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**Unmasking the Politics of Simplicity
in Modernist Hebrew Poetry:
Rereading David Fogel**

IN *NATIONALISM AND MINOR LITERATURE*, David Lloyd offers a three-tiered definition of minor literature. "The primary feature of any literature that is to be defined as minor," he writes, "is its exclusion from the canon, an exclusion that may on the face of it be as much on the grounds of aesthetic judgment as on those of racial or sexual discrimination." The second characteristic of minor literature is that it "remains in an oppositional relationship to the canon and the state from which it has been excluded." Third, minor literature refuses to produce "narratives of ethical identity"; instead, it works to perpetuate "non-identity."¹ In what follows, I read David Fogel's poetry as a particularly complex example of minor writing. Coalescing stylistic, political, and historical dimensions of poetics and critical reception, the concept of minor writing elucidates both Fogel's poetry and its marginal status in the modernist Hebrew canon. I propose to see David Fogel's poetry as minor first because it fulfills the condition of having been subjected to exclusion. As early as 1962, Solomon Grodzinski noticed that "David Fogel was not interwoven into the story of Hebrew poetry between the two world wars, and did not receive the attention of the small reading public that favorably read Shlonsky and Alterman and Uri Zvi Greenberg. It seems that this lack of attention was quite intentional. Fogel's poetry was hardly ever mentioned in the periodicals which fought for the new in Hebrew literature."² In the thirty years that have passed since Grodzinski wrote these words, Fogel's marginal status has often been acknowledged. And yet, as Dan Miron argued recently when he complained that Hebrew criticism failed to commemorate Fogel's centennial anniversary, "Fogel's poetry is forgotten

and neglected today almost as it was before its redeemers and defenders arose in the 1950s and 1960s."³

Second, Fogel's writing stands in oppositional relationship to the canon from which it has been excluded. In *Belated Modernity*, Gregory Jusdanis maintains that "nation building entails the invention of collective narratives . . . and the induction of citizens into the ideology of the imagined community."⁴ Literature, by permitting an imaginary perception of unity before it is achieved politically and administratively, is instrumental in creating an "imagined community"⁵ and in effecting national unity. Looking back on the emergence of modernist Hebrew poetry, Abraham Shlonsky, the high priest of the hegemonic *moderna* (whose relationship with Fogel will be thoroughly reconsidered in the following pages) writes: "A new poetry could have arisen only as a result of its identification with a vision, with a beginning [*bereshit*] of a new society which is socialist in its form and nationalist in its content."⁶ David Fogel did not participate—biographically or poetically—in the nation-building process. An assiduous scrutiny of Fogel's poetic *oeuvre* cannot yield a single poem about Palestine, Zionism, patriotism, or, for that matter, any collective issue.⁷ In his diary, Fogel explicitly dissociates himself from Zionism. Describing how an acquaintance declined to help him because of his refusal to emigrate to Erets Israel, Fogel writes: "Ha ha, to go to Erets Israel to cultivate the soil—that's not in accordance with my physical capacity or my desire; but in accordance with this man's principles who is boasting to be intelligent . . . and a so-called idealist . . . boo to this intelligentsia and its principles."⁸ In his political passivity and "silence," Fogel stands in clear opposition to the politically committed literary establishment of his period. When viewed as silent negation, Fogel's poems confirm Roland Barthes's observation that withdrawal is the most tenacious form of protest or resistance. "Power," he said in an interview, "can be affronted through attack or defense, but withdrawal is what society can assimilate the least."⁹

The third reason for considering Fogel's work as minor (in Lloyd's privileged sense) is that his refusal to participate poetically in the Zionist endeavor already manifests a lack of interest in "narratives of ethical identity." Zionism consciously attempted to create a new ethical Jewish identity. Abraham Shlonsky was once characterized as the first poet since Bialik to have written "poems about the new Hebrew man of the land."¹⁰ Shlonsky's major writing—as a poetic embodiment of Socialist Zionist ideology—is inextricably entangled, then, with an attempt to form a new ethical model of identity. When Shlonsky described himself in *Amal* ("Labor") as "a road-building bard in Israel" (*paytan solel beyisra'el*), he presented an ideal of a poet-pioneer, an emblem for the Zionist agenda of returning to productivity. Fogel, in contrast, negated the possibility of self-definition when he wrote in his diary, "Fogel has lost Fogel," suggest-

ing that identity can be construed as an absence rather than as a fixed, stabilized essence.¹¹

My interest in David Fogel as a minor writer centers on his *poetics of simplicity*. Although it is common to assert Fogel's marginality, his poetics of simplicity—and its underlying political meaning—have yet to be fully explored and adequately explained. However, my reading of Fogel is not only meant to reverse his position in the modernist Hebrew canon. It should also help recover the *other* Hebrew modernism, that of anti-*nusah*¹² or "simplicity," from the obscurity into which it has been cast by the success of the hegemonic, symbolist/futurist¹³ poetics of abundance of the *moderna*. By tracing an alternative, suppressed tradition within Hebrew modernism, one can see not only why and how a certain mode of writing is relegated to silence but also how the inclusion of previously silenced modes of writing can generate a new understanding of Hebrew literary history.

To put it another way, by peeling back the superimposed layers of critical judgment, one can extrapolate not only the process of inclusion and exclusion in a specific period but also the hidden ideological grid that determines both centrality and marginality in this period. Since systems of classification are largely based upon exclusions, it is only commonsensical to look at what is apparently marginal to a system in order to understand its "rules." As Jonathan Culler maintains: "One must consider ungrammatical sentences in order to work out the grammar of a language, or look at what is 'unthinkable' in a particular milieu in order to discover its deepest assumptions, or at what is unfashionable in order to reconstruct the code of fashion. . . . What is marginal or taboo turns out to be essential to the system that excludes it."¹⁴

Following Culler's methodology, I will argue that a close reading of Fogel's poetry and its reception can help demarcate what was considered essential to the system that marginalized him. Moreover, it can demonstrate how ideological and political differences can blind one modernist trend to the poetic achievements of another modernist trend.¹⁵ Thus, the history of Fogel's reception in Hebrew criticism, which is essentially the history of a series of misreadings, shows how such misreadings not only reflected but also helped preserve and consolidate the hegemonic ideology of the contemporary literary establishment.

1

The concept of "simplicity"—a concept first introduced by Raḥel,¹⁶ further developed by Fogel, and explicitly attacked by members of the *moderna*—is of utmost importance for an understanding of Hebrew poetic modernism. The largely untold story of what I shall call the "simplicity

debate" may be seen as one of the most intricate critical controversies within Hebrew modernism, involving questions of style, politics, and gender. Although quite a few poets and critics have participated in this controversy, I will focus mainly on the direct and indirect exchange between two figures: David Fogel and Abraham Shlonsky.

In his 1931 lecture "Language and Style in Our Young Literature,"¹⁷ Fogel draws an arresting distinction between two categories of writing. In distinguishing between "masters of style" and "masters of language," Fogel does not formulate an abstract theoretical argument. Rather, Fogel's lecture/manifesto, historically minded and polemical in tone, offers a stylistic mapping of Hebrew modernism, a mapping that carves out two essentially distinct trends in the literary production of the time. While the distinction between "masters of style" and "masters of language" may seem rather obscure, Fogel's examples are luminously instructive. The category of "masters of style" is embodied and exemplified by four prose-fiction writers: U. N. Gnessin, Gershon Shofman, J. H. Brenner, and Devorah Baron. Fogel's apparent, albeit implicit, proposition is that these "masters of style" have a stylistic common denominator—a minimalist aesthetics: he describes Shofman as a writer who has "stripped his style of all excess, all traces of blabbering chatter, of all bland rhetoric." Brenner's style is described metaphorically as that of "a poor person who suffices on bread and onions"; and Devorah Baron is praised for her "humility of expression." In contrast, the "masters of language," whose identity is not immediately revealed, are harshly denounced for their maximalist aesthetics, which emanates from the absence of a truly individual style:

I must turn my attention to the impostors who in recent years have become so numerous in our literature, to the *masters of language*, masters of prattle devoid of any creative content and of any trace of individuality. Certain writers have arisen among us whose language is their craft, who completely lack any experience of the world, any creative pangs, who shell us with *linguistic bombs* that do not explode at all, and when by chance they do explode—they just make a *loud noise* and do not ignite from lack of explosive material. These are counterfeiters of style, artistic frauds, counterfeiters even of individuality. (Emphases added)

According to Fogel, these "counterfeiters" are not writers who "sit in a remote corner and do what they do" but rather those who "rush right in, like all ignoramuses, professing to be guides of the literature." When it becomes unequivocally clear that the writers under fire are the most canonical figures of the time, Fogel finally reveals who is the real subject of his attack: "If we had learned and sophisticated critics, would it have been possible for a literary clown like Shlonsky to raise his head?" In delivering this lecture Fogel gave every indication of being eager to dissociate himself from the mainstream expansive, maximalist poetics of the *moderna*. That the maximalist aesthetics of Shlonsky and his coterie is

indeed the dividing issue is evident not only from the sardonic depiction of the use of "linguistic bombs" by the "masters of language" but also from Fogel's attack of their use of the *melitsah*.¹⁸ Describing the forgers' language as idle chatter, Fogel goes on to argue that "the empty *melitsah*, the regurgitation [*ha'alat hagera*] of ready-made verses, which every empty and talentless Maskil used at one time to adorn himself, this *melitsah* whose tomb we already sealed once, has risen up again before our eyes, even if in a slightly different form, a more modern form as befits the time." The striking alignment of the *moderna's* maximalist poetics with nineteenth-century, premodernist verse is no doubt one of the manifesto's most interesting arguments. Fogel's charge, then, is that the *moderna's* poetics of abundance does not convey newness, as it claims, but rather continues the premodernist poetic tradition against which it arose.¹⁹ Delivering this lecture was a declaration of war on Shlonsky, as is clear from the fact that Fogel's lecture could not be published in its entirety until 1974, more than forty years after its original presentation.²⁰ As odd as it may seem now, Shlonsky's power was perceived as so all-embracing and coercive that Fogel's critique of his use of language remained censored and largely unheard.

Although the relationship between Shlonsky and Fogel received close critical attention,²¹ the fact that Shlonsky actually responded in detail to Fogel's critique has not been noticed or acknowledged. How Shlonsky obtained a record of Fogel's unpublished lecture remains a mystery; but his response—while never referring to Fogel by name—uses Fogel's terminology with such precision that it is unequivocally clear that he was familiar not only with Fogel's main arguments but also with Fogel's style of address. In his 1938 essay "'Language tricks' or 'Simplicity'" (*Lahatey lashon' o 'pashitut'*)²² Shlonsky reverses Fogel's claims to argue that "simplicity, in its most popular form, has conquered almost all of our literary territory," and adds that "the lack of novelty has had a catastrophic victory." One passage in Shlonsky's essay is of particular relevance:

Accusations about "arrays of language," [*ma'arakhey lashon*] about the *melitsah*, as it were, about *clownish* juggling etc. etc. are especially prevalent. Just as "X," who is no intellectual *regurgitator*, but rather is graced with a little sense of self, is held among us to be a sophist; and "Y," whose command of poetic forms attains a cultured level, is considered a "juggler"—so too "Z," who is not a dim-witted and colorless stutterer, but is rather in command of expression and in possession of a [wide] palette, is considered among us a *melits* [rhetorician; a practitioner of the exalted *melitsah*]. It is as if poverty and meagerness, the quotidian and the lowly are our permanent historical characteristics. (Emphases added)

Shlonsky uses many of Fogel's expressions—"clownish," "regurgitation," "*melits*," "sense of self" (*atsmiyut*)—to counterattack Fogel's claims: By associating abundance with command of expression and a possession of a

wide palette, Shlonsky strengthens the equivalence between simplicity and colorless stuttering, pronouncing it to be a defect or deficiency rather than a conscious poetic choice. But there is more to Shlonsky's rejection of simplicity than I have suggested so far. The issue at stake is clearly larger than conflicting stylistic preferences. True, marked tensions between minimalist and maximalist versions of modernist poetics are prevalent in many strands of modernism. William Carlos Williams's self-proclaimed simplicity on the one hand, and Ezra Pound's expansiveness (in the *Cantos*) on the other, embody this discordant opposition in American modernism. Similarly, in Latin American *Vanguardista* poetry, the sparse nature of Alfonsina Storni's poetics is antithetical to Borges's Baroque-influenced poetry. In Hebrew poetic modernism, however, this conflict between minimalism and maximalism has an underlying political meaning, signifying opposing ideological stands concerning the role of poetry in the nation-consolidating process. When Avot Yeshurun says "Hebrew literature brought us to Zion," he gives succinct expression to the vital role Hebrew literature played in the nation-forming process. Similarly, for Shlonsky, the very act of writing poetry in Hebrew is a Zionist act. "In my opinion," he says, "every good translation, as every good original [poem], is Zionism."²³ I stress this point because Fogel's simplicity—and minimalism in general—were perceived not only as a stylistic choice but also as a political stance.

No one expressed the political impropriety of simplicity more vehemently than Uri Zvi Greenberg. Complaining that the "disconnectedness from the reality of a Hebrew state in its formation . . . is felt in ninety-nine percent of Hebrew writers," Greenberg draws an analogy between aestheticized minimalism and a lack of nationalist commitment:

The *little* poem (*hashir haqatan*)—hum . . . but of course. Individualism is permitted to celebrate, to show off its manicured nails in the name of "good taste," and to forever indulge in perfect rhyme, as if Hebrew poetry had no special destiny . . . as if the constitution of the Hebrew revolution does not apply to writers who write in the language of the Hebrews: To become different, just as it applies to every single man in the tribe of the pioneers [*shevet halutsim*] of Erets Israel.²⁴ (Emphasis added)

Greenberg's view should not be perceived as a personal idiosyncrasy of a poet on the far right of the political spectrum. Greenberg's condemnation of minimalism is part of the same simplicity debate I have started to outline. That politics played a major role in the rejection of simplicity as a poetic style becomes even more evident when one reads Abraham Shlonsky's poem, "The Clown's Speech" (*Ne'um hamukyon*).²⁵ Shlonsky, by uttering and articulating an attack on simplicity from a clown's perspective, insolently reiterates Fogel's characterization of him as a literary clown. The poem, a key text for the understanding of Shlonsky's

position in the simplicity debate, begins with a reply to the proponents of simplicity, a reply marked by the speaker's ironic tone:

אתם אומרים: פשוטות!
 אך טוב! נקבים לרגע,
 כי אל נכון הכל ידוע ופשוט:
 הנפש היא סירה, וְלֵה מְשׁוּט וְהַגָּה,
 וְבָה אֶפְשֶׁר לְשֵׁבֶת, לְשֵׁבֶת וְלִשְׁוֹט.

You say: simplicity!
 But well, let's agree
 That all in all everything is known and simple:
 The soul is a boat which has an oar and a wheel
 And in it you can sit, sit and sail.

In Shlonsky's view, simplicity entails not only a stylistic directness but also a poetic fascination with the psyche as an autonomous object. Shlonsky, in his ironic caricature of this position, thoroughly rejects the poetic formation of subjectivity that posits the psyche as a separate spatial entity unaffected by external reality. Instead of focusing on the autonomous self, Shlonsky brings to the fore the external factors that shape human fate; mentioning an assemblage of mythical and historical disasters both natural and man-made (Sodom and Gomorrah, the submergence of Atlantis, the sinking of the Titanic), he argues that a psychological self-analysis cannot look into—or touch upon—the larger issues of human existence. Charging that the poets of simplicity turn the Sambatyon, the mythical, mighty river of national Jewish lore, into a tiny bathtub (*ambatyon*) of self-indulgence, the speaker says:

הו טוב לְכֶם מְאֹד, מְאֹד מְאֹד־תִּים,
 בְּאִמְבַּטְיֹן הַזֹּאת לְחַתֵּר וְגַם לְשׁוֹט . . .
 וּמָה עוֹד אֶסְפֵּר לְכֶם עַל אֹדוֹתַי, אִם
 אֶצְלִי הַכֵּל-בְּכֹל לְגַמְרֵי לֹא פְשׁוּט.
 . . .
 מָה עוֹד אֶמְרֶה? יֵשׁ דָּם . . . הוּא שְׁחֹרֵר בְּשֵׁלֶג
 בְּלִילָה בּוֹ שֶׁבְּרוּ כָּל פְּנֵי הָרְחוֹב.
 אֲבָל אַתֶּם אֹמְרִים: דּוּגִית . . . וְשֶׁקֶטוֹן לְפִלֵּג
 וְגֶשֶׁר-פֶּשֶׁר קָטַן גְּטוּי מְחוּפֵּף אֶל חוּף.

Oh, you enjoy yourself a lot
 Rowing and sailing in this tub
 And what shall I tell you about myself if
 for me nothing but nothing is simply simple.

. . .
 What more shall I say? There's blood and it's as black as snow
 In the night in which the street lamps were broken
 But you say: a boat . . . a quiet stream . . .
 A bridge-of-meaning links the shores.

The poem's reference to violence, blood, and turmoil and its use of a deliberately self-contradictory trope (the oxymoron "black as snow") aim to convey that the proponents of simplicity repress and palliate the complexity of modern life. For Shlonsky, these poets who maintain distance from the political realm are mere blind aesthetes. Shlonsky's poem takes Fogel's pejorative epithet, the "clown," and shows its underlying political meaning. Aiming to galvanize his audience into political action, Shlonsky finds it useful to allude to a nonelitist art form. For him, the clown's art is populist in a positive sense, directed at a wide and heterogeneous audience. Moreover, the impersonal persona of the clown allows Shlonsky to escape from the kind of unmediated personal discourse he dislikes.

If Shlonsky's "The Clown's Speech" can be read as a poetic reply to Fogel's lecture, then Fogel's poem "The Street Has Made Us Tired" (*Rav hel'anu ze harhov*)²⁶ can be read as a response to "The Clown's Speech." Fogel's poem explicitly calls for a solitary life style that would minimize the speaker's participation in the historical-materialist world:

רב הלאנו זה הרחוב! נשובה אל קרבנו!
 יער עבת הוא ושקט, בו נעמיקה שבת,
 קרובים יותר אל החיים, קרובים אל המות.
 יגע בנו עלה נדף – ודינו.
 מקרבי חננה זו הנזה תציץ אימה כבדה.
 בדרך כה היינו תמיד עם ההוללים יחד –
 עתה נצוב הקמת שוא, הרעיפה בנו פחד.
 אל היחידות נפרש כי הלאתנו זו העדה.

The street has made us tired! We shall return inward!
 It is a thick and quiet forest where we can dwell deeply
 Closer to life, closer to death.
 Were a defeated leaf to touch us—it would have been enough.

From the blinds of this strange festivity a heavy anxiety will peep
 So lonely we always were with those who celebrate together—
 Now we shall leave the meaningless sounds that have dripped fear within us
 Into solitude we shall withdraw, for the crowd has made us tired.

Fogel's speaker, tired of the public domain (metonymically represented here by the street) calls for a withdrawal into the psyche, portrayed metaphorically as a forest. When portrayed as a shelter, the psyche—a "thick and quiet forest" of the soul—is somewhat similar to Shlonsky's parodic depiction of the poet's psyche as a sailing boat. In contrast to Shlonsky's parodic depiction of a poet blithely and blindly withdrawing from the world, however, Fogel's speaker engages in a desperate attempt to ward off the distracting forces of the exterior reality. Yet, even in his shelter, the speaker does not find peace, realizing that he is now closer—paradoxically—to both life and death.

The poem clearly lends itself to a political interpretation. Presenting the turmoil of the public sphere as "meaningless sounds" (*hemyat shav*), the speaker renders external events as an escape from the life and death that take place within. The speaker's sense of interiority, however, is constantly threatened by the outside world, since the inner space cannot be hermetically sealed. A minor movement, a "defeated leaf"²⁷ can destabilize the speaker's fragile sense of quiescence not only because it brings the exterior world into the innermost self but also because the slightest movement can yield both life and death. Although the poem's political implications seem unambiguous, a cautionary note is in order: Fogel's language always conceals twists that produce moments of indeterminacy and undecidability. Two paradoxes can be traced in this short poem. First, the defeated leaf that seems to be part of the external world may be read as belonging metonymically to the forest of interiority. If this is indeed the case, the world's distracting forces are within as well as outside. Second, Fogel's poem advances a call for inwardness and solitude by using the first person plural (*hel'anu, nashuva*). In a poem that calls for the separation of the "I" from the public, it would be only logical to use the pronoun "I." Yet this flight from the "I" to the "we" occurs often in Fogel's most "individualistic" poems.²⁸

Let us now turn to the debate's originary moment. I am referring to Shlonsky's 1923 review of Fogel's *Before the Dark Gate*. The review is suggestive enough of the intricate process by which Fogel was marginalized, trivialized, and rendered invisible to be quoted in its entirety:

"Before the Dark Gate". . . It's outside: a black cover. And it's inside: "black closets," "black birds," "black ship," "the night's black organ," "dark wine," "dark scripture," "dark forest." And night—night—night. Also father has a "black coat" and "his beard is black." Oh father! father! "Like a lonely star my father is wandering there now between his mountains." And we, in fact, we all are lost, blindfolded, bent down on autumn's paths covered with foliage. Each to his own way, each to his own way. But one day we shall meet, we shall all meet.—"All the paths are going towards the evening." And the evening is close, very close. And here is the night.—In a little while! Just in a little while!——But the one who will not sense the "fluttering black flags quivering in the wind"—should not open the book. In wide eyes there is too much wittiness. Only the ones that are groping, whose fingers are long and very thin, will follow and feel the "dark gate."²⁹

Dan Pagis has already noted that Shlonsky's ironic tone implies that Fogel's poems are "too gentle and nebulous."³⁰ Because Shlonsky's (mis)reading of Fogel's poetry is symptomatic of the ways in which Fogel's poetry was perceived until the 1960s, it is important to uncover the political meaning that lies repressed in Shlonsky's review. What Shlonsky sees in Fogel's poetry sharply underscores not only what he does not see, but also what he expects from poetry in general. If the

aesthetic value of literary texts is inseparable from the “function [they are] expected or desired to perform,”³¹ as Barbara Herrenstein Smith maintains, then the evaluation of Fogel’s poetry as second-rate or minor in the evaluative sense stems from the functions his poems “failed” to perform. Shlonsky’s critique is two-pronged: Fogel’s intent focus on the personal sphere on the one hand, and his limited palette (as manifested by his repetitive use of the color black) on the other, tacitly indicate the limited stature of his poems.

Not insignificantly, Shlonsky’s first comment on *Before the Dark Gate* concerns the sameness of “inside” and “outside.” Although his reference to the color of the book cover and to the frequent recurrence of black as adjective and even as adverb throughout the book is sardonic in tone, he nevertheless pinpoints a quality that emblemizes Fogel’s main poetic project. For Fogel, as my analysis of *Rav hel’anu ze harehov* demonstrates, there are no definite boundaries between the internal and the external. Although Shlonsky’s dislike for Fogel’s poetry is not yet expressed in terms of simplicity (as in *Ne’um hamukyon* or *‘Lahatey lashon’ o ‘pashtut’*), his reservations are of precisely the same kind. The blurring of the dichotomy between inside and outside is what Shlonsky opposes in Fogel’s poetry. For Shlonsky, who admired Mayakovski’s unabashed ideological involvement in the Russian revolution, and who was fully committed to the left Zionist nationalism as well as to the left’s optimistic social vision, Fogel’s overwhelming “blackness” is a sentimental and solipsistic depiction of personal sorrow. As Shlonsky’s parody of Fogel’s style makes clear, he dislikes what he sees as self-indulgent emotionalism, repetitious diction, and a poetic imagery of agony and loss.

In his diary, Shlonsky writes: “It is forbidden to cry in public. Therefore: it is forbidden to cry in a poem. Just as it is forbidden to vomit on stage even when the actor personifies a drunk. An exaggerated, emotional, “honest,” simplistic and very private lyricism is the vomit of the soul. It is an outpour, a weeping [*bekhiya*] rather than construction [*beniya*]” (emphases added). While Fogel’s manifesto posits an opposition between “artwork” (*yetsira*) and the lesser “work” (*asiya*), Shlonsky’s opposition consists of the valorized work of “constructing” versus the proscribed “weeping.” Instead of sentimental poetry, Shlonsky champions “closed, secretive, masculine poems. Because the poet is a man. An essence of malehood.”³² Although not directed at Fogel, Shlonsky’s assertions are telling. The adjectives attributed to what Shlonsky sees as lesser poetry (i.e., “emotional,” “honest,” “simplistic,” and “feminine”) are strikingly reminiscent of Hebrew criticism’s conceptions of Fogel’s poetry. Shlonsky’s words give succinct expression to the hegemonic ideological paradigm of poetic value in pre-Statehood modernism. According to this paradigm, the “personal” is aligned with the feminine

and the emotional, and it is inferior, by way of contrast, to the "public," masculine and intellectual.

A similar critical hierarchy was postulated by Yitshak Norman, one of the prominent critics in Shlonsky's coterie, *havurat ktuvim*. In an authoritative, harsh tone that explains why Avot Yeshurun characterized him as a "gendarme of poetry," Norman asserts that Fogel belongs to a group of unworthy poets who are too preoccupied with their personal sorrow:

The rooster's cry [but also "the male's call"] (*kri'at hagever*) begins with celestial poets: U. Z. Greenberg and A. Shlonsky. Here the perspective is broader, the distinction more subtle. . . . The poetry after Ch. N. Bialik (and Shneour)—like that of S. Tchernichowsky, Y. Cohen, J. Steinberg, J. Fichmann, D. Shimonovitch, Y. Karni, Y. Lamdan and the dying bubbling American group—can be skipped.

. . .

In his [the poet Baruch Katzenelson's] mood, in his private sorrow expressed in fragments of voices, he is part of a group of poets like M. Temkin, D. Fogel, Y. Bat-Miriam, A. Pinkerfeld—a tiny oil-jar, embers of energy that whisper and die, an orchestrated confusion of the heart, and a light rustle of poetry's foliage—the worship of the miniature for its own sake, the snail's vision and a poetry that will follow children's steps.³³

Norman's explicit rejection of Fogel's thematics and fragmentary, polyphonic style (*shivrey qolot*) is interesting in several different ways. Despite his impressionistic and personal tone, which was a widespread style in polemical critical writing of the time, and although he does not distinguish between premodern and modernist writers, Norman astutely categorizes Hebrew literature into two groups. The group he finds meaningless and intolerable includes Fogel as well as several male and female writers who belong to the very same suppressed tradition within Hebrew modernism, the tradition of anti-*nusah* or simplicity that I have mentioned earlier. Not insignificantly, Norman aligns two pairs of oppositions (masculine-feminine and collective-private), implying that while "important" male poetry is essentially concerned with broader, collective issues, feminine poetry (by both male and female writers) is of lesser quality because of its personal, minimalist focus. Norman's choice of words is telling; in describing unworthy poetry in terms such as "small" (*qatan*), "embers" (*remets*), "rustle" (*ivsha*), and "snail" (*hilazon*), he indicates that unlike the broad nature of public themes, personal issues (sexual, emotional, domestic) are flimsy and insubstantial.³⁴ Moreover, when Shlonsky and Greenberg are praised for their expansive poetics (*miqlahat gvanim*, "a shower of hues") it is hardly surprising that antithetical minimalist poets are undermined, trivialized, and marginalized.

A similar view can be traced in more neutral—or even favorable—reviews of Fogel's poetry. Joseph Lichtenbaum, for example, draws a

connection between Fogel and Ben-Yitshak and aligns both with modernist German poets such as Else Lasker-Schüler and Arno Holz. Maintaining that Fogel, like some of his German contemporaries, is mainly interested in the short *Stimmung* poem, Lichtenbaum asserts that Fogel's poetry struggles to liberate itself from the stranglehold of the schematic naturalism of previous generations. Although Lichtenbaum compliments Fogel's poetry for its lyric qualities, he also warns:

Yet, one should not disregard the danger such poetry faces, the danger of turning from hovering [*rehifut*] to volatility [*hitnadfut*], to be caught in a pose, sometimes even in philosophizing, to become vague, anemic; Fogel's poetry has not escaped these dangers entirely: some poems are characterized only by the beauty of their language and symbols; poems that are merely sketches of silhouettes, only shadowy lines, or nothing but an aphorism, a sketch. Sometimes life is represented by bits and pieces but art seeks the whole.³⁵

Alongside Zmora's complaint that one does not know "what is [Fogel's] world view . . . one sees only vagueness, fog, confusion and bewilderment,"³⁶ Lichtenbaum's view typifies a reading that condemns Fogel for a lack of ideology and substantial content. Like other misreaders, however, Lichtenbaum is a sensitive interpreter capable of detecting Fogel's poetic goals.³⁷ It would not be inaccurate to suggest that he condemns Fogel, to put it oxymoronically, for the right wrong reasons. Right because he astutely detects the "volatility" and fragmentation of Fogel's poems.³⁸ Wrong because he fails to acknowledge that these are exactly the poetic qualities Fogel seeks.

The critical view of Fogel's poetry as lacking substantial content is prevalent even today. In a recent critical debate over Fogel's status in the modernist canon, Dan Miron argued that

Fogel's poetry lacks the dynamics of experience, it is barren of active or activating human references. In this respect, its stature next to the poetry of poets like Bialik, U. Z. Greenberg and Alterman is the stature of a *dwarf*. But the static [nature] and the stable, limited horizons blemish the poems much less than they do the prose-fiction. It is not accidental that Fogel always remained within the domain of the very short poem which exhausts a single moment of experience. Nor is it accidental that in his best poems he avoided intellectualizing the moment of experience and focused on conveying it in a *direct, personal* and singular way. We will not go to Fogel's poetry in order to struggle with a richly complex and dynamic emotional and philosophical world view. We shall indeed look at them to find models for absolute lyrical expression.³⁹ (Emphases added)

Miron's positioning of Fogel against the background of Bialik, Alterman, and U. Z. Greenberg is by no means accidental. More than any other Hebrew poets, these three poets have come to emblemize the Hebrew poet's commitment to the idea of the nation. What surfaces in Miron's

critical judgment—as in the previous misreadings—is a hierarchy that privileges the public over the personal. Moreover, Miron's reading perpetuates the view of Fogel not only as nonintellectual but also as a scribbler of direct, personal, and biographical experiences.⁴⁰ Miron's reading of Fogel, and of minimalism in general, tends to be highly ambivalent. He argues, for example, that "an abstract paraphrase of [Fogel's] poems will leave us with a bunch of uninteresting and dull truths." But the same thing can be said of Alterman or Bialik. Any poetic content—when divorced from its unique form of expression—can be said to be a "dull truth." But while the inseparability of form and content is often acknowledged in studies of Bialik or Shlonsky, Fogel's poems are read only as biographical data detached from any intellectual or meta-poetic context.

In light of the consistent disapproval that Fogel's poetics encountered, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that by the standards of the hegemonic literary establishment, his poetry is almost "ungrammatical" (in Culler's sense). If Fogel's poetry remained marginalized and unread throughout the 1930s and 1940s, it is due to the enormous power of canonical conceptions of the "proper" literary values. Dan Pagis has already accounted for Shlonsky's aforementioned misreading of Fogel, expounding it in terms of both personal taste and a rupture between Russian-affiliated and German-affiliated poetry.⁴¹ It may be possible, however, to outline this rupture (or clash) with greater precision. The conflict, I believe, is a two-tiered one: First and foremost it is a struggle over the role of the poet in a society that seeks to construct a national identity. Second, it is a conflict over what is an appropriate poetic language. Fogel's simplicity, which dissociates itself—politically and aesthetically—from the expansive language of both Bialik and the *moderna*, was perceived as simplistic by poets who advocated a symbolist/futurist poetics of abundance.

The foregoing discussion has served a double purpose: to demonstrate how Fogel's poetry was misread and marginalized, and to sketch out the limits of literary possibility in pre-Statehood modernism. Having described Fogel as an oppositional figure in Hebrew poetic modernism, I shall now aim both to demonstrate the complexity of his simplicity and to politicize his so-called "nonideological" poetry.

2

Inasmuch as texts come before us as "always-already-read,"⁴² a reading aspiring to explain a poem must confront not only the text's meaning but also its history of signification. My attempt to reread David

Fogel's poetry aims to take issue with the prevalent construction of his poetry as simple, nonideological and apolitical. If Fredric Jameson is right to claim that "there is nothing that is not social and historical" and that "everything is 'in the last analysis' political,"⁴³ then it should be feasible to unearth a political meaning in Fogel's so-called nonideological poems. My critical assumption is that form, in and of itself, carries a political meaning.⁴⁴ A political rereading of the form of Fogel's poem will inevitably generate a shift of emphasis; rather than focusing on Fogel's subject matter as producing *Stimmung*, I will analyze the ways in which Fogel's texts destabilize any certainty so as to induce—via language, image, and poetic structure—an ideological and perceptual indeterminacy and undecidability. Although Fogel's poetry has no effective ideology of agency that would enable it to move toward political action, its silences, gaps, and indeterminacies effect a critique of the hegemonic trajectory of Hebrew letters. "In the Nights of Autumn" (*Beleilot hastav*) is an instructive example of the ways in which Fogel's style underscores ideology.

בְּלֵילוֹת הַסָּתָו	In the nights of autumn
נוֹפֵל בְּיַעַרִים עֵלֶה לֹא־נִרְאָה	falls in the forests an unseen leaf
וְשׁוֹכֵב דְּיוֹמָם לְאָרֶץ.	and lies still to the earth.
בְּנַחֲלִים	In the streams
יִקְפֹּץ הַדָּג מִן הַמַּיִם	the fish will jump from the water
וְהַד נִקִּישָׁה לְחֹה	and an echo of a wet beat
יַעַן בְּאֶפֶל.	will answer in the darkness.
בְּמַרְחָק הַשְּׁחֹר	In the black distance
נִנְרָעוֹת דְּהִרּוֹת סוּסִים לֹא־נִרְאִים	are sown gallops of invisible horses
הַנִּמְטָסִים וְהוֹלֵכִים.	that are dissolving away.
כֹּל אֵלֶּה יִשְׁמַע	All these
הַהֹלֵךְ הַיָּעִיף	the tired wanderer will hear
וְרֵעַד יַעֲבֹר אֶת בְּשָׂרוֹ.	and a quiver will pass through his flesh. ⁴⁵

This *Stimmung* poem, which centers on the speaker's nocturnal experience, seems somewhat resistant to analysis. The reader habituated to maximalist, perceptibly allusive, and overtly ideological poetry of pre-modernist and modernist Hebrew poetry, is predisposed to find Fogel's simple, ascetic style somewhat disconcerting. Let me outline the characteristics that make Fogel's poems register as ascetic. Like other Fogel poems, "In the Nights of Autumn" is ostensibly simple, bearing no "hidden" meaning. Its "transparent," simple language appears to casually achieve communicative rightness and appears to be generally literal. The poem seems to render a continuous realist frame of reference that unifies the poem mimetically. And finally, the depiction of a personal "mood" seems to be the poem's ultimate goal. In light of these appearances, Fogel's simple poem can paradoxically be said to be impenetrable: What is there to be said about such a simple text? However, all these

appearances prove deceptive as soon as one closely examines the texture of Fogel's language and the indeterminacy it underscores.

One way to problematize the perceived notion of Fogel's simplicity is to look at his intertextual patterns. If a meaning of a poem is always another poem, as Harold Bloom maintains in his *Anxiety of Influence*, then Fogel's *Beleilot hastav* is a modernist (re)writing of Goethe's 1780 *Wanderers Nachtlied II*.⁴⁶ Fogel's simultaneous affiliation with both Hebrew modernism and German Expressionism is best emblemized, perhaps, by his response to Goethe's poem. In German letters, Goethe's poem was often perceived as the high-water mark not only of German classicism but of German lyric poetry in general. In the 1920s, however, the poem came under fire when German expressionists/modernists attacked it as an emblem for the false lyricism of the past. Herwarth Walden, the editor of *Der Sturm*, critiqued the poem in his 1920 "Kritik der vorexpressionistischen Dichtung" (Critique of Pre-Expressionist Poetry). And Bertolt Brecht parodied it in his 1924 *Liturgie vom Hauch* ("Liturgy of Breath").⁴⁷ Unlike Brecht's or Walden's, however, Fogel's critique of Goethe is tacit, undemonstrative, and—in compliance with Fogel's minimalist poetics—does not call attention to itself.

There are striking similarities between Goethe's poem and Fogel's: Both aim to increase their poetic power by restricting their expression to a minimalist form. Both poems also partially share a poetic vocabulary, including the depiction of stillness as both silence and lack of movement. Similarly, the two poems explore the topos of a wanderer overwhelmed by nature. And finally, the poems begin with the depiction of nature and only then focus on its effect on the wanderer. Yet these similarities also mark a sharp difference between the two poems, a difference that clearly underlines Fogel's modernist ideology.

Fogel's poem can be read as a *restructuring* of the form of Goethe's text.⁴⁸ While Goethe's poem depicts a single moment, Fogel's poem is constituted of a heap of broken images whose interconnections are constantly problematized: The first stanza portrays a falling, unseen leaf; the second stanza depicts the jumping fish and the echo it creates, and the third focuses on the gallops of dissolving horses. What is the relationship between these reported events? Do they occur successively or are they simultaneous? Are they specific to a certain moment in time or, rather, habitual to autumn nights? Although the last stanza suggests a mimetic solution, namely, that all these fragmentary pictures are perceived by the wanderer as he roams, their mode of existence remains perplexingly ambiguous.

By disrupting its own narrative continuity, Fogel's poem pulverizes the totality of Goethe's single moment. Not unlike other Fogelian poems, "In the Nights of Autumn" initially seems to encourage the reader to reconstruct a story. Yet, as one attempts to build a narrative from the

discrete events, it becomes clear that any attempt to link these events in a causal or temporal chain is bound to fail; the story is fragmentary and incomplete, and narrative is impossible to recuperate. The poem's use of the plural form of the noun (*leilot*) as its temporal marker already problematizes the text's narrativity and subjectivity; if the reported events occur in many autumn nights, as the plural noun/temporal marker suggests, then there is nothing specifically personal in the wanderer's experience: another wanderer on another night might have had the same experience. The anchoring of the experience in time is thus indeterminate and impersonal.

Moreover, Fogel's deliberately ambiguous use of some of the verbal forms developed in the later phases of biblical grammar further complicates the relationship between the reported events, making at least some of them appear hypothetical and imagined. In an astute analysis of Fogel's syntax, Chana Kronfeld argues that it is possible to see Fogel's language as "[oscillating] between the biblical aspectual system and the modern tense system." In Kronfeld's analysis of the verbs of *Le'at olim susay* (in this issue) and *Binetot hayom*, verbs such as *eshlah*, *tabit*, or *itar*, demonstrate how they can be read in two different ways: "[These verbs] are either aspectual, describing habitual, imperfective action which the speaker experiences (in a future converted to the present or the past), or they are marked for tense, projecting a desired, unattained and perhaps unattainable future event."⁴⁹ The same holds true of these verbs in "In the Nights of Autumn" that are rendered ambiguous in the imperfect/future form. "In the streams the fish will jump from the water" is grammatically in contrast to the preceding and following images.⁵⁰ The use of the future/imperfect may very well be said to obfuscate the ontological status of this reported event, suggesting that it is different from that of the other images. An even more puzzling shift to the future/imperfect occurs in the last stanza: the realist-oriented impressionist explanation of the loose concatenation of images in terms of the perceiving subject is destabilized by the use of the hypothetical imperfect; that, no doubt, may suggest that the act of perception itself may be hypothetical. While the first and third stanzas are written in the present tense, the second and fourth stanzas are written in the future/imperfect, making it virtually impossible to determine whether the depicted events are actual or imagined. The sense of unreality is enhanced when one notes that the poem itself thematizes the problematics of human perception: Can one hear or see an invisible single leaf that falls silently to the ground on many different nights? Can one hear or see dissolving invisible horses? Fogel's interest in analyzing the sense impressions of objects and events undermines our certainty that these objects and events can be perceived by the wanderer. In sum, the poem seems to disorient the reader's sense of temporality: Are these events taking place simultaneously at one and the same place, or are they

simultaneous only in the wanderer's perception (as a moving, displaced subject)? Any determination to produce a mimetic reading will be frustrated by the gaps and indeterminacy of Fogel's text.

The undecidabilities of Fogel's poem do not simply result from Fogel's desire to subvert Goethe's lyrical picture, whose realist continuity is never interrupted. Working with the remnants of the poetic system he inherited from Goethe, Fogel forces the reader to confront the devaluation of the ideological framework that shaped them. By detotalizing Goethe's depiction of nature, Fogel fashions a modernist fragment.⁵¹ Yet, this fragment of totality is further problematized since its sincerity is somewhat undermined by the use of allusion. In his *Discovering Modernism*, Louis Menand maintains that "by the standards of sincerity, an allusion is an operative of questionable legitimacy, since its energy derives not from anything that might be pointed to the poet's experience but from the fact of its already having enjoyed an aesthetic success: it works because it has worked before. But its effectiveness, like the effectiveness of any literary figure, will depend on its cultural status."⁵²

Because Fogel's poems are normally construed as personal, it is important to show how his use of language and literary tradition aims to disrupt traditional conceptions of subjectivity. If the seemingly personal events that the poem represents are indeed not personal but, rather, an homage to a previous canonical text in the public domain of literary culture, then Fogelian subjectivity must be placed in quotation marks. In aligning his own poem to Goethe's, Fogel presents the most personal feeling as always-already a quotation and as a public artifact. In so doing, Fogel follows Walden's expressionist observation that "there are indeed experiences of the person but no personal experiences."⁵³ Reading Fogel's poetry either as a biography or as *Stimmung* ignores not only his thematics and poetic ideology, but also his dialectical relation to tradition. Fogel's poetry, usually perceived as a personal "diary" of suffering and desire, needs to be read in the literary-historical context of the modernist preoccupation with uncertainty and indeterminacy.

3

Fogel's interest in indeterminacy is itself not sufficient to distinguish him from other modernist Hebrew poets. Specific to Fogel's minimalist poetics, however, is the refusal to support any collective, utopian, or constructive ideology. With the exception of *Rav hel'anu ze harhov*, Fogel's resistance is never explicitly expressed. Instead, it is tacitly disclosed through the form: Fogel's tendency to inject undecidability into the reading process, to undermine all mimetic and ideological certainty, to express skepticism about the power of language to galvanize readers into

political action, to negate the notion of originary “truth,” and to question the concept of representation, are manifestations of this resistance.

Working to fracture and subvert its own appearance, Fogel’s language yields its own “negative.” Hence the literal often turns out to be metaphoric, the actual reveals itself as projected, the interior generates the exterior, and the personal becomes public. Constantly oscillating between opposing axes, Fogel’s indeterminate language could not become an empowering political tool. Yet his poetry is social and political precisely because it refrains from being socially useful. While the majority of Hebrew poets were writing poems about Erets Israel (Tchernichowsky’s *Oh artsi! moladti*, Shneur’s *Ba’arets*, Fichmann’s *Artsi*, Lamdan’s *Massada*, Raab’s *Libi im tlalayikh moledet*, Raḥel’s *El artsi*, and Bat-Miriam’s *Erets Israel*, to name but a few examples), Fogel avoided the subject altogether. He declined to anchor his poems in a specific time or place, not by mythologizing a universalized city or land (as in Shlonsky and Alterman’s poetry), but by situating the depicted events in an empty or permeable territory, in the gaps between spatial and temporal categories.

Fogel’s style can be said to emerge from what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call a “deterritorialization of language.” In their influential essay “What Is a Minor Literature” (from which David Lloyd’s definition of minor literature stems), Deleuze and Guattari maintain that Kafka’s style is the result of the impossible situation of a Jew writing German in Prague: “Prague German is a deterritorialized language, appropriate for strange and minor uses.”⁵⁴ Although Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of deterritorialization is too ahistorical (or transhistorical) to be used uncritically,⁵⁵ it may be usefully applied to Fogel’s poetic language. Yet the appropriation of the concept of deterritorialization for Fogel’s poetry should by no means be automatic. Because Hebrew was deterritorialized and unspoken for approximately two millennia, a deterritorialization of language does not seem to be specific to Fogel’s poetry. But while Hebrew modernists were desiring a *reterritorialization* of language (Shlonsky: “we couldn’t continue to live with optic Hebrew only. We wanted our language to be audible, too, to be a Hebrew of all the senses”),⁵⁶ Fogel seems to have been eager to strengthen—both biographically and poetically—the effects of deterritorialization. Fogel’s biography—his constant exile(s)—is a living metaphor for this deterritorialization. In a period when the reterritorialization of language was the ultimate goal of Hebrew literature, Fogel’s continuous attempt to destabilize meaning—to deterritorialize his language—could not be understood or appreciated.

We have already seen how, and up to a certain point why, Fogel’s mode of writing has been misread or silenced. By looking into Fogel’s ideology, I hope to read Fogel more accurately but also to point to the suppressed tradition of anti-*nusah* or simplicity in Hebrew poetic modernism that includes other marginalized poets. Elsewhere I have argued

that modernist women's poetry (Rahel, Esther Raab, and possibly the early poetry of Bat-Miriam and Lea Goldberg) can be perceived as belonging to this suppressed tradition.⁵⁷ What I have been trying to show, however, is that Fogel's and the above-mentioned women poets' simplicity, in and of itself, is anything but plain. Fogel's simplicity should be read in light of Yuri Lotman's assertion that "the concept of simplicity as an aesthetic value . . . is invariably connected with the rejection of ornamentality. Perception of artistic simplicity is possible only against the background of 'ornamental' art. . . . Consequently, simplicity is structurally a much more complex phenomenon than ornamentality."⁵⁸

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NOTES

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1. David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature* (Berkeley, 1987), pp. 20–22. Recent theoretical discussions have tended to conflate the minor and the marginal, privileging the concept of writing in the margins of the language of a hegemonic culture. My analysis aims to reappropriate the notion of the minor for oppositional stances that resist either the idiom or the ideology of the mainstream: not only "minority groups" but also individual, antithetical voices, be their language or ethnicity what it may.

2. Solomon Grodzinski, *Otobiografiya shel kore* [Autobiography of a Reader] (Tel Aviv, 1962), p. 118.

3. Dan Miron, "Two Dates" [Hebrew], *Siman qri'ah*, 22 (1991): 7.

4. Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture* (Minneapolis, 1991), p. 28.

5. According to Benedict Anderson, "Nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind." The nation, for Anderson, is "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." See *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), p. 6.

6. Abraham Shlonsky, *Yalkut Eshel* (Tel Aviv, 1960), p. 56. In the same essay, Shlonsky reviews the modernist literary production exemplified by Lea Goldberg, Nathan Alterman, Raphael Eliaz, Yokheved Bat-Miriam, Ezra Zussman, Alexander Penn, Zvi Arad, Amir Gilboa, T. Carmi, Edna Kornfeld, Shulamith Riftin, Binyamin Galay, and Haim Gouri. All of the above "have deeper roots in the country's landscape, and the personal biography, of almost all of them, is already that of total identification with the public of Erets Israel, whose main essence and glory is the camp of the pioneers" (p. 57). It is rather obvious that when modernism is identified with Zionism, Fogel's poetry cannot be included in the canon.

7. The only exceptions are the poems about World War II. See, for example, *Sha'atat tsva'ot bimlo tevel*, p. 262. Unless otherwise indicated, all page references refer to David Fogel's *Kol hashirim*, ed. Dan Pagis, 2d rev. ed. (Tel Aviv, 1972).

8. David Fogel, *Taḥanot kavot* (Tel Aviv, 1990), p. 301. It is noteworthy that Fogel did attempt to live in Palestine but found it unbearable. He returned to Europe after a year. See Dan Pagis, "Introduction," *Kol hashirim*, p. 23.

9. Roland Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice*, trans. Linda Coverdale (New York, 1985), p. 364.

10. Dov Shay, "To Abraham Shlonsky for His Jubilee" [Hebrew], *Hedim* (June 1950).

11. David Fogel, *Taḥanot kavot*, p. 314. Fogel similarly describes himself as "having been emptied of all content" (p. 325). For an account of Fogel's open-ended construction of subjectivity, see Naomi Seidman's essay in this issue.

12. The term is Robert Alter's. See *The Invention of Hebrew Prose* (Seattle, 1988), pp. 45–49. My attempt to uncover a suppressed, minimalist tradition within Hebrew modernism has been influenced by Chana Kronfeld's study of anti-*nusah* poets. As Hanan Hever notes, however, it was Dov Sadan who first acknowledged this version of modernism. See "Concealed Solace: On the Beginning of Modernism in Hebrew Poetry in Erets Israel" [Hebrew], *Hadarim* 9 (1990): 93.

13. Modernist Hebrew poetry from the 1920s to the early 1950s is highly influenced by and affiliated with Russian poetry. Shlonsky, for example, is highly influenced by both Symbolism and Futurism. Although Futurism emerged in Russia as a reaction against Symbolism, Shlonsky and other Hebrew modernists are simultaneously influenced by these contradictory modernist trends. This awkward phenomenon is typical of Hebrew literature (and maybe of peripheral literatures at large). The explanation for this enmeshment of styles may be found in Amos Oz's shrewd observation that "literary developments which occurred in English and other European literary traditions over centuries took place within decades in Hebrew." See his "Contemporary Hebrew Literature," *Partisan Review* 49 (1982): 17.

14. Jonathan Culler, *Framing The Sign* (Ithaca, 1988), p. 169.

15. A similar blindness, on the part of critics rather than poets, is astutely outlined by Marjorie Perloff's "Stevens/Pound: Whose Era?" where she shows that critics who favor one modernist model automatically denounce the opposite poetic model. See *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Pound Traditions* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 1–27.

16. "Al ot hazman" [On the Mark of Our Time] in *Shirat Raḥel* (Tel Aviv, 1981), pp. 204–5. Raḥel was the first to describe Shlonsky's style as *lahatey lashon*. Moreover, her characterization of the proponents of maximalist style as "writers of hieroglyphics" (*hartumey artsenu*) is indicative of her rejection of Shlonsky's maximalist aesthetics. Raḥel is aware, however, of the risks of simplicity: "The way of simplicity is difficult. From one side lurks the prosaic (*proza'i*) and from the other—dandyism (*gandranut*)."

17. See Yael Meroz and Eric Zakim's translation in this issue. All quotations are from this translation.

18. According to Robert Alter, *melitsah* consists of

poetry (or perhaps one should say 'poesy'), rhetoric, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the high-flown biblical phrase. . . . Thus a Haskalah writer would not simply say that something soared or bounded but that it was 'like the sparks that fly upward' (Job 5:7). . . . lifted from its classical Hebrew context and slapped down on contemporary realities, [the *melitsah*] was meant by its mere application to give the dignity of the ages to contemporary objects of representation.

See Robert Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose* (Seattle, 1990), pp. 23–24.

19. Interestingly, Fogel's attack on Shlonsky and his maximalist aesthetics is almost identical to Bialik's attack on Shlonsky's modernist language. Bialik argues that the "modernists are performing tricks. A true poet should listen to himself, and listen to the sounds of true poetry which come from the depth of his soul; but these [modernists] take the external, the shell; they want to amaze me with language 'tricks'. But language is still not everything." Quoted in Dan Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, ahayot ḥorgot* [Founding Mothers, Stepsisters] (Tel Aviv, 1991), p. 47. Although strikingly similar to Bialik's disapproval of

Shlonsky, Fogel's critique of Shlonsky and the *moderna* should be separated from Bialik's for one simple reason: As a premodernist, Bialik attacks Shlonsky for having chosen a new poetic trajectory. Fogel's attack, in contrast, blames Shlonsky for not having radically deviated from the language of Bialik's generation. As Fogel's attack of the *melitsah* clearly shows, he finds the maximalist language of Shlonsky too similar to that of the antecedent poetic generation. It would be erroneous, then, to assume that Fogel's attack on Shlonsky stems from or is indicative of a conservative, antimodernist position. Bialik's antagonistic characterization of Fogel's poems ("they are totally senseless") attests to the fact that the only thing they shared was a dislike for Shlonsky's so-called "language tricks."

20. See Moshe Ha'neomi, "Introduction" [Hebrew], *Siman qri'ah* 3-4, (1974): 387.

21. Uzi Shavit, "Relations between Shlonsky and Fogel" [Hebrew], *Hasifrut* 4 (1973): 251-56.

22. Abraham Shlonsky, *Yalkut Eshel* (Tel Aviv, 1960), pp. 151-57.

23. Quoted in Dov Vardi, *New Hebrew Poetry* (Tel Aviv, 1947), p. 29.

24. Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Against Ninety-nine* (Tel Aviv, 1938), pp. 7-8. Benjamin Harshav (Hrushovski) has already noted that Greenberg's *Against Ninety-nine* declares war against minimalism (as embodied by the poems of Karni). When Greenberg asserts that "the minimalist poets [*sofrei hatsimtsum*] negate the value of expansiveness . . . because a danger exists that due to the roar of young lions in the open, their lyrical whispering outpour in the corner, in the shadow, will not be heard. If they could roar: 'clear the way,' a roar for expansiveness . . . they would have done it" (p. 14). See Benjamin Hrushovski, *Ritmus harahvut* (Tel Aviv, 1978), pp. 16-19.

25. Abraham Shlonsky, *Shirim* [Poems], vol. 2 (Tel Aviv, 1961), p. 110. The poem was included in *Avney bohu*, whose poems were written between 1931 and 1934.

26. Fogel, *Kol hashirim*, p. 241. As Pagis indicates, the poem was first published in 1938. Interestingly, Pagis cites this poem as an example of Fogel's failure to maintain his individual style in metrically ordered poems (p. 53). Yet Pagis's dislike for the poem's didactic tone takes its meaning at face value, ignoring its ambivalent logic (see below).

27. The Hebrew 'ale nigaf (a defeated leaf) clearly echoes the idiomatic 'ale midaf (a trembling/falling leaf).

28. See, e.g., poems like "With Tender Fingers" (*Be'etsba'ot 'anugot*, p. 108) or "Fluttering Black Flags" (*Dgalim shhorim mefarperim*, p. 138).

29. Abraham Shlonsky, "Before the Dark Gate" [Hebrew], *Hedim* 6 (1923): 66-67. It should be noted that Uzi Shavit reads the same passage differently, suggesting that the "blackness" of Fogel's poetry is reminiscent of Shlonsky's own poetics in *Dvay*. Although Shavit sees Shlonsky's review as a supportive, welcoming text he too suggests that Fogel's poetry was viewed as somewhat reactionary: "It seems that poetry like Fogel's was perceived by Shlonsky and his fellows at that time like an early, rather conservative, stage of modernism, contrasting with the 'real' modernist, revolutionary poetry as in Russia." See Shavit, "Relations between Shlonsky and Fogel."

30. Dan Pagis, "Introduction," in David Fogel's *Kol hashirim*, p. 36.

31. Barbara Herenstein Smith, "Contingencies of Value," in *Canons*, ed. Robert von Hallberg (Chicago, 1984), p. 17.

32. Abraham Shlonsky, *Pirkey yoman* [Chapters of a Diary] (Tel Aviv, 1981), p. 46.

33. Quoted in Uzi Shavit, "Relations between Shlonsky and Fogel."

34. The correlation between poetic/political radicalism and the rejection of femininity is reminiscent of the Italian Futurists' praise of masculinity. Marinetti denounced the "femininity" and "delicacy" of D'Annunzio and celebrated (in his Futurist manifesto) masculinity, speed, and war. Although the *moderna's* politics was entirely different, many *moderna*-affiliated writers and critics denounced women's writing.

35. Joseph Lichtenbaum, *Bithuma shel sifrut* [In the Domain of Literature] (Tel Aviv, 1962), p. 91.

36. Y. Zmora, "On the Poetry of David Fogel" [Hebrew], *Davar*, June 17, 1966.

37. Norman, Zmora, and Lichtenbaum are highly perceptive. Their descriptions of Fogel's poetics, however, can be used only when the value judgments they formulate are ignored and suspended.

38. In condemning Fogel's poetry for its fragmentary nature, Lichtenbaum echoes David Hurvitz's 1922 account of the *Histadrut's* debate over the legitimacy of modernist fragmentation: "The main tragedy of contemporary culture is its fragmentary nature. . . . The cultural disintegration created a human being who is detached from any cultural ground, who struggles with his own contradictions, exploding his life to thousands of splinters. . . . Life and culture turn into a chain of fragments which are not interconnected; there isn't a possibility of seeing the fragments as a one organic picture." Yet, from his examples it becomes clear that Hurvitz legitimizes fragmentation when it is politically committed to the Russian revolution. See Benjamin Hrushovski, *Yorshey hasimbolism bashira* (Jerusalem, 1973).

39. Dan Miron, "When Will We Cease to 'Discover' Fogel" [Hebrew], *Yedi'ot aharonot*, June 2, 1987.

40. For a critique of Miron's reading of women's minimalism, see my "The Exclusion of Women from Hebrew Literary History," *Prooftexts* 11 (1991): 256.

41. Dan Pagis, "Introduction" in *Kol hashirim*, p. 35.

42. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, 1981), p. 9.

43. *The Political Unconscious*, p. 20.

44. I do not mean to suggest that form has a fixed, transhistorical meaning or essence. Instead, I argue that in each period some poetic forms are conservative while others are subversive. Any discussion of the politics of form would thus have to historicize the use of the form under investigation.

45. *Kol hashirim*, p. 113. Translated by Eric Zakim.

46. Goethe's poem reads: "Über allen Gipfeln / Ist Ruh, / In allen Wipfeln / Spürest du / Kaum einen Hauch; / Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde. / Warte nur, balde / Ruhest du auch." Longfellow's English translation of Goethe's poem reads: "O'er all the hill-tops / Is quiet now, / In all the tree-tops / Hearst thou / Hardly a breath; / The birds are asleep in the trees: Wait, soon like these / Thou, too shalt rest." The German text and the translation are drawn from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Selected Poems*, ed. Christopher Middleton (Boston, 1983), pp. 58–59. I want to thank Benjamin Harshav and Bluma Goldstein for helping me sort out the intertextual relationship between Fogel's poem and Goethe's.

47. Bertolt Brecht, *Poems 1913–1956*, ed. John Willet et al. (New York, 1976), p. 100. It is noteworthy that Brecht's attack on Goethe's poem equates lyricism with co-option and political blindness. Brecht's criticism is not dissimilar to Shlonsky's attack on Fogel. The irony, of course, is that Fogel himself critiqued Goethe, although in a much subtler way.

48. It is common for modernists to rewrite (and restructure) texts from the past. A salient example is Joyce's *Ulysses*, a mock epic that parodies Homer's *Odyssey*. See also Eliot's quotes from the French classics in "The Waste Land" or Marianne Moore's rewriting of the myth of Helen's visit to Egypt. Fogel's interest in rewriting is manifested in other poems as well. As Chana Kronfeld suggests, *Bintot hayom* can be read as a rewriting of Bialik's *Im dimdumey hahama*.

49. Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism* (forthcoming in the University of California Press).

50. The same phenomenon appears in many of Fogel's poems. In "Slowly My Horses Climb" (*Le'at 'olim susay*), for example, the speaker begins in the present tense (which in the late biblical model is also adjectival or gerundive) but shifts to the future/imperfect: "Heavy my coach will squeak." In "Days Pass by Me" (*Yamim ponim 'al yadi*) this shift is even more conspicuous. While beginning in the present tense, the speaker turns to the future/imperfect to describe an imagined meeting with his deceased father, a meeting that is modeled after a childhood experience. While the imagined meeting is described in the future/imperfect, the part that is based on childhood memory is projected onto the present

as if it is an ongoing state or action: "I shall still stand before you / Your little, good boy / and my hand silently pulling / your black coat's button." (*hen od e'emod lefanekha / na'arkha haqatan, hatov, / veyadi morta heresh / kaftor me'ilkha hashahor*).

51. Fogel's fragmentation of Goethe's depiction of nature is typically modernist. According to Roland Barthes, "modern poetry, that which stems not from Baudelaire but from Rimbaud . . . destroyed relationships in language and reduced discourse to words as static things . . . In it, Nature becomes a fragmented space, made of objects solitary and terrible, because the links between them are only potential." See *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (Boston, 1970), pp. 49–50.

52. Louis Menand, *Discovering Modernism* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 22–23.

53. Herwarth Walden, "Critique of Pre-Expressionist Poetry" [German], in Paul Pörtner ed., *Literatur—Revolution 1910–1925*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1960), p. 416.

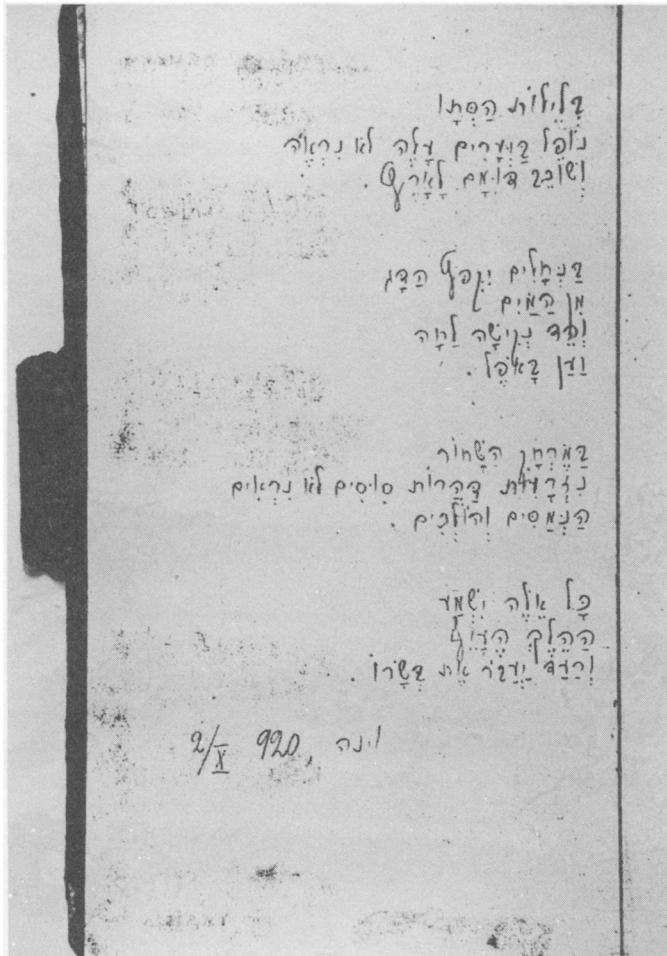
54. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis, 1986), p. 16.

55. For a comprehensive critique of Deleuze and Guattari's definition of minor literature and deterritorialization, see my Ph.D. dissertation, "Suppressed Modernisms: Marginality, Politics, Canon Formation."

56. Quoted in Dov Vardi, *New Hebrew Poetry* (Tel Aviv, 1947), p. 47.

57. See my "The Exclusion of Women from Hebrew Literary History," *Prooftexts* 11 (1991): 259–78.

58. Yuri Lotman, *Analysis of the Poetic Text* (Ann Arbor, 1975), p. 26.



בלילות הסתו [In the Nights of Autumn]—from the manuscript, Vienna, October 2, 1920. Courtesy of the Genazim Institute, Tel Aviv.