EROS and TRAGEDY

Jewish Male Fantasies and the Masculine Revolution of Zionism

OFER NORDHEIMER NUR

Israel: Society, Culture, and History

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press@academicstudiespress.com
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To the memory of my grandmother Judith Nordheimer

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Preface and Acknowledgements

In this book I claim that wishing to heal the injured masculinity of a generation of young Jews in central Europe is at the very heart of Zionism as a project for national regeneration. This dimension must be added to a well-researched catalogue list of reasons that address the question of why Zionism as a political, ideological, and practical movement rose davka in central Europe and what made it so appealing and so effective. Zionism should be understood in this perspective as the manly response to one of the most insulting dimensions of modern antisemitism: its venomous view of the Jewish body as ugly, abject, deformed, repulsive. Not only repulsive but also unmanly: the German fraternity charters at the University of Vienna, for example, explicitly forbade fencing with Jewish students because fencing is an honorable engagement, reserved exclusively for "real men." This strand of the "golden age" of antisemitism in Europe (1870s–1945) was especially offensive to the young Jewish men of central Europe, more pointedly sensitive to this insult than Jews living in Western nations such as England or France, or those living in the Pale of Settlement.

By and large, the Zionist movement (not unlike a host of other modern movements, from the *maskilim* of the late eighteenth century to anti-Semites) accepted the corporeal claims against the Jews and was conditioned by them. It derided the Jews of the Diaspora as *Luftmeschen*. This is one of the reasons why it was supremely important in the first decades of Zionist activity to make the movement visibly muscular, athletic, tanned, and attractive. The negation of the Diaspora, at the core of the Zionist discourse of recognition and justification, was a negation of a particular Jewish powerlessness, a powerlessness that mentally conditions peoples and groups in exile, termed by Yuri Slezkine "service nomads." This type of existence as an entrepreneurial minority, living without legitimate access to military power or claims to recognized territorial sovereignty, made the Jewish communities vulnerable, dependent on some form of protection. As was suggested by Daniel Boyarin, this condition of exile made its mark on Jewish masculinity. Living without territory, they became disembodied, imagined as sickly. It made them conciliatory, compromise-seeking, and averse to violence.

In the case of Hashomer Hatzair, the turn to Zionism was embedded in the most profound central European realm of discourse. I identified Eros and Tragedy as two core tropes in that German central European discourse that serves as the foundation upon which the "new man" of Hashomer Hatzair was imagined. These two tropes were borrowed to allow the rehabilitation of the Jewish young male, and then of the entire Jewish nation, including women, the elderly, and those still living in the Diaspora. Eros was adopted as a metaphor for the necessary yet invisible glue that cements and binds communities. Hashomer Hatzair wished to create small communities where Eros bound people together. In the first years in Palestine, these communities were imagined as exclusively male and the presence of male-male Eros in hyper-virile (and potentially homosexual) secretive male societies was explored as an important condition for the generation of authentic culture and even entire civilizations. Tragedy served as denoting the particularly heroic aspect of the new man-as-man of Hashomer Hatzair. This man sought to bravely fulfill his destiny and change history, whatever the consequences. These two tropes were not the only ones that served in fantasies of new manliness, a new society—national, socialist, or anarchist. In many ways, the "new man" of Hashomer Hatzair is peculiar to the movement. At the same time, it is no more than a self-consciously radical variation of the other Zionist core fantasies.

The young men of Hashomer Hatzair wished to reinvent themselves as "real men." At the same time, paradoxically, the wish to create a hyper-virile "new man" contained alongside it a manifestation of a self-reflective, sensitive masculinity. Tragic man eventually proved to be a man conscious of his feelings and willing to express them in public, a practice shunned by other forms of machismo and virility. During the early years of Bitania Ilit, the wish for heroic masculinity melted seamlessly into a softer construction of manliness. Ironically, the male fantasies that fueled a drive to rehabilitate the Jew of the Diaspora into a heroic tragic man brought about alongside it a construction of a thoughtful, sensitive, caring manliness. So at this point it is important to make the following note: the title of this book is inspired by Klaus Theweleit's classic interpretation of the German Freikorps units of World War I, who roamed Germany after the war and during the traumatized first years of the Weimar Republic. The young men and women of Hashomer Hatzair lived during the same period and in the same intellectual atmosphere of German central

Europe. Whereas understanding both groups in terms of male fantasies is fruitful, the Freikorps male fantasies reflect levels of aggression and brutality that are most alien to the world of fantasies that can be discerned from the sources of Hashomer Hatzair.

This book was very long in the making and I wish to express my gratitude to all those that made a contribution to what seems to be a solitary exercise of research and writing. I am grateful, first, to David Myers, my advisor, who always trusted me and my erratic path, and did not let me give up at times of crisis. His sincere interest in the dissertation as well as his attentive reading of every line of it not only inspired me to continue, but will also serve as a model for my own future as a teacher and scholar.

I had the great fortune of having Saul Friedländer as my teacher, first at Tel Aviv University, then at UCLA, and finally on my dissertation committee. Saul's advice, intuition, and his unique ability to know what I actually meant to write and where I was really going, at times far better than myself, have amazed me and helped me a great deal.

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I am grateful for the generous financial support I have received, first and foremost from the department of history at UCLA, and the Regents of the University of California. A dissertation research fellowship at the Max Planck Institute at Göttingen was made possible through a generous grant from the DAAD. I was also fortunate to have received grants from the Center for German and European Studies at Berkeley, the French government, the Monkarsh Fund, and the Franklin D. Murphy Funds at UCLA, as well as very generous support from the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute which facilitated the publication of this book.

Two post-doctoral grants made for four doctoral convalescent years: two of these years were at the Centre d'Études Juives at the

EHESS in Paris with thanks to Elie Barnavi and Michael Löwy for supporting me and to my dear friend Gil Mihaely for his companionship and friendship. I spent the two following years at the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center for German-Jewish Literature and Cultural History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where I enjoyed Gabi Motzkin's trust in my work.

At the Central Archive of Hashomer Hatzair in Givat Haviva, I received the friendly support of Dalia Moran, Josepha Fecher, and Talma Nasi, who were always ready and willing to help me find the material I needed, and were protective or perhaps suspicious enough to keep certain files for future research. I thank them for their hospitality. At the Beit Alpha Archive, I received the kind assistance of the all-knowing archivist Meira Hacohen. Elimelech Levron, a veteran of Hashomer Hatzair, enthusiastically helped in deciphering handwritten documents in Polish.

Matityahu Mintz from Tel Aviv University, the foremost expert in the study of Hashomer Hatzair, showed great enthusiasm for my project and read several versions of the manuscript. I have benefitted immensely from his expertise and will always cherish our long conversations on Jews in the modern world. David Sabean at UCLA invigorated my intellectual curiosity and never turned me away when I needed advice. Peter Loewenberg made very useful comments on two chapters. Moshe Sluhovsky from the Hebrew University read several drafts of the manuscript with a peculiar mix of stimulating intellectual reading and compassionate support for a struggling writer. Benny Arbel from Tel Aviv University also read earlier drafts of the manuscript with great care and attention, and made critical comments that set me thinking about what it was I wanted to say. Igal Halfin invited me to present a chapter of this work in a colloquium he organized at Tel Aviv University and gave me valuable comments and friendly support. Derek Penslar encouraged me with friendly comments, which were greatly needed. Paul Mendes-Flohr read an earlier draft of this work and inspired me with his warm encouragement. At the Max Planck Institute, I had extremely fruitful discussions about my project with Hans Medick. I had the great opportunity to discuss my project and rethink its implications with Dan Diner at the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture at Leipzig. David Biale was enthusiastic and critical at once and I am anxious to have him read the book in its final form.

This book would have never been completed without the intellectual camaraderie of Avner Ben Zaken, Zvi Ben Dor, Jeffrey Blutinger,

Sharon Gordon, Orna Kenan, Nitzan Lebovic, and Boaz Neumann. Thanks are also due to Aviva Halamish, Shula Keshet, Tali Tamir and Idit Zertal. Thanks to Zvi Razi who believed in me from the very start, and to Thomas von der Osten Sacken for a particularly seminal conversation on Jewish men and their manhood.

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Finally, some words of gratitude to my family, who really did not deserve to endure my choice of an academic life. My parents Yoram and Ziva Nur as well as my brother Erez and my sister Neta have always trusted my choices and encouraged me as long as I was happy. My grandmother Jehudith Nordheimer insisted on discussing every detail of this work with me. Her willpower and determination in all matters will always guide me. My uncle Amos Nur at Stanford served as a model for me since I was thirteen, and I still hope to make him proud one day. Without my family—Asher Ari, Yanai and Gili—this whole endeavor would have been a waste of time. I thank them for their love and support.

"You know my method. It is founded upon the observation of trifles."—Sherlock Holmes to Dr. Watson, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Bascombe Valley Mystery*, 1891

Introduction

Between 1920 and 1922, hundreds of members of the Hashomer Hatzair youth movement left the defunct Habsburg empire and sailed to Palestine. On a remote hill, overlooking the Sea of Galilee, a group of twenty-one young men and four young women between the ages of 18 and 25, all members of the movement, established one of the communities that laid the foundation for Israel's kibbutz movement. The community was named Bitania Ilit.[1] This social experiment lasted only eight months, from August 1920 to April 1921, but it gave birth to a powerful myth among Jewish youth in Palestine and in Eastern and Western Europe. It marked a beginning: a small, idealistic, independent youth movement, founded in 1916, had evolved into a Jewish settlement movement imbued with a Zionist and a socialist missionary zeal.[2]

What was it that made Bitania Ilit such a myth? How did it become a codeword for a particular worldview and how has it gained its recruiting appeal? What made this settlement adventure, experienced by about twenty-four pioneering youths in the year 1920, on a barren hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee an inspiration for novels

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1 For an accurate yet somewhat outdated account of Bitania Ilit in English see Amos Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 183–90. The community was named Bitania Ilit, but throughout the book will be referred to as Bitania.

2 Elkana Margalit, *ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir me-'adat ne'urim le-Marksizm mahapkhani 1913–1936*, *Hashomer Hatzair: From Youth Community to Revolutionary Marxism 1913–1936* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1971), 79. According to one assessment, about five hundred members arrived in 1920; another assessment speaks of six hundred, but in 1922 it seems that the number dropped to two hundred. Indeed, many gave up and left Palestine already in those early years.

and plays? What made it so famous among Jewish youth, in Palestine and in the Diaspora, for decades?

The myth of Bitania was limited in its scope in comparison to the other myths of Zionism, yet it was no less powerful. The Yishuv adopted and promoted many other myths of heroism: the outpost of Tel Hai and its decorated former Russian military commander Joseph Trumpeldor (1880–1920) became in 1920 the symbol of martyrdom and armed defense of remote settlements in Eretz Israel, or Ha-Shomer (first active as Bar-Giorah), an association of Jewish watchmen (1907 through 1920) that aimed at winning the right to Jewish self-defense in an all-Jewish guard system in Ottoman Palestine.[3] Other myths include Sarah Aharonson, the NILI underground network heroine who fought against the Ottoman rule of Palestine, and Deganyah, the first kevuzah, then kibbutz (founded 1909), a symbol of arduous agricultural labor in a commune, based on the principle of self-realization through physical work in a rural settlement. This was the type of recruiting myth Zionism needed, which was subsequently adopted by the State of Israel for its recruiting purposes. Unlike these myths, Bitania was not a myth of sacrifice or heroism; it did not symbolize fighting for or defending a Jewish settlement. It was hardly even a settlement myth, as it was merely a temporary work camp, and it dissolved after only eight months. Bitania's story primarily touched the hearts of high school students in Palestine, later in Israel and anywhere in the Jewish world where Zionist youth movements were to be found, from Eastern Europe and North Africa to North and South America. Today, Bitania's story is remembered mostly by educated Israelis and those few who grew up in the framework of the Israeli labor movement and its various youth movements. This book searches for the sources that made this myth so vital.

Bitania's story inspired several novels. Nathan Bistritzky (1896–1980) published in 1926 his first novel, *Yamim VeLeylot* (*Days and Nights*); Yehuda Ya'ari, himself member of Hashomer Hatzair, published his novel *Ka'or Yahel* (*As a Shining Light*) in 1937; and Yehoshua Sobol wrote the celebrated play *Leil HaEsrim* (*The Night of the Twentieth*), performed at the Haifa Municipal Theater in 1976. Were these writers'

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3 On the myth of Tel Hai see Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

imaginations, partly full of awe, partly voyeuristic, awakened by the nightly confessions held by the group? Or did these works only echo the *Kehiliatenu* collection, published in 1922, a year after the group dissolved? This remarkable collection, reprinted in 1964 by Kibbutz Beit Alpha, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of Hashomer Hatzair, and then again in a third edition in 1988, edited and updated by the labor movement scholar and political leader Muki Tsur, included monologues, short pieces of personal confessions, and a collective diary written by members of the group, as well as other members of Gedud Shomriya, a road construction group of approximately one hundred members of Hashomer Hatzair working on the Haifa-Jedda Road, northeast of Haifa. As for me, I stumbled upon the *Kehiliatenu* collection when I was a student in the early 1990s at Tel Aviv University's library. I immediately realized how remarkable and mesmerizing this text could be and pondered the questions: what made people hold ritualized public confessions and why was this kind of social interaction recorded and later published? In this early stage of my studies, I had not learned yet about the phenomenon of public confession among religious sects in the distant past, nor in communist parties in the early twentieth century. Bitania's practice of public confessions seemed mysterious to me. Using the *Kehiliatenu* collection of reverberating personal confessions, I tried to recreate the mental world of a small group of teenagers in the early 1920s, and to extract the essence of a new worldview that attempted to establish a new man and a new society. I rely heavily on *Kehiliatenu* in this book.[4]

Once workers in the Shomria camp, along with the members of Bitania, had come up with the idea for such a collection, they invited the author, playwright, and publicist Nathan Bistritzky, who had lectured at the camp on Hebrew, Jewish, and world literature, to edit the collection. Bistritzky was born in the Ukraine and immigrated with his wife to Palestine in 1920. In Palestine he worked as an itinerant lecturer in pioneer work camps, much like the author Yosef Haim Brenner. This was how he became acquainted with Gedud Shomria, Hashomer Hatzair's largest work camp. He was chosen to edit the collection after Hugo Bergmann, the German Jewish philosopher living in Palestine, declined the job, and said that "Freud and Blüher cannot serve as the

4 The most accessible edition is *Kehiliatenu*, ed. Muki Tsur (Jerusalem: 1988).

educators of the average worker."[5] Meir Yaari, whose idea it was to publish the collection, added that Bergmann, a member of the Hapoel Hatzair Socialist Party, felt that Hashomer Hatzair was too elitist and that it sought to destroy too much of the old world.[6]

The collection was meant to become a symbol of the movement's activities in Palestine, particularly its ideal of community building. It functioned as a recruitment tool, inspiring several generations of idealistic and enthusiastic young Jews to settle in kibbutz communities in Palestine; but it also functioned as an internal means of communication between the participants. As workers from Shomria and Bitania drew up their essays or recited them to Bistritzky for redaction, they used the opportunity to express their opinions and feelings about their recent experiences. Often they commented on the demanding ideals imposed by the social utopia they were destined to take part in. A close reading of the collection often reveals a critical attitude toward the camp and its leaders. Again and again authors expressed an inability to conform to the group's demands and ideals.

It was not the group's Zionism, nor its socialism, that made the group become a symbol and a myth. Adventure stories of teenagers deciding to leave their parents' homes in a quest for an unknown future can inflame any imagination. The background and composition of the members of Hashomer Hatzair who immigrated to Palestine in those years made the group even more visible. It is hard to imagine such an ambitious and talented group, natural-born leaders in various fields, intellectually, ideologically, and venture-wise bold, all committed to sharing their lives together. In addition to taking on this adventure, these young men and women tried to cope with their generation's turbulences and crises. They expressed their aspirations with bold and acute awareness, using ideological and other, mostly central European, cultural conceptual tools to suggest radical solutions to their generation's problems. They addressed these problems bravely, demandingly, and straight-forwardly, without cutting corners and without fearing the gate keepers of the bourgeoisie from which they came on the one hand, and without the rabbinical reproach on the other hand. Bitania slaughtered the holiest cows of its age, offering a new model for life, out of its sense

5 Letter by Meir Yaari 27 March 1921. Givat Haviva Archive, (3) 5.7–95.

6 Ibid.

of leadership. They had a special awareness of the concept of myth and its aesthetic dimension. They knew what a myth was and they knew its power, and understood why it could be such a constructing, recruiting force. They wanted to be myth. Their conception of myth was an aesthetic one, assuming the presence of viewers. Being visible, the myth had to be beautiful and attractive. Thus, the movement members, the communities they formed, and the places where they lived had to be beautiful and attractive too, models for decades to come. Jewish youth from Israel and the Diaspora, when exposed to this kind of myth, they thought, will aspire to resemble it, to join it, to take part, to make a sacrifice. They were right.

The group's intellectual climate was characterized by deep psychological experiences, a manifestation of the European crisis in which they grew up. A major part of this book is based on examining this experience of crisis. A sense of crisis may lead to pessimism and desperation, but it may also lead to new, optimistic, and fresh points of view on life. The experiences of those years gave birth to a specific, if eclectic, conception of a "new man" and a truly radical way of life. The case of Bitania included crisis and exhilaration at once. The extreme deep psychological states we will explore were not embedded in ideologies but preceded the adoption of such ideologies, which later became a hallmark of labor Zionism and of Hashomer Hatzair in particular. These experiential dimensions, deep psychic structures, reverberating Central European sensibilities and the ways of coping with them have reached far and wide in the first half of the twentieth century. They have touched generations of educated Jewish youth for decades. However, unlike historical accounts exploring religious, national, or ideological dimensions of Zionism—Socialism, Messianism, Utopia, National Regeneration, or the books written in the field of literary criticism analyzing modern Hebrew culture—this book will attempt to explore the experiences of the members of Bitania using the conceptual tools of cultural history, especially as they were articulated as part of the cultural turn in historical studies.[7]

Despite its exploration of ideas formed in the Bitania period and held by Hashomer Hatzair's worldview, as well as by larger Kibbutz

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7 See Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, "Introduction," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1–32.

Movement circles, even reflecting on the whole Israeli society, culture, and institutions, this book is not a history of ideas. It examines ideas as part of everyday practices, as a sometimes-accidental and inconsistent manifestation of desires, moods, and social vision. It tries to decipher ideas expressed in whole worldviews and ideologies by way of local and immediate contexts, stemming from social interpersonal concrete relationships. Without these contexts and relationships, we are left with a history of free-floating ideas, an outdated research tradition. I examine ideas expressed during the Bitania years in terms of mental thought processes and habits that shape people and influence the way they act or feel within the reference group to which they belong. Leaving behind intellectual and social history, we turn toward the promise of cultural history. Historical writing in the wake of the "cultural turn" is nourished by skepticism as to the capacity to explain why certain historical events and processes have occurred. This approach generally refrains from providing historical explanations, preferring to engage in interpreting historical representations and the manner in which they teach us something important, profound, and sometimes surprising about the culture in which they are embedded. The actors who operate in this culture, who are its more or less eloquent agents, may well be oblivious to this importance. Cultural history, by contrast, is prepared to confine itself to interpreting specific products of culture or their representations, as it seeks to create a "thick description" of this culture, according to one particularly influential approach.[8]

This book thus deals with cultural history and seeks to provide a compelling alternative to social or intellectual history. It is rooted in a number of commitments. My basic purpose was to describe the experiences of those who recorded them and to interpret them correctly. The core of the scholarly practice that I chose rests in paying the primary sources the utmost attention and enabling them to speak for themselves while reconstructing the immediate but also the wider contexts in which they were produced. This approach is influenced by the Italian microhistory school, which gained prominence in Western

[8] The concept of "thick description" is a contribution of the anthropology of Clifford Geertz to the field of knowledge that addresses the interpretation of symbols in culture. See the extremely influential Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

historiography during the 1970s and 1980s.[9] Microhistory painstakingly and intensively examines the unusual statements and beliefs of an individual, a family, or a small community within the framework of dramatic events, including those that end abruptly. This approach emerged at the time from an urge to conduct ethnographic observation of the human past as something that undergoes fleeting and crisis-ridden change rather than being grounded in long-term (*longue durée*) processes.[10] This approach seeks out unusual texts (such as the *Kehiliatenu* collection) which, by virtue of being singular or strange, tend to point in various ways to the "normal" of their time. Examination of the disparity between extreme, strange, or exceptional utterances and those considered reasonable, normal, and perhaps even banal in a certain period is in itself of scholarly value.[11] Comparison between the conventional and the unconventional facilitates interpretive analysis of the document that extends beyond a mere biographical statement about an individual or group. One may likewise regard the expressions contained in the *Kehiliatenu* collection as being of singular value in understanding pioneering Zionism, the Third Aliya (immigration wave to Palestine), the Jewish high-school youngsters of East and Central Europe during the 1920s, as well as general East Central European culture and its crises. Microhistory proved itself fertile for observing the early modern period in particular, which is relatively lacking in primary sources, rather than the twentieth century. A study of small, local, and muted utterances could lead one to view this study as being arcane, of limited value to a very small number of readers interested in the *Kehiliatenu* collection and Bitania Ilit as esoteric, detached phenomena that contribute little to a broader understanding of the period. I hope the readers of this book will recognize its value to a study and understanding that goes beyond Bitania Ilit itself.

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9 Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 38–41.

10 Edward Muir, "Introduction: Observing Trifles," in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

11 In this context, Carlo Ginzburg's exemplary work towers above all others. See Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992 [1979]).

The methodological inspiration afforded by Italian microhistory is augmented by a further source that likewise derives from the historiography of early modern Europe and originates in Holland, and itself emerged from a favorable and welcoming response to microhistory. This approach focuses on texts in which the authors write about themselves. Adherents of this approach seek to expand the concept of autobiography, which is a rather constricted genre, to include all historical sources that manifest writing about oneself. This scholarly trend calls such texts "egodocuments," namely documents that create selfhood, identity, and subjectivity.[12] This has given rise to an ever-growing repository of sources available to cultural historical research. Those who wrote themselves into texts are accorded a prosopographic flash[13] that illuminates that which they said or wrote and the way in which they constructed their selfhood.[14] This book thus addresses a number of forgotten writers, particularly those who contributed to the *Kehiliatenu* collection. It attempts to trace the various ways in which they wrote of themselves and their selfhood, and how they correspond with others and with the ideas that emerge around them.

It is within these scholarly contexts that I observed the inner world of the people of Bitania, their yearnings, their anxieties and fantasies, during a fleeting but stormy episode born of a broad historical crisis. I began by asking how individual members of a small group experience anxieties, desires, and longing, and how the people in the group were carried away into creating fantasies that centered

12 Arianne Baggerman, Rudolf Dekker, and Michael Mascuch, "Introduction," in *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self: Developments in Autobiographical Writing since the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

13 Prosopography—"the writing of faces"—is a biographical approach to the study of history, which was originally used in the study of Greece and Rome. It engages in the collection of sources that facilitate the reconstruction of historical figures in order to illuminate their role within larger groups that drive historical change. See Lawrence Stone, "Prosopography," *Daedalus* 100.1 (1971): 46–71.

14 In this research context I raise the question, sparked by perusal of the *Kehiliatenu* collection, of whether collective writing of the self is feasible. See Ofer Nordheimer Nur, "Can There Be a Collective Egodocument? The Case of the Hashomer Hatzair Kehilyatenu Collection in Palestine, 1922," in *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self: Developments in Autobiographical Writing since the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 215–27.

on themselves.[15] The interpretative analysis of their numerous utterances demands the employment of conceptual tools from a variety of areas. This multiplicity of conceptual tools is what turns this study into a multidisciplinary one. The scholar in this case is merely a *bricoleur*, someone who is only partially qualified to address a wide variety of topics and is not confined to a single area of expertise. The *bricoleur* carries a bag full of many different tools with which to observe and analyze the variety of utterances encountered.[16] In the next stage of his work, the *bricoleur* will be in a position to examine more coherent products of culture, such as worldviews, ideologies, or utopian visions, as having emerged from and been nourished by the haphazard collection of the utterances from which they grew.

At a very early stage of the research, I chose the concept of fantasy as a key to understanding the group. I use it in the broadest sense and do not seek to criticize those who entertain their fantasies. This is not an ironic use of the concept of the kind that declares "and then see what happened next," and certainly has no intention of judging the illusionary aspect of the fantasy, which is ostensibly detached from the real world. Fantasies are constructed here primarily as aesthetic products of expression, namely as forms that mediate between the "I" and society, which distort reality, at whose focal point stand the creators of the fantasy themselves. Whether they were aware of this or not, the fantasy mediates between desires and the reality of its creators' life.[17] It is an indication of mental processes that dynamically generate not only

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15 A further book that takes such a materialist step is that of Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011). Neumann quite literally examines the pioneers' desire. Another book that, in several ways, as is evident from the title, is kin to this book and my use of the term fantasy, is Paul Breines, *Tough Jews: Political Fantasies and the Moral Dilemma of American Jewry* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

16 And he resembles Isaiah Berlin's fox, who knows about many things and differs from the hedgehog, who knows only one thing. See Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1953).

17 Moreover, the book written by the German scholar of culture Klaus Theweleit influenced my choice of the concept of fantasy to serve as a point of departure for the interpretation and deciphering of the political and other products of culture. See Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Vol. I: Women, Floods, Bodies, History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [1977]). About the male aspect of these fantasies see below.

self-perceptions and perceptions of the body or the social body, or images, but also more complex ideas that incorporate new approaches for a truer life. Fantasies are nowadays viewed within the concept of "imagination": political imagination, historical imagination, scientific imagination, social imagination,[18] and eventually, a summa of the use of the broad term of imagination encapsulated in the celebrated and oft quoted "imagined communities"[19] have become codes for cultural creation initially born out of fantasies.[20] The concept of fantasy is particularly apposite to the world of the people of Hashomer Hatzair during those crisis-ridden years, and as we shall see, the texts are full of fantasies as ways of coping with painful, overwhelming reality, or as an auto-therapeutic mental process. In this respect too, the people of Bitania and of Hashomer Hatzair were no different from other early Zionist pioneers, as indicated by, for example, Boaz Neumann's "Land and Desire." Slavoj Žižek recently suggested that "fantasy provides the co-ordinates of our desire" and "constructs the frame enabling us to desire something." This is particularly useful for the way I view the male fantasies of the young men of Hashomer Hatzair.[21] After all, Zionism was created by dreamers and the land was packed with visionaries of all stripes. The fantasies examined in this book were so powerful that they served as a mental platform for the establishment of a compelling worldview that prevailed through the 1970s and even beyond.

The book is built upon three tiers:

1. One should decipher and understand the experience of the members of Bitania Ilit and of Hashomer Hatzair's first kibbutz and the new person and new society they sought to create in light of *Central European cultural sensibilities and their broad context*. The writing of such a history takes part in the

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18 The Greek philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis coined the formative concept of L'imaginare Social.

19 The concept coined by the anthropologist Benedict Anderson, which has become a key concept.

20 Among the first to make use of this concept, which expands the products of human imagination to the maximum, was the historian Amos Funkenstein. See Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

21 Quoted in Kaja Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins, Routledge (New York and London), 1992, 6.

project of modifying our view of the Zionist past as a purely internal Jewish development.[22] It also provides an entirely new perspective as to the intellectual roots of at least one part of the Zionist Labor Movement and connects it to the profound effect of the post-World War I German Conservative Revolution. In the case of Hashomer Hatzair this approach is particularly apposite, since these broad cultural and historical roots were so profound that to neglect this context would lead to a fundamental distortion. At the center of this context stands the turn of the century German cultural world and the manner in which it confronted its own crises.

2. The new person and the new society which the movement's members imagined in this period and which they bequeathed to future generations incorporated a primarily male motivation. In other words, *the new worldview and way of life were formulated by young men in order to resolve problems and crises of young men*. The worldview that crystallized within the movement's institutions and publications should be understood primarily as originating in and expressing the dreams of men, of the kind that grapple first and foremost with the problems, the anomalies, the pains, and the crises of young men, and to a lesser extent with those of other age groups or of women, and which by no means seek realistic solutions applicable to the Jewish people as a whole. Only a gender-based analysis, which approaches the worldview of Hashomer Hatzair in those years as having been formulated out of the expression of the distress and yearnings of young men, can correctly decipher its latent elements and likewise reveal the experiences of the young women in the group.
3. *In the midst of the Central European context and in response to the shockwaves of a clearly discernible German crisis of culture, two core, dialectic concepts find expression within the movement's intellectual frame. These are* Eros *and* tragedy. These concepts suc-

22 This scholarly and narrative step should likewise be taken with regard to further chapters in the annals of the Zionist chapter of Jewish history. Note, for example, a persuasive voice that advocates such a step: David Ohana, [Hebrew] *Neither Canaanites nor Crusaders: The Origins of Israeli Mythology* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2008), 20.

cinctly embody the core yearnings of the young men who formulated them. By deciphering the two core concepts and cracking the cultural codes contained in them as those that preoccupy young men in the midst of crisis, we can begin to understand the mental underpinnings of the new man of Hashomer Hatzair. Eros and tragedy figured prominently in the new sense of selfhood manifested in Bitania Ilit. They serve as the main pillars of the image of the new man of the movement, and they resonate in the discourse and the myth that subsequently evolved. Both these concepts derive from central fields of discourse in the world of German culture, to which the heads of the movement were exposed in their youth in Vienna and in Eastern Galicia during World War One. They embody powerful anxieties, desires, and values, manifesting themselves in the Galilee hills, at which the members of the movement arrived, but originated from a very distant time and place. In other words, they possess meaning in other very profound realms of ideas within the Western tradition. Recourse to such lofty concepts indicates that the members of the movement sensed that this was a momentous time. By generating a very specific type of "new man," the movement's leaders intended to create a new kind of organic community. In those years the people of Hashomer Hatzair referred to this face-to-face community as an "erotic community." At the same time, as this book will demonstrate, the sense of mission of the group's members was perceived as a tragedy, or more precisely, the group used the trope of tragedy to comprehend itself, its crisis, and its purpose, to broadcast its mission and project its image. In its image of a new man, the group saw a tragic individual, whose task was to confront life's "screen of illusion" through an act of heroism, an attitude of defiance derived directly from the works of the enormously influential German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

Since the advent of Christianity and through the French and Russian revolutions, the "new man" is a key foundational concept in modern Western culture.[23] This book focuses on the mental con-

[23] Gottfried Küenzlen, *Der Neue Mensch: Zur säkularen Religionsgeschichte der Moderne* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1994).

tours of the new man of Hashomer Hatzair and the Central European intellectual climate in which it was conceived.[24] The period of Bitania was exhilarating yet painful. Such pain is commonly experienced by groups that proclaim lofty ideals for a correct life, running into self-imposed hurdles erected by their own zealotry. As their members seek to realize new imperatives for a new life, they repeatedly come up against frustrating barriers that prevent them from realizing their aspirations for a truer and purer life and being an exemplary model. The tribulations of the people of Bitania Ilit were imprinted on them and turned into scars that are apparent in what the experience left behind it, in their writing and memories. As such, it is no different from the experiences of later generations of kibbutz members. Close perusal of the rich and singular documentation that the group left behind, alongside analysis of the literary depictions that followed, testifies not only to the complexities of this "new man," but also to specific aspects that left an impression on the emerging Zionist selfhood.

As we shall see, the period of Bitania gave rise to a hyper-virile masculinity, mixed with a peculiar softness and sensitivity. Alongside manifestations of extroverted and emphatic masculinity (a type of machismo), this construction embodies moments of sensitive, tender, and vulnerable masculinity (labeled "romantic" in previous scholarship, and sometimes mockingly conflated by contemporary observers with the German concept of *Weltschmerz*, or "sorrow of the world"). But when young men open their hearts and discuss their inner feelings in the presence of others, a non-macho masculinity is born. This extraordinary type of masculinity is preserved in a traceable tradition within Zionist annals—the tradition and literary genre of "Soldiers Talk" (see chapter 8) that met with a great deal of mockery and disdain both from the political right (for the "softness" and "tearfulness" that it exudes) and from the left—for the hypocrisy of those who "shoot and weep." It is one of the masculinities peculiar to Zionism and later to Israelis. It finds in Bitania a significant beginning.

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24 Rina Peled was the first to analyze Hashomer Hazair's "new man" in this manner and she thus laid the foundations for this study. Peled too maintains that her analysis of Hashomer Hazair's new person should be located in the Central European culture in which it took shape. See Rina Peled, "*Ha-adam ha-hadash" shel ha-mahapeikha ha-tsiyonit: Ha-shomer ha-tsa'ir ve-shorashav ha-eiropi'im* (The Zionist Revolution's "New Man": Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsa'ir and its European Roots) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2002).

Chapter I

Eastern Galicia and Vienna: Hashomer, Tse'irei Tsiyon, and the Origins of Hashomer Hatzair

The words Hashomer Hatzair literally mean "The Young Watchman." The movement was founded in Vienna in 1916 with the merging of two different youth organizations: Hashomer and Tse'irei Tsiyon. Both had been founded before the war in the Habsburg province of eastern Galicia, an overpopulated agrarian region inhabited mostly by Polish and Ukrainian peasants (termed Ruthenian by the Austrians).[1] Galicia was the poorest province in the Austrian monarchy. Historians of Hashomer Hatzair refer to the years between 1911 and 1918 as the Galicia-Vienna period. This covers the movement's formation in Galicia and the wartime years, roughly between 1915 and 1918, when the movement's leadership and many of its members moved to the relative safety of Vienna. The period after 1920 is referred to as the Palestinian period even though the branches in Vienna and Galicia were active until the destruction of these Jewish communities during the Holocaust.[2] Most of the members arrived in the city along with their families, though a small number came alone. During the war and immediately thereafter, the Hashomer Hatzair branch in Vienna comprised approximately 1000 members at its peak. Here, Hashomer

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1 For the most up to date background on eastern Galicia, see Joshua Shanes, *Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish Identity in Habsburg Galicia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). See also a wealth of information and analysis in a classic study, N.M. Gelber, *Toldot ha-tenu'ah ha-ziyonit be-Galiziyah 1875–1918* (History of the Zionist movement in Galicia 1875–1918) (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1958). For a detailed history of Hashomer Hatzair in this period, see Matityahu Mintz, *Havle ne'urim: ha-tenu'ah ha-Shomrit 1911–1921* (Pangs of Youth: "Hashomer Hazair" 1911–1921) (Jerusalem: Publishing House of the World Zionist Organization, 1995).

2 For a history of Hashomer Hatzair in Austria, see Angelika Jensen, *Sei Stark und Mutig! Chasak we'emaz!: 40 Jahre jüdische Jugend in Österreich am Beispiel der Bewegung "Haschomer Hazair" 1903 bis 1943* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1995).

Hatzair grew out of its original, dual origin in Galicia as a scouting organization and an association of study groups for university and high school students. During the Vienna years the movement gradually became an autonomous youth movement, an exceptional phenomenon in the entire history of youth movements and organizations, as most youth organizations were directed by adults with the sponsorship of institutions such as ideological movements or political parties. Much of this study is devoted to the emotional and psychological processes that took place in Vienna, where the movement underwent a colossal human transformation and became autonomous. The present chapter focuses on the origins of the movement in Eastern Galicia between 1911 and 1915 and its response to the traumatic events of 1918–19 in Galicia immediately after the war, and to the collapse of the monarchy. A brief historical account is required in order to clarify the peculiar historical trajectory—Galicia–Vienna–Galicia–Palestine—which was a consequence of two traumatic events: World War I and the skirmishes between the Poles and the Ukrainians that took place in Galicia in 1918 and 1919.

World War I was extremely traumatic for the Jews of Galicia.[3] In August 1914, Austria began its eastward offensive, following the assassination of the Habsburg Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28. In September, the provincial capital Lwów fell to the Russians. Galicia was reconquered by the Austrian army in March 1915, taken again by the Russians in the summer of 1916, only to be retaken by the Austrians in 1917. These military campaigns drove tens of thousands of Jews and non-Jews who feared brutal excesses and looting out of Eastern Galicia. Those who stayed faced social and political paralysis. Arye Karp (1900–78) had since 1913 been a member of Hashomer—the scouting organization that merged with Tse'irei Tsiyon in 1916 in Vienna to form the Hashomer Hatzair. As soon as the war broke out, he, together with other members of Hashomer, were sent as volunteers to the central railway station in Lwów to help provide supplies to the newly recruited military units of the empire, running various errands in his scout uniform. Karp and his friends were taught Czech and Hungarian folk songs by the soldiers in those multi-ethnic units, but this would be the last chance for this kind of interaction, as these were the last gasps

3 Howard M.v Sachar, *Dreamland: Europeans and Jews in the Aftermath of the Great War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

of the multinational Habsburg monarchy. Soon the province fell to the Russian army. Later, Karp recalled how horrified the local population was by the appearance of Tatar and Kirgyzian soldiers. Mounted on small horses and holding spears in their hands, they loosed terrifying screams. Their faces looked savage, and the stench of their clothes was unbearable. The Russian units held public executions, forcing the local population to bring their children to the spectacle, but they also brought large supplies of food into the hungry city. Some Jews befriended the Russian officers, and were regarded by the rest of the population as traitors. When the Russians were driven out of the province after several months, Karp recalled, the conquering Austrian army was greeted with kisses and flowers. But hunger soon ensued.[4]

The Jewish refugees who left Eastern Galicia because of these upheavals turned to Bohemia, Moravia, or Hungary, but mainly to the capital of the monarchy. Such a huge Jewish exodus was unprecedented in the history of the Jews in the Habsburg Domains since the time of the Chmielnicki pogroms in seventeenth-century Poland and Lithuania.[5] As Austrian nationals, the Jewish refugees could travel freely throughout the monarchy. The exact numbers are hard to ascertain. In 1915, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior estimated that there were roughly 400,000 Jewish and non-Jewish refugees in Austria. Of these, over 77,000 Jewish refugees made their way to Vienna.[6] The state provided financial assistance to all the refugees in Vienna, many of whom arrived quite destitute. But assistance proved to be insufficient, and the Jewish community itself established institutions for refugee support, including relief aid such as soup kitchens, legal advice, and medical assistance. Another source of support were the relatives already established in the city. Most of the Jewish refugees in Vienna opted to stay in the city and never return to Galicia. Manès Sperber (1905–1984) (later a well-known essayist and editor in Paris) became

4 *Sefer Beit Alpha*—An unpublished, unpaged collection of testimonies and interviews. Beit Alpha archive: Arye Karp's memories.

5 Arieh Tartakower, "Jewish Migratory Movements in Austria in Recent Generations," in *The Jews of Austria: Essays on Their Life, History and Destruction,* ed. Josef Fraenkel (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1967), 285–310.

6 Marsha Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity: The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 59, 61.

a member of the movement in Vienna. His family fled to the city during the war and chose to stay there because they felt that their old homeland had become foreign to them.[7] The majority of refugees chose to stay in Vienna because they feared the uncertainty of a future in war-torn Galicia. Many houses had already been destroyed during the war. They wished to become citizens of post-war Austria as soon as possible, especially those who had already managed to establish lives there. The thought of uprooting themselves once more cannot have been attractive. The parents of most Hashomer Hatzair members, by contrast, returned to Eastern Galicia as soon as possible; many still had property and business interests in the province. However, this trend was the exception.

The deployment of the Russian army in 1917, and the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire in 1918, were followed by a civil war between the Ukrainian and Polish ethnic minorities in Galicia.[8] This war would not have taken place without the rise of the new Ukrainian and Polish national aspiration. As soon as the Russian army began to disintegrate as a result of the Bolshevik revolution, Ukrainian nationalists seized the moment and encouraged Ukrainian conscripts to form their own units. Soon, they formally proclaimed their own autonomous republic and in January of 1918 the newly formed Rada (council) in Kiev announced the republic's full independence.[9] Inspired by this development, which eventually would not endure the attacks of both the Bolshevik Red Army and the Russian counterrevolutionary army, Ukrainian troops of the disintegrating Habsburg army began to desert and Eastern Galicia was now proclaimed as the "West Ukrainian Republic." As the Polish political leadership also proclaimed Poland's independence, its army launched an invasion of Eastern Galicia and defeated the exhausted Ukrainian forces.

The Jews, trapped between these two national entities, and the target of fierce antisemitism, suffered great abuse, though not comparable to the excesses the Jews who lived in the Ukraine proper had suf-

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7 Quoted in Marsha Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity,* 135.

8 N.M. Gelber, *Toldot ha-tenu'ah ha-ziyonit be-Galiziyah 1875–1918* (History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia 1875–1918) (Jerusalem: Zionist Library, 1958), Vol. II, 837.

9 Howard M Sachar, *Dreamland: Europeans and Jews in the Aftermath of the Great War*, 13.

fered at the hands of the retreating Ukrainian units, led by the champion of Ukrainian nationalism, Simon Petliura. In eastern Galicia, at least four hundred Jews were killed, and thousands were injured.[10] These tragic occurrences were especially shocking to the Jewish population, since historically, and in comparison with Russia and the Ukraine, it had not been terrorized by pogroms.[11] When Polish military units were permitted to kill and loot in Jewish neighborhoods without the intervention of the state, it was perceived by the entire Jewish population of Poland as an alarming sign that their situation has become precarious. An independent Poland had arisen out of the sudden and unexpected collapse of all three of its partitioning powers—the Austrian monarchy, Germany, and the Russian empire. A central feature of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, an independent Polish nation-state was eagerly pursued by the victorious Allies.[12] This political rebirth proved to become a bitter disappointment for many Polonized Jews, including the members of Hashomer Hatzair. The anti-Jewish excesses which spread all over Galicia and throughout Poland shocked these young Jews, who were immersed in the Polish language and literature. The period beginning in October 1918, which marked the end of the old Europe and the demise of the Habsburg monarchy, held out no promise to the Jews of Galicia, especially the younger generation. The political chaos, followed by brutalities perpetrated by the Poles and later by the Ukrainians, led them to a dead end.

As a result of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, both Poles and Ukrainians, as two national entities, had major claims to political sovereignty over Eastern Galicia. Poland had historical claims to the region, whereas the Ukrainians comprised the majority of the population. In 1910, the Ukrainians constituted 61.7 % of the population of eastern Galicia, the Poles 25.3 %, and the Jews 12.4 %.[13] But it was neither historical claims nor statistics that determined the political future

10 Elkana Margalit, *Ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir me-'adat ne'urim le-Marksizm mahapkhani 1913–1936* (Hashomer Hatzair: From Youth Community to Revolutionary Marxism 1913–1936) (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1971), 20.

11 Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 18.

12 Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity*, 137.

13 Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 99.

of eastern Galicia, but sheer force and international alliances. The Jews of Eastern Galicia had a strong position as effective economic entrepreneurs. In addition, they were the most prominent in the ranks of the intelligentsia. It was only natural that both the Poles and the Ukrainians initially tried to attract the Jews to their sides in order to enhance their political claims. In doing so they revealed sharp differences in style: the Poles, who felt superior to the Jews and gave little thought to assimilating them into Polish society, took their support for granted, and refused to recognize any Jewish claims to national identity or cultural autonomy. Even before the war, the Poles had tried to block any such claims made in the Habsburg parliament with fierce antisemitic passion, accusing the Jews of conspiring against the Polish nation.[14] The Ukrainians of Eastern Galicia, on the other hand, seeing themselves as a disadvantaged group, were willing to negotiate with the Jews as equals, on the condition of winning Jewish support for their national aspirations. Supported by the Austrians, the Ukrainians declared the Western Republic of Ukraine on October 20, 1920. As the Polish political parties deliberated, Ukrainian units took over the government building in Lwów on November 1, marking the beginning of a bloody conflict. As Eastern Ukraine (Russian Ukraine) gradually eroded and was taken over by the Bolsheviks, the Polish army advanced towards eastern Galicia with remarkable military success. By June 1919, the entire province was in the hands of the Poles. Polish sovereignty over the province was now recognized with the support of the western allies, who feared the spread of Bolshevism.[15]

Throughout this postwar period, the Jews consolidated their political activity in the framework of a National Jewish Committee which they established in Lwów. On October 26, 1918, they had organized a large rally, calling for recognition of Jewish national autonomy. At the same time, in order to protect the many local Jewish communities, they organized Jewish militias throughout the province, primarily consisting of former Austrian soldiers and officers. These initiatives were viewed favorably by the Ukrainians, who understood that the Jews supported their cause and not that of the Poles. Officially the Jews re-asserted their neutral position which was declared years previously, but

14 Ibid., 100–1.

15 Ibid., 102–3.

now this neutrality was perceived by the Poles as treason, which led to unprecedented incitement of the Polish population against the Jews by local political leaders. In her diary, Malka Unger, a member of the Lwów branch of Hashomer Hatzair, had predicted these excesses.[16] Many Jews were not so prescient. As the Poles declared their victory and Lwów celebrated, many Jews wholeheartedly joined in the festivities. The very next day, Polish army units marched into the city, looting and vandalizing Jewish property. They murdered seventy-eight Jews in Lwów alone, and injured hundreds more. These events lasted three days. The Jews of Galicia realized that their world had changed abruptly.[17]

Most of the rank-and-file members of Hashomer Hatzair were born between 1900 and 1901, and most of their leaders were born between 1896 and 1900. Driven from their homes as young adolescents, they lived as refugees in a strange and worrisome city. They were too young to be drafted into the military and spent their time struggling to survive and engaging in youth movement activities. A popular job they took was selling newspapers on the streets. Their parents' return to Eastern Galicia exposed them to the trauma of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict of 1918–19, which occurred immediately after the war. This event directly drove the movement's leadership to leave Galicia and immigrate to Palestine in 1920. However, it must be emphasized that the response of Hashomer Hatzair members to these events, their sensitivity, was that of the assimilated minority. As we shall see, most of their peers, those who studied with them in the same Polish schools and experienced the same hardships, responded to these events with helplessness if not indifference in terms of national pride. This fact itself was a source of great dismay at the time to the nationally conscious members of Hashomer Hatzair.

The first entry in Shraga Schlifka's diary referring to unrest in Lwów appeared on October 19, 1918. Schlifka (Yedidya Shoham—1901–93) was a group leader in Hashomer Hatzair in Lwów, later in Vienna during the war years, then back in Lwów immediately after the war. He immigrated to Palestine and was a founding member of Kibbutz Beit Alpha, established in 1924 as the first kibbutz of Hashomer Hatzair. According to his diary, during the weeks that became decisive

16 Malka Unger, diary entry November 2, 1918, in *Sefer Beit Alpha* (see note 2).

17 Mintz, *Pangs of Youth,* 104.

as to the political future of the province, the members decided to take part in a huge Jewish demonstration.[18] The Poles and the Ukrainians were also planning big rallies. Schlifka feared that there could be antisemitic outbursts. During the demonstration, the Jews not only expressed their demand for recognition of Jewish national autonomy, but also made claims about Palestine in light of the Balfour declaration. A Jewish rally of such proportions had never before taken place in Lwów, wrote Schlifka in his diary.

The demonstration included the entire range of Jewish factions and parties in Lwów, as no single coherent Jewish policy existed during this crisis. The Zionist movement in Galicia had already been functioning for decades, but as a response to the upheavals during the war, Zionism was increasingly supported by the general population, especially the younger generation. The Zionists dominated the rally's agenda. As early as July 1918, the first Zionist daily in the Polish language, *Nowy Dziennik* (the New Daily), was being published. The editor was Dr. Wilhelm Berkelhammer, who had edited Tse'irei Tsiyon's monthly periodical *Moriah* for years.[19] It became clear that as the Habsburg monarchy was about to disintegrate, the Jews too had to contend with the principle of national self-determination.[20] In both Poland and eastern Galicia, all Jewish political parties (with the exception of the Agudes Yisroel) were now committed to a "new Jewish politics." This meant the weakening of attempts to work out a modus vivendi with other political forces and with the authorities.[21]

A few days after the rally in Lwów, Ukrainian militia were seen disarming Austrian soldiers throughout the city. They raised their flag over the city hall.[22] This was the end of Habsburg rule in Lwów.[23] Then

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18 Yedidyah Shoham (Shraga Schlifka), *Yoman ne'urim* (Diary) (Givat Haviva: 1987), 80–3.

19 N.M. Gelber, "During the War," in *History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia 1875–1918* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1958), Vol. II, 813–38, especially p. 825.

20 Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity,* 133.

21 Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*, 48–9.

22 Malka Unger, diary entry November 1, 1918, in *Sefer Beit Alpha* (see note 2).

23 The following report of the events in Lwów was published in Dror Levi and Israel Rosenzweig, *Sefer Ha-shomer ha-tsa'ir* (Merhavia: Sifriat Poalim, 1946–1956), 67–71.

the city was recaptured by the Polish army on Friday, November 21, 1918. The looting and murder began as Polish soldiers went from door to door and from business to business. The next day, one of the synagogues was set on fire, and some private homes were burned with the residents trapped inside. Member Malka Unger and her family packed some belongings and stayed up all night, fully dressed. Their apartment was spared, and the next morning as they went out into the street, they witnessed the destruction and the piles of corpses.[24]

The proclamation of Poland as a free sovereign state in 1918 was a dramatic example of the triumph of the national principle in European history. Paradoxically, the triumphant rise of Polish nationalism exerted an incalculable influence on Polish Jewish youth. More specifically, it turned a significant number of young Jews to Zionism.[25] This development had far-reaching implications for the younger generation in Eastern Galicia. In 1917, Sigmund Elenberg had published a premonitory article discussing the relationship between Jewish and Polish youths. Dr. Sigmund Shmariahu Elenberg (1896–1965) was a leader of Tse'irei Tsiyon in Lwów, editor of the journal *Moriah* between 1915 and 1917, and one of the leaders of Tse'irei Tsiyon in Vienna at the time of the merger of Tse'irei Tsiyon with Hashomer in 1916. After the war, he became a leading educator, first in Poland, then, from 1940, in Palestine.[26] In his article, he accused the Polish high schools of antisemitism, portraying those high schools as prisons in which the Jewish students were ostracized. On the other hand, he pointed out, it was in those very schools that Jewish youths learned the meaning of national pride. There they learned about national heroes and their sacrifices on behalf of the nation. Elenberg made a direct connection between the spirit of Polish nationalism and the Jewish response:

> The heroic struggle of the Polish people for its freedom and the ideals of the Polish writers touched our hearts deeply, they deepened our love for our own nation and for its freedom. They intensified our will to struggle and make sacrifices for it.

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24 *Sefer Beit Alpha* (see note 2).

25 Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915–1926* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 345.

26 N.M. Gelber, *History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia 1875–1918*, Vol. II, 690.

> …Polish people! Your noble sons did not cast a shadow on our aspirations. On the contrary, they made them greater and more powerful.[27]

In this article, Elenberg signaled a break from a long tradition, going back to the mid-nineteenth century, whereby assimilated Jews often emphasized a sharing with the Polish people of the sense of being oppressed and disenfranchised.[28]

In an essay in the Hashomer Hatzair periodical *Nowa Młodzież*, published in mid 1919 in Polish, member Szymon Wolf expressed disappointment over the Polish attacks on the Jewish communities of Galicia. Wolf (1901–66) was born in Lwów, and played a leading role in Hashomer Hatzair. He immigrated to Palestine, published some of his poetry, translated some Hebrew poetry into Polish, and eventually left Palestine.[29] He lived as a journalist in London, where he founded the Hashomer Hatzair veterans' organization.[30] In his essay, titled "Possibilities for Utopia," Wolf addressed Poland's youth, accusing it of knowing nothing about two thousand years of Jewish suffering and Jewish heroism, whereas Polish Jews knew and admired Polish national heroes, and envisaged mutual support of Polish and Jewish youth for each other's national aspirations for freedom.[31] He claimed that the youths of both national movements were striving for the same ideals. It is worthy of note that the editors of the journal, which was published by Hashomer Hatzair's Lwów branch, explained in an edi-

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27 Sigmund Elenberg, "On a New Path," in *Sefer ha-Shomer ha-Tsair* (Book of Hashomer Hatzair) (Merhavia: Sifriat Poalim, 1956), 53–4.

28 Ezra Mendelsohn, "Jewish Assimilation in L'Viv: The Case of Wilhelm Feldman," in *Nationbuilding and the Politics of Nationalism: Essays on Austrian Galicia,* ed. Andrei S. Markovits and Frank E. Sysyn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 96–110.

29 For some of his verse see Szimon Wolf, *Antologja Najmłodszej Poezji Palestyńskiej* (Anthology of Contemporary Palestinian Poetry) (Warsaw, 1929). A copy is held at the National Library in Jerusalem.

30 David Horowitz, *Ha-etmol sheli* (*My Yesterday*) (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1970), 69–70.

31 Szymon Wolf, "Możliwość czy utopia: List otwarty do młodzieży polskiej" (Possibilities for Utopia: An Open Letter to Polish Youth), in *Nowa Młodzież* 1 (February 1919): 7–8.

torial comment that Wolf was solely responsible for the contents of the article and that it did not represent their views.

Reactions to the Polish-Ukrainian hostilities and to the excesses against the Jews were highly emotional. The sources clearly show how the members were torn between their Jewish national pride and their sense of belonging to the Polish nation. They celebrated the first anniversary of the Balfour declaration on November 2, 1918, and the next day they joined celebrations marking the founding of free Poland.[32] They were split between their wish to assimilate and their commitment to the Jewish nation. The excesses perpetrated during the following months dealt a decisive blow to their assimilationist inclinations. The aftermath of the chaos of 1918–19, emotional, psychological, and political, intensified their active Zionism and their wish to immigrate to Palestine. Outraged by the Polish mistreatment of Jews, member Malka Unger swore in her diary (in Polish) that she would never speak Polish again. Another member of the movement reported that disappointment with the Poles had inspired fellow members to discard their Polish names and assume Hebrew ones:

> August 16. Yesterday there was an important gathering of youth movement groups. We sat in a forest … we talked about changing our names from Polish to Hebrew. I tried to decide what name felt right for me.
>
> August 17. Yesterday I watched over our group's flag. Shinhabi, our leader, suggested I choose the name Shlomit. He told me about the shepherdess, Shlomit. I liked that very much. That night I could not fall asleep. I imagined Shlomit with her herd of sheep by the spring, her hair flowing in the wind. I wanted everyone at home and in school from then on to call me Shlomit. Saturday morning we stood at attention by the flag. Shinhabi told us to gather at ten at night by the large rock. Something momentous was happening but we did not know what it was. That evening, after congregating by the flag, we marched double file to the rock. Along the way, everyone was silent. We descended the steps of the abandoned building until reaching a bon-fire lit in the clearing. Shinhabi, wrapped in a sheet, stood elevated like a hight priest at an altar. In a loud voice he announced that on this night, our Polish names were to

32 *Sefer Beit Alpha*, Szymon Wolf (see note 2).

> be burned forever … Nachum and one other lad were dressed in white night shirts and carried a large banner with Polish names attached. It resembled a Catholic procession. Each one of us approached the banner, removed our own Polish name, and handed it to our leader who then cast it into the bon-fire. That is how all our names were burned: Julek, Salek, Hanke, Itzik, Sabek, Franka … After they were all burnt, and the fire subsided, Dulik played a song on his trumpet. Later, Shinhabi read a long list of Hebrew names replacing the ones that had been burnt: Asaf, Haiim, Shlomo, Margalit, Tamar, Yardena, Shlomit … To me it seemed that we had not only left our names behind. In the depths of our most inner beings a transformation had taken place. Singing, we continued to the beach. Boats, lit by torches, waited for us there. We stayed till dawn. This night, the most beautiful of my entire life, I shall never forget.[33]

Such extreme sentiments were shared by the many other members of Hashomer Hatzair, who convened and resolved to leave their Polish high schools and never speak Polish again. They printed flyers calling upon the city's Jewish youth to abandon their Polish schools and establish independent Jewish high schools. They staged daily public protests and formed picket lines at the gates of their former schools. They hoped to win over the majority of Jewish students to the idea of establishing new Jewish schools, but this was not simple, as many of these students only wished to continue their educations. Physically preventing these students from entering the schools was met with resistance. Most Jewish youths were largely indifferent to the Poles' murderous attacks, as was the Jewish community in Free Poland, which turned a blind eye to the entire outrage. Many families were confused as to which side they were to embrace. Lunek Goldberg, whose family was deeply Polonized, remembered that when the Ukrainians entered Lwów his entire Hashomer Hatzair group volunteered to guard food convoys. The group received direct orders in writing from the Ukrainian forces. This harmony was dis-

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33 Quoted in Alex Liban and Dodi Goldman, "Freud Comes to Palestine: A Study of Psychoanalysis in a Cultural Context," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 81, no. 5 (2000): 893–906, 896–7. Liban and Goldman relied on the Shenhabi File in the Givat Haviva Archive, the central archive of Hashomer Hatzair.

rupted when the Ukrainians posted warning notices with the following message: "Ukrainian fighters have been directly shot at from the windows of residential buildings. Should such an incident recur, all men over the age of fourteen will be arrested and every tenth man will be randomly executed." A curfew was imposed. A few nights later a doorkeeper rushed into the Goldbergs' apartment and said that the Ukrainians had ordered all the men to come out. Goldberg, his father, and his brother, along with the other men who lived in the building, complied with the command. Ukrainian fighters, their pistols at the ready, rounded them up, lined them up against a wall, then made them march to an open well, warned them, and released them. The clear purpose of this nocturnal exercise was to terrorize a civilian population and show who was in charge.[34] Another episode illustrates the shakiness of the alliance between the Jews and the Ukrainians. When a Ukrainian bomb exploded at Lwów's central ammunition depot, the authorities learned that a young member of Hashomer Hatzair named Sher had revealed the depot's exact location to the Ukrainians out of a fierce longing for revenge against the Poles. This act of revenge failed to purge Sher's rage: as soon as he learned about the excesses committed against the Jews by the Ukrainians in the area east of Galicia (these were far worse than those committed by the Poles), he locked himself in the movement's meeting hall and killed himself.[35]

Analyzing the rise of a Jewish national consciousness, Elkana Margalit characterized the members of Hashomer Hatzair as "marginal persons." This sociological category refers to people who fall between two or more cultures. The younger generation of Jews in Galicia, especially students and young intellectuals, first tried to leave the Jewish world, both physically and spiritually, only to find themselves rejected from a belonging to the Polish nation and drawn back to the Jewish world.[36] Some, of which the Hashomer Hatzair members are prime examples, responded to the rejection they experienced at the hands of gentile Poles with great enthusiasm for the Jewish nation and a true sense of mission.

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34 *Sefer Beit Alpha*, testimony of Eliezer Goldberg.

35 David Horowitz, *Ha-etmol sheli*, 73.

36 Elkana Margalit, "Social and Intellectual Origins of Hashomer Hatzair," *Journal of Contemporary History,* 4, no. 2 (1969): 25–46, esp. 27.

The conditions found in Galicia before the war gave rise to Tse'irei Tsiyon, founded around 1902, and Hashomer, founded in 1913. After the Habsburg monarchy emancipated the Jews in 1867–68, the Jews of eastern Galicia had made headway in higher education and in the professional world: in 1890, 36 % of the lawyers in the province were Jewish, in 1900, they were 40 %, and in 1910, 57 %. In 1890, 24 % of the doctors were Jewish, in 1900, 22 %, and in 1910, 31 %.[37] Admitting them to schools and universities was part of the Habsburg policy of tolerance, but the school system was dominated by the Polish population, which also dominated the University of Lwów. The Jewish population of eastern Galicia constituted one-fourth of the total population of Polish Jewry between the world wars, and many Jews were employed in government offices there.[38] It was this sociohistorical situation that shaped the spirit of the two organizations that formed Hashomer Hatzair. Unlike the communities of Congress Poland (under Russian rule), or the Borderlands (the Kresy)—including Lithuania and Volynia—where Jews were treated as second-class citizens, the Jewish population of eastern Galicia lived under liberal political conditions with a moderate political climate and enjoyed individual rights and freedoms. This cardinal fact shaped the political behavior of the Jewish communities of the province as it generated stronger individual and collective self-confidence, virtually unknown among the politically oppressed communities in Congress Poland and in Russia.

Galicia was a geographical borderland, an ethnic, religious, national, and linguistic hybrid. Not unlike the Rhineland of Heinrich Heine, this was fertile ground for social and political reform and cultural fermentation. The Jews formed a minority particularly susceptible to such potentially volatile conditions. The large and diverse Jewish population lived mostly in small towns.[39] Since the end of the nineteenth century, many Jews had migrated from Galicia to other parts of the monarchy as well as to the United States. Although impoverished, the province enjoyed a certain measure of cultural and administrative autonomy. The Jewish community's ability to ensure

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37 N.M. Gelber, (Hebrew) *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Poland Series, Lwow Volume* (Tel Aviv, 1956), 307.

38 Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland*, 17.

39 Margalit, *Hashomer Hatzair,* 22.

continuity and inculcate its spiritual, cultural, and religious values in the young generations eroded over the years. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the traditions of Hasidism and the Haskalah—the Jewish Enlightenment—were gradually replaced by or merged into Polish culture for some Jews; others chose Zionism or immigration. The Haskalah was successful at effectively promoting education so that the Jewish plutocracy and growing Jewish social circles could gain social equality with their non-Jewish counterparts.[40]

Zionism made its first inroad in Galicia in the 1880s. In 1892 it received its first official formulation when many local, pre-Herzlian Zionist organizations, popular among the well-educated and the young, were established.[41] The younger generation of the secularized Jewish intelligentsia of both the earlier pro-German variety and the later pro-Polish one was first to adhere to Zionism as an expression of national consciousness. Many Jews retained a sense of separate identity and were easily swept away by Zionist fantasies about political sovereignty in Palestine.[42] After 1905, the Zionists in the Habsburg monarchy became politicized and joined the competition for the vote among broader strata of the Jewish population.[43] Many remained German in their cultural orientation until the downfall of the monarchy; many parents preferred to send their children to German rather than Polish schools. Acceptance of the Polish orientation accelerated after 1867, when the Polish population of Galicia gained a growing political power as Vienna approved and supported home rule for the Polish population there. If the first wave of Polonization occurred out of this political necessity, a new generation, born in the 1860s, especially among the well-educated in Polish schools, supported the

40 Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication of America, 1985), 37.

41 Leila P. Everett, "The Rise of Jewish National Politics in Galicia, 1905–1907," in *Nation-building and the Politics of Nationalism: Essays on Austrian Galicia*, ed. Andrei S. Markovits and Frank E. Sysyn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 149–77, 157.

42 Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 178.

43 Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 169.

Polish cause out of conviction.[44] This was the generation of the parents of the members of Hashomer Hatzair, themselves born around 1900. This generation, which in 1882 founded the Covenant of Brothers (Polish: Przymierze braci; Hebrew: Agudat ahim) in Lwów to promote Jewish-Polish assimilation, championed Enlightenment traditions by working to improve the lives of Galician Jews through education and assimilation.[45]

The members of Hashomer Hatzair mostly came from these assimilating circles and the peculiarity of their generation, as opposed to that of their parents, was their invigorated wish for a Jewish renaissance. Having a more distant and therefore more romantic view of the Jewish world than their parents, they continued the initiative of the generation of the members of Tse'irei Tsiyon, which had been founded around 1902 by those who were born around 1885. The membership of Hashomer Hatzair came from comfortable middle-class families, and the early years of the movement were marked by exclusivity and elitism. Shlomo Horowitz wrote in 1918:

> Essentially, the movement is spiritually aristocratic and exclusive. It should be open only to a limited group of people… We should not allow the nature of the movement to be blurred by transforming it into a mass movement.[46]

Such elitism marked the entire worldview of the movement. In the earliest period, this exclusivity was based on social distinction established through education: the movement welcomed high school students who came from fairly affluent families and who aimed to acquire higher education. It usually rejected youths who had already left school and were working. The members' parents usually identified themselves as proud Habsburg subjects, and many of them owned prosperous businesses. Some, for example, had a stake in the petroleum refining center of the Boryslav oil field, in the vicinity of

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44 Ezra Mendelsohn, "Jewish Assimilation in L'viv: The Case of Wilhelm Feldman," in *Nationbuilding and the Politics of Nationalism: Essays on Austrian Galicia*, ed. Andrei S. Markovits and Frank E. Sysyn, 96–110, 98–9.

45 Ezra Mendelsohn, "Jewish Assimilation in L'viv: The Case of Wilhelm Feldman," in *Nationbuilding and the Politics of Nationalism*, 100.

46 Shlomo Horowitz, *Haszomer* 10–12 (1918): 18.

Drohobych, which was a great source of prosperity and speculation in the region. In Lwów, many lived in the elegant Polish quarter, some having moved there from smaller towns a short time before. Moving from a smaller town to Lwów is a recurring theme in the biographies of Hashomer Hatzair members. David Horowitz's family moved from Drohobych to Lwów in 1908; Szymon Wolf's family moved there from the small town of Sondowa Wisznia in 1910; Moshe Fishler's family came from Sambour, and so forth. These moves were signs of prosperity and upward social mobility.

The first generation of Hashomer Hatzair members broke with their generally assimilationist parents because of an intense quest for two national identities: both Polish and Jewish. An abyss of generational misunderstanding opened between the members and their parents, who had never set out on an intense and proactive quest for their Jewish identity.[47] Just as parts of the older generations had become assimilated into the cosmopolitan, German-speaking Habsburg transnational identity, the members of Hashomer Hatzair first adhered to the Polish nation, and had all attended Polish high schools, and then converted to Zionism as a form of Jewish nationalism. David Horowitz spoke only German with his father, who saw himself as a Habsburg subject, and in high school was most dedicated to the study of the Polish national-romantic epics. When Kaiser Franz Joseph I died in 1916, the father of the young Hashomer Hatzair member Manès Sperber sobbed and told his astonished son: "Austria has died with him… It is a great misfortune for the Jews."[48] Before member Arieh Kroch began organizing Dror, a Jewish gymnastics club in Lwów in those years, he belonged as a high school student to two groups: the Polish patriotic cell Sokoł (falcon) and the Zionist study group Haszachar (dawn).[49] When twelve-year-old Yedidya Shoham asked his parents to let him join the activities of Dror—which merged with other organizations to form Hashomer in 1913—his father would not hear of any affiliation

47 Zvi Lamm, *Shitat ha-hinukh shel ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir: sipur hithavutah* (The Educational Method of Hashomer-Hatzair Youth Movement: The Story of its Formation), (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998), 33–7.

48 Manès Sperber, *God's Water Carriers* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987 [1974]), 114.

49 *Sefer Beit Alpha*, testimony of Arieh Kroch.

with a Jewish organization. He had already made plans to send his two sons to the Polish scouts.[50]

The quest for Polish nationalism was expressed mainly in an attachment to the Polish language and literature, and many young people were in the thrall of the Romantic Young Poland movement. This latter-day quest for assimilation was frustrated by their fellow high school students and by a hostile Polish population, not unlike the rejection felt by the Galician Jews in the 1880s and 1890s, when they realized that their prospects for economic, cultural, social, or professional assimilation were extremely limited. And then came the pogroms of 1918.

Tse'irei Tsiyon, "The Youth of Tsiyon," was founded in Lwów in 1902, but had already begun to take shape in 1900. In those early years, the activities of various study groups around the province followed a certain direction in terms of the content and purpose of their studies. The study groups were formed by university and secondary school students, in a generational surge of interest in national revival. More often than not, these young people were Zionist in outlook.[51] In its activities, Tse'irei Tsiyon emphasized the value of Jewish culture, its members learned Hebrew and were interested in all aspects of Jewish studies; they studied Hebrew, Jewish history, Zionism as a body of ideas, geography of Palestine, Yiddish language and literature, and Jewish culture including Jewish holidays and folk songs.[52] Above all, the study of the Hebrew language was required of all members without exception. In 1911, the number of groups rose from twenty-one to sixty-five, accounting for a total of 1274 students. The organization was further consolidated that year, so that the activities of the various groups became more uniform.

One of the main organs of Tse'irei Tsiyon was the monthly journal *Moriah,* which appeared in Polish in Lwów between 1903 and 1924, with some disruptions between 1915 and 1917 due to the war. It was published along with several other monthly journals: *Ha-Snunit* (The Swallow), published in Hebrew, was founded in 1910 and was edited from 1911 by Y.H. Brenner and G. Shofman, who lived in Lwów at that

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50 See Shoham's testimony in *Sefer Beit Alpha*. As opposed to his father, Shoham's mother supported her sons' joining Dror.

51 Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*", 24.

52 Ibid., 27.

time; and *Ha-schachar* (Dawn), first published as a Zionist journal for youth in 1909. *Moriah* was founded by the influential Zionist activist Jacob Thon (1880–1950) and always advocated a Zionist solution to the pressing political and existential problems of the Jews of Galicia, even when the members of Tse'irei Tsiyon themselves favored a comprehensive study of Hebrew and Jewish history and tradition over Zionist political activism.[53] At the time he founded *Moriah*, Thon was heading the Jewish academic group at the University of Lwów. *Moriah* was usually opposed, sometimes vehemently, to Jewish autonomism, though it advocated the study of Jewish subjects and saw its role as facilitating Jewish studies.[54] The monthly went through a transformation during the war years. Even though in those years publication of the journal was often interrupted, it had a print run of 2500 copies.[55] After the war years, the journal reflected many of Hashomer Hatzair's ideas and concerns.

The second organization, Hashomer, "The Watchman," was modeled after the Polish Boy Scouts (founded in 1911)[56] and named after the Hashomer organization in Palestine.[57] It was closer in structure and motivation to the Polish Scouts, and its leaders even corresponded with Baden-Powell himself, the British general and national hero of the Boer war who founded the Boy Scout movement in England in 1908. It was easier for Jewish youth in Galicia to be exposed to the

53 Thon was the brother of Joshua Thon, a rabbi and publicist who was a member of the Polish parliament between 1919 and 1935. Jacob Thon became Dr. Arthur Ruppin's deputy in the Palestine office of the Zionist Organization and from 1930 was the president of the Waad Leumi, and hence one of the leaders of the Yishuv. Along with Ruppin, he was among the founders of Brit Shalom in the mid-1920s in Palestine. See N.M. Gelber, *History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia,* Vol. I, 96–7 and Vol. II, 603, 653, 658.

54 N.M. Gelber, *History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia:* Vol. II, 672–83.

55 N.M. Gelber, *History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia,* Vol. II, 690–3.

56 After the translation of Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* into Polish (Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 33), Baden-Powell's book was one of the most influential books of the twentieth century.

57 Hashomer was a vigilante organization in Palestine. It was founded in 1909 in response to political changes in the Ottoman Empire, which encouraged Arab national hostility toward Jewish settlement. Hashomer's aim was to defend Jews and their property. It acquired a certain mystique-heroic masculine and mythical image.

Polish scouting movement than any other Jewish youth in any other area of Poland, since it was in Lwów that the Polish boy scout movement had been founded and it was legally able to function only there, under Habsburg rule.[58] Hashomer was officially founded in 1913, with the merging of several Jewish scouting organizations and gymnastics clubs. These organizations were oriented to younger age groups than those of Tse'irei Tsiyon.

One of the main founders of Hashomer was Henryk Sterner (1888–1938), affectionately known as Uncle Wujko. Sterner was a lawyer and an ardent Zionist who had been a member of Tse'irei Tsiyon in his youth. He criticized its intellectual bent and sought a more wholesome educational experience for youth. He maintained that younger boys and girls needed athletic recreation and outdoor activities more than intellectual efforts. He founded Hashmonai, a gymnastics club, which later became Dror, which then merged with other groups to form Hashomer in 1913. (More about Uncle Wujko see chapter 7.)

It was Hashomer that introduced into the unified movement the Ten Commandments of the Shomer, based on the Polish version of Baden Powell's Scout Law. Like these, the Ten Commandments of Hashomer and later Hashomer Hatzair were revised many times over the years. As identity givers, a code that marked an insider who belonged, these commandments served to instill in the young members a commitment to the Jewish nation, and to the building of their characters. Significant changes in the rules were made to adapt them to reflect the particular sensibilities of Jewish youth, as opposed to Polish or English youth. For example, Baden Powell's second Scout Law, drafted in 1908, read as follows: "A Scout is Loyal to the King and to his officers, to his country and to his employers." In later versions, the scout's parents have also been added to the list. In the Scout Oath, the scout promised to "do my duty to God and the King." There are several early versions of the second commandment of the Shomer. One read: "The Shomer is loyal to the God of Israel, to the land of his forefathers and to his people."[59] Gradually this commandment became

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58 Saul Scheidlinger, "A Comparative Study of the Boy Scout Movement in Different National and Social Groups," *American Sociological Review* 13, no. 6 (1948): 739–50, 744.

59 Lamm, *The Educational Method of Hashomer-Hatzair Youth Movement*, 44.

less specific and was more or less permanently fixed as: "The Shomer is loyal to his people."[60]

Obedience to one's parents or loyalty to the symbols of political power did not at all reflect the particular needs of this generation of Polonized Jewish youths. Their rebellion against their parents as well as the religious leaders was strong and firm.

This experience of rebellion and generational tension continued to characterize the movement's outlook and activities through the 1920s as the movement became extremely popular in Poland. For example, member Sarah Potok remembered that many members of the branch of Częstochowa dared to eat during Yom Kippur, Day of Atonement, and some even ate pork. This did not prevent the members from leading a campaign to allow Jewish boys and girls to refrain from writing in school on the Sabath.[61] Being loyal to one's people was flexible enough to contain this generational tension. A biblical image to this effect was invoked:

> Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

The member who made this quote from the Prophet Malachi in his article betrayed the presence of generational discord, invoking a similar intergenerational sensitivity from biblical times.[62] It is impossible to reconstruct the discussions that took place in the movement in relation to this quote, or even why this quote was selected for group discussions and even fixed in a movement publication, but it is nonetheless quite telling of the theme of generational tension that permeated through this generation and later on through the 1920s. An assertion of youth as a force with its own consciousness reflected an entire central European age. It then became fixed in the movement's ethos and powerfully projected onto its worldview and activities.

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60 Ibid., 79.

61 *Sefer Beit Alpha*, testimony of Sarah Potok-Lens.

62 Malachi 4:5, King James Version. Quoted in "Kite'i Sicha" in the movement's periodical *Hamadrich* 1, no. 1 (May 1926): 6–7.

The 1916 merging of Tse'irei Tsiyon and Hashomer in Vienna was a direct result of the war and the refugee situation. This move was experimental at first: although the organizations shared a strong adherence to Zionism, they had been founded with different purposes and outlooks. At times, they even regarded each other with mild contempt.[63] Tse'irei Tsiyon members saw the scouting drills of Hashomer as immature, and Hashomer members regarded the primarily intellectual activities of Tse'irei Tsiyon as nothing more than barren Jewish intellectualizing. Still, the merger proved to be successful and yielded a most important 123-page document, the *Guide to Group Leaders*. Published in Vienna in 1917, it reflected the merging of the two organizations and provided a new direction for group activities. It served as an instruction book and gave expression to the spirit of both organizations. The publication of the *Guide* became a momentous step in the graduation of Hashomer Hatzair into an autonomous movement.

The *Guide* articulated the pivotal ideas and ideals of the movement: it was meant to give group leaders the tools they would need in order to mold the personalities of the young members. It was a critical text. Its point of departure was the negation of life in the Diaspora and it constructed a negative image of the diasporic Jew. As we shall see later, this point of departure lays the foundations for a construction of a new masculinity, a new invigorated man. The points of departure were the assertions that young people of that period were not leading a healthy life and that young Jews were not aware of their heritage. This dual conviction, reflecting the prevalent discourse of decadence, is repeated many times: "We assert that our national illness is expressed in the decay of the individual as a human being; the individual's lack of national consciousness is the inevitable and understandable byproduct of this condition."[64] The writers assumed that the integration of scouting values and activities would help heal individual Jewish youths so that they could acquire a national Jewish consciousness. The activities of Hashomer Hatzair mixed scouting skills with Jewish studies in a Zionist context. This combination would serve

63 Mintz, *Pangs of Youth,* 42.

64 *Poradnik dla kierowników szomrowych* (*Guide to Group Leaders*) (Vienna, 1917), 7. The book can be found online at rcin.org.pl/Content/16533/WA248_33081_F-22–422_poradnik-szomrowy-o.pdf.

as the foundation for a stronger national consciousness and a willingness to serve the national purpose.

Hashomer Hatzair was in line with many contemporary voices in Zionism. Since the 1880s, Jewish intellectuals and thinkers of diverse persuasions rejected the ills of Jewish life in the Diaspora.[65] Many in the movement were inspired by the writings of one of the fiercest critics of the Diaspora, the author Yosef Haim Brenner (1881–1921). Brenner, an editor, novelist, and essayist, was committed to the negation of Jewish life in the Diaspora. In his depictions of the misery of Jewish life in exile, he portrayed the Jew as living in extreme poverty and in moral and spiritual degradation.[66] The Jews in Brenner's novels, the inhabitants of the Pale of Settlement during the period prior to the Russian Revolution, experienced violent and humiliating persecutions and displayed a victim's typical self-contempt. This fate had enormous repercussions for the mental disfigurement of the Jew: Brenner's characters are fearful, submissive, panic-stricken, and utterly without resources. They lack any realistic plan as to how to escape their degrading condition. Brenner felt no pity for his *batlones* (weary, idle, passive) characters, calling them "gypsies and filthy dogs." He wanted to force open his readers' eyes, to make them confront reality namely, the dead-end situation of the Diaspora.

The *Guide* was severe in its outright damnation of life in the Diaspora. Like many documents produced by Hashomer Hatzair during this period, it decried Jewish tradition as atavistic, evoking a loaded concept in late nineteenth-century anthropology and evolutionary thought, borrowed from the Jewish Italian criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso (1836–1909), a proponent of popular quasi-scientific theories of degeneration.[67] Atavism meant the physical or mental reversion of a member of a species to a former, primitive type. This term originated in a biological and racialist pseudo-scientific discourse, ascribing indolence and moral depravity to certain groups of people—the insane, criminals, or "savages." Individuals and societies

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65 Eliezer Schweid, "The Rejection of the Diaspora in Zionist Thought: Two Approaches," in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 133–60.

66 Ibid., 137.

67 Horst Breuer, "Atavismus bei Joseph Conrad, Bram Stoker und Eugene O'Neill," *Anglia* 117, no. 3 (1999): 368–94.

who relapsed from the heights of civilization to an atavistic state were thrown back in time to humanity's past that had been already overcome. Being deformed, inferior, or incapable of moral conduct and lacking self-control now all recurred. The *Guide* stated that the movement had to struggle against the curse of atavism, presented as the process by which such faults and defects recurred among the Jews.[68] The use of this racialist term was extreme and betrayed an intense emotional aversion to Jewish life in the Diaspora. This way of life was not only obviously unattractive, but an abomination that amounted to perversion, a source of great shame.

The *Guide* set out to expose the defects of the Jewish people in order to correct them. The image of the decadent Jew presented by the movement was similar and at times identical to general European images of degeneration and decadence. Modern anti-Semites identified this general mode of degeneration with the Jews, and Hashomer Hatzair tended to accept such attributions in order to portray a straw man that needed revitalization. One of the main controversies of the day concerned individualism. Again and again, Jews were depicted as hyper-individualists, so committed to their own personal successes that they lacked any ability to cooperate, to build community. The agents of this committed individualism wished to be freed from the shackles of stifling social conventions, leading to egotistic self-interest.[69] The debate about individualism that took place in the movement's circles was reflective of a broader concern for individualism in central Europe at that time. When individualism was discussed, Max Stirner (1806–56) and his book *The Ego and His Own* were often invoked. The influence of this book, first published in 1845 but only widely read several decades later, assumed astonishing proportions in Germany and central Europe.[70] According to Stirner only the individual matters; every individual was to view the world as his/her property. Stirner's "I" creates his/her world out of nothing and has no universal destiny or ethico-religious duty. This "I" is neither a part of the Christian kingdom of God, nor of any other (Marxian) destiny.

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68 *Poradnik dla kierowników szomrowych*, 10.

69 Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 170.

70 Oscar Ewald, "German Philosophy in 1907," *The Philosophical Review* 17. 4 (1908): 400–26.

This, many felt, led to the denial of all obligations, whether social, religious, or ethical. This view was often understood at that time in terms of egoism, and Stirner was thought to preach an anarchist doctrine of unscrupulous self-seeking, granting freedom from all restraints.[71] According to Marx, man is alienated from himself in the industrial age and must transform the entire world through revolution, but according to Stirner, humans are freed from the shackles of religion and must make use of the world to their own benefit.[72] When members of the movement wished to expose and attack individualism as a hindrance to the development of a constructive Jewish life and community, they invoked Stirner negatively.[73] The youth movement experience of togetherness was meant to impede this lurking personal deformation that had ruinous social implications. Soon, as the movement exposed itself and digested in Vienna new German ideas, it would attach itself to one of the most fundamental and formative discussions on the value of community in the German cultural sphere.

A third charge leveled against the diasporic Jewish character was its tendency to over-intellectualize. To a certain degree the intellectual pursuits of Tse'irei Tsiyon too were implicated in the eyes of the members of Hashomer. According to this invective, echoing likeminded central European Zionists such as Jacob Klatzkin, Michah Josef Berdichevsky, and Martin Buber to name but a few, bookish studies were barren and sterile unless balanced with a wholesome exposure to nature and physical culture. The physical decay of the young

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71 R.A. Nicholls, "Beginnings of the Nietzsche Vogue in Germany," in *Modern Philology* LVI, no. 1 (1958): 24–37, 30. On Manès Sperber's (a member of Hashomer Hatzair) reading of Stirner in Vienna in 1918, see Manès Sperber, *All Our Yesterdays*, Vol. I: *God's Water Carriers* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1987 [1974]), 146.

72 Marx saw in Stirner a radical ideologue of the decaying bourgeois world of "isolated individuals." See the discussion in Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 103–5.

73 These concerns have anticipated similar ones 50 years later: see Richard Sennett's insights regarding the corrosion of character and civic responsibility in his *Fall of Public Man* (1974) and Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (1979). Both deal with the atomized individual, and his/her escape from obligations to anyone but oneself.

Jew in the Diaspora was part and parcel of this condition. A common example, contrasting an image of health to purposeless, decadent youth, often recurs, here recounted by Mietek Gutgeld, a member of Hashomer Hatzair from the Warsaw branch in the mid-1920s and latera member of Kibbutz Mishmar Ha-Emek and Knesset:

> I remember two illustrations of boys: the first was decadent, wearing long trousers with a peaked cap [Casquette] on his head and a cigarette in his mouth; opposite was an athletic youth in short pants, a proud chest, playing with a football. These images had such an effect on me that I have never smoked to this day.[74]

From Tura Afura, a series of 8 etchings created in Vienna in 1924 by Aryeh Allweil (1901-1967) who was a member of Bitania Ilit. The etchings were presented to the public many years after Allweil's death, in 1998. See Shula Keshet "From Bithania to Vienna and Back: A New Look at Arieh Allweil's The Gray Mountain Prints," *Kathedra* 145, 2012: 63-88. I thank Nava Rosenfeld for the permission to use the image.

74 Moshe Zertal, *Ken nu'urim: pirke ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir be-Varshah, 1913–1943* (Spring of Youth) (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1980), 29.

As he tells us, Gutgeld found the juxtaposition of these two stereotypical characters in no other than Baden Powell's *Scouting for Boys*, which had no reference to Jewish life. Nevertheless, the young men and women who were attracted to Hashomer Hatzair and to the perception that Jews had descended into decadence chose to associate the character with the cigarette as representing a young Jew, and the athletic character with the non-Jewish youth, English or Polish.[75]

By rectifying these ailments, the movement's leaders hoped to initiate a return to Jewish values superior to those deformed by the Diaspora, not by disinterested, detached, and infertile intellectuals, but by reinvigorated youths. The return to a healthy Jewish life could only take place if the value of youth as a culture in itself was recognized. The movement pledged to transform its young members into "whole human beings," that is, physically, psychologically and emotionally sound, harmonious, balanced, and beautiful.[76]

Elkana Margalit, the first historian of Hashomer Hatzair, claims that Tse'irei Tsiyon Judaized the Hashomer organization, which had absorbed Polish national influences.[77] But even before the unification, the leaders of Hashomer had required third-year members to speak only in Hebrew during the movement's activities; after the unification this emphasis became even stronger. After the unification in Vienna in 1916, the activities associated with Hashomer became more popular in comparison to those of Tse'irei Tsiyon, thanks in part to its excursions in the countryside and military-style drills. This popularity may perhaps be explained by Hashomer's leaders' increasingly permissive attitude toward free interactions between boys and girls, an innovation in that period, as we shall see.[78] A close look at the *Guide* shows how the leaders of Tse'irei Tsiyon were able to continue the most important of their own organization's activities: they seamlessly integrated the playful outings in nature with a commitment to serious Jewish studies. The importance of extracurricular study in small groups was not neglected in the *Guide's* instructions. Jewish studies, above all the study of Hebrew, are stressed in the *Guide* as the

75 See also Horowitz, *Ha-etmol sheli*, 30.

76 Isachar Reiss, "O ruchu szomrowym," in *Moriah Year XIII* (1918), 329–30.

77 Margalit, *Hashomer Hatzair*, 49.

78 Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 66.

most important of all activities. Eventually, the movement's veterans were supposed to become completely fluent in Hebrew.[79] The studies provided an alternative study experience for these young Jewish high school students who had no other framework in which to explore Jewish topics. Parallel to that, self-cultivation and personal growth with a national commitment were constantly emphasized. Movement member Chaim Bental (originally Heńek Pentelka) recalls the discussions on Romain Rolland's famous novel *Jean-Christophe.* In Rolland's book they read that human beings might as well be considered intellectually dead at the age of twenty-three. After the age of thirty most only repeat themselves, completely unable to break loose from their old patterns.[80] Bental then added:

> This idea stood before us as a *warning*, driving us to advance forward, to continue and develop, to be among the peerlessly cultivated. This warning absolutely haunted us … it gave us the most important thing of all: the urge not to stop, not to be rigid and ossify; to go on reading, to go on thinking, to continue to think independently. Those are the most precious values.[81]

The tension between the scouting activities and those of the study group remained potent for decades in Hashomer Hatzair. Certain voices in the movement, especially in Palestine, wished to eradicate book reading entirely, but this was ineffective. The group leader's task was to make studies attractive so that the members would be drawn to their Jewish heritage. The practice of reading books of all kinds, both privately and collectively, was upheld. It provided the ideal conditions for developing the concept of an unfolding individual personality. As a practice, it was accepted in the movement that this was one of the keys for the emergence of personal autonomy and a more sophisticated subjective consciousness.

The typical scouting activities such as military-like skills, topography, orienteering, and resourcefulness in difficult situations were not neglected in the *Guide*. The reaction to the conventional schoolteacher

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79 *Poradnik dla kierowników szomrowych*, 43, 44.

80 Moshe Zertal, *Spring of Youth*, 190.

81 Ibid., 190. Emphasis in text.

is apparent in the chapter on the character of the group leader: unlike the school teacher, the group leader must act as an older brother or sister. He or she became in a confidant, a social and psychological type of friendship which appeared and received attention in the German free youth movement.[82] The group leader should be able to win the members' confidence and should never force the group members into action, but lead them through trust-building.[83] The merging of Tse'irei Tsiyon and Hashomer allowed for the preservation of their two distinct legacies within the framework of the movement, and the *Guide* reflected that merge.

In the annals of Hashomer Hatzair, the years between 1911 and 1919 are called the Galicia-Vienna period. During the war years, between 1915 and 1918, many of the members were uprooted and lived along with their parents as impoverished refugees in Vienna, the capital of the monarchy. The Galician part reflected two distinct periods, the years 1911–1915 and then 1918–1920—the years of turmoil in Galicia. The Vienna years, roughly spanning between 1915 and 1919, constituted a unique period during which the young members and their leaders were exposed to an intellectual metropolis. This metropolis was intellectually stimulating, but it was also menacing: a descent into poverty, marginality, uprootedness, and anguish were common among the members of Hashomer Hatzair as well as other refugee youth. Youthful emotional and psychological needs led this group of bewildered young people to adopt particular ideas from the literature that circulated in Vienna at that time, offering new answers, solutions, and directions.

Vienna was a city of contradictions: culturally it was a German city, while politically it was Austrian, which involved it in a multiplicity of lands, provinces, ethnicities, religions, and languages. The late nineteenth century had made it, the capital of a multinational monarchy, a cultural and intellectual "battlefield" where the rise of a variety of ethnonationalisms, Zionism in particular, conflicted with universalist cosmopolitanism or subjective and escapist aestheticism. During the 1860s and 1870s, many well-educated Viennese, among them a great number of Jews, embraced political liberalism as the city experienced an

82 *Poradnik dla kierowników szomrowych*, 32.

83 Ibid., 36.

economic modernization which paralleled in a less intense form those of Berlin and Budapest.[84] With the stock market collapse in 1873, liberalism began to decline. Between roughly 1890 and 1910, the city saw the emergence of Viennese modernism and vigorous new trends in many different domains, from the human sciences to the social sciences, visual arts to architecture, literature, music, and political theory.

In this context, the celebrated author Robert Musil wrote his epoch-making novel *The Man Without Qualities* (1911), a novel that exposed the crisis of identity inherent in that age, especially in an urban environment. Fleeing "decadence," lack of identity, and lack of meaning, Musil's heroes rush to embrace the first enthusiasm they encounter. The individual choice of Zionist activism, Nietzschean irrationalism, or aestheticist retreat was meant, first and foremost, to deal with an overbearing crisis.

During the *fin-de-siècle* Vienna responded to political disintegration and crisis by transforming itself into one of this century's most fertile breeding grounds for intellectual and aesthetic innovation. Sigmund Freud's personal trajectory is emblematic of this turn. His ideas, it has been claimed, were profoundly affected by these political conditions of his day. His inward looking interpretation of dreams went hand in hand with a social and intellectual withdrawal.[85] According to historian Carl Schorske, the disappointed middle class of Vienna retreated from their political impasse and turned to aesthetics or psychoanalysis. When civic action became futile, noble art became a pursuit of religious intensity, a sanctified refuge.[86] In search for meaning and for food for the soul, modern culture became a surrogate for a politically marginalized and incapacitated liberal bourgeoisie.

Vienna was the home of a growing Jewish population. Like any other European metropolis of the time, Vienna absorbed a growing number of immigrants, among them Jews. The Viennese population rose from roughly 850,000 in 1869 to almost 2 million in 1910.[87] In 1857

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84 Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 21.

85 William Mcgrath, *Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis: The Politics of Hysteria* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 15, 27.

86 Carl E Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 8.

87 Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, 20.

there were only 6,217 Jews officially registered in Vienna, roughly 2 % of the city's population.[88] In 1880, there were 72,588 Viennese Jews, roughly 10 % of the total population. In 1910, the number of registered Jews rose to 175,318, thirty times the number Vienna had held fifty years earlier. This increase undoubtedly helped stir up an unprecedented virulent antisemitism. The high visibility of Jews was magnified because of the tendency to live in a small number of districts: 20 % in the first district, 34 % in the second, the Leopoldstadt, and 21 % in the ninth. While antisemites loved to inflate Jewish influence, in reality there was a lack of solidarity among the various Jewish milieux. In the 1870s Theodor Gompertz, a Viennese Jewish scholar of ancient Greek thought, contrasted the tightly knit families who had settled in the city before 1848 with the new immigrants from the Habsburg empire's eastern provinces, a group minimally integrated into the more veteran families.[89] Of course, there were other groups: Jews who converted to Catholicism and Protestantism, not to mention a new type of Jews, the self-loathing Jews, a vociferous group that included such figures as the editor and publicist Karl Kraus and the controversial writer Otto Weininger.

In all the gymnasiums of Vienna taken together, 30 % of all pupils came from Jewish families. Almost a quarter of the law students and over half of the medical students enrolled in the University of Vienna in 1900 were Jewish.

Since the 1880s, however, many changes had occurred that altered the makeup and experience of the Jews of Vienna. Synagogue attendance declined and the city became one of prominent Jewish thinkers and of consumers of the new literature, art, and music. Many of the city's promising young writers calling themselves *Jung Wien*—Young Vienna—were Jewish or part Jewish.[90] According to the Czech-Jewish scholar of nationalism and Buber follower Hans Kohn, "Vienna at the turn of the century owes its intellectual character for the most part to men of Jewish origin," and according to Stefan Zweig, "Nine-tenths of what the world celebrated as Viennese culture in the

88 Ibid., 192.

89 Ibid., 196.

90 George E. Berkley, *Vienna and Its Jews: The Tragedy of Success 1880s-1980s* (Cambridge: Abt Books, 1988), 39.

nineteenth century was promoted, nourished, and even created by Viennese Jewry."[91]

Since the emancipation in 1867, many Viennese Jews wished to assimilate. Assimilation meant adapting even to the most superficial aspects of Viennese life, taking part in its easy-going atmosphere to the point of *überwienern*—being more Viennese than the Viennese.[92] These assimilation efforts encountered a fierce clerical opposition, originating with the Catholic church, moving into the political realm, then turning to outright racism. Hatred for the Jews and for Judaism mounted and became an effective tool in gaining political power. Vienna was the city where Adolf Hitler received his cultural and intellectual formation not only from virulent antisemitic national chauvinists and clerical obscurantists, but also from political and economic personalities who cloaked their virulence with outright racism such as the Christian Social mayor Karl Lueger or the pan-Germanist Georg von Schönerer, who added the "Aryan Clause" to his party's platform in 1885, thus estranging not only Jews but also converted Jews.[93]

As pointed out by Marsha Rozenblit, one must not judge the rate of assimilation of Viennese Jews according to the extraordinary experiences of famous intellectual giants such as Sigmund Freud, Arthur Schnitzler, or Gustav Mahler. The composition of Viennese Jewry was highly diverse, not only throughout the nineteenth century but also, and especially, during World War I. This is not to say that the Galician families of Vienna were not assimilated; on the contrary, many of them came from the most assimilated social layers of Galician Jewry. Acculturation and assimilation in the provincial capital Lwów were as intense as can be imagined.

Isolated in the poor districts of Vienna, most Hashomer Hatzair members attended gymnasiums where Polish was the language of instruction. These schools had been set up by the monarchy as part of its wartime effort to meet the needs of Polish-speaking refugees. The living conditions in Vienna varied, but the families of Hashomer

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91 Kohn quoted in Marsha L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867–1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983), 2. Zweig quoted in George E. Berkley, *Vienna and Its Jews*, 40.

92 Beller, *Vienna and the Jews*, 179.

93 Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 242.

Hatzair members who arrived in the capital as war refugees experienced a sudden and overwhelming material decline.[94] They usually lived in the second district—the Leopoldstadt, which was already home to many Jews. Uprooted wartime refugees, they spent long hours in lines, day or night, inadequately protected against the cold weather, waiting for a loaf of bread or a bag of potatoes. At times, the "sold-out" sign would be put up before they managed to get anything.[95] Eleven-year-old Manès Sperber found work in a soup kitchen. Seventeen-year-old David Horowitz spent his evenings working as a newspaper boy on the Prater. It was here, selling newspapers until midnight in front of the magnificent theaters, that Horowitz got to know, for the first time, the poor of Vienna. His parents' cozy living room in Lwów was no more. For the first time he felt an identification with the working class and became aware of his arrogant intellectual presumption in trying to study them.[96] Alongside many others in this situation, Horowitz tells us he became a socialist. Many concerts were held and theaters played to sold-out houses while many in the city froze and starved.[97]

It was in Vienna that the movement's image of the German Free Youth Movement, The *Wandervogel,* was intensified. Zeev Bloch (1901–1963), a member of Hashomer Hatzair and later a founding member of Kibbutz Beit Alpha, wrote in his memoir:

> Here in Vienna we first encountered Europe. In our youth we were particularly impressed by the German Youth Movement, which made its historic debut at that time. Children from dull and drab Galicia, dwellers in narrow alleys, we were captivated by the fair and rebellious figures of the German youth. We yearned for redemption and freedom, and saw in these young boys and girls a new type of free youth. For many this was a true revelation; we read the literature of this movement and imbibed its teachings.[98]

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94 Manès Sperber, *All Our Yesterdays*, vol. 1: *God's Water Carriers*, 104.

95 Ibid., 133.

96 David Horowitz, *Ha-etmol sheli*, 38.

97 Manès Sperber, *All Our Yesterdays*, 134.

98 Zeev Bloch, *Be-ma'arahot ha-Kibbutz* (Struggle for the Kibbutz) (Merhavia: Sifriat Poalim, 1952), 13.

It was only the image of the autonomous German youth movement, already splintered up and waning, that made a powerful impression on the young members of Hashomer Hatzair, not a real encounter. What the members of Hashomer Hatzair knew of the German youth movement were idealized images. Few members ever met any *Wandervögel*. Later, after the war and under the spell of the German Youth Movement, the leadership of Hashomer Hatzair pieced together a song list based on the *Zupfgeigenhansel*—the *Wandervogel's* song book—and mixed it with Hasidic tunes and revolutionary songs from Russia.[99]

In Vienna, however, a real interaction took place with a new and completely different phenomenon, the *Jugendkulturbewegung.* The encounter took place between several leaders of Hashomer Hatzair, including Meir Yaari, Isachar Reiss, Szymon Wolf, and Shlomo Horowitz, and the radical, progressive *Jugendkulturbewegung*, otherwise known as the *Anfang* circle, mediated by the circle's leader and its most active figure, Siegfried Bernfeld.[100] Meeting Bernfeld himself, both in his house in Vienna and in the school he founded after the war—Kinderheim Baumgarten—as well as participating in the activities of the *Jugendkulturbewegung* had a tremendous impact on the members of Hashomer Hatzair. Meir Yaari, in an interview in 1975, recalled how he first became acquainted with the work of Sigmund Freud in one of the *Jugendkulturbewegung* groups, which primarily met for intellectual discussions.[101] This encounter was fruitful and eventful for the subsequent path that Hashomer Hatzair paved for itself. Siegfried Bernfeld was also a Galician: he was born in Lwów in 1892 but grew up in Vienna. His being a Galician Jew, although affluent and well-connected in Vienna, accounts for his "discovery," enthusiasm, and support of his much younger Hashomer Hatzair brethren. A highly gifted and mature young man, Bernfeld began his young adulthood by studying biology and mathematics and switched to pedagogy and psychology. He had access to the most prestigious intellectual circles in Vienna during the war years and the twenties, frequently visiting Sigmund Freud's home at 19 Berggasse, where he participated in a study group with

99 Manès Sperber, *All Our Yesterdays*, 145.

100 Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 76.

101 Isachar Reiss, "O ruchu szomrowym," *Moriah* Year XIII (1918): 329–30.

Anna Freud. He was regarded as a flamboyant young man, and there were even rumors that Anna Freud was in love with him.[102] He was active in the Psychoanalytic Society, and in the early twenties he acted as Martin Buber's secretary and assistant. In this capacity he was engaged in the publication of the journal *Der Jude*.[103] As early as 1911, he was active in the German movement for educational reform, inspired by the German educator Gustav Wyneken. He believed in the moral superiority of youth over adults; as a follower of Wyneken's concept of the Free School Community (*Freie Schulgemeinde*) he edited and published the monthly journal *Der Anfang: Zeitschrift der Jugend* (1913–1914).[104] It was in these circles that twenty-two-year-old Walter Benjamin published, in 1914, his enormously insightful early article "Metaphysics of Youth," which aligns with the views on the metaphysical aspects of youth and youth culture experience that would be expressed in Hashomer Hatzair a few years later.[105]

Wyneken and Bernfeld sought to propagate and implement an alternative to the prevalent rigid gymnasium education in order to meet the needs of youths who sought emancipation from the oppressive adult world and culture. Wyneken strove to create an educational environment in which adolescents of both sexes—a radical innovation—could develop a way of living and expressing themselves; he promoted imaginative thinking and creative powers, regarded as appropriate to the culture of youth. This experiment was developed in reaction to the conventional authoritarian schooling system, which merely sought to prepare the students for a future profession. Bernfeld became an avid popularizer of the new approach in his *Anfang* circle, also known as the *Jugendkulturbewegung*, a socialistically-oriented,

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102 Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Anna Freud: A Biography* (New York: Summit Books, 1988), 99.

103 Philip L. Utley, "Siegfried Bernfeld's Jewish Order of Youth 1914–1922," in *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 24 (1979): 349–68, 361.

104 Reinhard Preuss, *Verlorene Söhne: Links Strömungen in der deutschen Jugendbewegung; 1913–1919* (Köln: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Politik, 1991), 102.

105 For Walter Benjamin's essay "Metaphysics of Youth" see Michael W Jennings and Marcus Bullock, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume I: Metaphysics of Youth, Writings 1912–1926* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

feminist, and democratic urban circle. This circle flourished under his leadership in Berlin as well as Vienna from 1915 until shortly after the end of World War I. This movement is seen as a precursor to the socialist vogue that swept away large numbers of middle class youths in Austria and Germany after the war.

In the course of discussions and debates that took place in this circle, the most innovative, progressive and radical ideas regarding modern living, gender relations, sexual issues, and socialism were aired. The movement originated as a revolt of the younger generation of the Wilhelmine educated middle class. Many of its adherents, one-third according to Bernfeld, were Jewish. The members were gymnasium and university students. The movement's main interest was not political: it was more concerned with subjective existence in contemporary society. The movement's existence so concerned the authorities that the police were dispatched to break up its meetings.

From an organizational point of view, the activities of this movement were rather loose, compared with the more rigid and regimented structure of youth movements. The *Jugendkulturbewegung* met in debate halls—*Sprechsäle*—always open for discussion and debate on any issue. Meetings were led by a moderator who was attentive to the spontaneous expression of the participants. If the German Youth Movement only tacitly protested against such issues as conventional schooling, family life, the state, sexual relations, marriage, art, and religion, the *Jugendkulturbewegung* took a more active stance. It advocated an anti-authoritarian school reform and sought to develop an autonomous, self-conscious, and confident youth culture, along the lines conceived by Gustav Wyneken.

In reaction to the *völkisch* surge visible in some circles in the German Youth Movement during the war, Bernfeld decided to focus his efforts on Jewish youth. He then, too, became a Zionist. His encounter with the Galician refugees in Vienna, especially with the members of Hashomer Hatzair, deeply inspired him and convinced him of youth's potential for bringing about a national regeneration of the Jewish people. He began to edit a new journal, *Jerubbaal*. To Bernfeld, a journal was a nucleus around which people could be rallied.[106] Just as his first period of activity (1911–15) had centered around

106 Willi Hoffer, "Siegfried Bernfeld and "Jerubbaal': An Episode in the Jewish Youth Movement," in *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 10 (1965): 150–67, 159.

his journal *Der Anfang*, so his Zionist period centered around *Jerubbaal*, which was published in 1918–19. *Jerubbaal* was dedicated to issues concerning the Jewish youth as a rising force. The title of the journal symbolized Bernfeld's approach to youth and its relationship to the world of adults. Jerubbaal was the name given to the biblical Gideon in the book of Judges, who, along with ten youths, revolted against his elders and fought against the Canaanite god Baal. By worshipping both Baal and Yahweh, the elders had revealed their hypocrisy and opportunism, but thanks to Jerubbaal and the younger generation, they mended their ways, admitted their failure, and learned from the young.[107]

The journal was associated with a secret order, the *Kreis Jerubbaal* (the Jerubbaal Circle) which functioned as an Order of Jewish Youth. Very little is known about this order, which was marked by ranks, oaths, and secret insignias much like those of the Freemasons, and was meant to assume a leading position in the march towards the future regeneration of the Jewish people. It was designed to function as a revolutionary body, which Bernfeld termed *Zielgemeinde*—a spearhead community.[108] This was a central concept in Bernfeld's thought. He formulated this idea of a spearhead community around 1915 in order to promote a Jewish counterpart to the German Youth Movement that revolted against parents and school. According to Bernfeld, the German Youth Movement was escapist and non-reflective: never did its leaders offer an original program for reshaping society. It never held in-depth discussions on the burning problems of youth in society, but merely responded to them. At the time, Bernfeld wrote that such discussions create consciousness and are a necessary condition for a community devoted to social struggle and social change. In Vienna during the war, the *Jugendkulturebewegung* explored socialism and demanded autonomy for youth. Several years later, in his Zionist period, Bernfeld would describe in detail the role of the spearhead community in the Jewish world, specifically in Palestine.

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107 See opening manifesto in *Jerubbaal: Eine Zeitschrift der jüdischen Jugend* 1, issue 1 (1918–19): 4.

108 I thank Professor Peter Loewenberg for suggesting this translation of *Zielgemeinde*. Other possible translations: struggle community, battling community, aim community, goal directed community, innovative community, cutting edge community.

Like all of Bernfeld's journals, *Jerubbaal* was short lived; it appeared only in 1918–1919. The highly venerated Hashomer Hatzair leader Isachar Reiss wrote for *Jerubbaal*, as did another member, Jehuda Watenberg, and the journal published a German translation of the "Ten Commandments of the Shomer," taken from the *Guide for Group Leaders*.

A struggle for youth as spearheading a national regeneration in Palestine was outlined in a book Bernfeld published in 1919, titled *Das Jüdische Volk und seine Jugend* (The Jewish People and its Youth). This forgotten volume put Bernfeld on the long list of central European intellectuals who described a Jewish utopia in Palestine. The book describes an educational system that addresses every aspect of life, from childhood to maturity and is organized so as to offer the child and the adolescent the best conditions for growth and health. Bernfeld dedicated his book to the most innovative educators of his day: Gustav Wyneken, Berthold Otto, Maria Montessori, and Granville Stanley Hall, who each in their own way had made innovative and progressive contributions to pedagogy. The book outlines a pedagogical setting in Palestine, where the Jewish people educate their children and adolescents in communities designed especially for this purpose. In the book, Bernfeld calls upon the youth to lead the way toward this utopian initiative, and discusses the specific pedagogical needs of each age group. In Palestine, Wyneken and Bernfeld's ideas were championed by Hashomer Hatzair, in particular their ideas on youth autonomy and non-authoritarian education, as well as the ideal of the spearhead community. The book had a clear impact on the educational practices of Hashomer Hatzair and, as a consequence, on the educational system of the entire kibbutz movement. Especially striking is the similarity between Bernfeld's ideas on young children's education and the kibbutz's assumption of all educational responsibilities, marginalizing parents—mothers in particular. The book also anticipated the founding of the kibbutz "children's society"—a semi-autonomous unit found in all kibbutz communities. This social and educational unit, composed of all the kibbutz adolescents, promoted autonomous self-education. It enjoyed a great deal of autonomy while supervised by educators assigned this task by the kibbutz.

Bernfeld organized the Jewish youth rally held in Vienna in May 1918, a well-known event with great resonance at the time. Such a rally, where a large number of Jewish youths from many different locations in central and eastern Europe met, was unprecedented in the Jewish world. Numerous Jewish youth movements and organiza-

tions, including Hashomer Hatzair, met and discussed their role in the future of the Jewish people.[109] Thanks to this rally, and one in Lwów several months later, Martin Buber, himself a Galician Jew and by that time a famous thinker, became acquainted with the movement for the first time. The movement became deeply influenced by Buber and his thought. Buber (1878–1965) had an enormous influence on Jewish youth in central Europe. A substantial portion of his essays, speeches, and talks were addressed to youth. This was how his contact with the *Bar Kochba* Zionist circle in Prague had originated in 1903. Since then, Buber was invited to youth gatherings and tirelessly attended them, in Berlin, Vienna, or Lwów.[110] He was born in Vienna, but brought up by his grandparents in Lwów. A Zionist since 1898, he was a quintessential central European—a Jew who was both Polish and German. His relentless efforts to combine the major approaches of Romanticism and German mysticism, questions of everyday life and the turn-of-the-century crises of—in his words—man's alienation from his fellow man, from God, and from nature, became familiar to Jewish and non-Jewish readers alike. His talks had a galvanizing effect on his youth audiences and aroused an unprecedented response.

Bernfeld was engaged in research on youth and their culture, and here, too, the split between his early period and his Zionist period is apparent. In the first period he suggested creating archives in which young people's contributions to culture, in the form of prose, poetry, and art, would be preserved and studied scientifically.[111] During his Zionist period, between 1920 and 1924, he worked on a similar project, which he called The Jewish Institute for Research into Adolescence and Education, in which context he published two volumes of research. These initiatives are considered pioneering and groundbreaking efforts at youth research.[112]

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109 For a firsthand account of the rally, see Siegfried Bernfeld, "Der österreichische jüdische Jugendtag," in *Blätter aus der jüdischen Jugendbewegung* 1, no. 7/8 (July-August 1918): 2–7.

110 Chaim Schatzker, "Martin Buber's Influence on the Jewish Youth Movement in Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 23 (1978): 151–71.

111 The archive is now housed at YIVO in New York.

112 Peter Dudek, *Jugend als Object der Wissenschaften: Geschichte der Jugendforschung in Deutschland und Österreich* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag; 1990), 328.

During this period, Bernfeld ran the Kinderheim Baumgarten, a boarding school for Jewish orphans and misplaced youths from Poland, under the auspices of the Vienna branch of the Joint Distribution Committee. Established in a converted military barracks on the outskirts of Vienna, Kinderheim Baumgarten was to be a non-authoritarian, semi-democratic school, where the teachers were supposed to act as educators, friends, leaders, and counselors. At Kinderheim Baumgarten, every issue would be debated by all the school members in a parliament-like assembly.[113] At first, real chaos prevailed; after all, the students had known only the harsh discipline of conventional orphanages up to that point. Gradually, the school community stabilized, but the experiment did not last, due to mounting external criticism. In return for room and board, many members of Hashomer Hatzair did casual work at the school before continuing on their journey from Galicia to Palestine in 1919, the year in which the school operated.[114]

Bernfeld's relationship with Hashomer Hatzair was to bear fruit on many levels, particularly that of the gradual transformation that occurred within the movement with regard to sex and sexual behavior, as we will see in the following chapters. This transformation as it unfolded was directly influenced by Bernfeld and the social milieu of the *Jugendkulturbewegung*, that is, adolescents engaged independently in incisive debates on sexual issues, among other issues, in the debating halls of the *Jugendkulturbewegung*. The need for these debates originated in what was perceived as a particularly conservative and repressive sexual regime of Wilhelmine Germany and the Austrian monarchy. The echoes of the discussions over sexual matters in the *Jugendkulturbewegung* made a decisive impression on Hashomer Hatzair and had a long-lasting effect on the movement.

But Vienna was not only a haven where vibrant intellectuals flourished and world-class book shops abounded. It was also a menacing urban megalopolis, the core of an alienating civilization. Like members of other contemporaneous youth movements in central Europe, the young members of Hashomer Hatzair were ambivalent about the big city experience. They perceived the urban space as impure and

113 Willi Hoffer, "Siegfried Bernfeld and 'Jerubbaal,'" 152.

114 *Sefer Beit Alpha*.

responded sharply to it.[115] At the same time, for those who came from small towns in the backwater province of Eastern Galicia, Vienna symbolized splendor and imperial magnificence, with its palaces, patrician mansions, monuments, and wide, brightly lit, tree-lined streets. In the eyes of a provincial visitor, not unlike the Balkan soldiers who had come to Vienna to crush the revolts of 1848, this was the heart of a civilization, with stately buildings, elegant boulevards, and elegant burghers. In Arthur Koestler's autobiography, we catch a glimpse of the urban temptations that so distressed the youth movements and their members. It was this "bad" Vienna to which the members of the movement responded with abhorrence. Koestler (1905–83), an assimilated Hungarian Jewish student from an affluent family, was a contemporary of the first cohorts that joined the Galician youth movement. He lived in Vienna as a student in the early 1920s. Eventually he sailed to Palestine, joined Kibbutz Hefziba, and lived there for several months.

Beginning in 1922, Koestler studied at Vienna's *Technische Hochschule*, but his true allegiance lay with Unitas, one of the several Zionist *Burschenschaften* (fraternities) founded in Vienna by Herzl in the 1890s. Unlike the Catholic *Korps*, which was composed of students of theology, or the Socialist students, engaged in political discussions in their "clubs," the main preoccupation of the Zionist fraternities was dueling. The pan-German fraternities' refusal to duel with Jews on the grounds that they were by definition devoid of honor placed the Zionist young men in a difficult position. Forbidden to fight with swords, they resorted to fists and clubs, which made the University of Vienna the scene of bloody riots. Here is one of the first shows of Jewish young male disaffection, a result of modern antisemitic passive aggressive revilement and provocation, meant to injure and aggrieve where it hurts most—male honor. However, when it came to the youth movement, nothing appalled and repelled the progressive, wholesome, and decent members more than such riotous thuggery. The second most important institution of the fraternities, the *Kneipe*, was a strictly regulated drinking binge. Between clicking their heels and vomiting in the bathroom, the *Burschen* sang bawdy student songs. The youth movements, on the other hand, strictly prohibited

115 Walter Z. Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 1962).

smoking and drinking; they were prudish in their avoidance of fleshly pleasures. No aspect of the city was more menacing than its rampant sexual permissiveness. Fist-fighting on the streets, bawdy drinking sessions, and cheap sex on the town, either with a flirt or with a prostitute, horrified the movement's members.

Chapter II

The "Sexual Problem" in the Youth Movement: From Denial, to Love, to Eros

The Vienna years made an indelible mark on the lives of the young members of the movement as they grew up to become young men and women. While their leaders were an average of around twenty-one years old, the members of the first cohort, who eventually came to Palestine in 1920, were sixteen to seventeen years of age. As we shall see, the ideas they were exposed to in Vienna were internalized and then applied into an evolving worldview. One of the roles of this worldview was to justify and sustain a new construction of manliness in the framework of a new man and a new society. This worldview had two main pillars: Eros and Tragedy, two profound and fundamental concepts, prevalent among the younger generations in Central Europe in those years. The members of Hashomer Hatzair wanted to become Tragic Men; these Tragic Men were to establish and live in an erotic community. The following chapters will show how far away the members of the movement ventured mentally and intellectually from the early and naive days of a scouts-like youth movement, into a life in Eros and Tragedy.

Eros was the last station in a journey that began with prudish concern for the sex lives of adolescent boys. The first station was based on embarrassment and denial. Through a process of digestion at Hashomer Hatzair, it was profoundly transformed into an embrace of Eros as a life-creating power. An axial concept in central Europe between the turn of the century and the 1920s, Eros became key for philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and the legions of his followers in central Europe, or for the scientifically-minded, such as Sigmund Freud on the one hand and various cultural commentators and critics on the other. Hashomer Hatzair's encounter with Eros began with the exposure to the psychoanalytically informed Siegfried Bernfeld and the *Jugendkultur* circle, but it was incorporated into the movement's early worldview as a concept more related to Freidrich Nietzsche's thought and the central European trend of Life Philosophy it spawned, as we

shall see. The concept was imported into the movement and subsequently played a crucial role in the fundamental conceptualization of the kibbutz as an erotic community. It later informed the kibbutz educational doctrines, as is apparent in a book published in Palestine in 1941 by the movement's two chief educators and pedagogical theoreticians, Zvi Zohar (1898–1975) and Shmuel Golan (Goldschein) (1901–60). The book, titled *Ha-Hinuch Ha-Mini* (Sexual Education), both reflected and shaped the movement's approach to sex in education, as well as its role in everyday life in the kibbutz community. The book served as a guide to perplexed parents, educators, and youth movement leaders.

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Hashomer Hatzair's encounter with everyday life in Vienna exacerbated the fear of impurity, especially sexual impurity, that was already so culturally embedded in the middle classes in those years. But the unique intellectual environment of this city also channeled the fear of impure sexual behavior into a long-lasting and extremely fertile engagement with questions of sex and its role in human life. It is possible to discern four phases in the discourse on sex, beginning in the early days of the movement and concluding in the first few years after the war:

1. Conservative and repressive denial of the sexual needs of youths: *sex is dirty.*
2. Open but limited discussions on sex and an admission of its pressing, urgent presence: *sex turns into love.*
3. Affirmation of sex as a positive and beneficial aspect of life which could be utilized through *sublimation* in order to create and build social institutions.
4. *Eros* becomes the foundation of community and every other aspect of life, an approach anticipating Herbert Marcuse's 1955 *Eros and Civilization*.

Our starting point is the foundation of the Scouts. Sir Robert Baden-Powell, who founded the Boy Scout movement in England in 1908, formulated the "Scout Law," the scout's ten commandments. The much talked-about tenth clause in Baden-Powell's Scout Law referred to purity and alluded to sexual chastity: "A Scout is Clean in Thought,

Word, and Deed, that is, he looks down upon a silly youth who talks dirt, and he does not let himself give way to temptation, either to talk it or to think, or to do anything dirty. A scout is pure and clean-minded and manly."[1] The "dirty" activities Baden-Powell had in mind were clearly sexual and presumably referred to masturbation, shameful behavior, unfitting to a manly person.

Three years later, in 1911, the first version of the Polish Scout Law was published, inspired directly by Baden-Powell's. It omitted any reference or allusion to sexual propriety whatsoever. Only in the tenth clause of the second version of the Polish Scout Law, published three years later in 1914, was the sexual behavior of youths alluded to for the first time. It read as follows: "The Scout is clean in thought, word, and deed. He does not smoke and does not drink alcoholic beverages."[2] This allusion is as minimal as conceivably possible.

In both cases the treatment of adolescent male sexuality—silence, denial, and moralizing—is conservative and repressive. The Scout Law resembles the religious approach to adolescent sexual behavior of the period, though the latter was more severe and repressive, and used shaming and intimidation. The Catholic Church attacked masturbation as a sin against God and against Christian society, an abnormal, anti-social activity, a first step towards homosexuality, insanity, and social chaos. Some even went so far as to warn that masturbation posed a danger to the security of the state.[3] Hashomer Hatzair used the Polish Scout Law as a basis for formulating the early versions of what was termed the Ten Commandments of the Shomer. In one of the earliest versions, published in Polish in Vienna, 1917, the tenth commandment in the Guide to group leaders laconically stated: "The Shomer protects his health."[4] It then elaborated: "The Shomer

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1 Sir Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1920 [1908]), 58.

2 Andrzej Małkowski, *Scouting jako system: wychowania młodzieży* (Lwów, 1911), 22, and *O wychowanie scautowe* (Chicago, 1915), 64.

3 George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 11–12.

4 "Szomer dba o swe zdrowie." See *Poradnik dla kierowników szomrowych* (Vienna, 1917), 23. See a translation into German in *Jerubbaal,* Vol. 1 (Vienna, 1919): "Der Schomer schont seine Gesundheit."

protects his health. [For the sake of his physical and mental health and balance] he never abandons himself to masturbation, youth's most despicable illness, which sucks out all vitality." This repressive version explicitly names the vice of masturbation and condemns it as a harmful illness. In March 1919, the same formulation appeared in the Hashomer Hatzair journal *Nowa Młodzież* (the new youth).[5] A different version, which appeared in Hebrew in Warsaw in 1918, read as follows: "The Shomer is pure in thought, word, and deed." This is a precise translation of both Baden-Powell's version and the second Polish version of 1914. In the Hebrew version, short passages from Jewish traditional and religious texts were attached to each of the commandments—eight from the Bible, two from the Talmud. The commentary on the tenth commandment came from the Talmud and read as follows: "Cleanliness leads to abstinence, abstinence leads to purity, purity leads to sanctity."[6] In this version more than in others, abstinence was clearly singled out as an ideal.

Yet another version appeared in 1919 in the journal *Hazak ve' Ematz!* (be strong and brave!—Hashomer Hatzair's salute). This time, the commandments appeared in both Hebrew and Polish; the commentary, this time in Polish and not from traditional Jewish sources, read as follows: "The Shomer is pure in thought, word, and deed… He exercises, and does not use drugs that destroy body and soul. He combats bad habits such as alcohol, gambling, and sexual deviation." Sexual deviation in this context meant masturbation and promiscuous sex. Here too, what we see are examples of the first approach to the sexual question; adolescent sexual behavior is a health hazard and poses a danger of addiction. In the name of purity and health, both physical and mental, abstinence is the solution. As of 1917, the actual naming of the damaging sexual activities occurs, no longer shrouded in mystery.

In their book *Sexual Education*, Zvi Zohar (formerly Abraham Hersch Sonenschein) and Shmuel Golan (Shmuel Goldschein)

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5 *Nowa Młodzież*, 1, no. 3 (March 1919): 44: "*Szomer dba o swe zdrowie*… Nigdy nie odda się onanii, najstraszliwszej chorobie młodzieży która ssie z niej krew i soki żywotne."

6 Reprinted in Zvi Lamm, *Shitat ha-hinukh shel ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir: Sipur hithavutah, The Educational Method of Hashomer-Hatzair Youth Movement: The Story of its Formation* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998), 44.

acknowledge with reproach the problem of silence about sexual matters and the encouragement of abstinence typical of those early years of the movement. In a chapter dedicated to "harmful books," they describe the impression that the books of the German pedagogue Friedrich Wilhelm Förster made on the movement. They claim that Förster's *Sexualethik und Sexualpädagogik*, first published in 1908, had both a positive and a negative effect. On the one hand, Förster's ideas about self-education were of great value: he emphasized the merit and even the necessity of extracurricular study, especially at times when the conventional schools do not answer youth's particular needs for knowledge. On the other hand, "along with this important nucleus [i.e. self-education] upon which the youth movement based rich and important study activities, its leaders and members imbibed without noticing it an utterly negative and deleterious approach to sexual education."[7] Zohar and Golan had Förster's stiff and uncompromising opposition to any discussion of sexual matters in mind, in addition to his insistence on absolute abstinence. In explicit opposition, Zohar and Golan adopted a more sympathetic and open attitude:

> An author in whom "sexual pleasure" and "sexual activity" (sex life) arouse such aversion and horror—is there a more dangerous poison than this to youth…? It is worthwhile for the youth movement leader to get to know this book and learn what a long way we have come from its approach to our current understanding of the question of sexual development. This book should be read in order to learn how not to educate… The importance of the development of will power for self education [which Förster's book teaches] should have nothing to do with the negation of one's sexuality.[8]

Zohar and Golan's statement was published in 1941, but the departure from silence and the norm of abstinence began in Vienna in 1918.

The old conservative approach soon made room for another, much more open, approach to sex. Instead of framing the issue in

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7 Shmuel Golan and Zvi Zohar, *Ha-hinukh ha-mini* (Sexual Education) (Merhavia: Hashomer Hatzair Publishing House, 1941), 227.

8 Ibid., 227.

an atmosphere of denial and aversion, this approach encouraged open debates about sexual questions, or at least acknowledged that sex exists and can be talked about. *Haszomer*, a periodical published by Hashomer Hatzair, included in its January-February 1920 issue a Polish translation of Gustav Wyneken's article "Coeducation and Sexual Education."[9] In 1914 Wyneken, the progressive and innovative educator who collaborated with Siegfried Bernfeld, had published *Schule und Jugendkultur* (School and Youth Culture). In this book, Wyneken outlined his educational credo and expressed his firm belief in the value of coeducation. The is article was extracted from the book. Such an article would never have been published without the contact with Bernfeld's *Anfang* circle in Vienna. Wyneken proposed that the two sexes be educated together. The interaction between boys and girls, he contended, would be beneficial to both. At the same time, he explicitly warned against full sexual relations between boys and girls. The differences between the sexes and the sexual tension that arose therefrom were not to be completely eradicated, and relations between boys and girls were to be characterized by grace and gentle sensitivity. Wyneken expressed the wish that the sexual drive could rise to the level of Eros, the concept now becoming more and more central in the movement's vocabulary, as we shall soon see.

The diary of Shraga Schlifka (Yedidya Shoham) (1901–93) written between 1917 and 1925 contains much information about the shift from silence to discussion about sex. On August 29, 1918, Shoham noted that he planned to discuss the "sexual problem" with his group. Unfortunately, he did not elaborate on what the discussion included.[10] However, he does mention in this context reading a book by the widely read and translated German Jewish sexologist Iwan Bloch (first published in 1907): *Das Sexualleben unserer Zeit in seinen Beziehungen zur modernen Kultur*, translated into English as *The Sexual Life of Our Time in Its Relation to Modern Civilization.* Quite a reading choice for a seventeen-year-old! This study broke with a previous phase in the history of nineteenth-century sexology, most notably represented by Richard von

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9 Gustav Wyneken, "Koedukacja i wychowanie seksualne" (Co-education and sexual education), *Haszomer: pismo młodzieży szomrowej* 2.5 (January-February 1920): 14–19.

10 Yedidya Shoham [Shraga Schlifka], *Yoman ne'urim* (Diary) (Givat Haviva, 1987), 73, August 29, 1918.

Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Especial Reference to Antipathic Sexual Instinct; a Medico-forensic Study* (1887). Krafft-Ebing's book was medical in approach and focused, as is evident from its title and subtitle, on psychopathology, sexual aberrations, and "antipathic sexual instincts." In contrast, Bloch adopted an anthropological approach, comparing the sexual practices of different societies in global perspective. Like his other books and essays, this study was marked by ethical relativism and was much more tolerant of sexual variety than those of most other writers of the time.[11]

Though minimally mentioned in the *Guide for Group Leaders*, discussions of sex were meant to encourage the members to avoid promiscuous behavior in the name of physical and mental health, and in the name of a Shomer's propriety. The method was quite different now. It allowed open discussions, but the goal was still the same: abstinence and sexual purity.

Since the rise of youth organizations in Europe in the last third of the nineteenth century, youth groups had been organized solely for boys, separating them from girls of the same age. The "sexual problem" was primarily a boy's problem in this context. This pattern changed when groups began to be formed for girls, alongside groups for boys. For example, in 1907 girls took part for the first time in a German Youth Movement outing, about a decade after the movement had begun its activities.[12] The joint participation of boys and girls in the activities of the various movements triggered a new approach to relationships between the genders. As closer relationships developed between boys and girls they affected every aspect of their activities and their lives. This rising coeducation was perceived as audacious at the time, not only by the general public and the educational establishment, but also by the young people themselves.

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11 See his *Beiträge zur Aetiologie der Psychopathia Sexualis* (Dresden, 1902–3), cited by Sigmund Freud in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), in the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. VII, 139, n.2. See also his *Anthropological Studies on the Strange Sexual Practices of All Races and All Ages* (New York: Kessinger Publishing 2003 [1933]). I thank Professor Peter Loewenberg for these references.

12 Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany,* 56. Laqueur devoted an entire chapter to gender and the German youth movement and aptly termed it "The war of the sexes."

Hashomer Hatzair was no exception to this pattern. In Shoham's diary, the question of relations between boys and girls took a central place. In June 1918, Shoham, serving enthusiastically as a group leader in Lwów, became a head of a *gdud*—a formation of several groups. He felt that his main task was to promote coeducation. He wrote: "A month ago I became the head of Gdud Hashmonaim… Alongside my group, I shall form a battalion of boys and girls (coeducation). This was my plan, and a new phase has begun in my life." Two weeks later Shoham wrote: "At today's leaders' meeting the question on the agenda was coeducation and the consequent reorganization of the groups. I felt that almost everybody shared the same view [on the promotion of coeducation]."[13]

An autonomous youth movement, Hashomer Hatzair became coeducational with little difficulty, as it was relatively immune to external, potentially conservative pressures from parents or other adults, or even from other students with a more conservative outlook. Such conservative attitudes were widespread at the time: several weeks before leaving for Palestine in 1920, Shoham enrolled in the department of pedagogy at the University of Prague. In a meeting with fellow pedagogy students, Shoham brought up the issue of coeducation and "in the name of the youth movement" argued for its benefits. He recorded that his short speech was received with unconcealed scorn by the second- and third-year students who were present.[14]

While both Tse'irei Zion and Hashomer had begun to accept girls before the two organizations merged in 1916, Hashomer had made more significant strides. Only a small number of girls took part in the activities of Tse'irei Zion. As a scouting organization, Hashomer had separate groups for boys and girls. But the boys and girls had the opportunity to develop a sense of togetherness within the framework of the *ken* (in both Hebrew and Polish meaning a bird's nest), the movement's branch, after the formal activities.[15] At summer camps or during outings in the countryside, boys and girls had the opportunity to get to know one another, as the sixteen-year-old Shoham describes in his diary:

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13 Yedidya Shoham, *Diary*, 55, 59, entry from June 30, 1920.

14 Ibid., 58, entry from June 30, 1920.

15 Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 35.

> On Thursday we went out on a trip [which was] a turning point in my life. It was the first time I had been out with a big group of boys and girls. …Eventually I passed this test after waiting for it for years… After getting to know Ginzburg closer, I saw she was not the woman I was looking for… I must admit that those were the two most wonderful days of my life. I met a girl [Greenberg] who could fulfill my dreams, a girl I didn't believe really existed.[16]

Many parents allowed their daughters to participate in the movement's activities on the understanding that they were going to meetings attended by girls only. For some of the girls, the movement was in fact off-limits as far as their parents were concerned, so they kept their participation secret. Sarah Linn-Meiersdorf (1898-?), who was born in Pzremysl in Eastern Galicia and came to Vienna with her family as war refugees in 1915, remembered joining Hashomer Hatzair as an act of rebellion against her unyielding father, an observant, God-fearing Jew. With her group she made day trips to the Wienerwald, the green hills surrounding Vienna, without her parents' permission or knowledge. She sneaked out of the house to join in group outings, putting on her uniform only once she felt safe among her friends. She studied Hebrew in bed under the blanket after everybody else was sound asleep; all secular books had to be hidden from her father. As honesty was a major principle of Hashomer Hatzair and the first of its ten commandments, during a group discussion Linn-Meiersdorf brought up the question of whether deceiving her parents this way was consistent with the first commandment. Surprisingly, the answer was yes.[17]

One day Sarah showed up to a group meeting, her face visibly swollen. Her father had caught her in the Baumgarten, one of the city's parks, with Shmaryahu Ellenberg, one of the group leaders of Tse'irei Zion, who helped her in her Hebrew studies. It had come out that she was a member of a coeducational youth movement. "You are going out with students," her father accused her in Yiddish. Back at home, as her parents contemplated locking her up in the house, they found secular

16 Shoham, *Diary*, 19–20.

17 *Sefer Beit Alpha* (see chapter 1, note 2).

books she had hidden between her prayer books: a Latin grammar book and a copy of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. This was too much to bear and her father had declared that he and she could not live under the same roof. Or if they had to, the family would leave the big city and return to Przemysl. But when Linn-Meiersdorf learned that Hashomer Hatzair had organized no *ken* in Przemysl, she prevailed upon her brother to help her run away from home. Alone and penniless, eighteen year-old Sarah made her way back to Vienna to resume her role as a group leader. This family dispute was extreme, but it conveys the hardships that the young women encountered when they began to take part in the movement's activities.

What was the impact of the coeducational condition on the young members of youth movements? In 1936, the Jewish Austrian communist writer and political activist Franz Borkenau, a member of the Frankfurt School since 1928, drew upon information supplied to him by Siegfried Bernfeld and published an article under the ironic pseudonym Fritz Jungmann, titled "Autorität und Sexualmoral in der freien bürgerlichen Jugendbewegung" (Authority and the sexual problem in the free, middle-class youth movement), in a collection edited by Max Horkheimer.[18] This article is essential for an analysis of the move into coeducation that took place in central European youth movements such as the Wandervogel and Hashomer Hatzair. In the second part, Borkenau discussed the implications of boys and girls mingling during the activities of the German youth movements, principally those chapters in the northern, Protestant regions of Germany. According to Borkenau, this mingling gave rise to two principles: *Rheinheitsideal* (the "ideal of purity") and *Keuschheitsprinzip* (the "principle of chastity"). These were internalized and functioned as repressive mechanisms, responding to the threatening sexual tension between the boys and the girls. Borkenau, as a critical radical, regarded these principles with outright contempt, seeing them as childish, sentimental, petit-bourgeois, and ultimately reactionary. If flirting was a possibility for adolescents in general, it was now unacceptable in the activities of the youth movement. In effect, the movement's ideas were entirely consistent with the conservative social conventions of the day, forbid-

18 Franz Borkenau [Fritz Jungmann, pseud.] "Autorität und Sexualmoral in der freien bürgerlichen Jugendbewegung," in *Studien über Autorität und Familie,* ed. Max Horkheimer (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1936), 669–705.

ding innocuous relationships, totally devoid of any sexual content. The girls had to learn to become hausfraus, essential in proper, middle class society. Sex had to wait until the much valued wedlock. The result, according to Borkenau, was widespread neurosis.

The principle of chastity and the ideal of purity crop up frequently in the early records of Hashomer Hatzair. After day-dreaming about Lola Katz, Schlifka wrote in his diary that he felt that "something was burning within … my feelings towards her are growing to what people call love… But remember! For her you are just a friend, a friend only, and love is the deepest friendship."[19] Schlifka clung to the ideal of purity and the principle of chastity, warning himself against any contact of a sexual nature.[20] In a separate entry, he described a gathering of male and female movement leaders that took place in 1918 in Tarnawa Wiżna, a small village at the foot of the Carpathian mountains:

> Oh, if only those mothers had seen their daughters standing in a barn at two o'clock in the morning, talking to young men in pitch darkness with no witnesses. The sinful thoughts those mothers had in their minds when they forbade their daughters to be outdoors after eight o'clock certainly never occurred to these youths.[21]

The boys and girls were mutually respectful. Abstinence was strictly and voluntarily observed; a camaraderie akin to that of brothers and sisters was the rule. The metaphor of brother and sister occurs many times in the primary sources, in spite of Wyneken's opinion that the brother-sister bond led to sterility.

In his essay, Borkenau made the seminal distinction between the *Jugendbewegung*, the German youth movement, typical of the provincial towns, and the *Jugendkulturbewegung* that flourished in the urban centers—Vienna and Berlin. These two movements had very

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19 Shoham, *Diary*, 111.

20 In accounts based on German Youth Movement diaries, a similar if not identical process can be detected. See Ulfried Geuter, *Homosexualität in der Deutschen Jugendbewegung: Jungenfreudschaft und Sexualität in Diskurs von Jugendbewegung, psychoanalyse und Jugendpsychologie am Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Suhrkamp, 1994), 132–7.

21 Shoham, *Diary*, 70.

little in common, and this distinction is critical for our understanding of Hashomer Hatzair's trajectory in Vienna. The latter was concretely committed to ridding schools of their authoritarian hierarchy and was established in direct opposition to the former's vague and unarticulated yearning for freedom.[22] The German youth movement fled to nature from contemporary culture and escaped from a confused modern urban identity to the völkisch past, whereas the *Jugendkulturbewegung* was radical, future-oriented, and willing to assume responsibilities.[23] To some extent it also upheld budding feminist ideals.

Another major difference between these two movements was the measure of reflection and self-awareness involved in their activities. Bernfeld affirmed the value of a growing self-awareness as a central component in the *Jugendkulturbewegung*, contrasting it to the *Jugendbewegung*, which avoided discussion of such issues as religion, art, the state, school, sex, and the family. If the *Jugendbewegung* was spontaneous and rebellious, it shunned any intellectual discussion of the nature of this rebelliousness.[24] As opposed to the *Jugendbewegung*, which spread all through Germany and attracted middle and lower middle class boys and girls, the *Jugendkulturbewegung* was a much more restricted phenomenon, numbering several hundred followers at most. It was more informal in its organization and activities, and committed to a non-authoritarian atmosphere. According to Bernfeld, the *Jugendkulturbewegung* consisted of three social groups: Jewish students, the psychologically informed, and the poorest of Vienna's students, who felt the need to transform the educational system more acutely than did their more affluent classmates.[25] Sexuality and relations between the sexes were hotly debated, and sexual problems were

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22 Ulrich Hermann, "Die Jugendkulturbewegung: Der Kampf um die höhere Schule," in "*Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit*": *Der Mythos Jugend*, ed. Thomas Koebner, Rolf-Peter Janz, and Frank Trommler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 224–44.

23 Richard Dougherty, *Eros, Youth Culture and "Geist": The Ideology of Gustav Wyneken and Its Influence upon the German Youth Movement*, Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1978), 347–48.

24 Siegfried Bernfeld, "Drei Reden an die Jugend," in *Sämtliche Werke,* vol. 2 (Weinheim: Beltz, 1994 [1914]), 52–85, esp. 53–56.

25 Borkenau, *op. cit*., 688–9.

openly discussed. Camaraderie and spiritual friendships between boys and girls were viewed as positive goals. Over time it became clear that there was a need to determine the exact nature of such camaraderie, as some members expressed the view that sexual abstinence was not only superfluous but immoral. By the end of World War I, many members endorsed pre-marital love affairs with some measure of sexual involvement. Such relationships were deemed rewarding and could lead to a profound emotional experience, though they need not entail full intercourse.[26]

Borkenau's distinction between the small-town youth movement and the urban youth culture movement is essential for an analysis of gender relations in Hashomer Hatzair. While the movement, like its German counterpart, had originated in a small town environment, in contradistinction to the German youth movement it was directly exposed for several years to the *Jugendkulturbewegung* of Vienna, and thus to discussions of articles by members of the *Anfang* circle, such as Gustav Wyneken's "Jugendliche Erotik," and the young Max Hodann's (later a sexologist) "Das erotische Problem in der Jugendbewegung," or Otto Fenichel's (later a Marxist psychoanalyst) "Sexuelle Aufkärung," all published during the war years.[27] These articles self-consciously discussed sexual matters among youth, a burgeoning, well-informed discourse without precedence. In the context of Hashomer Hatzair, the outcome of this combination was a mix of what Borkenau termed a small-town reactionary and conservative attitude toward sex, together with an advanced, sophisticated urban stance. The difference between the provincial German youth movement analyzed by Borkenau and the case of Hashomer Hatzair lay in the latter's exposure to the Viennese *Jugendkulturbewegung*. No doubt chastity and purity were highly prized by Hashomer Hatzair leaders decades after the Vienna years, but in Vienna a growing willingness arose to discuss the issue of sex and adopt a firmly progressive

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26 Ulrich Linse, "Geschlechtsnot der Jugend: Über Jugendbewegung und Sexualität," in "*Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit": Der Mythos Jugend*, ed. Thomas Koebner, Rolf-Peter Janz, and Frank Trommler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 245–309, esp. 271–2.

27 Gustav Wyneken and Max Hodann published their articles in the journal *Die neue Generation* (July-August 1916); Otto Fenichel in *Schriften zur Jugendbewegung* (May 1916).

stance toward it. The movement there was first exposed to the ideas and practices of psychoanalysis, which brought about a radical transformation of the movement's pedagogical outlook and practice.

An early reference to Eros by individual associated with Hashomer Hatzair is found in an a letter that appeared in 1918 in *Moriah*, the Galician periodical dedicated to Jewish youth, originally published by Tse'irei Tsiyon. The open letter was written by Isachar Reiss (1900–42), one of the most venerated and influential of the group leaders from Hashomer Hatzair's Viennese branch, originally from Lwów. Reiss associated the cultural possibilities of youth with Eros:

> For youth, the Jewish problem is first and foremost subjective; youth's duty in serving the Jewish people lies not in political activism but in the realization of the healthy and beautiful type of Jew. This only youth is capable of achieving, youth in whose heart burns the sacred flame of Eros, of love of all that is good and beautiful…[28]

This was a typical rendering of the lofty central European concept of Eros. For Reiss, Eros signified an aesthetic accomplishment and the key to a fulfillment of exalted ideals. Eros is not sex. While the willingness to discuss sexual matters represented a big step beyond the previously practiced silence, we know little about what was actually discussed. The contents of these discussions are revealed in an essay by David Horowitz, titled "Eros," published in March 1919 in the movement's short lived periodical *Nowa Młodzież* (New Youth).[29] In this essay, Horowitz called upon his readers to distance themselves from those who regarded sex primarily as a source of pleasure, a physiological phenomenon. For such people, sex could only be cheap and vulgar. The call to transcend such lower passions, according to George Mosse, played a major part in movements for national revival as they set about constructing a new identity.[30] Horowitz conformed to this model. Beyond purity, men were to practice discipline and self-restraint, two of the most cherished values of the middle

28 See excerpt in Givat Haviva Archive, (3) 1.150, 3.

29 David Horowitz, "Eros," *Nowa Młodzież* 1.2 (1919): 3.

30 Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, 13.

class. Horowitz wished that the members of Hashomer Hatzair might come to feel comfortable discussing sexual matters, which he placed under the rubric of Eros. In this, his focus differed from the approach described by Mosse, which emphasized the control of sexuality in the name of respectability.[31] Horowitz and the members of Hashomer Hatzair more broadly scorned middle class respectability and rebelled against it. Morevover, their variety of post-traditional Jewish culture arose as a challenge to traditional mores and practices. While youth organizations such as Baden-Powell's scouts and their epigones determined in principle to uphold tradition, movements such as the German youth movement and Hashomer Hatzair were founded and run by youths who could be much more independent in the ideas they chose to adhere to. Horowitz felt that Eros and the sex drive ought to be seen as a positive and beneficial phenomenon, and the literature on sex being produced in Vienna and Germany shored up his rejection of conservative Jewish traditions. The new youth should not be afraid of the body, not even of the naked body. It should embrace the most primordial instincts. Eros had the power to raise humanity above the coarse material level into a realm of beauty and harmony.[32] The human body was to be the font of human creation, the sexual drive was to be directed toward Eros, the key to aesthetic achievement.

After the transfer to Palestine, when Hashomer Hatzair aimed at establishing a large number of kibbutz communities and educational institutions, the sexual component of human life, as we shall see later, would receive even more attention. During the first years in Palestine, the movement's principal leaders wished consciously to eroticize all aspects of life. Other immigrant organizations present in Palestine at the time were usually oblivious of the promise of Eros as a pillar of an ideal life. In Hashomer Hatzair, it was felt that without an erotic compliment to the economic life of a community, the spirit of that community would cease to exist. As we shall see later when we look closely at the experience of Bitania, Eros had not only a positive aesthetic role but a negative one too: it was meant to destroy the philistine bourgeois family by building an alternative, erotic community.[33]

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31 Ibid., 10.

32 Horowitz, "Eros," 24–6.

33 Draft for an article: Givat Haviva Archive, (4) 5.7–95, p. 3, no date. While in later years Yaari and Horowitz were at pains to emphasize their

When he published "The Youth Movement" in July 1922 in *Hapoel Hatzair* (the most popular weekly among Palestine's workers), member David Horowitz presented Eros as one of the most fundamental elements in the ideal community of Hashomer Hatzair. This was a manifesto for constructing a future society based on two dyads: economics and psychology, hunger and love. This essay was written as a socialist manifesto for all workers in Palestine. It is one of the first attempts ever to bring together the conceptual frameworks of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, revolutionary socialism and psychoanalysis. This attempt at a synthesis characterized the later intellectual efforts of other contemporary central European Jewish thinkers, notably the affiliates of the Frankfurt school for social thought.[34] According to Horowitz, "erotic power" was no less important than a revolt against the oppression of the owners of the means of production to bring about liberation. "Erotic life," he explained, "created major social communities which found expression in spiritual life and in the eternal values of humanity."[35] Horowitz listed these social communities: the Essenes, the biblical prophets, and the early Christians. Each of these, according to Horowitz, was an erotic community which also chose a communal way of life. These historical movements were erotic because of their power to create new cultures, to engender rejuvenation and revitalization and establish an ideal of communal bonding, not because of any connection to sexual life or practice, but in his article, Horowitz connected the ideal of the erotic life with the question of youthful sexuality:

> The physiological process of sexual development creates in the young person unique possibilities. The forces awakening in this period call for action and express themselves creatively. Certain forces from one sphere are expressed in another; this sublima-

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disagreement, in the early 1920s their thinking about Eros was quite similar. See also David Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, 252 (Hebrew edition).

34 On Siegfried Bernfeld's attempt to synthesize Marx and Freud, see Zvi Kurzweil, "Siegfried Bernfeld's Experiment in Anti-authoritarian Education," in *Sefer Baruch Kurzweil* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1975), 250–63, esp. 253–4.

35 David Horowitz, "Tnu'at ha-noar" (The Youth Movement), *Hapoel Hatzair* 15, Vol. 33, July 26, 1922, 8–11.

> tion was discovered by psychoanalysis. During puberty, these forces lead to mental strain and to an intensification of life.[36]

The model that Horowitz proposed to his readers, which Hashomer Hatzair wished to follow, was the German youth movement. We should not forget that Horowitz only had an idealized image of the German youth movement. Accordingly, in a reaction against bourgeois lies, especially those of the bourgeois family and the philistine high school system (the *gymnasium*), this movement had established a *Bund*, the modern form of an erotic community. The German youth movement "created a new relationship between human beings, an erotic, free, and new life."[37] There the work of Eros rendered possible a free life of aesthetic and social creativity. Sublimation was the key to harnessing sexual drives for the sake of creativity. Sublimation was one of the key concepts developed by psychoanalysis. According to Freud, sublimation is a common, unconscious psychological process by which the sexual urges are transformed into powers of creation.[38] This process takes place when an urge, or sexual drive, detours from its original object of desire to a new one; when it finds a new purpose through that new object; and when the new object of desire, unlike the original one, is prized by society. Freud's superego in his discovery of the structure of the human psyche (kin to Nietzsche's conception of the *Übermensch*) is the theoretical part of the human mind most closely connected with the process of sublimation. According to Freud, in psychoanalytic terms Eros is none other than the raging libido, which is then profoundly reshaped, refined, and sublimated thanks to the work of the superego into human accomplishment.

Once the leaders of Hashomer Hatzair discovered and familiarized themselves with the psychoanalytical nexus of Eros and sublimation, that is, human cultural and aesthetic achievement embedded in the most profound human urges, they prized tracing the mechanics

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36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 See for example Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905), Standard Edition *vol.* VII, 238–9. See also Jacob Golomb, (Hebrew) *Between Nietzsche and Freud: The Will to Power* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press), 34–40, and Gay P. Volney, *Freud on Sublimation* (Binghamton: State University of New York Press, 1992).

of this individual mental process in order to harness it for social purposes. The desired outcome would be the *Bund* they associated with the German youth movement. In Hebrew they dubbed this bund *eda*—a community that is bonded together through the presence of Eros to the point of aesthetic elation. Meir Yaari, one of the leaders of the movement and its most influential thinker and theoretician, as we shall see throughout the book, wrote: "Let us consecrate the erotic experience which ennobles us and fuses us as a brotherhood and an *Eda* (*Bund)*… The erotic attachment bursts out of our unified soul, spreads and engulfs all, the land, work, and the surroundings… It tears our souls open and unites us with the universe."[39] This expression conveys the exalted purpose of the erotic community, as we shall see in the chapter dedicated to the ideal life in Bitania.

Here we encounter yet another twist in the career that Eros took in the evolving worldview of Hashomer Hatzair. Eros as a tool, to be utilized as a glue to cement the building blocks of an ideal society, was to pervade life in its entirety with reference to the ideal of work. Here, following a highly original intuition, Hashomer Hatzair (actually, two thinkers—David Horowitz and Meir Yaari) pushed the concept of Eros into its ultimate logical conclusion in terms of theory developed in central Europe. Putting together Eros and work, love and toil, psychoanalysis and economy, Freud and Marx, they anticipated similar theoretical paths taken by members of the Frankfurt school such as Erich Fromm or Herbert Marcuse—two central European Jewish intellectuals of the exact same age group. As Hashomer Hatzair took its first steps in Palestine, it advocated work as a way of life. As is well known, labor was a major concern for many Zionist thinkers. Productive labor, especially agriculture and tilling of the soil, was seen by Labor Zionists as the remedy for distorted lives of Jews in the Diaspora, living degraded existences, particularly in the pale of settlement—a life A.D. Gordon described as the "parasitism of fundamentally useless people." A.D. Gordon (1856–1922) was one of the main thinkers of Zionist Labor. Born in a Russian farming village in Podolia, he had come to Palestine in 1904 at the age

39 Meir Yaari, Letter sent back to Europe. Matityahu Mintz estimates it was written in March of 1921. Parts of this letter have been published in the movement's journal *Haszomer*. The original is found in Givat Haviva Archive (3) 5.7–95. I quote from Mintz's translation as it appears in the appendix to *Pangs of Youth*, 375–402, 398.

of forty-eight. In 1912, he settled in Degania, a settlement that became the first kibbutz, where he spent his days working in the fields and his nights writing. Strongly influenced by Leo Tolstoy, Gordon developed a philosophy of work that approached religious intensity. He idealized manual labor as an ultimate ethical value, essential for the regeneration of the Jew as an individual. Agricultural work, he hoped, would reduce the distance between man and nature; this made it an authentic vocation, key for collective redemption through personal transformation. According to Gordon, society would not change unless the individual changed, and this revival, so badly needed by the Jewish people, could only occur when individuals returned to a life of physical labor on the land.[40] Gordon influenced labor Zionism not only through his writings but also by his personal example. He was regarded by many as exemplifying in his own life what Tolstoy had preached. He made a profound impression on the Second Aliya—the second wave of Zionist immigration to Palestine (1905–14)—and his teachings had a lasting effect on the entire labor movement in the Yishuv (the organized Jewish community in Palestine), which came to embrace physical labor on the soil as a fundamental value. This included Hashomer Hatzair, which knew about Gordon and his teachings even before arrival in Palestine in 1920.

In a letter written in Palestine around March 1921 and sent to Hashomer Hatzair members still in Europe, Meir Yaari outlined his own vision of labor. It would infuse work with Eros. He wrote in a fantasy-like description: "When work wishes to be raised to an act of creation, the community (the *eda* of Hashomer Hatzair—the equivalent of the German *Bund*) in a moment of uplifted tension, is elevated to a convivial symposium."[41] The ideal here is "creative work"—that is, work that is driven by consciousness, seeking to achieve and accomplish. For Yaari, such labor must be charged with Eros. The body that would do this work belonged to the "new man" who dared to experience his "naked body" and would never let his libido be suffocated.[42] Rather, it would be sublimated. Yaari explained that in order to experience work as an erotically charged act, one had to live in an erotic community. Thus, a life infused with Eros was experienced individually, but had to

40 Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976 [1972]), 285–6.

41 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 392.

42 Ibid., 380–1.

be embedded in a community. Alone, this could not be achieved. The *eda* of Hashomer Hatzair embedded the conscious presence of Eros in labor and all other aspects of life. He complained that non-Hashomer Hatzair workers of the Second Aliya, who mainly came from the Pale of Settlement in Russia and the Ukraine, were oblivious to Eros as a *sine qua non* for correct living. As a result, their efforts to realize their Zionism and Socialism through labor would fail.[43] Yaari explicitly criticized Gordon, whose commune in Degania had failed to create a truly erotic community: the commune had permitted the family, that incomparably philistine, bourgeois, reactionary institution, to prevail, and therefore block the workings of Eros, without which there is no *eda*. As we shall see in detail later, marriage and the family, based exclusively on the erotic union between one man and one woman, would be seen in Hashomer Hatzair as the single most important challenge to the vitality of the erotic community. The *eda* is the irreducible erotic nucleolus, a condition for an authentic, exemplary, fulfilling life that is not alienated.

In a fragment of male fantasy, Yaari refers to mesmerizing hallucinations during hard physical labor. Their occurrence, Yaari tells us, betrays the presence of Eros:

> Hallucination turns into reality. Enchanting hallucination of a spirit of ecstasy ignites a spark out of hard, crushing labor. At such moments we love every pit we dig, every tree we plant. The unified soul of the community merges with the motherland in a collective effort of life and work. The united soul struggles for its beauty, for the mysteries of the forest, in labor and sweat.[44]

In this fragment of fantasy, Yaari describes the moment of ecstasy, the birth moment of the erotic community, a generative moment that enables the members of the community to be fused, glued together into one single being. Hard, crushing labor with consciousness of Eros conditions this moment of ecstasy.

In the following passage, Yaari added:

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43 Ibid., 381.

44 Ibid., 381.

> Do you repeat what others say, that work is slavery, that it is a necessary evil and is merely required for daily survival? Or do you produce only because you are forced to? … [When your work is ecstatic] it sublimates the libido, the source of the community's union, the source of cosmic love, and an act of collective creation in the motherland, a life-creating act.[45]

In order to produce creative work through hard labor, one has to become an erotic being, a process that could only take place in an erotic community. Eros glues the group together. Through ecstasy, work becomes a pleasure. The group is now blessed with the power of creation. Obviously, this discourse resulted from exposure to psychoanalysis. If we were not informed enough to guess this by ourselves, Yaari makes it explicit:

> Psychoanalysis burrows deterministically into our mental depths and illuminates them, only to make things more mysterious and reach a dead end. Without a spark of creativity, without an absolutely spontaneous, impulsive caprice, without autonomous will, one cannot break through one's shell and cannot experience and create.[46]

The fusion of Eros with a quest for creativity has generated the manifest core of the early Hashomer Hatzair's worldview. Freud wished to study the manifestations of Eros in the most minute detail. Frustrated and repressed, Eros manifested in dreams that had to be deciphered. Hashomer Hatzair, as a social movement, wished to socially *harness* Eros in order to build a new type of community. Eros was to be utilized as a tool for personal and social change. Following Freud, Yaari made the connection between neurosis and the potential to create when a neurosis transforms into a positive and creative moment through sublimation. Freud considered neurosis to be negative, a substitute for a positive means of gratification. As such, neurosis, which originated in real or imagined emotional disturbance, was irritating, a nuisance, a refusal to face simple facts. Yaari took this basic

45 Ibid., 394.

46 Ibid.

tenet and applied it to the Jew in the Diaspora. His point of departure was the need to negate the spirit of the Diaspora, where the Jew denied himself gratification and repressed his instincts, thus becoming neurotic:

> Hashomer Hatzair consciously or unconsciously aspired to… put an end to hypocrisy and to the sexual lies. It removed from the boys' and girls' development that incapacity of the instincts, that erotic feebleness that so characterizes the conventional image of the young Jew. We have managed to educate a generation which prevails and enters the land [Palestine] pure and sincere. We have cured our people of hysterical nervousness and destruction of the instincts. We cherish the naked young man who always remains a child, who consecrates instinct and instinctual love and does not detest them.[47]

Here we are presented with the most revealing and most profound of Yaari's fantasies. Yaari identified the condition of the Diaspora Jew with Freud's repressed neurotic. In this he was repeating a trope often used by Zionist thinkers, primarily Max Nordau, the peddler of various male fantasies, notably that of muscle Judaism. However, Yaari makes use of the language and of psychoanalysis: in the Diaspora, the Jew was afflicted with hysterical nervousness and decayed instincts. Redemption could only come from a life free of repression, where neurotic forces were channeled into creativity. The instinctual naked young man who always remains a child, the man Yaari yearns for, is the core essence of his male fantasy. This man will become everything that the Diaspora Jew cannot be. He is an aesthetic spectacle, meant to impress those who view him living the authentic manly life. The Eros that makes him pure and sincere radiates from his body and soul. He is an authentic being and a spectacle at once.

Freud commented on Eros that it was an effort to "combine organic substances into ever larger unities,"[48] which gives rise to fanta-

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47 Meir Yaari, "Mi-toch ha-tesisa," *Hapoel Hatzair* 14, nos. 15–16, January 1921.

48 Quoted in Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 46; see Peter M.R. Stirk, "Eros and Civilization Revisited," *History of the Human Sciences* 12, no. 1 (1999): 73–90, 78.

sies of merging with other persons, or with larger imagined units, such as Mother Earth, the Nation, or the Cosmos. According to Yaari, Eros only appears in a *Bund*, a small, organic community. It is the glue that binds such communities together, the power that enables the creation of an authentic culture. Such a community, the utopian social unit adopted by Hashomer Hatzair, has to be an erotically charged human environment where hard physical work, through sublimation, becomes a form of collective experience. Anticipating the publication more than three decades later of Herbert Marcuse's most famous, both critical and utopian book, *Eros and Civilization* (1955), Yaari called for a community pervaded by Eros where humanity might exorcise its repressions. Like Marcuse, Yaari sought to introduce a new, revolutionary, non-repressive mode of production, though he did not express his ideas in such precise Marxist terms. Moreover, for Yaari, it was rather agricultural labor that would provide an alternative to the experience of the urban industrial labor. But while Marcuse was to assert that sexual and physical control were the repressive attributes of an exploitative social order, Yaari was more concerned with developing an alternative social utopia that could cure the particular disease of the Diaspora Jew, described as suffering from many afflictions, especially from sexual repression. Both blamed the bourgeois institution of the family for stripping love of playfulness and spontaneity, replacing these expressions of human freedom with the prison-like duty and habit of monogamous fidelity in the name of reproduction.

Both Yaari and Marcuse wanted to introduce Eros into life and especially into work, in order to generate meaningful productivity through the process of sublimation. The utopian promise in Marcuse's thought was that by abolishing capitalism, "surplus repression," which occurs in the service of economic and political domination in capitalism, would disappear. Yaari's utopia was to replace the repressive diasporic bourgeois life, the source of neurosis, with an erotic community of sublimating individuals. I see both thinkers as motivated by a similar fantasy, produced by males and seeking male liberation. Whereas Marcuse was able to catapult his fantasy into a towering and influential theoretical achievement for the twentieth century, Yaari's musings remained fragments of fantasy. What makes them particularly male in orientation, I hope to elucidate in following chapters.

Chapter III

Tragic Man: An Aesthetic of Anarchism

The quest for Eros was the first pillar of the new man and new society in the early years of Bitania. The second pillar was a quest for a tragic life, that is, a quest for meaning and purpose in life that both in content and form was understood by the trope of tragedy. These two concepts make up a secular search for religiosity, for sanctity, repeated and expressed again and again in those formative years. This religiosity was secular inasmuch as it diverged from traditional religion and its institutions, from churches, synagogues, dogma, or religious law. The tragic element in it was formulated, as we shall see, as a negative theology, that is, a religiosity centered around life with the absence of God. Perhaps the full-blown atheistic characteristic of Hashomer Hatzair since the early years of Bitania stemmed from this immersion in the fantasy of tragedy where God is present in a tortuous absence? Thus, a juvenile fantasy of heroic tragedy metamorphosed into a different pillar of a secularist life destiny altogether.

Until my work on Hashomer Hatzair, I had not come across understandings of Zionism that use the trope of tragedy. Rather, messianism is often invoked. It has become commonplace to a degree that it is no longer fruitful or revealing to say that Zionism has been imbued with a messianic redemptive spirit, albeit a secularized one.[1] Thus, many Zionists have expressed a secularized yearning for redemption using the messianic trope. Alongside the messianic condition, which certainly comes from a Jewish or Jewish-Christian tradition, I detected in the early Hashomer Hatzair a very different condition, originating in ancient Greek genius, which may be termed as the tragic vision of the world.

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1 See Richard Wolin, "Reflections on Jewish Secular Messianism," in *Labyrinths: Explorations in the Critical History of Ideas* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 41–54, or Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

The movement's tragic vision of the world was expressed as a human condition immediately after World War I and during the 1920s. In this, the movement's members were no different from other groups of the same age or political orientation in post-World War I central Europe.[2] Briefly, the tragic vision of the world marks the point where human beings perceive the absence of God, the lack of divine intervention in human affairs, combined with an imperative set upon human beings themselves to act in the world, in defiance of God's inexplicable choice to refrain from helping and guiding them.

Here is one seminal expression, out of many, of the essence of the tragic life. Meir Yaari, in a letter to the members of the movement still in the Diaspora, wrote the following:

> Man must be condemned in order to rise up and vanquish. The creative act and human illusion stand out of the sight of the emptiness of death. The most elevated act of life is at the same time the act of cessation. Dostoyevsky was condemned to death and was already standing at the gallows when chance delivered him. Afterward, he always extolled this lofty act: engaging death. He who engages death even once will be redeemed and will earn rare moments of harmony. This is why I so love the dire conditions of our existence here. We do not see the long path of life that leads to our future. Our life and our form of organization know no future — they do not even know next month. Sometimes, when all hope for the future fades, hope suddenly reappears, like a castle, fixed at the tip of a boulder. It is surrounded on all sides by an abyss; no path leads to tomorrow. At such a moment I revel in our temporary island of life and in the nothingness surrounding this island on all sides. I propose a toast to the birth of our tragedy.[3]

This quote conveys most intensely the essence of the new tragic man of Hashomer Hatzair. Recalling Dostoyevsky's ordeal in a Siberian prison, where he was condemned to hanging and then spared at the gallows, Yaari tried to convey the experience of nothingness, on the

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2 The most notable example known to me are expressions of a tragic world-view made by Austro Marxists.

3 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 392.

edge of the abyss, facing death as a springboard to a life of action and meaning. He anticipated Karl Löwith's diagnosis of modern existence, free of the shackles of religion and tradition, in which "[man] must rely on himself as upon a rope stretched over the abyss of nothingness, extended into emptiness."[4] In its most intense moment, human realization is a capsule of existence outside of the flow of time surrounded by the abyss, a vacuum of nothingness. It knows no future but an eternal present.

The tragic vision of the world is a fantasy and I analyze it as such. Inspired by Klaus Theweleit's classic work *Male Fantasies*, I maintain that an analysis of fantasies that have characterized certain groups that experienced social or historical crises is essential for a more complete history of those groups and the mental contexts in which they lived and acted.[5] Fantasies are part of an imaginative thought process that has its own laws and is experienced in opposition to reality. As part of our mental structures, fantasies play a most decisive role in the way they link the deepest layers of the unconscious in dreams or daydreaming, in repressed memories, tabooed images of liberation, or images of self-annihilation with the cultural products of consciousness, represented not only in art but also in moments of everyday life.

Those in Hashomer Hatzair who felt they were tragic persons expressed this experience as being trapped between two poles: total commitment to a colossal human achievement in history as the positive pole of being, and falling into a seductive abyss of failure and punishment as the threatening, negative pole of nothingness. Such were the two extremes between which the tragic person was trapped in his fantasies. The tragic condition, as we shall see, in the lives of the members of Hashomer Hatzair was the key to a plunging into history in order to dramatically change it, but in and of itself it was a fantasy that was experienced outside of time and outside of history. It was experienced as if within a timeless capsule that empowered the person or group inside of it to become active and not passive in history. This desire for powerful action, to overcome passivity, echoed a major

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4 Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 322.

5 Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies,* vol. 1: W*omen, Floods, Bodies, History*, trans. Erica Carter and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; 1990 [1977]).

ambition among Jewish men, and sometimes women, at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The expression of the tragic condition which manifested itself in the early years of Hashomer Hatzair was until then overlooked. This tragic condition informed the purposes, activities, desires, and self-understanding of the "new man" of the movement. The most important reference to the tragic condition contains all the components that constitute what the "tragic man" was, or was supposed to be. It comes from the preface to one of the first books published by Hashomer Hatzair's publishing house, Sifriat Poalim, in 1939, the year in which the publishing house was established. In reference to the tragic condition, the distance in time from the war years and the early 1920s helped elucidate to the editors what had been only fragmentally articulated two decades earlier. The preface served the Hebrew translation of the novel *Flames*, first published by the Polish author Stanisław Brzozowski in 1908.[6] This book, which tells the story of Polish revolutionaries attempting to assassinate the Russian Tsar in the mid-nineteenth century, was adopted as the movement's bible, according to chronicler Moshe Zertal, during and after WWI.[7] The book is mentioned many times in the sources from those years, and its importance as reading material with lessons to draw and relate can be compared to other such books—for example the German author Hermann Popert's book *Helmut Harringa*, which became a must—read among the members of the German *Wandervogel*.

In that preface the publishers account for the tremendous role that the book had in forming the movement's ideal of the "new man." It lists the components of the tragic condition:

> [The book] exposes the origin of the soul, the birth of liberated man wherever he may be: it is the Promethean personality, who *dares to freely shape human history*. This [is the] new man, tragic, *godless*, who *clasped in his hands the pillars of life in order to reconstitute them*, facing the *widely open abyss of*

6 S[tanislaw] Brzozowski (Hebrew), *Lehavot* (Flames) (No Place), (The Kibbutz Ha-artzi, Hashomer Hatsair Publishing House, 1939).

7 Moshe Zertal, *Ken nu'urim: Pirke ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir be-Varshah, 1913–1943* (Spring of Youth) (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1980).

> *death, facing black nothingness, which lurked both out of reality and out of its spiritual being.*
>
> Brzozowsky's heroes live the elevated life of the superhuman [Übermensch]. That is the power of the historical flame of truth, when it is fused with the personal bitterness of the lonely revolutionary pioneer, a persecuted beast of pray. That is the tragic temperament of the conspiring revolutionary, an isolated bearer of truth in the darkness of night.[8]

This quote is a key passage for understanding the tragic condition as it was articulated in Hashomer Hatzair. It strongly demonstrates the reception of the ideas of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Like so many individuals, groups, and movements in central Europe since the turn of the century, Hashomer Hatzair discovered Nietzsche's writings and enthusiastically imbibed his ideas. Between 1918 and its embrace of Marxism in 1924, the members of the movement experienced a passionate affair with Nietzsche's ideas; the sources from the period following World War I show a deep internalization of Nietzsche's values and cultural critique.

The two books that were imbibed by the members of Hashomer Hatzair were *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Birth of Tragedy*. According to Nietzsche, in present times the individual stands alone with his fate in his own hands. He cannot expect any supernatural help because God is dead and the essence of traditional values has lost its relevance. Man is alienated both from nature and from human society and has become acutely lonely. In order to transcend into a super-human being, "man" must become a creator. The Übermensch is not a development of any evolutionary process, but is the incarnation of man's strivings. Perfection through self-creation is attainable imminently; it is not above the clouds or in the distant past.[9] The Übermensch is

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8 S[tanislaw] Brzozowski (Hebrew), *Lehavot* (Flames) (No Place), preface. Emphases mine.

"[הספר]...חושף את השורשים הנפשיים, את ההליד של האדם המשוחרר באשר האו שם:זו האישיות הפרומתאית, המרהיבה עוז בנפשה להיות מהמעצבים החפשיים של ההיסתוריה האנושית. האדם החדש, הטראגי, חסר-האלהים, אשר לפת בידיו את עמודי החיים לכוננם מחדש, מול התהום הפעורה של המוות, מול האין השחור, אשר הציץ מתוך המציאות וה"יש" הרוחני שלה גם יחד .[% המשך הטקסט, משפט אחרון חסר]"

9 Walter Kaufmann, *From Shakespeare to Existentialism: An Original Study* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 217.

elastic; he is no more than an open invitation for everyone to provide the content and contours of a self-determined life of creative, willful action. In Hashomer Hatzair in 1939, this action was dubbed "revolutionary" and the tragic revolutionary person was committed to class struggle and revolutionary Marxism. In the early 1920s, the term "revolutionary" was also used, but Hashomer Hatzair's tragic man's exact commitment was more vague, and was linked to Zionism as a heroic leap forward in Jewish history and a leap of the Jews into history.

Several characteristics of the tragic man and the tragic condition appear in the quote, and echo the most important analyses we have of the tragic condition: that of the Marxist literary critic Georg Lukács in an essay entitled "The Metaphysics of Tragedy," which was written in 1910 and first published in 1911, and then much later in 1955; and that of the French Jewish Marxist intellectual and scholar Lucien Goldmann in his classic book *Le Dieu Caché*.[10] Lukács has identified in the most penetrating way the tragic condition, just a few years before the European stability was shattered and the Great War ended the "world of yesterday." Where Lukács provided a uniquely brilliant literary analysis of the tragic condition, Goldmann has added a sociohistorical explanation to the rare moments in history which give rise to the tragic vision of the world.

The first characteristic of the tragic condition is a secular negative theology, that is, among other things, an acute sense of being alone in the world, forsaken by a God who is always there but who no longer cares, or never shows the tormented hero the path to correct action. This is the hidden God, never providential. The second characteristic is the imperative to plunge into history out of a situation of utter despair in order to decisively change its course through personal sacrifice. The third characteristic is a commitment to total values, symbolized by the slogan "all or nothing," in which there are no degrees or compromise. This occurs in situations in which the tragic hero is driven by an ethical need but is trapped in a fundamentally insoluble conflict. This leads to the fourth characteristic, where the tragic hero experiences tormenting and never-ending inner turmoil. His or

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10 Georg Lukács, "The Metaphysics of Tragedy," in *Soul and Form* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974 [1910]), 152–74; Lucien Goldmann, *The Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensees of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1970 [1955]).

her constant self-doubt are absolutely *sine qua non*, without which they will never reach the truth and the right course in their action. The tragic hero yearns for clarity and the end of ambiguity but never attains them. What he is left with are sudden swings from one extreme to the other, from nothingness to being, from error to truth.[11] The tragic heroes that symbolized these characteristics for Hashomer Hatzair in those years were Shakespeare's Hamlet and Ibsen's Brand.

Being forsaken by God: as the title of Goldmann's book *The Hidden God* (1955) suggests, the most important component in the "tragic vision of the world" is the absence of God, the human feeling that God has abandoned man. Georg Lukács wrote in his essay that "Tragedy is a game … a game which is watched by God. He is nothing more than a spectator, and he never intervenes, either by word or deed, in what the actors are doing." Lukacs quoted the (little-known) German writer Paul Ernst, who wrote that "[o]nly when we have become completely godless … shall we have tragedy once more."[12] Similarly, David Horowitz, in an article that calls for a tragic life, solemnly informed his fellow members of Zarathustra's dictum that God is dead.[13] For him, the death of God is the birth moment of the tragic man, seeking a heroic life.

In his studies of ancient Greece and the origins of tragedy as a genre, the French scholar Jean-Pierre Vernant found that the tragic consciousness appears when the human and divine levels are sufficiently distinct for them to be opposed, while still appearing to be inseparable. The suffering that conditioned tragedy in ancient Greece involved a strong feeling, a realization of being forsaken. For Lukács, the divine act of forsaking, or the sense of being forsaken by God, is the source of what he termed "modern melancholy." It is not a mere absence or death of God, but a deliberate, incomprehensible move away, a disconnecting from the human protagonists, leaving them to their own devices. Man is forsaken, trying to make sense of the world and of his or her destiny.[14]

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11 Lucien Goldmann, *Racine* (Cambridge: Rivers Press, 1972), 11.

12 Georg Lukács, "The Metaphysics of Tragedy," in *Soul and Form* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974 [1911]), 154.

13 David Horowitz, "The Youth Movement," in *Hapoel Hatzair* 15, Vol. 33, July 26, 1922, 8–11.

14 Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990 [1920]), 86.

Plunge into history: here is how member Shlomo Horowitz, in a fragment from 1921, understood his personal struggle:

> You sometimes feel that all this toil, the suffering of all the generations—the ones that passed, those of the future—that all of these are but a horrific drama which was arranged on the stage of history by a bloodthirsty tyrant. In this life you yourself are trapped. Despite all of your feeling, and despite the great rebellion inside your soul … you must find a path in this raging sea… all around, you see young people quivering in the agony of death… Our people all seem to me as a Prometheus, bound in chains to a rock, a vulture picking their entrails. And where is Herakles the redeemer who could undo the chains and release the sufferers?[15]

Tragedy here is described as a fantasy where the members of the movement are trapped in history—a drama staged by a vicious, hostile tyrant. The state of being chained, and helpless surfaces as the starting point of the tragic struggle. Tossed into the cauldron of history, the image of Prometheus is invoked, suffering, defying, being forsaken, not knowing the fate awaiting him, but at the same time promising creation and creativity to mankind.[16]

According to Jean-Pierre Vernant, tragedy was born when free Greek citizens started to consider myth and its symbols in view of the realities of life in the polis.[17] Tragedy as a genre was first created toward the end of the sixth century BCE in ancient Greece. The genre flourished for approximately a century and then degenerated. The rise of the genre was intertwined with a wish to bring about a change in the historical chain of events. In contrast to the epic, the mythic, or the lyric, the contours of tragedy, as a literary genre, were grounded

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15 Muki Tsur, ed., *Kehiliatenu: kovets hagut, levatim u-ma'avaye halutsim* (Jerusalem, 1988), 138.

16 Epictetus, the stoic philosopher, sarcastically said that tragedy is what happens when chance events befall fools. In the face of horror, what one needed was stoic detachment.

17 Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece,* ed. Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 29–48, 33.

in the social realities of a situation that was rooted in history. Both the ancient Greek inventors of tragedy and those inspired by ancient tragedy in the twentieth century shared the use of expressive mythical images by individuals who enter the historical stage with the intention to revolutionize a political situation. In the case of ancient Greece, it was the rule of the tyrants that raised the wrath of citizens and determined their resolve to change a political dead-end, bringing about a historical change. After World War I, in their desire to enter the historical stage, those young Jews of eastern and central European origin who developed an antipathy to the bourgeoisie of their parents were torn between several options: they could for example join the Russian Revolution and commit themselves to that new world—that is, become communists—or they could go to Palestine and become pioneers in the enterprise of building the Jewish nation.[18] The motives for these two alternatives were similar: experience of social injustice or degradation; a sense of insecurity and a shattered identity, bred by the current crises, and a craving for taking active part in a great ideal. Going to Palestine was perceived as a plunge into history in defiance of the passivity of the Diaspora. Here the tragic was both an individual and a collective experience, as wrote Meir Yaari, a leading member of the movement: "…When the tragic element disappears from our midst, we shall disintegrate completely and cease to be a movement."[19] Yaari understood the tragic as a collective experience, providing the glue for the movement's existence and enabling it to forge its destiny and the nation's.

Total commitment: the loss of God and the shattering of any conventional authority, coupled with a strong idealism and a deep commitment to ethical and moral ideals, brought about a commitment to absolute values. Lucien Goldmann connected the commitment to total ideals with the mindset of the "tragic man":

> There are two essential characteristics of tragic man which should be noted if we are to see him as a coherent human real-

18 David Horowitz (Hebrew) *My Yesterday* (Tel Aviv, 1970), 76–7; 116.

19 Quoted in Elkana Margalit, *ha-Shomer ha-Tsa'ir me-'adat ne'urim le-Marksizm mahapkhani 1913–1936* (Hashomer Hatzair: From Youth Community to Revolutionary Marxism 1913–1936) (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1971), 88.

> ity: the first is that he makes this absolute and exclusive demand for impossible values; and the second is that, as a result of this, his demand is for "*all or nothing*," and he is totally indifferent to degrees and approximations, and to any concept containing the idea of relativity.[20]

In a different place Goldmann repeated the slogan "all or nothing": "Pour Lukács, en effet, la vie n'a de sens que dans la mesure où elle permet d'attaindre à des valeurs absolues. La seule attitude authentique est celle qui, régie par la catégorie du '*tout ou rien*,' refuse le plus et le moins, les degrée, les transitions."[21]

The young members of Hashomer Hatzair, too, expressed a yearning for totality, for total commitment to total ideals. Rejecting a moderate middle ground, "tragic man" wishes to create and realize a perfect society. The search for a world of total solutions was juxtaposed to the world of the middle class, a world seeking via the media the middle ground of compromise and negotiation. Refusing all compromise and convinced of absolute values, in the longing for a better world, he or she sets themselves apart from society, which accepts the world as it is.[22] The young members of Hashomer Hatzair found inspiration for an uncompromising zealous life in images of the biblical prophet Elijah and the fifteenth-century Florentine Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola, both mentioned as extremists seeking to accomplish their ideals through uncompromising action, not yielding to pressure.[23] More than these two figures, it was Ibsen's monumental play *Brand* (1866) that was passionately read in the movement, inspiring an uncompromising search for the absolute in didactic literary trials the movement conducted. David Horowitz wrote: "and then I believed in the "absolute" and in a different life—a life of freedom … In front of me stood Brand, in full charge of life, even though he was above life, in the power of his purity and in his search of the absolute.

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20 Goldmann, *The Hidden God*, 63.

21 Lucien Goldmann's contribution to *Kierkegaard Vivant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 125–66, 130, emphasis mine.

22 Mary Evans, *Lucien Goldmann: An Introduction* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981), 60.

23 *Kehiliatenu*, 122.

Brand's '*all or nothing*'—was for me the most important principle."[24] In a letter home from Palestine in 1920, Horowitz wrote: "We left L'wow with a strong happiness, feeling we are sailing on the waves of real life … that we approach life with the eternal demand for '*all or nothing*.' We desire power, tension, overflowing torrents of life, freedom and intoxicating beauty."[25]

"All or nothing" is an old German expression. It was also Brand's motto. In the play, Brand, a stern Norwegian minister, gives up everything and even sacrifices the health and finally the lives of his child and wife in his quest for perfect obedience to a harsh, merciless God. A zealous prophet, in his search for heroism, which he cannot share with any other character in the play, Brand finally reaches his goal, leading his parishioners to the Church of Life in the Ice Church, high in the mountains, a symbol of perfection, only to be buried alive by an avalanche of snow. On his way, ignoring human limitations, Brand makes absolute demands of all others, but above all of himself. Brand, the prophet Elijah, and Savonarola, all fierce religious extremists, served as role models in Hashomer Hatzair's non-religious and even anti-religious quest for a secularized religiosity. This secular religiosity was embedded into a regenerative fantasy of manly heroism.

Inner turmoil: According to Goldmann, who analyzed the sociological roots of the tragic condition, in his despair, "tragic man" lives a life of paradox and absurdities, where the answer to every problem is both yes and no.[26] Such a condition leads to unceasing, unrelenting inner turmoil. Member David Horowitz wrote:

> There is no merit to the legend about the one-dimensional man, partisan and zealot, the only one who is capable of social action. The revolution always calls for extremely complex characters, having a most peculiar psychic structure. Those who know Brzozowski's *Flames*, the soul of the Russian Revolution, know the profound depths of *inner tragedy*, the *complications which produced a determined revolutionary activism*. In this conception of a *Promethean life*… lies a tremendous power.

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24 *Kehiliatenu*, 84. Emphases mine.

25 David Horowitz, *Ha-etmol sheli* (*My Yesterday*) (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1970), 87–8.

26 Goldmann, *The Hidden God*, 60.

Weltschmerz and Hamletism, these are moments of creativity, not symptoms of decadence.[27]

Perhaps more than anyone else in the twentieth century, Goldmann "discovered" and developed the theme of a "tragic vision" in his classic treatment of Pascal, Racine, and seventeenth-century Jansenism. These movements, according to Goldmann, shared the mental structure of thought that expressed itself in what he called a "tragic vision." According to Goldmann, the tragic vision is a view of the world in which an individual is confronted with conditions and limitations that he finds impossible to overcome. In the case of Pascal, Racine, and the rise of Jansenism, Goldmann regarded their works as expressing the frustration of an entire social group—the legal and administrative office holders—the *noblesse de robe*, who became dispossessed of their political power and social standing as the absolutist state was forming in seventeenth-century France. "Tragic man" arises out of despair in times of crisis. This despair can make the tragic person wish to withdraw from the world, but may also enable a daring, determined, and brave act in defiance of that situation. Goldmann tried to define the particular social conditions that gave rise to the tragic vision of the world and identified a social context of despair. The articulation of a tragic vision is produced in a "closed" social situation, in which certain social groups are excluded from access to authority or social resources. Such groups have little control over their immediate environment and are barred from the privileges that society offers to others.[28] What conditioned the tragic consciousness was a full, reflexive awareness of despair. To this point, the German philosopher Karl Jaspers wrote, "Tragedy … may be said to occur at the margin of awareness beyond power, where men can sense and suffer beyond their ability to act and win success …"[29] This is particularly true when awareness of a major need exceeds the power to overcome that need.

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27 Quoted in Mintz, *Paths of Youth*, 228. Emphases mine.

28 Mary Evans, *Lucien Goldmann: An Introduction* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981), 61.

29 Karl W. Deutsch, "Introduction," in Karl Jaspers, *Tragedy Is Not Enough* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), 17.

In eastern Galicia and Vienna, the members of Hashomer Hatzair experienced precisely this kind of "closed" social condition. This dead-end situation of helplessness in Europe was turned through the explicit sense of tragedy into a colossal resource for regeneration and action in history, in Palestine. In this sense, despair became the fuel that generated a revolutionary spirit. The result, as we can see in David Horowitz's fragment, was a conscious call for anarchism.

The myth of Prometheus was invoked to express another dimension of tragic life. Prometheus involved a sense of great human suffering. According to Goldmann, this great suffering must be experienced before embarking on a tragic mission. Member Shlomo Horowitz embraced suffering as the key for the "tragedy of life": "Man's true happiness comes not from being satisfied but from being hungry, not from joy but from suffering."[30] A search for a life of stability, an end of strife and struggle in a social utopia of harmony, was an illusion and a guarantee for a life of boredom. Real happiness could never be achieved by being satisfied, but on the contrary by submitting to ongoing craving, yearning, and suffering. Horowitz attributed this awareness to Nietzsche and added that only those who experienced true suffering in their personal lives could understand that there was no happiness at the end of social struggle but only in its ongoing progression. The tragic hero is eternally becoming and consciously lives a life of sacrifice: "The tragic life does not come from the mere social conditions … Those who have not known the abyss of suffering in life … will never understand this."[31]

Expressing a deep personal and collective crisis, being defeated by the historical situation of post-World War I Vienna and war—torn Galicia, the trope of the tragic marks a self-conscious condition of despair, a sense of social and historical incapacity, and in response to these defeats, the wish to act heroically. In a footnote dedicated to Israeli identity, from a work published in the 1960s, the psychological and psychoanalytical theorist Erik Erikson once noted: "We may state tentatively that the elites which emerge from historical change are groups which out of the deepest common identity crisis manage to create a new style of coping with the outstanding dangerous situa-

30 *Kehiliatenu*, 216.

31 *Kehiliatenu*, 216.

tions of their society. In doing so, they free the "revolutionary" energies of the underprivileged and the dispossessed."[32] Erikson, writer of most perceptive analysis "Young Man Luther" and author of a most acute commentary on Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* as a young distressed man, advanced our understanding of youth and identity crisis. Here he did not conflate the Israeli Labor Movement with the tragic condition, but he showed the most intuitively acute understanding of this chapter in Jewish history. And indeed, "tragic man" evolved out of a crisis, an identity crisis and a perceived historical dead-end.[33] And then, it signified a profound change of mentality towards active participation in the forging of history. In expressing a self-understanding in terms of fate and destiny, it dreaded passivity and victimhood.[34] The trope of the tragic functioned as a mental meta-structure, making sense of action in history, and giving an account of the demands of such a choice in narcissistic fantasies about being trapped between the desire to bring about colossal heroic achievement in history, or being lost in nothingness, in the abyss.

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32 Erik H Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 194, n. 21.

33 Franz Rosenzweig wrote in his *Star of Redemption*, contemporaneous with the expressions of the tragic (the book was first published in 1921), that "tragic man" was in essence a peculiar Western phenomenon. The tragic never appeared in the Indian or Chinese cultures, neither in dramatic art nor in popular wisdom. See Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1971 [1921]), 78–82.

34 Raul Hilberg wrote that the passivity of the Jews during the Holocaust was conditioned by two thousand years of tactics of passivity. The Warsaw Ghetto uprising, as futile as it was, was, according to Hilberg, a true revolution (see Amos Funkenstein, [Hebrew] "Passivity as Signifying the Judaism of the Diaspora: Myth and Reality," in *Perceptions of Jewish History from the Antiquity to the Present* [Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1991], 232–42).The leader of the uprising, Mordechai Anielevich, was a group leader in the Warsaw branch of Hashomer Hatzair.

Chapter IV

Eros and Tragedy: Dionysos in the Galilee

Readers most informed about the German cultural crisis and its turn of the century critics would immediately recognize the footprints of the towering German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. The German Jewish scholar Karl Löwith once wrote that "without Nietzsche, German development cannot be understood and, not unlike Martin Luther, generator of the Protestant Reformation, he is a specific German event, radical and fateful."[1] Nietzsche perhaps is best understood in his German context, but his influence by far transcends the bounds of German culture. Like so many individuals, groups, and movements in central Europe since the turn of the century, Hashomer Hatzair also discovered Nietzsche's writings and passionately imbibed his ideas. Between 1918 and the movement's embrace of Marxism in the mid-1920s, the members of Hashomer Hatzair enjoyed a passionate affair with Nietzsche's ideas. Nietzsche's forceful influence on the entire Zionist movement cannot be fully understood without a close examination of this particular affair, as it reveals an almost all-consuming intensity. The sources from the period following World War I show a deep internalization of this "specific German event" into Hashomer Hatzair, its values, and cultural critique.

Nietzsche's influence in the Jewish world and on Zionism in particular is recognized. Many Jewish readers first learned about Nietzsche from the extremely influential Jewish writer Mikha Yosef Berdichevsky (1865–1921), whose books and essays were especially popular since the last decade of the nineteenth century. Berdichevsky made a tremendous impact on the Second Aliya, the wave of immigrants that came to Palestine from the Ukraine and Russia between

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1 Quoted in Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 22.

1905 and 1914.[2] Hashomer Hatzair, part of the Third Aliya (1919–1924), embodies a different chapter in the Jewish and Zionist reception of Nietzsche. The movement's leaders read Nietzsche directly in German in Vienna. They were not exposed to his writings through Berdichevsky's mediation. Like all of the thinkers who had been influenced by Nietzsche, the movement's leaders picked what they found useful for their purposes from the extraordinarily rich variety of ideas expressed in Nietzsche's corpus.

Paramount among the virtues Hashomer Hatsair hoped to inculcate into its membership was the drive to self-invention. This meant imparting will and resourcefulness, while providing the objective and subjective conditions to facilitate that creativity. Many nineteenth-century German thinkers had prized creativity and the possibility of inventing the self. In the case of Nietzsche, this was so much the case that some readers assigned to him the belief that aesthetics, rather than morality, served as a basis for modern life.[3] Most generally, it was Nietzsche's "sustained celebration of creativity" that was wholly adopted into Hashomer Hatzair's evolving worldview.[4]

The present chapter is largely built upon two texts. The first is a letter from 1921 reporting on life in Palestine to the members of the movement in Europe after close to one year in the Galilee. Parts of it were published in Polish in one of the movement's periodicals, *Haszomer*, in 1922 and 1923. According to the movement's historian Matityahu Mintz, the report was probably written in late February or early March. This means it was written in Bitania, which was dissolved in April 1921.[5] The text was written by Meir Yaari (1897–1987), previously head of Hashomer Hatzair's branch in Vienna and at the time the leader of the community of Bitania. Over approximately twenty pages, Yaari tried to communicate the experience of the first members

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2 Avraham Band, "Mikha Yosef Bin-Gorion: Between Words and Politics," in *ha-Sifrut ha-'Ivrit u-tenu'at ha-'avodah* (*Hebrew Literature and the Labour Movement*), ed. Pinhas Ginossar (Beer Sheva: Ben Gurion University Press, 1989), 17–25.

3 Gilya Gerda Schmidt, *Martin Buber's Formative Years: From German Culture to Jewish Renewal, 1897–1909* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).

4 Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, 8.

5 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 375 (see chapter 3 note 42).

who had arrived in Palestine to those members of the movement still in Europe who were contemplating immigration to Palestine. In addition to describing the current work situation in Palestine and evaluating the prospects of the community, the report presented a lengthy and detailed discussion of the values the movement upheld and how these values might be realized in a future society. The second text is David Horowitz's "The Youth Movement," published in mid-1922 in *Hapoel Hatzair,* the most widely read weekly journal in Labor Palestine in the twenties. The article is a manifesto of the movement's most cherished values and was written for a non-Hashomer Hatzair readership.

When reading these formative documents, one is struck by how the leaders of the early Hashomer Hatzair embraced irrationalism explicitly. Here, one can see raw attempts to intellectually crystallize a string of raging male fantasies into a budding worldview by means of a manifesto. The brand of irrationalism embraced in these texts echoes a particular trend that flourished in central Europe as a reaction to the crisis that immediately followed World War I.[6] The motivation and vocabulary of this irrationalism, part and parcel of the German crisis-driven cultural critique, came from an anti-positivistic tradition that, at its core, harshly attacked reason as a reliable means of attaining knowledge about the world. In particular, at its most extreme, it expressed a deep skepticism to the point of nihilism regarding the self, its very existence as a subject, and its ability to correctly perceive reality. In this evolving discourse, the elusive categories of Life, Existence, and Being, expressing a ceaseless flux, replaced stable categories, now seen as deceptive fictions. The users of these elusive categories sought to portray science and reason as nothing less than leading to uncertainties and absurdities.

In Yaari's letter, examples for advocating the irrational dimension in human perception abound. For example, in his discussion of the nature of the communities which the movement sought to establish, Yaari wrote: "We emphasize that an irrational relationship, a sense of belonging… continues. Our intimacy, the irrational nature of

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6 For one of the most detailed scholarly accounts of this irrationalism, its relationship to the counter-enlightenment, and its political implications, see Richard Wolin, *The Seduction of Unreason: From Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

our mutual relationship, will serve as the starting point of our [social] project."[7] Taking irrationalism to the realm of human experience, Yaari expressed the wish that irrational elements of the soul—dreams, hallucinations, ecstatic outbursts—would rule, rather than reasonable and moderate conversation, sober and restrained analysis.[8] He called for action: "Action releases one's inner powers; action brings one's irrational personality to full consciousness."[9] Here Yaari embraced the validity of unconscious passions, urges, impulse. Increasingly throughout the letter, he viewed the "will" as a primary human motivator. This betrayed a well-documented endeavor in the movement to fortify the personality of the rank-and-file members with an intense willpower. For example, the ninth law in the Law of the Shomer (the Hashomer Hatzair equivalent of the Scout Law), after exposure to the discourse of the will in the works of the German philosophers Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer, states that "the shomer is a person of willpower …" In the 1917 version of the Law of the Shomer, which predates German influences, this clause is absent and there is no discussion of willpower at all.[10] It appears a few years later in the early 1920s and it is interesting to note that discussions about willpower are absent from the original and subsequent Scout Law formulations. In his diary, member and group leader Shraga Schlifka discussed the importance of willpower in the entries from January 1917: he tried to arouse the curiosity of the members of his group by announcing an eleventh secret commandment in addition to the ten commandments of the Shomer: a commandment about willpower.[11]

Nietzsche became an unmediated accessory to such inclinations.[12] Yaari wrote:

> The relationship to the land and to work cannot be only a matter of cognition. Not only do we see and experience differently

7 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 376.

8 Ibid., 388.

9 Ibid., 391.

10 See *Poradnik dla kierowników szomrowych* (Vienna, 1917), 22.

11 Yedidya Shoham, (Hebrew) *Yoman ne'urim* (Diary) (Givat Haviva, 1987), 8.

12 William J. Mcgrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), 118.

> in different states of mind, but at such times reason also generalizes differently, and the erotic being sees different shades. A man noble of mind sees differently, perceives many new points of view. …Only the concentrated *will to experience*, present in the profound personality, could fuse the different perceptions and tensions relating to work and land… in an act of creation. But this capacity to concentrate the will and to be able to *reveal the obscure worlds of man* is a gift of God.[13]

Yaari added:

> Let the Intellect judge, search and analyze, sharp as a razor. And the licentious Eros will ridicule his insights and all his ideals with wild laughter.[14] Let the dream-state deride cognition. If only a new type of man would arise, who could *not rationally perceive himself*. How suffocating it is when everything is clear, when there is no *labyrinth*, when life is held by certainty.[15]

These quotes very clearly betray a profound impression of the ideas of Freidrich Nietzsche, as we will soon see. Yaari passionately preaches the importance of the will to experience as part of a reaction against the bourgeoisie and its adherence to science, rationality, and positivism. Intuitive understanding would be the only way of grasping oneself. Truth lay within: "Let us listen to the tense contradictions of our soul," he says elsewhere.[16] Moments of alternative consciousness lead the way into the individual soul. Inner subjectivity was to become the preferred form of the experience of truth.

Before we proceed to search for Yaari's perception and reception of Nietzsche, we need to clarify a central notion prevalent in the German discourse of the irrational. The mode of experience that Yaari calls for here falls under the concept of *Erlebnis* (inner, lived experience) as the way to reach a truthful, meaningful, and authentic under-

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13 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 383.

14 This quote very obviously echoes Nietzsche, quoted and discussed in Henri Bergson's *Le rire,* first published in 1900 and introduced to German readers by the students of Georg Simmel in 1914.

15 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 394.

16 Ibid., 393.

standing of the world. For Yaari, this experiencing could be achieved in the framework of what he coined the "erotic community." The concept of *Erlebnis*, sometimes termed *Erlebnismystik* (spiritual, lived experience), enjoyed an immense popularity in Germany in the first decades of the century. For the German Jewish sociologist Georg Simmel, who served as Martin Buber's doctoral advisor, *Erlebnis* was the source of all social knowledge. He saw it as an affective experience that occurred by reliving and reflecting on experience, as opposed to *Erfahrung*, experiencing the phenomenal world through the senses.[17] In his doctoral dissertation, devoted to Medieval German mysticism, Buber described *Erlebnis* as permitting the individual to gain experience outside of the *principium individuationis*, in other words, the process of individuation which is on the one hand the key to the advances of civilization, but on the other, the destroyer of primal instincts and the "unindividuated" will. This discussion alone is heavy Nietzsche and Schopenhauer philosophical territory. It was Schopenhauer, in his best—known book "The World as Will and Representation" (vol. I 1818/19, vol. II 1844), a must—read in Hashomer Hatzair of those years (as part of the more general central European young middle class readership), who sought to suggest the destruction of this *principium individuationis*, which makes the rationalist (but alas, illusory) perception of the world possible, hence the source of Western error and misery. In Schopenhauer's philosophy, individuation, which is the condition in which our perception of the world is as a plurality of discreet, separated, finite units functions, is gravely erroneous. This rationalist mode of perception created a barrier between person and object, and person and person. It is not only objects in the world that are individuated so that we can perceive and recognize them, but also the human self. Through *Erlebnis*, through mystical experiences, a person could recover the flavor of the pre-individuated self, an authentic being that is one with the world, and is able to live it as such, not mediated through the senses. Buber dedicated his dissertation to this deep problem, the fruit of cultural skepticism. It will reverberate through the tribulations of Hashomer Hatzair a generation later. *Erlebnis* was now seen as an experience of life that demanded personal participation and

17 Paul Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue: Martin Buber's Transformation of German Social Thought* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 72.

involvement.[18] Here, truth is regarded as subjective, and as such it is promising for Yaari: skeptical criticism of the moribund bourgeoise, formed in deep pessimism and even cultural despair, could turn into an optimistic plan for the future, model society.

In the previous chapter, I examined how Eros and sublimation were seen as motive forces in creation and mentioned that both Freud and Nietzsche had used the two terms. Here I shall consider that strictly Nietzschean preoccupation: Dionysian ecstasy. The wish to experience a "Dionysian intoxication" is expressed several times in the sources by members of Hashomer Hatzair, and was taken directly from Nietzsche's first book "Birth of Tragedy" (1872), the source of his personal catastrophic rejection as a scholar of ancient Greece. Alluding to this book, Yaari wrote in his letter: "I propose a toast to the *birth of our tragedy. Bacchus* [the alternate Latin name for the Greek Dionysos] … is for me the holiest symbol."[19] Yaari was one of many in Germany and central Europe after World War I to idolize the Nietzschean Bacchus.[20] The book "Birth of Tragedy" was immensely popular among intellectual youths.[21] By the 1880s, many Viennese youths had turned away from liberal values such as progress and scientific rationality, and intensely took up Nietzsche's philosophy as a new religion. The book was read as an endorsement of the forces of creativity: the history of their deepest origin in ancient Greece, their development and their subsequent corruption in former times and in the contemporary West. According to Nietzsche, art, first embodied in Greek drama, evolved out of the fusion of the Apollonian element with the Dionysian. Apollo represented the ancient Greek plastic arts, subjected to intellectual restraint. The Dionysian, on the other hand, was associated with intox-

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18 Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work: The Early Years 1878–1923* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981), 391.

19 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 392. On the satyrs see section 8 in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967): Italics mine.

20 Rolf-Peter Janz, "Die Faszination der Jugend Durch Rituale und Sakrale Symbole mit Anmerkungen zu Fidus, Hesse, Hofmannsthal und George," in *"Mit Uns Zieht die neue Zeit": Der Mythos Jugend*, ed. Rolf-Peter Janz, Frank Trommler and Thomas Koebner (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985): 310–37, 310.

21 William J. Mcgrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*, 54.

ication and loss of control; this was a mystery cult of rapture, of orgiastic worship, and of uncontrolled emotion.[22] According to Nietzsche, there was no way of understanding the Greek aesthetic achievements without realizing what potentially destructive forces had to be harnessed in order to make them possible.[23] Dionysos is not a figure given to passive introversion. Rather, he stirs man up, to the point of ecstasy. He is constantly acting out his fantasies. He may communicate events of a purely intrapsychic character in a symbolic way, but they are projected into the external world and involve the participation of others. The Dionysian drive dissolves the boundaries of the individual self. It breaks down the barriers separating it from others, leading to a feeling of oneness with the social group, and it also dissolves the boundaries between the individual human being and the world of nature, in a manner conducive to a sense of unity with the cosmos.

Dionysos and his cult of intoxication begot Greek tragedy as a font of creativity. This font was born out of the conflict between the Apollonian and the irrational powers of the Dionysian. According to Nietzsche, it then disintegrated under the paralyzing influence of the Socratic age, analogous to the enlightened liberal bourgeoisie. By extending Nietzsche's social criticism, young Germans hoped to encourage the tranquility and balance of the sober Apollonian recognition of the individual self to grapple with the Dionysiac tendency for man to forget himself. Here in Nietzsche's discussion appears the *principium individuationis*. It is the point at which the individual is born and the point at which the self is recognized as an individual.[24] The destruction of the *principium individuationis*, echoed in Yaari's quest for the moment where Dionysos "melts down individuality," is a condition for aesthetic creation and could not take place without acknowledging the Dionysian and harnessing its otherwise potentially violent and destructive powers.[25] Dionysian man stood for the creative employment of the human passions and the affirmation of life in spite

22 See Helene Deutsch, *A Psychoanalytical Study of the Myth of Dionysus and Apollo: Two Variants of the Son-Mother Relationship* (New York: International Universities Press, 1969), 14.

23 Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 10.

24 A term Nietzsche borrowed from Schopenhauer.

25 Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 40.

of suffering.[26] For Nietzsche, this was the alternative to the Christian mentality, which he saw as suffocating all that is vital in life. For Yaari it was the potential replacement of a petrified exilic Judaism. Yaari hoped that in the moment of Dionysian loss of control, the loss of the *principium individuationis*, that in the wallowing and the frenzy of satyrs, men might recover or discover a creative spark. For Nietzsche, mankind would realize its greatest artistic achievement in that collision of wild laughter and Apollonian calm.[27] Yaari demanded the wild laughter of Dionysos: "Above all we reserve the right to laugh. Let frolic and intoxication rule over the passions."[28] In the following chapters, we shall see what makes these yearnings and fantasies particularly male fantasies.

Again and again in his letter, Yaari praised the value of profound inner conflict, without which he could imagine no creation: "This [Dionysian] intoxication revives the *art of life*, the ability *to focus the split elements of our most profound being*…"[29] He compared the struggle to being trapped in a labyrinth: "How choking it is when all is clear, when there is no labyrinth, when life is held in the forceps of certainty."[30] And: "Creation does not depend on inner determination. The creator will never be free of inner conflicts. The act of creation always bursts out of this tension and out of these inner conflicts. Do not tremble when you lose your way."[31] Yaari evoked the great artists of the Italian Renaissance, who "were so far from realizing an inner spiritual balance. The harmony of their art grew out of the chaos in their souls."[32]

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26 Ibid., 20, n. 5.

27 Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 334.

28 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 393.

29 Ibid., 401.

30 Ibid., 394.

31 Ibid., 390.

32 Ibid., 396. In some aesthetic theories, the potential to create was rooted in a view of an unfocused, generalized, vague striving in which one advances along a broad front of contradicting opinions and in which one is receptive to all possible combinations. See an exploration of the creative process in M. Alexenberg, *Aesthetic Experience in Creative Process* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1981), 13. As a keen follower of Nietzsche, the psy-

This introverted examination of moods and mental states and a preoccupation with the passions and inner struggles of the individual are rooted in the European Romantic tradition.[33] However, the preoccupation with subjectivity and inwardness so common among the members of Hashomer Hatzair must be distinguished from an inwardness as retreat. Take for example the notable work of the American historian Carl Schorske: in his *Fin de Siècle Vienna*, Schorske explored the reaction of the middle-class Viennese to the decline of liberalism after the 1880s.[34] Responding to its political marginalization, the Viennese middle class retreated to the subjective realm of aesthetics and introspective psychoanalysis. In this context, after his political ambitions had been dashed, Sigmund Freud initiated his study of dreams, that most inner activity.[35] When civic action became futile, art became for some a religion and psychoanalysis a refuge. In Hashomer Hatzair, subjectivity and the affirmation of inwardness, far from being the "bourgeois" mechanisms by which one might escape from reality, were seen as the means for the creation of an elite beacon-like group that would project a self-transformation of the Jew of the Diaspora, breaking ground for a "new man" and a new model society.

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chologist Carl Gustav Jung understood the importance of inner conflict and of reconciling inner contradictions as vital for mental functioning. In his *Psychology and Alchemy* (1944), Jung contended that the only way to achieve wholeness, the original purpose of alchemy, was by facing great inner contradictions, such as those between light and dark or Christ and the devil, experiences that involved great suffering. Jung based his book on an extended analogy between the therapist's procedure and that of the alchemist: just as the former tried to discover the original matter, so does the latter try to reach human wholeness in the unconscious by confronting the duality of opposites present in the conscious mind and in its projected psychic contents. See Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952 [1944]), 23, 32.

33 For the best account known to me of the Romantic Movement as a cultural protest against modern bourgeois industrial civilization, see Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, "Redefining Romanticism," in their *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 1–56.

34 Carl E. Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981).

35 Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 12.

Yaari, in his turn a generation later, sensed the crises brought forth by bourgeois culture and the liberal condition, especially in the context of an epistemological crisis, and made the following diagnosis: the root of the problem was the curse of individuation. In this he followed in the footsteps of many thinkers since Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Georg Simmel, Martin Buber, and so many others. Nietzsche's Dionysian principle instead tore down barriers and undermined the *principium individuationis*, opening the way to the innermost heart of things, that is, to direct, authentic knowledge about the world.[36] The erroneous image of the individuated world could only be destroyed if it were understood that the world is in perpetual flux and is essentially one. People should be willing to live this reality of unity, that is, to be one with the world, in order to perceive the world correctly.[37] The key to such a potential lay in a constant dialogue with the self and its perception of the world. This Yaari takes from these philosophies.

Meir Yaari was not the only formulator of ideas in Hashomer Hatzair siding with the acute and unaccepting critique of bourgeois modern and liberal culture and its hallmarks—reason, science, and utility. In an essay entitled "The Youth Movement," David Horowitz, another leading member of Bitania Ilit, discussed two concepts with great contemporary weight: *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. One thinks immediately of Oswald Spengler's best-seller of the period, "The Decline of the West," and indeed one member of the movement remembered Horowitz walking around in Bitania with a copy of the book in his hand.[38] An immediate sensation, this book, first published in July 1918, became the subject of a widespread and bitter controversy in Germany immediately after the war.[39] A follower of Nietzsche, Spengler developed his philosophy of history or in his own words, a "morphology of world history" and "*the* philosophy of the future" along Nietzschean

36 Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, part 16.

37 The most lucid discussion of this issue is found in Paul Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue*, 49–53.

38 *Sefer Beit Alpha* (see chapter 1, note 2).

39 Stuart H. Hughes, *Oswald Spengler: A Critical Estimate* (New York and London: Scribner's, 1952), 1.

lines as he understood them.[40] He identified eight fully fledged, separate historical cultures, all of which he claimed had been subject to an identical law of rise and decline. The distinctions between his eight cultures lay in their artistic styles, which Spengler believed reflected intrinsic values. Dismissing the traditional historical periodization of "ancient, medieval and modern," Spengler posited four organic periods of development: birth, growth, aging and death. This scheme, built around life, as if cultures are living, prompted his use of the term morphology, a concept he borrowed from biology.[41] Spengler paid special attention to decline, but rather than Gibbon's historically circumscribed decline, his was metaphysical, concerned with destiny—not causality. Civilizations are born, grow, and reach maturity and then are destined to decline and die. Ultimately, Spengler's view was utterly pessimistic and he presented it in sharp contrast to the optimistic Enlightenment ideal of progress. For Spengler civilization was devoid of creativity. It was artificial, urban, intellectualizing, theorizing, material-comfort-driven, petrified, and dead. It was "the thing become." Its style and form, realized by exceptional elites and individuals, were doomed to break down. Culture, on the other hand, was the dynamic becoming. It was creative and expansive. It was life and it was soul.

The distinction between culture and civilization was not new. A quintessential German mode of thought, it dates back to the eighteenth century, when it was first formulated by a rising German middle-class intelligentsia, reflecting the increasing tensions between this class and the enlightened court society.[42] This tension assumed a national significance in the nineteenth century as Germany's middle-class intelligentsia, now the bearer of German national consciousness, contrasted French *civilisation*—superficial, courteous, and hypocritical—with German *Kultur*—deep and sincere.[43]

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40 Oswald Spengler, *Form and Actuality*, vol. 1 of *The Decline of the West* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 5.

41 Ibid., 22.

42 An introduction to the problem of *Kultur* versus *Zivilisation* is found in the first chapter of Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners*, vol. 1 of *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994), esp. 3–13 and 24–8.

43 Ibid., 25.

After reading Spengler, Horowitz adopted into his own scheme the distinction between culture and civilization, an often repeated idea in Germany towards the end of the war and immediately after it.[44] Preserving the essence of the distinction, he wrote:

> Civilization overcame culture… The extensive life prevented it from enlarging its inner life, prevented a conscious style and stretched its mental capabilities intensively; all of this only underlined culture's vulgar and superficial character. All this brought about the rationalization of life which kills culture and all religious phenomena. Zarathustra tells us that God is dead.[45]

Horowitz's mistrust of modern society and of its liberal rationalism is evident. He too bemoaned the decline in human achievement. His attack on civilization was an attack on the very self-consciousness of the West as progressing, always superior to its own past. The word "extensive" was borrowed directly from Spengler, who used it a bit unorthodoxly to refer to slight human achievement, outside the realm of the aesthetic, merely superficial achievement that could be measured by external observation and science. It referred to all those things that man does best within civilization but, as he is trapped inside civilization, he is unable to create more deeply.[46]

The pessimistic Spengler left very little room for action in the late phase of civilization, and as to the future, he believed that action would only be revived by a new Caesar, a political leader who could galvanize the (despised) urban "masses."[47] Whatever this new Caesar

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44 The German defeat in World War I made this distinction chauvinistic. In 1918 it was used by Thomas Mann in *Reflections of a Non-Political Man* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983). Expressing a German self-image, Mann too saw Western civilization as merely literary [32] as opposed to the German *Kultur,* which was life itself [58].

45 David Horowitz, "The Youth Movement."

46 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte,* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1920), 40, 56.

47 Spengler shared this vague political idea of Caesarism with another German prophet of doom, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck. This idea was not restricted to Germany; see George Mosse's chapter "Caesarism, Circuses and Monuments," in *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1980), 104–18. It is surprising to com-

did, he would never be able to restore the creativity of *Kultur*, manifested in great works of art. There was no escape from this destiny and this is going to be the future of the West, writes Spengler: "And I can only hope that men of the new generation may be moved by this book to devote themselves to technics instead of lyrics, the sea [commerce] instead of the paint brush, and politics instead of epistemology. Better they could not do."[48] This is indeed a most pessimistic vision of cultural doom. But Spengler's student Horowitz went further, remaining optimistic as a young man: "If the purpose of human life were man and his soul, while technology, art, and science were only the means, then a profound change of values was necessary. The youth movement of religiosity, disdaining problems of practicality, puts man at the center, invigorates culture by doing so, and gives it a new direction."[49] Rejecting Spengler's vision of doom materialized in urban jungles and mass political leadership, Horowitz called optimistically for a revival of *Kultur* through the creative powers nurtured by the youth movement. Spengler was unquestionably pessimistic. Rejuvenating civilization was in his view as impossible as trying to rejuvenate a living thing as it approached death. Horowitz was an optimistic Spenglerian, an oxymoron. He believed that change through action that would lead to cultural creation and rejuvenation could be accomplished. But precisely what is involved in a cultural revival? How would it come about in real life? The key according to Horowitz was a regeneration of religiosity, a Buberian term, a state of mind, concerned idealistically with the holy and the pure. This conception of religiosity had absolutely nothing to do with institutional religion, with churches, rabbis,

pare Horowitz's response to Spengler with that of the proto-national socialist Moeller van den Bruck, who attacked the pessimism embedded in Spengler's belief that Germany would win the war and proceed to the doom of the West. Moeller welcomed the German defeat, and also the defeat of another "young" nation: Russia. He believed that the vigor of these young peoples [Germany and Russia] would prevail, that their defeat had actually cheated destiny of its prey. See Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 238–9.

48 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang*, 57.

49 David Horowitz, "The Youth Movement," 10.

or doctrine or religious law.[50] It would spur on creativity. Horowitz believed that it was incumbent on man to be "intensive," a Spenglerian concept—to turn inward to the subjective, creative realm. This would be a very different thing from the shallow, philistine art produced by and for the bourgeoisie. He termed this art tragic: "Tragic art uprises and revolts against aesthetic art [which is merely produced for bourgeois amusement], the Promethean art against the patronizing art."[51] Artistic creation had to be immersed in struggle against the bourgeoisie. Tragic art, in Nietzsche's view, had redeeming powers. Leaving behind the *principium individuationis*, "tragic man" as artist could tap into the creative and destructive forces of life. The centrality of aesthetic concerns in Spengler's book, taken from Nietzsche, appealed strongly to Horowitz. Horowitz's new vitalized "man" was *aesthetic*. The main potential achievement of this "new man" was artistic, under the threat of being throttled by civilization.

Spengler, himself a proponent of *Lebensphilosophie*, compared the emergence and disappearance of cultures with the life cycle of living organisms. He believed that inner subjective life was the source of monumental creativity. Horowitz's borrowings from Spengler resonated with these and other aspects of *Lebensphilosophie*, such as the desire to expose the contradictions and shortcomings of modern society, the most fundamental of which was the fragmentation of modern life and the atomization of society. In order to counteract this fragmentation, "youth disconnects itself from school and the family… it aspires to a unified community, to the unity of life and the unity of human essence… [All these] are expressions of a cultural revolution that aspires to enliven life."[52] The schools and the family are portrayed here and in many other instances in the sources as prime socializers of bourgeois society. They create defective and crippled individuals. The remedy is to be found in a "unified community" or what Meir Yaari will coin as an erotic community. The first step toward this social unit was membership in the youth movement.

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50 About a new religion, for the German Jewish thinker Gustav Landauer, divorced from institutionalized religion, see for example Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe, a Study in Elective Affinity* (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), 133.

51 Horowitz, "The Youth Movement," 10. Emphases mine.

52 Ibid.

Horowitz expressed in his manifesto for the youth movement a blueprint for an exclusive, even elitist group. Culture was to be the work of the youth movement while civilization was the product of the workers at large, the economic conditions of the urban working class, its ideology and interests. Eventually, he and others in Hashomer Hatzair would unite with working class consciousness and political interests manifested in a socialist ideology, but in the early 1920s he reproduced Spengler's view of the working class of the Age of Civilization as a barren mass movement, vulgar and unrefined. Horowitz's view of the future envisioned a dialectical dynamic between the culture of the youth movement (a Nietzschean new self-made aristocracy), driven by introspective soul searching (termed with the catchword "love"), and the civilization of the working class, driven by economic rage (he terms it hunger.) The synthesis would fuse the revival of culture by inner, personal, subjective freedom and fulfillment with the working class's quest for revolutionary emancipation.[53] This formulation permitted Horowitz to preserve the elitism of the youth movement and his fear of mass democracy without discarding of the power of class struggle. We need to remember that his audience—the readers of the weekly *Hapoel Hatzair* (The Young Worker)—consisted of socialist workers in Palestine. Horowitz offered to reform their quest for a new society. In many ways, the future of the kibbutz movement would indeed include the introspective ideals expressed in Hashomer Hatzair, along with an anti-bourgeois, socialist way of life, class consciousness, and solidarity. The youth movement might grapple with the regeneration of culture, even when it maintained a non-political, even anti-political, stance.

In what could be seen as a juvenile whim, a group of members swore over Herzl's tomb back in Vienna during the war never to form a political party.[54] This reflected the contemporary tendency to insist on a divide between *Kultur* and politics, a very German quest, expressed for example in 1918 in Thomas Mann's *Reflections of a Nonpolitical*

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53 It would have been disheartening had the staunch anti-fascist Horowitz known that in his own formulation he echoed the proto-Fascist Moeller Van den Bruck, who wrote: "Culture is of the spirit, and civilization of the stomach" (1906). See Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, 196.

54 *Sefer Beit Alpha*: Sarah Linn Meiersdorf's testimony.

Man.[55] The youth movement chose to concern itself with higher things than politics: it sought to metaphysically reunite all the aspects of life that had become fragmented by a damned, cursed civilization. "The spirit [of the individual in the youth movement] should affect the earnestness of life on the economy, politics and the mutual relations between human beings… The wall that had been erected around the spirit, the wall of philosophy, science and the lies of abstract ideas shall be demolished."[56] This is an expression typical of the prophets of the German *Lebensphilosophie*. It yearned to create a unified individual, unalienated by rationalism, science, and the social atomizing effect of urban civilization. This coherence is encapsulated in the term Life. It could be regained through the creation of (tragic) art, that is, art born in the most authentic struggles and unresolved tangles of an anti-bourgeois life.[57] Even after the movement's turn to Marxism around 1924, the emphasis on creativity—either subjective or collective—remained a vital current in the movement. Members were encouraged to become artists: writers, painters, and playwrights. Their great foe was the philistine bourgeois soullessness and deadness.[58] Along with expressionist artists of the time, to whom they felt an elective affinity, the members of Hashomer Hatzair underwent a spiritual crisis and resolved to bring about a radical social change.[59]

A return to Culture, to being creative with social transformative potential, involved in Hashomer Hatzair the concept of myth. The movement developed a vital interest in symbols and in myth. Symbols, especially those referred to as "living symbols," were the building

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55 Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, 18.

56 Horowitz, "The Youth Movement," 10.

57 See Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche, Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), and Allan Megill's *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 2: "I am using [aestheticism] to refer… to an attempt to expand the aesthetic to embrace the whole of reality. To put it another way, I am using it to refer to a tendency to see 'art' or 'language' or 'discourse' or 'text' as constituting the primary realm of human experience."

58 Ernst Blass, "The Old Cafe Des Westens," in *The Era of Expressionism*, ed. Paul Raabe (London: Calder and Boyars, 1974), 27–33, 29.

59 On the Goethe's concept of elective affinity precisely in this context see Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia*, esp. 6–13.

blocks for meaningful experiences. Living symbols had a reassuring quality: one's ability to see and touch them seemed to put one in touch with the real, the living, the personal. In Hashomer Hatzair, one had to wish to become a symbol, then become a myth. Zeev Bloch (1898–1963), a member of Hashomer Hatzair, wrote: "The young man likes symbolism and not theory; he prefers symbols in the sense of Jesus, who is not [merely] a splendid image but a blood-spewing divine corpse."[60] The young author Nathan Bistritzky who lectured in Bitania wrote the following as he was infatuated with the movement: "We are poets, all of us are poets… We have the living symbolism, ecstatic or agonizing, carved from our blood, our suffering, from the creation of our lives…"[61] He wrote further, referring to the movement's wish to become a living symbol:

> For us, creating culture is not an abstract notion, nor is it an intellectual effort, nor is it a mystery. It is the whole of our complicated Being, a process of struggle for a higher existence… Culture is an eternal depiction of a collective historical moment. This depiction is made through a universal symbolism, which expresses itself in a language of symbols in art, science, and reflection. Without this organic quality, there is no living culture… The living culture of the bible, the classical culture of ancient Greece, the romantic culture of the middle ages have all… sprung from the blessed font of eternal myth—that of the virtuous personality, the hero.[62]

According to Bistritzky, the actual existence of the movement in Palestine is a historical event in the Jewish world that could bring forth a cultural regeneration. This culture will be superior to the contemporary, philistine, sentimental bourgeois culture because of the fact that it is produced by living models of virtue and heroism.

As a member of the Second Aliya, Bistritzky was indebted to the author Mikha Yosef Berdichevsky for introducing the concept of myth. When he wrote Berdichevsky's obituary in 1921, Bistritzky repeated

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60 *Kehiliatenu: kovets hagut, levatim u-ma'avaye halutsim* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak ben-Tsevi, 1987), 59.

61 Ibid., 158.

62 Ibid., 159.

the essence of that teaching. Myth lies in the people, conditioning creativity and transmitting it, "a holy secret of ceaseless fructification," enabling the creation of legends, forming a connection between the mortal and the divine. Such are the sources for the Kabbalistic "ma'ase merkavah" (the divine chariot) or Moses' miraculous encounter with the burning bush. Such occurrences create myth because they permitted one to "…grasp in a child-like manner the cosmic might, to perceive at once the whole of creation!"[63]

Myth was understood as transhistorical. It promised a leap back to the authentic, to the creative fonts of a Jewish *Volk*. Just as Gershom Scholem saw myth as the driving force behind Jewish mysticism, the leaders of Hashomer Hatzair exploited myth and wished to harness it, outside the (lifeless) bounds of institutional religion, in order to generate creativity. The movement might harness myth by fusing itself in it, being fructified by it, becoming it. Bistritzky's encounter with Hashomer Hatzair in 1921 deeply influenced him as he felt he encountered myth itself: he told his readers that his first book, *Days and Nights: The Saga of the Myth of the Eda* (first published in 1926), was the result of this exposure to myth in the midst of Hashomer Hatzair. "It was a moment of eternity, touching the eternity of every act of creation. This moment made a bud sprout inside of me and the fruit of that seed was the present book."[64] Hashomer Hatzair sought myth in its quest to reveal the hidden essence of the Jew and the human. In addition to challenging scientific (mis) understanding, myth and symbols were seen as powerful forces for mobilization.

Meir Yaari quoted, in the original German, a famous verse that Nietzsche dedicated to Goethe in the closing of his *Gay Science*:

> An Goethe:
> Das Unvergängliche
> Ist nur dein Gleichnis!
> Gott der Verfängliche
> Ist Dichter-Erschleichniss
> Welt-Rad, das rollende,

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63 Nathan Bistritzky, "To Berdichevsky," *Hapoel Hatzair* 15, no. 7, December 23, 1921, 16–17.

64 Nathan Bistritzky, *Yamim ve-lelot* (Days and Nights: The Saga of the Myth of the Eda), 3rd ed. (1978), postscript, 310.

Streift Ziel auf Ziel:
Noth—nent's der Grollende,
Der Narr nent's Spiel…
Welt-Spiel, das herrische,
Mischt Sein und Schein:-
Das Ewig-Närrische
Mischt-uns hinein!…[65]

Nietzsche's biographer Walter Kaufmann translated this verse:

"The undecaying"
Is but thy label
God the betraying
Is Poet's fable.
Our aims all are thwarted
By the World-wheel's blind roll:
"Doom" says the downhearted,
"Sports" says the fool.

The World-sport, all-ruling
Mingles false with true:
The eternally fooling
Makes us play, too!

Yaari quoted this verse in order to affirm eternity in one ecstatic minute: "We consecrate the divine within us, within our symbols, within our love. Action flows out of our present. Without pitying ourselves and others, we becloud the difference between creation and utility. We make the present moment eternal."[66] This was how myth was to be experienced, and how its aura was to be further transmitted, an eternal turning of a wheel, unlike the linear telos of Christian redemption, Jewish messianism, or liberal progress.[67] Elsewhere, Yaari wrote: "By the power to make symbols out of people and things we consecrate Olympian moments in our everyday lives, and make an eternity out of one moment."[68]

65 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 393.

66 Ibid., 393.

67 White, *Metahistory*, 333–5.

68 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 401.

In early 1923, Yaari published an article titled "Torn Symbols," in which he presented a dramatic illustration of the use of symbols. The article was a symptom of crisis, a harsh attack on the Bitania experience. It called for a change, and that change had to take place in the realm of symbols. A close reading reveals that the movement understood the power of symbols, but also the content of the symbols for which the movement yearned. Yaari distinguished between "torn symbols," those that had led the movement astray, and a single "vital symbol." The torn symbols were those of youth culture which, according to Yaari, proved to be an empty vessel, lacking any moral principle. His good symbol was now A.D. Gordon, the Tolstoyan prophet he had rejected just a few years earlier, who preached the religion of work through self-discipline and self-sacrifice for the sake of the nation. But what was the nature of vital symbols? They are permanent and eternal, incarnated in a person who bases meaning on the people, in particular, on the poor and the underprivileged: from converts, strangers and outcasts, widows, and poor fishermen. They emanate from their souls and are the light of their lives. Then come the "chosen ones," who provide a liberating expression for the symbol. This takes form in a nation's cultural heritage: folklore, legends, and laws. Yaari explained that during biblical times, as in ancient Greece, symbols were vital in that they embodied a metaphysical principle. In the middle ages, the symbols had been snatched from the people by priests and knights: the former used them in liturgy, the latter aesthetically. Symbols became instruments of oppression in the hands of decaying ruling elites. The symbols lost their vitality. Medieval Christian Europe, continued Yaari, corrupted the symbols so that only Don Quixotes would be left to follow them. If in ancient Israel the symbol was the initiator of all creativity, today it was obsolete. In the face of this crisis, the result of exile, Yaari believed that vital symbols and a revival of myth could provide great motivational power. He hoped that Hashomer Hatzair would become a living symbol which would have the power to draw the people. But even before this crisis of 1923, Nathan Bistritzky referred to the quest for a vital symbol and the potential for myth. Hinting at an ideal of loyalty to a leader-hero, a symbol and myth, he wrote:

> Culture means tender, cruel, timid, stubborn loyalty to the one *person*, intimate, monumental, that can be replaced by no one, for any treasure of the spirit, of eternity, and of humanity, for

> without this person there is no purpose for spirituality, eternity or humanity.[69]

This loyalty to one leader-hero person was the key to regenerative cultural creation. For Bistritzky, as was generally the case for Hashomer Hatzair in its early years in Palestine, the model for such a hero-leader-symbol was Jesus of Nazareth (see in detail in the next chapter). Bistritzky wrote:

> There is no religiosity without the myth of the intimate person, relating to everyone everyday. What did European culture have without the erotic symbol of Jesus of Nazareth? Our own generation would not wait for *that man*, the myth. We must view the portrait of *that man* in the faces and in the crevices of each other's souls. We must create the myth, we must experience it today, as it is formed in fraternity, in each and every one of us. We must appropriate Jesus of Nazareth flesh in the flesh, spirit in spirit, dream in dream… Blessed is the generation that could realize this and will not have to wait for the return of *that man*.[70]

The wish to become myth of such proportion is a concentrated expression of an elaborate, multilayered fantasy of young men. We shall see below how this fantasy included a leader principle and a particular relationship between the man who becomes a leader and his male followers. As we shall see, the presence of women in this orbit of fantasy was irrelevant and even detrimental.

In 1944, the American modern Orthodox leader, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, published *Halakhic Man*, his most notable book, in which he outlined his modern Orthodox manifesto. He wrote the following long footnote:

> It would appear to me that there is no need to explain the self-evident falsity of this ideology. First, the entire Romantic aspiration to escape from the domain of knowledge, the rebellion

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69 *Kehiliatenu*, 161.

70 Ibid., 165. "That man" is emphasized in the original text. "That man" means Jesus of Nazareth, as it was customary among Jews to call Jesus "that man" in order to avoid using his name.

> against the authority of objective, scientific cognition which has found its expression in the biologistic philosophies of Bergson, Nietzsche, Spengler, Klages, and their followers and in the phenomenological, existential, and antiscientific school of Heidegger and his coterie, and from the midst of which there arose in various forms the sanctification of vitality and intuition, the veneration of instinct, the desire for power, the glorification of the emotional-affective life and the flowing, surging stream of subjectivity, the lavishing of extravagant praise on the Faustian type and the Dionysian personality, etc. etc., have brought complete chaos and human depravity to the world. And let the events of the present era be proof! The individual who frees himself from the rational principle and who casts off the yoke of objective thought will in the end turn destructive and lay waste the entire created order. Therefore, it is preferable that religion should ally itself with the forces of clear, logical cognition, as uniquely exemplified in the scientific method, even though at times the two might clash with one another, rather than pledge its troth to beclouded, mysterious ideologies that grope in the dark corners of existence, unaided by the shining light of objective knowledge, and believe that they have penetrated to the secret core of the world."[71]

When Soloveitchik in 1944 condemned the Faustian or Dionysian Man and the dangers inherent in *Lebensphilosophie* and irrationalism, he evidently had Nazi Germany in mind. We would gain much if we applied his rationalist critique to the early years of Hashomer Hatzair in Vienna and Palestine, when the members of Hashomer Hatzair came under the spell of a German streak of irrationalism. What Soloveitchik could not understand, and his view of Jewish law (Halakha) could not help resolve, were the inflamed, demonic conflicts of these young Jewish men.

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71 Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, trans. Lawrence Kaplan (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983), 141, n. 4.

Chapter V

Martin Buber and Gustav Landauer: *Gemeinschaft* and Subterranean Judaism

The present chapter explores Hashomer Hatzair's appropriation of Martin Buber and Gustav Landauer's concept of the spiritual community, the *Geistige Gemeinschaft*—an anarcho-socialist conception of the ideal community. This rich image of an ideal community is going to be the last building block that will be used to build the erotic community of tragic men—the ultimate male fantasy explored in this book.

In an article published in Palestine in 1921, Meir Yaari tried to present and clarify the essence of the social formation Hashomer Hatzair hoped to erect, the *eda*.[1] The essay was published in *Hapoel Hatzair*, established in 1906 as the first modern Hebrew workers' weekly and the most widely read journal among workers in Palestine. It was the bulletin of Hapoel Hatzair, the first and largest workers' political party. *Eda*, a Hebrew word generally translated as "community," corresponds to the German word *Bund*, used to describe an organic community in modern times. In his article, Yaari responded to an essay published several weeks earlier in the same weekly by a non-Hashomer Hatzair writer who viewed the community of Bitania as juvenile and unripe. Yaari asserted that at the heart of Hashomer Hatzair's project in Palestine was the erection of the organic *eda*, an alternative to other modern social formations. In this essay, Yaari formulated his ideal blueprint for a kibbutz.

Scholars sometimes view the kibbutz in the framework of a history of communal formations, nearly all of which have quickly failed.[2] With the arrival of immigrants to Palestine from the Ukraine and Russia, referred to as the Second Aliya (1904–14), communes called kvutzot were

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1 Meir Yaari, "Mitoch Ha-tesisa" ("Our Fermentation"), *Hapoel Hatzair* XIV, nos. 15–16 (January 1921).

2 See, for example, H. Darin-Drabkin, *The Other Society* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1962).

spontaneously organized. The kvutzot grew out of economic necessity, the desire for radical egalitarianism, and a rejection of occupational hierarchies. By the outbreak of World War I, a kvutza called Degania had emerged as exemplary. Founded in 1909 by a handful of Jewish pioneers from the Ukraine, it had clearly defined a communal ideology and set of practices: it was a permanent settlement with a permanent core of members who cooperated in consumption and production.[3] Within a kvutza wages and housing were shared; the commune functioned as both a social and economic unit. These communes were used pragmatically as living quarters for day laborers in plantations; some functioned as collective contractors. In this context, there were other programs for socialist communities. Yosef Trumpeldor, one of Zionism's mythicized heroic figures, absorbed the spirit of Tolstoy's collectivist vision and advocated the building of communistic settlements in Palestine supported by industry and agriculture. These communes were to be united in a disciplined collective.[4] In contrast to Trumpeldor, the poet Zvi Schatz rejected large cooperatives and advocated extremely small communes: fifteen people united by a common goal, friendship, and commitment.[5] The *eda* of Hashomer Hatzair is often examined in this comparative framework. In contrast to the other programs for an ideal community in Labor Palestine, it was embedded not only in the particular Central European, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century neo-romantic quest for community, but it also reflected particular post World War I fantasies of young Jewish men, as we shall see in the following chapters.

Few topics in modern German social thought have provoked more debate and research than *Gemeinschaft*, inadequately translated into English as "community."[6] Arguably a romantic pseudo-histor-

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3 Henry Near, *The Kibbutz Movement: A History,* vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 57. The land was bought by the World Zionist Organization, thoroughly bourgeois money, but we need not concern ourselves with such trifles here.

4 Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972), 285–91.

5 Ben Halpern and Jehuda Reinharz, *Zionism and the Creation of a New Society* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 209.

6 Manfred Riedel, "Gesellschaft, Gemeinschaft," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur Politisch-Sozialen Sprache in Deutschland,* edited by Werner Conze Reinhart Koselleck and Otto Brunner (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1972): 801–62, see especially 857–62.

ical entity, the concept first became a subject of sociological discussion thanks to the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, though the German thinker Johann Gottlieb Fichte had already discussed *Gemeinschaft* as a social ideal in the early nineteenth century in his influential *Addresses to the German Nation* (1808).[7] In a book first published in 1887, Tönnies made the distinction between *Gemeinschaft*—community—and *Gesellschaft*—society or association. *Gemeinschaft* applied to small-scale, well-integrated pre-industrial communities based on family or neighborhood ties where social relations were enduring, intimate, and committed. *Gesellschaft* on the other hand represented all that community was not: it was impersonal, anonymous, and contractual, a superficial social artifact, a mechanistic "sum of individuals." It was a mere aggregate of competing individuals, induced by their isolation to egoistic selfishness. *Gemeinschaft*, whose members enjoyed a natural coherence, was associated with the traditional rural past, whereas *Gesellschaft* was associated with the modern industrial present, a product of anonymous mass society. This distinction repeated the prevalent romantic distinction between "organic" community and atomized, urban society. *Gemeinschaft* was understood as a living organism with its own "personality" and with interests above and beyond the self-interests of the individuals composing it.[8] Martin Buber found in the Hasidic congregation, centered on the zaddik, its pious leader, a community in the truest sense. For the neo-romantic Buber, the structure of this religious community held the key to freedom, creativity, and redemption.

During World War I and in the years following the war, the concept of *Gemeinschaft* achieved a cult status. Its adherents coupled it with every conceivable sphere of life and spoke, among other things, of a *Liebesgemeinschaft* or "love community" (the German philosopher Max Scheler), *Menschengemeinschaft* or "people's community," *Blutgemeinschaft* or "blood community," *Ideengemeinschaft*

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7 Richard W. Dougherty, "Eros, Youth Culture and Geist: The Ideology of Gustav Wyneken and its Influence upon the German Youth Movement," Ph.D. dissertation (University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1977), 27.

8 Ulrich Linse, "Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Von Ferdinand Tönnies Bis Theodor Geiger," in *Handbuch Der Deutschen Reformbewegungen 1880–1933*, ed. Diethart Kerbs and Jürgen Reulecke (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 1998), 161–5.

or "community of an idea," *Denkgemeinschaft* or "thought community" (the philosopher of science and scientist from L'wów Ludwik Fleck), *Schiksalsgemeinschaft* or "community of fate" (Otto Bauer), *Geistige Gemeinschaft* or "spiritual community" (Martin Buber and Paul Tillich), *Volksgemeinschaft* or "community of the nation" (The German conservative thinker Julius Langbehn and Nazi ideologues), and *Weltgemeinschaft* or "community of the world."[9] For most thinkers, *Gemeinschaft* existed only in the past, in ancient Greece, early Christianity, medieval Germany, or the eighteenth-century Hasidic congregations.[10] But this did not mean that community was dead or irrecoverable. Modern society could not recreate a past *Gemeinschaft* but it could create a similar structure faithful to the former community's virtues and values. In German, such a structure was called *Bund*. In contrast to a community, the *Bund* is a voluntary group, based on shared interests and camaraderie. Religious groups seem always to have stemmed from *Bünde*; the sociologist Max Weber, followed by the sociologist of religion Ernst Troeltsch, compared the pair *Gemeinschaft* and *Bund* to church and sect.[11] Churches are anchored on communities; they are based on tradition, habit, and memory. A sect, a *Bund*, is based on affective, or emotional, bonds. *Bünde* are borne by waves of emotion, reaching ecstatic heights of collective enthusiasm. They rise out of depths of love or hate.[12] It would not be incorrect to retrospectively

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9 On the austro-marxist Otto Bauer and his use of *Schiksalsgemeinschaft* to mean a nation which is a community shaped by shared experiences, see Peter Loewenberg, "The Construction of National Identity," in *Psychoanalysis and Culture at the Millenium,* ed. Nancy Ginsburg and Roy Ginsburg (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 37–63. On *Denkgemeinschaft*, exchangeable with *denkkollektiv*, see Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, trans. Fred Bradley and Thaddeus Trenn (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979).

10 For example, Nietzsche saw the Greek city state as the perfect community. See William J. Mcgrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria,* 57.

11 Herman Schmalenbach, "The Sociological Category of Communion," in *Theories of Society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory,* Vol. I, ed. Edward Shils, Kaspar D. Naegele, Jesse R. Pitts and Talcott Parsons (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1961): 331–47, 332. Schamlenbach's vital discussion was first published in 1922. See H. Schmalenbach, "Die soziologische Kategorie des Bundes," *Die Dioskuren, Jahrbuch für Geisteswissenschaften*, Vol. I [1922]).

12 Hermann Schmalenbach, "The Sociological Category of Communion," 332.

view the community of Bitania as a sect. The member of the movement David Horowitz did so in his autobiography, published in 1970, and the Israeli historian Tom Segev did so too in a recent book review of the biography of the Hashomer Hatzair longtime leader Meir Yaari, published in Haaretz in July 2013. Segev applied the term "sect" to the entire movement and its relationship to its leader.[13]

The master-follower friendship between the German Jewish anarchist and spiritual socialist thinker Gustav Landauer and his disciple Martin Buber affected the leaders of Hashomer Hatzair and their adoption of the notions of *Gemeinschaft* and *Bund,* which they renamed in Hebrew as *eda*. According to Buber's biographer and close follower Hans Kohn, Buber had fallen under Landauer's spell as early as 1900.[14] Their subsequent intellectual exchange intensified Buber's interest in social issues, and he renewed his commitment to *Gemeinschaft* after Landauer's murder in 1919.[15] Both published widely about the values of community and the ills of the modern society in both Jewish and non-Jewish contexts. Thus, at a conference organized by the Zionist socialist movement Hapoel Hatzair in Prague in 1920, Buber gave a speech about *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, advocating a return to the values of the former. The speech was soon published in Hebrew in Palestine.[16] Gustav Landauer (1870–1919) was the son of an affluent Jewish merchant from Karlsruhe in southwest Germany.

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13 In the 1960s counterculture, this type of leader will be called guru, the Sanskrit world for teacher or master. Aviva Halamish, Meir Yaari's biographer, entitled the second volume of the biography: *Meir Yaari: The Rebbe from Merhavia, The State Years*. Here, Rebbe is a translation of the Chasidic Hebrew term Admo'r, an acronym for "our master, our teacher, our rebbe," a term that conveys the flavor of this type of leadership. See Aviva Halamish *Meir Yaari: The Rebbe from Merhavia, The State Years* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 2013).

14 Hans Kohn, *Martin Buber: Sein Werk und seine Zeit. Ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte Mitteleuropas, 1880–1930* (Cologne: J. Melzer, 1961), 188.

15 On Landauer's particular conception of community see Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe; A Study in Elective Affinity* (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), 129.

16 Avraham Shapira (Hebrew) "Evolving Communities and "Tikkun Olam': The Social Utopianism of Martin Buber," in Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1983), 294. This book was dedicated to the memory of Gustav Landauer.

He began his career as an essayist and freelance journalist, became an editor and an esteemed literary critic whose work prefigured modern linguistic analysis. His most influential books, in which he outlined the basics of his anarchism and socialism, were *Die Revolution* (1907) and *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* (Call for Socialism), published in 1911 and 1919. In 1919, when the Bavarian Soviet Republic was proclaimed, Landauer accepted the invitation of the journalist Kurt Eisner, charismatic socialist leader, to become its minister of education, but this government was quickly overthrown and Landauer was brutally murdered in the streets of Munich by counterrevolutionary soldiers of the German *Freikorps*, often called the "White Guards," the same unit that killed his colleagues Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in Berlin a few months earlier.[17]

Over the course of his career, Landauer refined his socialistic philosophy, moving from a focus on improving the lot of the urban proletariat to a dream of communal agrarian communities, described in 1900 as a way for the German *Volk* to reconstitute itself as a nation of peasants and craftsmen.[18] Landauer became convinced that the highest form of human community was the rural settlement where farming families committed to helping each other and living as cooperating neighbors.[19]

Landauer believed that each nation contributes equally to a common humanity. An individual who wishes to lead an authentic life must live inside their *Volk,* he thought, but his *Völkisch* thinking shunned any show of chauvinism or xenophobia. Landauer belonged to a pacifist circle, unlike Buber, and vehemently, desperately opposed World War I, just as he opposed political Zionism because he thought that it would negate the Jewish "calling for humanity." Not unlike a kin thinker of the same period, Bernard Lazare, he believed that only in the Diaspora could Jews be liberated, making them universal redeemers of all of humanity.[20] He feared that by advocating a Jewish state, political Zionism would threaten the integrity of Jewish iden-

17 Eugene Lunn, *Prophet of Community: The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973).

18 Ibid., 5.

19 Kohn, *Martin Buber,* 188.

20 On Bernard Lazare, see Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia,* 178–99.

tity.[21] He hoped the Jewish people would recover its nationhood, but for him this had nothing to do with territory and less with a nation-state. Here too his thinking diverged from that of Buber, who believed that a true nation needed sovereignty on its own soil. This divergence did not prevent Buber from declaring in his *Paths in Utopia* (1947) that Landauer was the "hidden leader" of the Jewish struggle for socialism, even though the leader and his people, tragically, so Buber said, never met.[22]

Landauer wished only for the disappearance of states, not of nations, which, according to his *völkisch* thinking, were units of cultural and linguistic continuity and integrity.[23] According to Landauer, the *Volk* could only grow authentically outside of a state structure.[24] Only through the abolition of the state as such could the *Volk* realize itself. The task of each nation was to rejuvenate its *Volksgeist* (national spirit) and rejuvenate itself as a *Gemeinschaft*.[25]

The clearest and most suggestive description of the movement's thinking about the *eda* is found in Meir Yaari's article mentioned above. Full of Landauerian echoes, the article came out several months after two articles published by Martin Buber: "Landauer and the Revolution," published in Hebrew in late 1919 in the periodical *Ha'adama* [The Earth], the periodical of the socialist-Zionist political party Ahdut Haavodah (United Labor Party), and "The Eda," published in Hebrew in late 1920 in M*a'abarot* [Transitions], the literary journal of Hapoel Hatzair.[26] Landauer's brutal death had inspired Buber to publish such articles and collections of Landauer's own

21 Lunn, *Prophet of Community*, 271.

22 Martin Buber, (Hebrew) *Paths in Utopia* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1983 [1947]), 250.

23 Paul Breines, "The Jew As Revolutionary: The Case of Gustav Landauer," *Leo Baeck Iinstitute Year Book*, 12 (1967): 75–85, 81.

24 Buber, (Hebrew) *Paths in Utopia*, 247.

25 Breines, "The Jew As Revolutionary," 82. This was the main difference between Landauer's humanistic and universalistic *völkisch* thinking and the chauvinistic thought of such nineteenth-century German conservatives as Paul de Lagarde and Julius Langbehn who believed in the superiority of Germany and glorified its imperial ambitions.

26 Martin Buber, "Landauer ve-ha-mahapecha" (Landauer and the Revolution), in *Ha-adama* 1.4 (1921): 477–83.

essays. The affinity between Yaari's *eda* and Landauer's ideas is clear, whether picked up directly from Landauer's writings or from Buber's articles. For example, Yaari repeated verbatim Landauer's ideal of an anarchistic "community of communities" (*Gemeinschaft von Gemeinden*) as an alternative to the modern centralized state.[27] For Yaari, the *eda* seemed far preferable to other social options: either a faceless collective—that is, the proletariat—in which a person was erased as an individual, or hyper-individualism, in which young Jews not only lost all commitment to the nation, but were also "most sickly and degraded."[28] As Yaari explained in a passage laced with Buberian images, the Jews' wish for community had evolved in response to the lives they themselves led in the Diaspora:

> Back in Europe we struggled against the mechanization of life and education, against the hypocrisy which reigned in the schools against the landlordishness [bourgeois philistinism] of our parents and against the Diaspora Jew's tendency to over intellectualize. Instead of a society of poverty stricken shopkeepers, we created a fermenting community [*eda*] … a free and natural way of life … In our community, our youths find an environment in which they can struggle to express their point of view clearly. Our youths have experienced a social and an erotic attraction between boys and girls; they have created a particular symbolism… We have discovered that only on the basis of free education, of self-education, and of socially free individuals … are social formations created and social forces generated. These have the capacity to transform our degraded society.[29]

The *eda* was to offer an alternative to a detested bourgeois course of life in the Jewish Diaspora. We will see later how in its structure and spirit the *eda* sought to replace, or at least override, what was condemned as the most powerful bourgeois institution—the family.

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27 Landauer's ideal of "community of communities" was repeated by Buber in his 1947 *Paths in Utopia*, 55–6.

28 Meir Yaari, "Mitoch Ha-tesisa" ("Our Fermentation"), *Hapoel Hatzair* XIV, nos. 15–16, January 1921, quoted in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, appendix 10, 370.

29 Ibid.

The *eda* would eventually metamorphose into the Kibbutz utopia of Hashomer Hatzair.

Again and again, Yaari contrasted this ideal community and way of life to that quintessentially evil, liberal, and bourgeois social formation, the symptom and agent of social decay—the political party. This was a common theme, shared by anarchists and conservatives alike. It was central to the German youth movement way of thinking up to World War I. Buber had written in 1919 that Landauer felt that the political parties, with their bureaucratic apparatuses, were the most rotten element in the most rotten form of government.[30] Publishing his essay in what was, after all, a party publication, Yaari meant to pass judgement on the milieu of his readers—a political party founded by the veterans of the Second Aliya—as if to say: our alternative vision of society is superior to yours, far more radical and daring. He wrote: "The political party as a social formation … contrasts with the *eda*; it is [merely] a centralized organizational unit. The *eda* [on the other hand] is a social formation which dynamically forms itself."[31] The political party only perpetuates the lamentable conditions of modern society, a decaying, lifeless social formation without a future, whereas the *eda* was an organism, living, evolving, becoming. In Palestine, according to Yaari, there was room for both formations. The role of the political parties was to struggle against capitalism on behalf of the working class, but the ultimate goal, the key to social, individual, and hence national regeneration through creativity, was only to be found in the *eda*. According to Yaari, only the ferment of youth could yield the forces capable of transforming a decayed society. In order to create, the power to destroy was needed: "This fermentation has a revolutionary power; a constant renewal of destruction and creation." This fermentation could only be achieved in a voluntary community, an *eda* of individuals who came freely together.

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30 Buber, "Landauer and the Revolution," *Ha-adama*, 477. As a response to this antipolitics, non-political anarchism was attacked in the 1890s by the leader of the German Social Democratic Party August, Bebel, who believed that socialists must take political rather than direct action, using political rights and the legislative machinery as much as possible in order to win political power. See Lunn, *Prophet of Community*, 85.

31 Meir Yaari, "Our Fermentation," quoted in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, appendix 10, 372.

Yaari's vision radically opposed any centralization. Instead, he imagined a large number of autonomous communities:

> The communities are united by a covenant; they help each other, leaving each member community an inner autonomy if it needs it. *The communities do not tolerate external governance; through free association they erect an anarchic fabric.*[32]

Here Yaari echoed Landauer's idea of a free association of voluntary rural autonomous communities lacking any external government, especially a centralized, bureaucratized state.[33] Implicitly, the *eda* also included the essence of Landauer's anarchism, the authoritarian state replaced by political system without a sovereign or master: "*Our supra-statist community*… is anarchic; our culturally specific environment is sure to be our reality [ממשות, the Hebrew word used by Buber to express his ideal of *Wirklichkeit*, reality]."[34] The *eda* would provide the social conditions necessary for personal and collective creativity, the supra-statist community of communities became the blueprint to the way the kibbutz movement was made up, comprised of hundreds of separate and autonomous communities, united by common ideals and goals and independent of the state.

David Horowitz, one of the other leading thinkers in the movement in the early 1920s, championed an anti-political, anarchistic worldview as an alternative to Western capitalism on the one hand and to state socialism introduced by the post-revolutionary Bolshevik Soviet Union on the other. He wrote:

> The first steps of the workers in Palestine involve free and organic communities. The building block of these communities was a new type of person with a new type of inner subjectivity. Political questions involving the state are secondary in importance for us… *Only an anarchistic network of free communities* who cultivate their own style of life could create a new society based

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32 Ibid., 373: emphases in original text.

33 Paul Breines, "The Jew As Revolutionary: The Case of Gustav Landauer," 78.

34 Meir Yaari, Letter of March 1921, quoted in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 395, emphasis in original.

> on activism and complete responsibility… The desire for cooperation is rooted in the human soul, in its most primitive and primordial yearnings, in its erotic relation to its environment.[35]

As Landauer and his epigones Buber and Yaari had hoped, an intense bonding fused together the members of the *eda*. This essence distinguishes the *eda* from other small-scale communities. Landauer supported the approach that claimed that people could best realize their potential through cooperation and free mutual aid, rather than capitalistic competition. He had translated Kropotkin's anti-Darwinian *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution* (1902) into German, but did not regard cooperation as the only true basis for human solidarity. Rather, he placed his faith in the mystical union that arises when person-to-person relationships spontaneously form within a free community.[36]

This modern (or rather, anti-modern) German thinking about community by Buber and Landauer had mystical overtones and inspiration. Through it, individuals could reach a mystical union with each other and with the entire cosmos. From the German medieval mystic Meister Eckhart, Landauer learned that each individual soul contained within it all of creation (Buber took it from a different, early modern German mystic, Jakob Böhme). True community, as a result, had to be discovered first in the soul of the individual.[37] In order to probe this interior universe one experienced one's *Erlebnis* (see the previous chapter.) In the spirit of that severe critique of positivism that rejects all possibility of rational understanding, believers in mystical enlightenment acknowledged only one means to perceiving the continually reborn world: by experiencing it within the interior of the individual soul. Buber, too, believed that a mystical union with an ultimate

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35 *Kehiliatenu: kovets hagut, levatim u-ma'avaye halutsim* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak ben-Tsevi, 1987), 151.

36 Paul Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue: Martin Buber's Transformation of German Social Thought* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 19. See also Martin Buber, "Ha-eda," in *Ma'abarot* 3, nos. 1–2 (1920). This approach, reached through an unmediated, person-to-person relationship, subsequently served as the foundation for Buber's dialogical philosophy in *I-Thou*, first published in 1923, which was less a theological treatise than a call for an ethical regeneration of *Gemeinschaft* through an involvement that could be read as mystical.

37 Lunn, *Prophet of Community*, 154.

reality, or God, was only possible in the context of a community, either that of the Zaddik and his Hasidic congregation, or a secular *Bund*. Only in a community could the I achieve union with the absolute.[38] This socio-mystical process was at the heart of the image of Hasidism he propagated, a force negating petrified, rabbinic Judaism. The desire for religiosity expressed in Hashomer Hatzair was taken directly from these of Buber's teachings.

Like other groups in the Zionist labor movement, Hashomer Hatzair emerged out of its experience of crisis in Europe as a voluntary, self-appointing avant-garde elite. Hashomer Hatzair molded itself to be in stark contrast to mass movements or the "masses." In the most general way, cultivating a personality that contrasted with the person of the "masses" was one of the components of the youth movement experience of central Europe.[39] The yearning for small-scale communities can be seen in a wider context as part of an attempt to erect obstacles to the spread of the "masses" and their (democratic) institutions. Meir Yaari often contrasted in his writings the *eda* to its antithesis—the political party, the core organization of revolutionary proletarians. Not that parties were not crucially important in revolutionary struggles, but for cultural regeneration he thought them detrimental and even destructive.[40]

Such attitudes survived into Hashomer Hatzair's Marxist period, producing a strange ideological hybrid—a self-making exclusive elite, armed with a Marxist ideology. Such a hybrid was consolidated by a firm belief in the role of elites in resurrecting the nation. In 1900, Landauer gave a lecture entitled "Through Isolation to Community," in which he wrote:

> Monstrous and almost inexpressibly huge is the distance that now separates us—we who consider ourselves the advance guard—from the rest of humanity … With ardor we have gone into the *Volk* in order to raise it, awaken it, purify it, stimu-

38 Oscar Zimmermann, "From Relationship to Community: On Martin Buber's Social Philosophy," MA thesis (Tel Aviv University, 1985), 4.

39 Horowitz, "The Youth Movement," 8–11.

40 Meir Yaari, "Our Fermentation," quoted in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, appendix 10, 371.

> late it to anger and rebellion, call it to beauty and greatness, finally to organize it into new social and economic associations … Through pain and struggle, however, we have gained this knowledge: we have gone too far in front to be understood by the masses…
>
> Our realization is that we should not go down to the masses, we must lead the way for them, and that will seem for the time being as if we are going away from them. The community we long for and need we will find only if we separate ourselves as individuals; then we will at last find, in the innermost core of our hidden being, the most ancient and most universal community: the human race and the cosmos. Whoever has discovered this joyous community in himself is enriched and blessed for all time and is finally removed from the common accidental communities of our age.[41]

In this quotation, Landauer formulated the role of an avant-garde as an elite, whose role is to show the way for the people who follow it. But a gap yawns between the avant-garde and the "masses," as well as a growing misunderstanding. The role of the elite in this model is different and much more exclusive than that which was preached by Tolstoy, who believed that Moscow's poor could be taught to work by the example of the upper classes, that is, by direct example.[42] Landauer, who was intimately familiar with the ideas of Tolstoy, insisted that the avant-garde should not descend and live among the people. Rather, the avant-garde needed to separate itself from the people, the "masses," in order to form a community with the potential to regenerate the entire configuration of person-to-person relationships. First, a community, a *Bund*, should be erected. Only this community, endowed with a mystical capacity to fuse its members into a bond, could lead to the regeneration of the entire *Volk* and of humanity.

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41 For the entire essay: Gustav Landauer, "From Isolation to Community," in Avraham Yassur, *Gustav Landauer: Works and Letters* (Merhavia: Sifriat Poalim, 1992), 27–41. This essay first appeared in 1901 as "Durch Absonderung zur Gemeinschaft." The quotation above was translated in Eugene Lunn, *Prophet of Community*, 124–5.

42 Lev Shestov, *Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1969), 33.

Hashomer Hatzair adopted precisely this model, rejecting the Tolstoyan one preached by A.D. Gordon, as shown in the following passage from an essay by member Benjamin Dror:

> Gordon … emphasized the national-popular idea, which the pioneers should revive in Eretz Israel. I vigorously opposed Gordon because his approach to reviving the nation did not come out from a view of Judaism as a crystallized cultural phenomenon, but directly from the present state of the people. Since we had ceased to be a part of the hideous and crippling Diaspora only recently, clearly we had to oppose Gordon's approach with all our being. Unlike him, we saw the center of gravity of national revival not in the people in their present state but in ourselves …: the individuals who come to the land and build its future. The Jewish people has only one mission today: providing financial support to the pioneers whose spirit it does not understand. We have the right to demand this support [thanks to] the natural bond between us and the ancient generations of the Jewish people, the creators of Judaism whose spirit flourishes within all of us and which stimulates us to heroic acts of work, the building of the land and redemption of the Jewish people.[43]

Benjamin Dror (1900–88) was born in Lwów, was a member of Bitania and later in 1924 became member of kibbutz Beit Alpha. The quote above is a classic example of Zionist negation of the Diaspora. Dror's brand of pioneer elitism stressed the contemporaneous state of the Jewish people in the Diaspora as deplorable, lacking any national consciousness. Only through the work of pioneers, endowed with a revitalized spirit, could the Jewish people be redeemed. National revival is first and foremost cultural. A revival could only be achieved by overcoming the Diaspora and its destructive marks on the Jewish soul, and through uncovering a deep connection to pre-Diaspora times. The masses lacked the capacity and the consciousness that would enable them to bring about this revival.

Another rank-and-file member expressed the pursuit of elitism as the only path to a life of meaning: Moshe Hellenberg (1900–81) was born in the Habsburg province of Bukovina, east of eastern

43 Contribution of Benjamin Dror in *Kehiliatenu*, 26.

Galicia, but his family soon moved to Lwów. He was not a member of Hashomer Hatzair as an adolescent and joined the movement only after he had taken part in the activities of anarchist cells in Vienna. When the Spartacists began their activities in Munich in 1918–19, he travelled there with friends hoping to join the revolution, but it soon failed. In his explanation of the great disappointment and how it led him to join Hashomer Hatzair, Hellenberg set forth his thinking about the relationship between leaders and the masses:

> The uprising failed… In prison I contemplated my actions, I pondered and began to have doubts. I searched my soul about the meaning of our endeavor, the great spiritual striving for which we fought and in whose name we struggled. There was none. There was only a tragic jumble that could not justify itself. Man! Here you are, marching with the masses under the banner of the revolution—demanding, agitating, and yearning for beauty, virtue, and that in life which is sacred. And that mob, what does it want? Who knows? Couldn't it easily betray the original message of its leaders? This entire revolution, spawned in the streets, amidst great clamor, when the masses momentarily erupt, how is it good or valuable for humankind? What good is it anyway?
>
> Here I began my soul-searching. I began yearning for something else, something real, tangible. This became clear: only that which one could realize in one's own life would bear fruit and never let down. I then remembered Eretz Israel: I linked the land with the crisis that had befallen me.[44]

Hellenberg found his way to the particular vision of Hashomer Hatzair, which had as its goal the creation of small and exclusive agricultural communities in Palestine, when he became convinced that the fruits of a more cosmopolitan revolution could easily be destroyed by the fickle, capricious masses.

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44 Hellenberg's contribution to *Kehiliatenu*, 68. It was a similar fear of the mob that brought Elias Canetti, after the traumatic burning of the palace of justice in Vienna in the early thirties, to think deeply about the masses, reflections which culminated into his 1960 masterpiece, *Crowds and Power*.

There were however, different voices in the movement. In view of its elitist outlook and makeup, another member, Yehuda Yaari (1900–82), criticized the movement's exclusivity and its shutting itself away as a closed sect. Yaari was a member of the movement and later an author and popularizer of the writings of the Hasidic mystic Nahman of Bratslav (for more on Yaari see below in this chapter.) He wrote:

> Today we dream of a spiritual family. At the heart of things we wish to redeem the individual. We wish to redeem ourselves, to save ourselves … we must be [however] among the generators of a new messianic movement that could redeem the [entire] nation, that would be able to create a new people. We made a sacred covenant … but this ideal must have a bigger significance than our own redemption: the redemption of the entire Jewish people.[45]

Practically, Yaari proposed to disseminate the movement's ideals and practices among wider circles. If the movement's members had their own private redemptions in mind, then the movement's project would not have any historical significance for the entire Jewish people.

The movement's *eda* was an adaptation taken from the neo-romantic central European discourse of community and *Bund*. As such, it was an anarcho-socialist model of community. On a different plane, it was imagined as situated in a peculiar Jewish historical narrative. The movement imagined itself, its roots, and its mission in the framework of this narrative, which was first articulated most suggestively by Martin Buber. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to this narrative and how Hashomer Hatzair fantasized itself as the latter part of it.

Yedidya Schlifka, a member of Hashomer Hatzair since 1913 and a leader in the movement since 1917, later to join Kibbutz Beit Alpha, remembered Buber's visit to Lwów in June of 1918. Buber came to Lwów a few weeks after Vienna's famous *Jugendtag*—the youth rally organized by Siegfried Bernfeld—to give a lecture entitled "*Die Verwirklichung des Judentums*" (the realization of Judaism). Schlifka was sixteen years old at the time; he knew little if anything about Buber's philosophy and contented himself with listing some of

45 Yehuda Yaari's contribution to *Kehiliatenu*, 96.

the ideas in Buber's address that resonated with his own thinking. He remembered Buber stating that the Jewish ideal of realization progressed by a specific genealogy going from Abraham to the Judges, the Prophets, the Hasmonean dynasty, the Essenes, and Jesus; the time has arrived, announced Buber, for the Jewish people to recreate the *Geistige Gemeinschaft*, a spiritual community.[46] Two months later, in the last two rainy weeks of August 1918, a gathering of Hashomer Hatzair group leaders took place in Tarnawa Wiżna, a village in eastern Galicia, southwest of Lwów, at the foot of the Carpathian mountains.[47] Most participants came from Galicia, but as the movement had already started to spread, members from the new branches in the Habsburg province of Bukovina and from non-Habsburg Poland were also invited. Schlifka, fascinated by new ideas in circulation about the calling of the Jews, participated in the gathering and described it in a letter to his group back in Lwów:

> Today, when I reflect on my Judaism, I feel something deeper, a deep connection between the nation and myself, a connection through a common, three-thousand-year-old message that is born in us and had been in existence since Moses, the prophets, Jesus, and the time of the Diaspora. All of this crystallizes and becomes *one big chain of which we are part*… Yes, our lives have a sense of purpose when we join and tie ourselves to this long, eternal chain. This is how we create something eternal. If we live without a connection to this chain, our lives will pass without leaving their mark.[48]

Connecting to this chain gave Schlifka a new sense of identity. His longing for a commitment to lofty ideals now received an exciting and clear direction. Three years later, a similar self-understanding was articulated by member Yehuda Yaari, whose background differed somewhat from most other members of the movement. He was born in Tarnobrzeg, a very small town in western Galicia, and religion and Jewish tradition figured more prominently in his family than

46 Shoham, *Diary*, 67.

47 For the best account of the Tarnava Wiżna conference see Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 82–97.

48 Shoham, *Diary*, 67. Emphasis mine.

was typical among the other, more secular members; he received his education in quite conservative circles and schools. During his first years in Palestine, Yaari distinguished himself by his reading of traditional Jewish texts. In 1920, he began to plan a performance of the Jewish playwright S. An-ski's *Dibbuk* in Hebrew, drawing actors and stage crew from Shomria, the movement's biggest work camp in the Galilee at the time. The performance took place in March 1921, predating Habima's historic performance of the play in Moscow in January 1922.[49] In his contribution to the *Kehiliatenu* collection, Yaari wrote:

> And I remember a series of tales, all of which were related to the land [Eretz Israel]: the prophets who prophesied eternal visions; Jesus and his disciples who lived here on these mountains and declared the Kingdom of Heaven; Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai and his friends, who spent in these caves the best of their years and prepared a meal with the divine (Seudata im Shechinata); Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, who came here in order to mend his crooked soul and straighten the swellings of the heart [i.e., to break his own pride.] To this chain I would like to add another link: youths who have come here in order to create a new life.[50]

Yaari emphasized the connection to Eretz Israel—Palestine. Like Schlifka, he connected the destiny of the movement to a long tradition stretching into the Jewish past. The quotations above suggest the historical narrative that the members of Hashomer Hatzair developed. It appears that Buber's lectures, especially his famous and influential *Three Addresses on Judaism*, were taken to heart by the leaders of the movement. Between 1909 and 1911, Buber delivered a series of addresses to large Jewish and Zionist audiences in Prague that he would eventually refashion into what was to become the *Drei Reden über das Judentum* (*Three addresses on Judaism*).[51] Assailing what he saw

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49 About this very telling episode, selecting the most irrational-affirming topic for a theatrical performance—the Dybbuk—see Freddi Rokem, "The Dybbuk on the Haifa-Jedda Road: The first Performance of the *Dybbuk* in Palestine," [Hebrew] *Kathedra* 26 (1993): 186–93.

50 Yehuda Yaari's contribution to *Kehiliatenu*, 95.

51 Martin Buber, *On Judaism*, trans. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken, 1967).

as a petrified *Halakhic* religion, he outlined a path toward a new religiosity. Cultural Zionism could serve as the means to this renewal, since a true people depends on roots and continuity. Buber distinguished between the concept of religion and that of religiosity—he saw the first as a petrified institution, befitting the old and decrepit, the second as a living emotion, the domain of youth. According to Buber, in the struggle between religion and religiosity, the latter, a living religion of the heart, did not exist in Judaism anymore. The rabbis of the Diaspora had destroyed it. By insisting on the observance of laws and rituals they had robbed the Jewish religion of genuine feeling and ensured that the needs of the common people were ignored. Buber envisaged a transformation of the Jewish soul by reconnecting it with the Jewish *Volk* in the framework of a "Jewish Renaissance."[52] In the *Three Addresses on Judaism*, Buber turned from the abstract question of whether Jews were to be considered members of a common creed, a race, or a nation, to the personal question of the meaning of Judaism to the individual Jew.[53] In exile, the Jews were a troubled nation, detached from its soil and in need of renewal. During this period of spiritual impoverishment the rabbis seized control of official Judaism, perpetuating it without renewing it. During this exile the Jews became detached souls, spiritually poor and barren. The only hope lay in the creation of organic communities where the Jews could once again enjoy a wholesome existence.

As part of his search for a living religion, Buber took up the study of Hasidism, which soon enthralled him. His original interest in the tales of the Hasidim culminated in the publication of two widely-read books—*Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* (The Tales of Rabbi Nahman, 1906) and *Die Legende des Baalschem* (The Legends of the Baal Shem, 1908)—that introduced readers of German to the legends and allegorical wisdom of the Hasidic thinkers. In the books' introductions Buber presented his views concerning the religious pietistic message of Hasidism. He identified a struggle in Judaism between the official Judaism of the rabbis and the Hasidic movement of the eighteenth

52 See virtually all of the essays in Buber's *Die Jüdische Bewegung: Gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1920), a collection of essays from 1904–14.

53 Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work: The Early Years 1878–1923* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981), 130.

century. He saw Hasidism as part of a much longer history of struggle which manifested in the lives and works of the biblical prophets, the Essenes, Jesus, and the early Christians, a tradition he dubbed "subterranean Judaism." According to this narrative, the official Judaism of the rabbis, insisting on the legalistic aspects of the religion, struggled against any spark of creativity, anything that had the power to fire the emotions. The great renewal movements of the Essenes, the early Christians, and the Hasidim had developed out of rebelling against the normative Jewish authorities.[54] This brought about a long struggle, which Buber called the struggle of the official, against the subterranean Judaism (Kampf des offizielen gegen das unterirdische Judentum). In the name of religiosity, creativity, and spiritual renewal, Buber sided with the agents of the latter.

The struggle of these renewal movements for redemption, Buber argued, was carried out primarily by heretics and mystics, willing to martyr themselves. On the face of it, the religion of the rabbis always held the upper hand, but in reality subterranean Judaism, the creator of myth, was the true victor: all of the victories claimed by the rabbis did nothing but hasten the degeneration of a beleaguered religious community. In their battles the rabbis relied on the Halakha, the codification of the religious laws, and used it as a dam against the opposing forces who armed themselves with less rationalized and more creative texts such as the Kabbalah or the folktales of the Aggadah.[55] Rather than suffer under the oppressive weight of the Halakha, the true Jew had to turn against it or simply desert it. The underground current of Judaism's creative powers, though always oppressed, had never been broken.[56]

Judaism's subterranean strand possessed great appeal for the young members of Hashomer Hatzair. The idea of a continuous struggle against normative Jewish authorities was a perfect match for their own high ideals. As the youth struggled against the bourgeois hypocrisy, superficiality, and the unheroic existence of their parents, staid

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54 These movements were sometimes mentioned by Buber, along with the excommunicated seventeenth-century philosopher, Baruch Spinoza.

55 Martin Buber, *The Legend of the Baal-Shem*, trans. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955 [1907]), xi.

56 Martin Buber, *Die Jüdische Bewegung: Gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1920).

rabbinical figures had to be cast aside and new heroes from Judaism's past set up in their place. The earliest link in the chain of subterranean Judaism were the biblical prophets, Moses among them. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many European thinkers had been attracted to the Hebrew prophets. The neo-Kantian German-Jewish philosopher Hermann Cohen identified a universal ethic in the visions of the prophets; so did his contemporary, the renowned Protestant theologian Ernst Troeltsch.[57] During the trying days of the early twentieth century, many Jewish thinkers looked for leaders who possessed the virtues of the prophets.[58]

Especially attracted to the prophets were Jewish thinkers who upheld universalistic ideals and who saw in Judaism a mission to other nations and religions.[59] The biblical prophets were seen as individuals chosen by God, sometimes against their will, to save their people from calamity. They communicated directly with God and were independent of the political establishment, often defying its authority. They also defied the authority of the biblical priests and promoted the ideals of universal peace and social justice. Defying the biblical priests who presided over the rituals, prophets such as Jeremiah and Amos emphasized ethical monotheism, denounced corruption, and called for social justice. For them, moral life, encompassing the whole of human life, was more important than formal worship. In this regard, the prophets were seen by the Hungarian Jewish sociologist Karl Mannheim as providing some of the first fragments of utopia in Western culture. According to Mannheim, the utopian element in their messages was the realization that it was not through the practice of magic or rituals that evil could be exorcized from human life but through an ethical transformation of society.[60] Their struggle was

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57 Joerg Hackeschmidt, "Die hebräischen Propheten und die Ethik Kants," *Aschkenas* 5.1 (1995): 121–9.

58 Eliezer Schweid, *Nevi'im le-a'mam vela-enoshut: nevu'ah u-nevi'im be-hagut ha-Yehudit shel ha-me'ah ha-e'srim* (Prophets for their People and for Humanity: Prophecy and Prophets in Twentieth-Century Jewish Thought) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press), 1999.

59 Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

60 Karl Mannheim, "Utopia," in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1954 [1935]), 200–4.

of right versus rite. In their mission, they bore the burden of conveying God's message, and in doing so they paid a heavy personal price as some prophets suffered from outright banishment and persecution. For Buber, the prophets were also seen as paragons of realization and fulfilment; their lives and personal fate conveyed the message that personal responsibility and dedicated leadership were necessary for social and ethical change.

Shlomo Horowitz (1895–1975), a leading thinker in Hashomer Hatzair and later a teacher of history at Haifa's Hareali school and author of numerous history textbooks, admired both the speech and the actions of the prophets, which he found direct, transparent, simple and honest. He proposed them as role models.[61] Of course Buber, who had much to say on this topic, saw the prophets as "poets of myth" and saw them as the beginning of an anti-traditional movement in which the "ecstatic fantasy of the Jews" prevailed.[62] In an open letter written in 1918, Isachar Reiss, another important Hashomer Hatzair leader, called on his fellows to go beyond reading about the prophets to realize in their own lives the values personified by them.[63]

The next link in the chain of subterranean Judaism after the prophets was the eschatological movements of Jewish antiquity—the Essenes and the early Christians.[64] Buber understood these pre-exilic movements as the heirs to the prophets. According to the historian Josephus, the Essene sect seceded from the mainstream society of Judea and set out to live a life of communalist purity in the Judean desert after the Hasmonean revolt in the second century BCE. According to Buber, their mysticism and direct encounters with God endowed them with great creative power. The young members of Hashomer Hatzair greatly admired their disdain for material comfort, their withdrawal from urban centers to the desert, their quest for purity, and their simple life of manual labor, growing palm trees in the desert. Some also admired the communistic aspect of their lives. Their communal meals, sharing that practice with the early Christians and the Hasidic move-

61 Shlomo Horowitz, "Mistyfikacye żydostwa," *Moriah Year* 13 (February-March 1918): 129–41, 134.

62 Martin Buber, *The Legend of the Baal-Shem*, Introduction, xi-xii.

63 Isachar Reiss, "O ruchu szomrowym," *Moriah Year* 13 (1918): 329–30.

64 Martin Buber, *On Judaism*, 18, 28 ff.

ment, a *seudata im Shechinata* was, according to Meir Yaari, a holy show of fraternity. In an interview late in his life, Yaari responded to a question about the movement's early tendencies toward anarchism by saying that in order to understand the early days of the movement, one should look further back in time to the Essenes or the Last Supper:

> Interviewer: You presented the Christian meal [as a symbol] as also Jewish, Essene, Hasidic—why not a precurser of anarchism?
>
> Meir: The fraternal and sacred aspect of a shared meal did not start with Christianity; it already existed with the Essenes and they say that the Christians were essentially an Essene sect.
>
> Interviewer: Yes, but you didn't know that at that time.
>
> Meir: And they also say that the Hasidic meal indeed continued that tradition.[65]

Several of the contributors to the *Kehiliatenu* collection described the sharing of food as a holy act of community. It echoed both the ancient Greek practice of banqueting and the Hasidic practice of the *tish* (literally, table), a sacred meal, held on the Sabbath and religious festivals by the congregation and led by its pious leader, the zaddik. In the Hasidic tradition, the tish is organized by the rebbe (rabbi), who tastes all the food before it is shared among the Hasidim, since this is seen as a means of sharing the holiness in his person. Yaari mentioned the *mishte ruchani* (spiritual banquet) as a practice of Bitania. The members of Bitania hung on the wall of their dining hall a reproduction of *Plato's Symposium*, painted by the nineteenth-century German painter Anselm Feuerbach. As the most famous discussion of love and Eros in Western culture, the Symposium had an appeal for them. Shlomo Horowitz visited Bitania in the spring of 1921 and he described the meals there as "a Platonic symposium, enacted daily."[66] Plato's symposium was obviously not a Jewish source of inspiration, but it had an affinity to the spirit of the community.

Another historical and mythical figure evoked in discussions of subterranean Judaism was Simeon bar Yochai, the first-century

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65 Avraham Yassour, *Hazon ve-haye yom-yom ba-kibuts* (Kibbutz: Vision and daily life) (Tel Aviv: Yaron Golan, 1997).

66 Shlomo Horowitz in *Kehiliatenu*, 135.

disciple of Rabbi Akiva, active in the second century CE. Bar Yochai's importance arose out of the popular legend that attributed to him the writing of the *Zohar, Book of Splendor,* the most important book of the Kabbalah. In fact, the book was most likely written in the thirteenth century and won great renown for purportedly elucidating an ancient tradition of secret wisdom. Fleeing from the Romans, bar Yochai and his son lived in a cave in the Galilee for thirteen years. The father and son tended carob trees, utterly removed from society.[67] In addition to his appeal as a link to subterranean Judaism as a rebel and fugitive, here was a Galilean who lived a simple and austere life that impressed the members of Hashomer Hatzair.

However, the most unconventional link in the chain of subterranean Judaism was that of Jesus and his disciples, mentioned fifteen times in the *Kehiliatenu* collection. As a powerful symbol, Jesus' image was put to a great variety of social, political, and other purposes by Christian Europeans (and by Jews) for centuries. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, German Lutheran theologians began to investigate the life of Jesus in its historical context, marking a shift in Protestant theology from worshipping a supernatural Christ to searching for a historical Jesus.[68] Over the course of their search, motivated by the wish to learn how better to follow his way, these scholars uncovered, to their dismay, that Jesus had been Jewish. In particular, *Das Judentum und seine Geschichte* (Judaism and its history) which was published by the German-Jewish scholar Abraham Geiger in 1863 stirred a scandal. Geiger redefined Jesus as a Pharisee, the symbol of religious degeneracy for many Christian theologians; worse still, Geiger presented early Christianity as a pagan corruption of Jesus' originally Jewish message. Such an interpretation was perceived as a complete abomination by Christian theologians, but furthered the reception of Jesus as a Jew in the Jewish world.[69] During this period, the liberal Jews in the West, especially in Germany, initially viewed Christianity within the framework of theological or philosophical debates. Inevitably, the awareness that Jesus was a Jew spilled out of the specialist realm of theolo-

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67 Hayim Kolitz, *Ben-ha-'aliya: Rabi Shim'on Bar-Yohai be-mishnato* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mas, 1986), 73.

68 Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 10.

69 Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, 11.

gians and scholars of philosophy. Ultimately, Jesus' Jewishness could not be denied. The most extreme reaction was that of German ultranationalists, who rejected Jesus' figure, along with the Christian religion in its entirety, as too Jewish. In this vein, the racialist and anti-Jewish arch-conservative author Houston Stuart Chamberlain had made efforts in 1900 to separate Jesus' religious Jewish origin from a new image of Jesus as Aryan. By the turn of the century, many liberal Jewish thinkers in the West began to see Jesus as one of Judaism's great religious leaders. In an important study of Hasidism published immediately after World War I and read by members of Hashomer Hatzair, S. A. Horodetzky (1871–1957) mentioned Jesus as a precursor of Hasidism (the following link in Buber's subterranean Judaism).[70] He asserted that Jesus' personality, and the tone of his teaching, much less its content, had infuriated the Jewish authorities of his times. These teachings had been prefigured in the writings of the prophets. Horodetzky compared Jesus to the Hasidic zaddik, a charismatic holy man whose image included direct contact with the divine.

In contrast to the theological efforts of liberal German-Jewish scholars to come to terms with Christianity and its Jewish roots, in Eastern Europe Christianity was resented as a hostile and brutally oppressive hegemonic religion.[71] It was perceived as the very misfortune of the Jews and of Judaism. At times of Jewish persecution, however, it was customary to fend off hostilities by pointing out that Jesus himself had not preached against the Jewish faith. This "favorable" view of Jesus was instrumental, as it was meant to make Christians reflect on their anti-Jewish thought or action. It never led to a real discussion of his significance and his role in the history of Judaism.

All of this changed after World War I and the Russian Revolution. At this moment of historical change, Eastern European Jewish writers began to write about Jesus in a radically new way. As early as the turn of the century, following the Hebrew poet Shaul Tchernichowsky's intimate embrace of pagan deities, such as Apollo or the Canaanite Tamuz, other Jewish poets and writers encountered Jesus for the first

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70 Samuel Aba Horodezky, *ha-Hasidut veha-Hasidim* (Hasidism) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1953 [1923]), 13.

71 Rosenblum, Noah, "ha-Antitetiut ha-teologit notsrit sheba-natsrut be-shirat Uri Tsevi Grinberg" (The Theologico-historical Antithesis in the Poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg), *Perakim* 4 (1996): 263–320, 296.

time as a Jew. Some expressed little but contempt, derision, and scorn, marking a new era of transgression regarding traditional religious symbols. But most literary expressions embraced Jesus as a Jew and identified with his fate—his message suddenly seemed quite Jewish indeed. Among those who reclaimed Jesus as a Jew were the poet U.Z. Greenberg, the authors Avigdor Feuerstein Hameiri and Nathan Bistritzky, the scholar Yosef Klausner, Hashomer Hatzair member Yehuda Yaari, and later the author Aharon Kabak.

Martin Buber consistently insisted on including Jesus and early Christianity in his understanding of late antique Judaism. "From my youth onwards," reflected Buber in 1950, "I have found in Jesus my great brother … I am more than ever certain that a great place belongs to him in Israel's history of faith."[72] He saw Jesus as a Jewish revolutionary, the Sermon on the Mount as a "Jewish avowal in the most intimate possible sense."[73] When he was attacked for these unconventional assertions, he responded with a short statement published in the Zionist weekly *Die Welt* in May 1914. He explained that he saw early Christianity as a radical Jewish movement, a vital part of Jewish history. Later on, added Buber, early Christianity was transformed into the Christian church, which distorted the religion's Jewish elements and alienated it from the Jews. According to Buber, Jesus was relevant for contemporary Jews not as a religious object of worship, but as a religious subject, as one of those who had articulated and experienced the deepest Jewish religiosity.[74] Buber accepted that Jesus belonged to the Jewish tradition of messianism, but he rejected the corollary that the Jews should accept him as the messiah, no matter how Jewish his teachings were.

In addition to attending lectures by Buber and reading his publications, members of Hashomer Hatzair indirectly gleaned his ideas from another source. This was Ernst Elijahu Rappeport (1889–1952), a young disciple of Buber's who had published a book entitled *Das Buch Jeschua* (The Book of Jesus, 1920), and wrote an unpublished

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72 Malcolm L. Diamond, *Martin Buber: Jewish Existentialist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 173.

73 Martin Buber, *On Judaism*, 45–6.

74 Martin Buber, "Feststellung," *Die Welt*, 18, vol. 21, May 22, 1914.

sequel entitled *Das Buch Schaul* (The Book of Paul).[75] In 1910, he had met Buber for the first time after a lecture the latter gave in Vienna at a gathering organized by the *Bar Kochba* circle. Like Hermann Gerson of the German-Jewish youth movement *Kameraden*, the scholar and journalist Hans Kohn, and Maurice Friedman (the last two became Buber's biographers), Rappeport developed a close, father-son-like relationship with Buber. Between 1910 and the mid-1920s he followed Buber's advice in many areas, especially in philosophical and personal matters.[76] Rappeport published several articles in Buber's new journal *Der Jude*, founded in 1917. He was interested in the ways in which the Jewish and Christian religions informed each other. He immigrated to Palestine with his wife in 1920, and after a short stay at the Mikve Israel agricultural boarding school, where he improved his mastery of Hebrew, he joined the Shomria camp on the outskirts of Haifa towards the end of the year.

Rappeport was born to an affluent Jewish family in Hungary and grew up in Vienna. In 1910, he moved with his new wife Sarah (née Gelb) to the University of Göttingen, where he studied mathematics and pursued philosophy with Leonard Nelson and Edmund Husserl.[77] During the Göttingen years, Rappeport was in close contact with the local Jewish community and gave lectures about Judaism at community events. He and his wife belonged to the intimate circle of the writer Lou Andreas-Salomé, author of an audacious essay, published in 1896, titled *Jesus der Jude* (Jesus the Jew). In that article, Andreas Salomé asserted that Jesus owed to Judaism his particular relationship to God, which she described as close, loving, and of this world. She also insisted that by being a symbol of a personalized relationship with God, Jesus can in no way be seen as overcoming his Jewish origin but, on the contrary, must be seen as distinctly continuing it.[78] Rappeport was an unusual member in the human landscape of Hashomer Hatzair. He did

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75 Elijahu Rappeport, *Das Buch Jeschua des Elijahu ben Lasar* (Leipzig: E.P. Tal Verlag), 1920.

76 Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work*, 128.

77 Letter no. 160 from Rappeport to Buber, November 11, 1910, in *Martin Buber: Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten*, Band I (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1972), 288–90.

78 Lou Andreas-Salomé, "Jesus der Jude," *Neue Deutsche Rundschau* 7 (1896): 342–51, esp. 346–7.

not come from eastern Galicia and did not join the movement before immigrating to Palestine. He was ten years older than most of the members in the Shomria camp; his wife and four children joined Shomria several months after his arrival there. Too frail for the hard manual labor, he displayed resourcefulness as a shoemaker and sanitation expert in the camp, making useful improvements to the temporary, makeshift settlement. Rappeport became very enthusiastic about the group's aspirations to becoming a spiritual community and decided to make his home there. He made several contributions to the *Kehiliatenu* collection and would invite the inhabitants of Shomria, later Kibbutz Beit Alpha, to his little workshop, where he sculpted figurines out of olive wood and lectured on literary matters.

Rappeport's *Book of Jesus*, published at the same time he joined Shomria, was written in an exalted and archaic German. The book contains a mostly fictional account of Jesus' life, presented as a recently discovered gospel. It recounts the conversations between Jesus and figures from all walks of life he met as he roamed the land. The book is written as an eyewitness account by one "Elijahu ben Lasar." Rappeport tells the story as a disciple of Jesus with a particular mission to the Jewish people, relying on names and religious terms familiar to the Jewish reader: while God, for example, is called *Haschem*, one common Hebrew name for God, Jesus is called "Rabbi Jeschua ben Josseph." The book reclaims Jesus for the Jews, telling his story as if he had never left the Jewish fold, and communicated a message intended specifically for the Jewish people. Around 1912, Rappeport submitted an article entitled "Jesus, Paul and early Christianity in Martin Buber's essay on Judaism" for inclusion in a collection of essays titled *Vom Judentum* (Of Judaism, 1913), edited by Hans Kohn for the *Bar Kochba* circle. Apparently Rappeport's thinking had strayed quite far from other Buber followers. Kohn rejected his article, claiming it was incomprehensible.[79]

Jesus, the Jew who rebelled against the rabbis, fascinated the other members of Hashomer Hatzair. They identified with him, since they saw him as a myth and founder of a movement with great, epoch-making creative powers. "What would European culture be without the erotic image of Jesus of Nazareth? Without that elegiac, poetic, virgin

[79] Letter no. 192, October 1912, in *Martin Buber: Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten*, Band I (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1972), 316.

image…?" one member asked.[80] It was incumbent on the movement's members, he added, "to conquer Jesus of Nazareth, flesh in flesh, spirit in spirit, dream in dreams…"[81] Conquering Jesus meant identification, mystical or otherwise, with Jesus who lived in the Galilee.

Jesus was approachable, a tangible image and a leader of true religiosity. He lived in the hearts of common Christian people. His image as a forsaken son caught the members' imagination, as was that of Prometheus, who was also mentioned numerous times in the *Kehiliatenu* collection. Jesus had lived in the Holy Land, in the Galilee, the very existence that so many Hashomer Hatzair members hoped for. He not only dwelt in the Galilee but fused with nature and the landscape there: "The Sea of Galilee revealed to him its depths, and that man reached the secret of the abyss … and when the secret of the abyss fused with that man's crimson blood, a huge power arose … that man was crucified on Golgotha."[82] Jesus had a moral message for humanity and was carrying a burden in his mission. He was determined to overcome great adversity. "Forty generations ago life in this land was even more evil. One man and his twelve brethren arose in the darkness, fought against thousands, against the entire world—and won."[83] He is mentioned several times as a man who suffered in the name of high ideals and also as a man of love and forgiveness.[84] He was an approachable leader dedicated to a brotherhood, seeking to create the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, a utopia in which true spiritual values could be fulfilled and pain and suffering eradicated. This Kingdom would be established by his disciples, entrusted with the duty of preaching it further. His disciples were endowed with such a purity of heart that they were able to "see God," a wish expressed several times in the *Kehiliatenu* collection.[85]

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80 *Kehiliatenu*.

81 Nathan Bistritzky's contribution to *Kehiliatenu*, 165.

82 Zeev Bloch's contribution to *Kehiliatenu,* 65.

83 David Horowitz's contribution to *Kehiliatenu,* 90.

84 Moshe Hellenberg and David Horowitz's contribution to *Kehiliatenu,* 69; 84, 86.

85 On the ethics of the Kingdom of Heaven, see Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931 [1911]), Vol. I, 51–8.

The last historical link in subterranean Judaism, according to Schlifka and Yaari, was Hasidism. This Jewish popular revivalist movement born in mid-eighteenth-century Poland and Eastern Europe created a new spirituality that gave voice to messages of salvation and redemption as a response to intense experiences of pain and alienation.[86] Structurally, it followed a charismatic leader, the Ba'al Shem Tov (Besht) or the Master of the Good Name, who was a mystic and a popular healer. Hasidism gave primacy to community-making practices of piety, such as praying, singing, and dancing, over the strict and austere intellectuality of the rabbinate. The Maskilim, the Jewish enlighteners of Galicia and Eastern and Central Europe during the nineteenth century, viewed the Besht as no more than a charlatan, a magician, and a demonologist for the simple folk. As a man of the country, he was derided as uneducated and superstitious.[87] The secular members of Hashomer Hatzair admired not the historically authentic Hasidism, but rather its idealized image as depicted in Buber's works. Buber and the members were attracted to Hasidism's clash with the rationalistic and rule-bound rabbinical society and to the movement's innovative relation to the world and to life, affirming joy and holiness in the here and now. By creatively adapting kabbalistic ideas, the Besht infused his revivalist movement with Jewish mystical content. The everyday gained a redemptive significance. In Buber's words quoted earlier, the Hasidim embodied a true *Geistige Gemeinschaft*—a spiritual community. The image of an alternative social structure based on charismatic leadership and the invigorating spirituality of Hasidism appealed to those hoping to ground their community in spiritual ideals. Some in the Shomria were fondly and humorously identified by others as "Hasidim."[88] These members, Yehuda Yaari leading them, in view of the universalistic values of socialism and the struggle against the bourgeoisie the movement championed, insisted on the Jewish roots and heritage of the entire group. In times of sorrow they sang melancholic Hasidic songs, and in times of joy they organized Hasidic dances.

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86 Yael Weiler, "ha-kesem shel ha-shomer ha-tsair," in *Kathedra* 88 (1998): 73–94, 89.

87 Samuel Werses, *Megamot ve-tsurot be-sifrut ha-haskalah* (Trends and Forms in Haskalah Literature) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 91–109.

88 *Sefer Beit Alpha*, Yehuda Yaari's testimony (no page). See also *Kehiliatenu*, 288.

Such overtly Jewish displays were rare in this resolutely secular movement. The very term kibbutz, according to Yehuda Yaari, was adopted from Hasidism. On a trip to Jerusalem in 1920, Yaari met with Hasidim of the Bratslav sect, an experience that impressed him deeply. When he returned to Shomria, he spoke about the Hasidim he had met in Jerusalem, about their modest lives of hard labor, their poverty, and their sincere and honest way of life. He described the sect's founder, Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav (1772–1810), as a man close to nature, who had come to Palestine for a *tikkun*, a program of cosmic repair achieved by mending one's soul; this changed the rest of his life as well as his teachings.[89] Because the Hasidim of Bratslav convened once a year at Uman, a small town in the Ukraine, to honor Rabbi Nahman's memory in a celebration known as "kibbutz," meaning convening or gathering, Yaari is said to have suggested that the camp in Shomria call itself a kibbutz; according to this version of the origin of the term, the camp was thence called Kibbutz Hashomer Hatzair.[90] Twenty years ago, the Israeli author Nathan Shaham, a member of Kibbutz Beit Alpha, wrote that the title of *Kehiliatenu* (the word means "our community") was borrowed from S. A. Horodetzky's book on Hasidism.[91] While living in Galicia, he had been ignorant of the Hasidic movement. Ironically, the secularized families from which most Hashomer Hatzair members came viewed Hasidism as an ultra-pious, obscurantist, and superstitious movement. Now in search of a new life, familiar with Martin Buber's works, the younger generation of these families culturally re-discovered Hasidism.

Though by 1927 Hashomer Hatzair had become a movement with a decisive Marxist vein, its early ideal of community was rooted in the anarchistic, anti-Marxist philosophy of Gustav Landauer, coupled with Martin Buber's spiritual ideas. In addition to the desire to create small, egalitarian communities, a strong emphasis on anti-authoritarianism drew the movement to Landauer. The movement wholeheartedly adopted Landauer's call to build small-scale, participatory communities, as an attempt to render centralized authority superfluous

89 Yehuda Yaari, *Sipure ma'asiyot mi-shanim kadmoniyot* (The Legends of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav) (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-rav Kuk, 1971).

90 Muki Tsur "Epilogue" in Yehuda Yaari, *Teshuvato shel Avigdor Shats: Roman* (The Penitence of Avigdor Shatz) (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1986), 201–2.

91 Nathan Shaham, *ha-Har veha-bayit: Bet Alfa be-shishim li-"kehiliatenu"* (Utopia–Sixty Years Later) (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim 1984), 10.

and avoid control in the hands of a modern state and its attendant evils.

Three of Landauer's teachings were taken up by Hashomer Hatzair. First, strong adherence to an anti-authoritarian union of small, autonomous agricultural communities—Hashomer Hatzair would not forsake this goal in the decades to come. Second, the importance of an autonomous and free individual as the basis of knowledge and revolution. As Landauer had contended, all knowledge came from introspection, and only the individual who preserved himself against the encroachments of large groups could lead the way to an ideal, socialistic society. Third, a mystical view of interpersonal relations within each community and between these communities and the *Volk*. This ideal, largely discussed within the context of the *Erlebnis* sensibility, was transitory, just as Landauer and Buber's mysticism constituted only one phase in their intellectual and emotional development.

In a collective fantasy, the members of Hashomer Hatzair imagined the movement as the last link in the chain of subterranean Judaism. That genealogy provided a foundational narrative integral to the movement's identity in its early years. Martin Buber had discovered this genealogy during his search for the vital forces of the Jewish past while kabbalah studies and Hasidism were viewed by the Jewish enlighteners and by nineteenth-century German liberal scholars as obscurantist, regressive, and superstitious. A neoromantic, Buber rehabilitated these movements, which he saw as the true bearers of the Jewish spirit. Buber's discovery of "subterranean Judaism" drew the ire of Gershom Scholem, the most eminent scholar of Jewish mysticism and the Jewish messianic movements. As opposed to Buber, who saw in the links of the subterranean tradition a contained history, Scholem argued that this tradition was always in constant and dialectical conflict with rabbinic Judaism, and its mystical core was in continual cross-fertilization with rational philosophy.[92] In other words, while Buber idealized the subterranean Judaism as the authentic core of Judaism and the font of its creativity, Scholem saw the struggle between this rebellious force of renewal with Rabbinic, official Judaism as the generator of invigoration.

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92 David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 36–7.

Buber's genealogy appealed to the members of Hashomer Hatzair in their quest to regenerate the Jewish people and Jewish culture. The entire idea of the kibbutz as a community, especially in its early stages, should be understood as inspired by and identified with images from subterranean Judaism, in particular the idea and ideal of the "spiritual community." Naturally, this meant rejecting the period of exile, which Hashomer Hatzair, like so many other Zionist groups, saw as bereft of productivity. This was the early Hashomer Hatzair's version of the negation of the Diaspora, "Shelilat Ha-Galut."

The links in the genealogy of subterranean Judaism were imagined as young people rebelling against a corrupt society. Subterranean Judaism was ecstatic and redemptive. It was persecuted and tormented as it challenged the authority of rabbis and other "philistines." It had a direct connection to God, a state perceived as the root of genuine creativity, albeit now secularized by Hashomer Hatzair, a secularism in search of a new, "imagined religiosity." The inspiration from subterranean Judaism and the connection to it has largely been neglected, if not entirely forgotten, in the movement's subsequent annals.

Chapter VI

Dancing, Working, and Public Confessions: The *Eda* Takes Its Form

The first years in Palestine can be viewed as the field in which the movement brought into practice the various ideas it encountered and adopted in the intellectual laboratory of Vienna. The Vienna years had provided the members of the movement an arsenal of ideas and ideals to be implemented in the ideal society, the home of the "new man." The men and women living in Bitania envisioned what they had termed an erotic community. The premise of this ideal is that this type of erotic bonding is a condition for wholesome creation and the ultimate key to a meaningful grasp of the world. It was in this model community, the erotic creative *eda* of Hashomer Hatzair, that the concepts and ideals taken from Friedrich Nietzsche (Eros and tragedy), Sigmund Freud (sublimation), Gustav Landauer (anarchist and neoromantic community-bound socialism), Martin Buber (subterranean Judaism), Gustav Wyneken (coeducation), and Siegfried Bernfeld (anti-authoritarian educational doctrine) would be finally realized.

Bitania, its communal practices, and the mythical image that it constructed, was the ideal community the movement sought to establish and then expand. The Bitania experiment lasted only approximately eight months, between August 1920 and April 1921. The collection of personal narratives titled *Kehiliatenu* (Our Community), which the movement published in 1922, was instrumental in creating the myth of Bitania, even though it was collected and edited a few months later in the framework of the Shomria Camp—Hashomer Hatzair's larger work camp on the outskirts of Haifa, shortly after the dissolution of Bitania in the spring of 1921. *Our Community* was edited by the young writer Nathan Bistritzky who, like the author Joseph Chaim Brenner, visited the various workers' camps in Palestine in the early 1920s, where he delivered lectures about literature.[1] His novel *Yamim*

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1 Nathan Bistritzky, (Hebrew) *The Hidden Myth* (Tel Aviv: Yachdav, 1980), 95–102.

ve-lelot (Days and Nights), published in 1926, is a *roman à clef* that tells the story of the Bitania community.[2]

To fulfill their Zionist dream, 131 members of Hashomer Hatzair arrived in Jaffa on July 1920 on board the *Cargnolia,* which had departed Trieste three weeks earlier.[3] While most came from eastern Galicia, 30 came from Congress Poland—Polish provinces not under Habsburg rule. The group included 103 young men and 28 young women. Over the next few years, the number of Hashomer Hatzair members who immigrated to Palestine grew to about 600; of these, eventually only about a quarter remained permanently. This group of 600 young men and women included much of the leadership of the movement and most of the members of Bitania.

They left behind a perplexing new Central Europe. The Habsburg Empire was no more and many aspects of everyday life, not to mention the political and economic realms, were in a state of disarray. On the train ride from Lwów to Vienna, for example, in the vicinity of the newly erected Czech border, a train conductor offered to sell the young Hashomer Hatzair members the train wagon they were sitting in; that way, he said, they would not have to change trains for the rest of their voyage. In Vienna, he told them, they could do with their new property whatever they pleased.[4] Other groups had opted to make their way first to Bratislava, Slovakia, continuing from there to Vienna via the Danube. The river route would permit them to avoid hostile border crossings, where they might be drafted into military service.[5]

Hundreds of members convened in Vienna where they were received by well-organized Zionist organizations whose functionaries helped them find temporary accomodation and subsidies for their trip to Palestine. From Vienna they usually headed to Trieste, on the Adriatic Sea, in groups of one dozen to several dozen; in Trieste they

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2 Nathan Bistritzky, (Hebrew) *Yamim ve-lelot: sipur be-arba'ah sefarim* (Days and Nights) (Jerusalem: Hamadpis, 1926).

3 Eli Shadmi, ed., *Mekorot* (Sources to the Study of Hashomer Hatzair) (Givat Haviva, 1984), 85–6. See also David Horowitz, *Ha-etmol sheli* (My Yesterday) (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1970), 87.

4 Ibid., 86.

5 Yehuda Erez, *Sefer Ha-aliya ha-shelishit* (Book of the Third Aliya) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1956), vol. II, 886.

boarded Italian ships. Conditions were hardly luxurious, but though the immigrants were obliged to sleep on the ships' decks, they were well-treated by the predominantly communist sailors, who looked at them with astonishment and admiration. When stops were made in Italian ports, in Venice or Bari, the young members—who did not speak Italian—tried out the Latin they studied in the gymnasium on the bewildered locals.

Other Hashomer Hatzair members had arrived in Palestine before this formative group. In April 1919, several members arrived as part of the group known as "The 105," often called the first immigrants of the Third Aliya—the wave of immigration to Palestine between 1919 and 1923. In January 1920, a group of 35 members arrived from Kraków and Przemyśl. In May a group of 20 members arrived from Vienna; they were directed to the kvutza of Kinneret, where they took on agricultural work under harsh conditions.

During the first years in Palestine, the members experienced a sense of freedom from many social and traditional conventions. Many experimented with new identities. They wore the symbolically charged clothes of pioneers, and some toyed with Bedouin garb or the military uniforms worn by the Turks and the British. Many adopted new Hebrew names through a literal translation of their original surnames: Yehuda Wachsberg changed his name to Hardonag ("wax mountain"), Augenblick changed his name to Heref Ain ("immediately") and Schneller changed his name to Hushi ("faster").

Over a fairly short period, many of the mores of the youth movement were cast aside. At first, after arriving in the port of Jaffa, the members exhibited the discipline of scouts by marching proudly to the Tel Aviv workers' hospice. However, soon enough many had their first drinks of wine and began to smoke cigarettes, both formerly strictly forbidden by Hashomer Hatzair guidelines.[6] Beyond these seemingly trivial deviant steps, a very deep, all-encompassing identity crisis had begun to manifest itself.

Many of the members arrived in Palestine committed to sticking together. This was a formidable challenge given the living conditions, in which small groups and individuals were obliged to turn to various more established communities for employment in agriculture and construction. This led members to depend on Hapoel Hatzair

6 Yehuda Erez, *Sefer Ha-aliya ha-shelishit*, vol. I, 259.

("young worker"), a Jewish nationalist and socialist labor organization whose main Zionist ideal was the "conquest of labor"—that is, a policy designed to increase the number of Jewish workers in Palestine and to improve their living and working conditions. The resources of Hapoel Hatzair, however, were limited. It was not able to employ the members as one big group, and quite possibly it would have been disinclined to do so if it could. Therefore, as the various clumps of members arrived in the port of Jaffa, they were sent as small groups and sometimes even as individuals to settlements across the land where they could find work.

Eventually, of the many small groups of Hashomer Hatzair members around Palestine, two developed sufficient size and coherence to be identified: the first was located in a harsh and hostile swamp area south of Haifa with the unprepossessing name Umm al-Alaq, which in Arabic means "mother of leeches." This group of about fifty workers was largely made up of Hashomer Hatzair members from Lwów and Jaroław. It immediately encountered insufferable conditions: within four months, almost all of its members contracted malaria and needed medical attention and hospitalization. The group was dispersed, its members absorbed into other Hashomer Hatzair groups. The Umm al-Alaq story was retold in a novel written by Yehuda Yaari, published in 1937.[7]

The second group was sent to Beit Gan in the Yavniel area of the lower Galilee to repair a local road.[8] It had approximately forty members, including most of the movement's council.[9] The group worked there for a short time, and most of its members formed the group that was self-selected to go to Bitania Ilit. In mid-August of 1920, this group, known as the commune of Bitania, began its work on a dry stony hilltop overlooking the Sea of Galilee. The breathtaking view from this hilltop could not have presented a greater contrast to the dismal tents and single wooden hut, surrounded by a small number of vegetable beds, that made up the little settlement. This time the group's task was to prepare a large plot of land for planting of trees.

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7 Yehuda Yaari, *Ka-or yahel: megilat hayav shel Yosef Landa* (Tel Aviv: Massada, 1937).

8 Yehuda Erez, *Sefer Ha-aliya ha-shelishit* vol. 2, 409.

9 Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 264.

Through a combination of intense introspection and self-examination and hard and daily physical labor, the members of Hashomer Hatzair who came to Palestine were to be reborn into a new society, an experience they termed a new "Revelation of Sinai." They could now create a new communion, a new covenant. The new experimental social unit which they were to create was meant to define a new relationship between self and group, individual and community. The *eda* was created and became a tangible social fact when its members fused together into one whole. The most intense moments of this interaction would culminate while they were working, dancing, and confessing together at the nightly gatherings of the entire *eda*. In these occasions of public confessions, the members were supposed to reveal their deepest and most personal secrets.

An essential and intense practice of Bitania then were the nocturnal confessions in which all of the members of the *eda* were supposed to reveal their innermost secrets to one another. These closely resembled the *sicha,* an emotionally and psychologically intensified variation on a not-so-extraordinary youth movement meeting where a group leader moderates a simple discussion on a given topic. The *sicha* was practiced by the movement's groups already in the Diaspora. The origin of this peculiar practice is not clear. Long, self-revealing talks may have been a spontaneous, culturally specific development, and may also have been inspired, in the case of Hashomer Hatzair, by the institution of the *Sprechsaal* of the *Jugendkulturbewegung* (see previous chapters). This practice of the Viennese *Jugendkulturbewegung*, however, was geared toward intellectual exchange and debate, rather than revealing self-exploration. In typical, lofty language, member Benjamin Dror described the meaning of the confessions conducted in Bitania:

> We called it the Night of Atonement. This was the night we confessed to each other, as a pure prayer that flows from the heart. The mystery that wove the fellows together, above and beyond the web of internal personal complications, gave the community its future image. This image was carved onto our hearts. Even in times of abysmal anguish and distress, these nights will serve our fellows as the light of salvation.[10]

[10] Benjamin Dror, *Kehiliatenu,* 30.

Member Shulamit Chaiut described the confessions in her diary on October 3, 1921:

> Nights when each of us searched the path—that is how I shall call those sacred nights. Hours, hours of confessions and listening. Some of us were fortunate to be able to express themselves. Some stuttered… many kept silent… and in the moments of silence and stillness, it seemed that from each heart sprang a spark, and the sparks joined into one big flame that pierced the sky. And I felt that a big spirit fluttered about the room and kissed our foreheads. And the signs on our foreheads will shed light forever: thanks to this light we will recognize each other to our last day.[11]

The public confessions seem to be a profound intensification of the *sicha*. The practice of public confessions touched the heart of the concern for the individual self and one's relationship with others. Public confessions were meant to build community by mending what was perceived as a disturbed, isolated individual existence. The exposure would lead to an intense and harmonized relationship with the community. Such confessions may have been inspired by the psychoanalytical practice, which was a rationally governed method of self-examination, taking as its principal objects of scrutiny everything that was not rational—affects, instinctual strivings, fears, dreams and nightmares, guilt, sexual obsessions, or aggressions. In contradistinction to the manifestly therapeutic end of the psychoanalytical confession, the purpose of this practice in Bitania was community building through the sharing of inner turmoil.[12]

The yearning for an unmediated bonding, based on spiritual sharing and experiencing (*Erlebnis*), is not without precedent among the intellectual avant-garde in German Central Europe in those years. To ensure that the reader does not surmise that the group of Bitania was juvenile, unripe, eccentric, or even bizarre without precedence, it is perhaps now opportune to refer to an extended quote from

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11 Shulamit Chaiut, *Kehiliatenu,* 230.

12 Steven Marcus, *Freud and the Culture of Psychoanalysis: Studies in the Transition from Victorian Humanism to Modernity* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1984), 7.

Gershom Scholem's autobiography "From Berlin to Jerusalem," in which Scholem reports about a group he terms "anarchistic aristocrats of the spirit" who also set out to conduct similar sessions of public confessions around 1913. The group called itself the Forte Circle (*Forte Kreis*), and it operated in Berlin around 1910–1915. The idea was to conduct spiritual retreats that included sessions of public confession at the coastal town Forte dei Marmi in Tuscany. The circle included the German Jewish mystical thinker Erich Gutkind, the Dutch writer and psychologist Frederik van Eeden, Martin Buber, Gustav Landauer, the German Jewish conservative industrialist and statesman Walter Rathenau, and others, more and lesser known.[13] As Scholem described the idea: "A small group of people would set up a community devoted to intellectual and spiritual activity for a certain period of time to engage without any reservations in a creative exchange of ideas; in doing so they might manage to shake the world off its hinges."[14] The English translation just quoted is a weakened version of the original German and the subsequent Hebrew version written by Scholem on his deathbed in 1982, where the spiritual *Erlebnis*-bound nature of the group is much more pronounced, reported by Scholem tongue in cheek.[15]

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13 The group also included the German poet and cultural critic Theodor Däubler, the Dutch writer and journalist Henri Borel, the Swedish psychiatrist Poul Bjerre, the German protestant theologian Florence Christian Rang, and a few others. In previous years, the group also included the Russian painter and theorist Wassily Kandinsky, the Bengali author and first non-European to win the Nobel prize in 1913 Rabindranath Tagore, the American author Upton Sinclair, the French novelist Romain Rolland, and the German Jewish political economist Franz Oppenheimer. On the Forte Kreis, see Christine Holste, *Der Forte Kreis: (1910–1915) Rekonstruktion eines utopischen Versuchs* (Stuttgart: M & P Verl, 1992), and Sharon Gordon, "Das Projekt zur Rettung der Moderne: Erich Gutkind und Emmanuel Levinas zur Jugend, Alter und Tod," in *Die Zeit der Jugend. Deutsch-juedische Jugend in der Moderne*, ed. Yotam Hotam (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlag, 2009), 35–60, esp. 36–8.

14 Eventually, according to Scholem, the idea to go to Forte dei Marmi and engage in these spiritual sessions was called off in a stormy meeting in Potsdam in April 1914.

15 See Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1980), 81. The Hebrew edition only, which according to its editor, the Israeli scholar Avraham Shapira, is

In subsequent years, the practice of public confessions at Bitania and in Hashomer Hatzair in general was sharply criticized. It was reported that the practice violated one's privacy in an extreme manner; that psychological coercion was applied; that confessions were extracted with little regard to the heavy emotional toll entailed. What had begun as practices of soul-searching and sensing of one's internal space through an extreme and public application of sincerity had ironically become instruments of manipulation and repressive control, according to some critics.[16] One retrospective account called the practice of public confessions a ritual which defined Bitania as a cult through the application of spiritual cruelty and the deprivation of its members of their private interiority.[17] The practice was orchestrated by the group's charismatic leader, Meir Yaari, who was later accused of manipulative and even coercive psychological methods to extract these self-revealing confessions from the members in the dead of night. Eventually, Yaari was expelled from Bitania in late March of 1921. His expulsion from the community was related to his abusive manner in conducting these nocturnal confessions. It was insinuated in several instances that this practice had brought one participant to suicide.[18] Some members were extremely uncomfortable with this practice, felt abused by it, and avoided speaking their hearts.

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the most accurate, gives a hint as to the true reason for canceling the spiritual sessions at Forte dei Marmi: it was not the coming of the great war, but rather a veto put forth by no other than the (prescient) wives of the participants. Can the Forte Kreis then be interpreted as a *Männerbund*, and the idea to hold spiritual sessions in a secluded coastal resort on the Ligurian Sea an exclusive setting for the expression of communal male fantasies?

16 For a discussion of diary writing as confession and the rise of individualism among the Puritans in England, see Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution 1603–1714* (London: Nelson, 1967 [1961]), 253. For a Foucauldian discussion of practices of individuation in Russia and the Soviet Union see Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study in Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). On sincerity and the Western mentality see Lionel Trilling's seminal *Sincerity and Authenticity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

17 David Horowitz, *Ha-etmol sheli*, 105.

18 Dina Kraft, "Portrait of a Pioneer: The Spiritual Odyssey of Ernst Pollak, 1901–1920," Senior Thesis (University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1993).

The moments in which the fantasy of fusion of individual with group into one single entity occurred most intensely were in nocturnal dancing raves. These frenzies exemplified the fantasy of fusing into one whole. A collective, unified soul, into which the individual participants fused together, became a common trope.[19] Many members used a variety of images to express their wish to experience a moment where they abandon their own flesh and blood and fuse with others into one collective being. For example, member Joshua Bierer (who became in subsequent years a social psychiatrist in the UK) wrote the following:

> Whenever I go to Haifa and see a row of cactus trees I think about us… The cacti have a peculiar contour: they spread, become thicker and thicker, and when the leaves of two adjacent trees meet, they merge together, penetrate each other, become attached and grow as one, and so grows a firm wall of trees which are bound together by blood, and one vein unites them all.[20]

Others saw in working together the key to such a fusion. Member Moshe Hellenberg described the meaning of working together as bonding through concerted physical effort:

> I have wandered across the land. I was searching for the regenerated man who could find his way to another person directly, without any intermediary. It is not necessary to speak to each other but rather to create a togetherness through materiality. Just like the cosmos around us that communicates to us its sorrow, pain, and intensity through physical materiality… We offer each other everything, harmonizing our everyday life by working together… indeed by working together. This is how I felt my power and energy most intensely: two men join together to roll a heavy boulder; we flex our muscles, pulling the boulder away together. In such a moment there is no need for talk—gaze would suffice…[21]

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19 Shimon Wolf, *Kehiliatenu*, 41.

20 Joshua Bierer, *Kehiliatenu*, 93.

21 Moshe Hellenberg, *Kehiliatenu*, 68.

A fantasy of a collective soul, imagined through the experience of ecstatic moments, was created by conducting public confessions, by working together in hard physical work, and through nocturnal dancing. It is true that dancing was one of the characteristic activities of the entire pioneer milieu in Palestine. In fact, there is evidence that the members of Hashomer Hatzair did not dance in Europe and only learned to dance from the other pioneers who came from Russia and the Ukraine after they arrived in Palestine.[22] Typically, though, in Hashomer Hatzair dancing was self-consciously adopted because it was perceived as instrumental to community building. It was embraced as another path to the erotic community. Unlike the hora, a traditional folk circle dance, originally from the Balkans and adopted by the pioneers, the dance at Hashomer Hatzair is reported to have been more expressive and to have lacked much structure; this makes it closer to Hasidic dance.

Dancing was meant to reinforce, build, and consolidate the *eda*, unify its members into one unit in a moment of ecstasy. As he wandered around the Galilee, Meir Yaari came across a camp of non-Hashomer Hatzair pioneers. Here is his description of this group and their manner of dancing, which he judged as not self-conscious, that is, holding less potential to facilitate community building:

> From afar I heard the sound of singing and dancing. In the camp two hundred voices sang in a loud shrieking tone. Boys and girls were dancing. Oh, that dancing and the song of the workers! The worker wishes to consummate his lust for a girl. He burns with desire, his blood is pounding. He groans because he doesn't have a girl or a family. Great potency surges within him without an outlet. This dance is the dance of the repressed. This husky singing is the only orgy where he can find relief. His passions wane with the sweat that courses off him. Dancing can be a substitute for unrequited love, for masturbation. Leaping and jumping around, he is scornful of his own dancing: are you singing, are you dancing, are you drunk my poor friend? This place is loaded with vulgar *masochism*.[23]

22 Dov Beker, *Ba-afarim, sedot mir'eh* (In the Grazing Fields) (Tel Aviv, 1972), 9.

23 Meir Yaari, letter from Palestine, 1920, published in *Kehiliatenu*, 278.

According to this sneering description, dancing without a conscious attempt to build a community is barren and futile. These pioneers danced, but theirs was a crude, unshaped, and impotent outburst. They had all the erotic potential, but lacked the key to harnessing its potency. The key to the building of an erotic community that dances itself into a higher level of consciousness is the awareness of the process by which one sheds one's individuality in order to fuse with the group, and on a different plane, the way in which form is given to the Dionysian powers. Instead of a purposeless orgy, Yaari wished for an Apollonian harnessing of the Dionysian outburst, as Nietzsche himself put it in "Birth of Tragedy":

> The dialogue [between the Dionysian and the Apollonian]… is the mirror of the Greek mind, whose nature manifests itself in dance… Everything that rises to the surface in the Apollonian portion of Greek tragedy (in the dialogue) looks simple, transparent, and beautiful.[24]

Having read Nietzsche, member of Bitania Zeev Bloch wrote about the power of dancing:

> You forget your sighs and your agony, and you begin singing and join your hands together. You begin dancing: that is the Dionysian act… The Greeks called their great god Apollo, the god of measure and temperance… And when your instincts erupt, your boundaries become blurred and the danger of nothingness begins to threaten your individuality, then Apollo would come down in his golden chariot and, through the charms of his sublime movement, would put a stop to this orgy.[25]

The Dionysian frenzy, then, needs to take place in order to unleash powerful, if destructive, force, to be refined into creativity. The presence and utility of a Dionysian license was essential for cultural production, but then, without the intervention of Apollo, it would lead to nothing, to a pointless outburst. There was no other

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24 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, trans. Francis Golfing (New York: Doubleday, 1956), chapter 9, 59.

25 Zeev Bloch, *Kehiliatenu*, 59.

context in Palestine in the 1920s more bound to Nietzsche's spirit than this conscious building of an erotic community.

The fantasy of the *eda* here included fusion not only with one's fellows but also with nature and the landscape. Nietzsche wrote: "Not only does the bond between man and man come to be forged once more by the magic of the Dionysian rite, but nature itself, long alienated or subjugated, rises again to celebrate the reconciliation with her prodigal son, man."[26] In this very spirit, Yaari wrote about his Dionysian dancers: "Man peeled off his shell and kissed Mother Earth and fused with her powers of fertility."[27] Many Zionist pioneers, not only members of Hashomer Hatzair, imagined the soil in the holy land as an erotic object. Recent research shows how central this trope and experience was for Hebrew writers and for rank and file settlers, reflecting the outpouring of boundless desires and a profound, simultaneous shift in cultural constructions.[28] Here is an example of this effect that was not mentioned or analyzed in previous research. The quote was published in a collection that commemorates the Third Aliya—the wave of immigration to Palestine that took place between 1919 and 1924:

> April 3rd, 1921, tomorrow at dawn, our ship shall dock at Jaffa harbor… The mist has melted away and our eyes behold! The "Hatikva" burst out of our throats… With reverence and elevation I stepped on the ground. I wanted to throw myself down and kiss the soil, but I was ashamed of my friends… I could not sleep that night. My heart could not contain all the good it held, and when my friends fell asleep, I got up and walked out quietly through the entrance to the yard and celebrated my wedding with the land. I clung to it, ate it, and was drunk with it… "I betroth thee forever, I betroth thee in Justice and Law, in loving kindness and mercy, I betroth thee in faith." … Thousands of stars twinkled above affirming my words, and my feelings overcame me.[29]

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26 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, 23.

27 Meir Yaari, Letter from Palestine, 1920 in *Kehiliatenu*, 290.

28 See Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011), and Michael Gluzman, (Hebrew) *The Zionist Body: Nationalism, Gender and Sexuality in Modern Hebrew Literature* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 2007).

29 Erez, *Sefer Ha-aliya ha-shelishit*, vol. I.

This quote is a good representation of the (usually male) pioneers' desire—as Boaz Neumann framed it, an erotic desire for the land.

The ecstatic quality of the dancing was emphasized by member Rachel Shapira in a diary entry from 1921: "Our community becomes intoxicated through dancing, intoxicated wildly, to the point of madness and swoon. A hidden dynamic force draws one to another, seizes them by their forelocks and commands them to be joined. Our hands stretch out, our eyes yearning to penetrate the darkness, our bodies tremble."[30]

Member Joseph Held wrote: "I woke up… I saw a big campfire lighting up the camp… and young men and women were dancing in frenzy. I joined quickly… and so we danced until the point of rapture, oblivion, and nothingness."[31] Dancing in the dark around a campfire was the surest way to achieve ecstasy and an activity closest to a magnetizing enchantment.[32] Zeev Bloch described one such dancing incident:

> As the campfire died out, the dancers rushed to their tents and carried back their wooden cases full of clothing, which they threw into the fire. The fire began to pick up like a furnace that fuses and bonds. Here a collective dawned and solidified, as the members stripped off the rind that was their "I" and merged into a regenerating collective.[33]

Bloch too, understood dancing around a campfire not as a fun pastime after a long day of work, but rather as a mentally transformative activity. Another member, Shulamit Chaiut, wrote:

> And there are also… nights of great shout, storm, and wildness. A big campfire burns in the center of our camp and under the pressure of the hora the earth utters a rhythmic sigh which accompanied wild singing. "God will build the Galilee, Galilee,

30 Rachel Shapira, *Kehiliatenu*, 110.

31 Joseph Held, *Kehiliatenu*, 76.

32 Carl Gustav Jung, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1934–1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 39.

33 Erez, *Sefer Ha-aliya ha-shelishit*, vol. I, 423.

Galilee" … This word is repeated over and over again. Finally it ceased to be a word and became a continuous cry, like the one which is sometimes cried by the Arab shepherds. Then I will look into your blazing eyes, blazing with inebriation though you drank no wine. I will look into your faces which are lit in a strange light reflected by the fire, and in the movements of your bodies that move in the direction of the dance, and you march forward, forward, and you draw behind you the living chain…[34]

34 Shulamit Chaiut, *Kehiliatenu*, 229.

Chapter VII

The *Eda* of Hashomer Hatzair as *Männerbund*: A Jewish Male Fantasy Comes Full Central European Circle

In this chapter we will explore an unexpected and unusual further outcome of the experience of life in the ideal erotic community: the *eda*—the erotic community of Hashomer Hatzair—was explicitly imagined as an exclusive community of men, termed in German *Männerbund*. We will see how and in what sense this erotic community turned out to be imagined as homoerotic. This particular direction in the movement's odyssey was short-lived and is related primarily to Meir Yaari's influence on the movement's intellectual trajectory. It seems that Yaari was the one who most profoundly impressed upon the movement the ideas of yet another widely read German thinker, Hans Blüher, who developed a theory of civilization based on his experiences as a member of the pre-World War I German youth movement. His theory, as we shall see, was predicated on the crucial presence of a secret homoerotic male group as the single most important font for the rise of civilization.

Hashomer Hatzair's vision of community, grounded in the fantasy of fusion through abandonment of one's individuality, seemed gender-blind and sounded as though it included every member of the movement who had arrived in Palestine. However, during the last year in Vienna and the first years in Palestine, Meir Yaari, who commanded exceptional intellectual acuity, developed a particular fantasy regarding the human structure he hoped the movement would adopt and develop. The fantasy Yaari had in mind spoke of the erection in Palestine of a *Männerbund*, a male society in which, theoretically and practically, there would be no room for women, and no room for femininity. This male society was to be cemented through the works of Eros. At the heart of this fantasy was an attempt to establish the erotic community, the *eda* that would serve as an alternative to the bourgeois family. For Yaari and many other members, the bourgeois fam-

ily was considered philistine. In this respect, they were no different from wide currents of cultural critique in Central Europe. Philistine is a term that recurs often in the sources from those years, denoting people who are smugly narrow-minded, who stick to the most conventional, petty moral imperatives of society, and being thoroughly materialistic, they despise idealist values and are indifferent toward cultural or aesthetic achievement.[1] The bourgeois as philistine was thoroughly derided and ridiculed here as intellectually inert, conceited, and hypocritical, a coward and a cretin.[2] If this absolute rebuke was not enough, the philistine was also described as soulless, spiritually dead, lazy, and mean.[3] In this damning context, the petty bourgeois family was indicted as the most important and damaging bourgeois institution.[4] As such, it was seen as the enemy of Eros, of the erotic community. Such was the philistine family.[5]

In one expression, criticizing the insistence on the family at the settlement of Degania, Yaari wrote: "…The philistine family will suffocate the community. And it is not possible to destroy the family without converting altogether its erotic essence, and for that [the

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1 Elkana Margalit, "Social and Intellectual Origins of the Hashomer Hatzair Youth Movement, 1913–1920," *Journal of Contemporary History* 4 (1969): 37.

2 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953 [1946]), 501.

3 Steven Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 54.

4 It was Gustav Wyneken, influenced by Nietzsche, who contrasted the ideal of youth culture to the despised petty bourgeois philistinism. See Ulrich Linse, "Die Jugendkulturbewegung," in *Das Wilhelminische Bildungsbuergertum: zur Sozialgeschichte seiner Ideen,* ed. Klaus Vondung (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 119–37, 128; see also Franz Borkenau [Fritz Jungmann, pseud.] "Autorität und Sexualmoral in der freien bürgerlichen Jugendbewegung," in *Studien über Autorität und Familie,* ed. Max Horkheimer (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1936), 669–705, 672.

5 Sheila Fitzpatrick uses the term "philistine" as used by party officials, including Lenin. It was synonymous with *meshchanstvo*—the legal term for small town inhabitants under the tsar regime. It connoted petit bourgeois in the twenties, something the Russian students should strive not to become, economically, aesthetically, morally, and in terms of gender. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Sex and Revolution: An Examination of Literary and Statistical Data on the Mores of Soviet Students in the 1920s," in *Journal of Modern History* 50.2 (1978): 272.

members of Degania] are too old."[6] As we shall see in the following chapter, the attack on the family was merely a thin veil in the hands of Meir Yaari, now establishing his leadership of Hashomer Hatzair, for an attack on women and femininity. Yaari wrote: "Without brotherly love, there is no alternative to the family."[7] When Yaari talked about "brotherly love" he did not refer to this kind of love metaphorically, that is, a brotherly love that is gender-blind, in a spirit of universal solidarity, but rather, a love that could only take place between male comrades. Given woman's primary role in the reproduction of the family as a unit, her place in the *eda* would be problematic and therefore unwanted. Here is Yaari's typical description of the essence of the *eda:* "The erotic union bursts out of our fused soul, spreading out to cover everything: the land, work, and the landscape. It colors everything, it is a way of life, a symbol and a devotion. It tears our souls open and fuses them with the entire cosmos."[8] But the wish to bond for this particular purpose was expressed in a far more gender-specific fashion. The bond was to be exclusively among males, forming a male society—a *Männerbund*. This idea was adopted in Vienna, though its origin as a sociological or pseudo-sociological category is not Viennese, but specifically German.

The German philosopher and thinker Hans Blüher (1888–1955), a controversial publicist and private scholar, was the first to popularize this novel theory. His books about the German *Wandervogel* and the phenomenon of the *Männerbund* were opium to Hashomer Hatzair leaders for this brief, crucial period.[9] Then, shortly after this period of a few years, all of Blüher's influence was repressed and buried, and remained only under the surface.[10] A perfect example occurs in the following passage from Meir Yaari's autobiography:

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6 Quoted in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 299.

7 Meir Yaari, Letter from Palestine, 1920, in *Kehiliatenu*, 290.

8 Meir Yaari, "Our Group in Palestine," letter sent from Palestine, written in 1921, in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, appendix 14, 405–16.

9 On Blüher see Jürgen Reulecke, "*Ich Möchte einer werden wie die…": Männerbünde im 20. Jahrhundert,* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2001).

10 It was the historian Matityahu Mintz who, in 1995, was first to discover and explore the connection to Blüher's theories at Hashomer Hatzair and especially by Meir Yaari.

> [In Vienna] we dealt with the most fashionable books of the time, includng those of the antifeminist [Otto] Weininger and Hans Blüher… and the teachings which prepared the intellectual climate for the rise of Hitlerism. We were relatively immune to these delusionary trends, because of our deep commitment to Judiasm and its tradition.[11]

The above quotation, published in 1992, is a blatant misrepresentation of how the movement and Yaari himself actually dealt with these trends. Both were smitten by Blüher's social theory for a few years; it was seen as the ultimate key for the creation of a vital culture. Nor is it surprising that Weininger and Blüher are mentioned together: both were extremely outspoken about the detrimental role Jews and Judaism played in the modern world, and both were even more uncompromising and harsh antifeminists, fierce haters of things feminine, albeit in different ways.[12]

It is important to add that the appeal that Blüher had for Yaari and Hashomer Hatzair was to a certain degree similar and parallel to his appeal for a kin contemporary movement, the German Jewish Blau Weiss (began its proto-activities in 1907 and founded in 1913). Between 1922 and 1926, the Blau Weiss was led by the Zionist activist Walter Moses (1892–1955) who, not unlike Yaari, was smitten by Blüher's theories and was implicated in little-known scandals involving homosexual activities in Weimar Berlin.[13] He too made the connection between national revival and the necessity to erect a modern *Männerbund* that would in turn herald the glorified, charismatic leader. He fantasized about an order similar in zeal and devotion to the military religious order of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), founded in Spain by the Basque knight Ignatius of Loyola in the sixteenth century. His leadership

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11 Meir Yaari, *Deyokano shel manhig ke-adam tsa'ir: Meir Ya'ari, pirke hayim* (A Portrait of the Leader as a Young Man: Meir Yaari, 1897–1929) (Tel Aviv: Sifirat Poalim, 1992), 37–8.

12 For a treatment of Weininger, see Nancy A. Harrowitz, and Barbara Hyams, *Jews and Gender: Responses to Otto Weininger* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

13 Jörg Hackeschmidt, *Von Kurt Blumenfeld zu Norbert Elias: Die Erfindung einer Jüdischen Nation* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1997), 186 and esp. 213.

of the Blau Weiss was characterized by many commentators of the period as authoritarian, referring to his well-documented preoccupation with the rising concept of charismatic leadership and the relationship between such a leader and his followers.[14] It is not surprising that Richard Lichtheim, a German Jewish Zionist activist and historian of German Jewish Zionism, wrote the following about the Blau Weiss under the leadership of Moses: "Blüher's theories about the *Männerbund* and the longing for a dictator, which eventually occurred in National Socialism, came in the context of the Blau Weiss to a rapid decay."[15]

The awareness of the *Männerbund* as a social phenomenon arose in Germany during the first two decades of the twentieth century. In 1902 the ethnographer Heinrich Schurtz (1863–1903) published his most important book, *Alterklassen und Männerbünde: Eine Darstellung der Grundformen der Gesellschaft* (Age Groups and Male Societies: An Exploration of the Basic Forms of Society), a study of secret male societies in remote African tribes; he theorized that such societies had played a vital role at the origin of human society and civilization.[16] Schurtz described a complementary relation between the family with its male-female bond on the one hand, and secret societies in which the bond was exclusively between males on the other.[17] Fifteen years later, Hans Blüher published his theory on the homoerotic element in male societies, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft* (see below). But already in 1912, as a twenty-three-year-old student, Blüher had written a highly controversial history of the German *Wandervogel* youth movement in which he dwelt on the erotic essence of male com-

14 Max Weber's discussion of the authority and charismatic leadership became central in the early 1920s.

15 Richard Lichtheim, *Geschichte des Deutsche Zionismus*, quoted in Hackeschmidt, *Von Kurt Blumenfeld zu Norbert Elias*, 179.

16 Heinrich Schurtz, *Alterklassen und Männerbünde: Eine Darstellung der Grundformen der Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Druck und Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1902).

17 Jürgen Reulecke, "Das Jahr 1902 und die Ursprünge der Männerbund-Ideologie in Deutschland," in *Männerbande, Männerbünde: Zur Rolle des Mannes im Kulturvergleich,* ed. GiselaVolger and Karin von Welck (Cologne: Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, 1990), 3–10.

panionship.[18] Blüher explained the rise of the German middle-class youth movement, beginning in 1900 or so, as driven by a current of passion that found its release and its purest expression in male erotic bonding.[19] This exclusively male Eros generated the *Männerbund* and resulted in a social theory that glorified male societies and disparaged women, whose femininity was seen as poison to the spirit of the male society. This book embarrassed the membership of the *Wandervogel* movement, who felt they had been characterized as a gang of degenerate homosexuals; Blüher ceased to find a welcome among his former *Wandervogel* companions.[20]

We know the book had been read in the circles of Hashomer Hatzair, as it exists at the central archives of Hashomer Hatzair in Givat Haviva, and at least one member reports a favorable reading of the book: member Shraga Schlifka wrote in his diary in an entry from August 13, 1918: "I am reading Blüher's story of the *Wandervogel*. Wonderful book, wonderful characters. Now I understand how it felt to be discovered for [Isachar] Reiss."[21] Reiss (see chapter 2) was the venerated group leader in those years at the Vienna branch. Being discovered here means being discovered as an older brother, a mentor that a member could entrust with his most private feelings, thus creating an erotic bond between the two. In his second book, *Die Rolle Der Erotik in Der männlichen Gesellschaft: Eine Theorie der menschlichen Staatsbildung nach Wesen und Wert* (The Role of the Erotic in Male Society: A Theory in the Origin of State Building, 1917), strongly influenced by Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, Blüher elaborated on the role of homoeroticism and the foundation of human civilization. He believed that neither economic forces nor spiritual power was the font of the human polity. Rather, the source was male societies, secretive

18 Hans Blüher, *Wandervogel: Geschichte einer Jugendbewegung*, 2 vols. (Prien [Chiemsee]: Kampmann & Schnabel, 1920 [1912]).

19 Jürgen Reulecke, "Männerbund versus Familie: Bürgerliche Jugendbewegung und Familie in Deutschland im ersten Drittel des 20. Jahrhunderts" in *"Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit": Der Mythos Jugend*, ed. Thomas Koebner, Rolf-Peter Janz and Frank Trommler (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), 199–223.

20 Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 178.

21 Yedidya Shoham [Shraga Schlifka], *Yoman ne'urim* (Diary), (Givat Haviva, 1987), 68.

social units, whose secret essence only a small number of researchers had so far discovered.[22]

The male society's first task was to overthrow the sexual primacy of the (philistine) family, breaking its stranglehold on creativity. For this, the male society relied on a particular kind of man, the *typus inversus,* who liberated mankind by rejecting the sexual appeal of women and graduating to a male-male erotic focus.[23] The members of the male society would cluster around this *typus inversus,* who then became a *Männerheld,* the hero of the male group.[24] All the members of the society would enjoy erotic relations with the *Männerheld*, though his would always be the dominant role, theirs the subordinate. This dynamic provided the male group with its cohesion. Blüher called the male society the harem of the *typus inversus*.[25] Belonging to such a society could only be welded by a deep emotional experience.[26] The prototype that Blüher used for such a male society, with a secret, potent erotic bond, in his analysis and examples, was the German youth movement.

Blüher hoped that Eros would come to have a primacy as a social function over sexual gratification or procreation. Erotic creation would ideally yield not children but works of lasting cultural, social, and political value.[27] Only in the context of male societies, Blüher believed, could men realize their highest cultural achievement. Just like Otto Weininger, Blüher considered women and Jews incapable of rising to the highest cultural achievements. In the case of women the reason was their exclusive preoccupation with marriage and reproduction. Jews could never erect a male society because they prized family life and lacked the capacity for this type of bonding. In addition, Jewish

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22 Hans Blüher, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der Männlichen Gesellschaft: Eine Theorie der menschlichen Staatsbildung nach Wesen und Wert,* vol. 1, *Der Typus inversus* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1917), 8.

23 Ibid., 140.

24 Hans Blüher, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der Männlichen Gesellschaft: Eine Theorie der menschlichen Staatsbildung nach Wesen und Wert,* vol. 2 *Familie and Männerbund* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1919), 102.

25 Ibid., 103.

26 Ibid., 108.

27 George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), 212–3.

men are overly committed to their own individual interests. They are so inimical to other men that Blüher paraphrased the well-known Latin *homo homini lupus est* (man is a wolf to his fellow man) into the insulting *Judaeus Jodaeo lupus* (a Jew is a wolf to his fellow Jew).[28] Thus Jews, according to Blüher, would never build their own civilization. In addition, Jews and women were preoccupied with material pursuits and lacked any spiritual interests.[29] This image or stereotype of Jews had roots both in the Jewish world and outside it, and had positive as well as antisemitic overtones. For example, the German Jewish socialist and proto-Zionist thinker Moses Hess, in his well-known *Rome and Jerusalem*, had connected Judaism with femininity as early as 1862. He claimed that Judaism was a religion of mothers, of the feminine, and of the family, as opposed to Christianity, which he deemed individualistic and masculine.[30]

The first volume of *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft* was reviewed in the 1917/1918 issue of *Moriah*, the most widely read monthly journal of Galician Jewish youth in the Polish language, especially connected with Hashomer Hatzair, by one Julian Rottersmann.[31] In this review, the critic recalled both non-Jewish historical male society phenomena, such as the Platonic academy and the medieval Order of the Knights Templar, and Jewish movements such as Hasidism, the late medieval Kabbalah scholars, and Ahad Haam's Zionist circle the Bnei Moshe Society in Odessa, ultimately concluding, with Blüher, that Jews had never experimented with this particular social formation.

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28 Hans Blüher, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft*, vol. 2, 170.

29 Julius H. Schoeps, "Sexualität, Erotik und Männerbund: Hans Blüher und die deutsche Jugendbewegung," in *Typisch Deutsch: Die Jugendbewegung. Beiträge zur einer Phaenomengeschichte,* ed. Joachim H. Knoll and Julius H. Schoeps (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1988), 137–54.

30 See Shlomo Avineri, [Hebrew] *Varieties of Zionist Thought* (Tel Aviv: Am-Oved, 1980), 58.

31 Julian Rottersmann, Review of Blüher's *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft: Eine Theorie der Menschlichen Staatsbildung nach Wesen und Wert,* vol. 1, *Der Typus inversus*, *Moriah* 13 (1917/1918): 116–8. Rottersman was most probably not a member of Hashomer Hatzair. I thank François Guenet for this reference.

In Hashomer Hatzair, however, the idea of a regenerative secret male society took root. In the *Kehiliatenu* collection, member Benjamin Dror wrote the following:

> Erotic feelings between men engages them into a community and endows that community and the individuals in it with a firm position in the universe. Erotic feelings between males and females gives the individuals their entire lives, being a part in the unfolding of humankind and the chain of future generations. The first kind of Eros appeared both among the ancient Greeks and the Jews. An association of men [*Männerbund*] formed erotic bonds and thereby became a cultural nucleus, a spiritual heart of the nation, a font from which the people drew their creative powers for generations. The Hasidim found in the male society the House of God. This is to say that an abstract idea found its expression in drinking, dancing, singing, in a circle of men who are joined together at the moment of excitement.[32]

This passage stands out as the strongest endorsement of an erotic male society offered by a member of Hashomer Hatzair. It struggles with Blüher's assertion that Jews were not capable of forming a male society, insisting that ancient Greek male bonding closely resembled a contemporaneous Jewish equivalent; these were parallel phenomena that conditioned the cultural vigor of these two peoples.

During those years, Meir Yaari was the most outspoken leader of Hashomer Hatzair to develop a *Männerbund* social ideal. It would be realized in exclusively male communities of Hashomer Hatzair in the Galilee.[33] Heroic exclusive or secretive male societies of the past, mounted on horses if possible, caught Yaari's imagination as models for his male communities: the nineteenth-century Italian revolutionary Carbonari, the Ukrainian Zaporozhian Cossacks who roamed the Polish Lithuanian commonwealth in the seventeenth century, or the Hashomer vigilante organization of Ottoman Palestine. Yaari wrote the following poetic fragment describing a hallucination that illumi-

32 Benjamin Dror, *Kehiliatenu*, 29–30.

33 Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 301.

nates the essence of Hashomer Hatzair's homoerotic *eda* and its relation to the rise of a charismatic leader:

> I remember an event that took place in the month of July… The wind was playfully blowing; it lifted up the tents and dwelled in them. A… got carried away in the wind, detached himself from his work, opened his arms, tossed away his shovel, leaped on a boulder and gathered his fellows. Comrades! He gestured theatrically, a tribune of the people. The people nodded and he spurred them on. The people were frenzied and caused him to fall from the boulder. He fell on the shoulders of the multitude, his laughter exposing a row of teeth. The multitude carried him on their shoulders and suddenly all collapsed with the wind. They all wallowed in the soil, pulling each other's hair. They yelled and rolled about. He only raised his eyes and suddenly his flock disappeared. They wallowed with growing fury, animalistic, like satyrs, tossing about, and their hooves hanging over them in the air… How had they been enchanted by A… Were you to ask, and were you to try to get to the bottom of this, you would conclude that something burst out of him, something that detaches people from work, throws them to the ground, melts down individuality, glues together their souls in a Dionysian intoxication…[34]

In this paragraph, Yaari put in writing, for the sake of his readers in the Diaspora, a fantasy of the homoerotic birth moment of the *eda*, a moment of blissful unity of the group around the Blüherian figure of the *Männerheld,* the male hero who serves as the magnetic core for the erotic male society. Yaari described the experience of an intense, communal, emotional yet at the same time physical bonding. The *eda* could only be attained in communities that excited the Dionysian element, and that element was exclusively male if civilization was to be conceived and built. At the moment of ecstasy, of Dionysian intoxication, one is able to step outside of onself, to negate and forget the self. Only in ecstasy could one fuse and merge with the world and thus come to know it through direct experience, not reflection.[35] This is

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34 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, quoted in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 397.

35 Moshe Schwarcz, *mi-Mitos le-hitgalut* (From Myth to Revelation) (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1978), 57, 61, 64.

how the male society is born; it is its most precious moment. What the group experienced in this hallucinatory fantasy was further described by Yaari:

> The hundreds of minute attachments, both conscious and unconscious, connecting us to each other in this union constitute our most authentic existence, even though this may run counter to our own will. These erotic relations create a common fluidity and the community's common spirit.[36]

Whether it defined itself as a male society or a more inclusive community that tolerated and appreciated the presence of women, the *eda* of Hashomer Hatzair had to have a leader. The leader was to become the erotic heart of the community. The problem of leadership, of who was a leader and how the qualities of leadership could be stimulated, was an absolutely vital concern for many central European thinkers after World War I. Their thinking was anticipated by late nineteenth-century German thinkers such as the proto-fascist Julius Langbehn. In his widely read *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (Rembrandt as Educator, 1891), Langbehn described the German people as sorely in need of a great artist-leader who would free them from the debilitating effects of science, rationalism, and shallow liberalism, while catalyzing the resurgence of a national art and a common aesthetic experience.[37] The 1920s are the years during which Max Weber's formulations of the charismatic leader and the social problem of authority were most intensely discussed. In his *Weimar Culture,* historian Peter Gay presented the German Jewish medieval scholar Ernst Kantorowicz's monumental and widely read *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* (Frederick the Second, 1924) as an expression of the need for heroic leadership. Kantorowicz not only traced the biography of the great medieval German emperor but examined his powers of leadership and closed his book with an explicit call for a modern leader of the same caliber as his book's subject.[38] It is but a small leap from this call for charismatic leadership to

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36 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, quoted in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 392.

37 Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961).

38 Otto Gerhard Oexle, "German Malaise of Modernity: Ernst H. Kantorowicz and His 'Kaiser Friedrich Der Zweite,'" in *Ernst Kantorowicz*, ed.

the rise of a cult of leadership, practiced by all authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, fascist, Nazi, and communist.[39] The search for leadership, mainly political leadership became one of the main perplexities in continental Europe, especially in central Europe after World War I. This is the context in which we should approach the centrality of the leader in Hashomer Hatzair.

The German youth movement offered its own model for charismatic leadership, the *Führer-Prinzip* (leader principle).[40] According to this principle, the group in the youth movement was to be led by a dedicated leader, an older brother, completely and wholeheartedly devoted to his subordinates. Acting as their confidant, he understood them, cared for them, and provided intimate guidance. By communicating with his group members in an unmediated, direct way, the leader would successfully assume the role so many fathers, school teachers, and statesmen had failed to assume. And it was no other than Hans Blüher who was one of the first formulators of this, as is evident from the title of his 1917 book "Führer und Volk in der Jugendbewegung."

Hashomer Hatzair as a youth movement wholeheartedly adopted this leader principle, which it saw as crucial to community building, and later on to social mobilization. In a letter written to a movement work camp called Shomria at the end of 1921, Shlomo Horowitz, one of the movement's intellectual leaders and a resident of Jerusalem, described and criticized the adoption of the leader principle:

> "Leader!" A young man's heart trembles when he hears this word. But it will tremble even more when he *feels* its essence, when he lives under the spell that flows out of this leader whose role it is to show the way, to give expression to the prayers of

Robert L. Benson and Johannes Fried (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997), 33–56.

39 Limore Yagil, "*L'homme nouveau" et la revolution nationale de Vichy (1940–1944)* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1997), 282. See also Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider As Insider* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), 50.

40 Peter D. Stachura, *The German Youth Movement, 1900–1945: An Interpretive and Documentary History* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), 47.

> the collective heart and to the tremors of the soul. "Leader!" A helping hand in times of trouble and a show of strength in times of deep depression, but also a "broken reed," an unreliable support for those who *always* depend on him and rely on him with all of their weight… You did not understand that a leader is only human and not a god… that if you see a prophet in him, you force him to either flee and abandon you, or become a charlatan… The disciples and the messengers always bring their leaders to failure.[41]

While affirming the value of a genuinely charismatic leader who commands an unquestionable mystique, Horowitz criticized the movement's members for failing to correctly evaluate the limited powers of a leader and for expecting too much of him. This letter was sent to the Shomria camp after it absorbed the members of Bitania, who several weeks earlier had expelled their own leader in a dramatic confrontation.

It is worth noting again the difference between the leaders of the German Youth Movement and the ones of Hashomer Hatzair regarding self-consciousness: for the *Wandervogel* youth, Eros was spontaneously experienced, only to be described and theorized by the psychoanalytically informed outcast Blüher. Hashomer Hatzair, which encountered the concept of Eros in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, set out to consciously utilize it to build a culture. The prevalence of this social unit was by no means unique to Germany. What was unique to the case of Blüher's theory, however, was the application of the secret male society in the service of political and social causes. Only in Germany was homoeroticism viewed as the building block of society and civilization. Ironically, only a Jewish youth movement favorably and seriously discussed Blüher's ideas and adopted them, only to abandon any discussion of them after a few short years. This is not to say that the homoerotic male society configuration and the leader principle lost their vitality in the kibbutzim of Hashomer Hatzair; on the contrary, it radiated onto the entire social fabric of the kibbutz movement and throughout the Yishuv, and later on to the state of Israel, for decades, directly and indirectly.

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41 The letter, written on October 13, 1921, was published in *Kehiliatenu*, 219. Emphasis in original.

The leader principle too, along with the *Männerbund* theory in which it was embedded and from which it emanated (in the way it was articulated by Hashomer Hatzair in those years), incorporated Central European thought currents that came from a mix of origins, primarily a mixed baggage that is termed the (German) Conservative Revolution. Blüher was in fact one of the first, around 1918, to have used this term in the framework of a national-conservative rhetoric.[42] Here the most unusual and most paradoxical intellectual development occurred. Hans Blüher, a fierce opponent of the corrupting, corrosive effect Judaism and Jewish presence allegedly had in Germany, profound antifeminist, antidemocratic nationalist, activist promoting homosexual rights, and anti-bourgeois conservative revolutionary in Weimar Germany, is the source for two major and entwined components of the worldview that evolved in Hashomer Hatzair in the early 1920s: a theory of civilization as the working of secret, homoerotic male societies and the leader principle that emanated from those societies, a self-selecting, towering, and ultra-virile homosexual person. In order to understand why Hans Blüher had such a profound effect on Meir Yaari, and on Hashomer Hatzair more broadly, we will need to place him in his intellectual and cultural context. This will prove to be necessary because out of all the diverse intellectual influences on the movement, he is the most unusual, coming from strange, non-Jewish, and even blatantly anti-Jewish domains of thought, yet at the same time and with astute interpretation, makes perfect sense.

Now quite forgotten, Hans Blüher (1888–1955) was a widely-read, well-known young thinker in Germany right before World War I and during the years of the Weimar Republic. He owed his fame as a young man to the publication in 1912 of a trilogy—the history of the German Youth Movement, the *Wandervogel*, of which he was a member. The third volume of the trilogy, titled "The Wandervogel Youth Movement as an Erotic Phenomenon," stirred a bitter controversy.[43] It outraged the youth movement leaders and members, who expelled him upon

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42 Robert Beachy, "Book Review of *Politik des Eros: Der Männerbund in Wissenschaft, Politik und Jugendkultur (1880–1934),* by Claudia Bruns" (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2008), in *German History* 29.2 (2011): 331–3.

43 Hans Blüher, *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen: ein Beitrag zur Erkenntnis der sexuellen Inversion* (Berlin: Weise, 1912), with a forward by Magnus Hirschfeld.

publication of the book. They soon purged the movement's ranks of any known homosexuals. We can see from the original book title what so enraged the leaders, members, and veterans of the youth movement: "Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen: ein Beitrag zur Erkenntnis der sexuellen Inversion" (The German Wandervogel [Youth] Movement as an Erotic Phenomenon: An Essay with Insight on Sexual Inversion). The book was not only a history of the movement based on Blüher's personal experiences as an adolescent boy; it also offered its readers a complex theory about the erotic dimension of the movement as an all-male social formation, using the pseudo-scientific term—developed in the framework of the sexological medical and psychiatric discourse of the time—(sexual) "inversion." This was an explicit reference to male homosexuality, as "invert" was the term denoting homosexual. If this was not enough to alienate Blüher from the movement, a forward by the controversial Doctor Magnus Hirschfeld finished the job. Hirschfeld, a Jewish Berlin expert on sexual matters and the leading activist in the campaign to repeal the infamous paragraph 175 of the German penal code regarding homosexual sex, was widely detested throughout Germany during those years.

In 1902, fourteen-year-old Blüher became a member of the original *Wandervogel* group that was formed a few years earlier in the Berlin suburb of Steglitz. His book was based on his own experiences, including his adolescent sexual experiences, there. A book that could have been written as a pleasant and unobjectionable memoir based on years of innocent camaraderie—hiking in the countryside and singing together—turned out to be an offensive, explosive, explicitly homosexual social theory. It is important to note that Blüher was not the first to call attention to questions of homoerotic adolescent relationships in the youth movement. Those questions arose out of internal developments and discussions in the movement; the admission of girls, for example, and why the membership so fiercely opposed it, or the split that divided the movement as a direct or indirect result of Blüher's sexual relationship with another member. These developments advanced discussions about the preferred relationships among the members and between members and leaders, and gave form to the first embryonic discussions about the leader principle in Germany, the *Führeprinzip*—that is, an authoritarian principle of leadership that highlighted the leader as a peerlessly gifted person who was "born to rule," revered and glorified by those ruled, and who therefore may demand absolute loyalty and obedience.

The questions of homoeroticism and the leader principle cannot be understood without the public concern with homosexuality that took place in Germany in those decades. The question of homosexuality became extremely central in the German public sphere in the years preceding the war. This was exacerbated by high-profile scandals involving court-martials and libel trials regarding homosexual conduct among prominent members of Kaiser Wilhelm II's cabinet and military entourage.[44] These trials entailed torrents of press coverage and accelerated the rise of a discourse about homosexuality and homosexual identity, not unlike a similar aspect of the trial of Oscar Wilde around 1895 in Great Britain. In addition, an early homosexual rights movement based in Berlin (as of 1897) was active for more than a decade. These public affairs went hand in hand with rising pseudoscientific sexological theories about the nature of homosexuality that abounded. One of the axes around which these theories revolved was the question of whether homosexuals were effeminate, virile, or constituted an entirely different "third sex." The particular way in which Blüher took part in these debates and controversies is key for what attracted Meir Yaari to his theory.

One of the most prominent and highly visible theoreticians of sexuality in the medical field of sexology was the world-renowned Jewish doctor Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) of Berlin, who propagated a theory of the third sex, claiming that homosexuals were congenitally abnormal in that they were endowed with a female psyche. He continued the track taken by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895), the first gay rights activist and the first theoretician to support the view that homosexual men were not ordinary, but rather effeminate men, female psyches confined in men's bodies, the result of which are men who are sexually attracted to other men.

Opposing this medicalized discourse about homosexuality as a feminine psychiatric aberration, a counter-discourse arose that regarded homosexuality as masculine and even hyper-virile. This discourse not only regarded homosexual men as members of the

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44 On what has been termed the Eulenburg Affair, see James D. Steakley, "Iconography of a Scandal: Political Cartoons and the Eulenburg Affair in Wilhelmine Germany," in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York: Penguin, 1989), 233–63.

masculine gender, but also saw them as having a privileged position among men: they were hyper-virile men with such homoerotic tendencies that made them born leaders; they were not perverts or inverts, the result of psychiatric or pathological disorders and subject to a (bourgeois, that is, in the sacred name of the family as the unit of reproduction) drive for psychiatric "cure," but rather the products of cultural conditions, and as such, endowed with cultural and even political gifts of leadership and with powers destined toward state-formation. Indeed, they were the generators of states and political leadership. This current stimulated the development of Blüher's theory.

For Blüher, homosexuals were not mentally and psychologically disturbed, degenerate, decadent (Jewish, that is), effeminate individuals, impotent with women and in need of cure, but rather inborn, manly men.[45] The quintessential homosexual is the hero of the men, the *Männerheld*, the pinnacle of masculinity and heroism. He is the man of great charisma, the magnet that animates the band of men who are erotically and sexually attracted to him. These male heroes become idealized and even idolized objects of male desire.[46] As opposed to the pathologized homosexual of the medical discourse of sexology and of psychoanalysis, in need of cure, masculine homosexuality was a perfectly healthy disposition. The manly homosexual therefore was a man of true worth, high ideals, and exemplary love and trust, and his male love could also express itself genitally without complication. Eventually, Blüher "Germanicized" his virile *Männerbund* theory, that is, he explained virile homosexual male bonding as a racially German superior social phenomenon, supremely endowed with state and culture building. In contrast to the virile German culture, he regarded Jewish men as degenerate, decadent, liberal bourgeois, and therefore effeminate. They were unable to form virile male societies and therefore incapable of generating culture and ultimately unfit for heroic life.

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45 To be contrasted with the prevalent conservative view of homosexuals as a menace to morality and society.

46 See the excellent and insightful Jay Geller, "Freud Blüher, and the Secessio Inversa: Männerbünde, Homosexuality, and Freud's theory of Cultural Formation," in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, ed. Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 90–120, 97.

It was these hyper-virile overtones of a theory of homosexuality that caught Yaari's imagination. However, this crucial virile excuse was bound to be overlooked. Just as Blüher was rejected by the *Wandervogel* because of the homosexual overtones of his male Eros, the male Eros discussed in the *Kehiliatenu* collection provoked rebuke among its non-Hashomer Hatzair readers. For example, the Hebrew publicist Yehoshua Radler-Feldman (1880–1957), known by his pen name Rabbi Benjamin,[47] published a review of *Kehiliatenu* in the Hebrew periodical *Ha-tekufah* in 1923. He called it unripe and attacked youth culture as inauthentic.[48] In his review, Radler-Feldman rambled about the collection, in which he saw "Venus and Jesus conjoined" and in which lewd sexual conduct was discussed, the sort of practice that occurred between Socrates and his disciple Alcibiades, somehow related to Michaelangelo, Oscar Wilde, and the vice which was attributed to the English nation. These clear innuendos regarding homosexuality betrayed a profound misunderstanding of the theory of virile homosexuality.

Yaari's ideal of the *eda* was a hyper-virile *Männerbund*. If Yaari would say:

> Our erotic attachment bursts out of our unified soul, spreading everywhere and covering all—the land, work, the landscape from which come color, symbol, and piety. It tears our souls open and fuses us with the entire cosmos.[49]

He would actually mean it in an exclusively male context:

> We demand that man, suffocating in his cage, which is made of layers of rugged mechanical civilization, must peel off and destroy the shell which contains his natural personality. He must court his brothers, fusing with their souls and voluptuous flesh into a united soul-community [*eda*], celebrating the feast of unity with his fellow man, with creation, and with all that is becoming.[50]

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47 He was not a rabbi.

48 Rabbi Benjamin (Yehoshua Radler-Feldman), "Tzeror michtavim," *Ha-tekufah* 17 (1923): 457–67.

49 Meir Yaari's letter of March 1921, quoted in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 398.

50 Ibid., 397.

It is not only souls that unite, but also the voluptuous flesh of the band of brothers and their fellow men. If at its very core, as powerfully noted by Daniel Boyarin, the ultimate fantasy of Zionism was to cure the effeminate Jewish male of the Diaspora, Meir Yaari's version of this cure took a detour into the early twentieth-century fantasy of the Germanic male society that was generated by the Eros of the homosexual male hero. Is it conceivable that such a male hero, a born leader for a lifetime, to be supremely revered and absolutely obeyed, was to be Meir Yaari himself? The answer to this question can be drawn from two directions: the real and the imagined parallels between Hashomer Hatzair and the *Wandervogel*, one theorized as an erotic phenomenon in a scandalous book published in 1912, the other imagined as the locus of an erotic *Bund*-like cluster of *edot* (plural of *eda*) around 1920. Both movements dabbled intensely with homoerotic male camaraderie and both had adults centrally involved in the movement's activities who were either openly or covertly homosexual: the *Wandervogel* had Uncle Willie (Willie Jansen) and Hashomer Hatzair had Dr. Zvi Henryk Sterner, who for many decades was remembered as the Loving Uncle Wujko.[51]

[51] See a volume published to commemorate Dr. Sterner, Mendel Scherl, *The Loving Uncle Wujko: A Collection of Essays in His Memory* (Givat Haviva, 1983). There are only hints about Dr. Sterner's homosexuality, no direct testimony.

Chapter VIII

The Tragic Hero Metamorphoses into a Sensitive Man

In this chapter, I consider the implementation of Hashomer Hatzair's lofty ideals during the early years in Palestine, as the rank-and-file members experienced them. Besides the expression of disappointment with the extremely primitive living conditions the young members were thrown into, we also see signs of disappointment with the demands for a utopian life in the Galilee. This disappointment filled the letters the members sent back to loved ones in Europe. Such letters are the earliest expressions available to us of these doubts. Such doubts were expressed in a Nietzschean discourse of Nihilism and developed into a problem of morale. Many such doubts could be traced in the *Kehiliatenu* collection, letters, and personal diaries. These doubts addressed the realities of tragic life. We will also see how the demands for a tragic life in an erotic community had to be reconciled with the presence of young women, and we will see how instead of hyper-virile men, the sources betray a construction of masculinity that is much more refined and sensitive.

The most powerful critique of the ideal Nietzschean erotic and tragic community was itself cloaked in this very language, the intellectual root of existentialism and its danger—nihilism, that is, a creeping pessimistic anxiety that there is no basis to any value, that nothing could now be known about the world with certainty, and that existence itself had become senseless and useless. Rachel Shapira wrote the following in clear Nietzschean language on August 3, 1921:

> There are moments where a gray abyss will lie in front of you, and the abyss has no limits, it is endless. Then you understand: with all of your human essence you lie under God's yoke; you feel as a plaything in His hand and He will condemn you mercilessly. Woe to you if you rebel against Him! And the abyss is pulling, pulling, pulling. And your only weapon, your "brain," cannot close the abyss, madly and drunkenly jumping into it, to

> fall and fall forever. You cannot forget yourself! And you cannot know God! Oh, you wish to fight God? Woe! Woe unto you! But no, you must! You must fight Him, you must rise up against Him… You wish to steal from him all the secrets of the world…
>
> Once upon a time, there were drunken madmen who built a tower whose tip reached the sky… And the end of the story is the confusion of tongues…
>
> But we are stubborn, we fight against God, and hell will open its mouth, and the abyss pulls ever more strongly, and the laughter and weeping of madness are also becoming stronger.[1]

Here Shapira expressed a very pessimistic assessment of the project in Palestine. She wondered whether all those who held lofty aspirations would come to the same end as the myth of Prometheus.[2] Accusing her fellow workers of wishing to reach heaven, of rebelling against God, of defying God and vying for his place, Shapira felt a yawning abyss opening under her feet, the punishment for a hubris she compared to the building of the biblical tower of Babel, the ultimate experiment in human self-destruction. Her reference to the brain challenged the desire to invent a new world by sheer imagination, in utter defiance of tradition. In saying "You cannot forget yourself!" she referred to the Dionysian ecstasy as the ultimate way to knowledge and creativity. A threatening, all-devouring abyss was the image she chose to express extreme doubt about the individual and collective audacity of the movement, her fear of nihilism. Shapira conceived of the abyss as a threat to sheer sanity.[3] It represented the anxiety of

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1 Rachel Shapira, *Kehiliatenu,* 108.

2 Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Francis Golfing (New York: Anchor Books, 1956), chapter 9, 62–3.

3 The abyss can be found in many sources of existentialist thought. See Maurice Friedman, *The Worlds of Existentialism: A Critical Reader* (New York: Random House, 1964), 18: The Lutheran mystic Jacob Boehme (1575–1624) spoke of the fire of desire and the *Ungrund,* the abyss of nothingness out of which all being comes. Blaise Pascal insisted on the precarious position of man, situated between being and nothingness: "We burn with the desire to find solid ground and an ultimate sure foundation whereon to build a tower reaching to the Infinite. But our whole groundwork cracks, and the earth opens to abysses."

a group of people who had freed themselves from the shackles of religion and tradition to seek a new world for themselves.

Shapira's reference to the the ideal of a creative deed and its dialectical relation to illusion comes directly from Nietzsche, for whom creation and illusion were intertwined with the experience of the abyss. According to Nietzsche, tragic art is both realistically illusionist and creatively destructive of its own illusions. By transforming a primal void—the abyss—into beautiful images of superior human lives and then destroying them, tragic art shatters the old dreams upon which the former human tradition was based and clears the ground for the construction of new ones.[4] The heroic, creative deeds of the future spring out of a confrontation with the menacing presence of the abyss of nothingness. But does standing in front of the abyss in the wish to engage it suggest the possibility of a degeneration into nihilism, where all traditional values have been destroyed and action can lead to further destruction and self-destruction? It seems that Rachel Shapira thoroughly understood the dangers of nihilism inherent in the Nietzschean discourse, and that nihilism is at the core of her critique of the movement's Nietzschean leap.

Member Moshe Fishler, like Rachel Shapira, expressed doubts about the feasibility of the movement's social ideal in Palestine. He too relied on *Birth of Tragedy* for expressing himself and both intuitively and explicitly feared the dangers of nihilism*:*

> Often, the communal act fails to seize us and we disperse again, as if we were strangers. And I don't see in this a mysterious dread each feels for the other, and neither do I see the mask that must be donned in every case of strong erotic rejection. No! Just a simple alienation.
>
> That is why, perhaps, sorrow is my lot in life: my path is sinking into the abyss. Bitania was for me this path. The Bitania that imploded? And then what? The answer of Silenus to King Midas?[5]

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4 Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 338.

5 David Horowitz, *Kehiliatenu*, 80–1.

Fishler was not a central figure in the movement; nevertheless, he was selected to join the Bitania group. His scepticism extended to the very possibility of forming the erotic community, the *eda*. He felt that the experiment of Bitania had failed and that he had never realized the erotic promise of a community of individuals who fuse into one another to create one being. By mentioning Silenus and King Midas, Fishler was alluding to a passage in *The Birth of Tragedy*:

> There is an ancient story that King Midas hunted in the forest a long time for the wise Silenus, the companion of Dionysus, without capturing him. When Silenus at last fell into his hands, the king asked what was the best and most desirable of all things for man. Fixed and immovable, the demigod said not a word, till at last, urged by the king, he gave a shrill laugh and broke out into these words: "Oh, wretched ephemeral race, children of chance and misery, why do you compel me to tell you what it would be most expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is—to die soon."[6]

By invoking Silenus's answer to King Midas, Fishler touched on the question of being and not being as the possible end result of the ecstatic experience of an erotic community. This message in Nietzsche's "Birth of Tragedy" is still invoked to discuss questions of nihilism, negation, and the human encounter with an abyss of nothingness, from either psychological or philosophical perspectives. It is not clear whether in Fishler's view not being was negative, akin to death or suicide, or positive, the disappearance of the Dionysian individual that constituted the core of the ecstatic experience. The benefits that accrued to a community predicated on rapturous Dionysian ecstasies were quite dubious. His own experience was of a personal alienation. It seems that he was unable personally to perceive the fruitfulness of self-oblivion and rebirth as a path to a creative community.

Nietzsche had but scorn for weaklings, the antithesis to his ideal of the *Übermensch*. In an essay published in the movement's journal *Haszomer* in the December-January 1919/1920 issue, a review of Nietzsche's ideas included a long discussion of his notion of "slave

6 Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy,* 42.

morality." It was clear to the writer that Nietzsche was correct in claiming that the Jews invented the lamentable "slave morality" and its subsequent cultivation of pity instead of heroism.[7] In this context, Yaari responded to traces of personal doubt:

> Our effort is to uncover the secrets of the Sphinx. It arises when we struggle to conquer it. The riddle grows with man: as much as he grows, spiritually and physically, so his role and destiny become loftier. The jealous weaklings however, shall mock us. Later they will follow us, or will flee as cowards.[8]

In Greek mythology, the sphinx was a winged creature having the head of a woman and the body of a lion. Facing the Sphinx, who killed those who could not answer its riddles, and uncovering those riddles as life's mission are mentioned several times by various members; this task required courage and did not fit weak and doubting individuals. At the same time, Yaari affirmed the necessity of having inner turmoil and inner doubt as necessary for a meaningful "tragic" action. The difference between such idle doubt and doubt that leads to meaningful action is important here. No figure could fit this problem of reflection versus action better than Shakespeare's Prince Hamlet. Hamlet had been fundamental reading in Hashomer Hatzair. The tragedy was debated in literary trials—an important activity in the movement for decades to come. The "tragic man" of Hashomer Hatzair was a man of inner turmoil, feeding a determination for a life-long struggle. The experiences of inner conflict were encoded as "Hamletism." One member described Hamlet as a "doubter and an idler."[9] Member David Horowitz, however, affirmed the value of inner turmoil and doubt:

> There is no merit to the legend about the one dimensional man, partisan and zealot, the only one who is capable of social action. The revolution always calls for extremely complex characters, having a most peculiar psychic structure. Those who read

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7 Shimon Federbush, "Master and Slave Morality," *Haszomer* 2.5 (December, January 1919/1920): 7–10.

8 Meir Yaari's letter of 1921, quoted in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 372.

9 Shlomo Horowitz, *Kehiliatenu*. 219.

> Brzozowski's *Flames* … know the profound depths of inner tragedy, the complications which produced a determined revolutionary activism. In this conception of a Promethean life … lies a tremendous power. *Weltschmerz* and Hamletism, these are moments of creativity, not symptoms of decadence.[10]

The tragic, Promethean character of a revolutionary person involved a mental condition: inner turmoil and tangled complications. These are affirmed as necessary for conditioning tragic revolutionary action. Hamlet was torn between his passion for truth, trying to prove a witnessless crime, and his wish to avenge his father's death; he had no one to whom he could communicate his dilemma; and he experienced an incessant inner turmoil. The play was perfect for literary trials that debated the Prince's character. Was he indeed an idler, unable to make decisions, incapable of action, a coward, a nervous, hesitating, decadent dreamer? In his monologues, Hamlet himself could easily confirm this list.[11] Or was he on the other hand a tragic hero, torn asunder by an inner conflict that made him an ideal candidate for a revolutionary person? According to Goethe, Hamlet, too delicate and sensitive to engage in revenge, represented a paralysis of direct action by an overdeveloped intellect.[12] Nietzsche too in *Birth of Tragedy* discussed Hamlet's condition:

> In this sense the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet: both have once looked truly into the essence of things, they have *gained knowledge*, and nausea inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things; they feel it to be ridiculous or humiliating that they should be asked to set right a world that is out of joint. Knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion: that is the doctrine of Hamlet, not that cheap wisdom of Jack the Dreamer who reflects too much

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10 Quoted in Mintz, *Pangs of Youth*, 228.

11 "Yet I, A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak, Like John-a-dreams…"

12 Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Basic Books, 1955), 265. See also Erik H. Erikson, *Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 238. Hamlet became an intellectual in Luther's Wittenberg—"the hotbed of humanist corruption"—compared only to today's universities, "infested with existentialism, psychoanalysis—or worse?"

> and, as it were, from an excess of possibilities does not get around to action. Not reflection, no—true knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth, outweighs any motive for action, both in Hamlet and in the Dionysian man.[13]

The real tragic man seeks and gains true knowledge, and is then, and only then, ready for authentic action. Horowitz could find support for his affirmation of Hamlet as a potential revolutionary in Nietzsche's reference to Shakespeare's tragedy. The value of seeking and attaining knowledge, not through merely abstract reflection but through immersion in the world, required inner turmoil. Hamlet's melancholic introspection, his uncertainty, and his dwelling on moral dilemmas were seen by many interpreters as deterring him from a manly violent deed. But translating complex feelings into simple action made doubting necessary; hence the Nietzschean *Übermensch* derided the weaklings as slaves who lacked faith and determination in the face of adversity. For Horowitz, then, doubting was morally necessary, conditioning the true tragic life, if action and resolve were then to follow. And this process gave birth, as we shall soon see, to a peculiar construction of manliness in Palestine, a construction that could be gleaned from the sources of Hashomer Hatzair in those years.

Many contributions to the *Kehiliatenu* collection complain of personal failure in experiencing the communal unity. Instead of sharing experiences extracted from the depths of one's soul and thus creating and forming the erotic community, most members had a simple difficulty—to open their hearts and to speak. They often chose to remain silent. In contrast to the idealized descriptions of the confessions as a community-building practice, it is possible to see how in fact speaking openly and sincerely in front of others about one's emotional world was difficult, especially for young men seeking their masculinity. In fact, this practice, along with the call for intellectual doubting as a path to meaningful action, enables a construction of a new model of masculinity that explicitly wishes to be hardened and virile, but at the same time confident enough to be soft and gentle to the point of visible fragility. This is a peculiar combination.

13 Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy,* section 7.

Speaking in public about one's emotions was difficult, both for the young men and the young women. Member Joseph Held described the nocturnal confessions:

> The shack was half dark. The lamplight reflected ugly, yellow shadows. Sitting with your faces down you kept silent, waiting for a redeeming word, waiting for the miracle that will awaken the energies in your young, supple bodies.[14]

Dubi, a member about whom almost nothing is known, described the *Kehiliatenu* collection as "my only refuge," since "I could not utter a word in our meetings."[15] Member Jehudith Dror expressed the inability to share her thoughts with the group in the talks: "At our talks I wished to speak up, to tell you about my little projects, about small tombstones on each day's grave. I kept silent. I could not find the right moment to speak. But if you wish to write to me, please do."[16] Zeev Bloch wrote: "It was difficult for me to take part in your celebrations… I had already decided to commit myself to harsh silence, but now I have to speak up."[17] Moshe Hellenberg also expressed his preference for silence:

> I have respect for those of us who give voice to their souls. Without doubt there is a sublime power in this… A spiritual person is one who is able to reveal the spark in another person, draw the spark out of the depths of the soul. Our individual sparks will fuse into one big flame. But as for myself, I reserve the right to be silent.[18]

Silence betrayed an embarrassment, an unwillingness to speak and reveal intimate secrets for the sake of community building. David Horowitz also expressed opposition to the nocturnal confessions:

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14 Joseph Held, *Kehiliatenu*, 74.

15 Dubi, *Kehiliatenu*, 55.

16 Judith Dror, *Kehiliatenu*, 129.

17 Zeev Bloch, *Kehiliatenu*, 58.

18 Moshe Hellenberg, *Kehiliatenu*, 68.

> How few are our moments of elation and how trite and banal are our long days. We need to cherish truth and mystery in our lives, lest they turn into cold and empty words. Woe to us if we destroy the magic of the hidden shades and words, the enigmas of our souls! By doing that, we kill the source of legends; weariness and barrenness will fill up a wide wasteland, as pale as death.[19]

Horowitz felt that speaking about one's experiences in public will only give voice to banal and trite conversation, that is, such confessions do not lead to anything of value.

In his essay in the *Kehiliatenu* collection, member Joshua Bierer approved of public confessions in principle but blamed the group for their failure in practice:

> Our talk has become trivial. We say a lot to each other, our lips and tongues move, our brains work, we scream so hard it becomes impossible to hear the silence of our souls—there is no fusion of the souls… You do not honestly believe that our talk could fuse honest and transparent souls.[20]

Bierer confessed in the *Kehiliatenu* collection: "My lips spoke to you many times but I did not. I lacked the courage to break my shell, as I feared it would crack yours."[21] Bierer believed that if the members could reveal themselves more vigorously, more honestly, the practice of public confessions would bear fruit.

The fascinating history of gender relations in Labor Palestine has yet to be written. In many ways, the case of Hashomer Hatzair can both be seen as an exception in the wider Labor context, and at the same time as a very limited deviation from a wider norm. One of the traits that distinguished Hashomer Hatzair early on from other youth movements, Jewish and non-Jewish, was the movement's commitment to the camaraderie of boys and girls cooperating in the movement's activities. The members usually arrived in Palestine in mixed groups of young men

19 David Horowitz, *Kehiliatenu*, 81.

20 Joshua Bierer, *Kehiliatenu*, 91.

21 Ibid.

and women, unlike most other groups of worker immigrants. The other groups of pioneers, mainly coming from Russia and the Ukraine, were composed almost exclusively of young men. Member Dov Becker recalled that when two hundred pioneers sailed on the *Cargnolia* from Trieste to Jaffa in 1920, only the Hashomer Hatzair group included both young men and women.[22] This mixed-gender conviviality had a considerable impact on the gender construction of both the young men and the young women. It seems that a turning point in gender relations can be traced to the movement's insistence on this mixed setting. The turning point consists of a certain experimentation with perceived gender roles that were traditionally strictly associated with one gender or the other. The most important result of these new possibilities was the young women's experimentation with roles, jobs, and occupations that until that point were assigned to men only. This new experience included cross-dressing, which was one-sided. It reflected the reception of the drive-to-manliness by young women. This reception included not only accepting affirmation but also a transformative experimentation with new constructions of femininity, a femininity that was infatuated with masculine social roles. This affirmation of men and masculinity by the young women who in turn put down their own femininity was confronted in Hashomer Hatzair in Palestine, especially by Meir Yaari, with a twisted, pain-inflicting attitude.[23] To begin with, many of Hashomer Hatzair's male members had never intended to travel to Palestine along with the young women. They often organized their journeys to Palestine secretly and included women only once their plans had been revealed and the women insisted on going as well. Sharing activities with girls in the *ken*—the movement's center—or in the city park was one thing; bringing them along on a perilous journey that involved leaving the country, sometimes illegally, sneaking through borders, bribing border patrols, and crossing the Mediterranean on Italian ship decks, all in the wish to join other pioneers in the desolate province that Palestine was in those years, was something quite different.[24]

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22 Dov Beker, *Ba-afarim: Sdot mir'e* (*In the Grazing Fields*) (Tel Aviv, 1972), 8–9.

23 See the pioneering discussion of the late historian Eyal Kafkafy in her "From the Sublimation of Femininity to the Sublimation of Maternity: Stages in the Attitude of Hashomer Hatzair towards its Women Members," in *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel* 11, (2001): 307–49.

24 On these adventures see David Horowitz, *Ha-etmol sheli*.

The young women faced another difficulty: the reaction of their own parents to the idea of their departure. Parents were far more resistant to their daughters' emigration to Palestine than their sons'. Because her parents did not approve of her activities in Hashomer Hatzair, when the time came to begin the trip, member Rachel Schindler simply left home in the dead of night without a penny. When she arrived in Vienna, she received two telegrams from her mother. In the first telegram, she was asked to come back home immediately as her father had become seriously ill. The other telegram had a money order attached. Schindler ignored her mother's plea, took the money, joined a group, and sailed to Palestine.[25] Many other young women simply ran away from home, suffering tremendous guilt for years to come.

While the young women of Hashomer Hatzair were as committed to the pioneer project as the young men, they were in fact not treated as equals. There is abundant evidence that the men clung to the belief that they were superior as pioneers to the young women.[26] In its very early years, it is fair to say that the movement all but ignored the special needs of young women. Gradually this changed. The movement nominally embraced complete equality between men and women. This equality became part of the declarative legacy of the movement, not unlike the entire labor movement in the Yishuv. Practice, however, contradicted this nominal commitment to equality. The special needs and hardships of women were often not considered. But worse than this, doubts were voiced about their commitment to the movement's pioneering project. Femininity itself was put down. The young women discovered, however, that their male fellow members, who had grown accustomed to the company of women thanks to movement outings and activities, were considerably more enlightened than other Zionist pioneers in this domain. Sarah Potok arrived in Palestine in August 1920 and was sent to work on the Haifa-Jedda road construction project with the Hashomer Hatzair Shomria group. As a nurse, Potok was asked to join a neighboring group, and as she was desperately needed there, she decided to also reside there, rather than in the Shomria camp. After a short time she found the conditions in the other camp unbearable:

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25 Interview with Rachel Schindler-Drucker, *Sefer Beit Alpha*.

26 See the discussion of the late historian Eyal Kafkafy in *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel* 11, (2001): 307–49.

> The men in the other camp were unsuitable for me. They harassed me because I was a girl. Most of them came from Russia. I was unused to this behavior… They did not touch me physically, just put me down. Their pranks were all sexually explicit. I could not bear this and could not become their friend.[27]

The workers who came from Russia did not know how to befriend a young woman, and assumed that her presence in their midst was a provocation, with no social sanction attached to disrespectful behavior toward her. The difference between the social environment and expectations of the young men from Russia and that of the young men and women of Hashomer Hatzair could not have been more stark: when Sarah finally left the group to join Shomria several weeks later, she did not hesitate to share a tent with Dov Becker and Yehuda Yaari, her male friends from the movement.

As a result of the unusual relations between the sexes as they developed in the movement, not unlike those of the *Jugendkultur* movement in Vienna, the Hashomer Hatzair communities in Palestine were labeled promiscuous societies of "free love" by uninformed outsiders. Yehuda Yaari remembered that when a contribution to *Kehiliatenu* was dedicated "to Zushka our sister and to all those who loved her," some cynical members of the Second Aliya concluded that Zushka was actually engaged in sexual activity with the men in the group.[28] Rachel Shapira tells this tongue-in-cheek anecdote in her memoir:

> Free love was not practiced, even though there were members who tried to force it on us. I think that the girls hated the idea of free love. We saw ourselves as "brothers and sisters." When the rumor about free love started to spread, the institutions [i.e., Zionist organizations] sent a delegation of respectable elderly ladies to investigate the matter. We put them up in a shack and as it was not locked they had a most agitated night. The guard, who did not know about the ladies, came in the early morning hours to wake one of the girls up for kitchen duty. One of the ladies was startled by this and began shouting "Rape! Rape!" We all woke up, suddenly afraid that something terrible had

27 Interview with Sarah Potok-Lens, *Sefer Beit Alpha*.

28 Interview with Yehuda Yaari, *Sefer Beit Alpha*.

> happened. The ladies immediately left the country and reported that we were living in promiscuity.[29]

Here we see a clue to the fact that even within the movement, there were male members who tried to introduce a practice of free love and impose it on the young women. As late as 1927, when Meir Yaari visited that part of Poland that had once been eastern Galicia and met with functionaries of the Jewish communities there, he learned that young girls were being locked in their homes and forbidden to lay their eyes on him, the representative of Hashomer Hatzair, that supposed hotbed of free love in Palestine.[30]

Much like the Jewish labor movement in Palestine, Hashomer Hatzair advocated equality between the sexes. As the members arrived in Palestine and were sent to different communities in various locations, it became clear that there would be no easy agreement about a sexual division of labor. Ben Nissan, a male Hashomer Hatzair member, recorded the following anecdote:

> I glanced at a girl that was sitting across from me on a pile of stones. Surely her pile was three times higher than mine. I blushed and lifted my hammer up and down, up and down, and was pleased to see that my pile was slowly getting bigger and bigger. My companion was very young, almost a little girl… she wore men's boots… She wanted to do as much work as the men, at any cost.[31]

This type of anecdote is consistent with the entire male-female relation experience of the Labor Movement in Palestine, where the young women were constructing new modes of femininity that

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29 Genna Reisner, *Memories,* Archive of Kibbutz Ramat-Yohanan.

30 See the response of locals in The Hague, forty years earlier, when the first Communist International met there and children were not allowed to leave their homes, lest they see the "monsters." In the German context, the *Wandervogel* was also accused of being a "den of free love" in a debate in the Bavarian Landtag in 1914, see Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 57.

31 Levi Dror and Israel Rosenzweig, eds., *Sefer ha-Shomer ha-Tsair* (The book of Hashomer Hatzair) (Merhavia: Sifriat Hapoalim, 1956), 84–5.

experimented with occupations that were traditionally performed by men. This included cross-dressing.[32]

The movement's emerging leader, Meir Yaari, in particular held the opinion that women posed a threat to the erotic bonding of the *eda*. Hints of exclusion of women from the realm of cultural achievement and even outright misogyny could be detected in his writings and actions. Meir Yaari asked: "Has a woman ever taken part in the creation of an *eda*? What is the reason for the fact that no woman ever participated in the activities of a great order or movement?"[33] These hints echo the anti-feminine views of the celebrated Viennese anti-feminist Jewish philosopher Otto Weininger and Hans Blüher.

The women had to struggle against being relegated to mere service jobs, such as cooking and laundry. If back in Europe the principle of equality between the sexes had made it possible for the women to become leaders of groups and even of entire chapters, the shift to Palestine meant an immediate setback.[34] In many instances the men tried to block the young women from assuming certain jobs, perceived as tough or dangerous, but also the most "heroic." Those women who rebelled and insisted on taking up these jobs were often accused of refusing to admit that they were needlessly putting themselves in danger. Gradually, however, this male chauvinism gave way to an uneasy and dynamic dialogue, a continuous give and take.

If we consider the young women's gender expression, the construction of their selves and their femininity during the early settlement years, all myths of practical equality evaporate. Living side-by-side with members of the opposite sex in work camps, trying to determine appropriate masculine and feminine models of behavior in a place where many social mores and rules of conduct were under revision, and working out a division of labor based on gender roles all combined to make the experience of many members stressful and confusing. The young women faced a far greater challenge, for three reasons. First, woman

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32 On the prevalence of cross-dressing, see for example M. Posnanski and M. Shchori, (Hebrew) *Chaverot Ba-Kibbutz* (Female members in the Kibbutz) (Ein Harod, 1944), 82. I thank Rafi Raphaeli for this quote.

33 Meir Yaari, *Kehiliatenu*, 288.

34 Szulamith Gutgeld, *Li-she'elat ha-Bahura be-Eretz Israel* (The problem of the young woman in Eretz Israel) (Warsaw: Central Hashomer Hatzair Cooperative, 1926), 7.

and femininity were seen as the primary enemy of the community's potential to bond through Eros. As we saw earlier, the ideal of a male society that took precedence over the family took root for a few years, influenced by Hans Blüher's writings. Tied to biology, woman tried to chain the male to nature, according to Blüher's misogynistic thinking. Woman was the enemy of human creativity; she had no role to play in the formation of civilization. Jealous of her male mate, woman insists on monogamy as a safeguard against his erotic attraction to illegitimate women and to the erotic attraction to his *Männerbund*. Through monogamous marriage, woman then sucked out all that was creative in a man. As opposed to man, who erotically strove for the sake of his family and the male society that built state and culture, woman was only one-sided, selfish, with no commitment to any public benefit. Championing only her own family and offspring, she threatened to debilitate men's creative powers by isolating them from their male brethren. Echoes of this misogynistic pseudo-theory reverberated through the discourse prevalent in the movement, and there is some evidence that sheds light on proactive marginalization of women in the early years in Palestine and a fear of femininity.

A few fragments from the *Kehiliatenu* collection and one etching published in 1924 by Aryeh Allweil (1901–1967), a member of Bitania who later became an artist, reveal the extent to which the young women sustained maltreatment simply because of their femininity. One such report of abuse is part of member Hanan Nesher Adler's (1901–1942) contribution to *Kehiliatenu*:

> I said, I must thank you very very much for your diary, yes, a diary—a woman's heart… You told me of all those willing and beautiful fellows that you loved as a girl and as a sister. And then you told me with pain about this sour brother, his eternal scorn for you and about that awful night he asked you to approach him. You came. And then he demanded of you that which is above all love, that which is given in sanctity, that which is sanctified. And he, contemptuous to all that is sacred, a morose vagrant whose forehead you kissed with a sisterly kiss, he mocked you. He screamed and shouted, full of anger, and you suffered.[35]

35 *Kehiliatenu*, 102.

It is not clear who this member addressed. What is certain is that it was a young woman and that, being a woman, this member sustained an aggressive psychological assault by another member. Based on the work of the late historian Eyal Kafkafy, she was not the only one, and it is fair to assume that it was no other than Meir Yaari who aggressed these young women routinely in those years on account of their femininity, which had been deemed destructive. Yaari also covertly and routinely expelled women from the group, by setting up meetings with them where he reported to them that their presence was no longer welcome among the other members. In many cases, as reveals Dr. Kafkafy, these vulnerable young women simply left, shocked and traumatized. Alweil's etching is part of a series of etchings that describe life in Bitania Ilit and was published in 1924. In it, we see a nocturnal ritual-like scene where a young man humiliates a young, half-naked woman who bows to him with her hands up in the air, full of reverence. The young woman is half buried in the ground as the man bears a shovel.

In 1926 member Szulamith Gutgeld (1904–1985) published a booklet on the problem of the young female member of Hashomer Hatzair in Palestine. There is much to learn from this publication regarding how women were to cope with the male fantasies spun by the movement's male members in those years. Gutgeld was a devoted member of the movement in Warsaw. In Palestine, she became an esteemed playwright, joined kibbutz Mishmar Ha-emek, the second kibbutz of Hashomer Hatzair, and was one of the founders of Tel Aviv University in the 1960s. In her booklet, Gutgeld wrote that the young women who joined the pioneers in Palestine had been at the forefront of the movement back in Europe, active as group leaders and taking a lively part in political and public affairs. In Palestine they all abandoned such activities: "This brought about tremendous psychological turmoil, entailing tragic consequences for the girls in Eretz Israel. Their sense of equality to the men had been their main source of pride. Once this sense of equality dissipated, their very identity was shaken."[36] This regression meant a return to women's traditional roles, a fact to which some women responded with dismay and vigorous opposition. Other women accepted this new role imposed upon them by the movement lovingly, with the belief that it was an inseparable part of their duty and destiny.

[36] Gutgeld, "The problem of the young woman in Eretz Israel," 3 n. 34.

In her little book, Gutgeld asked the movement's women to admit that not only were they not men's equals, but that they were inferior to them in their potential for social creativity, and that this was their own fault. She claimed that the female members posed obstacles to the development of the movement's communities.[37] Generations of upbringing had made the women petty and quarrelsome, and had drained them of any initiative they might once have had outside the realm of the family. Small luxuries were the center of women's concerns, she claimed. The time had come for a change: women should overcome their essence and become less feminine. In addition, it was incumbent on the women to become more socially aware, to take an active role in social creativity, that is, political activity and building the community. A gentle smile, warmth, a comforting voice, encouragement—these ought to be rekindled as womens' traits. After all, young men sorely needed these from the relatively small number of young women in the movement's communities. They had to be combined with a stern willpower and a determined resolve to make an impact on the community. Gutgeld wanted the women to participate in the men's world on equal terms. Therefore, any traces of the old femininity that were not enhanced by an awareness of the men's world should be consciously eliminated. The femininity demanded by the young men could only reinforce women's passivity, so women, if I understand Gutgeld correctly, should fuse masculine traits in their lives.

Repeating Yaari's misogynist views, taken from Hans Blüher and Otto Weininger, Gutgeld wrote that the young women posed a threat to the entire community if they directed their erotic impulse towards one man. For women, larger social formations such as nation or class were abstract, far less important than the concrete concepts of husband and family. A married woman sees her husband's life outside of the family as a threat to her and their children—she is envious of her husband's activities. He ought to belong to her exclusively. As soon as one man and one woman paired up, the woman's social activity stopped almost completely, and the man's activity was significantly reduced. They ensconced themselves and by doing so, did "great damage" to the life of the entire community.[38] But in the worst possible

37 Ibid., 11.

38 Ibid., 15.

scenario, according to Gutgeld, the young woman dragged her man out of the kibbutz, regressing to the old, bourgeois family way of life: "And because of this we often hear that entire communities have been dispersed and separated, and this was entirely the women's fault…" Thus women ought to devote themselves to the entire community and should not incite competition between the community and their own individual mates.[39] One can wonder whether Gutgeld's little book did not increase the young women's confusion by encouraging them to adopt an entirely new construction of femininity, one which retains some feminine sense of difference combined with manly action and given with an accusatory warning: do not seek to return to a bourgeois nuclear family structure, because this will destroy the erotic *eda* and the entire kibbutz. You may not love one man only because by doing so you separate him erotically from the community and bring about the dissolution of the *eda*. This manifesto of sorts reflected an anti-feminine mood and demanded a way of life that fused a certain manliness into a hybrid femininity.

As soon as they arrived in Palestine, the young women had to choose between several options: insist on working equally with the men, assume "women's" service roles, or leave their groups and either return to Europe or live in independent circumstances. Many of those who wanted radical equality found themselves transforming their construction of femininity, adopting masculine behavioral and symbolic codes. Doing so was adventurous and the path to heroism. Nathan Bistritzky captured this phenomenon in the following passage, taken from his novel *Yamim ve-lelot*, which was published in 1926 and was based on the story of Bitania:

> Zusia, a girl from a good family, still remembers the shock she experienced at the age of twelve when her body began to ripen early … In fear and desperation she measured her hips … her mounds burst through the thick gray cloth of her schoolgirl uniform. When her period came, she felt attached forever to some dark element … How splendid is the male body! [she thought] How pure in its simplicity of construction, standing erect, free.
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> With a manly jump she boarded the ship going to Asia; she shook hot and sweaty hands right and left and did not kiss "on

[39] Ibid., 16.

> principle"; at the last moment she sent her father, whose hair had turned white in a single night, a jolly postcard with a colorful Italian landscape, on which she wrote: "Goodbye, father! I am going to Eretz Israel. Be a man." She hid her long hair under a Boy Scout cap and wore a sailor's shirt and masculine boots; she learned to stare like a boy straight into the misty eyes of the Italian sailors …
>
> She shunned any work connected even remotely with the kitchen. She worked at paving roads, breaking up stones and boulders. She even tried to work in a quarry. But to no avail: her heavy body pulled her down to the ground … She wanted to say something at the nocturnal talk … but when she realized that one of the young men present might be thinking absentmindedly about women's liberation, or that her voice might become shrill like the voices of women who give lectures, she bit her lower lip and said nothing. "Oh David, if I could be in your place, with a body that has no bulges, I wouldn't be standing in the kitchen!"[40]

Bistritzky was trying to convey in the most empathetic way a young woman's admiration of manliness. Feminine self-deprecation can also be detected in this quote. Even though this passage was written by a man, it conveys a real predicament: gender trouble subjectively experienced by the young women who had joined a pioneering effort designed by men and meant to promote male heroism. According to this passage, young women wanted to take part in this effort not only as men's equals but as men in real life. Such passages call for further research into the construction of femininity in the Labor movement in Palestine. For many of the young women who had to struggle to be recognized as the equals of men in Shomria and Bitania, taking on attributes conventionally associated with men came rather smoothly. After all, did not heroic life demand manly action, hard physical work, dangerous missions, and so on? Women could now make themselves heroes in a man's world. If this may have made them feel equal, it could not help but lead to competition with the young men, whose understanding of the limits and contours of gender construction was unsettled. So, when women became men, as it were,

40 Nathan Bistritzky, *Yamim ve-lelot* (Days and Nights) (Tel Aviv: Hamadpis, 1926).

the fixed gender hierarchy that defined manliness as anything but inferior, weak, and submissive lost its dichotomous structure. In this new, perhaps unwelcome perspective, how could men now determine how manly they "really" were? This construction of femininity, characterizing young pioneers not only from Hashomer Hatzair but from all of Labor Zionism, was perhaps more apparent to outside observers than to the pioneers themselves. Joseph Kessel, a traveler to Palestine in the mid-1920s, described his reaction to a kibbutz community:

> I could not hold back my surprise: was that really a woman? Shoulders of a wrestler, heavy muscular arms, naked legs solid as posts. Unisex clothes, a baggy blouse and pants, both made of thick, coarse, brown cloth. Hair completely shaven, cheeks tanned and leathery. Only the bobbing about of the breast under the brittle garment, and a certain softness of the mouth explained why such a childlike voice belonged to such a muscular body. The young woman stood at the entrance to the stable with a rake in her hand. Her naked feet nervously pushed at straw and manure. Her embarrassment was obvious… Before she immigrated to Palestine this young woman from a well-to-do family had studied medicine![41]

On the whole, for many young women, a man's work was the first choice. Jonah Schiffmiller (Oren) came to Palestine from Lwów on May 5, 1920, with her Hashomer Hatzair group. She was sent to work at Merhavia, a farm where two groups of young pioneers were already working. Jonah joined the smaller group of twelve, where the only other woman immediately assumed that Jonah would replace her in the kitchen. Jonah complied, but after serving her first meal, the entire group demanded that the previous member resume her kitchen duties. Jonah moved to working in the fields, where she cleared stones and weeded out the stubborn Jujube weed. Here too a sexual division of labor took place: working in pairs, the young men chopped

41 Joseph Kessel, *Terre d'Amour*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1965), quoted by Joachim Schloer, "Der Nackte und der Bekleidete Körper" in *"Der Schejne Jid": Das Bild des "Jüdischen Körpers" in Mythos und Ritual,* ed. Sander L. Gilman, Robert Juette and Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1999), 131.

the Jujube out and then uprooted it with a hoe; the women's job was to clear the dirt around the plant's roots to uproot it completely. Jonah wrote: "I disagreed with those who said that a woman was unable to work as a man. I revolted, took an axe and a hoe, and worked together with another young woman. Our yield was not lower than that of the young men."[42]

But not all of the young men who sailed to Jaffa with Hashomer Hatzair groups turned against the young women who shared their travails. Hanan Nesher Adler dedicated his entire contribution to *Kehiliatenu* to a compelling refutation of Blüher's teachings about the male society. He even managed to turn Blüher against the Blüherites:

> I found a beautiful image in Blüher's book, a symbol of women's potential to love: the hand of a man cleared away some rocks and built some brick houses, firm houses, a man's toil. But these houses among the cleared rocks remained empty and gloomy and the land was wasted, desolate, until the moment of woman's arrival. With her power of love she set plants, flowers, and an entire garden around each house.

Addressing the women pioneers, he then wrote:

> I dreamed that each of you will sink deep roots in our community, and that after you devote yourselves to us, each of you will consecrate her heart to a loving brother, to your chosen one… I saw living flowers, little children in the sun, bringing life and joy to our camp.[43]

Adler was dismayed by the ideal of an exclusive male society. A community in which women were not men's partners in a family life seemed to him meaningless, futile, barren. Deep sympathy for the women whom Blüher undervalued led Adler to read Blüher against the grain: in the passage above he turned the male society ideal on its head: a loving union between man and woman should not be seen as a threat to the *eda*, but its possible consequence.

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42 Yehuda Erez, *Sefer ha-Aliya ha-shelishit* (Book of the Third Aliya) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved), vol. I, 417.

43 Nesher Adler, *Kehiliatenu*, 103.

There is a substantial and growing body of research literature on Zionism and masculinity. This literature varies, but mostly connects Zionism with an intensification of masculinity to the point of macho. This field of research found a conceptual beginning in Daniel Boyarin's anti-Zionist scholarly political pamphlet titled "Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man." In this extremely valuable book, cloaked in a post-colonial theoretical critique, Boyarin contrasts the aggressive male fantasies of the Central European ideological founders of Zionism to the former much more gentle constructions of the ideal masculinity in the European Jewish Diaspora. Boyarin correctly claims that Zionism was fantasized as the ticket to white male domination in a colonial setting, that is, outside of Europe. In other words, Zionism allowed the now reformed, muscular Jewish male of the Diaspora to be respected as a "real man" by those who may determine who indeed is a real man. Other books followed this direction, notably Michael Gluzman's *The Zionist Body* and Raz Yosef's *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema*.[44] Both books emphasize the machoization of the Jewish male in the cultural production of Zionism (literature and cinema). Above these theoretically-minded discussions towers George Mosse's discussion of Zionism in his path-breaking "The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity," in which he too traces the drive to an intensified masculinity in the ideological framework of Zionism.[45]

I propose to see the Bitania variant of Labor Zionism as offering an alternative to this research unanimity. The construction of masculinity as a drive to hyper-virility is explicit and undeniable. However, at the same time, both the practices and expressions from the early years in Palestine point to a much more complex construction of masculinity, one that consciously creates a cocktail of macho with soft, fragile sensitivity. At times these contradicting tendencies created an unresolved tension. At other times, this combination was more at peace with itself. Expressing one's emotions in public view is abhorred by men seeking to embolden their masculinity. For future research,

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44 Michael Gluzman, [Hebrew] *The Zionist Body*, and Raz Yosef, *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema* (New Bruswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

45 See George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 151–2.

I propose to see this peculiar combination of hyper-virility with sensitive, soft, and fragile undertones as a corrective to our present understanding of Zionism as a path to aggressive masculinity *tout court*. The cultural result of this peculiar combination of virility and sensitivity can be traced in the Israeli genre of *Siach Lochamim* (Soldiers Talk). Much like *Kehiliatenu*'s structure, Soldiers Talk is a collection of monologues of young Israeli soldiers who participated in the Six-Day War, most of whom came from the Kibbutz movement. The book had no commercial ambition but became an instant bestseller and was soon translated into several languages, titled in English *The Seventh Day: Soldiers Talk About the Six-Day War*.[46] The book reveals the prevalence of moral reprehension many soldiers felt with respect to their battlefield experiences, contemplating and agonizing about the brutalizing effects of war. This collection too should be examined in terms of gender construction. An indirect line can be imagined between Bitania's *Kehiliatenu* collection and the now canonical Soldiers Talk.

In the sources we encounter expressions such as the following, made by member David Kahane:

> Our social-cultural project is inextricably bound to ourselves—each beloved face and soul. Take one of us away, and the entire project will be lacking… Cultural creativity is the fruit of a brotherhood which embraces the man who comes forth not with an abstract idea but with love, yearning, and devotion… Without this fundamental condition, there shall be no creative culture. It does not originate in an external form but in man, be he solitary or related erotically to his brothers.[47]

It seems that opening one's heart to others present does not diminish one's masculinity; on the contrary. Thus, the wish to create a hyper-virile "new man," a model to negate the weak, decrepit "old man" of the Diaspora, ironically resulted in a construction of something completely different: a new, sensitive man. Tragic man eventually proved to be a man conscious of his innermost feelings; the wish for heroic masculinity metamorphosed into a much softer construction

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46 Stuart A. Cohen, *Israel and Its Army: From Cohesion to Confusion* (London: Routledge, 2008), 141–2.

47 David Kahane's contribution to *Kehiliatenu*, 53.

of manliness. Ironically, the male fantasies that fueled a drive to rehabilitate the Jew of the Diaspora into a heroic tragic man brought about a construction of a thoughtful, sensitive, at times very visibly soft masculinity.

On one hand we have expressions like the following, made by member Shimon Wolf, who described the essence of life in the *eda* in a poem:

Our community creates a collective soul

Forged in the fire of religiosity, eternally regenerating
We are its priests, presiding at the fire
With dynamite we shall explode these boulders and release the powers within them
We shall dig the earth and redeem the bewitched spirits dwelling in the Earth's crust
We shall pave roads into the future
Every night in our shack we share the dream
Each and every night we melt the Gypsies' clay jewels into steel tools
Our soul shall be suffused with the blood that flows into the goblet we share
We all drink from that goblet, infused with living powers
We all drink from that goblet and dance around the campfire
At dawn we resume our labor, simple, gray
Gray but without drudgery
There is meaning even in the most menial creation, in the simplest utterance.[48]

This poem is a hyper-virile hymn to the process in which the new man of Zionism is born. This new man is shaped from clay—a soft material associated with rootless gypsies. He transforms into steel tools, useful for digging the earth in an ecstatic show of religiosity where blood flows into a reshaping of being, both in space ("dig the earth") and in time ("pave roads into the future"). But the component in this poem that marks it as peculiar to Hashomer Hatzair and its understanding of the *eda* is the desire here to make the new man part of a melting of a group of people into one single being. Wolf

48 Shimon Wolf, *Kehiliatenu*, 260–1.

names the *eda* a collective soul. This shedding of one's individuality for the purpose of fusion into an erotic, single, unified whole captures the essence of the Bitania ideal. A "collective soul" allowed an escape from the imagined subjective feeling of isolation in the atomized bourgeois society. It is the desired result of the manifest goal of Landauer's mystical communitarianism, aided by Nietzsche's Dionysian ecstasy (dancing around the campfire). The goal of the *eda* was to negate the core of *principium individuationis*, the modern impediment for spontaneous merging with the flow of life. Exploding boulders, digging holes, paving roads, and dancing into the night are here portrayed as the ways in which these gypsies from a condemned Diaspora redeem themselves. On the other hand, the practice of public confession and the affirmation of doubt on the path to meaningful action betray an incomplete, doubted macho, a much more complex construction of masculinity that fuses into it an acceptance of softness and contemplation.

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