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Cultural Nationalism and the Formulation of the Political: Reflections on the Jewish National Movement in the Works of D. Frishman and M. J. Berdichevski

REVITAL AMIRAN

Regarding culture as the very basis of the concept of a nation, this article reflects on cultural nationalism's attitude towards the idea of a nation-state and national-political life. I will suggest that cultural nationalism is a concept that inevitably invokes the aspiration that art will overcome political life, undermining its role to provide the soon-to-be citizens with an adequate arena on which to contest their ethics. Thus, cultural nationalism might prevent politics from being involved in questions of identity and may imply some questionable consequences regarding democratic values such as individual autonomy. Hence, cultural nationalism keeps open the option to contradict its own intrinsic postulation that aims for self-sovereignty. This claim will be demonstrated with the case study of the Jewish national movement and more specifically through the examination of the writings of two important literary personae within it: David Frishman and Micha Joseph Berdichevski.

This article aims to contribute to a productive trend in the study of nationalism, which emphasizes the culture (that is, costumes, language, moral ideals, conciseness, and art) of an ethnic group rather than its political aspects, regarding culture as the very basis of the concept of a nation. Thus, scholars such as Anthony D. Smith, John Hutchinson, Joep Leerssen, David Aberbach, Charles Blattberg, and Miroslav Hroch direct our attention to the inspirational role of culture, especially of literary figures and works, in providing the modern nation with its *raison d'être*.¹

In light of this assumption, the article considers the phenomenon of cultural nationalism in relation to political nationalism. More specifically, I wish

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to reflect on cultural nationalism's attitude towards the idea of a nation-state and national-political life. This article will suggest that cultural nationalism is a concept that inevitably aspires to the victory of art over political life. Regarding the political primarily as an idea of physical energy, force, and violence, the concept of cultural nationalism pushes to the shadows the role of politics in providing the soon-to-be-citizens with an adequate arena for contesting their ethics. Thus, cultural nationalism may wish to prevent politics from having involvement in questions of identity and may imply some questionable consequences regarding democratic values. Hence, cultural nationalism maintains the option of contradicting its own intrinsic postulation that aims for liberty.

This claim will be demonstrated through the case study of the Jewish national movement and, more specifically, through the writings of two of its important literary figures: the very influential literary critic, novelist, and essayist David Frishman (1859–1921),² and the famous novelist, journalist and essayist Micha Joseph Berdichevski (Bin Gorion, 1865–1921), who served as a role-model for many Jews of his generation and became something of a legend.³

Following Hroch, who argued that the first phase of every national movement is cultural, I would like to consider the Jewish national movement, in both its political and wider social and cultural conditions, as emanating from a search for a specifically modern identity for European Jews. Hence, the Jewish national movement's origin should not be placed in 1897, the year of the first Zionist Congress, but rather in 1853, upon the publication of the first Hebrew novel, Avraham Mapu's *The Love of Zion*. Examining the Jewish national movement not only as a political but also, and primarily, as a cultural movement provides a broader perspective that may disclose insights into the relationship between culture and politics.

Most theorists treat nationalism as an exclusively modern phenomenon and an essentially political one. According to the modernist approaches, there were no nations before the modern period. Hence, nationalism is intelligible only as a product of the transformation from a rural, traditionalist society to an urban, industrial one. While Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner associated nationalism with the modern industrial economy and the appearance of democratic states,⁴ Isaiah Berlin, Charles Taylor, and Homi Bhabha emphasized the agency of intellectual elites and social power.⁵ For all these thinkers, it was some particular set of modern conditions that was thought to have created the urge to form a national community characterized by political sovereignty. Revisionist theorists such as Anthony D. Smith and John Armstrong believed that modern forces facilitated the process of turning ethnic groups into nations, although they did stress the inevitably ethnic character of nations. That is, they acknowledged the role of the forces of modernity in fostering the aspiration of certain groups to define the national and the political in terms of one another.⁶

In sum, most theorists of nationalism shared the assumption that the specific context of modernity (for example, the rise of the middle class, print,

capitalism, and the disintegration of organic communities) aroused in certain groups (ethnic and nonethnic) a yearning for self-determination. Nationalism is therefore defined primarily in political terms, and the constitution of a national state is regarded as the first task of national movements. As Gellner puts it, “[n]ationalism is primarily a political principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent.”⁷

The singularity of the nationalist movements of certain peoples, such as the Greeks, the Jews, and the Armenians (to mention just a few examples), consists of an overlap not only between political sovereignty and the national unit but also between these two factors and an intense ethnocentrism, in which a specific ethnic group is infused with sacred elements and religious fervor and imagery.⁸ However, I would like to suggest that it is exactly instances of this kind that should invite us to reexamine the position of the political in these movements. Since the cultural roots of these ethnic groups (including myths, shared language, shared historical memories, and sense of ancient solidarity) are largely vital to their self-definition as nations, the question that should be asked is: What is the relationship between the cultural and the political in these groups’ national movements? Moreover, given the substantial overlap between culture and politics, what remains of the properly political domain?

This question is particularly interesting in the case study of Jewish nationalism, since unlike the Armenians and other “nations in exile,” of which many members continued to inhabit their motherland, most Jews were in the Diaspora and did not retain a territorial homeland. Hence, whereas nationalism often involves a struggle for territorial secession from a larger political unit, the Jewish national movement, at least in its incipient phase, aspired for a return to a former, if ancient, territorial homeland.⁹ Accordingly, the relation to the political realm among members of this group, insofar as politics is identified with the existence of a sovereign state, did not lean upon any direct practical experience but had to be (re)invented and (re)imagined.

Focusing on this case study, this article will discuss this politically immature movement, in which the cultural, at least at its outset, was the main issue. The movement was host to two opposing trends (represented by Frishman and Berdichevski) that were, however, alike in treating the political sphere as a reflection of aesthetic aspirations. In this sense, the national movement may present a democratically problematic case of interaction between the cultural and the political. Before turning to the discussion of this interplay in the two authors, I will offer a brief overview of cultural nationalism.

CULTURAL NATIONALISM

In *La Scienza Nuova* (*The New Science*, 1725), Giambattista Vico described nationalism as a major preoccupation of the modern world and as a source of inspiration. He suggested tracing a nation’s origins to its earliest cultural

manifestations as presented to it by its primeval poets, historians, lawmakers, and religious leaders. However, these manifestations were thought to constitute a totality best explored in a way that transcended specialization and national boundaries, as the history of humanity was believed to exhibit a universal pattern that would be followed by all nations. With the passage of time, nations would move towards realizing their full potential and would consequently contribute to the improvement of the world.

Since Vico believed that humanity's original legislative wisdom was that of the poets, he viewed the very incipient phenomenon of the modern nation-state as an expression of a poetic truth: "[W]e find that poetry constituted the first common language of all ancient nations, including that of the Hebrews."¹⁰ For Vico, it is people's ability to feel and imagine, above and beyond the power of reason, that has enabled the creation of fables, myths, and religion. Hence, the original and defining attributes of a nation should be sought in what was imagined by its first poets.

The term "cultural nationalism" is usually identified with a trend within European Romanticism that emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century, and whose leading figures included J. G. Herder, F. Schiller, J. W. V. Goethe, and Lord G. G. Byron, who, in the spirit of Vico, could be said to have constituted nationalism on cultural foundations. Their endeavor was to encourage liberalism, education, and the upholding of certain moral ideals, thereby promoting the creation of a better, more tolerant world, in which each nation would be recognized for its unique cultural contribution to humanity and progress.

According to Herder, humanity is naturally divided into different nations. Specific to each is a set of historical, cultural experiences that dictates its future development and enables it to participate in the greater advancement of the human race.¹¹ Herder's view inspired literary personae throughout Europe to salvage and produce national identity through the collection of folk literature and legends that emphasized their nation's uniqueness (These writers included Adam Mickiewicz in Poland, the Grimm Brothers, Klemens Brentano, and Achim Von Arnim in Germany, and Ján Kollár in Slovenia).

In sum, in this period, nationalism evolved in line with universalism. Rivalry between nations was not considered contradictory with international fraternity. The leaders of this ideology were mainly literary people who were in a position to trace or invent, to articulate, and to interpret their nation's ancient lore in order to assist in cultivating its intrinsic strength, referred to by Herder as the "*Kraft*" (power, force) of their own people.

Political life, according to this doctrine, was not epitomized in formal institutions or legal arrangements, but rather in the activity of maintaining and developing what was thought to be the transcendent essence of the nation. Hence, the real legislators were not those with authority over the armed forces or the distribution of material resources, but those who were

considered as the cultural authority that could shape national identity. Especially important were the poets, who with their mastery of words and prophetic modes of expression were perceived as able to bridge the ancient roots of the nation with its emergent modern identity, thereby translating its mythical origins into a kind of secular holiness that would define their nation's uniqueness amongst others and enable fruitful cross-border dialogues.

This pluralist scheme was only the first phase of nationalism. After 1848, the atmosphere changed and with it the meaning of nationalism. Self-interest took the place of a universal vision; the value of cross-border exchanges of ideas was replaced by a sanctification of each nation within its borders; Herder and Vico were replaced by a Right Hegelianism; D'Annunzio took the place of Byron. The emphasis was no longer the freedom of the individual but rather the narrow protection of the state.¹²

The fact that nationalism came to be based on the concept of territorial distinctness and was no longer thought of in the context of internationalism did not mean it ceased to exist as a specifically cultural movement that was a major concern to many intellectuals.¹³ In other words, cultural passion was still crucial and led the way, but its direction shifted radically.

The poets of this second, chauvinist phase of nationalism occupied much the same modernist ground as the lyricists of its first phase. The Romanticist praise of a national, heroic past and the attempt to counter rationalism through a return to tradition that was thought capable of redeeming individuals from an atomistic way of life, were an integral part of their *Weltanschauung*. It is therefore not surprising that Gabriele D'Annunzio, a famous poet and a fighter pilot, was able to transform nationalism from a democratic ideology into a fascist one and to have a major impact on Mussolini as a consequence.¹⁴ The prominence and public responsibility accorded to cultural figures in matters of national identity was another point of continuity. This outstanding position of artists becomes even more striking in light of the fact that D'Annunzio's popularity almost equaled that of Mussolini¹⁵ (highlighting the importance of culture alongside politics in the nationalist imagination).

An additional point of continuity between the literary people of the two phases of nationalism was the intellectual connections they all maintained with like-minded thinkers in other countries. Like Byron in his time, D'Annunzio was part of a wide-ranging network that included other European poets who shared his fascist tendencies, and who, although each was very much focused on the interests of his own nation, were influenced by the same ideas.¹⁶

However, despite this strong commonality between the two phases of nationalism, there was a crucial difference between them in the way the cultural was thought to shape the political. In the first phase of nationalism, violence was perceived as a necessary means only in the cause of liberating an oppressed nation from tyranny. Heroism was exalted for the sake of the

liberation of nations. Concomitantly, art was wedded to politics through the ideas of universal morality. Poets like Byron, Adam F. Ryleyev, Adam B. Mickiewicz, and Sándor Petőfi died on the battlefield while struggling for national independence. The merging of these poets' artistic works with their self-image as bearers of a national cause was mediated through their strong sense of moral responsibility and belief in universal justice, liberation, and progress.

The attempt of the poets of the "chauvinist phase" of nationalism to abolish the lines between the literary world and the physical one was manifested in a very different manner. Passions took the place of supposedly universal and "objective" morals. The poet's involvement in national revival was no longer justified on an ethical basis but instead came to represent one's passionate drives and urges. The passion for sovereignty transformed into a fondness of violence justified through aesthetic terms.

This presentation of the two sides of cultural nationalism is, of course, schematic and does not tell the whole story of the phenomenon. Of course, the two positions are extremes on a continuum. I will focus the discussion on these two extremes as reflected in Jewish cultural nationalism, in an attempt to shed light on their formulations of the political. After introducing the specific cultural roots of Jewish nationalism, I will move on to discuss Frishman and Berdichevski's worldviews. Both writers were highly involved in the cultural revival of the Jewish nation and contributed in various ways to the search for a modern Jewish identity. Frishman can be regarded as a representative of the first phase of European cultural nationalism, while Berdichevski represents the zealous, aggressive patriotism of its second phase.

JEWISH CULTURAL NATIONALISM

Jewish nationalism was largely the result of a severe cultural crisis encountered by European Jewry in the second half of the nineteenth century. The watershed in the modern history of the Jewish people is the rise of the Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*) in Germany in the late eighteenth century. The Jewish "Enlighteners" aspired to add the fruits of the European Enlightenment, in areas including philosophy, literature, and science, to the intellectual world of the Jews that until then had been confined mainly to the *Halakha*, Jewish law. The Jewish Enlightenment declined in Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but then spread to Eastern Europe, mainly Russia, where it reached its peak in the 1860s and 1870s. The Jewish "Enlighteners" aspired to provide a bridge from the medieval world of the ghetto to the modern world of Western Europe. They sought to do this chiefly by calling for educational reforms within the Jewish communities and by encouraging secular education and the acquisition of foreign languages.

The overall effects of the *Haskalah* were both disintegrative and integrative. In Western Europe, the *Haskalah* served as a means for diffusing

Enlightenment ideas and turned participation in the Jewish community into an option. In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, it served as a vehicle for modernizing the Jewish collective, while stressing the ethnic aspects of Jewish identity and endeavoring to strengthen the cohesiveness of Jewish communities. Thus, in Eastern Europe, where the Jewish national movement was most developed, the “Enlighteners” aspired to bring modernity to Judaism, but to do so without neglecting a sense of Jewish solidarity. They did, however, seek to transform the features of this solidarity, basing it on secular foundations. In addition to their affirmation of modernity and the promotion of secular education and the acquisition of languages, the Jewish “Enlighteners” were looking for ways to bolster the confidence of the Jewish people, to restore their dignity, to reawaken their emotional life, and to develop their aesthetic sense. In these terms, the Jewish religion was conceived as a cultural attribute of the nation that could contribute to the improvement of emotional life, and not as an authority over that life.¹⁷

It should be noted that Jews were not only attempting to participate in modernity but were often held responsible for the distresses of the modern world and the decadence associated with the *fin de siècle*. Thus, for example, the famous French neurologist Martin Charcot (1825–1893), a highly influential medical figure and one of Freud’s teachers, claimed that the Jews were more likely to be predisposed to decadence as a result of their unstable and frail nervous systems. Many Jews sought to counter these accusations by, for example, the creation of a “muscular Jew.”¹⁸

Whereas in Western Europe, philosophy and science were the main branches of knowledge in the nineteenth century, in Russia works of literature and journalism served as the highest expressions of culture. Judaism tended to be treated by *Haskalah* writers as a cultural and moral phenomenon, but not as an object of philosophical investigation. The combined effect of positivism and the ban on political activity in Tsarist Russia turned literature into the intelligentsia’s arena of free expression and ideological battleground. Jewish writers sought to wage a social and moral struggle in order to improve Jewish life, enabling the modern Jew to escape the ascetic life of the *Halakha* in favor of some profane, worldly experiences. Writers such as Avraham Mapu, Shalom Ya’akov Abramovitz (known as Mendele the Book Peddler), Yehudah Leib Gordon, Peretz Smolenskin, Reuven Asher Brodes, and David Frishman were some of the representatives of this endeavor. These writers used the Hebrew language press to spread their ideas and created a Hebrew literature that criticized the rabbinic establishment and offered detailed descriptions of contemporary Jewish social life.

The end of the nineteenth century saw a proliferation of Hebrew periodicals—such as *Ha-Maggid*, *Ha-Karmel*, *Ha-Melitz*, and *Ha-Zefira*—all of which played a decisive role in bridging the gap between enlightenment and the Jewish religion, and between Russian culture and the emergent Hebrew one. Eventually these Hebrew papers contributed to the cultural

revolution of Russian Jewry. Hebrew fiction and poetry began to play a decisive role in Jewish life. In 1853, Avraham Mapu published *The Love of Zion*, the first Hebrew novel, which seems to respond to and fulfill the whole range of the Jewish Enlighteners' aspirations and intentions. This novel was written in Biblical Hebrew and described love affairs and passions. By emphasizing the superiority of the language of the Bible, Mapu succeeded in exhibiting an aesthetic side of Judaism and also showed that the Hebrew language could be forged into different forms of expression and adapted to serve the diversity of modern existence.

Mapu's Romantic spirit was soon replaced by a more realist one. Literary works such as *Hypocrite Eagle* (Mapu, 1858), *The Pole of a Carriage* (Leib Gordon, 1860), *Religion and Life* (Brodes, 1876), to name only a few, focused on current events and embedded a critique of the confinement within traditional communities and religious restrictions enforced by Orthodoxy. Hebrew literature thus came to be perceived as responsible for the transformation of Jewish culture as a whole, and, as such, it became a revolutionary force within Jewish society and its national movement. This reference to actual events continued to characterize the next phase of Hebrew literature, which lasted from the beginning of the 1880s through the early years of the twentieth century. This phase, known as the Modern Hebrew Renaissance, was characterized by the writers' deep commitment to the struggle for the improvement of Jewish life and by the attempt to influence the community's historical course.¹⁹

Although the Modern Hebrew Renaissance is partly contemporaneous with the *Hibat Zion* movement (established in 1881) that promoted Jewish settlement in Palestine, the two movements were independent of one another. The Modern Hebrew Renaissance tended to have its own ideological agendas, and those drawn to the emerging Zionist movement were not among the forces that propelled, as writers or readers, the revival of Hebrew literature. In fact, the early Zionist movement was nourished by reactionary elements in the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia that, alerted by the pogroms of 1881 and disappointed by the failure of Jews to become an integral part of Russian society, was looking for a political solution and saw the redemption of Russian Jewry in the establishment of a separate Jewish sovereignty.

The New Hebrew literature, on the other hand, was nurtured by Eastern European Jews who had never abandoned traditional Jewish life. They understood their own nationalism as a natural continuation of a Jewish identity that was strengthened by the pogroms, rather than restored by them. The emergence of a large Hebrew readership at the beginning of the 1880s was the result of economic and social changes in the lower strata of the Russian and Eastern European Jewish bourgeoisie that began to be exposed to European culture and education. The combination of this exposure and the effect of the pogroms created in these Jews an urge to redefine their identity and consequently to create a literary public sphere in which they could deal with

their specific situation and distress.²⁰ Their choice of Hebrew over Yiddish reflected their conviction that the Hebrew language—the language of the Bible, with its connotations of national autonomy, literary innovation, and a unique historical role—carried a dignity unequalled by Yiddish. As such, Hebrew provided the Jewish bourgeoisie with an appropriate medium for their national project, which aimed to transcend the culture of the *shtetl* in its shabby reality and to create in its place a modern Jewish culture that would not be oblivious to its own unique tradition.²¹

In addition to the differences in background and experience among members of the new Jewish political movement and the pioneers of the cultural one, there was a distinction in the national ambitions of the two groups. In fact, the founders of Modern Hebrew literature were by no means committed to the Zionist idea, and some, including David Frishman, Yehudah Leib Kantor, and Shalom Yaa'kov Abramovitz, were even hostile to it. Their sense of national mission was not an aspiration for a sovereign state for the Jews but the project of creating a modern Jewish identity.

The Modern Hebrew Renaissance began as an international movement. The literary journals became an arena for the convergence of authors from many countries and several cities in Eastern Europe (particularly Vilna, Warsaw, and Odessa), allowing them to spread their ideas to a far greater readership. The interest in the Land of Israel (*Eretz Israel*) was regarded mainly as a passing episode, as these writers' investment resided in the establishment of an imaginary, cultural territory.

The two forms of nationalism (cultural and political) coexisted during the Jewish national revival until the 1920s. During this time, the literary domain competed with the political realm and as such it took on some of the attributes usually reserved for the political arena.

After the Bolshevik revolution, Hebrew literature in Eastern Europe lost its power and Palestine became its main base. With this shift, the relations between the cultural and the political within Jewish nationalism underwent radical changes. Shedding its arrogant posture, the Modern Hebrew Renaissance subsequently became wedded to the Zionist idea and closely followed its evolution.

In the following pages, I will discuss two different forms of “cultural nationalism,” each maintaining a different relationship between culture and politics, and I will argue that, despite their differences, these forms of nationalism share certain fundamental features that may challenge democratic values.

HUMANIST NATIONALISM: DAVID FRISHMAN

David Frishman was the most prominent Hebrew literary critic at the end of the nineteenth century. He was also closely involved in Hebrew publishing

in Europe. Like many intellectuals of his time, he found interest in various genres. Thus, in addition to literary criticism, he wrote poems and short stories and was famous for his anthology of Hebrew folk legends, *Bamidbar (In the Desert)*. His influential criticism led to the radical transformation of Hebrew literature and contributed to literary modernism in Hebrew. In light of the fact that in his time literary texts played a major role in shaping and directing Jewish life, Frishman was granted the status of a national leader.²² In honor of his fiftieth birthday, the Society of Lovers of Hebrew (*Hovevey Sfat Ever*) organized a special ceremony. Rabbi Yaa'kov Maza's words, cited by *Hazfirah*—one of the most influential Hebrew journals at the time—reflect Frishman's status as a national leader:

A nation that does not celebrate its writers' fiftieth birthdays is not a living nation; and a nation that knows how to celebrate those who should be remembered, has its own self-awareness and its ears are attentive to the voice of literature Our nation has no roof in the whole universe, only the sky above. When a nation places itself within anniversaries, it testifies to its virtue and not to its dishonor.²³

Rabbi Maza's explanation for Frishman's special status is concealed in the way he characterizes a nation, as a cultural unit that is not restricted by any physical borders. It is an entity whose existence and validity is fully dependent on its literature and its literary personae.

In a sense, the early-twentieth-century Jewish world in which Frishman was active exhibited some similar features to the spirit of early German idealism that was closely linked to Romanticism. In German idealism, politics, especially in its material embodiment, was considered secondary to reason, art, and language. Thinkers such as I. Kant, J. G. Fichte, F. Schiller, J. G. Herder, and W. V. Humboldt aspired to redeem the individual from the chains of absolutism through an embrace of universal values.²⁴ The national state was considered a threat to human freedom. However, the Jewish universalism to which Frishman adhered did not truly seek to redeem the individual from a destructive political system but rather served as a vehicle towards salvation from psychological, traditional, and cultural fetters. Accordingly, Jewish thinkers like Peretz Smolenskin (in his early phase), Simon Dubnow, and Ahad Haa'm (penname of Asher Zvi Ginzberg, considered the founder of cultural Zionism and one of the main critics of political Zionism) held that the Jewish national redemption must be primarily a spiritual and cultural one.

Frishman, however, occupied an extreme position. His rejection of any attempt to redeem the Jewish people by political means (in Palestine or in the Diaspora) was total. Moreover, he perceived any attempt to use political tools for the recovery of the Jewish nation as immoral and harmful to the Jewish

Volksgeist. Thus, Frishman contributed to the insertion and dissemination of a problematic approach towards politics in the Jewish world.

In what follows, I would like to examine Frishman's worldview and to analyze its reasoning and conclusions. Frishman defined the main problem of the Jewish nation in terms of the emotional distresses of its private individuals. The Jewish soul became like "an embalmed body, [that] has no freshness, no emotion, no feeling . . . [it is] indifferent to the voice of music and imperceptive to beauty."²⁵

The internal "adversary" is encapsulated in the hearts of the Jewish people and in their inability to cope with their emotional needs: "I know of no people whose senses have been dulled to the same extent and whose inner feelings have so faded away as the people of Israel."²⁶ Elsewhere he adds: "How many Jews feel the need to speak their hearts? How many feel the necessity to be refined, to be excited, to become sanctified?"²⁷

For Frishman, the source of the Jewish angst was mainly rooted in the Jews' own traditional asceticism that emphasized the traditional, theoretical studies and advanced a rational, stoic lifestyle: "It would be good for us if we could forget our history at times. . . . if only we could relinquish our studies, if only we could relinquish books, if only we could relinquish our history. We may fall wherever we fall if only not in the written word . . . Our soul has become like an old yellow paper from an ancient Torah Book."²⁸

Thus, the redemption of the Jewish people lies in the revival of their emotional, imaginary lives and in their ability to oppose their tendency for rational thought: "Redemption will not come from without, but from within; it will not come from the head, but from the heart."²⁹ This premise led Frishman to appoint art as the primary agent of redemption: "I am not ashamed to declare that I wholeheartedly believe in the phrase: Works of art are the revival of the nation."³⁰ Under the influence of Idealist and early Romanticist writers such as Kant, Herder, and Schiller, Frishman promoted an involvement with art that would arouse the individual's creative forces and at the same time unite the nation:

Verses, which are the product of a true poet, turn a people into a nation! Verses, if they contain exalted language and imagination, magnetize the heart of any young scholar, not allowing him to depart from his nation.³¹

National revival, thus seeks to cultivate the emotional lives of the individuals and respond to their inner needs. Echoing the German *Bildung* tradition that promoted personal and cultural cultivation, Frishman set up Hebrew literature as the foremost pedagogical tool for liberating the Jewish people from their internal chains and for developing their minds. Thus, he perceived the advancement of Jewish national literature as the ultimate

instrument of national revival and ascribed it a prominent role in the creation of a distinct and coherent modern Jewish national identity.³²

Following Herder, who regarded the establishment of formal political institutions as the beginning of the atrophy and destruction of the national spirit, Frishman aspired to create a cultural national ethos instead of an administrative one.³³ Consequently, his national vision did not involve any radical alteration of external reality, but rather a cultural-aesthetic transformation intended to influence the internal world of the nation's members. His steadfast refusal to draw any political implications from his national commitment made him oppose his *Zeitgeist*, which called for safeguarding the national spirit within the structure of a national state.³⁴

What was the premise for Frishman's negation of the Jewish political revival? Why did he insist? Frishman's main argument was that the spirit of the Jewish people did not require any intentional effort in order to be maintained, since the Jewish *Volksgeist* was cyclic and undying:

Judaism is an ideal, and therefore eternal. No ideal could be eliminated from this world—this is my creed. Generations come and go. The great circle is rolling around. And when Judaism and Jews become feeble in one place, at the very same moment, the tongue of flame is flashing elsewhere, and slowly turns into a burning fire . . . and everything begins all over again.³⁵

In contrast to Herder, who claimed that the historical role of the Jewish nation had ended and that its continued existence was abnormal,³⁶ Frishman believed that the Jewish national spirit could not disappear and would forever be renewed in a cyclical recurrence:

They usually ask: Why have the Greeks ceased to be a nation, why have the Romans been obliterated from the earth while the Jews still live to this very day? . . . What can one take from the Jews? . . . Their homeland is not dependent on "The Land," but is sheer spirit. It is sheer ideal, and an ideal is an eternal thing.³⁷

In order to prove that Judaism is eternal, Frishman chose to stress the Universalist characteristics of the Jewish tradition. Thus, he chose to speak of the monotheistic faith, the precept "Love thy neighbor as thyself," and the idea of a messiah. He regarded the Jewish spirit as the avant-garde of universal values that emblemizes the appropriate, enlightened way of life:

The essence of Judaism is uprightness . . . the inability to do injustice to fellow men. If uprightness was a sort of music I would have said: The Jews have the best sense of hearing for it, while other nations are less musical. The Jew could not commit injustice. He thus becomes the bearer of absolute morality.³⁸

This total identification of Judaism with moral and spiritual values not only inoculates the Jewish nation against disappearance but also renders it an adequate participant in the secular world. In this context, it is worth recalling Herder's notion that every historical phenomenon is an expression of an aspect of the truth of humanity. Herder regarded humanity as a multifaceted entity with each nation representing a different aspect. Thus, the various national units do not pose an obstacle to universality, but rather betoken its varied manifestations.³⁹

In his depiction of the Jewish nation as a purely ethical spirit, Frishman presented it as the forefront of European society, enabling modern Jews to connect their Jewish identity with what he considered universal experiences. It should be noted that Frishman admired Western culture and regarded it as the ultimate force of a universal progress. His whole cultural enterprise was aimed at turning this culture into an indispensable part of Judaism: "The spirit of progress consistently moves from east to west; it moves from place to place heading always to the west. . . . And America has always been considered a symbol of sweetness and light."⁴⁰

Like the concept of humanity in Herder's view or of reason in Kant's and Fichte's writings, Frishman viewed Judaism as autonomous, its existence based on its self-understanding. He further expounded that a nation is defined by its historical identity and not by its geographical boundaries: "To the term 'country' I give no validation, but rather to the term 'nation'. A nation without a country is my only aim, and the spirit of history aspires to it."⁴¹

Moreover, Frishman was convinced that any attempt to give material expression to Judaism would contradict its essence and would thus lead to its destruction: "Did we not have a material land once, one that was opposed to our character and selfhood? And it was by no means good for us . . . everything material is temporary—whereas Judaism aspires to the eternal."⁴² The Jewish people survived not *despite* the absence of a state but precisely *because* of its unavailability: "A state that already exists signifies nothing. Perhaps it is this conception that has maintained a whole nation for two thousand years."⁴³

Indeed, in 1912–13, when Frishman paid a visit to Palestine, he discovered the materialization of his fears, that is, the seeds of destruction of the moral Jewish spirit. He wrote the following in his notebook: "When one walks around the Land of Israel in the settlements that manifest its strength, one may notice that our brethren exercise domination and sometimes even use greater force than that dictated by our national character."⁴⁴

Frishman may be regarded as a special kind of Byronic spirit. Following in the footsteps of the Scottish-born poet whom he admired, he was convinced that nationalism could and should coexist with universalism. Moreover, Frishman adored Byron's temperamental personality. In his short stories, he consistently presented rebellious, unconventional characters that coped with guilt and struggled against the accepted norms. However, it

should be noted that his heroism took a totally different form. His nonconformist Romanticism aimed to achieve his nation's inner freedom, and, as such, he abhorred the ideal of warfare or sacrifice for political freedom. He was intolerant of any expression of violence and even negated it as a means for the achievement of a noble goal.

By the same token, his appreciation of the Jewish past was not intended to generate a narrow-minded Jew, concentrated exclusively on his own heritage, but rather one who is open to broader experiences. Frishman's pursuit of spiritual harmony found its analogy in his wish for universal harmony, in which all nations would live in brotherhood and cooperation, united by their striving towards universal progress, which would render redundant any formal political institutions or land divisions.

In Frishman's view, art was awarded an educational leadership role. Men of letters in particular are the ones who become the real legislators. As the most important representatives and leaders of their community, they act to sensitize their people emotionally, thereby helping them to feel at home within their own community and at the same time take an active part in modern European life. In addition to the abandonment of the everyday distress of European Jewry, Frishman's view marked politics as the arena of immortality. This theme is even more prominent in Frishman's celebrated anthology *Bamidbar*. Throughout this work, Frishman expressed a consistently hostile and suspicious attitude towards any social contract and political institution. Presenting the political through a language of coercion, injustice, and hypocrisy, Frishman constituted this realm as one that contradicts and threatens human authenticity and freedom.

Thus, for example, in the fable *Sorer VeMored (The Rebellious)* Khat Ben Pgie'l is presented as a noble savage who consistently tries to combat the immoral and inhuman social institutions (for example, army, law, and private property):

Only greedy rulers made up these social laws and rules. They did that in order to prevent man from stepping wherever he pleases and deprive him of the freedom bestowed on him by creation.⁴⁵

As one of his era's most prominent Jewish literary figures, Frishman taught his public that politics is a bed of corruption, evil, and thus wholly detached from the noble values embedded in their Jewish identity. The irony, however, is inevitable. Frishman's treatment of politics as a sphere that is entirely disconnected from questions of selfhood, values, and identity may have paved the way for some Jews to perceive it in a manner that may negate individual self-realization. As such, Frishman failed to see how his determined insistence to act exclusively in the cultural sphere and his denial

of the political may have jeopardized the individual autonomy and freedom he sanctified.

NATIONALISM OF BLOOD: MICHA JOSEPH BERDICHEVSKI

Significantly, for Berdichevski as for Frishman, literary revival was at the core of national consciousness:

As I Stand on the Mountain of Israel's House I see the many cracks in the walls of Judaism and the Jews and behold my people in their misery; I see the misfortune that surrounds them. . . . I am convinced that a literary awakening and a written reproach emerging from the heart and entering the heart is what is needed in order to awaken our drowsy people and to cure their spiritual and material illness.⁴⁶

Given the fact that Berdichevski is considered one of the founders of Modern Hebrew prose,⁴⁷ the above phrase may not be so surprising. Like Frishman, Berdichevski was a great believer in the art of words as well as in their active role in society: "Poetry does not only describe people and their lives, it creates new people and new lives."⁴⁸

Moreover, he followed Frishman in diagnosing the main problem of his era's Jewry as an internal one. His original motivation for pursuing national revival stemmed from the belief that Judaism would need to undergo a radical cultural change in order to keep its relevance for modern Jews.

According to Berdichevski, a nation's literary life serves as the primary indication of its strengths and unity. Therefore, there can be no physical, political redemption in the absence of a national literary and one that would turn into a healthy, living salvation, relevant to the younger generations. In an article written in 1890, he mocked his contemporary Hebrew authors who called for an immediate, concrete redemption of the Jewish people in times when the Jewish cultural, literary condition seems hopeless:

The people of Israel are in sorrow, drowning, dying, and they [some Hebrew authors-R. A.] praise their revival and yell: revival of [the spoken-R. A.] language . . . revival of the people . . . revival of the land.⁴⁹

In contrast to earlier generations, Berdichevski diagnosed contemporary Jews as much more concerned with the present, intimate, existential situation. He was therefore convinced that rabbinic Judaism could no longer be accepted as it attempted to force an embrace of the world of tradition and tighten its grasp over everyday life. Both Berdichevski and Frishman aspired to enrich Jewish life and to allow it to enjoy the fruits of the Western world

that had emerged with the secularization process, opening the people up to new experiences and acknowledging their new desiderata as individuals.

Despite this continuity between Frishman and Berdichevski, one should be aware of a main difference between these two cultural leaders. While Frishman turned his back on the political realm, perceiving and shaping it as a danger to the cultivation of the Jewish individual and nation, Berdichevski passionately and enthusiastically approved it. Indeed, Berdichevski internalized the late Romantic idea that the establishment of a national state is an essential component of national redemption. Consequently, he hoped for the return of political power to the Jewish people:⁵⁰ “We need a basis in place and in time . . . in order to grasp an existing thing.”⁵¹ Elsewhere, he wrote:

The truth is that if people do not cling to the land, any government is a mere abstraction. . . . Lands and estates are the Alpha and Omega of any government settlement.⁵²

While Frishman, as a cultural nationalist, aspired for a complete separation of culture from politics, Berdichevski’s cultural nationalism followed a different path and strove for a fusion between these two spheres. In what follows, I would like to outline the basis on which Berdichevski shaped his attitude towards the political. My main claim is that the marriage he aspired to pronounce between the cultural and the political ended up with the depletion of politics from its liberating potential and, thus, juxtaposed Berdichevski’s approach to politics with that of Frishman’s.

Berdichevski considered human experience as comprised of irreconcilable, opposing tendencies. In sharp contrast to Frishman, he denounced the ideal of a harmonious sense of existence. “Life,” he wrote, “is a tractate of different orders and different moves that contradict each other. . . . Life is a chain of approval and negation, negation and approval.”⁵³ Also, viewing modernity in particular as chaotic, he sought to turn Jews into modern individuals by advocating the release of their latent passions. This path, he believed, would lead to an authentic self:

Each one of us builds and ruins, longs for something and despises, loves and hates, hopes and despairs. . . . Light and darkness serve our life in a disorderly manner, as do subservience and pride, slavery and freedom.⁵⁴

Thus, his critique of rationalism was much more radical than that of Frishman. Indeed, rational thinking appears as a farce in his novellas, as the protagonists are unconsciously ruled by their passions, while trying in vain to rationalize their chaotic lives.⁵⁵

This view of human existence as fundamentally chaotic accorded with the way he perceived the aesthetic realm and shaped his understanding of

the relations between national revival and art. His full trust in the art of words did not aim to teach Jews to seek redemption in a sense of harmony but aspired to confront and adapt to the contradictory character of existence and modernity. In other words, Berdichevski sought to awaken feelings not in order to create a peaceful world but in order to legitimize passion. Instead of Frishman's aesthetic ideal that sought to shape the modern Jew in a harmonious way, Berdichevski followed a more Dionysian model that legitimized passion in its raw, unsublimated, inharmonic form:

Where is the path? The spirit is cruel! The spirit that was to blaze a trail and plant new desires. . . . The people's great historical hours . . . carry within them internal moral conflict . . . (and) a war of ideas.⁵⁶

Accordingly, he designated passion and spontaneous enthusiasm as the main criteria of aesthetic value, and also as ones that applied to ethics. For Berdichevski, morality was not an objective matter, but a subjective one. Like beauty, it was not an external category, but an expression based on inner experience. As he wrote in his doctoral dissertation:

The beauty of nature and the beauty of morals are felt rather than seen . . . The rules of ethics can, under absolutely no circumstances, be rational conclusions, because we do not conclude them, but feel them through the power of beauty and through the power of strength.⁵⁷

Berdichevski sought to create a modern Jew based on the expression of desires rather than, as promoted by Frishman, on the delicate balance between emotion and reason. He wished for Jews to engage in modern life by embracing the carnal. Thus, he created what one may call an aesthetics of blood, that is, an aesthetics that constitutes itself through images of violence and aggressive expressions. His eminent novel, *The Red Heifer (Parah Adumah)*, provides an example for this kind of aesthetics. In this fictional work, Berdichevski tells of Jewish butchers in a small Jewish town, who slaughtered the beautiful heifer of their neighbor in order to satisfy their gluttony and greed. The story seems to express Berdichevski's passionate temperament and his aspiration to infuse Jewish culture with the physical. He uses an expressionistic style with intense imagery in which motifs of blood and violence play a leading role:

Suddenly, the butcher, who was the slaughterer, took up his blade and ran it back and forth across her delicate neck. . . . Blood poured out like a fountain, spreading in a great arc and shining in the midst of the light from the lamp that hung from the ceiling. The blood kept flowing, splattering on the roof and walls, on the ground and on the trousers of the men and their hands and faces. . . . The ground became a river of blood. . . . Man conquers beast! The animal was stripped. . . . One butcher

could not restrain himself. He took the fat liver and put it on the hot coals. . . . When the blood reached the flames, everyone ate it without proper salting and with ravenous hunger, licking their fingers eagerly. A large bottle of brew was ready, so they ate and drank until they had satisfied their lust.⁵⁸

Whereas in Frishman's harmonious approach beauty and morality were constituted as objective, universal, abstract categories, Berdichevski introduced a more instinctive approach. According to the last, beauty and morality are unique expressions that emanate from an individual's authentic involvement with the world. Every individual, while passionately involved in reality, creates his/her own work of art and turns reality into a work of art in itself:

Man, by his nature is a myth creator, a poet. As he writes the poetry of natural phenomena and shapes them idealistically, thus he treats social matters. . . . We are all artists, our free life's revelations are our art forms, expressing our uniqueness and setting man's ideals.⁵⁹

This announcement, according to which every person is an artist, may seem attractive and liberating, but bearing in mind Berdichevski's inclination towards aesthetics of heroism and of blood, his artistic approach to actual life becomes problematic. When it comes to the political arena, this violent aesthetics could be viewed as dangerous.

In Berdichevski's view, political redemption for the Jewish people demands the use of power: "A home won with the fist and the plough will provide the foundations."⁶⁰ In the spirit of Nietzsche, D'Annunzio, and many other avant-garde intellectuals who glorified situations of war, Berdichevski advocated the use of force as an instrument of liberation and conquest and as the pivotal political action of Jewish nationalism:

The difference between the Diaspora and Zionism, between privileging the spiritual over every temporal political matter, and first and foremost, in laying a popular political basis for spiritual matters, lies in complete change and rebirth. The way of change resides not in passivity, but in negation and conquest.⁶¹

As with Nietzsche, who posited warriors as political figures,⁶² Berdichevski perceived the necessary, inaugural act of a nation-state as one of violence. Thus, he complained, "We have no vital spirit. . . . The ancient Hebrew culture . . . did not conquer other nations, never found virgin territory in which to renew itself."⁶³

This fusion between the aesthetic and the political and the attempt to turn politics into a heroic sphere in which the mundane is transcended raises some questionable thoughts regarding the implications of this worldview. As

is the case with Frishman, the irony in Berdichevski's outlook is striking. His Zionist idea seems to defeat itself. His aspiration to redeem individual Jews from internal chains and to establish Zionism on the foundations of passion yielded a chauvinist interpretation of the national idea. Thus, his cultural nationalism held the inability to accredit the political sphere with autonomy and to acknowledge its singularity. His assumption, according to which the political is an integral part of the cultural and should be dictated by its rules and colored by its intensity, legitimized the political sphere only as an arena of heroism and catharsis. Thus, he detached the political from its humdrum, unheroic, and compromising aspects that are essential for the affirmation of human liberty.

CONCLUSIONS

Frishman's and Berdichevski's total commitment to Hebrew literature was aimed at grappling with the issue of Jewish identity. Both sought to adjust Jewish writing to the condition of Jewish modern life. Thus, they aspired to provide their contemporary Jews with the requisite intellectual paraphernalia thereby redefining the singularity of Jewish identity. Consequently, both approached the national question primarily through art and culture, privileging the inspirational and spiritual over the mundane.

Frishman and Berdichevski turned art into the ultimate locus of freedom for the Jewish nation. By favoring the cultural over the political, art over the practical, the heroic over the banal, fantasy and imagination over reality, and dreams and aspirations over their materialization, the two writers deprived the political sphere of its autonomy. Frishman, as I attempted to show, totally negated the political, while Berdichevski upheld a more bloody political engagement. The result, however, is similar, in that both painted politics in colors of force and aggressiveness. In the paradigm they shared, politics could be negated by art (Frishman) or shaped by it (Berdichevski) but would not be able to provide a suitable platform for ethical engagement, dialogue, and identity exploration. Hence, politics is detached from questions of selfhood and individual liberation.

In addition, Frishman and Berdichevski's cultural efforts consisted of a reconsideration and critique of the Jewish heritage, but neither could relinquish the intellectual character of traditional Jewish culture. This can be seen in the fact that their rebellion against the Jewish scholarly tradition was carried out through intellectual activity, and their struggle against the Jewish tradition of the written word was conducted through written words. Consequently, their heroism was destined to be different from that of Byron and D'Annunzio. Instead of actual participation in battles and sacrifice for a national ideology, they risked another precious asset: their cultural identity.

Placing at stake the Hebrew language, Jewish faith, and Jewish history and attempting to check the influence of these forces on the present, the two writers' theater of war was made of words.

Nevertheless, as artists, Frishman and Berdichevski's relation to reality was not very different from that of Byron and D'Annunzio. Like their gentle Romantic counterparts, whose outlooks on life led them to embrace a life of action and martyrdom, Frishman and Berdichevski's artistic activity also aspired to rise above everyday life. Indeed, they were anxious about any encounter with banality. This may have affected both writers' attitudes towards the idea of a Jewish state. Indeed, Frishman coined the phrase "craftsmanship–national revival" and refused to accept any attempt to give practical expression to the Jewish national spirit. On close examination, Berdichevski's position was not very different. With all his fervor for the idea of a state for the Jewish people, he maintained his skepticism about the actual Zionist endeavor until his dying day.⁶⁴

Certainly, one may interpret this skepticism through Berdichevski's aesthetic motivation. Berdichevski's passion for the political was driven first and foremost by an aesthetic worldview and was anchored in images of the strong and authentic Jew. Where he felt that the Zionist project was not an expression of a transformation of Jewish identity in accordance with this aesthetics of force, he became very critical, pessimistic, and rejecting:

With charity they seek to build a homeland. It requires the whole human being with all his lusts and his urge for possession. How could one have a country as his national base while his inner life is disconnected from it?⁶⁵

I wish to suggest that Berdichevski's pessimistic attitude towards the Zionist project could reflect a fear of relinquishing his dreams and losing his spiritual leadership role. As he was an artist immersed in the world of ideas, imagination, and reflection, his fear of facing reality and coming to terms with the compromises it dictates may be understandable. This fear was shared by Frishman, who claimed: "A state that already exists is nothing. . . . Perhaps it is this faith that has maintained our people for over two thousand years."⁶⁶

This difficulty with the materialization of life, with all its implications, should be taken into account in any discussion about the Jewish national movement's attitude toward the political sphere. Moreover, any discussion about the Israeli democracy will be benefited, I believe, from examining this pattern in the Hebrew writings that followed the two writers. On the international arena, this historical pattern, with all its far-reaching ramifications, may serve as a potential point of comparison in any discussion on politics and cultural nationalism.

NOTES

1. Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991); John Hutchinson, *The Dynamic of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987); Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006); David Aberbach, "Nationalism and the Hebrew Bible," *Nations and Nationalism* 9(3): 255–75 (2005); David Aberbach, "Byron to D'Annunzio: From Liberalism to Fascism in National Poetry 1815–1920," *Nations and Nationalism* 14(3): 478–97 (2008); Charles Blattberg, "Secular Nationalism?: The Importance of Language in the Life of Nations," *Nations and Nationalism* 12(4): 597–612 (2006); Miroslav Hroch, *In the National Interest* (Prague: Charles University Press, 1996).
2. On Frishman's status, see Shalom Kremer, *Frishman the Critic* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1984), 44, 46 (In Hebrew).
3. Nurit Govrin, *Honey from Rock: Studies in Israeli Literature* (Tel Aviv: The Defense office, 1989), 27–35. (In Hebrew).
4. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).
5. Isaiah Berlin, "The Bent Twig: On the Rise of Nationalism," in Henry Hardy, ed., *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (London: John Murray, 1990), 238–61; "Nationalism: Past Neglect and Present Power," in Henry Hardy, ed., *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1979), 333–55; Charles Taylor, *Nationalism and Modernity*, in Robert McKim and Jeff McMahan, eds., *The Morality of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 31–35; Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nations and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), 291–322.
6. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); John Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).
7. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 43.
8. For a discussion of the uniqueness of the Greek, Armenian, and Jewish nations, see Smith, *The Ethnic Origins*, 60–67.
9. Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1995), 5–6. On the term "diaspora nations" and its relation to Jewish nationality, see Hugh S. Watson, *Nations and States—An Enquiry into the Origins and the Politics of Nationalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977), 383–415; Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, 288; and Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983), 192–210.
10. Giambattista Vico, *The First New Science*, Leon Pompa trans. & ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002[1725]), chapter II, 253; chapter XIX [XX], 294.
11. Johann G. Herder, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968 [1800]), 335, 486.
12. Aberbach, "Byron to D'Annunzio," 488. See also: Jacob L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1960), 29–30.
13. I here oppose the definition of Joep Leerssen in *National Thought in Europe*. Leerssen uses the term "cultural nationalism" to apply only to movements that were indifferent to the issue of territory. In my usage, the concept can be applied to at least some of those national movements that strove for a distinct territory as well as to exclusively cultural ones. In many cases, their aspirations for political sovereignty did not negate their major cultural status and influence. Thus, the concept should be applied much more inclusively.
14. On D'Annunzio's status, see Aberbach, "Byron to D'Annunzio," 489, 492.
15. Richard J. Bosworth, *Mussolini* (London: Arnold, 2002), 117.
16. Aberbach mentions the poetry of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound as examples of racist currents and asserts that in his fascist tendencies D'Annunzio was a poet of his age. Aberbach, "Byron to D'Annunzio," 489. On the multinational intellectual networks of cultural nationalists, see Joep Leerssen, "Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture," *Nations and Nationalism* 12(4): 559–78 (2006).
17. Shimoni, *The Zionist*, 14–21.
18. George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press), 143. The idea of the "aesthetic Jew" was shared by different trends in the Jewish national movement. People like Max Nordau, Nahum Sokolov, and certainly Frishman and Berdichevski were trying to dispense with

the ugly descriptions of the Jews and used various means, fictional as well as practical, to do so. The concept of the “muscular Jew” was part of this trend. See Shmuel Almog, *Zionism and History* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982), 73–86 (in Hebrew).

19. Michael Keren, *The Pen and the Sword* (Tel Aviv: Ramot, 1991), 35–39 (in Hebrew); Dan Miron, *If There Is No Jerusalem: Essays on Hebrew Literature in Cultural and Political Contexts* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuhad, 1987), 13–14 (in Hebrew).

20. Dan Miron, *When Loners Come Together: A Portrait of Hebrew Literature at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1987), 74–82 (in Hebrew).

21. Robert Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose: Modern Fiction and the Language of Realism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 12–13.

22. On Frishman’s nationalist passion, see Iris Parush, *National Ideology and the Literary Canon* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1992), 11 (in Hebrew).

23. Maza’ words were cited in the daily newspaper *Hatzfira*, vol. 24 (1914), 1–2 (in Hebrew). In this context, see also Berdichevski’s words of praise of Frishman, whereby he treats him as a national leader: David Frishman, *The Complete Works of David Frishman*, Vol. 17 (Warsaw: Sifrut Publication, 1910), 40 (in Hebrew).

24. On German Idealism, see Robert C. Solomon, *Introducing the German Idealists* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1981). Mosse indicates that in the nineteenth century one could still find intellectuals (for example, Klemens Wenzel von Metternich 1773–1859) who resisted the materialistic definition of a nation and the view that territorial sovereignty is a necessary condition for its existence; George L. Mosse, *The Culture of Western Europe—The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Boulder & London: Westview Press, 1988), 82.

25. Frishman, *Complete Works*, Vol. 4, 51. All the translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

26. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, 35–36.

27. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, 51.

28. *Ibid.*, 53.

29. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, 35–36.

30. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, 58. For an illuminating discussion of Frishman’s view on the emotional distress of the Jews, see Parush, *National Ideology*, 33–43.

31. Frishman, *Complete Works*, Vol. 5, 108.

32. The term *Bildung*, which played a prominent role in German intellectual life, carries a variety of meanings. Frishman’s understanding of the role of literature in Jewish life seems to have been developed under the influence of Humboldt: Wilhelm Von Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

33. For Herder’s political views, see Frederick M. Barnard, *Self-Direction and Political Legitimacy: Rousseau and Herder* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 238–243.

34. See, for example, his essay “On Judaism” in which he belittled Ahad Haa’m’s vision of a Jewish spiritual center in Palestine and even more so the common idea of his time of a nation-state: Frishman, *Complete Works*, Vol. 4, 19.

35. Frishman, *Complete Works*, Vol. 4, 13, 15.

36. Herder, *Reflections on Philosophy*, 335, 486. This revision in Herder’s outlook was common also to the Jewish philosopher Rabbi Nachman Krochmel (Ranak) and Ahad Haa’m.

37. Frishman, *Complete Works*, Vol. 4, 19.

38. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, 16–17.

39. Karl Lowith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth Century Thought* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), 200–201.

40. Frishman, *Complete Works*, Vol. 5, 136.

41. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, 25.

42. *Ibid.*, 28–29.

43. *Ibid.*, 24.

44. David Frishman, *In the Country* (Warsaw & Berlin: Achisefer, 1913), 42 (in Hebrew). Author’s translation.

45. David Frishman, *Bamidbar* (Tel Aviv: Kneset, 1949), 69. For an extensive discussion of this anthology and the way it presents politics as an aggressive realm, see my unpublished dissertation: *Self Redemption in the Jewish National Revival* (The Hebrew University, Jerusalem).

46. Micha Y. Berdichevski, in Avner Holzman and Yitshak Kafkafi, eds., *The Writings of Micha Josef Berdichevski* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1996), Vol. 2, 160 (in Hebrew). Author’s translations.

47. For his status, see Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose*, 49–51; Avner Holzman, *The Book and Life* (Jerusalem: Karmel, 2003) (in Hebrew).

48. Micha Y. Berdichevski, *The Complete Essays of Micha Josef Bin Gorion (Berdichevski)* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1952), 153 (in Hebrew). All the translations from this source are mine.

49. Berdichevski, *The Writings of Micha Josef Berdichevski*, Vol. 2, 238.

50. Shlomo Aronson, “The Doctrine of the German Will and Nietzsche’s Influence on Berdichevski and the Zionist Leadership Affected by him,” in Avner Holzman, ed., *Micha Josef Berdichevski: Studies and Documents* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2002), 320–21.

51. Berdichevski, *Complete Essays*, 16–17.

52. *Ibid.*, 79; Berdichevski’s dual engagement with the spiritual and the material manifested itself in his ability to write in many genres (for example, fiction, journalism, philosophy) and eventually allowed him to influence not only the next generation of Hebrew writers (including Joseph H. Brenner, Uri N. Gnessin, and Shmuel Y. Agnon) but also the members and leaders of the second wave of immigration (*Aliya Shniyab*) to Palestine, who laid the foundations of the state of Israel.

53. Berdichevski, *The Writings of Micha Josef Berdichevski*, Vol. 3, 153.

54. Berdichevski, *Complete Essays*, 155.

55. On Berdichevski’s chaotic world, see Ben Mordechai, *Praise of Hatred* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1990) (in Hebrew). Also see Gershon Shaked’s interpretations of Berdichevski’s story *Klonimus and Naomi*: Gerson Shaked, *Dead End* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1973), 15–32 (in Hebrew).

56. Berdichevski, *Complete Essays*, 88.

57. Berdichevski, *The Writings of Micah Josef Berdichevski*, Vol. 4, 103.

58. Micha Y. Berdichevski, “The Red Heifer,” in William Cutter, trans., and Avner Holzman, ed., *Miriam and Other Stories* (New Milford: The Toby Press, 2004), 38.

59. Berdichevski, *Complete Essays*, 88.

60. *Ibid.*, 81.

61. *Ibid.*, 82, 87; Berdichevski’s treatment of politics as a violent prior framing power is discussed at length in my paper, “Zionism between Raw Force and Eros: Berdichevski’s Passionate Relation to the Jewish National Revival,” *Israel Studies Forum* 23(1): 15–39 (2008).

62. See Friedrich Nietzsche, “Thus Spake Zarathustra,” in Oscar Levi, ed., *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), Vol. 11, Section 10.

63. Berdichevski, *Complete Essays*, 19.

64. It is interesting to note that, contrary to the growing pessimism of Berdichevski, Frishman moved in a different direction and in his old age was willing to accept the idea of settlement in Palestine as refugees (but not as part of a Jewish state) for those poor Jews who could not manage to assimilate into European society. See, on this issue, Parush, *National Ideology*, 27–32.

65. Berdichevski, *Complete Essays*, 383.

66. Frishman, *Complete Works*, Vol. 4, 24.

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