributed to writing as a category opposed to speech. In *Of Grammatology*, Jacques Derrida repeatedly points to this recurring dichotomy: "writing, the letter, the sensible inscription, has always been considered by Western tradition as the body and matter external to the spirit, to breath, to speech, and to the logos."⁵¹ Yet in Brenner's novel, it is the newly evolved Hebrew *speech* that seems to embody this externality and activate the so-called perverse attributes it entails. A threatening enactment of speech as a form of "writing" (in the sense described above) prevails throughout the narrative. Derrida shows how thinkers such as Saussure and Rousseau have described the inversion of the hierarchy between speech and writing not only as a theoretical error, but also as "a sort of stain" and "a sin":

Sin has been defined often—among others by Malebranche and by Kant—as the inversion of the natural relationship between the soul and the body through passion. Saussure here points at the inversion of the natural relationship between speech and writing. It is not a simple analogy . . . the problem of soul and body is no doubt derived from the problem of writing from which it seems—conversely—to borrow its metaphors.⁵²

The twofold drama portrayed in *From the Beginning* similarly pertains to an inversion of a relationship—a disruption of hierarchy—that occurs both in the realm of sexuality and within language. The two inversions are not simply analogues of each other; they are intertwined and affect one another. Through passion, body prevails the soul ("the empty flirt . . . consumes the flesh, robs the soul"⁵³ or "takes life away").⁵⁴ Similarly, the passionate attempt to force and enact Hebrew speech, subsequently to the rise of Hebrew literature, transgresses the "natural" relations of representation within language. The anarchic result is perversion, indeed a sin.

Yet the novel does not suggest a simple inversion between speech and writing. Writing does not fully occupy the privileged space formerly attributed to speech within that equation. If writing is slightly favored in the novel, it is only because speech marks an even greater degree of distance and mediation within representation. But in fact, the everlasting split latent in the notion of the derivative Hebrew speech seems crucial for Brenner's poetics. It opens a path for representation in which the possibility of an original, fluent speech is always deferred; always already thwarted: "In this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable . . . no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin. For what is reflected is split *in itself* and not only as an addition to itself of its image."⁵⁵

As we shall soon see, this notion of split in the self is a quintessential device within Brenner's poetics. The following section will focus on some of the techniques and modes of narration frequently employed in Brenner's oeuvre. It will explore the apparent contradiction between the rejection of stammering in *From the Beginning* and what could be described as Brenner's own poetics of stammering.

The Split Narrator: Brenner's Poetics of Stammering

Discussions on rhetoric, poetics, and literary style or lack thereof have played an important part in the commentary and scholarly research on Brenner from their earliest days. What was initially considered enthusiastic writing in a fairly "sloppy style" was gradually interpreted, ever since the 1950s, as a carefully crafted artistry of modernist literature.⁵⁶ A particular emphasis on Brenner's complex approach to language is evident in Dan Miron's pioneer essay on Brenner's style. Miron draws attention to Brenner's "excessive sensitivity" to both language and the literary medium, arguing that Brenner's narration demonstrates an alert attentiveness to the reverberating surplus meanings of each and every word.⁵⁷ This attentiveness, which also reflects deep suspicion, creates the impression that Brenner's use of the language is constantly accompanied by a haunting doubt as to what is being said. Ariel Hirschfeld demonstrates a similar argument in his close reading of Brenner's *Atsabim* עצבים (*Nerves*). Locating the narrative's drama at a linguistic level, Hirschfeld shows how Brenner inserts words foreign to their linguistic context, in order to ridicule any tendency for an overly ideal romanticization. Such ridiculing moments, however, never fully abolish the effect of the romantic sentiment that preceded them. They call it into question only

to bring it back as an option at a later moment, thus manifesting a sense of constant wavering.⁵⁸ These readings into Brenner's style already point to a somewhat hesitant tendency in his writing, a movement of saying and negating, which might be read as a form of stammer.

For Menachem Brinker, this hesitant tendency, along with other expressions of Brenner's poetics, centers around one principle: the intentionally driven tension between "rhetoric" and "sincerity." In his monumental study of Brenner, Brinker points to the author's contradictory attempt to create the impression of a sincere, nonrhetorical utterance, which simultaneously renders him a clear rhetorician. The many autobiographical allusions, the fragmentary style, and the repeated presentations of the text as a "citation of real life" (a diary entry, a letter, a gushing speech or a cry), all serve as examples of what Brinker calls "rhetoric of sincerity."⁵⁹

Boaz Arpali similarly attempts to capture the philosophical infrastructure of Brenner's work in an organizing oxymoronic principle. He shows how by confronting opposing ideologies and exposing their stagnant nature, Brenner negates each and every one of them. Examining the notion of truth in Brenner's belletristic writing, Arpali argues that Brenner's continuous striving for truth is riddled with negation. However, he maintains that through this constant negation, a primary truth, whose essence is negative, does emerge in Brenner's thinking. Arpali thus frames Brenner's work as revolving around a "negative principle."⁶⁰

Relying on both of these accounts and pointing to the ways in which they complement one another, Hannah Naveh contends that truth in Brenner's work is marked by "negativity," which is manifested both philosophically and poetically. She shows how the negative is favored and grounded as truthful by way of boisterous mediations that are simultaneously exposed as empty and false. Hence, within Brenner's oeuvre, what is considered "truthful" also reflects a voice that is barely discernible: "this is the rhetoric of sincerity in its ultimate manifestation: not only garbled language and spirit, not only stammer and failure of expression, but even complete silence or silencing designate the place of definite and final sincerity; and it therefore appears in close proximity to extreme suffering, evil and death."⁶¹ In other words, Naveh suggests that Brenner's work sophisticatedly produces its truths not only as stammering, but also as mute. The voice of the representative of truth is only available through its distancing or silencing, through a series of violent mediations.⁶²

It is this notion of distancing that is particularly important to my reading of Brenner. Taking the interpretations presented above as a point of departure, I suggest turning the gaze from the so-called attempt at

sincerity, from the notion of a negative silent truth concealed in Brenner's work, to the very visible act of its distancing. As we will see, this shift of perspective might also call into question the very category of the truthful, a category that remains largely uncompromised in the readings of Brinker, Arpali, and Naveh.

The awkward mediation of a sincere, originally spoken truth is a recurring theme both in Brenner's work and throughout the various interpretations of it. A major component in Brenner's writing which evokes this view is the apologetic, fictional "publisher's note," which opens many of his later works.⁶³ These notes usually have a similar argumentative structure. They prepare the reader for a flawed text, presenting it as lacking both in terms of literary composition and style, and in its ability to authentically reflect the voice of its "original author."⁶⁴ Furthermore, it is claimed that the text was found in (or taken from) the personal belongings of its initial producer. Crucially, these apologetic forewords split the utterance of the narrator. Prior to the beginning of the story, they designate an additional agency (to the one who is fictionally identified as the producer of the text), and thus divide the narrating voice, rendering at least two levels of mediation.

Michael Gluzman elaborately reads the "publisher's note" that opens the novel *Breakdown and Bereavement*. The text is presented as a diary, originally written in the first person. However, in the foreword, the publisher-narrator confesses that he has converted the text from the first to the third person. Hence Gluzman contends:

The central drama of the text . . . [is] a drama of expropriation. The fragmentariness and sloppiness of *Breakdown and Bereavement* attest to the constant mediation of the external narrator who appropriates Hefets's [the protagonist] notes and does with them as he pleases. The sloppiness and fragmentariness frequently make manifest the uprooting of Hefets's story from the first person of the "I" and its transfer to the third person's space of otherness. The foreword therefore changes the standing of the text, for by means of it . . . Brenner manages to cast doubt on the "authenticity" and reliability of the speaker's voice.⁶⁵

In its very inception, the novel is marked by a violent expropriation. Throughout the narrative, this external narrator will repeatedly intervene in the narrative, assert his comments, and intentionally undermine any pretense of authenticity. As Gluzman shows, in his early confession, the narrator explicitly defines the nature of the text as inauthentic, derivative,

even parasitic. Its attempt at sincerity is therefore doomed to failure from the very beginning, because sincerity is only produced in it by way of a violent distortion.

Schachter, who in her reading of *Breakdown and Bereavement* focuses on the Yiddish trace in the novel, argues that the “publisher’s note” reveals yet another level of dishonesty; although the narrator pretends that the novel was written in Hebrew, the text alludes to the possibility that the expropriated diary was not only adapted by the narrator-publisher but was also translated by him from Yiddish to Hebrew. Schachter reads this act of fictional translation as pointing to the narrator’s unreliability and to the novel’s intentional misrepresentation of linguistic reality. By presupposing a fictional Yiddish origin and its deceptive mistranslation, she contends that the novel estranges its own language while surfacing the linguistic tensions of the time.⁶⁶

These interpretations demonstrate how Brenner’s text—in its language, stylistics, and narration techniques—produces a particular mode of representation, in which the very attempt to convey truth appears as already contaminated with falsity. Yet, whereas Schachter infers that in highlighting linguistic deficiencies and pointing to the falsification of the text, Brenner undermines the nationalist cause along with its monolingual ideologies, Hannan Hever argues that the problematics of misrepresentation in Brenner’s work establish yet another form of nationalist commitment.

In a well-known essay from 1911, titled “Ha-janer ha-erets israeli va-avizrayehu” “הז'אנר הארץ-ישראלי ואביוזריהו” (The Genre of Erets Israel and Its Devices), Brenner famously denounced a type of harmonious literary representation of life in the *yishuv*, which he called “the Israeli genre.” Hever asserts that in this essay Brenner does not advocate for a more accurate or truthful representation of reality, but in fact summons a different type of lie; a diminishing representation instead of an overly flattering one. According to Hever, Brenner’s call for an alternative literary representation that reflects the unstable state of a transforming community was meant to produce a utopian effect that would sustain a constant tension between representation and reality and thus stimulate a desire to realize the fantasy of a Jewish nation-state.⁶⁷

Despite their opposing conclusions, Schachter’s and Hever’s readings rely on the assumption that for Brenner, authentic or sincere representation is possible as such. In fact, both of them seem to suggest that at the heart of Brenner’s poetics lies a conscious choice to distort a reality (or an origin) that *could have been* truthfully imparted. However, Brenner’s ambivalent approach to mimesis, which is evident precisely in his linguistic wavering and dysfluency, alludes to a less stable ground of representation, which constitutes the

language of narration as inherently divided.⁶⁸ Shai Ginsburg convincingly shows that at times, it is difficult to determine whether in his critical work Brenner establishes a distinction between opposing modes of representation or rather dismisses fictive literary representation altogether. Yet, Ginsburg also points out that Brenner's rejection of literary fiction is articulated via a clearly fictional rhetoric, and therefore results in a conflation of the very distinctions he sets forth.⁶⁹

It seems, then, that Brenner's "rhetoric of sincerity" is not a mere pretention to present the text as sincere utterance, rather: it says something about sincerity itself. The very attempt at sincerity is repeatedly presented in his work as a distorting process. Sincere representation involves an apparent mediation, whose form is fragmentary, "wretched and ugly."⁷⁰ It is never transparent or fluent, but rather stammering and excessive. The narrating voice in Brenner's work constantly points at its own wretched visibility, announces its own failures, and always already reflects a split in itself. Within the social, ideological, and cultural circumstances of the Jewish settlement in early twentieth-century Palestine—particularly its attempt to implement Hebrew as an all-encompassing, exclusive national language—sincerity is revealed as questionable, and truth a necessarily unstable category, available only through distorting mediation.

Brenner's poetics of stammering could be read as the effect of this split in the narrating voice. "Noises of otherness"⁷¹ constantly traverse and interrupt narration, scatter haunting doubts and hesitation throughout the text. The works manifest themselves as being in the process of creation. The apologetic forwards usually introduce them as no-longer-a-memoir, not-yet-a-proper-literary-work. They are described as scripts imparted to the readers in the midst of the process of editing. This incompleteness, which exceeds any genre ascription, conveys a demand for a stammering-like form. But the insistence on the incomplete, the resistance to bring speech to an end, also promotes an ethics of stammering.

Going back to Brenner's peculiar relationship with spoken Hebrew, we can now reconsider his concept of an authentic, natural spoken tongue. For Brenner, this ideal Hebrew is available only through its constant deferral, only by way of stammering mediation. As we saw earlier, in the novel *From the Beginning*, an angry narrator makes cruel accusations against the new generation of Hebrew stammerers. Their stammer is presented as sinful, lifeless imitation; the emptying of a vital creative language. Yet, in this novel everyone stammers. Even the occasional interventions of the disparaging narrator expose his struggle to keep up with the hasty, uncontrollable developments that Hebrew is undergoing.

concedes to publish them while omitting only some of the “dubious places.” The text is therefore defined from the very beginning as personal impressions, which have already been edited and censored. At the same time, the narrator’s impressions conceal another layer of mediation, since, as previously mentioned, the narrator records, repeats, and even mimics the speech of the youngsters throughout the text. We are left with nothing but a series of mediations: the “beginning” is already a shadow.

We barely know anything about the figure of the narrator throughout the novel. But on one rare occasion, toward the very ending, he does reveal himself. Quite abruptly and without any former mention, it is implied that the narrator is in fact a guest at the colony, a 40-year-old sick man, nursed by Nehama the Lithuanian. From his sick bed, it now becomes clear that he had passively followed the tormented young students, especially Nehama and Ben Zion (the two immigrants), to whom he shows special regard. In his single moment of expression in the first person, he regrets that he cannot assist or warn them, that he in fact cannot do anything to prevent their “disaster.”⁷⁴ This statement, which is left unexplained, echoes the short dedication that accompanies the novel. Brenner had dedicated it to his son, urging him to read the text when he grows up and apologizing for his meager tribute, stating that he had yearned to give more.⁷⁵ In his mind, the sick narrator addresses the two immigrants in what appears to be a fatherly gesture (Brenner had inserted into this paragraph his son’s middle name, which is also the name of a Hebrew month): שמש-המזרח, שמעל, שמש היוקדת ממעל, “הנה ניסן. עוד מעט תחל השמש היוקדת ממעל, יהיו יבשים וחיורים.” (1810). (“It is Nissan. Soon the burning sun will rise from above, the burning sun of the east, and your faces, my children—you are the children who were brought hither from there—will be dry and pale”). Soon after these words, the speaker bursts into tears, and the narrative continues in the third person. This final lamentation of the narrator, which conveys the immigrants’ experience of otherness under the burning sun of the east, could also be read as a lamentation for the transitional state of Hebrew, for the Hebrew that had flourished in the multilingual environment of Eastern-European Jewish culture.

As we have seen, in his literary version of a stammering Hebrew, Brenner seems to have found a fertile ground for rethinking questions of origin, representation, and truth in language. Despite his narrator’s apparent aversion from the youngsters’ Hebrew speech, it is clear that Brenner was attentive to and fascinated by the becoming of Hebrew a spoken vernacular. The notion of a transforming language fraught with traces of foreign tongues, which ultimately lacks an origin and therefore cannot be spoken fluently, provided Brenner with

an experimental instrument that served his literary project on both poetic and ethic levels. And yet, the ongoing transformation of the language simultaneously threatened to put an end to that experimental quality of Hebrew and bring about a future in which the language would be isolated and fixed. Indeed, for Brenner, whatever awaits after stammering Hebrew is of disastrous dimensions.

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Notes

1. Marc Shell, *Stutter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 107.
2. *Ibid.*, 126.
3. For an elaborate discussion of stammering in the work of U. N. Gnessin, an important modernist Hebrew author and Brenner's beloved friend, see Eyal Bassan, "Elef ha-mishorim shel Uri Nissan Gnessin" [The Thousand Plateaus of Uri Nissan Gnessin], *Ot: ketav et le-sifrut u-le-te'orya* 2 (2012): 55–89.
4. As many critics of nationalism have noted, such peculiar coexistence of tradition and rupture is one of the primary marks of nationalist thought. The series of paradoxes around which the nationalist imagination is organized entails the dual enunciation of continuity and discontinuity, the imperative of cultural memorization and collective forgetfulness. See, for instance, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991); Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Stathis Gourgouris, *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
5. See Nurit Govrin, "Ha-dalut ha-nora'a ba-bituy' (Y. H. Brenner: 'Me-hathala') 150 shana le-huladeto shel Eliezer Ben-Yehuda" ['The Dreadful Poverty of Speech'], *Moznaim* 81, no. 2 (2008): 3; Shlomo Haramati, "Brenner ke-more u-manhil lashon li-mevugarim" [Brenner as a Teacher and a Language Instructor for Adults], *Mabul*, no. 16 (1995): 65, 74–5; Shlomo Haramati, *Reshit ha-binukh ha-ivri ba-arets ve-trumato le-habya'at ha-lashon 1882–1914* [The Role of the Hebrew Teacher in Reviving the Hebrew Language 1882–1914] (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1979).
6. See Samuel Eisenstadt, *Sefatenu ha-ivrit ha-haya* [Our Living Hebrew Language] (Tel Aviv: Tekuma, 1967), 38.
7. See, for instance, Mikha Yosef Berdichevsky, "Inyaney lashon" [Language Matters], in *Ba-shira u-va-lashon* (Warsaw: Tushiya, 1911); Hayim Nahman Bialik, "Hevley lashon" [Language Pangs], in *Ha-shiloah: Yarbon le-sifrut, le-mada u-le-inyaney ha-bayim* 18 (1907): 2–19; Ahad Ha'am, "Ha-lashon ve-sifruta" [The Language and Its Literature], in *Al parashat drakhim: Kovets ma'amarim* (Berlin: Jüdische Verlag, 1921).
8. Yosef Hayim Brenner, *Ketavim*, vol. 4 (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat po'alim: Ha-kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1985), 1062–63.

9. It is important to note that the Hebrew term for stammer is somewhat different from the English one. The Hebrew word *gimgum* (גמגום), which is traced back to medieval Hebrew literature, designates, in its modern use, a garbled tongue, a speech disorder, a difficulty of pronunciation that may be caused by different factors and an expression of doubt or hesitation. See Avraham Even-Shoshan, *Milon Even-Shoshan* (Israel: Ha-milon he-hadash, 2003), 351. *Gimgum* might be translated to English as either stutter or stammer. While some of the theory of dysfluency I refer to focuses on stutter, I chose to translate *gimgum* mostly as stammer, since it seems to encompass a broader variety of phenomena associated with speech disorder.

10. Chris Eagle, *Literature, Speech Disorders, and Disability: Talking Normal*, ed. Chris Eagle (New York: Routledge, 2014), 5–7.

11. Gilles Deleuze, “He Stuttered,” in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 107–09.

12. Shell, *Stutter*, 190–96.

13. Haviva Pedaya, “Gam-ve-gam (gimgum)” [Both: Stammer], *Daka: Journal of Poetry and Criticism* 1 (2007): 32–38.

14. Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 156; Shoshana Felman, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J.L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

15. Michel De Certeau, “Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias,” trans. Daniel Rosenberg, *Representations*, no. 56 (1996): 29.

16. *Ibid.*, 30.

17. Joshua St. Pierre, “The Construction of the Disabled Speaker,” in *Literature, Speech Disorders, and Disability: Talking Normal*, ed. Christopher Eagle (New York: Routledge, 2013), 14.

18. De Certeau, “Vocal Utopias,” 30, 40–41.

19. For further elaboration on language wars in Palestine and the attempts to impose Hebrew as the major language of the *yishuv* see Yael Chaver, *What Must Be Forgotten: The Survival of Yiddish in Zionist Palestine* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004); Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920–1948* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Zohar Shavit, “Tel Aviv Language Police,” in *Tel-Aviv, the First Century: Visions, Actualities*, ed. Maoz Azaryahu and S. Ilan Troen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

20. See, for instance, Ravnitzky’s famous phrase from an essay published in 1890: “Don’t call them the expanders of the language, but rather its expungers” (quoted in Govrin, 2008). Govrin, “The Dreadful Poverty,” 4. (My translation.) All translations from Hebrew sources are my own, unless mentioned otherwise.

21. Ahad Ha’am, “Emet me-erets Israel: Ma’amar sheni” [A Truth from Erets Israel: A Second Essay], *Ha-melits* (August 17, 1893).

22. Berdichevsky, “Language Matters,” 44.

23. Epstein asserted that “one who knows how to speak a language, knows how to use it lively, naturally.” See Yitzhak Epstein, “Ivrit be-ivrit” [Hebrew in Hebrew], *Ha-shiloah; Yarhon le-sifrut, le-mada u-le-inyaney-ha-hayim* 4 (1898): 388.

24. Berdichevsky, “Language Matters,” 43–44.

25. Epstein, “Hebrew in Hebrew,” 390.

26. *Ibid.*, 386.

27. Berdichevsky, “Language Matters,” 44.

28. Haramati, “Brenner as a Teacher,” 68–69.

29. Brenner, *Ketavim*, vol. 4, 1060.

30. Allison Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 59.

31. Yosef Hayim Brenner, *Kol kitvey Y. H. Brenner* (Tel Aviv: Shtibel, 1924), 132.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Brenner, *Ketavim*, vol. 4, 1060–61.

34. Ya'akov Fikhman, "Brenner ha-mesaper" [Brenner the Narrator], in *Yosef Hayim Brenner: Mivhar ma'amarey bikoret al yetsirato ha-sipurit*, ed. Yitshak Bakon (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1972), 103. Fikhman was a contemporary of Brenner. His essay was first published about a decade after Brenner's death.

35. *Ibid.*, 102. (Emphases in the original).

36. In *Mourning Philology*, Marc Nichanian describes the circular mechanism that operates within the heart of modern national literature. He extensively shows how national literature "speaks" in the name of an imagined collectivity that it simultaneously evokes as mute or silent (not being able to hear its own voice or speak for itself). It understands itself as if hailed in order to give this silent collectivity a voice, a recognizable aestheticized identity, without which the experience of nationality is intangible. Marc Nichanian, *Mourning Philology: Art and Religion at the Margins of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 42–46.

37. Gershon Shaked, "Al miftan ha-hayim: Al be'ayot mivnniyot be-me-hathala le-Y.H. Brenner" [Structural Problems in Brenner's *From the Beginning*], *Sadan: Mebkarim be-sifrut ivrit* 4 (2000): 265–66; Govrin, "The Dreadful Poverty," 6–7.

38. Anita Shapira, *Brenner: Sipur hayim* [Brenner: A Life] (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 2008), 275–76.

39. Yosef Hayim Brenner, *Ketavim* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat po'alim: Ha-kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1977), vol. 2, 1777. Hereafter cited by page number.

40. Shaked, "Structural Problems," 266–67.

41. Menachem Brinker argued that in this late novel, Brenner marked the *beginning* of a new strand in his own literary work (a strand that might have been further developed, had he not murdered in 1921). See Menachem Brinker, *Ad ha-simta ha-teveryanit: Ma'amar al sipur u-mahashava bi-yetsirat Brenner* [Narrative Art and Social Thought in Y. H. Brenner's Work] (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1990), 236.

42. Brenner, *Ketavim*, vol. 2, 1782, 1792.

43. In Hebrew, names of cities and states are always grammatically feminine.

44. Yosef Hayim Brenner Papers, The Pinhas Lavon Institute for Labour Movement Research, file IV104-37-56; Shaked, "Structural Problems," 265–66; Govrin, "The Dreadful Poverty," 6–7; Shapira, *Brenner: A Life*, 280.

45. Marc Shell points out that the word "stammer" is etymologically associated with the term "barbarian," which, according to Shell, often comes down to mean "a person who cannot speak our language 'properly,' or "a people whose language 'we' do not understand." (Shell, *Stutter*, 66, 73 respectively). In the novel, the narrator's relation to the youngsters' Hebrew stammer seems to waver between these two meanings.

46. The narrator demonstrates here, as in other places, the irony of the reassured speech of the youth by inserting a clunky, non-idiomatic phrase ("tearing the ropes"), and providing the "correct" phrase in brackets.

47. Brenner, *Ketavim*, vol. 2, 1801–02. Compare with the following quote: "Their mouths mechanically evoke chimes of syllables, similar to New Hebrew, but disconnected, *distasteful*." (Brenner, *Ketavim*, vol. 2, 1777, my emphasis). At a later point in the story, Ben Zion ceases to hesitate and attacks Yael violently. He is interrupted only by a roommate who suddenly enters the room.

48. The narrator often uses theatrical language to depict the protagonist's speech and behavior, and the novel is filled with theatrical gestures. See, for instance, Brenner, *Ketavim*, vol. 2, 1796, 1797, 1805.

49. See, for instance, Brenner, *Ketavim*, vol. 2, 1761, 1786. These examples clarify that the students also "stammer" in their writing: "these scraps of paper, where the word *shalom* is not fully uttered, only 'sh...' followed by ellipsis" (Brenner, *Ketavim*, vol. 2, 1786).

50. Hannah Naveh, "Nora: le-ofyo shel mishpat ha-emet etsel Brenner" ["Awful": On the Nature of the Judgment of Truth in Brenner], *Sadan: Mebkarim be-sifrut ivrit* 4 (2000): 183–209.

51. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 35.

52. *Ibid.*, 34–35.

53. Brenner, *Ketavim*, vol. 2, 1810.

54. Ibid., 1780.
55. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 36.
56. Among the famous critics of Brenner's style, one can name Yosef Klausner, Berdichevsky, and Bialik. See Avner Holtzman, "Poetics, Ideology, Biography, Myth: The Scholarship on J. H. Brenner, 1971-96," *Prooftexts* 18, no. 1 (1998): 83.
57. Dan Miron, "Al be'ayot signono shel Y. H. Brenner be-sipurav" [On the Problems of Y. H. Brenner's Style in His Stories], in *Kivun orot: Tabanot ba-siporet ha-ivrit ha-modernit* (Yerushalayim: Shoken, 1979), 359.
58. Ariel Hirschfeld, "Retet tsamarot ve-dagim meluhim: Al milim u-devarim be-atsabim le-Y.H. Brenner" [Trembling Treetops and Salty Fish: On Words and Things in Y.H. Brenner's *Nerves*], *Sifrut ve-hevra ba-tarbut ha-ivrit ha-badasha: Ma'amarim mugashim le-Gershon Shaked*, eds. Yehudah Bar-El, Yigal Schwartz, and Tamar S. Hess (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibuts ha-me'uhad, 2000): 71-81.
59. Brinker, *Narrative Art and Social Thought*, 15-17.
60. Boaz Arpali, *Ha-ikar ha-shelili: Ide'ologya u-po'etika be-"mi-kan u-mi-kan" u-ve-"atsabim" le-Y.H. Brenner* [The Negative Principle: Ideology and Poetics in Two Stories by Y.H. Brenner] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1992), 20.
61. Naveh, "Awful," 187.
62. Ibid., 205-06.
63. Among these works one can mention *Shana Ahat* שנה אחת (*One Year*), *From Here and There*, *Breakdown and Bereavement*, and *From the Beginning*.
64. Arpali shows how these two types of argument in fact contradict one another, and therefore question the reliability of the narrator. Arpali, *The Negative Principle*, 101-03.
65. Michael Gluzman, *Ha-guf ha-tsyoni: Le'umiyut, migdar u-miniyut ba-sifrut ha-ivrit ha-badasha* [The Zionist Body: Nationalism, Gender and Sexuality in Modern Hebrew Literature] (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibuts ha-me'uhad, 2007), 161.
66. Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms*, 73-80.
67. Hannan Hever, *Ha-sipur ve-ha-le'om: Kri'ot bikortiyot be-kanon ha-siporet ha-ivrit* [The Narrative and the Nation: Critical Readings in the Canon of Hebrew Fiction] (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2007), 50-54.
68. Iris Parush, who discusses Brenner's consideration of both Hebrew and Yiddish as crucial to Jewish life, argues that according to Brenner, the lack of Jewish political sovereignty entailed the maintenance of a split culture, torn between Yiddish and Hebrew. See Iris Parush, *Kanon sifrutit v e-ide'ologya le'umit* [Literary Canon and National Ideology] (Yerushalayim: Mosad Byalik; Hotsa'at ha-sefarim shel universitat Ben-Gurion ba-negev, 1992), 286.
69. Shai Ginsburg, *Rhetoric and Nation: The Formation of Hebrew National Culture, 1880-1990* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 135-37.
70. This is how Yehezkel Hefets, the protagonist and the "original author" of *Breakdown and Bereavement*, is described in the "publisher's note." Brenner, *Ketavim*, vol. 2, 1443.
71. De Certeau, "Vocal Utopias," 29.
72. According to the fictional publisher, the script was found in a deserted house after the Ottoman government had expelled its residents with the break of the First World War. In reality, the script for Brenner's novel was actually found among the ruins of his Jaffa apartment following his murder in 1921.
73. In fact, Brenner echoes here a concern that has been voiced in reality regarding his own script of *From the Beginning*. In a letter dated from 1919, Brenner writes that Menahem Poznansky had told him that he thinks *From the Beginning* should not be published at the moment, since it might have a bad influence on the youth. See Yosef Hayim Brenner, *Kol kirvey Y. H. Brenner* (Tel-Aviv: Ha-kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1955), 421.
74. Brenner, *Ketavim*, vol. 2, 1810.
75. Ibid., 1744.