

**THE INFLUENCE OF EUROPEAN WRITERS ON THE HEBREW WRITER  
S.Y. AGNON**

**by**

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## INTRODUCTION

In concluding a speech given at a memorial tribute to S.Y. Agnon, Professor Dr. S. D. Gottein stated:

In conclusion, as rightly expressed in the bestowal of the Nobel Prize, Agnon is the representative Hebrew writer of our age. Since Biblical times there has not been in the Hebrew language a corpus of narrative prose of the magnitude, dignity, and meaningfulness as that of Agnon's creation. He has done for Hebrew prose what Yehuda Halevy has achieved in religious poetry. Halevy wrote in the forms and the spirits of the 12th century. Agnon expressed the mood and the refinement of the 20th century. But both are the mouthpieces of genuine and integral Judaism.... Yehuda Halevy in religious poetry and Shmuel Yosef Agnon in narrative prose are the most genuine and the most perfect artistic exponents of post-Biblical Judaism.<sup>1</sup>

It is therefore no wonder that Agnon's works have aroused a steadily increasing interest among scholars as well as the general public of Israel (and of late throughout the entire world). Even before the late Shmuel Yosef Agnon, of blessed memory, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in December 1966, his work aroused interest and discussion in many European countries. However, since this historical literary event, his life-work has become part and parcel of World Literature. And since the English language is one of the main channels through which one gains or spreads knowledge throughout the world, we have decided to contribute our small part by opening another little lattice for the lovers of literature, who will be able, we hope, to reach, at least partly, the startling range of the abovementioned Hebrew writer's genius through our research.

In this research we intend to prove that there is more

than just pure coincidence for the similarities and parallelism seen in the works of Agnon and some European writers. Moreover it will be rather more scientific and more interesting to show the possible influence of some of the most famous European writers on Agnon's work, than to deal just with the parallelisms between some of their writings. We also have to take into consideration that the concept "influence" has a broader meaning than "parallelism"; and this demands that we delve deeper into the subject and that we should not be satisfied with simple similarities and superficial conclusions.

We wish to stress that even when we assume influence, even that which we shall prove, this is not to say that Agnon was aping or copying. Even more so, we dare to say that no one will be able to prove that he was conscious of the different sources of influence on his work in general and on any work in particular, even though he does not deny the existence or the possibility of influence on his work.

In all the material which we have scrutinized for this research - books, essays, personal letters published or exhibited - we did not find any occasion where the writer himself admitted any influence or any European or non-European writer that he was conscious about, and even when asked about it he denied that he had consciously been influenced by any writer mentioned to him. There is no doubt that he read a lot of European literature in German, Yiddish or Hebrew. We have his own enthusiastic remarks on certain European writers. We do not say: Agnon read this writer's works and therefore this proves that he was influenced. We dare however to say: Agnon admits he read the works of A. B. C. writers, he admits that every reader is influenced by what he is reading, and as we find similar motifs, characters, situations, descriptions and

plots in Agnon's works, we feel that we have proved the existence of influence. Even so, we do not claim that this influence was conscious or that this is a result of aping or plagiarism.

In his speech delivered at the banquet honoring the laureates in Stockholm, when he received the Nobel Prize for Literature, he personally raised and answered the above-mentioned question by stating:

Who were my mentors in poetry and literature? That is a matter of opinion. Some see in my books the influence of authors whose names, in my ignorance, I have not even heard, while others see the influences of poets whose names I have heard but whose writings I have not read. And what is my opinion? From whom did I receive nurture? Not every man remembers the name of the cow which supplied him with each drop of milk he has drunk. But in order not to leave you totally in the dark, I will try to clarify for you from whom I received whatever I have received. First and foremost, there are the Sacred Scriptures, from which I learned how to combine letters. Then there are the Mishna and the Talmud and the Midrashim and Rashi's commentary on the Torah. After these come the Poskim - the later explicators of Talmudic law - and our sacred poets and the medieval sages, led by our Master, Rabbi Moses, son of Maimon, known as Maimonides, of blessed memory.

When I first began to combine letters other than Hebrew, I read every book in German that came my way, and from there I certainly received according to the nature of my soul.<sup>2</sup>

From these quotations it is clear and obvious that S.Y. Agnon denies totally the existence of any influence he was conscious of from any writer even if he had read his work, and he emphasized that most of the names mentioned by the critics were not even known to him, even more so their writings.

Therefore, the aim of this study will be to demonstrate, convince and prove to the reader that there was influence, although unconsciously, on Agnon's works, that the works of these writers have been read by Agnon, according to his own admission, and also which motifs, scenes and characters or plots left their traces and impression on his monumental work.

We are not pretentious to think that each and every aspect discussed in this study is a novelty, but we would venture to say that many are, otherwise we would not have decided to devote to this study the time, effort and devotion it needed to be brought to a fruitful conclusion. Surely some of the aspects discussed at length in this study have been mentioned previously by various scholars and critics, but none of them were treated in depth and should it have been treated, it was never consolidated into a monograph. This is not said in criticism but to point out that to these scholars and critics it was of secondary importance and therefore discussed briefly and sometimes only mentioned in passing. Even so, there is more than just a change of emphasis on certain themes made conspicuous in this study. We believe that this is the first study ever written on the subject of possible influence of European Literature on Agnon's writings, which seems to have been proved through selected comparisons between works of European writers that Agnon himself admitted to have read with admiration and pleasure, and Agnon's work itself.

The scholar who wants to find traces of European literature in Agnon's works can do so by three main methods. First, he can read all the works of all the writers Agnon admitted that he read and to compare them with Agnon's works thereby coming to certain general conclusions which cover all his works based on similarities found and made conspicuous. Second, he

can pick out motifs or stylistic similarities from one or more works. And third, he can pick out single works from some of the European writers and compare them to Agnon's works in as much detail as possible. For the purpose of this study and its limits, the writer preferred mainly the second and third methods.

Another problem encountered was how to bring to the knowledge of those reading Agnon in English, the background for the hints and symbols in these works without interrupting the fluency and without distracting them from the main action.

This aim was the guiding line of the structure of this study, compelling the writer of this study to elaborate on some themes seemingly irrelevant and even somewhat superfluous, such as the problem of translating from Hebrew, the need for explanatory notes as well as a brief biography. This may also explain why not all the chapters are connected from the formal point of view. The bridge is established by continuity in the treatment of the same subject matter.

\*

The first chapter deals with the problem of translating Agnon from Hebrew, in which we explain to the reader, not only the difficulties the translator faces generally but mainly the well known fact that through the process of translating from one language to another some elements of paramount importance in the original text get lost. For instance, the style of writing, the idiomatic expressions used by the writer, and the association of ideas some words evoke in the readers of the original text, etc. We also discuss the need for explanatory notes for the reader of Agnon's works, even those reading the original Hebrew, and even more so the general reader who has no knowledge of Biblical and Talmudical



texts and therefore cannot be aware of the many allusions to the abovementioned sources without these enlightening notes.

The second chapter gives a very concise biography of Agnon mainly because such a biography is not yet available in book form as of this date.

In the third chapter we outline briefly the different views on Agnon's indebtedness to European literature. The source of these views are taken mainly from books or periodicals published by scholars and critics.

The fourth chapter consists of a brief scrutiny of Agnon's own statements and letters regarding possible influence of European writers on his works as well as names of authors whose works he read and some of whom impressed him greatly. This chapter also includes a very brief study of the views of five young Israeli writers who answer positively to the question of whether or not Agnon influenced their work and who also express their opinions on the question of influence.

The fifth chapter makes conspicuous the influence of classical literature on Agnon's works. Some of the similarities and allusions are truly amazing and are completely unexpected even by the general Hebrew reader.

The sixth chapter points out the influence of Scandinavian literature by comparing some of Hamson's works to Agnon revealing similar motifs, expressions, etc. Agnon's graceful style has contributed considerably to the fact that foreign influence is not noticeable and to this day delights the reader of Modern Hebrew. However, to the attentive reader these similarities can not be overlooked completely.

Chapter seven shows the influence of Russian literature by a comparison of some striking similarities between the motifs and stylistic expressions of Dostoyevsky's and Agnon's

world.

The eighth chapter consists of the Balzac-Agnon comparison and provides evidence (in the form of numerous quotations) that Agnon was influenced by Balzac.

The ninth chapter is devoted to our interpretation of the story Vehaya he'akov lemishor, the more important of the two stories by Agnon compared in the previous chapter. Here we also quote and consider the other interpretations as well.

The tenth chapter continues the comparison of the above mentioned works of Agnon and Balzac and compares them with similar motifs in one of the works of each of the following writers: Tennyson, Crabbe and A.A. Procter, although Agnon never mentioned or admitted that he read any of these writers' works.

We devote the eleventh chapter entirely to a comparison between The Bridal Canopy by Agnon and Don Quixote by Cervantes, in which influence is proven by a detailed comparison of only the first part, as a complete and minute comparison would have demanded a voluminous study of a few volumes.

The twelfth chapter is devoted to the subject of symbolism in Agnon's Vehaya he'akov lemishor and in some of his other stories.

Since the last study on Agnon was published in the English language many critical essays and some books were published in Hebrew as well as in English, in addition to three books recently published posthumously from Agnon's manuscripts. These will all be included in the bibliography.

In the appendixes we brought (I) a comparative table of the motifs in the compared works; (II) Agnon's version of Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav's tale; (III) Osterling's speech at the Nobel prize ceremony; (IV) Agnon's speech at the Nobel

Prize ceremony in the English translation published by the Swedish Academy; and (V) A critical remark to Colonel Chabert.

All quotations from the original Hebrew texts were translated by the writer of this study unless otherwise specified.

The quotations from Greek, Scandinavian and French literature were taken from English translations of these works, except where this was not available, in which case it was also translated by this writer from Hebrew through a comparison with the German translation.

#### NOTES

1. A Memorial Tribute to Dr. Shmuel Yosef Agnon, The Dropsie University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., March, 1970, p. 12.
2. Les Prix Nobel en 1966, Stockholm, 1967, Imprimerie Royale, published by P.A. Norstedt and Soner. From Agnon's speech, pp. 69-70.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM OF TRANSLATING AGNON FROM HEBREW

#### 1. Introduction

The dissemination and growth of Jewish literature, and thereby knowledge of the culture of the Jewish peoples, from very early times was through translations. At the beginning this was limited to the ancient languages such as Aramaic, Greek, Latin and Arabic which was the lingua franca<sup>1</sup> of the Jews in the lands of their dispersion, but as, of course, the local population understood these languages the material was also available to their scholars.

The need for translations from Hebrew into all the languages of the modern world is of paramount importance, not only for political or propaganda purposes, for it is only through a modern idiomatic translation, of both the modern and ancient literature and poetry of the Hebrew people, that their present culture, and its ancient origins, can be established and appreciated.

It will therefore be understood that a tremendous responsibility rests upon the shoulders of any would-be translator. For the Jewish reader, even without a working knowledge of the Hebrew or Yiddish languages, (who has learned and retained a minimum acquaintanceship with the cultural nuances of his people, even through a popular or not completely accurate translation from the original into, say, English, French, Spanish, etc.,) will be able to appreciate the meaning of what the writer is trying to say and to fit it into its proper place in the historical and cultural evolution of the Jews. For the non-Jewish reader such a background cannot be expected, hence

the need for a more accurate and detailed translation, accompanied, where necessary, by explanatory notes.

Generally speaking, people are so used to being supplied with translated literature that they take the same for granted and do not concern themselves, or may not even be aware of, the problems of a translator. The person with no knowledge of a language other than that of his native land may not even be aware of the fact that a literal word-for-word translation of any material would result in a jungle of disconnected words wherein not only the content, but also the spirit and music of the original text would be completely lost and rendered unintelligible. The translator therefore has, to some extent, to rewrite the story into the accepted tempo of the new language and, at the same time, give over the emotional and associative nuances which were used by the author in his original.

## 2. Various views on translation

There are many views on the problems of translating literature from one language into the other but we shall mention here only a few representative views.

Curt Leviant, in his interesting essay Translating Agnon<sup>2</sup>, distinguishes between "two types of translation. One may be termed verbal and the other cultural". Even for the first one "one must have the rudimentary working tools of the language - that is knowledge of vocabulary, idiom, grammar and syntax. However, the second type of translation involving cultural interpretation, is infinitely more complex. Here the translator is confronted with not merely the linguistic problem of conveying a word or an expression from one language to another, but of rendering the nuances of a culture - its very essence, its soul".<sup>3</sup>

One who truly wants to understand "everything in a classical Hebrew work has to be familiar with a great deal of the Jewish culture's usable past".<sup>4</sup> "This holds true", writes Leviant, "especially for writings of Shmuel Yosef Agnon whose Hebrew is inseparable from the mainstream of the classical Hebrew tradition",<sup>5</sup> therefore one who is about to translate Agnon's work into one of the modern languages has to face an additional problem of primary importance; namely the style that the translator will use in rendering Agnon's original textual style. It must be borne in mind that, since the style of the original text is one of the most important elements which charmed the readers of this famous writer's works in its original language, it is inconceivable that any translator will dare to bypass or disconsider it.

Agnon makes good use of biblical and post-biblical style which he mixes, in his genuine and virtuous manner, with Talmudic and Rabbinic (post-Talmudic) style. The translator must therefore "be aware of the endless array of quotes and phrases from the entirety of Hebrew literature - from Bible through Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, the medieval poets and exegetes, hasidic lore, customs and Jewish history".<sup>6</sup>

Sometimes Agnon prepares the reader for the classical phrases in stating "As it is written" or "As it is said", but more often his "allusions and phrases blend smoothly into the fabric of his prose".<sup>7</sup> To illustrate this point, Leviant states "The concluding line to a brief folk-story, The Tale of the Goat<sup>8</sup> reads "May he flourish in old age, sprouting in verdure, in the lands of the living, tranquil and serene". Here, Agnon alludes to three different biblical verses and, at the same time, parodies a technique of medieval Hebrew prose. One phrase is from Psalm 92, The Psalm for the Sabbath,

another is from Psalm 116, also found in the Hallel prayer,<sup>9</sup> while the concluding phrase is from Jeremiah 30:10. The entire line is composed of two clauses and the final word of each clause rhymes. Here Agnon parodies the *magama* technique of rhymed prose utilized by some of the medieval Spanish-Jewish writers of the 'Golden Age'.<sup>10</sup> How is it possible to expect a reader, even one fairly knowledgeable in the Bible, to discover the biblical sources of Agnon's style without being guided by the translators hints or footnotes? This, even more so, holds true in the case of a Talmudic, Midrashic or Rabbinic character or situation hinted at in a story, the source of which the average reader, even a Jewish one, could not be familiar with. Only those few Jews who have received an extensive traditional Jewish education - in Eastern Europe, Israel, the United States of America or South Africa - consisting of Hebrew, Bible and Talmud would have no difficulty in reading and understanding Agnon.<sup>11</sup> This same opinion is comprehensively expressed by Curt Leviant when he states:

Agnon is unique, *sui generis*. He is extremely difficult to translate, - but, paradoxically, not so difficult to read.<sup>12</sup>

The vocabulary of Agnon is rather classic and simple. The difficulty in translating Agnon is not in rendering a recondite vocabulary or idiom, but in conveying the essence of his allusions and prismatic meanings. Like Dante, much of Agnon can be read on various levels. Basically, there is always of course, as there always must be, the simple story level, for this is the frame work upon which all other levels of meaning depend. In addition to the story level, there can also be the allegoric, religious and mystical levels, corresponding to the four categories of ancient biblical interpretation: Pschat (literal or plain interpretation), Drash (homiletic interpretation), Remez (a hint, an allusion or an allegory), and Sod (Kabbalahic or mystical).<sup>13</sup>

To offer a parallel, his writings would not sound like a hodge-podge of Anglo-Saxon, Chaucerian, Elizabethan and modern English. Nor should a translators.<sup>14</sup>

To illustrate this special aspect of Agnon's style, we should like to cite another example. In the story, A Whole Loaf<sup>15</sup> Agnon speaks of a man who invented a better mousetrap. "No doubt", says the narrator, "this is very useful" - the translator's pale rendering of the Hebrew tikkun gadol. Tikkun, in Hebrew, can mean a repair or an improvement, indeed something useful. However, tikkun is also a technical religious term which means "correction of worldly imperfections". In other words, there is both a physical and metaphysical weight to the word tikkun and its glance extends in many directions. The word tikkun can be applied to fixing a chair or to moral reformation. This word then may serve as a paradigm for countless other words or phrases which, through the several thousand years of Hebrew linguistic and literary tradition, have taken on many different meanings.<sup>16</sup>

Not only certain words need the attention of the translator, but also little stories within larger ones. Even names of stories, or their protagonists, have a meaning - many times a prophetic or an allegorical one. "And it is this deep rootedness within a literary tradition that surprises and delights both reader and translator alike."<sup>17</sup>

As we have already pointed out, there are some 'losses' in any translation which cannot be avoided. For, only seldom, does the translator transmit to his readers successfully the rhythm, the 'music', the connotations and the associations of the original text. Or, in Leviant's words,

There is a musical quality in Agnon's prose which offers the translator another problem; how to convey the sense of classic prose without sounding archaic or mannered, a trap which many of Agnon's translators fall into; and how to preserve the rhythm and occasional assonance, alliteration, word play and even rhymes.<sup>18</sup>



Having said all this, we can only conclude that the richer the style of a writer is with linguistic virtuosity and ornamental expressions, the greater the 'loss' will be in the translation; but this was never an impediment, or daunted any translator throughout the ages.

It must be emphasized that the reader of a translated work experiences a different pleasure, no matter how aesthetic and exciting it may be, than that of the reader in the original. It is the duty of the translator to see that any differences are as minimal as possible. The translations of the Bible into most of the world's languages and dialects, of Homer, or of the works of the Eastern world into Western languages, or vice-versa, have an invaluable artistic and emotional value regardless of the distance between the cultures and the peoples involved.<sup>19</sup>

This optimistic view concerning the value and validity of translated works explains why, despite all the problems involved, "Agnon has been translated into more than a dozen languages, including all the major European and Scandinavian languages as well as Hungarian, Arabic and even Chinese. For it is his narrative mastery, his fully realized characters and his universal themes of man spiritually lost and wrenched from his environment that have made his writings understandable in various cultures".<sup>20</sup>

Another, although similar, view of the difficulties the translator faces when dealing with Agnon's work and, in spite of which the charm of his writings remained, is convincingly expressed by Arnold Band when he writes:

Though difficult to translate because of the extreme Hebraicism of his style, Agnon in translation is still an engaging writer. He can spin a tale like few writers of our century, but he can also render, quite

sensitively, the fragmentary moods of the disinherited intellectual as in the Sefer Hama'asim (The Book of Deeds or Tales) cycle. The reader cannot escape the impression that in both his serious and comic moods, Agnon is a master craftsman.

Beyond merely aesthetic considerations, one encounters Agnon as the artistic interpreter of the cultural crisis of our century - cultural crisis, incidentally, which is not the monopoly of Jews. Working through specifically Jewish situations however, Agnon seizes upon situations which display the universally human problems of his heroes and antiheroes. His story may take place in the Galicia of his childhood, in Jaffa of the Second Aliyah,<sup>21</sup> or in urban Germany; the principals may be Hasidim, halutzim or Jewish shopkeepers; the language may hark back to the rabbinic prose style of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries - but the situations are universal.<sup>22</sup>

### 3. Agnon's own opinion on translated literature

It is not often that we are fortunate in having the views of an author expressed on the subject of translation of his writings. In the case of Agnon however, we have the opportunity of learning his views on the matter through an interview he had with Galiah Yardeni.

Replying to the question:

...if the knowledge of the sources is an indispensable key to the understanding of your works, which are brimful with biblical, talmudic, hasidic, etc. associations; and if only this one, who knows to cover them into their depth and perfection (only he) will understand the full meaning of your stories?<sup>23</sup>

Agnon, very frankly, said:

My works have been translated into English, Swedish, Polish, Italian, Hungarian and to more languages. Of course, the folk of the (original) language understand more. But, if the works have an intrinsic value, the essence thereof remains, even in translations in which there is no room for all these associations, of language, of a certain way of life. Behold, we read

books which were written thousands of years ago. We have lost, already long ago, many of the associations of language and of life, that the readers of their times tasted in them. Nevertheless, in good literature there always remains enough, that every generation will savour it in good taste, will experience its beauty and will see the picturesqueness thereof.<sup>24</sup>

From reading the above answer it is clear that Agnon had a most positive appreciation for the translation of good literature as a means of fruitful multilateral cultural contact between different peoples, their literature and culture, even if it spanned the centuries.

In support of this view we find another interview by Raphael Bashan, which was published only after Agnon's death. In this interview we read a similar answer given by Agnon to the specific question:

Is it at all possible to pour Agnon's style from one language into another one?

Rashy<sup>25</sup> Agnon answered with a riddle:

Any book can not be translated and everyone can be.

I understood and I did not understand until he explained:

If they (the translators) could translate the Bible, not to mention them in the same breath, to many of the world languages, then there is also the possibility of translating my books. But what happens? The aroma cannot be transmitted. It is impossible. And all this because the Hebrew word has a history as wide and deep as the ocean, and every expression is frequent in tens, perhaps hundreds of places - and which bring to mind (to the memory) associations without limit and without end.<sup>26</sup>

Agnon's answer was given to the above mentioned question after which he expressed his satisfaction with the fact that Vehaya he'akov le mishor was printed in 80,000 copies, and that it was translated into German five times. In Polish, it was published in the newspaper Chvilda in Lemberg in install-

ments. It was translated also into the Swedish language, into Hungarian, and twice into Italian.<sup>27</sup> Agnon's pride in the many translations of his works is clearly evidence of his positive appreciation for the value of good translations.

In a later interview, however, "Agnon was not too optimistic about translations, and told one of the many interviewers, who had plagued him during the past weeks, a story of a man in Germany who learned several languages in order to read the Bible in different versions. Finally, he also learned Hebrew and then realized that all the translations had been no more than shadows of the original. Such a comparison surprises nobody; at most there might be an argument as to whether he was half-joking or perfectly serious."<sup>28</sup>

It is our feeling, however, that despite the above-mentioned remarks, that 'translations are no more than shadows of the original' and do some injustice to his works, Agnon felt that it was still valuable to allow his works to be translated into as many languages as possible.

#### 4. The need for explanatory notes<sup>29</sup>

Agnon is a great writer and in most, and certainly the best of his writings, we find factual descriptions of the historical and geographical realities to which his stories refer. He recalls, with exceptional detail, the time and place of the events, this in addition to the extraordinary imaginative forces and talent of an aesthetical and descriptive nature which he brings to his characters and events.

It is worthy of note, however, that while his descriptions are actual, and his geographical detail exact, Agnon does not give us a photograph of that which he has seen, a photograph which, very sensitively, registers everything and re-

flects it afterwards on a screen. He is more like a painter, like an artist who knows how to make conspicuous the important and the eternal; and to ignore the ephemeral and that of temporary value. For example, if one wishes to reconstruct in his mind the period of the Second Aliyah he will never have it so clearly constructed as in Agnon's novels - even though the reader might have access to all the newspapers and documents of the period. In other words, Agnon gives us an artistic as well as a historical and geographical approach to the events and to the characters involved in them.

Another point that should be stressed is that only readers with a similar education and knowledge - which is based on the Jewish tradition and on a wide and deep knowledge of the Bible, the Talmud and the later Jewish literature - will be able to properly understand the characters, the connotations and the hints scattered throughout his stories. Of his original style, there is nothing to compare it with throughout the ages.<sup>30</sup> Because of being so attractive to the learned and to the pious, it will now be very difficult for his writings to be understood clearly by the new generation of Jewish readers, those with a different social, cultural and religious background, without a detailed and comprehensive introductory chapter explaining the historical and geographical events alluded to, or, at the very least, detailed explanatory notes.<sup>31</sup>

Generally speaking, the historical background of Agnon's stories extend from 1775 until 1960 - if not until the very date that he fell sick and ceased to create. Geographically, the locale is in Galicia, from East of Lemberg and North of the Dniester River, but especially in Buczacz, where he was born and grew up. Central Germany - Berlin, Leipzig and

Munich - also play a great part in his stories but a special role is reserved to the Holy Land - Jaffa and Jerusalem - both, under Turkish rule, under the British Mandate and the new State of Israel.

Therefore, if we desire that a young reader will be able to properly understand and appreciate Agnon's works, we have to give explanatory notes to the stories and novels.

As Professor Brauer writes, "There is a German saying, 'if you want to understand the poet, go to his country'." While we cannot all be fortunate enough to be world travellers, the next best thing is to supply the reader with maps, or even photographs of the landscape, where the characters of the novel or stories live. There is also the need for explanations of the ideas, of the hopes, of the worries, the naive and religious behavior of the peoples of whom he writes, and of their philosophy of life and the meaning of death. Without these the young readers, the modern readers, especially those whose background is atheistic, will not be able to understand the peculiar behavior of these characters and what a meaningful life they led - twenty, fifty and even seventy years ago.<sup>32</sup>

In summary, therefore, we may state that there is a great danger that some of the elements of paramount importance in the original text may be lost through the translation thereof from one language into another as, for example, the uniqueness of the style, the exposure of the characters, the idiomatic language used by the author, the sweetness of some expressions or the association of ideas and nostalgia, that the original words awake in the readers of the original.

Although to a large extent we may say 'Traductore-traditore', which freely translated means 'the translator is a traitor', Agnon, despite this, has and will continue to be translated, because as he himself said, "If the works have an intrinsic value, the essence thereof remains, even in the translation."<sup>33</sup>

In a similar expression to that quoted above, namely: 'If you want to understand the poet, go to his country', we may also say, and rightly so: 'If you want to understand the poet, go and read his biography'. And as there is as yet no available up-to-date biography of Agnon, we felt that at least a brief review of some biographical data must be summarized and included for the reader.

#### NOTES

1. The first oral translators are those known from the Talmudic period when every Jewish Tanna (an authority quoted in the Mishnah) used to have an interpreter-translator who transmitted his words to the people in their (local) language. We find also earlier translations into the Greek language and later into Latin. As the Jewish people were dispersed into various countries so too grew the number of languages into which the original texts of Judaism were translated.
2. LEVIANT, C., Translating Agnon, Hebrew Abstracts, National Association of Professors of Hebrew in American Institutions of Higher Learning, 80 Washington Square East, New York, New York, U.S.A., Vol. XI (1966-67) pp. 17-20.

3. Ibid., pp. 17.
4. Ibid., pp. 18.
5. Ibid., pp. 19.
6. Ibid., pp. 18.
7. Ibid., pp. 19.
8. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, "The Fable of the Goat", London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1970, Nahum N. Glatzer, Ed., translated by Barney Rubin, pp. 26-29.
9. The Hallel prayer is composed of ten psalms which are recited during the morning service of the first day of each Rosh Chodesh (new month) with the exception of the month of Tishrei, which is Rosh Hashanah (the new year). This Hallel prayer is also recited on the Passover, Shavuot (Weeks), Tabernacle and Chanukah (Rededication) festivals.
10. LEVIANT, C., Translating Agnon, p. 19.
11. Of course, every reader can understand Agnon. However, what we mean here is the depth of the symbolic hints, associations and allusions through the use of language, the irony hidden in their composure as well as in some of the situations and even the characters.
12. LEVIANT, C., Translating Agnon, p. 18.
13. Ibid., p. 19. The explanation in brackets is not given in the original text.
14. Ibid., p. 19.
15. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, "A Whole Loaf", translated by I.M. Lask, op. cit., pp. 79-95.



16. LEVIANT, C., Translating Agnon, p. 19.
17. Ibid., p. 20.
18. Ibid.
19. Professor Chaim Rabin discusses, very comprehensively, all the aspects of this subject in his critical essay "Hearot Balshaniot le Bayat Targum Divrei Shay Agnon le Loazit" (Linguistic remarks to the problem of the translation of Agnon's works into a foreign language), published in Yuval Shai, Tel Aviv, Bar Ilan University, Kurzweil, ed., pp. 13-25, on the occasion of Agnon's seventieth birthday.
20. LEVIANT, C., Translating Agnon, p. 20.
21. The Jewish immigrants who immigrated to Palestine during the years 1904-1914 are mentioned in the history of the Zionist movement and in the literature as the Second Aliyah - the second immigration - of a large group of Jewish idealistic pioneers, especially from Eastern Europe.
22. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare, Jerusalem Post article, October 21, 1966, p. 12.
23. YARDENI, G., Shesh Esreh Sichot im Sofrim (Sixteen Interviews with Writers), Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1961, p. 64.
24. Ibid.
25. Rashy are the initials of Agnon's first names with the rabbinical title: Rabbi Shmuel Yosef. It is a common use in Hebrew, either oral or in writing, to give initials

of the first names.

26. Maariv, February 20, 1970, p. 16.
27. Ibid.
28. BEN-DOR, L., Congress, (A journal of opinion and Jewish affairs - bi-weekly) November 7, 1966, vol. 33, no. 14, New York, p. 17.
29. BRAWER, A.Y., Al hatsorech bemevo'ot historiyyi'm vege' ografiyim lekhitve Agnon (About the need for historical and geographical introductions to Agnon's works), Yuval Shai, Ramat Gan, 1958, Kurzweil, ed., pp. 35-38.
30. BRAWER, A.J. brings in the above-mentioned essay a story about a Rabbi who suffered from insomnia and having at his disposal Agnon's book Hakhnasat Kalah (The Bridal Canopy) read it and couldn't stop until he had finished the book. He stresses that if you would have supplied the Rabbi with one of the best sellers or of the Belle-lettres of any European or American writer, he would hardly have been able to read but a few pages of it, but here he could not stop in the middle, even for a while. This demonstrates how much Agnon's work appeals to pious readers.
31. This applies, of course, not only to the Israeli reader but also to the modern Jewish reader everywhere in the world, as much as to the non-Jewish one.
32. BRAWER, A.J., op. cit., abstract from p. 38.
33. YARDENI, G., op. cit., p. 64.

## CHAPTER II

### A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

#### 1. Introduction

As there is unavailable, at present, a detailed up-to-date biography of Agnon<sup>1</sup> it is felt that a chapter of this study should be devoted to this purpose.

The work of an artist, or for that matter the activities of any contributor to the culture of a people, can perhaps best be understood through an insight into his personality, his life experiences and his cultural background. One, however, must not be drawn into the trap of attaching excessive weight to the relationship between the personality of the artist, his biography and his works. In this view there is support from Welleck and Warren, who write:

However, in our context two questions of literary biography are crucial. How far is the biographer justified in using the evidence of the works themselves for his purposes? How far are the results of literary biography relevant and important for an understanding of the works themselves? An affirmative answer to both questions is usually given.<sup>2</sup>

There is use in biographical study. First, no doubt it has exegetical value; it may explain a great many allusions, or even words, in an author's text. The biographical framework will also help us in studying the most obvious of all strictly developmental problems in the history of literature - the growth, maturing and possible decline in an author's art. Biography also accumulates the materials for other questions of literary history such as the readings of the poet, his personal associations with literary men, his

travels, the landscape and cities he saw and lived in; all of those questions which may throw light on literary history, i.e., the tradition in which the poet was placed, the influences which shaped and the materials on which he drew. Whatever the importance of biography in these respects, however, it seems dangerous to ascribe to it any real critical importance. No biographical evidence can change or influence critical evaluation... Byron's Fare Thee Well is neither worse nor better a poem because it dramatizes the poet's actual relationship with his wife, nor "is it a pity" as Paul Elmer More thinks, that the manuscript shows no traces of the tears which, according to Thomas Moore's memoranda, fell on it. The poem exists, the tears shed or unshed, the personal emotions are gone and cannot be reconstructed, nor need they be.<sup>3</sup>

It is true that there is a danger in ascribing to the biography what cannot be in it, but at the same time it is very important to expose, as much as possible, to the general reader as well as to the scholar, all those aspects which will help us to understand better the author's art through his biography.

## 2. Buczacz

Shmuel Yosef Agnon was born on the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Av,<sup>4</sup> 5648<sup>5</sup> which corresponds to the 17th of July, 1888 C.E.<sup>6</sup> in the small town of Buczacz<sup>7</sup> in Eastern Galicia, the first born son and eldest of five children (a brother, Asher, and three sisters, Dvora, Rosa and Tirtza) born to Rabbi Shalom Mordecai Halevi Czaczkes and Esther Farb.

In Agnon's own words:

As a result of the historic catastrophe in which Titus of Rome destroyed Jerusalem and Israel was exiled from its land, I was born in one of the cities of the Exile. But, always, I regarded myself as one who was born in Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, while Agnon was born, physically, in

Exile, spiritually he was born in the Holy City of Jerusalem where once, in all their splendor, stood the Temples<sup>9</sup> but today all that remains is their memory and part of their walls.<sup>10</sup>

According to the geneological tree kept in the hands of his family from generation to generation, Agnon claimed to be a true descendant from the Third Tribe of Israel, the Levites,<sup>11</sup> and that his forebears were "of the minstrels that were in the Temple, and there is a tradition in my father's family that we are of the lineage of the Prophet Samuel (Shmuel) whose name I bear".<sup>12</sup>

Although Agnon's father, Rabbi Shalom Mordechai had received rabbinic ordination from Rabbi Yitzhak Shmelkis, the rabbi of Buczacz, in accordance with the Talmudic admonition "Do not use the Torah as a spade to dig with"<sup>13</sup> he earned his livelihood by conducting successful businesses. During the day he was busy in his business of furs, and in the evenings he used to study the Torah. The fur business his grandfather "inherited from his father-in-law, who had inherited it from his father-in-law (this is the business that my grandfather handed over to my father, my tutor, blessed be the memory of the righteous) in addition to a business of copper, tin and other metals".<sup>14</sup> Rabbi Shalom Mordechai, who was an associate of the Chortkov Hasidim - in addition to his own studies in Talmud,<sup>16</sup> traditional law, poetry and medieval philosophy - used to study the works of the Hasidic Masters with his eldest son, Agnon, so that from early childhood he became acquainted with the tales of the great Hasidim.

At the age of three, the young Shmuel Yosef was enrolled in a private religious school (Cheder) where he was introduced to the reading of classical Hebrew from the Prayer book, the Bible and Talmud. Except for two changes in locale, this formal

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type of education continued until he was nine years of age (1897 C.E.), after which he was taught and guided mainly by his learned father in the more difficult interpretations and studies in Talmud, Midrash,<sup>17</sup> Agada,<sup>18</sup> philosophy and Jewish and Hebrew letters and literature. However, during his thirteenth year he studied with the town rabbi, Rabbi Issachar Shtark.<sup>19</sup>

From his mother, Esther, (1864-1908 C.E.) (the youngest daughter of Yehuda Farb, a man of substance who had great influence in the Jewish community as well as among non-Jewish circles) who was familiar with the works of Schiller, Goethe and Lessing, he was guided and became acquainted with and interested in the works of European literary geniuses which had been written or translated into the German language.

To a great extent Agnon was an autodidact who was fortunate, throughout his lifetime, in having at his disposal well stocked libraries in religious as well as in secular subjects.

Agnon's literary horizons were enlarged at quite an early age. According to his own testimony, he read a rabbinic booklet, Shivche Ha-Arie<sup>20</sup> at the age of eleven. With regard to the books he bought in those days, and which made a great impression on him, Agnon also mentions the book Shivche Haran (The Praiseworthiness of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav).<sup>21</sup> Shortly afterwards he read Othello in Hebrew, and at the age of thirteen, he read Schiller's Die Rauber in the original, no doubt with the help of his mother who was fond of literary works in the German language. He learned German from a teacher of the local branch of Baron Mirsh's school, while he learned Polish from a farmer's son who wanted to become a priest, in exchange for Hebrew lessons taught to him by Agnon. He never learned

enough Polish, however, to read any literary works in the original. (It is possible that some folklore reached his ears through the people he may have met.) The reading of literature, classical and modern Hebrew, as well as Yiddish, and European classical literature in German, began, as far as we can see, in his early adolescence and he must have read everything that came his way in these three languages.<sup>22</sup>

"I was five years old when I wrote my first song"<sup>23</sup> which was written "out of longing for my father who happened to be away on account of his business". (It can be assumed that this song was written in the Yiddish language, his mother tongue.) From this inauspicious beginning he went on to write many more poems, but from all these none remain because his father's house, in which there was a room full of his early manuscripts, was burned down during World War I, and with it were consumed all his beginning literary efforts.

According to Agnon's own testimony, his early songs were so popular that "the young artisans, tailors and shoemakers used to sing my songs at their work". Unfortunately, many of these men "were killed in the First World War and of those who were not killed in the War, some were buried alive with their sisters in the pits they dug for themselves by order of the enemy, and most were burned in the crematoria of Aushwitz together with their sisters, who had adorned our town with their beauty and sung my songs with their sweet voices".<sup>24</sup>

The same fate as that of the singers of his songs and poems was that of many of the books he wrote both during and after the war.

All of them went up in flame to Heaven together in a fire which broke out one night at my home in Bad Homburg as I lay ill in hospital. Among the books

that were burned was a large novel of some seven hundred pages, the first part of which the publisher had announced he was about to bring out. Together with this novel, called Eternal Life, was burned everything I had written since the day I had gone down into exile from the Land of Israel,<sup>25</sup> including a book I had worked on together with Martin Buber, besides four thousand Hebrew books, most of which had come down to me from my forebears and some of which I had bought with money set aside from my daily bread.<sup>26</sup>

So for the second time fire struck the life and works of Agnon.

As mentioned, Agnon started to write at an early age<sup>27</sup> and many of his early works saw the light of publication, for he was continually being encouraged in his efforts by his family and by the editors of many publications in both the Yiddish and Hebrew languages to whom he had submitted manuscripts. During the period from his fourteenth birthday until the age of eighteen, there can be identified well over sixty items from the pen of Agnon as having been published in over eight periodicals.<sup>28</sup> As in the case of all writers, we can assume that much more than this was written by him but which, on completion, suffered the fate of rejection by editors, or even by himself, as being unworthy of bearing his name, or even a nom-de-plume. Although his early writings showed considerable insight and merit, none could foresee the growth of this young writer into a Hebrew literary giant - one of the greatest of modern times.

At the age of eighteen, Agnon was appointed assistant editor of the Yiddish weekly Der Judisher Wecker<sup>29</sup> and even before celebrating his nineteenth birthday he left for Lemberg to become assistant editor of the Hebrew weekly Ha-et.<sup>30</sup> This



rapid climb to early fame was cut short after three months, owing to financial difficulties in the publication of the paper.

### 3. First Holy Land (Palestine) Period

Agnon's disappointment at the cutting off of his editorial career is what probably decided him to return physically to the land of his spiritual birth. In the spring of 1908,<sup>31</sup> after a short visit to his family in Buczacz and a short stop-over in Lemberg and Vienna,<sup>32</sup> where he met writers, editors and even local Zionist leaders who tried to dissuade him from following his Zionistic ideal of settling in the Holy Land,<sup>33</sup> he left for Palestine, sailing from the Port of Trieste.<sup>34</sup>

At the age of nineteen and a half I went up to the Land of Israel to till its soil and live by the labour of my hands. As I did not find work, I sought my livelihood elsewhere. I was appointed Secretary of the Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) Society, and Secretary of the Palestine Council - which was a kind of parliament-on-the-way. I was also the first secretary of the voluntary Jewish Magistrate's Court.<sup>35</sup>

After arriving in Jaffa and being unsuccessful in following the Zionist ideal of 'returning to the land', Agnon was forced to obtain clerical employment, as mentioned above, where his literary talents could be utilized.

Agnon was fortunate, while in Jaffa, in meeting the cream of Jewish society in Palestine, including the spiritual<sup>36</sup> and lay<sup>37</sup> leaders of the Yishuv<sup>38</sup> as well as the leading members of the labour movement<sup>39</sup> and as many writers and editors who lived there.<sup>40</sup> There is no doubt that these frequent, perhaps even daily, meetings enriched the experiences of this young, but promising, writer and also enlarged his

cultural world. One may go so far as to say that the angel of fortune was accompanying Agnon in every one of his steps, otherwise where could he find such a stimulating society for Hebrew writing at that time if not in Jaffa, which was then the center of the Jewish revival.

It was during this first Holy Land period that Agnon gained his first real laurels, which started him on the road to international acknowledgement and fame, culminating in his being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, through the publication of two stories, Agunot<sup>41</sup> in 1908 and Vehaya he 'akov le mishor<sup>42</sup> in 1912. In addition to these two stories some fifteen other stories were written by Agnon during his stay in Jaffa, many of which were, in later years, rewritten and published in other books, published singularly or included in his collected works, while others were left untouched.

#### 4. Germany

At the beginning of 1913, on the advice of his friend Arthur Rupin, whom Agnon revered as a father figure all his life, he left Palestine for Germany where, contrary to his own expectations, he stayed almost eleven years (1913-1924). These were certainly the most enriching and important years in his spiritual and literary career.

Most of the time that Agnon was in Berlin he supported himself by doing editorial work for the Judische Verlag published by Aharon Eliasberg and by giving private lessons. In 1916 he received an annual stipend from S.Z. Schocken<sup>43</sup> which was to be granted for five years on condition that he produce a lengthy Hebrew literary work.

During his stay in Germany, Agnon lived for short periods in Leipzig, Bruckenau, Munich, Weisbaden and Homburg.

His stay in Leipsig was a most satisfying one for him in that he spent most of his time in writing and in studying the Talmud and other Judaic subjects. It was during this time that he worked with Martin Buber in the preparation of an anthology of Hasidic tales. In Homburg, Agnon met and established meaningful relationships with many Hebrew and Yiddish writers, including Bialik, Fichman, Ahad Ha'am and others. Once again, he was fortunate in finding the best companionship and literary stimulation that one could ever dream of. Agnon, throughout his life, yearned to be near the centers of learning, enlightenment and the springs of Torah and science. While never a member of the academic community, he was always close to it. This fact may explain why we do not find in almost any of his works the colloquial style spoken by the man in the street or in the market.

In addition to the literary and spiritual dimensions which were added to his life during his stay in Germany, another dimension was also added when, on Lag-B'Omer 5680 (May 6, 1920) he married Esther Marx, daughter of one of the most respected families and leading bankers in Germany. In the summer of 1921 their first child, a girl, Emmuna, was born; quickly followed in the fall of 1922 by a son, Shalom Mordechai (later called Hemdat).

##### 5. Second Holy Land (Palestine) Period and Israel

In 1924, after all his possessions had been burned,<sup>44</sup> "God gave me wisdom to return to Jerusalem. I returned to Jerusalem and it is by virtue of Jerusalem that I have written all that God has put into my heart and into my pen. I have also written a book about the Giving of the Torah,<sup>45</sup> and a book on the Days of Awe,<sup>46</sup> and a book on the books of Israel that have

been written since the day the Torah was given to Israel,<sup>47</sup> and on the books of the righteous".<sup>48</sup> These, as well as the two editions of his completed works,<sup>49</sup> and other works, most of which were written during his stay in Jerusalem, have been published in part, while many are still in manuscript form.<sup>50</sup>

The early years of his return to the Holy Land were not without incident. An earthquake, which shook Jerusalem in 1927, forced his family to move to a rented house in Talniet, a suburb of the new city. Tragedy again struck Agnon and his possessions in 1929 when, during August of that year, there was a wave of attacks by the Arabs on Jewish settlements. While he and his family escaped without injury, his home and library were ravaged. None of these incidents even suggested to Agnon that he should leave the Holy Land, for his return in 1924 was, to him, an act of repentance.<sup>51</sup>

Agnon, however, did leave on four separate occasions. In 1930 he returned to Germany to see Zalman Shoken in connection with the printing and publication of his books;<sup>52</sup> in 1951 he travelled to Norway and Sweden for, as Agnon said, "their great poets had implanted love and admiration for their countries in my heart, and I decided to go to see them".<sup>53</sup> He left Israel for the third time for the purpose of receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature from the Stockholm Academy on December 10th, 1966. On his return he had resolved never to leave again, but in the summer of 1967, bowing to heavy pressure, he left for the fourth and last time when he visited the United States of America and there received Honorary degrees from Columbia University and Yeshiva University.

During his lifetime many literary prizes and other honors were bestowed on Agnon.

In 1934, Agnon was presented by the Municipality of Tel Aviv with the Bialik Prize for Hebrew Literature. He was awarded this prize for a second time in 1950. In 1946, he was awarded the Usshishkin Prize and, in both 1954 and 1958, he was honoured by being awarded the National 'Israel Prize' by the Government of Israel. The highest award for belles-lettres that the world can award a person was received by Agnon when he was presented with the Nobel Prize for Literature, recognition by the world of his genius and a persona grata among world famous writers.

In addition to the above, Agnon received Honorary degrees from the Hebrew University, Jerusalem; The Jewish Theological Seminary, New York; Columbia University, New York; and also from Yeshiva University, New York. Special citations were awarded to him in 1963 by both New York University and Bar Ilan University. Literary jubilees were also presented to him on his fiftieth, sixtieth, seventieth, seventy-fifth and eightieth birthdays.

In 1962, Agnon was made an Honorary Citizen of Jerusalem, the city in which he had lived since his return to the Holy Land in 1924 and also for some time during his first Holy Land (Palestine) period.

Agnon was a very religious man. He was a strictly observant Jew. Therefore, even in the presence of the king, he wore the traditional black-velvet skull cap. As he was called to receive his award from King Gustav Adolph VI of Sweden, he stepped forward and when the King greeted him by saying "May the Lord grant you many more creative years for your people's sake and for the sake of the whole world", Agnon, in his turn, greeted the King with the traditional

Hebrew blessing required to be said when seeing a monarch, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who has given of Thy glory to a king of flesh and blood". He then turned to the Masters of the Swedish Academy and pronounced the traditional blessing upon seeing sages or wise men of the nations of the world, "Blessed be He, that has given of His wisdom to flesh and blood".

At the banquet which took place, following the presentation ceremony, in the new and modern Town Hall, Agnon was served kosher food which had been especially prepared for him. One wit was heard to remark, "they never had learned in Sweden so many dietary laws as in those few days that Agnon was here".

In his remarks, Dr. Anders Oesterling, Chairman of the Swedish Academy's Nobel Committee, said:

Samuel Agnon's reputation as the foremost writer in modern Hebrew literature has gradually penetrated linguistic barriers which in this case are particularly obstructive. His most important works are now available in other languages and there is even a selection of his short stories available in Swedish ... Agnon, now 78 years old, began writing in Yiddish but soon changed to Hebrew, which according to experts he handles with absolute mastery, in a taut and sonorous prose style of extraordinary expressiveness. ....

Agnon's unique quality as a writer is chiefly apparent in the great novel cycle from his native town of Buczacz, once a flourishing centre of Jewish piety and rabbinical learning, now in ruins. Reality and legend stand side by side in his narrative art. The Bridal Canopy is the name of one of his most characteristic stories, in its ingenious and earthy humour a Jewish counterpart of Don Quixote and Tyl Eulenspiegel. But perhaps his greatest achievement is his novel Guest Only for a Night which tells of a visit to the war-ruined city of his childhood, Buczacz, and the storyteller's vain attempts to assemble the congregation to a service in the synagogue. Within the framework of a local chronicle we see a wonderful perspective of

destinies and figures, of experiences and meditation. The lost key of the prayerhouse, which the traveller finds in his knapsack only after his return to Jerusalem, is for Agnon a symbolic hint that the old order can never be rebuilt in the Diaspora, but only under the protection of Zionism. Agnon is a realist, but there always is a mystical admixture which lends to even the grayest and most ordinary scenes a golden outline of strange fairytale poetry, often reminiscent of Chagall's motifs from the world of the Old Testament. He stands out as a deeply original writer, endowed with remarkable gifts of humor and wisdom and with a perspicacious play of thought combined with naive perception; in all a consummate expression of the Jewish character.<sup>55</sup>

Agnon concluded his response to all the good wishes extended to him with the prayer:

He Who giveth wisdom unto the wise and salvation unto kings, may He increase your wisdom beyond measure and exalt your Sovereign. In his days and in ours may Judah (the biblical name for the State of Israel) be redeemed and Israel dwell in safety. May a redeemer come to Zion, may the earth be filled with knowledge and eternal joy for all who dwell therein, and may they enjoy much peace. May all this be God's will. Amen.<sup>56</sup>

Following his return from Europe and America, Agnon, who had been suffering from a heart condition, began to suffer further ill-health which prevented his continuing to write. He was in bed for a few months and then sent to the same chronic disease hospital in Gedera where his wife had been sent earlier for a different illness. He died on the 11th Adar I, 5730 (February 17, 1970).

Agnon was given a State funeral and buried the following day in the most holy of all cemeteries in Israel, the Mount of Olives, mourned not only by his wife, son, daughter and grandchildren, but by all the people of Israel and the lovers of literature throughout the world.

In concluding this brief biography, we may sum up by saying that Agnon's life can be divided into five main periods. The historical circumstances and events which occurred during these, and to which he was an eye-witness, touched his heart and his pen, and are mirrored throughout his works.

1. Buczacz: (1888-1908) His native town and its neighbourhood, Eastern Galicia, with its picturesque landscapes and naive people. The beginning of his Yiddish and Hebrew activity.

2. The First Holy Land period: (1908-1912) (Palestine under Turkish rule) When he settled, most of the time in Jaffa, but where he also spent much time both visiting and living in Jerusalem and other parts of the country. Here he gained his fame through the publication of Agunot and Vehaya he'akov le mishor and fifteen other stories, part of which have been revised and republished in his Collected Works and part of which are included in The Bridal Canopy or in other works. Of these stories only three have not been republished although Agnon wanted to rework these as well, especially Beera shel Miriam (Miriam's Well).

3. Germany: (1913-1924) Here is where Agnon went to satisfy his yearning for enlightenment and for the purpose of widening his cultural and literary horizons. As German was the only foreign language understood by Agnon, the choice of Germany was the most obvious and successful decision that he could have made. Interesting to note, during this period many stories which were written by him were first translated into German and published, while the Hebrew original remained in manuscript and was not published until some time later.



4. The Second Holy Land Period: (1924-1948) (Palestine under the British Mandate.) During this period Agnon published the first edition of his Collected Works in four volumes as well as many other books and short stories. These amazed his readers by the super-modernistic technique, unparalleled in modern Hebrew literature (like the Sefer Ha-Ma'asim [Book of Deeds] cycle and similar short stories)<sup>57</sup> in addition to his classical style and motifs.

5. The Israeli Period: (1948-1970) During this period Agnon completed the publication of the first edition of his Collected Works, in eleven volumes, as well as the second edition of his Collected Works, in eight volumes, which were rewritten, giving them a more artistic and mature polishing touch. Other stories were published, written under the influence of the Nazi horrors and their aftermath, from one side, and the miraculous events leading to the restoration of the Jewish State and return of the Jewish people to their homeland, from the other side.

It might be the subject of an interesting thesis to reveal how these tragic and miraculous events are mirrored in Agnon's writings. But even more intriguing is the question of the possible influence of different sources upon Agnon, especially during the early days when Agnon's artistic creativity was still being formed. Many writers and critics expressed their views on this subject, and Agnon himself left us with many hints and clues which will be mentioned in the following chapters.

#### NOTES

1. There are available today two biographical works on Agnon: (a) a monography was written in Hebrew by Efraim Tsoref and

published in Israel in 1957 by Niv Publishing House, S.Y. Agnon, the Man and His Works. This is more of a literary biography than a scientific one. It contains a brief summary of Agnon's cultural background, as well as short commentaries on his works. The reader is seldom offered the sources of this monography. (b) A comprehensive and detailed cultural biography can be found in Arnold Band's Nostalgia and Nightmare, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968, pp. 1-28. There is much important additional data to be found scattered throughout the book. The book was finished in 1966 and published in 1968. The research for this thesis was written during 1971-74, therefore some details of Agnon's biography were, of course, not mentioned by either Tsoref or Band.

2. WELLECK and WARREN, Theory of Literature, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., Third Edition, New York, 1956, p. 61.
3. Ibid., pp. 73-74.
4. The Hebrew month of Av is the fifth month in the calendar of the Jews in which the months are counted from the first month of the exodus from Egypt, i.e., from Passover, which falls in the month of Nissan. This day, the 9th of Av, is known in Jewish tradition, history and folklore as the day of both national and individual tragedy, as well as the day of the culmination of the greatest of the Jewish hopes. It is believed that on this day the Messiah, the final redeemer of the Jewish people, will be born. According to Jewish tradition, both the first and second Temples were destroyed on the 9th of Av and Betar, the last stronghold of the revolutionaries against the Romans in 135 C.E. fell.

It was also on this very same day that the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492.

5. The Jewish year is counted from the creation of the world, as mentioned in the Bible.
6. Orthodox Jews use the term B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) to represent the period Before Christ (B.C.) and C.E. (Common Era) to represent the period A.D.
7. Buczacz, a small town in the Tarnopol district in Western Ukraina (in the past Eastern Galicia), stands on the Stripa River, 270 metres above sea level. Until the Russian occupation, the town served as a center for small workshops and as a market for agricultural produce. The ruins of a castle, church and municipality house from the Pototzky period (17th to 19th century) are of great artistical. A Jewish population was first mentioned in 5332 (1572 C.E.). The first tombstone dates back to 1633. This Jewish community was destroyed during the slaughter of the Jews by the Cossacks under Chmielenski (1648-49) and was restored by Graf S. Pototzky in 5459 (1699), the town lord who restored their rights and privileges. They were released from attachment to the municipality and allowed to purchase and build houses, without restriction or limitation, and also to trade both in industry and agricultural goods as well as in beer and alcohol. By 1765 there were 1,055 Jews in the town as well as over 300 Jews in the nearby villages. In 1867 C.E., under the Austro-Hungarian government, the Jews were granted equal rights to that of the rest of the population of the empire. A Jewish member from the district was even elected to the Austrian parliament (1867-1905).

At the beginning of the 20th century some 7000 Jews lived in the town, and before 1914 the majority of the big estates surrounding the town were owned by Jews. The best known writer, before 1914, was Itzhac Ferenhof. At the beginning of the 20th century, there appeared a weekly in Yiddish, Der Jüdischer Wecker, whose editor was Eliezer Rokeah. In 1907, a great publishing house was founded in the town. During World War I the majority of the Jews left Buczacz. Of those that returned all were exterminated during the holocaust. See the Hebrew Encyclopedia, Vol. VII, pp. 924-925.

8. Les Prix Nobel en 1966, Stockholm, 1967 Imprimerie Royale, published by P.A. Norstedt & Soner. From Agnon's address, p. 68.
9. The first Temple was built by King Solomon, son of King David, and was destroyed by Nebuchadnasar in 586 B.C.E. The second Temple was built on the same site about 70 years later and was destroyed by Titus in 70 C.E.
10. Although the entire Temple was destroyed, the Western Wall remained intact and still stands today. Sometimes called the "Wailing Wall", Jews from throughout the world come to pray and weep at the Wall mourning for the destruction of the Temple and praying for the redemption of the Jewish people to their land through the coming of the Messiah, and for the realization of the prophetic visions of peace for all mankind. From 1948 to 1967 Jews were denied access to this site by the Jordanian Government and it was only after the restoration of the Old City to the State of Israel during the Six Day War that Jews returned to pray, day and

night, at the Western Wall. The Wall was a place of great stimulus to Agnon, for according to his own testimony, "the nights I used to spend with devout and pious men at midnight beside the Walling Wall, nights which gave me eyes to see the land of the Holy One, Blessed be He, which He gave us, and the city in which He established His Name". (Les Prix Nobel, p. 70)

11. Jacob had twelve sons, and from them descended the Twelve Tribes of Israel, who bear their names. Levi was the third son, and therefore the third Tribe, and was nominated to work in the Holy Sanctuary and later in the Temple because the Tribe of Levi was not among those who sinned by making and worshipping the Golden Calf.
12. Les Prix Nobel, p. 68. Even though there is no doubt that Agnon was a Levite and that one of his first names was Samuel, there is no convincing proof that he was a descendant of the Prophet Samuel.
13. Pirke Avot, (Sayings of the [Jewish] Fathers) IV, 7.
14. AGNON, S.Y., Ir U'Melo'ah (A Town and its Fullness), Schocken Publishing House, Tel Aviv, 1973, p. 674.
15. Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov (Israel, Master of the Good Name) (1700-1760 C.E.) was the founder of the Hassidic movement. Many of his disciples became leaders of Hassidic houses or dynasties which bear the names of their residential places, like Chortkov, Rysin, Carlin, Lubavitch, etc. These Hasidic masters had a very great influence on the Jewish life in Eastern Europe and many tales have been written and told concerning their divine personalities and activities. The movement is concerned with the

mystical interpretation of Jewish law, lore and life. Many of these dynasties continue their Rabbinical charismatic leadership to this very day.

16. The commentaries on the Mishnah, which is the collection of the original "oral law" handed down by God to Moses at Sinai and compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Nasi (The Prince). These commentaries, called "Gemarah", together with the Mishnah, are called the Talmud. The Code of Jewish Law is based on the conclusions made in the Talmud.
17. Homiletical commentaries on the Holy Scriptures.
18. Homiletical legends found scattered throughout the Talmud and Midrash.
19. YA'ARI, A., S.Y. Agnon (25 Years to His Aliyah and Creativity), The Eretz Israel Yearbook, 1934, F. Lachover, ed., p. 276.
20. This booklet contained three letters written by Rabbi S. Shlomil of Zefath, published in a book Sefer Ta'alumoth Hochma in Bazel by Y.S. Rappoport. The letters dealt with the praiseworthiness and greatness of Rabbi Yitzchac Luria, head of the Kabalistic movement in the 15th century in Safad, Israel (1534-1572).
21. YA'ARI, A., op. cit., p. 277. The great influence of Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav upon Agnon was shown by the fact that one of his magnificent poems was based on a tale from the legendary folklore of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav., under the title The Robber and the Jew published in June 1949, and translated into English by Herbert Howarth in Jewish News, Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A., March 16, 1970. See

addendum.

22. The list of Agnon's reading has to be divided into these three languages, modern and classical Hebrew, Yiddish and German. For the purpose of this study, it is important only to know those books or periodicals which reveal to us Agnon's contact with European literature. The most important of these periodicals was, undoubtedly, Der Judisher Wecker, especially if the reader takes into account the fact that the young Czaczkes was the assistant editor, and that this is where his early poems and ballads were published. But of greater interest is the list of European writers whose works were translated and published in this weekly journal. "We find in this weekly articles on Ibsen, on Brunetiere, a translation of Georg Brandes' article on Anatole France, translations of Gorki and Andreiev, a series of articles on Mendele and so on." (Nostalgia and Nightmares, p. 9) Additional data on his reading in German will be found in Chapter IV of this study, The influence of European writers on Agnon's works. With regard to modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature, Agnon's own testimony shows that he read Shlomo Rubin, Reuven Asher Broides, Mordekhai Brandstadter, Mendele (Shalom Yaakov Abromowitz), Shalom Aleichem (Shalom Rabinovitz) and among the poets, only M. Tz. Mane (Ya'ari, A., Sefer Hashana Shel Eretz Israel, p. 277). We can assume that the list must have been considerably longer than this, considering what he must have found in the Hebrew and Yiddish newspapers in which he himself contributed.
23. It seems that Agnon is contradicting himself in regard to

this question. In the above-mentioned speech, he describes his first attempt at writing as being made at the age of five, while in his autobiographical letter to M.E. Jacques (Zernansky) Agnon wrote, according to Band's translation:

When I was nine years old I made a ballad about a boy who went out to kindle candles by the river on the first night of Selichot (penitential prayers read during the early morning of each day of the week preceeding Rosh Hashanah [the Jewish New Year]), as was the custom of boys in my childhood. One of the sea-maidens came and took him away. That was the first poem, and the second was a poem of longing which I wrote when my father went away on a trip. (Moznaim [7], 1958, p. 209)

Band inaccurately translated the last sentence, and the correct translation gives an entirely different meaning to the facts mentioned, namely: "That (the ballad) was the first poem and the second was a poem of longing which Agnon wrote". Concerning Agnon, Band also wrote "His personal testimony must be carefully sifted. Agnon's imagination is extraordinarily fecund and at his advanced age he cannot be expected to recall facts with accuracy" (Nostalgia and Nightmare, p. 2), but according to the editor of Moznaim, based on facts mentioned in the preface to the above-mentioned letter, it was written by Agnon in 1927, when he was not old at all. After personally checking the original text, we found that there is no foundation to Band's translation, and there is no sharp contradiction, even if we think it somewhat exaggerated that Agnon really wrote his first poem at the age of five. The disputed sentence reads in the Hebrew "Ze haya hashir ha-sheini aharei shir hagaagum asher catavti binsoa avi lemassav" (This was the second poem (which I wrote) after a poem of longing that I have written



when my father went away on his trips). According to our translation, which we suggest is the correct one, we may conclude that "the ballad" was written at the age of nine, but the poem "out of longing" was written in any case earlier, even if we do not accept, without reservation, Agnon's testimony in Stockholm that it was written at the age of five.

24. Les Prix Nobel, op. cit., p. 68.
25. The reader is reminded that Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) was the name of the first Jewish kingdom to be established in what became known as the Holy Land. This name continued to be used during the two thousand years of exile, despite the fact that the Romans called it South of Syria and later it became known as Palestine, the name by which it was known both under Turkish rule and the British Mandate, until May 15, 1948 when the State of Israel (Medinat Yisrael) was officially established in part of the land originally known as Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel).
26. Les Prix Nobel, op. cit., p. 69.
27. While there may be a question mark as to the date that Agnon first started to write - either nine or five years of age - there can be no doubt as to the date of his first published item. His first published writing in Yiddish was a ballad called Rabbi Yosef Dela Reina, which was based on a popular folk tale about a rabbi who tried to subdue the devil, but without success. This was published in Der Stanislawer Vokhenblat (Stanislaw Weekly) edited by Meir Henish during 1903. The first work pub-

lished in the Hebrew language was a Shir Haskama (a laudatory preface to a new book) written for the booklet Minhat Yehuda by Rabbi Yehuda Tzvi Gelbard, published in Munkacz, in 1903. Dov Sadan thinks that the Yiddish ballad preceeds somewhat the Hebrew one. He writes that Agnon's beginning is well known and it starts with the story Agunot, on account of which, and because of this story, the author took up the pseudonym Agnon, which later became his official surname. But there is still another beginning which belongs to Czaczkes. Agnon himself sees it in the poem Little Hero which was published in 1904 in the periodical HaMitzpeh, Simon Menachem Lazar, ed., Cracow, Vol. I, 4 (21 Iyar 5664) May 6, 1904. The poem ends with these two prophetic lines:

Little child! exalted power!  
You shall (yet) show wonders to your people!

which became true in our very days.

28. There is a problem of identifying Agnon's items of this period, because of his custom, as well as that of many others, to use pseudonyms when they published their first works.
29. A weekly published in Buczacz from the summer of 1906 edited by Elazar Rokeah.
30. A weekly published in Lemberg from the beginning of 1907 edited by Gershon Bader.
31. Band remarks in footnote 20 on page 16 "Though all handbooks and biographical articles give 1909 or 1908 as the date of Agnon's arrival in Jaffa, there is abundant evidence that he actually arrived in 1907". Most convincing

is the testimony of his sisters, Rose Apelberg and Dora Weiner, that Agnon left home a year before his mother's death which took place in 1908, but Yitzhac Bakon argues with Band's findings and he brings convincing evidence that Agnon's arrival must have been in Summer 1908, and in any case, not in Spring 1907. Since Agnon left his father's house after Passover 1908 and he was in Vienna for at least four weeks (see Bakon's article in Hapoel Hatzair, 1968 39/27-28, pp. 23-25). Prof. Dan Meron agrees with Bakon's findings and opinion about the date of Agnon's arrival in Palestine in 1908 and, in a footnote, adds that there are in Bakon's article corrections to some factual errors in Band's description of Agnon's life during the years 1907-1908 (see Meron, D., The Agnonian Odyssey of Band, Moznaim, August-September 1968, pp. 183-201). An additional support to Bakon's opinion we find in Agnon's speech on the occasion of being presented with the Honorary Citizenship of Jerusalem, from which it is clear that he came, for the first time, to Jerusalem in 1908. See also Professor G. Shaked's footnote in his book Omanut Hasipur shel S.Y. Agnon (The Narrative Art of S.Y. Agnon), Merchavia and Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz ha'Artzi Publishing House, 1973/5733, p. 304, f. 15.

32. Lemberg and Vienna were two large centres of Jewish population and learning in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Here one could feel the pulse of the Jewish cultural activity of Eastern Europe. Here was the place where East and West met.
33. Agnon claims that his relative, a native of Buczacz, who was a famous professor of Oriental languages, Professor

Heinrich David Miller, of the University of Vienna, tried to persuade him not to go to Palestine, promising him his help if he would agree to study at the University.

34. Agnon's sea voyage may have influenced some of his works, such as Bilvav Yamim (In the Heart of the Seas) and in another way, more realistic, in some chapters of Temol Shilshom (The Day Before Yesterday) where he describes the Aliya (immigration) of Yitzhac Koomar to Palestine.
35. Les Prix Nobel, op. cit., p. 69.
36. E.g., the late Rabbi A.Y. Kook, who at that time was Chief Rabbi of Jaffa-Tel Aviv, and was renowned as an original religious thinker and writer. He was later appointed Chief Rabbi of the Yishuv, with his seat in Jerusalem. His religious philosophical conceptions are still guiding the Israeli Rabbinate to this very date. Some of his poems have also been published.
37. One of the most well-known was Meyer Disengoff, communal leader and first mayor of Tel Aviv, the first all Jewish city in Palestine.
38. The Hebrew term for the Jewish population in the Land of Israel before the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel.
39. Including Yitzhac Ben Zvi, later to become the second President of the State of Israel and Berl Katznelson, one of the most famous labour leaders and thinkers that the Jewish people produced, except, of course, Ben Gurion.
40. To mention only the most important, S. Ben Zion, in whom Agnon found a guide and a friend and under whose editorial

periodical Agunot was published; Y.H. Brenner, who received his first works enthusiastically and even published a special edition of Vehaya he'akov le mishor at his own expense; and R. Binyamin (pseudonym of Yeshua Radler-Feldman) whose reminiscence appeared in Davar, Saturday and holiday supplement 7, no. 21 (April 4, 1932), p. 1. described young Agnon, then Czaczkes, as: "A young boy ... with almost nothing but a scrap of paper - a letter of recommendation to me from M.E. Lipschutz... he was shy ... and also talked jokingly ... with folk proverbs, peppered with biblical expressions. And he was a dreamer awake..."

41. Agunot means deserted woman, or anchored woman, as a result of the disappearance of the husband, who left his wife without leaving any trace, either because he died but his death could not be confirmed by witnesses, and the woman could not therefore be released from her marital bonds, or because the husband refused to give his wife a divorce.
42. This title hints to Isaiah 40:4 "And the rugged shall be made level". The title actually translates "And the crooked shall be made straight". The story was first published in installments in the Hebrew periodical Hapoel Hatzair (The Young Labourer) during the Spring of 1912, Vol. 5, no. 7 (Jan. 9, 1912) to no. 16 (May 19, 1912). In this story, which made a deep impression on its readers, Agnon's special art in narration, style and variety of expression was revealed for the first time. Agnon claims to have written it in four days during the winter of

1911-12. Interestingly, it is perhaps the only story which Agnon wrote that he did not alter at all, and indeed hardly retouched, in contrast to his usual custom of re-editing and sometimes rewriting, before including in his Collected Works.

43. Solomon Zalman Schocken, a man of culture and affairs, first met Agnon at the end of 1915, and immediately a close relationship developed between them. Schocken, who recognized Agnon's unusual gifts helped him devote himself entirely to literary creation. In later years, Schocken published Agnon's works, the first works to be published by the publishing house founded by Schocken, and they have continued to publish everything he has written.
44. The fire which broke out on June 4, 1924 destroyed not only 4,000 books, some of them rare editions, but also minute books of German-Jewish communities. In addition, the manuscript of a lengthy autobiographical novel, Bitzror HaHayim, was destroyed. Agnon had laboured for about eighteen years on this work, and it came to about 60 galleys and was about to be published by P.H. Stybel. The manuscript of a one-act play, Rembrandt and Esther, was also destroyed. In a postcard to Martin Buber from Munich dated August 27, 1919, Agnon mentions the novel Bitzror hahayim, which he referred to as 'Elef'(thousand) because of the thousand characters in it: "I have not worked on it recently".
45. Atem Re'item (You Have Seen) was published by Schocken Publishing House, Tel Aviv-Jerusalem, 1950.

46. Yamim nora'im (Days of Awe), an anthology of readings and legends for the High Holidays, first published in 1938 (5698) by Schocken Publishing House, Jerusalem-New York.
47. Sefer, Sofer, Wesipur (Book, Writer and Story) - stories about writers and books collected by Shmuel Yosef Agnon, Jerusalem (1938), compiled in honour of S.Z. Schocken on his sixtieth birthday. Only 120 copies were printed.
48. Sifreihem Shel Tzadikim, 101 stories about the disciples of the Besht (Baal Shem Tov). Schocken Publishing House, Tel Aviv-Jerusalem, 1961.
49. Kol Sipurav Shel S.Y. Agnon, first edition vol. I-VI, Berlin; vols. VII-VIII, Jerusalem, vols. IX-XI, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv (1931-1952), and second edition, revised and rewritten in eight Vols. I-VIII, Tel Aviv, 1953-1962. It took Agnon many years to complete the editing of his works, since he used to make many changes in them. Changes made between the first and second editions show an inclination to change secular motifs to religious ones, e.g., in the story Vehaya he'akov le mishor (The Crooked Shall Be Made Straight), Menashe Hayim tells his wife, before he leaves home, to take a piece of linen and to pull out one thread each day that he is away, hoping and praying that, please God, he will be back before she finishes. This is in the first edition. In the revised edition, published in 1953, there are very few changes. The main change is that instead of the piece of linen, she is told to take the book of Psalms and to read one Psalm each day, hoping and praying that before she finishes, there will be an end to all her trouble.

50. A great novel, Shira, was published posthumously from his manuscripts by Schocken Publishing House, Tel Aviv, 1971. An additional volume of stories has been published by Schocken Publishing House in May 1973, entitled A Town and its Fullness. It may take many more years until we will be able to fully appreciate Agnon's fecundity. More than 900 manuscripts of Agnon's were handed over to the Hebrew University and National Library's archives, after Agnon's death.
51. It is well known that during the first Holy Land period and when Agnon was in Germany, he moved away from his Orthodox way of life. (We may find this described in part in the character of Itzhac Koomar in Temol Shilshom.) It seems to this writer that the tragic events and experiences that Agnon saw and went through in Europe during his Germany period, like the horrors of World War I and its aftermath, the destruction, spiritually and physically of his beloved Buczacs and of Eastern Galicia, as well as personal tragedies which he suffered - the destruction of his father's house with all his manuscripts, the fire which destroyed almost everything he had written and collected in Bad Homburg - all had a traumatic influence on Agnon who saw in them a heavenly punishment for leaving the Land of Israel. (According to Jewish Law one is not supposed to leave the Land of Israel except for force majeure). Therefore, his immediate return to Israel and Jerusalem after the fire was an act of repentance, which was followed by a return to the full orthodox way of life. There is support of this view in the opinion of Professor Dr. S. Goitein, which he expressed on the



occasion of a memorial tribute to Agnon. He said (inter alia: "Esther (Agnon's wife) wished to return to Palestine, Agnon hesitated. Then in June 1924 something terrible occurred. Agnon was in hospital with some sickness when his apartment burned down, and all his collection of writings, in particular his chef d'oeuvre, called Bi-Tsror HaHayim (In the Bond of Life) perished in the conflagration. Agnon believed, or at least repeatedly said, that he never wrote and never would be able to write anything like that work. The traumatic event had an unexpected effect. Agnon, almost immediately afterwards, set out for Jerusalem where he remained, except for short intervals, until his death. This clearly was an act of Teshuva, or repentance and penitence. During all the time he lived in the Holy City he practiced the strictest and most rigorous observance of the Jewish religion. Any literary critic who disregards this fact necessarily misinterprets Agnon's creation." (A Memorial Tribute to Dr. Shmuel Yosef Agnon, The Dropsie University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 29, 1970, p. 11.) Agnon returned to Jerusalem on Friday, October 31, 1924.

52. In the summer of 1930 Agnon went to Leipzig and remained there for some months while Schocken started to print his works. After he finished reading the proofs in Leipzig, Agnon visited Galicia and Poland. This trip served as basis for the novel Oreach Nata Lalun (A Guest for a Night). In a postcard to E.M. Lipschutz, written from Zamasc on September 3, 1930, Agnon wrote about his impressions of his tour of Polish towns: "I am wandering about the towns of Poland.. and the markets and the fairs

.. sometimes it seems to me that the Jews and even the non-Jews, have read my stories and arranged their lives according to my books..."

53. Les Prix Nobel, p. 69.
54. On this occasion he said that he feels himself as being a citizen of the city for 54 years. This presentation occurred in 1962, and it means that he first came to Jerusalem in 1908. (Booklet published by Jerusalem Municipality, on occasion of Agnon becoming an Honorary Citizen, Lag B'Omer, 18 Iyar 5722 (May 22, 1962).
55. Les Prix Nobel, pp. 56-57.
56. Ibid., p. 70.
57. The Book of Deeds, or Book of Happenings, or Book of Fables, was written in the 1930s and 1940s. These stories are surrealistic, introspective, disturbing and dream-like. Their appearance shocked the Hebrew readers and many critics became completely confused by this new facet of Agnon's genius. These tales have some resemblance to Kafka's style, but the writer of this study quotes convincing sources about their originality and of their Jewish Hassidic origin.

## CHAPTER III

### VARIOUS ESTIMATES OF AGNON'S INDEBTEDNESS TO EUROPEAN LITERATURE

#### 1. Introduction

For tens of years the general view among most of Agnon's readers was that he was not influenced at all by any other writer or by any literature, except, of course, the Holy Scriptures. If there was any similarity of motifs, problems, etc., between his writings and those of European writers, this was as a result of Agnon's genius. Any similarity, therefore, was dismissed as pure and simple coincidence.

Taking into account the above general view, the most difficult task one has to face in dealing with this subject is to prove not only that this view was mistaken but also to show which of the world's famous, and not so famous, writers could have had any influence on Agnon's writings.

While it is the intent of this study to attempt to prove that certain European writers had an acknowledged or unacknowledged, direct or indirect, influence, we must make it clear at the outset that we acknowledge the self-evident originality of his characters and scenes. We do not suggest or even dare to allude to Agnon as being an adapter, plagiariser, or even one who apes the plots and style of another. There can be no question that Agnon was possessed of a sensitive, imaginative and creative soul. But even such a soul requires nurturing. We will, therefore, be so bold as to suggest that part of the nourishment that Agnon received was prepared by certain European writers whose names and contributions will be dealt with in this and the next chapter.

The task that we have undertaken in this study is complicated by the fact that with the exception of a very recent study by Professor H. Barzel comparing some of the works of Kafka and Agnon<sup>1</sup> there has not been a single study that attempts to compare Agnon's works with those of European writers for the purpose of tracing any possible influence. The only hints that there might have been some influence are contained in scattered remarks appearing in critical essays published in various newspapers or periodicals.

Having regard for the above, the reader will well understand the temerity of this researcher in even raising the questions (a) was there any influence on Agnon by European writers? and (b) if so, what was the nature of this influence? how did it manifest itself? and to what measure or extent did it occur? and (c) who are these sources?

This writer has been fortunate in having the opportunity of discussing the above questions with Professors (Emeritus) Dov Sadan, G. Shaked and S. Verses, all of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Each of them has written on the subject of Agnon and his works.<sup>2</sup> Their reaction to the questions was that they felt there was a strong and fruitful influence involved, especially from Scandinavian writers but also from German, French and other writers, more specifically from those whose works have been translated into any of the three languages that Agnon is known to have mastered. But this view is quite new among the critics and scholars, and has not yet been researched properly. The other view is still dominating most literary circles.

It seems to the writer of this study that the above-mentioned general view regarding Agnon's complete unindebtedness to European literature comes from a critical article published

by Avraham Ya'ari on the occasion of the publication of Agnon's first collected works in four volumes.<sup>3</sup> There he writes, inter alia, that "Agnon drew everything from the (Jewish) source. There is not to be seen in his works any influence from the literature of the gentile nations. That is not to say that he did not read and that he did not study world literature, but when he created, he did so from his Jewish sources..."<sup>4</sup> As it is known that A. Ya'ari was the source of many ideas and interpretations about Agnon and his biography, we allow ourselves to suggest that this is also the source of this view, which was dominant in the critical circles in Israel for the last decades. Recently, Professor D. Sadan again stressed that only lately scholars have come to the conclusion that there may be some influence from European writers upon Agnon's works. But until this study nothing on the subject has been proven and published.

## 2. General Views

As was already mentioned, there is today an almost common knowledge among scholars that European literature had a strong and fruitful influence on Agnon's writings. Critics have pointed to similar motifs found in the works of certain European writers as well as in that of Agnon. Some<sup>5</sup> have quoted from the compared works to show these similarities clearly, but even so they do not claim that this was more than pure coincidence resulting from similar backgrounds or experience. Others<sup>6</sup> have not even bothered to quote or to compare specifically, but mention influence in general terms, as though this was already a proven fact or common knowledge.

Reviewing the different views on Agnon's indebtedness to European writers, we find two main categories which will be discussed in greater detail. The first seems to be accepted

by both the general reader and the scholar since it has not aroused opposition either in literary circles or, during his lifetime, from Agnon himself; while the second has encountered strong opposition and rejection by both Agnon and serious literary critics and scholars.

Professor Sadan's critical book contains many general remarks on similarities and parallelisms between some of Agnon's stories, heroes or scenes and those of such European writers as Kafka, Hamsun, Gotfried Keller, etc. He writes:

..And as The Book of Deeds,<sup>7</sup> according to the order assigned it among Agnon's books, is an overt and courageous deed of breaking frames and throwing off chains, I am not satisfied with the explanation that has been given to it by hinting at Kafka, especially when the explanation implies that it is a fashionable illness which the wind will carry away. Because it is permitted, as I also permit myself, to mention the similarity to Kafka in connection with the compactness of the heavy and onerous atmosphere as drifting between dreams and wakefulness, this should not be regarded as a substantial explanation. It is not my intention to clarify the attachment to Kafka and its extent which is worthwhile examining, as it is worthwhile examining the other and very different attachments to authors like Hamsun, Gottfried Keller, Fontana, and perhaps also Hesse.<sup>8</sup>

Sadan was somewhat surprised, and also disturbed, by the superficial reaction of some readers who regarded the stories in The Book of Deeds not as a product of the inner depth of Agnon's creative and genial soul, but as the result of a temporary caprice reminiscent of Kafka, as if to say: it is not worthwhile making any effort to try to analyze these stories in depth, because they originate merely in Agnon's wish to be modernistic, so he did not even refrain from imitating Kafka, using Kafkaesque motifs, style, atmosphere, etc. Sadan

does not consider this "a substantial explanation", but, in order not to be misunderstood, he emphasizes that he has nothing against any methodical or scientific research focused upon the question of the attachment between Agnon and Kafka, as he also has nothing against research into the attachment between Agnon and any of the other above-mentioned writers.

Sadan therefore stresses here that the similarity between Kafka and Agnon is more than a matter of essence. It is a matter of function, "a very organic function. The Book of Deeds can be likened to a half-way process, the middle of a development, more exactly the middle of an explosion..."<sup>9</sup> It is an artistic sketch to an energetic as well as a far reaching art system, whose one end we already saw, while the other one, perhaps even the main part, is yet concealed from us.

Some readers were perplexed when they read the stories in The Book of Deeds as they seemed to consider themselves entitled to judge and criticize all of Agnon's works from the same angle, and through the same lenses, that they had previously viewed and read him. When Agnon's style as the Hasidic storyteller appeared to have suddenly changed so extremely, they were unable to admit and confess that they had fundamentally misinterpreted Agnon's style, motifs and scenes. Instead of reviewing their opinions and revising them according to the new dimensions uncovered by the latest cycle of stories, they took the easy road of alluding to Kafka, and so saved themselves the trouble of examining them without prejudice.

Sadan's statement that The Book of Deeds "is an overt and courageous deed of breaking frames" implies that those who had only read Agnon superficially could not foresee that he would write in this way.

Sadan already wrote, in his first critical essay on Agnon, With his First Four Volumes, "that underneath the surface of a quiet atmosphere there seethes the tragedy of our world and that we are entitled to uncover it; on the contrary, you will try to remove the veils and reach the insight...and perhaps you will understand why the story-writer wanted to escape into the past generation and its naivety...and you will also understand that there can be no complete return to naivety from the one who saw the things this way."<sup>10</sup>

The reader must realize that we have to search for the right interpretation of a literary work by insight into the works themselves and not just by making comparisons and hinting. Namely, Agnon's similarity to Kafka is not the result of direct influence or imitation but rather the result of historical events which have made their impact on his very sensitive and creative mind.

Professor Kurtzweil's critical book on Agnon<sup>11</sup> contains many general remarks on similarities, reminiscences and parallelisms between some of Agnon's stories, heroes, and scenes, and those of European writers such as Homer, Cervantes, Thomas Mann, Stifter and Kafka, but in none does Kurtzweil mention the possibility of influence. Moreover, speaking of the many similarities between Agnon and Stifter, the greatest of Austrian epic writers, he states (evidently to avoid any misunderstanding): "Of course, I am far from speaking of Stifter's influence on Agnon."<sup>12</sup> His approach is the same when mentioning names, such as Joyce, Kafka, Robert Musil and Thomas Wolfe, among contemporary writers, and Gogol, Edgar Allan Poe and E.T.A. Hoffman, of the last century.

In regard to the duty of the literary critic to examine



inner legitimacy of The Book of Deeds. He stated that this should be done "without considering the question, if at all, as to the measure by which Agnon was influenced by the above-mentioned writers".<sup>13</sup> Even when Kurtzweil refers to the "interesting and instructive comparison between the stories of The Book of Deeds and Kafka's stories, which is something that is worth special attention"<sup>14</sup> he does not speak of influence.

In spite of the many similarities and parallelisms between the works of Kafka and Agnon there is still an even greater difference. Kurtzweil returns to this question of influence on many occasions in his essays, from which pertinent remarks will be quoted in the section of this study where views on the similarities between Kafka and Agnon will be discussed in greater detail.

### 3. Views on Andersen's Influence

Following Professor Sadan's footsteps, Arnold Band was fortunate to discover some of Agnon's early works. Analyzing one of these stories (which was written when Agnon still used the name Czaczkes) - Ha-Panas (The Street Lantern) which was later included in the Yiddish story Toiten Tanz (Dance Macabre), Band writes:

When we strip away the specifically Jewish aspects of the story Ha-Panas, and perhaps also Meholat Ha-Ma-vet (Hebrew version of Dance Macabre) we discover a striking resemblance to Hans Christian Andersen's The Old Lamp, which was available in German throughout Europe. The atmosphere of Agnon's version is more Gothic; graves open, ghosts dance, the memory of the dead pervades the world of the living. Out of this atmosphere there emanates the inescapable sense of decay, described briefly here, but expanded to book length in Oreach Nata La-Lun (A Guest for a Night) wherein the Beth

Midrash is closed, nobody comes to the Synagogue, and so forth...<sup>15</sup>

One can postulate about the source of this resemblance, although we have no information as to whether Agnon may have read Andersen. But even so, one cannot overlook the traces of Andersen's story Tom Thumb in Agnon's legendary story Rabbi Gadiel Hatinok (Rabbi Gadiel, the Baby) in spite of the fact that it has Hebrew sources as well in some Jewish legendary stories and in the Kabala.<sup>16</sup> There is still room to write an essay on the theme: The Sources of Rabbi Gadiel Hatinok in the Jewish legendary literature.

The similarity between Agnon and Andersen appears to be limited to the above-mentioned stories. It is possible that there are more similarities but we were not aware of them because of the fact that this question was not as yet thoroughly researched and studied. However, we do find views about a more general influence on Agnon's works as being attributed to Hamsun.

#### 4. Views on Hamsun's Influence

Fichman<sup>17</sup> remarked on the occasion of Agnon's fiftieth birthday about his first impression, thirty years ago, of the first literary work of Agnon's to be published, that he was then especially attracted by the extraordinary melody of the story Agunoth; the melancholy tone, the fate of the lovely and pleasant inseparable heroes who were predestined not to find each other, the sad road of the man whose ship always departs to the opposite shore, not to the shore he strove so hard to reach. It seemed to him that the charm lay in the mingling of poetry and prose which did not jostle one another. This was Agnon in his full form. Agnon's way

lay clear in front of him, even when his legs were entangled in Hamsun's mesh of charm, and the new symbolism still charmed him. It was clear that in Agunoth Agnon found himself. In Agunoth a specific Agnonian motif is present, par excellence, and it is not important if in his story he drew upon Hamsun's perfume. This fine scent is bound together with Agnon's poetry until today. All the prose of the epoch gained from Hamsun's work, which was assimilated from outside, was nullified by the sharpness of his own style and his own percipience. This view, that all the prose of the epoch gained from Hamsun's work, is supported also by an American writer, I.B. Singer, who speaking about Hamsun's influence on world literature counts Agnon as among those who were influenced by this writer. He writes:

European writers know that he (Hamsun) is the father of the modern school of literature in its every aspect. His subjectiveness, his fragmentariness, his use of flash-backs, his lyricism. The whole modern school of fiction in the 20th Century stems from Hamsun. They were also Hamsun's disciples: Thomas Mann and Arthur Schnitzer, Jacob Wasserman and Stefan Zweig, Zeromski and Bunim, Kellerman and Peter Altenberg, D'Anunzio and Herman Bang, and even such American writers as Fitzgerald and Hemingway. Literary influence often does not come in a direct fashion. Hamsun even had an effect on Hebrew and Yiddish literature. Agnon, Shoffman and Bergelson were influenced by him... Hamsun was perhaps the first to show how childish the so-called grown-ups are. His heroes are all children - as romantic as children, as irrational, and often as savage. Hamsun discovered, even before Freud did, that love and sex are a child's game. Hamsun belonged to that select group of writers who not only interested a reader but virtually hypnotized him. In pre-World War I Russia hosts of readers awaited Hamsun's each book with impatience. The same held true in Germany, Poland and in all of north, east and central Europe. Few writers were as imitated as Hamsun. The novel

Ingeborg by the German writer Kellerman is virtually a copy of Pan. Kellerman had been bewitched by Hamsun.<sup>18</sup>

As we saw Fichman brings no examples to prove his general statements about Hamsun's influence or traces of it in Agnon's works. He repeats the same idea when reviewing Givat Ha-Hol (The Sandhill), again without bringing examples to prove his statements. Fichman writes that he still likes the chapters of Givat Ha-Hol perhaps because he recognizes in this sandhill the footsteps of the young Agnon when he was walking in the back streets of Neve Tzedek, "crowned with the naked landscape of the Land of Israel, crowned with virgin dreams - pangs of love which first open the eyes..."<sup>19</sup> Fichman feels that this is something of Hamsun. Hamsunian is the special gift of vision, the gift of love and to know, to see with closed eyes, to stand with a full heart on the verge of the abyss. But this is also Agnonian, although less stylized than other works. The spirit only assimilates from itself - from what existed a priori to itself. Fichman felt that in Givat Ha-Hol naive vision struggles with searching eyes and these mysterious contextures, whose name is love, greatly deepened Agnon's vision, although something of Hamsunian love dialectic remained in most of his stories, if not in all of them.

Shaked also sustains the view that Agnon was influenced by some of the Scandinavian writers. In a footnote, Shaked writes:

Through a rigorous perusal of Agnon's entire works in this period, and in connection with his attachment to European writers, it becomes clear to me that the main source of the neo-romantic subjects and motifs, which treat of love and death, is Scandinavian literature. Decisive evidence for example is Agnon's translation of B. Bjorensen's story Avaq which was published in

the collection Yephet.<sup>20</sup> Another external evidence is that Agnon mentions in his story Tishri that Na'aman will work at home, near his desk and tools. Tomorrow he will start to translate Nils Lena.<sup>21</sup>

Shaked mentions Bjorensen's possible influence on Agnon but we would like to attract the reader's attention to the possible influence of another Scandinavian writer, namely Jacobsen.

In regard to Agnon's affinity to Jacobsen, we have his own confession in a letter to Lachover which may be seen as decisive evidence similar to that adduced by Shaked, and mentioned above, in which he wrote, "and about (the) translating of Jacobsen, the refined writer, I shall think it over.. Meanwhile I do not know what to choose, and it will be at least a month before I shall be able to read his works again".<sup>22</sup> This quotation clearly shows us two things: (a) that Agnon has read Jacobsen's works more than once and (b) that he appreciated him so much so as to feel that his works were worthy of being translated into Hebrew. Though not every writer that Agnon mentioned in admiration can be convincingly proved to have influenced him, there is no doubt that traces can be found in most of the cases if a detailed study were to be devoted to all the writers mentioned by Agnon.

Detailed comparisons between Agnon's works and those of the Scandinavian writers will be described in a separate chapter.

The views regarding the influence of another European writer on one of Agnon's works must, however, also be examined here. This is the presumed influence of Cervantes' Don Quixote on Agnon's The Bridal Canopy.

## 5. Views on the Influence of Cervantes

The view that Agnon was influenced by Cervantes is clearly expressed by Lachover,<sup>23</sup> who thought that the Jewish world, in the form it took during the great Middle Ages, is still intact, and the Jew is still perfect in his faith. In this world everything still stands on the faith, but it is felt that it starts to collapse here and there. And this is where the element of fun entered the story of Hacknasat Kalah (The Bridal Canopy). This is like the element of poking fun that we find, very much, in the eternal story of Cervantes, which is on the border of the old and new epoch in the history of the world. Lachover claims that it is recognizable that Agnon also learned from Cervantes, and from his travelling story, as it must also be considered that he learned something from Mendele Mocher Sefarim and from his travelling stories. Not to keep us purely in the abstract, Lachover brings an example,<sup>24</sup> comparing briefly the two main protagonists saying that besides Nuta, the coach driver, with the whip in his hand and with the two horses, Rabbi Yudel Hassid, who is himself a type of Don Quixote of the faith, is well emphasized in front of us. And so a picture is woven of the "Don Quixote" of our story - this one who does not recognize and who does not know any other reality besides that which is in accordance with what is written in the Holy Books. Lachover comes to this conclusion because of the great resemblance between the two main characters of both books (Don Quixote and The Bridal Canopy), while Band feels that "the archetype of Don Quixote must be invoked, not for its superficial resemblance to The Bridal Canopy as has been done on several occasions, but for

the narrative modes through which Cervantes set out to parody the chivalric tale..."<sup>25</sup>

In referring to the above, Professor Verses supports this view and brings to the fore another facet of similarity by stating:

Agnon's manner of quoting in The Bridal Canopy from the sources, has had a base not only in the tradition of the Hebrew literature but it has support also in classical works of humoristic literature of Europe. This custom of quotations and references from the author's mouth and from the mouth of his protagonists exists in the web of the stories of Rabelais and of Cervantes, of Lorenz Stern and of Vilaind. We may conclude that this work which is 'brimful with Judaism' in an abundance that deters even some Hebrew readers, is close even from this side of quotations, a surprising closeness to the tradition of the classical story in Europe..<sup>26</sup>

The Bridal Canopy would have been nurtured by similar works in European literature, especially by Cervantes' Don Quixote.

Kurtzweil<sup>27</sup> emphasizes the contrasts and the inner differences between these two writers. He expresses this view by writing that it is possible to speak about an interesting parallelism between The Bridal Canopy and Don Quixote, but we are not supposed to concentrate our attention upon the external phenomenon of the pair Rabbi Yudel - Nutta which fits, so to speak, the alliance between the Knight (Don Quixote) and Sancho Panza. Kurtzweil claims that the plot of Don Quixote develops like the comic tragedy because of the lack of harmony between the world of the protagonist, who behaves as if the absolute values of the chivalry world still exist, and between the reality (of a world) which has already been emptied of those values.

Kurtzweil admits that G. Lukacz rightfully sees in Don

Quixote the first modern novel which testifies to the isolation of the ego in a world left by his Lord. In vain, therefore, we expect to find a miracle which saves the hero from his troubles. Instead of this miracle, which would help the protagonist of the epos, we find Don Quixote involved in deeds of witchcraft which overcome the good and destroy it completely. Kurtzweil writes:

This symbolism, which reveals the deepest nucleus of 'Cervantes' work, is missing in The Bridal Canopy. Agnon weaves, with an extreme consistency, the romantic delusion of the perfect and complete world which contains the miracle as the verified and indispensable solution. In this he (Agnon) is nearer to the epos than Cervantes..The chapters of the book which disclose the secret of delusion, through means of romantic irony, attest to the partial affiliation of The Bridal Canopy to the social novel.<sup>28</sup>

We find here, therefore, the main difference between Cervantes and Agnon, which is fundamental to the understanding of Agnon's genuineness. In Don Quixote the hero acts in the present as if the past two-three hundred years have not passed at all, while in The Bridal Canopy the hero acts in a world in which there is no discrepancy between him and his world. The inner structure gives a greater depth to Agnon's works and makes more conspicuous his literary virtuosity.

#### 6. Views on the Influence of Kafka

A most interesting and intriguing question, which comes to the mind of anyone concerned with the influence of European writers on Agnon, concerns the possible contact between Kafka and Agnon and the possibility of any influence of Kafka on Agnon.

Many critical essays have been written on this topic. Most of them compare motifs, scenes, style, structure and



atmosphere between the works of these two great authors, but they contain no suggestion or hint as to the possibility of there being therein influence on Agnon's works. Moreover, most of the critics who raise this question of influence immediately dismiss it as being completely unfounded, despite the many similarities in the areas mentioned above. Most of them do, however, stress that, side by side with the great and interesting parallelisms, there are great differences between them, especially in the characteristics of the protagonists as well as in the special and unique atmosphere in which the reader is so convincingly pulled into Agnon's dream-realistic world.

In the remaining paragraphs of this chapter we will attempt to bring a synopsis of the main arguments of writers on this subject. It is not our intention to devote a chapter to the comparison of these two writers, especially in view of the fact that recently a book has been published which is devoted entirely to this subject.

To these almost unanimous views, there are two exceptions. One, that of Sh. Tzemach, who had the temerity to accuse Agnon of aping, and even of copying, Kafka, and the other of Y. Bar-Yosef who dared to do the same, but in a more vulgar way, in a letter to the readers. Both these views, which will be briefly quoted here, were rejected and dismissed either by other critics or by Agnon himself as being completely unfounded, even on the smallest evidence from the works compared. These views will be quoted at the end of this chapter, but first will be quoted views which point out similarities and, at the same time, dismiss the possibility of any influence of Kafka on Agnon.

Professor Kurtzweil,<sup>29</sup> who was the main authority together with Professor Sadan in the field of literary criticism on Agnon, stressed on many occasions the tremendous differences between these two writers in spite of and maybe because of the great similarities between them.

Kurtzweil<sup>30</sup> writes that as far back as twenty years ago he hinted to the common motifs and atmosphere between Kafka's and Agnon's stories. Since then he drew attention, on many occasions, to the similar elements in the works of these two writers. However, he feels, it is precisely the common elements that clarify the different ones. There are obvious differences in the formative aspects about which this is not the place to expiate. However, as literary documents, in which the problem of time comes to its intuitive fulfillment, there must be a distinction made between Kafka's and Agnon's works.

In another context, Kurtzweil<sup>31</sup> writes that Kafka's and Agnon's stories are woven upon the general European background, upon the crisis and the problems of the modern man; but the Jewish dimension of this European background is different in Kafka and in Agnon. At its base, Kafka is lacking the roots of a complete Jewish identity, and this is revealed in the last spasm of agony, the Jewish problematic. With Agnon, this is only a second pole of healthy deeprootedness. From the aesthetic aspects, it is impossible to make any steps beyond Kafka's work, as e.g., the extraction of the bitter truth of the nightmarish epoch and time and the defective vision and helplessness. He is the climax, and everyone who follows him can only be an epigonal imitator. From the Jewish spiritual aspect, Agnon's world is still much healthier and is no less true in its authenticity, than is Kafka's world. But the gravity

of the crisis of the hero as a human being, and as a Jewish man, in Agnon, is not similar to that of Kafka's man. For Agnon there is always open the possibility of a positive surrender to the authority of God.

It is in spite of the similarities and parallelisms between Agnon and Kafka, and perhaps due to them, that Agnon's genuineness and originality becomes even more obvious.

Kurtzweil writes:

The most heterogenic artistical means (in Agnon) are faithful, exclusively, to one most high principle. This is the principle of the creative desire, which reproduced a new integration of styles, of formulae, of style-dimension (Stillagen) with their medium, and this in summary is what is called "Agnon's style". But that diversity of style, and the reluctance to receive the discipline of one single and unique style (- and in contrast to Agnon this is almost the situation with Mendele, Brenner, Gnessin -) this kaleidoscopic (style) with its multivalent character which is given to incessant oscillations, adduces Agnon to the camp of extreme modernism, which justifies life in the sense of an aesthetic phenomenon only. It is clear that the author (Agnon) does not know about this process and he does not intend to perform it. It is the opposite extreme of what Agnon and his followers would like to admit. However, here we have no interest in the author but in the story teller and his characters which change continually, every time according to the subject and its artistical inner needs. From this aspect there is no greater contrast than between Agnon and Kafka. Kafka's style and formula are almost identical in all his stories. Kafka has a single and unequalled style.<sup>32</sup>

Kurtzweil says that in this lies Kafka's strength and his shortcomings. Whereas Agnon gives the story-teller many possibilities. Agnon's style is not obvious at the beginning. It is not given to the dominancy or limitation of one element. We find here development, variety, a complete lack of dependence

upon any orthodoxy of faith or of art as well. Everything is possible in Agnon's stories, and nothing is certain and constant for ever.

Kurtzweil stresses:

Only two truths are high above any doubt in Agnon's world; (a) that of the dominance of the creative desire and (b) that of the unreasonable, almost infantile, running of the story-teller - who speaks in the sense of a revolutionary and "throwing off the yoke" - towards the positions of the faith - the Father's creed - which are prepared in advance. This process is unfolded in front of our eyes, especially in the stories of The Book of Deeds but also in complete chapters of Oreach Nata Lalun (A Guest for a Night), in The Letter and also in other stories. A similar thing cannot be found in Kafka, because by doing so his artistical world would have been destroyed.<sup>33</sup>

Kurtzweil makes obvious all the Agnonian genuine and artistic narrative craft by comparing the different ways each of them deal with the same motif or plot, which brings to the fore Agnon's originality. But even other views which place more stress on the similarities between Agnon and Kafka do not admit the possibility of Kafka's influence on Agnon.

Arnold Band referred to this question twice. The first time that he dealt with this problem he wrote:

Because of the concern with spiritual alienation, with dehumanizing bureaucracy, Agnon has often been compared with Kafka, has even been accused of aping Kafka. The question of influence can easily be settled by historical research. Agnon was writing 'Kafkaesque' stories in Yiddish five years before Kafka published his Metamorphosis. Actually both Kafka and Agnon share the same Central European literary tradition which stems from German romanticism. The similarity with Kafka nevertheless should not be discounted. Both share the same spiritual concerns; both write sparse tense prose which reflects the anxieties of the writer. Yet, since Agnon's Jewish background is much richer, since he is

an observant Jew, in spite of all his doubts, and since he chose to live in Jerusalem, a vital centre of Jewish life, his stories are more concrete and his ironies often more subtle than Kafka's. Like Kafka, he should be included in the "existentialist" writers by those who are fond of the term...<sup>34</sup>

Not everyone agrees with all of Band's views and opinions about the similarities. Band writes "both (Agnon and Kafka) write a sparse tense prose which reflects the anxieties of the writer". A different view is held by one of the most important German writers of our days, Heinrich Boell, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1972. He writes on Agnon:

A great writer as he is, he has no need to be introduced to the public, he has also no need for scholastic or learned interpretations. But he needs the protection against the efforts made (by some critics) to be pushed into a remote Kafkaesque corner, so as to put him much easier in a certain 'line'. This is true, Agnon is Kafka's contemporary, but his prose is different and his rhythm is different.<sup>35</sup>

To say that Agnon writes Kafkaesquely, namely to suggest that he is aping, means to diminish without measure Agnon's originality as a writer, who was recognized in the world of literature as "A man of unquestionable genius".<sup>36</sup>

This is also Band's view, who referred again to this question in his book, when he wrote:

In discussions of Temol Shilshom or Sefer Hamassim (The Book of Deeds) cycle, the epithet Kafkaesque is inevitably conjured up, alluding to a nightmarish mode of literary expression or even to the source of Agnon's narrative technique in these stories... While it is entirely possible that Agnon read some of Kafka in later years, by 1907 he had already explored this mode of narrative in his late adolescence and was fully aware of its potentialities as a vehicle for the expression of certain sentiments and moods that could not be expressed otherwise. Agnon is Kafkaesque only because Kafka is the best-known exponent of a style of writing

both he and Agnon inherited, which has its roots in German Romanticism, or more directly in the late 19th Century rebirth of the Romantic spirit called neo-romanticism. Buczacz and Prague were in provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; in both areas the language of Western culture was German and the writers most admired had either written in German or were translated into German from one of the Scandinavian languages. While, for instance, it is simple to claim that Agnon conceived of his mad dog 'Balak' after reading about Kafka's beetle, a more sophisticated approach should take notice of the fact that the correlation of man and animal is hardly new in European literature and reaches almost archetypal expression in E.T.A. Hoffman's Kater Murr first published at the beginning of the 19th century. Agnon, moreover, freely admits that he was deeply impressed by Hamsun's Mysteries in his adolescence. A writer who has metabolized Mysteries in his adolescence does not need to study Kafka for ways to convey a painful self-awareness or the alienation of self from society or the absurdity of much of daily existence.<sup>37</sup>

In these lines Band clarifies convincingly the unfounded Kafkaesque epithet attributed to some of Agnon's works. He made conspicuous the fact that Agnon wrote Kafkaesquely six to seven years before the first Kafkaesque story was published, as well as the similar central European literary tradition between Agnon and Kafka including in it works translated from the Scandinavian languages, but also from French and Russian into the German language, which was the cultural milieu of Central Europe and Galicia, and thus explained the similarities between them.

We find also Edmond Wilson's view, in which he stresses the similar Jewish background of these two writers, Kafka and Agnon, but which at the same time is also quite different. Wilson writes:

One is struck at once, on reading him (Agnon), by similarities to two other Jewish artists, Marc Chagall

and Franz Kafka, both born, like Agnon, in the eighties. The picture of Jewish life in Agnon, as in their cases, is completely different from any kind of "genre" work that is derived from Nineteenth Century naturalism. But in Agnon you have also the moral, the theological, element that is not characteristic of Kafka. Kafka, born in Prague in the eighties, ... did not study Hebrew until late in life, but he derived from his mother's family a tradition of piety and learning. Though five years older than Agnon, he represents a later, more "assimilated" phase of the Judaic culture, and it is only by reading Agnon that you come to see how deeply Judaic the work of Kafka is ... Though in Kafka you do not get explicitly the background of the Talmud and Ghetto. Kafka's typical hero, like Agnon's is a man who is trying to survive in an alien, often unsympathetic and only partly comprehensive world, and who is bent in maintaining or discovering a technique that will make it possible for him to live in it on good terms with 'The Name'.<sup>38</sup> The difference between Agnon and Kafka is that Reb Yudel of The Bridal Canopy, though equally at cross-purposes with the larger community, and even with the common conditions of life, is diverted only momentarily from the path of salvation he has taken, the path of study and prayer. Whereas Kafka's all but anonymous "K", who is never given a Jewish origin, can not be sure of anything, and confuses, as Reb Yudel would never do, his duty to an imperfectly accessible God with his duty to established society. In Kafka, the situation of the Jew in Central Europe makes connections, as Agnon does not, with a more general situation, and he becomes the moralist and the poet, or better perhaps, the poet of moral certainty - of a baffling historical moment... the human interest of Agnon's fiction is much wider and warmer than Kafka's. These personal situations, by which the ideals of Judaism are shown as implicated with human nature, if not quite perhaps tied down to earth, are always treated by Agnon with sympathy. In Kafka, the irony of the French Flaubert has tintured with a certain contempt the abstraction of Jewish analysis. The irony of Agnon is all pervasive too; he is never sentimental, still less melodramatic.<sup>39</sup>

From Wilson's analysis it is quite clear that there is room for similarities which make Agnon's uniqueness even more

conspicuous, while there is no hint at all of any possibility of Kafka's influence on Agnon.

Analysing Agnon's stories from The Book of Deeds Professor Harold Fisch also compares them to Kafka, as well as to others, and he comes to the same conclusion as that of other critics and scholars that there was no influence whatsoever from Kafka upon Agnon. Professor Fisch, as well as Professors Sadan, Kurtzweil, Band, Barzel and others have found great similarities between Agnon and Kafka, but just as they did, so did Professor Fisch stress time and time again that besides the similarities there are even greater differences between them.

The differences are remarkable in the stories of The Book of Deeds as well as in any other story which is flavoured with Kafkaesque motifs, scenes, mood or atmosphere. Professor Fisch made these conspicuous by writing:

The symbolic and everyday world are yoked by violence together in a way only found elsewhere in Kafka, but Agnon differs from Kafka in the degree of faithfulness both to the dream experience and to everyday observation. It is true, as has been claimed, that these stories project the inner contents of the psyche, 'the spiritual plight of the narrator'<sup>40</sup> and that perhaps this aspect is foremost; but it is not true that he is romantically abstracted from his environment and totally immersed in his psychic depths. These are not tales involving radical alienation of that kind. The last story of The Book of Fables<sup>41</sup> in the 1951 edition, The Letter may be read as a detailed, almost journalistic account of Jerusalem society in the thirties... There is also the faithfulness of the dream...

A typical dream situation which reoccurs throughout The Book of Fables is sudden amnesia. The narrator finds he is tongue-tied, or that his feet are dragging and that he cannot move, or that he is improperly clad... Above all (as in so many dreams of those of us



who have to give a lecture or attend meetings) there is an obsession with time. The clock is mentioned in practically every fable;... Agnon's dreams are not typically Freudian or Jungian, although it would be easy to find features to support both a Freudian or a Jungian type of analysis. What we seem to have here is a *tertium quid*, an Agnonian type of dream which has a syntax all of its own. I am not here concerned to draw conclusions about the nature of dreams, nor even about the nature of Jewish dreams (though it may be that there is some such special category). It is enough to insist that a particular pattern is to be found in the literary work which we are studying, whether the pattern is invented or whether it is actually projected from the inner world of Agnon's dreams is a question for the psychoanalyst rather than for the literary critic. One would only wish to warn the psychoanalyst that before beginning his enquiries he had better furnish himself with some rudimentary knowledge of biblical literature and theology.<sup>42</sup>

But not only in the typical dream situations did Agnon show his originality in comparison to Kafka, but also in other literary forms - like the symbolic or allegoric story - which he masters with a virtuosity incomparable not only in Hebrew, but also in world literature.

Writing about The Whole Loaf, Fisch stresses that: this is clearly an allegorical tale like so many of Kafka's tales and like Pilgrim's Progress; but its force is not entirely owing to its allegorical contrivance. The brooding sense of the pressure of time is not accessible entirely to allegorical schematization. We do not escape the past; it is with us... But it is not only that such a tale has behind it the symbolism of historical times, but that it is itself history, an image of contemporary existence in the historical present. And here is where Agnon differs radically from Kafka. A Whole Loaf is amongst other things, a naturalistic account of a Saturday night in Jerusalem in the twenties. We see the Arabs in their fesses, the Orthodox Jews in their streimals, there is traffic, there are cafes and hotels; you see different types coming out to take the air after a burning day of Hamsin. You meet the scholar

at his lighted window, the successful man of property in his couch, you visit the little synagogue with its candles and benches, a fine restaurant with its magnificent appointment and its babal of tongues.

Here is a special dimension of Agnon's fiction.<sup>43</sup>

And again, in another article discussing Agnon's Betrothed, Professor Fisch stresses again that besides the likeness to Kafka there goes hand in hand also the differences.

But we must be careful when we speak of Agnon as a symbolic novelist. His characters, like those of Kafka, have a hidden life, a secret meaning; but unlike those of Kafka, they also have a compulsive everyday reality. He is more like Conrad, who writes genuine sea-tales and tales of adventure which nevertheless have an inward psychological and symbolic bearing. Agnon in Betrothed has written the history of Jaffa in the time of the Second Aliyah, he has also written a symbolic tale portraying the bond linking Jacob-Israel and the Queen Shabbath - The Shekinah - the sleeping beauty of the fairy tale who can be aroused from the sleep of centuries only by the kiss of her destined spouse.<sup>44</sup>

The long quotations from the essays and books were brought here to demonstrate the great interest this subject awoke among Agnon's readers and amongst scholars and in spite of its importance only a small number of the critics or scholars are represented in this chapter. There are still many more articles, both in periodicals and books, which deal with this topic. Above we have quoted the most authoritative, all of whom dismiss the possibility of influence. As previously stated, there are a few who do not agree with these findings, and whose views have been rejected, but for the purpose of completeness we feel it is necessary to discuss them here.

Y. Bar-Yosef, an Israeli Hebrew story teller, who was born in Zefath, wrote a letter to the Literary Supplement of

The Haifa Journal which he captioned "Against Agnon's Followers". In this letter he brought eight objections or criticisms against the near-divinisation of Agnon as a writer, concerning whom all the critics use only superlatives. For our purposes we will quote only his sixth objection in which he deals especially with the similarity between Kafka and Agnon. He dares to say:

All of his (Agnon's) works in modernistic style hang on nothingness. If the fans of modernism look up with admiration and excitement to the reading of his Kafkaesque stories, behold they forget a simple fact that Agnon did not invent anything new in this field. He may be considered, at the most, as a successful epigon in this field, if not a copyist or as one who takes from the prepared. And what is more important from this aspect is that modernism is not Agnon's inner world. When Kafka wrote what he wrote, he was Kafka in each and every one of his lines, and he was Kafka when he sat down to a cup of tea and when he dreamed his wild dreams on his bed during the nights. He was not able to write today a sweet idyllia and the next day the story The Metamorphosis or The Trial. He lived his nightmarish world in all his two hundred and forty-eight organs<sup>45</sup> and he gave to it expression in his work. This is not so with Agnon, who is a pleasant and charming person, and who does not make at all the impression that he ever lived in a world of nightmare. On the contrary, in many of his stories he handles them with the pain of a most spoiled person and he exaggerates them out of proportion. This indicates that the whole surrialistic world of terror and despair and dreadful loneliness is not but a literary creation, and he may have influence only upon students who want to be modernistic at any price, but not upon a person with judgement and with the capacity of discernment between truth and nice but flamboyant art.<sup>46</sup>

Agnon did not react openly to this impertinent letter. This was done for him (without his prior knowledge or consent) by Shlomo Tannai in a letter to the Davar's supplement which was titled "A Letter Which is not Convincing" (Remarks to Bar-Yosef's

objections to Agnon).<sup>47</sup> Tannai attacks all of Bar-Yosef's objections one by one and as Tannai's response has some convincing points, we shall let his views speak for themselves:

Bar Yosef claims that he (Agnon) is not but an average good writer ... and not the writer, with the definite article, of Hebrew literature. In eight objections he tries to prove the veracity of the mark that he granted to the writer...

Without knowing, and in time of wanting to swim against the stream without serious effort, Bar Yosef reveals that he has a clear 'Code of Law' about the notion of what is a writer, like a recipe. If he has these and these elements, the man is a writer, and if not the mark is very low.

And there is in 'the letter' also not a little of a curiosity. Bar Yosef claims, in an arbitrary style, that in his Kafkaesque stories 'Agnon did not invent anything new in this field. He may be considered at the most a successful epigon, if not a copyist who takes from the prepared'. Yes this is a heavy argument. And why does not the modernistic style, in the Kafkaesque nightmarish formula fit to Agnon? Because he (Agnon), according to Bar Yosef 'is a pleasant and charming person, and he does not make at all the impression that he ever lived in a world of nightmare'. If not, the conclusion has to be then, that a written work of a writer may be judged according to the impression that he makes at random, in a talk in the street or by a meeting in his home. According to this approach no one will be able to judge the works of Sophocles, Shakespeare or Goethe because none of the living did talk to these writers in the street or at home ... Bar Yosef understood himself, as he mentions in his letter, that to prove it categorically, one has to sit for a month and prepare a research. He had to accept his own view and not give us - instead of a critical review, or research - an impetuous letter that cannot convince and whose level takes it out of the sphere of fruitful literary thought.<sup>48</sup>

Any comment is superfluous.

A similar view to that of Bar Yosef, and even more amazing, was expressed by Sh. Tzemach in a series of articles in which he sharply criticizes Agnon's works as a whole and especially those which allude to Kafka's works. He writes that Agnon resided in Berlin for many years during the First World War and the Weimar rule, that he read the "Modern" books or heard about them, and even read (or heard) about the whole annals of the arguments concerning them in the critical literature of Germany in those days. The atmosphere around him was filled with them and he must have, even if unwillingly, absorbed them. "And, because here it is the case of technique and machinations, and of literary etiquette, Agnon knows where the keys are and how one opens with them all the locks of the chests... Here is the taking possession of ownerless property and from that which lies in the public domain."<sup>49</sup> Tzemach feels that what is astonishing about Agnon is how and why a Hebrew writer who always wrote about things as they really were suddenly turned and started to be fallacious. This is the question the critic has to ask and answer and not dive into the deep waters of minute and pseudo-commentary, which is like the technique and machination of the writer. His conclusion is that both the writer and his critics both glorify and self-adorn themselves with borrowed tools which were already squashed from plethora usage.

Agnon did not react directly to these critical essays and to these amazing insinuations, although on many occasions he did express his astonishment and indignation. Sometimes, however, he reacted quite calmly to them, as it was reported in the Yiddish periodical Die Goldene Keit that Agnon had asked and answered the question as follows:

If there is influence in my work of Franz Kafka?  
I was not influenced by Kafka, as some scholars and literary critics say. I have read only his The Trial and this when I was lying sick. My wife (may she live long) tried to induce me to read his works, but he is not of the same root as my soul. He is a great writer, Kafka, but for me he is strange...<sup>50</sup>

We find instead another literary critic who defended Agnon's originality very successfully, proving methodically that all these insinuations are without foundation. Meshulam Tochner wrote that in a rich and kaleidoscopic web of critic, which is woven with esteem and admiration about a monumental creative project in honour of the seventieth year of its creator, there is no wonder that a writer and critic who started to walk on the paths of literature almost at the same time as the jubilarian will contribute his part in reminiscences, in impressions and with appreciation. But to the deep sorrow of all the lovers and searchers of literature, Sh. Tzemach did not feel pain and did not spare from coming out, even at this time, in a trial to disqualify almost the majority of Sh. Y. Agnon's work.<sup>51</sup>

Tochner quoted, one by one, all the statements that Tzemach states against Agnon's greatness and uniqueness and convincingly proved to the reader how unfounded these statements are, as none of them were sustained by quotations from Agnon's works. Thus he says:

But the whole accusation about the matching of Mea Shearim (the ultra-orthodox suburb in Jerusalem where Itzhak Koomar found a home by marrying an ultra-orthodox girl, and who returned to religious life because of her, and later died there) to the plot of Temol Shilshom is like as naught in comparison with Tzemach's attack on the inclusion of the dog Balak into the circle of the novel. According to his opinion Agnon imitates Kafka either with the ideic motifs in the dog's section,

or with its use as an aesthetical medium. He even adds "that the dog in Temol Shilshom did come to divert the attention from the things that he (Agnon) was not given in his story of the days of the Second Aliyah in spite of the fact that he wanted to do so very much". And further, on what basis does he (Tzemach) say that Temol Shilshom has in it "a blind diety which does nothing but mocks without sense". And what importance does it have if this diety is to be found in Kafka or not, if there is no support that it is found in Temol Shilshom...have these imminent motifs any resemblance to the array of ideals in The Castle, in The Trial, in America or in the other Kafka stories. Moreover, also when he raises the accusation that the episode of the dog, Balak, is an accurate copy, in the sense of imitation, 'according to a certain formula' with Kafka's story of The Beetle, he does not bother to prove this through textual comparison.<sup>52</sup>

Tochner asks what similarity there is between the dog, Balak, which has a definite biological character, from the realistic point of view, and is an organic figure in the affairs of Jerusalem before the First World War, and the dog by Kafka, which is but an allegoric hint stripped and exposed from any attachment to place, time and man. He wants to know what is common to Balak and to the seven dogs by Kafka which suddenly stood up on their legs and exposed their nakedness or to the flying dogs, which even the dog himself, Kafka's protagonist, never saw.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, Tochner destroys, very convincingly, all the arguments that Tzemach brought forth in his series of articles. Summing up his methodical research Tochner writes:

To sum up, it is impossible not to conclude from all that has been said (and this is but a fraction of what can be said) that not for foreign tables, and not for foreign children, was Agnon in need. When he needed for an aesthetic psychologic construction, a dog in Temol Shilshom - from his own sources did he chisel it

and from his imagination did he create him, and no foreigner has neither part nor lot in it.<sup>54</sup>

..The harmonic perfection and the aesthetic splendour which dominate in Temol Shilshom in spite of its different elements, they by themselves are however the decisive proof to the authenticity and to the uniqueness and originality of the dog, Balak, in the world of Hebrew creation as well as in the general one.<sup>55</sup>

Tuchner has a very comprehensive chapter in his book devoted entirely to refuting Sh. Tzemach's attack on Agnon, which he has done very successfully and very convincingly, and its essential ideas have been quoted here. But there is one more essay which is important for our subject, since it reveals an inner original Jewish source which explains the similarities between these two great writers, and so gives an unexpected support to those who believe in the inner Jewish source of Agnon's scenes and plots, characters and the atmosphere in which they are acting.

A more detailed explanation to the intriguing question of Agnon's original source of those nightmarish stories which was already hinted at by Tuchner is found in a study by Rivka Horvitz.<sup>57</sup> She writes that Agnon's world of symbols is connected with symbols from the Midrashic, Kabalistic and Hassidic literature. The dog, Balak, that many struggled in understanding its purport, alludes perhaps to the dog which is hinted to in the portion of the law "Balak" from the Zohar. But such scrutinies were not always done. Kurtzweil pointed out the conceptual closeness between Agnon and Kafka, but it is known that Agnon did not know of Kafka's works when he wrote these stories, and we have to believe in the testimony of the author. Agnon was attached to the writings of his forebears in the sense of "Turn it, and turn it again, for everything is in it"<sup>56</sup>



(it is an inexhaustable source of information). It appears, however, that those Kafkaesque motifs of Agnon are there without the influence of foreign literature.

Rivka Horvitz mentions that there are similar Kafkaesque motifs in the writings of Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav. There is no doubt that Agnon knew Rabbi Nachman's writings, he quotes him and even wrote, in rhymes, one of his stories. And motifs, like lack of real structure, the negation of the ego, ups and downs without end, mission and deviation from the road, all these are common to Rabbi Nachman, Kafka and Agnon.

Eliezer Shteinman, who prepared Rabbi Nachman's writings into a popular edition, was surprised by the attachment between Rabbi Nachman and Kafka. He writes, "for the browser, the one who is reading the stories of Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav, it is impossible that he will not investigate the references between him and Kafka. The whole nightmarish world of Kafka is already hinted to in these thirteen stories. Even 'the man' of Rabbi Nachman is loaded with a heavy guilt and is always persecuted, is being chased, or is chasing after something that he lost.."<sup>58</sup> The similar style between Rabbi Nachman and Agnon, is in the content and not in the style. Also, the motif of disguising is common, without doubt, to Rabbi Nachman and to Agnon. We do not know if we are in the real existence or in the dream existence, exactly as in Kafka's stories.

The comparative research of the works of Agnon with those of Kafka (as with the works of other European writers) is still in its beginnings, but even so we find some interesting remarks in a comparative study between The Lady and the Pedlar by Agnon and The Castle by Kafka published by Dr. Hillel Barzel first as an essay and then in his book. He writes:

In spite of the different literary structure a small story opposite to a comprehensive novel, there is attached great importance to the comparison of these two literary works. The thematic closeness, the fate of the Jew among the nations (which stands in the background of both literary works) is apparent to an interesting parallelism in the ways of literary expression in the world of images and in the kingdom of symbols. The main purpose of the comparative literature is not in the search for imitating ways, or even concerned with the conscious receiving of influence. Its interest is focused in the deep roots which are far from the surface and which reveal themselves in different scenes and landscapes. But even the unknown common cause is likely to reveal its signs openly. Kafka did not influence Agnon directly. The searching after proof between their genial unique works is not supported by the claim of acquaintanceship, or having known each other. The theory is that a hidden spring, whose source is in the spirit of the time, and whose influence are from the common national and religious origin - without disregarding individual personal decisive and significant differences - presents the works of both these writers with resemblance.<sup>59</sup>

In the book recently published by this same author, there are many comparative studies collected on the same subject based on the comparison of different works of these writers. The main view of this scholar did not change. In the preface of his book, in which he devoted himself to a systematic research both of Agnon's as well as Kafka's writings, comparing their works and their similarities and parallelisms, as well as their general spirit, atmosphere and style, Professor Barzel writes:

The purpose of this book is not to prove that there exists a direct influence of Kafka's works upon Agnon's. Many of Agnon's stories, which are flavoured with Kafkaesque spirit were written before Kafka's stories started to be published. Agnon himself, vehemently denied on many occasions, that he was influenced by

Kafka's writings. He was acquainted, he pleaded, with only one Kafka. This was a policeman named Kafka in his hometown, Buczacz. When he was asked once for an explanation as to the existence of Kafka's books in his library, he answered that his wife read them. About the attachment between The Book of Deeds and Kafka's work, as well as about his attitude to Kafka's stories in general Agnon said (on the occasion of celebrating the 60th birthday of Dov Sadan at the house of the Tochners on the 13th of Adar I, 5722 [and published in the daily newspaper Ha-aretz March 3, 1972])

'My friends, ladies and gentlemen, never in my born days did I deny my mentors, and I did not conceal from whom I learned, but The Book of Deeds only my own soul taught me, and my soul was this one who told them to me. And what they mention concerning Kafka and me, it is a mistake. Before I published The Book of Deeds I did not know of Kafka's stories, except for his story Metamorphosis, and even now I did not take any of Kafka's books into my hands, except The Trial which I read when I was sick ten years ago. Many times did my wife wish to read to me one of Kafka's stories, but she did not succeed. After she read for me one or two pages I could not listen any more. Kafka is not of the same root as my soul, and anyone who is not of the root of my soul I do not assimilate, even if he is as great as the Ten Sages who composed the Book of Psalms. I know that Kafka is a great writer, but my soul is strange to him. The same about Proust, the same about Joyce, the same about Hoffman, and the same about other great men..'60

This categorical denial seems to have convinced all the readers of Agnon's frankness and sincerity. And therefore we are not surprised by Barzel's conclusion in his preface in which he writes "To point to Agnon as a 'Kafka who writes Hebrew' is without doubt to disregard the unique specificness of the Hebrew writer".<sup>61</sup>

But a great question mark still hovers over this interesting and intriguing phenomena. In the epilogue to his book, Barzel comes to the same conclusion as most of the critics and

scholars who have dealt with this problem, namely that there is no influence whatsoever from Kafka upon Agnon, despite the many similar motifs and parallelisms and the great resemblance between them. Barzel's explanation is that the resemblance between the works that were discussed can be explained by the Jewish resources of the two authors, as well as to the resources of the attachment to European literature. It is worthwhile to remember that Agnon's wide Jewish learning was accompanied by a deep knowledge of world literature. The reading in Shira is enough to prove this. Herbst held in his saddlebag many books from the best of the Greek and German classics, when he came to write The Art of the Tragedy. The essence of a Strindbergian scene is also clear to him. Kafka, on the other hand, tried with all his might to be familiar with Jewish literature. Agnon and Kafka were born and grew up in the same period. Agnon (1888-1970) and Kafka (1883-1924) absorbed from the spirit of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and both were well acquainted with German literature. Agnon stayed for more than eleven years in Germany (1913-1924). Both story tellers had a deep attitude to the cultural heritage.<sup>62</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

In concluding this chapter it is conspicuous from the views quoted (and there are still many more which were not mentioned at all) that there are similarities, reminiscences and parallelisms between Agnon's works and other European writers which are due to two different causes. One is because of the wide range of Agnon's reading, and therefore we feel entitled to agree with those views which point to these similarities, etc., as proof of the existence of certain

influence on Agnon's works, namely the similarities between Cervantes, Andersen, Hamsun, and other writers hint to their influence. The other is the result of similar cultural, national and general backgrounds, excluding the possibility of influence, because of a similar parallel fountain or spring, which influenced these prolific writers without them having any contact with each other, like Kafka and Agnon.

All this does not diminish the status of Agnon as the greatest Hebrew writer in Modern times, as well as one of the great writers in world literature, which was acknowledged by the bestowing upon him of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966.

Agnon's originality in style, motifs, scenes and characters is obvious in spite of the great similarity of some of them to one specific, or more than one, European writer, e.g., Kafka. Agnon's own view on this subject will convince the reader that both these contradictory views are based on the truth of art as well as on the truth of Agnon's life, and in the following chapter we give mainly Agnon's own view on the possibility of the influence of European writers on his works.

#### NOTES

1. BARZEL, H., Bein Agnon LeKafka (Agnon and Kafka - A Comparative Study), Ramat Gan, Bar Urian, The Publishing House of the Union of Bar Ilan University Students, 1972/5733.
2. (a) SADAN, D., Al Shai Agnon (On Shai Agnon), Massa, Iyun ve'Heker (Essays, Study and Research), Israel, Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, Ltd., 1959.

b) SHAKED, G., Omanuth Hasippur Shel Agnon (The Narrative Art of S.Y. Agnon), Merchavia and Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz ha'Artzi Publishing House, 1973/5733.

c) VERSES, S., ha'Sipur ve'Shorsho (The Story and its Roots), Ramat Gan, Massada Publishing House in conjunction with the Hebrew Writers' Association, 1971.

3. YA'ARI, A., Kitve Agnon, Moznaim, III/20-21, September 24, 1931, pp. 10-12.

4. Ibid., p. 11.

5. Including Professors Hillel Barzel and Harold Fisch who quote for comparison purposes without claiming influence, while Professors G. Shaked and S. Verses do quote for comparison purposes but allude, rightfully, to influence. But there are also those who just point to similar motifs without assuming influence, like Kurtzweil and Dov Sadan.

6. Like Shlomo Tzemach and Yoshua Bar Yosef, whose views are quoted at the end of this chapter. It is worthwhile to mention that there are also those who do both; sometimes quoting for comparison purposes and sometimes just taking it for granted, and sometimes just pointing to similarities without assuming influence, such as Arnold Band and E. Wilson.

7. The Book of Deeds (or Book of Happenings or Book of Fables, Sefer HaMaasim) written in the thirties and forties.

These surrealist, introspective, dreamlike tales are told with clarity and precision that remind some readers of Kafka's style. So, too, does the content: Man is lonely, homeless, in exile, meaning disintegrates, lines

of communication break down, there is no exit. Deep faith is a matter of the past, the present forms of religion are full of ambivalence, paradox, even of decay. Time itself disintegrates. In 1966 Agnon spoke of himself as "a stranger both to his time and to his place...."

It may be assumed that the tragedy that befell the Jewish people in the thirties and forties prompted Agnon to accentuate in The Book of Deeds the motives that incited his creative life from its inception, though in less stark, less turbulent forms. Against the background of the frightful events, the artist must have felt compelled to abandon the form of the well composed tale, the quiet orderly progression of events, and the appearance of simplicity. Now, the experience of chaos penetrated the very form of the story and pervaded style and expression. (Editorial Postscript, Twenty One Stories, London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., Nachum N. Glatzer, Ed., 1970).

8. SADAN, D., Al Shai Agnon, op. cit., p. 58.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., pp. 26-27.
11. KURTZWEIL, B., Massot Al Sippurei Shai Agnon, 3rd enlarged edition, Tel Aviv, Schocken Publishing House, 1970.
12. Ibid., p. 14.
13. Ibid., p. 75.
14. Ibid., p. 85.
15. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare, op. cit., p. 47.
16. SHALOM, G., Mekorotav Shel Ma'ase Rabbi Gadiel Hatinok

- besifrut hakabala, in Le'Agnon Shai, Jerusalem, Hebrew University Press, D. Sadan and E. Urbach, Ed., 1959, pp. 289-306.
17. FICHMAN, Y., Kata'im Al Agnon Zichronot Ureshamin, Moznaim, VII/5, 1938 (Elul 5698), pp. 625-631.
  18. SINGER, I.B., Introduction to Hunger, Knut Hamsun, translated by Robert Bly, New York, Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1967, pp. IX-X.
  19. FICHMAN, Y., Kata'im Al Agnon, op. cit., p. 627.
  20. Yephet, Vol. 3, 1912/13. See also note 5 in chapter IV "Influence of European Writers on Agnon...".
  21. SHAKED, G., Omanuth Hasippur Shel Agnon (The Narrative Art of S.Y. Agnon), op. cit., p. 310, ff. 34.
  22. Yedioth Genazim, 70, 5730, Vol. 4, year 8, p. 598, published by Agudath Ha-Sofrim ha-Ivrim.
  23. LACHOVER, F., Rishonia ve-Aharonim, Tel Aviv, Dvir Publishing House, 1966/5726, p. 359.
  24. Ibid., p. 360.
  25. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare, op. cit., p. 127.
  26. VERSES, S., Hasipur ve'Shorso, op. cit., p. 186.
  27. KURTZWEIL, B., Massot Al Sippurei Shai Agnon, op. cit., p. 24.
  28. Ibid.
  29. BARZEL, M., Agnon and Kafka (A Comparative Study), op. cit.
  30. KURTZWEIL, B., Massot Al Sippurei Shai Agnon, op. cit., p. 260 discusses it more fully.



31. Ibid., p. 264.
32. Ibid., pp. 383-384.
33. Ibid.
34. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare (article), The Jerusalem Post, October 21, 1966, p. 12.
35. JIDDE, M., reporting in Maariv, January 1, 1965.
36. An essay with this title was published in Hebrew Abstracts, Vol. XI, 1966-67, pp. 13-17 by Edmond Wilson.
37. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare, op. cit., pp. 448-449.
38. "The Name" is used by pious Jews instead of mentioning the Tetragrammaton. It is based on the biblical verse "And the son of the Israelitish woman pronounced the (holy) Name". Lev. 24.11.
39. WILSON, E., Hebrew Abstracts, op. cit., pp. 14-15.
40. BAND, A., cf. p. 188, also pp. 448-449.
41. Fisch seems to prefer the translation of Sefer Hamaasim as The Book of Fables instead of the more prevalent The Book of Deeds.
42. FISCH, H., A Forum on Fiction, Vol. 4, No. 1, Fall 1970, pp. 60-61.
43. Ibid., p. 68.
44. FISCH, H., writing in Tradition, A Journal of Orthodox Thought, Vol. 9, Nos. 1-2, Spring-Summer, 1967.
45. The Jewish Sages of blessed memory counted 248 organs in the human body, and when they wanted to say that some-

body did something, or something was done wholeheartedly, they said it was done with all 248 organs, and so it became a metaphor in the Hebrew Literature.

46. BAR YOSEF, Y., Neged Haside Agnon, Haifa Ha'ovedet, November 7, 1963.
47. Michtav She'eino Mishachnea, Davar, November 15, 1963.
48. Ibid.
49. Masechot Uteraphim, Davar, December 12 and 26, 1958, January 9 and 16, 1959.
50. Die Goldene Keit, Tel Aviv, 1969/70, p. 47.
51. TOCHNER, M., Pesher Agnon, Israel, Massad. Publishing House, p. 81.
52. Ibid., p. 90.
53. Ibid., p. 90.
54. Ibid., p. 92.
55. Ibid., p. 93.
56. Pirke Avoth (The Sayings of the Fathers), Ch. 5, Mishna 25.
57. HORVITZ, R., Moznaim, Aug.-Sept. 1968, pp. 173-174.
58. Kitvei Rabbi Nachman, Tel Aviv, Knesset Publishing House, E. Shteinman, Ed., 1951, p. 23.
59. BARZEL, H., Kafka & Agnon, an article, Carmelit, 5726, p. 174.
60. BARZEL, H., Kafka & Agnon, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
61. Ibid., p. 10
62. Ibid., p. 332.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INFLUENCE OF EUROPEAN WRITERS ON AGNON'S WORKS AND AGNON'S ON OTHERS

#### 1. Introduction

In the previous chapter we have made conspicuous the different main views about Agnon's indebtedness to European literature. The European writers mentioned by the critics and scholars are only a few of those that could have been mentioned and we mainly focused upon the relation between Franz Kafka and Agnon as well as upon Kafka's possible influence on Agnon. Most of the views quoted dismissed completely the possibility of such an influence, and even today Professor Sadan stresses that he still sticks to his opinion that Agnon was not influenced by Kafka.<sup>1</sup> Some of the views pointed to the influence of Cervantes and Hamsun, but even these views were not based on comparative studies but on the general feeling of the reader, which means that it still leaves a great deal of space for the scholar to enter this wide field. Even where we have Agnon's own testimony as to his range of reading the real work is still in front of us.

The main point of this chapter, therefore, is to make conspicuous the list of writers Agnon himself acknowledges as having read. Afterwards we shall bring the appropriate quotations to convince the reader of the truth of the researcher's assumptions.

It is generally accepted today that Agnon only mastered the Yiddish, Hebrew and German languages. About Yiddish and Hebrew there can be no question. His first literary works

were written in either Yiddish or Hebrew.<sup>2</sup> Concerning his knowledge of the German language, we have the testimony of Lea Ben Dor, who quotes Agnon as saying, "Recently I read a story of mine that had been translated into German and published in a German newspaper. I could have scratched my face open".<sup>3</sup> She describes his agitation and his concern at the inadequacy or even ineptness of the translation when she says "...He raised his fingers to the sprouting beard on his face in a terrible despairing gesture. For a writer who prunes and polishes every phrase nine times, or so it is said, what can be a worse fate than to write in a language understood by so few and to be helpless in the hands of translators."<sup>4</sup> This testimony reveals that (a) Agnon had read, and was reading, those of his works which had been translated into the German language (as well as those translated into the Yiddish language), and (b) that he was able to appreciate their accuracy and their artistic value (or the lack thereof). To do this, to judge the quality of a translation, one has to master both languages.

An additional testimony to Agnon's good knowledge of the German language is the fact that he translated Bjornson's story Dust from German<sup>5</sup> as well as his stated wish to translate some of Jacobsen's stories. There is no evidence of the materialization of this wish, which is expressed in a letter to Lachover in which he states "...and about translating Jacobsen, the refined writer, I shall still think it over and I'll try my creative ability. If I will be successful and I will translate it I shall send it to you, dear Sir, so that you can check on the work and see if it is correct. Meanwhile, I do not know yet what to choose, and there will pass at least one month before I shall be able to read his works again."<sup>6</sup>

In discussing the question of influence, it is important to take into consideration Agnon's own view on the possibility of influence upon a writer in general, and upon himself in particular. Before bringing any evidence of influence, we have to answer the question 'To what extent was Agnon acquainted with the literary works of the above-mentioned writers?' We are fortunate in having his own admissions, which we feel are worth more than the evidence of one hundred critics.<sup>7</sup>

We have to divide the documents we shall bring in this context into two divisions. The first division consists of letters written on various occasions to his friends, writers and others. The letters in this section were written before he received the unquestioned recognition of Hebrew literary critical circles that he is the creator of a new genre which will charm, again and again, both his Hebrew and non-Hebrew readers. In these letters Agnon was able to express himself freely, for little could he have imagined, at that time, that his every word would undergo microscopical critical evaluation. The documents in this category, we therefore feel, should be considered completely truthful as they were written without consciousness that they would be read by anyone, other than by those to whom they were addressed. The second division contains documents which are answers given to specific questions, or reactions to insinuations which appeared, rarely, in the publications of literary critical circles, but which angered him because of the false accusations. These answers, however, were given when Agnon was already a *persona grata* of the majority of the Hebrew reading world.

## 2. Agnon's Knowledge of the Works of Various Writers

In a letter written to S.Z. Schocken from the Jewish hospital in Berlin, and dated November 14, 1916, Agnon (then still Czaczkes) writes:

...today or tomorrow I shall return to you, Sir, part of the books of Balzac, Dostoyevsky and Keller. I enjoyed the books very much... From Balzac, who stands and thrashes his people in the palm of his hand and handles them like a man disposing of his own.. And who shall say to him, what do you do? But the characters are growing and developing like living creatures and, suddenly, they turn heavy and he is forced to lower them. And Dostoyevsky whom, every time I read, I shall remember what Moltke had said about the city of Moscow... And Keller, the simple and industrious, who had better technique than both of them. The other books I have not yet read...<sup>8</sup>

Once speaking to David Cn'ani, Agnon expressed his admiration for Balzac, by saying:

Balzac, for instance is a genius. I find in him Freud before the psychoanalysis was in the world. Very modern; Amazing in his observations... He is a genius in spite of the fact that in this point he erred.<sup>9</sup>

In another letter, also written to S.Z. Schocken (when Agnon was still in the hospital) dated December 27, 1916, he writes:

I was very glad to receive the fine books that you were so kind as to send me. Emil Zola's brochure on Flaubert, I read in one breath. Not because the book is so good but because it is on Flaubert. Flaubert, and everything about him, touches my heart. This poet who killed himself in the tent of poetry<sup>10</sup> is for me in the capacity of "a small note"<sup>11</sup> of the Rabbi Elimelech of Lizansk. It would be worthwhile that every writer would read about him before (he writes) and after that he writes; and then no book would be boring.<sup>12</sup>

In a letter to F. Lachover, dated May 1, 1913, Agnon writes: "Sir, I read Flaubert's Salambo. How good it would be to bring it into "our tent", but it would have to be done by Frischman."<sup>13</sup>

Speaking of the general attitude towards Jewish writers, David Kn'ani records Agnon as saying:

Jews quickly forget their writers, (a typical) a Jewish characteristic par excellence. An antisemitic wrote once that with the death of a Jewish writer in a foreign language he is immediately forgotten and the same happens to his work and he may be as popular as ever. And truly, there did not remain any memory of Jews in literature. Who is excited today about Shnitzler, Wasserman, Stefan Zweig, Feuchtwagner? In my youth I expressed in front of Brener my excitement about Shnitzler and Wasserman, and he laughed. "They may go and learn from you".<sup>14</sup>

According to this remark we may add the above-mentioned writers to the list of whom Agnon had read during his youth.

In a speech given in honour of Dov Sadan on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, Agnon again spoke of the question of influence by way of praising the jubilant for his fine taste and good advise. He said:

My friends, ladies and gentlemen, never in my life did I deny who were my mentors, and I did not hide from whom I have learned... It is a pleasure to read Homer, Cervantes, Balzak, Gogol, Tolstoi, Flaubert and Hamsun...<sup>15</sup>

From Agnon's expressions in these letters and talks, we may conclude that not only did he enjoy reading the books of the above-mentioned writers, but also that he was able to appreciate everyone's qualities and faculties. Also, from the enthusiasm and admiration so clearly expressed in these letters and talks it has to be deduced that these writers left a deep and abiding impression on Agnon's sensitive and creative soul, an impression which we may define as "a creative influence".

### 3. Agnon's Opinion on Influence

Not only from the above quoted letters do we have indirect evidence of the possible influence of European writers on Agnon and his writings. We also have textual evidence, which will be brought forward in another part of this research. In addition to these, we have the direct evidence left us in two separate documents. One is an interview given to Galiah 16 Yardeni in 1953, and another interview given to her in 1958-59. The second is in the speech given by Agnon at the banquet honouring the laureates in Stockholm on the occasion of their receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966. In this address Agnon, himself, asked and answered the above-mentioned question, as follows:

Who were my mentors in poetry and in literature? This is a matter of opinion. Some see in my books the influences of authors whose names, in my ignorance, I have never even heard, while others see the influence of poets whose names I have heard but whose writings I have not read. And what is my opinion? From whom did I receive nurture? Not every man remembers the name of the cow which supplied him with every drop of milk he has drunk. But, in order not to leave you totally in the dark, I will try to clarify from whom I received whatever I received. First, and foremost, there are the Sacred Scriptures from which I learned how to combine letters. Then there are the Mishnah and the Talmud and the Midrashim, and Rashi's commentary on the Torah. After these come the Poskim - the later explainers of Talmudic law - and our sacred poets and medieval sages, led by our Master, Rabbi Moses son of Maimon, known as Maimonides, of blessed memory.

When I first began to combine letters other than Hebrew, I read every book in German that came my way and, from these I certainly received according to the nature of my soul...<sup>17</sup>

From these quotations, it is clear that Agnon denies



the existence of any influence he was conscious of from any writer, even if he had read his work. Agnon stresses that most of the names mentioned by critics were not even known to him. He, however, does admit that "he read every book in German that came my way and from these I received according to the nature of my soul".

A similar view was expressed by Agnon in an interview given to Galia Yardeni many years before the decision of the Swedish Academy to grant him the Nobel Prize for Literature. In this interview he said:

... the question of influence is a big and deep one, and it is possible to talk about it a lot. I'll try to speak very briefly. It seems to me that not every time you are influenced by the big ones, from the writers most read and admired by the people. It happens that one can be equally or even more influenced by the little ones, or from second or third hand sources. I have read Homer, Cervantes, Tolstoy, Hamsun, Balzac and Flaubert, but I cannot tell if, and in what measure, I was influenced by them. Is there at all a possibility for one to know what are the things which are engraved on his heart? Behold, it happens that the most influences occur without the consciousness of the man, and he does not know about them. I believe that a writer does not know from whom he is suckling, the same as a baby does not know the sources of the food he puts into himself with his mother's milk..<sup>18</sup>

And Agnon continued to reveal that he was always reading and, as every reader, he was also, of course, influenced by what he had read, and there is no doubt that the authors left their impression on the soul of the reader, nevertheless Agnon could not (or would not) say that "This book, or this author, had an influence on me or on my way of writing".

The only thing I can say on my writing is - to make use of an expression from my neighbours - it is from Allah.<sup>19</sup>

I do not know how and from where it comes to me. This is not arrogance on my part, God forbid, and also not humbleness. I say what seems to me to be correct.<sup>20</sup>

The conclusion that one can draw from the above quotations must be that while Agnon does not deny that there was any influence on his writing, as is natural that there should be, he is unable to say precisely who, when, where and how his work was influenced. He has, however, left us a very important clue for our research, and this is the list of European writers whose works he admits he has read.

An additional document through which we find some more clues about the range of Agnon's readings is Der Judisher Wecker, which was edited and printed in Buczacz during the year Agnon worked closely with the editor and publisher of the periodical. According to Band:

A person who could read German and Yiddish could well be knowledgeable about the contemporary currents of Scandinavian, Russian and German literature. Agnon, for instance, while usually reluctant to reveal his knowledge of European literature admits that, as a boy in Buczacz, he read Bjornson, Ibsen and especially Hamsun.<sup>21</sup>

Even during his First Palestine Period he widened and enlarged the scope of his reading. Again, according to Band, he did this under the influence of the people he met in Jaffa; So he read:

more of the Scandinavians, Hamsun, Bjornson and Ibsen to be sure; of the Russians, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Gogol, Chekhov and Korolenko.<sup>22</sup>

There is no doubt that this list is far from complete and we can assume that Agnon had a much wider range of reading. For the purposes of our study we shall limit ourselves only to those authors which he mentions, or which were easily accessible to him as, for example, those items translated in

Der Judischer Wecker.

There are two or three writers whose works Agnon admits to having read in later years, but whose influence on his works he categorically denies.

In an interview given to reporters of B'Machne Nachal (In the Nahal Camp), Agnon was asked, "Do you like Kafka?" and he replied:

I read The Trial and The Metamorphosis with great pleasure. But imagine yourself that my wife has them (all) and I do not take them.<sup>23</sup>

This interview was given in 1960, long after Agnon's Kafkaesque nightmarish motifs and techniques were known and lengthly discussed in all the Israeli literary circles. However, according to a talk given, inadvertently, to David Kna'ani and recorded by him, it seems that such questions, or insinuations, caused Agnon true anger. In one of these talks, he said to Kna'ani: (According to Kna'ani's testimony)

For many years I did not read even one story of Kafka. One year ago I took one book and I was satisfied with that. I have told this already to many people and, even so, they speak of Kafka's influence on me.

Bialik examined me with great tension and curiosity as to how I came to write the six stories of The Book of Deeds. He took me for a long walk on the beach and did not slacken from the subject. I told him that I wrote them like in a dream (also Bialik wrote things in a dream). They were new also for myself. And when I finished writing them, I read them to Estherlane (his wife's name was Esther. It seems that this was his pet name for her.) in the kitchen. She was shaken, but not confident in her view, and she said "You know what? Show them to Shtock (Professor Dov Sadan) and let us hear what he says. When the stories were published they were not accepted by the readers and critics and many people told me 'If they had not been signed by the name Agnon, the editor would have

rejected them. Bialik's opinion was different.<sup>24</sup>

On another occasion when he was asked by a reporter, "What is the attitude of a writer to his critics, to the studies which are written on his work, to the 'interpretations' which are given to his stories? Does he give his support to these interpretations which try to find a solution and a 'key' to all the secrets and mysteries in Edo and Enam for example or in Ad Olam (Forever)? The answer, which was given after a short reflection, was rather diplomatic. It suggested that the words of the critics caused respect in Agnon's heart. Agnon admitted that he appreciated Professor Kurtzweil very much and thought him to be a very important man. However, it annoyed Agnon especially when one of the writers or critics accused him by suggesting that the story of the dog in Temol Shilshom (The Day Before Yesterday) was taken by him from Kafka. He did not read Kafka at all prior to his writing Temol Shilshom.<sup>25</sup>

Many critical views concerning an attachment between Agnon and Kafka have been stated and written about in literary forums. A summary of these views were brought in Chapter III.

Agnon also denied any influence upon him by Thomas Mann. Once speaking to one of his followers, Agnon expressed his indignation saying "This man writes that I was influenced by Thomas Mann. I have read only one single book written by Mann, The Buddenbrocks. While I enjoyed it, it was enough for me. The critics speak of influence, but they do not understand that there is a writer that draws everything from himself, from his inner world."

To understand his indignation, we quote what he said on another occasion, and which explains his general attitude towards Mann. In an interview given to the reporters of

B'Machne Nachal, he answered the question, "Do you like Thomas Mann's works?"

I cannot read Mann. Only The Buddenbrocks have I read, but not Yosef and His Brothers. I cannot read any biblical story because it distorts the pictures that I have..<sup>26</sup>

Louis Feldman, Lecturer of Literature in the Yeshiva University of New York, said once to Agnon: "The literary critics consider you greater than Thomas Mann." Agnon answered: "There is nothing new about that. I know this. The evidence to it is, forty years ago one of the literary critics from Germany wrote that where by Thomas Mann the hero dies in sixty pages, even then it is not clear if he is truly dead. Whereas by Agnon the hero dies in two lines and his death is a sure one."<sup>27</sup>

#### 4. Agnon's Explanation of the Occurrence of Similarities

Agnon once decided to explain, in his charming manner, to one of his followers, his opinion on the reason similarities exist between works of writers who did not even know each other. For this purpose he made good use of his natural gift as a story teller. He said:

I'll tell you a story (of an event) that happened to me in Berlin in 1923 or 1924. Two stories of mine were translated into German. One year afterwards Gotfried Keller's archive was opened. (This was a great writer.) According to his will it was forbidden to open the chest until that year - and they found a story that was not published during his lifetime and which was very similar to a story that I had written. It was clear that I didn't take from him and that I was not influenced by him. They came to me to enquire how such a thing was possible. Here you have influences. I have my own theory in this matter. I'll give you an example. To the house of a Minister, at his estate, came guests. Some of them intellectuals. One of the people sitting at

the table laid for a meal told a story that he had heard of an event that happened. All the guests at the table heard the story as it was told, also the servant who was serving at the table heard the story. On returning to the kitchen the servant repeats the story to the cooks and the *femine de chambre* of the Ministers, also to the coachmen and horsemen who happen to be there. When all these people return to their villages they repeat these stories - with a little embellishment or omission - at least some change in their forms. So the story rolls on throughout the district or through the country. It arrives also to the Jews, who make changes according to their taste. After some days a writer comes here, and a writer comes there, and they both make of it "a piece of art". And what wonder is there that these two who did not know each other write a similar story.<sup>28</sup>

This fable explains Agnon's opinion concerning the question of influence. Namely, there is no doubt about its existence, but there is a great mark on the question of its directness or the consciousness of its receiver and assimilator.

#### 5. Agnon's Influence on Young Hebrew Writers

The question or problem of influence is not one specifically limited to Agnon. It is a very real and perplexing problem in general World Literature<sup>29</sup> as well as in Hebrew literature.

A very interesting discussion took place through a referendum among young Hebrew writers on this very question. Amongst other questions they were asked specifically as to the influence of Agnon on their writings. All of them answered positively, but it is interesting to note how they felt this influence, and to hear their reactions to the whole question of influence.

Mordechai Taviv, in answer to the question, "Were you influenced by Agnon?" stated:

Every writer, like every man, is influenced. The question is how does he assimilate these influences

upon himself. A person whose digestive organs are healthy, assimilates the influences like the food he eats, and when they are digested they become part of himself. The influencing fountain, it is not a necessity that it be great in quantity and in importance. Sometimes it is a source that seems to be incidental and unimportant. People do not like to admit influences upon them... But there is no doubt that Agnon had an influence upon many young writers.<sup>30</sup>

This answer is very similar to that given by Agnon himself in an interview with Galia Yardeni, which we referred to above.

Another writer, Rachel Eytan, answered:

Influences? Every great creation stirs imitators and none of us is free from imitation. Agnon's mighty influence is felt more because of his being a single influencing focus. If we would have had many more great powers in literature, additional influences would have been felt.<sup>31</sup>

A.B. Yehoshua admits quite frankly that he was influenced by Agnon. He says:

Had Agnon any influence upon my writing? Yes, I feel the tremendous influence of Agnon's narrative technique upon me as a writer. And not only upon me. Agnon projects such a great shadow that many writers, each different from one another, are able to stand under the threshold of his shadow.<sup>32</sup>

A fourth view, expressed by Binyamin Tamuz, was:

Agnon has deep roots, which are nurtured from generations of creation, in the Hebrew culture. At the same time he has an excellent and outstanding familiarity with the culture of our time. Agnon is a writer of the 20th century... Are there, or can there be, followers to Agnon's creation? Agnon served to many of us also as a channel for the influences of modern literature. Agnon was like a transmissive apparatus of the literary influences of our times. This influence is blessed... He serves especially as an object for imitation. Not everything that fits a giant fits a dwarf.<sup>33</sup>

A fifth, and final, view was expressed by A. Eppelfeld.

What did Agnon give me? How did he build the image of my world? What layer did he add to my personality as a writer?... Agnon is a modern writer because he grasped the present in its entirety, in his tools and in his personal prose... Agnon is modern also from the formative aspect... Agnon is modern in the personal rhythm of his stories; and also with other signs - like his way of using the punctuation marks.. Agnon (has certainly) influenced the young writers..<sup>34</sup>

It will be seen from the above quotations that the question of influence from Agnon, as well as influences on Agnon, are not subjects that they are reluctant to discuss or which should be spoken of only in hushed tones. It would appear that they are most appreciative of Agnon's familiarity with world literature as well as being proud of his almost unique position in the field of modern Hebrew literature. It also appears quite clear that they do not find anything wrong in the admission of the existence of influence which is a natural and blessed product of human nature. What they do not condone is the improper use of influences which causes the imitation or aping of Agnon and which they feel has no literary value. This then can be said to be the views of a cross-section of young Israeli Hebrew writers.

We would like to add that there may be a possibility of feedback, in its general concept, upon European literature. Since some of Agnon's works were translated very early into the German language, sometimes even before they were published in the original Hebrew, especially during his stay in Germany, some readers may have been influenced by his works. This may be the topic of a very intriguing and interesting study. For this purpose, we would like to attract the attention of the reader to two facts. (a) Agnon's story Vehaya he'akov le'mishor



(And the Crooked Shall Be Made Straight) was translated into German by 1918,<sup>35</sup> As it is known, the main motif of this story is the husband who leaves his wife and home and returns too late as his wife has meanwhile remarried on the basis of incorrect information that he was dead. This motif is found in the literature of many nations, so that even if a European writer built a story upon it it will not lead to the conclusion that he had been influenced by reading Agnon. It may have acted as a stimulus as this theme may still be very interesting.

(b) Amazing as it may seem, a story with a similar main motif was written by Leonard Frank<sup>36</sup> and published in Germany in 1924. This story, Karl und Anna, has a great resemblance and similarities to Balzac's Coloniel Chabert as well as to Agnon's Vehaya he'akov lemishor and Ferenheim.

Before concluding this chapter, we would also like to raise the question of the possibility that there exists what might be called "atmospherial influence". By this we mean that some motifs, problems and popular stories may be found circulating or floating in the atmosphere of Europe and in its literature, and are not connected to or with any particular writer or culture. As a result of this, many writers described the same motifs, problems, etc., each, of course, in his own different and sometimes unique writing style or plot structure - one in England, another in France, a third in the Scandinavian countries and yet others in Germany, Russia or even in Israel - without knowing of the works of the other or even of their very existence.

If this is so, then we are compelled to conclude that in addition to the known sources of influence of a direct or proveable nature, there exists, side by side, a hidden and more

ancient source of influence which has acted upon and worked through European literature as an under-the-surface stream. The existence of this understream is being acknowledged during the past few years as a result of in-depth analysis of the subjects, motifs, etc. in world literature.

#### 6. Conclusion

There is no doubt about the existence of influence upon Agnon's writings. The aim of this study will now be to show the sources of this influence. Therefore, we hope to be able to prove successfully in this study, because of its objectivity, what Agnon could not, or did not, wish to say or admit, because of his subjectivity. These facts may help us to conclude that the most probable and palpable pipeline for the sources of, or the streams of, influence on Agnon's works, can be uncovered by scrutinizing the literature which was published at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century and which was translated into the three languages known by Agnon.

To this we add, as a limiting criterion, the list of authors and of works Agnon himself mentioned as having read.

This conclusion leads, inevitably, to another, which is the result of this scrutiny and which, we feel, will be proved during the course of this study, that Agnon was influenced in accordance with the percipiency of his soul and with his artistic inclinations, by some of the following writers whose works he undoubtedly read. The Scandinavian writers, Hamsun, Bjornson, Jacobsen and Ibsen; the French writers, Balzac, Flaubert and Zola; the German writers, Keller, Schiller, Shmitzler, Wasserman, Stefan Zweig, and Feuchtwanger; and the Russian writers, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy,

Gogol, Chekov and Korolenko. He also read the Spanish writer, Cervantes, and the works of Homer, of the Greek classics.

This conclusion does not exclude a much wider scope of Agnon's reading, but since we have, we feel, only proof concerning the above-mentioned list, we do not wish to speculate further. With this we open the gate for the comparative study in which some of the above-mentioned writers' works will be quoted and compared.

#### NOTES

1. Since I came back to Jerusalem to complete my research, I have met with Professor Sadan many times and discussed with him the different aspects of this study. In the last meeting I asked him again what he thinks about this intriguing question. To this he answered calmly that he still sticks to his opinion.
2. For more details on this subject, see our Chapter II, 'Brief Biography'.
3. BEN DOR, L., The Jerusalem Post Magazine, Friday, August 2, 1969.
4. Ibid.
5. Published by Yefet, Vol. 3., 1912/13. This volume is a collection of translations from world literature, and contains this story under the title Avaq (Dust). In the list of contents the translator is shown by the initials 'S.A.' while the title page of the translation shows the initials 'A.N.'. "This translation indicates the affinity of the young Agnon to contemporary Scandinavian literature." (From the catalogue of the Exhibition in

Honor of S.Y. Agnon, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, 1966, The Jewish National and University Library, Berman Hall, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel, 1967, pp. 18, item 57.)

6. Yediot Genazim (News from the Archives), 70, 5730, Vol. 4, year 8, p. 598, published by Agudath Ha-Sofrim ha-Ivrim (Hebrew Writers Association).
7. There is a talmudic saying "An admission is worth one hundred witnesses".
8. Tarbut veSifrut (Culture and Literature), a literary supplement published by Ha'arezt on the occasion of Agnon's 75th anniversary, July 26, 1963, p. 10.
9. KNA'ANI, D., Shai Agnon Ba'al Peh (The Oral Agnon), Tel Aviv, HaKibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1971, p. 39.
10. There is a talmudic saying, based on Numbers XIX.14 "This is the law when one dies in a tent" which says "The one who kills himself in the Tent of the Torah" which means the one who dedicates his whole life to the study of the Torah and its commentaries. By the use of this talmudic idiom Agnon expressed the highest admiration and dedication he had to Flaubert and his craft.
11. Rabbi Elimelech of Lizansk, a Hasidic, charismatic, spiritual leader, published "a small note" as a guide to his disciples. This note had the sub-heading "These are the things which a man shall do and live by them". In the context of Agnon's remarks, it means that the methodology used by Flaubert in his writing should be

emulated by other would-be writers.

12. Ha'aretz, July 26, 1963, p. 10.
13. Yediot Genazim, 70, Vol. 4, year 8, p. 586, op. cit.
14. KNA'ANI, D., Shai Agnon Ba'al Peh (The Oral Agnon), op. cit., pp. 91-92.
15. Agnon gave this speech in the house of M. and R. Tochner at a party given in honor of Dov Sadan on his sixtieth birthday, 13 Adar I, 5722 (February 17, 1962). (Ha'aretz, March 13, 1972)
16. YARDENI, G., Tet-Zain Sihot im Sofrim (Sixteen Interviews with Writers), Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1961, pp. 47-65.
17. Les Prix Nobel, Stockholm, op. cit., 1967, p. 68.
18. YARDENI, G., op. cit., p. 51.
19. An Arabic idiom meaning "It is from the heavenly source".
20. YARDENI, G., op. cit., p. 51.
21. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare, op. cit., p. 10.
22. Ibid., pp. 18-19.
23. Two Hours with Agnon, B'Machne Nachal, Rosh Hashanah 5720 (Jewish New Year, 1960) edition, p. 8.
24. KNA'ANI, D., Shai Agnon Ba'al Peh, op. cit., p. 36.
25. Interview with Maariv reporter, David Lazar, in July 26th, 1963 edition, p. 14.
26. Two Hours with Agnon, op. cit., p. 9.

27. Die Goldene Keit, Tel Aviv, 1969/70, p. 46.
28. KNA'ANI, D., Shai Agnon Ba'al Peh, op. cit., pp. 112-113.
29. There are many books written on this subject. The following three are particularly pertinent. COBB, P., The Influence of E.T.A. Hoffman on the Tales of Edgar Allan Poe, Chapel Hill, University Press, 1908; FANGER, D., Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism; a study of Dostoevsky in relation to Balzac, Dickens and Gogol, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1965; and PASSAGE, C.E., Dostoevsky the adapter; a study in Dostoevsky's use of The Tales of Hoffman, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1954.
30. Massa Lesifrut Omanut U'vikoret (A Publication for Literature, Art and Critic), Tel Aviv, Hashomer HaTzair Publishing Co., August 2, 1963.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Und Das Krumme Wird Gerade, Berlin, Judischer Verlag, 1918, German translation by Max Strauss. This was the first book by Agnon to be translated, but there was another story which was translated earlier and published. We refer to the story Agunot which was translated into German by Ernest Muller and published in Die Welt 14 (1910) under the title Seelenverbannung.
36. FRANK, L., Karl und Anna, Erzählung, Erstausgabe, Berlin,

1927; Karl ve'Ana translated into Hebrew by M.Z. Wolpovsky, Palestine, Hakibutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1945.

The writer of this dissertation takes the opportunity to quote a few lines from two encyclopedia about Frank and this specific story.

His best known work, Karl und Anna (1927; Eng. Carl and Anna 1930; Am., Desire Me, 1948). Encyc. of World Literature in the 20th Century, Vol. I, p. 400, Cl. II.

...he achieved his greatest success with his short story based on the Enoch Arden motif, Karl und Anna (1927) which was later dramatized (1929). The Encycl. Americana, Vol. XII, p. 4, cl. 2.

It may be interesting to note here that the motif of Karl und Anna is not only similar to Enoch Arden by Lord Alfred Tennyson, but also to many more works in literature in general and English literature in particular and also to two different stories by Agnon. Two special chapters (VIII and X) deal with the comparison of some of these works.

## CHAPTER V

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE CLASSIC LITERATURE

#### 1. Introduction

We have so far produced convincing evidence that Agnon had a wide range of reading from the European literature. This literature spanned the centuries, from the Greek classics through the 20th century. In this study we propose making detailed comparisons of motifs, plots, etc. between Agnon's works and the works of some of those writers whom Agnon himself mentioned as having read with pleasure, admiration and appreciation. In this chapter we propose to treat separately similar single motifs, which appear in more than one of Agnon's stories, as well as similar plots, scenes and characters. Surprising as it may seem, it appears to be a fact that their source goes back as far as the classic epos of Homer, which seems to have impressed Agnon very much. Before making the comparison between the single motifs we will also give the precis of this epos.

#### 2. Homerian and Other Classical Influence

The hero of this epos, who is a king and a master of a house, left his home and his wife, for an indefinite period, to undertake a military mission which he hoped to successfully complete within a reasonable time, promising himself as well as his wife to be back as soon as possible. Unfortunately for him and for his wife as well, his absence from home was prolonged for twenty years. During this time he underwent many terrible and terrifying adventures, all of which he escaped from unharmed only



because of his being godlike and favoured by the goddesses. When he belatedly returned home he found his wife still faithfully waiting for her beloved husband. In literature this motif is identified as "the late-return motif".

Kurtzweil maintains that the motif of late-return cannot be made applicable in a story of our times, because it can succeed only in a world of miracles. Such a world, states Kurtzweil, exists only in the world of the Greek epos, namely in the *Odyssey*, "... And similar to it in The Bridal Canopy, a work in which the poet gave revival to the elements of the ancient epos, whose realistic truth is obviously in doubt because of the incessant usage of ironic elements, whose function is to destroy the artistical delusion."<sup>1</sup> Besides this general remark about the Homeric source of the motif of "late-return" to which Kurtzweil devoted a special study entitled On the motif of the exit and its interlocking with the motif of return in Agnon's stories, he points out to the reader that it is worthwhile to deal with more parallelisms between the *Odyssey* and *Vehaya he'akov lemishor*. In the *Odyssey*, before the last miracle happens, Odysseus appears like an old beggar and is not recognized by anyone. The dogs jump upon him. Similarly the story is told about Menashe Hayim:

But while going, 'his spirit sank', because everyone that he met did not recognize him.<sup>2</sup>

Only dogs showed him signs of affection:

...But the dog did not do him any evil, only that he dusted himself at his feet and licked his dress in a sort of longing and appeasing as if he was acquainted with him from before aforesaid.<sup>3</sup>

Kurtzweil contented himself with these two general remarks concerning Homeric resemblance, but at the same time stressed the demonic function of the dog in Agnon's writings,

a motif to which we shall return at a later stage. Kurtzweil only hinted to two Homeric motifs in Agnon's stories, but we troubled ourselves to look further in the Odyssey and in Agnon's works as well, searching for, and then uncovering, the traces of additional similar motifs.<sup>4</sup>

Even so, it is not intended in this study to make a detailed comparison between Agnon's works and the Greek motifs which entered, during the centuries, into the European literature and are today already accepted generally as common to all cultures and civilizations, like the motif of the fate, 'Μοιρα', or the terror of the curse, the Oedipean and the Electra complex, etc. But special attention will be paid to the particular Greek single motifs which penetrated into Agnon's stories, almost unnoticed because of the dominancy of the rich Jewish background of the main characters, scenes and style. In these works we find not only single motifs, which show Agnon's attachment to the classic Greek culture, but also different details from the Greek and Roman mythology, as well as from their daily lives in accordance with the historical reality of those days. Moreover, Agnon occasionally uses pagan expressions which are very strange to the ear of any monotheistic reader. Most of these "peculiar penetrations" we find in Shevuath Emunim (Betrotthed) which was first published separately in 1943. First of all he tells us about the protagonist of this story having read Homer and that this reading had a great influence upon him, so much so that it made him change the whole direction of his life.

This is how Rechnitz's interest in his field began... He already thought himself as an eternal student, one who would never leave the walls of the academy. But one night he was reading Homer. He heard a voice like the voice of the waves, though he had never yet set eyes on the sea. He shut his book and raised his ears to listen. And the voice exploded, leaping like the

sound of many waters. He stood up and looked outside... He went back to his book and read. Again he heard the same voice. He put down the book and lay on his bed. The voices died away, but that sea whose call he had heard spread itself out before him, endlessly,... Next day Rechnitz felt as lost as a man whom the waves have cast up on a desolate island, and so it was for all the days that followed... he took up medicine, with the idea of becoming a ship's doctor. But as soon as he entered the anatomy hall he fainted; he knew then that this could never be his calling. Once, however, Rechnitz happened to visit a friend who was doing research on seaweed. ... Rechnitz saw and was amazed at how much grows in the sea and how little we know about it all. He had scarcely parted from his friend before he realized what he was seeking.

Perhaps this story about Rechnitz reading Homer, with all that followed in its wake, is little more than a legend. But after all it would seem to be less unlikely than other explanations of how he began his career...<sup>5</sup>

So it happened that instead of taking up natural sciences or medicine he took up the career of a seaweed researcher. But the reading of Homer did not end there. The protagonist is spreading the knowledge of Greek and Roman "poetry and myth" as well as details about their "customs and habits".

Jacob Rechnitz, as a teacher and a scholar, thus became to be acquainted mainly with girls of this type; ... Jacob never spoke to them about his work. But he would tell them about other lands and seas, about strange peoples and tribes, their customs and habits, their poetry and myths. So it came to pass that if you heard a girl in Jaffa speaking of Greece and Rome, of Sappho and Medea you could be sure that she had learned all this from Jacob Rechnitz. Until his arrival, no Jaffa girl had ever heard things of this sort, even though the town was full of men with university degrees who had learned of such matters in their time; ...<sup>6</sup>

It is truly amazing that in this story he used heathen expressions, which occur more than once, i.e., this occurrence cannot

be explained as casual. It could be that the only explanation of this fact is the immense impression Homer's books made on Agnon. But it is also possible that this is another expression of Agnon's irony, as if to say, that is the world of today, that every corner of our life is influenced by foreign elements instead of our being proud of our national and cultural inheritance. So he mentions the Roman god of health, Aesculapius, without giving his nationality:

Accordingly, when Rechnitz had jumped out of bed he filled a basin with cold water, plunged his head into it, and after washing, shaved himself too. Aesculapius the god of health protected him, so that he escaped from slashes on the chin or cuts on the cheek....<sup>7</sup>

And afterwards he alternatively mentions the good gods and the mere gods, after which he even mentions the supreme god of the Greeks:

The good gods give us more than we deserve... At times, the good gods deal with mortals, allowing them to see eternity in one hour...<sup>8</sup>

The good gods have favoured Rechnitz, granting him peace and calm, together with joy in his work. But these favors were not to last long...<sup>9</sup>

Let us then ask the gods to prolong this hour without end or limit.<sup>10</sup>

The gods are envious, and when they see us prosper too much, they send their agents to change our lives. Every man learns this for himself; let those who have not yet done so now witness the case of Rechnitz.<sup>11</sup>

The envy of the gods works in devious ways, so that we ourselves cannot know what is for our good and what is not.<sup>12</sup>

But Zeus, who watches over guests, now intimated to the host that tea might be prepared, for tea is welcome on all occasions. So Rechnitz took out his spirit lamp and set it going....<sup>13</sup>

This does not mean that these ideas are not stressed strongly enough in Judaism. The peculiar side of it is that he attributes them not to the Holy One, Blessed be He, but to the legendary and mythological gods who are so unusual and even foreign to the world of ideas of every Jew and possibly for anyone of the other monotheistic religions, but as was already suggested, it may have an ironic purpose.

The last idea attributed to Zeus is emphasized much stronger in Judaism through the Biblical story about the visit the Holy One Blessed be He paid to Abraham when he was sick. In the middle of this visit three passers~~by~~by (Angels) appeared and Abraham went to look after them in spite of the presence of the most high guest. The explanation given by our Sages, of blessed memory, in addition to the teaching that one has to visit the sick, is that the good deed of welcoming guests is even more important than the welcoming of the Divine Presence. But instead of putting in relief this original Jewish idea, Agnon prefers to refer to the Greek legendary and mythological connotations and associations possibly to mock the lay world of the people described, and their aloofness to original Jewish tradition in general, and Jewish hospitality in particular. Or even more so, to mock those groups of people who lost their appreciation for their national religion and culture, and who were longing for a total assimilation with the European people, culture and civilization.

As was already mentioned, Agnon also paid attention to customs. The Greek sport of running was, at that time, a sport for men. This was well known to Agnon, and he makes good use of it by reversing the roles, giving the roles of the men to the girls and that of the beautiful girl to the learned man.

... Now listen to me, girls, listen. Whoever beats the others in the race will be crowned with this garland. She raised overhead the seaweeds she had plaited, repeating, 'Whoever beats the rest takes this as her crown. What do you want to say, Leah?'

'That's not how the Greeks did it', said Leah. 'What they did was this. The young men ran and whoever won the race received the crown from the most beautiful girl present. Isn't that so, Dr. Rechnitz?' And as she spoke she, too, felt her knees quiver. To Rachel she said, 'Will you run with me?' 'Run, Leah, run!' said Rachel. 'Perhaps you'll win the garland.'

At this point the other girls returned. 'Girls,' said Leah, 'if you'd been here a moment ago, you'd have heard a splendid thing.'

'And what is this splendid thing we've missed?' asked Asnat.

'Do you see this garland?' said Leah. 'We've all agreed that the fastest runner will win and wear this wreath, made of Dr. Rechnitz's weeds ...' Leah insisted, 'The Greeks had the men run, not the girls.'

Asnat answered, 'But since all those young men are dead and we are alive, let's do the running ourselves. Do you agree, Dr. Rechnitz? Yes or no? -- Why don't you speak?'

Rechnitz answered, 'I agree,' and his heart quaked all the more.<sup>15</sup>

Agnon's deep knowledge of Greek culture and literature is demonstrated not only by these quotations from Betrothed. It is made conspicuous by two 'forgotten' details mentioned, as an aside, once in The Bridal Canopy and again in the short story Leiloth. In The Bridal Canopy we read:

How greatly he desired to sleep, but the Holy and Blessed One removed sleep from his eyes, and all night long one-eyed Gabriel was peeping at him with his one eye dancing and twinkling and suddenly fixing itself in the middle

of his forehead like the folk in the isles of the sea who have an eye in the middle of their brows; ...

And in the short story Leiloth (Nights), we read:

And I told her more: did you hear of the fame of the giant who has one eye in his forehead. I am, I am this giant. And I told her more: did you hear about the seven girls that this giant did kiss. The seven girls did the giant kiss, because he saw with flesh eyes, like a human being sees. But when the eye grew up in his forehead and he looked upon the king's daughter he did not look upon another woman and he did not see another one. And you are the king's daughter and I am, I am the giant.<sup>17</sup>

These quotations remind us of the legendary giants who are mentioned in the Odyssey (Book 9) as having only one eye in the middle of their foreheads, and who lived in the island which seems to be identified with Sycilia.<sup>18</sup>

It is interesting to note that Agnon may have read about the figure of the one eyed giant in Hamsun's love story Victoria as well, but there is no assurance or certainty that here the allusion is only to the Greek original one since he mentions them in connection with the isles, since Hamsun's one eyed giant is also connected with a cave in the Scandinavian countryside. Johannes invites Victoria into the cave which is on a small island. When they are inside he pointed out a stone for her to sit on and said:

"Upon this stone sat the giant."

"O, please, don't talk any more, don't tell me this! Aren't you truly afraid?"

"No."

"Yes, but you had said, that he has one eye; and only witches are those, who are so."<sup>19</sup>

What is quite amazing is that sometimes Agnon not only

does not camouflage the origin of some of his ideas or motifs, but he even hints openly to them, as for example in his story Ma'aloth u'Moraddoth (Ups and Downs). Agnon described the events of a well-to-do, rich and very successful person, who upon his way to the fair lost his purse with all his money. He did not disclose to anybody what had happened for fear that no one would trust him any more if they knew his real situation. He had no hope of finding the purse with the money since he lost it on the main road and it would be unbelievable that such a big and attractive object would go unobserved. But the unbelievable happened, and on his way back he found the big purse untouched. Instead of rejoicing because of the miraculous event, he became very sad and did not talk to anybody at all, but cried almost the whole way home. He even forgot to buy presents for his family and friends. He was so worried by the presentiment that from that moment on he would start to lose his money until he became completely impoverished, that he lost his peace of mind. And that is exactly what happened. Within a short period of time he became so poor that he had to beg alms.

This story reminds us of a similar story originating with Herodotus but known through Schillers adaptation into a balladic form known as The Ring of Polycrates.<sup>20</sup>

Upon his battlements he stands --  
And proudly looks along the lands --  
His Samos and the Sea!  
"And all," he said, "that we survey,  
Egyptian king, my power obey --  
Ours, Fortune favours me!"

Astounded stood that kingly guest,  
"Thy luck this day must be confessed,...."

Scarce spoke the Egyptian King -- before  
Hark, "Victory -- Victory!" from the shore,



And from the seas ascended; ....

Shudder'd the guest - "In sooth," he falter'd,  
"Today thy fortune smiles unalter'd,  
Yet more thy fate I dread - ....

"So, would'st thou 'scape the coming ill -  
Implore the dread Invisible - ....

".... This counsel of thy friend disdain not -  
....And what of all thy worldly gear  
Thy deepest heart esteems most dear,  
Cast into yonder sea!"

The Samian thrill'd to hear the king -  
"No gems so rich as deck this ring,  
The wealth of Samos gave:  
By this - O may the Fatal Three  
My glut of fortune pardon me!"  
He cast it on the wave -

And when the morrow's dawn began,  
All joyous came a fisherman  
Before the prince - Quoth he,  
"Behold this fish - so fair a spoil  
Ne'er yet repaid the snarer's foil,  
I bring my best to thee!"

The cook to dress the fish begun -  
The cook ran fast as cook could run -  
"Lord, look! - O master mine -  
The ring - the ring the sea did win,  
I found the fish's maw within -  
Was ever luck like thine!"

In horror turns the kingly guest -  
"Then longer here I may not rest,  
I'll have no friend in thee!  
The Gods have marked thee for their prey,  
To share thy doom I dare not stay!"  
He spoke - and put to sea,<sup>21</sup>

The legend tells us about this king whose life was under the constellation of luck and success until his ring, which was

thrown into the sea, was returned to him in the bowels of a fish which was brought to him. The king then started to lose his good luck until he was completely lost.

Agnon hints to the reader about the Greek source of this motif in two short passages:

- a) ...When he returned they told him your shirt was stolen and the thief was arrested. He went to him and found him lying like a Greek letter **Khaf** (equivalent to the K in our alphabet), and he was charred and smooth like an eel and smeared with oil...
- b) How many times during the day he told himself you have seen a good dream, you have seen a good dream. Behold, in the dream he saw (something) like a fish, and as fish from the sea are covered with water and no evil eye has power over them, upon me also, no evil eye has power...<sup>22</sup>

In these quoted passages there are two clear hints to the origin of this motif. These hints came immediately after the protagonist finds his purse intact. The first one mentions the Greeks openly, as he writes: "... and found him lying like a Greek letter Chaf", while the other is referred to twice, once in the same sentence "... and he was charred and smooth like an eel..." and again at the end of the page, "... Behold, in the dream he saw (something) like a fish, and as a fish..." as if to say to the reader I hope that now after these hints you will be able to guess that the origin of this motif is Greek and is connected with a fish, exactly as Schiller's The Ring of Polycrates, whose origin is Greek and is connected with a fish. However, Agnon does not always leave us a "finger-print" of the source of the motifs used in his story.

### 3. The Traces of the Motif: The Sirens and Their Charming Power

The story In the Heart of the Seas, first published in

1934, is truly anchored in the Jewish legendary tradition. Nevertheless, we may suppose that some of the motifs, of the miraculous voyage on the sea, was nurtured, to some extent, by the Odyssey. Agnon's attachment to Homer was made conspicuous only afterwards in the story Shevuat Emmunim, where it is a factor which clarifies the history of the researching field career of the protagonist of the story, already mentioned above. But here, in the following passages, we find that some Homeric motifs, par excellence, are interwoven in the Talmudic legend about the four hundred Jewish boys and girls who drowned themselves after the destruction of the Temple. The tale, which was enlarged in an extremely poetical legendary style, ends with a typical Odysseyan motif.

...Corresponding to the prayers of Israel, praises of the Holy One Blessed be He, rise up from the waters.

Is it possible for water which has neither utterance nor speech so to praise the Holy One, Blessed be He? But these sounds are the voices of the boys and girls who once flung themselves into the sea. After the wicked Titus destroyed Jerusalem, he brought three thousand ships and filled them with boys and girls. When they were out to sea they said to one another. Was it not enough for us to have angered the Holy One, Blessed be He, in His house, and now, are required to anger Him in the land of Edom? Thereupon they all leaped into the sea together...<sup>24</sup>

This is what Agnon wrote. In the Talmud it is written:

...that it was taught in a Baraitha. On one occasion four hundred boys and girls were carried off for immoral purposes. They divined what they were wanted for and said to themselves. If we drown in the sea we shall attain the life of the future world. The eldest among them expounded the verse; 'The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring again from the depths of the sea'. (Ps. 68:23) 'I will bring again from Bashan,' from between the lion's

teeth. (  $\gamma$   $\mu$   $\lambda$  of which is taken as a contraction.)  
'I will bring again from the depth of the sea' those who  
drown in the sea. When the girls heard this they all  
leaped into the sea. The boys then drew the moral for  
themselves, saying. If these for whom this is natural to  
act so, shall not we, for whom it is unnatural? They  
also leaped into the sea. ...<sup>24</sup>

This is the kernel of the Talmudic legend but even this already  
has a legendary enlargement which is introduced as if to lead  
to Odysseyan similitude:

Furthermore, all the years that those boys and girls  
have dwelt in the midst of the sea they have constantly  
awaited salvation, and there is no ship sailing to the  
Land of Israel which these boys and girls do not follow.  
For when they see a ship at sea, one says to the other,  
The time has come for the Gathering of the Exiles.  
Thereupon, each of them takes one of the great sea  
waves and mounts it as a rider mounts his horse and  
rides until he comes near the ship.

And as they ride they sing, 'I will bring them back from  
Bashan, I will bring them back from the depth of the sea.'  
And their voices are as golden bells in the skirts of a  
garment, and they are heard by those who go down to the  
sea. Indeed we have heard a tale from such as tell only  
the truth of how they were sailing to the Land of Israel  
on the Great Sea and heard a voice so sweet they wished  
to leap into the sea and follow that voice; but the  
sailors tied them up with their belts until the ship had  
sailed a distance away from the voice...<sup>25</sup>

Through the cover of the Jewish legend there are traces of the  
Odysseyan motif which appears originally in the Odyssey in  
a fuller and more varied form, being transmitted from many  
narrative angles. In the original text, the warning about the  
dangerous enchantment of the Song of the Sirens is brought to  
Odysseus' attention by Circe, the goddess, as follows:

'Next, where the Sirens dwell, you plough the seas;  
Their song is death, and makes destruction please.

Unblest the man, whom music wins to stay  
Nigh the cursed shore, and listen to the lay.  
No more that wretch shall view the joys of life,  
His blooming offspring, or his beauteous wife!

.....

Fly swift the dangerous coast; let every ear  
Be stopp'd against the song! 'tis death to hear!  
Firm to the mast with chains thyself be bound,  
Nor trust thy virtue to the enchanting sound.  
If, mad with transport, freedom thou demand,  
Be every fetter strain'd, and added band to band.<sup>26</sup>

The motif of the Sirens' power to enchant, to subdue and to destroy, appears in Homer's Odyssey twice, while in Agnon it appears each time in a different story, and in a different form. However, it appears twice in The Heart of the Seas as well.

In the Odyssey it appears first as a warning and then as an experience through which the protagonist passed successfully because of his being aware of the great danger he had to go through, and also because of the active advice and help given to him by the gods and the goddesses who wished to save the godlike Odysseus from death. This warning was truly and strictly observed, as it may be understood from Odysseus' story which describes his report of the terrible experience he went through in Book XII, as follows:

'In flowery meads the sportive Sirens play,  
Touch the soft lyre, and tune the vocal lay;  
Me, me alone, with fetters firmly bound,  
The gods allow to hear the dangerous sound.  
Hear and obey; if freedom I demand,  
Be every fetter strain'd, be added band to band.'

....

Then every ear I barr'd against the strain,  
and from access of frenzy lock'd the brain.  
Now round the masts my mates the fetters roll'd,

And bound me limb by limb with fold on fold.  
Then bending to the stroke, the active train  
Plunge all at once their oars, and cleave the main.  
While to the shore the rapid vessel flies,  
Our swift approach the Siren choir descries;  
Celestial music warbles from their tongue,  
And thus the sweet deluders tune the song:

....

Thus the sweet charmers warbled o'er the main;  
My soul takes wing to meet the heavenly strain;  
I give the sign, and the struggle to be free:  
Swift row my mates, and shoot along the sea;  
New chains they add, and rapid urge the way,  
Till, dying off, the distant sounds decay.  
Then scudding swiftly from the dangerous ground,  
The deafen'd ear unlock'd, the chains unbound.<sup>27</sup>

As was already pointed out In The Heart of the Seas this has been mentioned twice, not as something that was experienced by somebody but once as a tale that was told by some true heralders and again as a subject for the entertainment of the ship's crew:

The ship's officers examined the ropes and snars, lit lamps, sat down to eat and drink, and began to sing songs about wine and women of the sea, who turn their eyes on human beings and steal their souls away with their singing.<sup>28</sup>

This very same motif of the Sirens who have the power to attract persons and to kill them appears again in another story, The Lady and the Pedlar, where it changes into the figure of the lady who attracts the pedlar into her house, bed, etc., with the clear intention of killing him as she did with her previous husbands. The heroine of this story agrees to respond favourably to the advances of the pedlar, who advances into her bedroom where, after having a good time with the lady, is nearly stabbed to death by her. This changed motif, that of a

woman who kills her husband,<sup>29</sup> has another Greek mythological source in the legend of the Danaides, the fifty daughters of Danaus, king of Argos, who, having been driven out by his brother (Aegyptus, King of Egypt) fled with his fifty daughters to Argos, the home of his ancestress Io. The fifty sons of Aegyptus arrived in Argos and Danaus was obliged to consent to their marriage with his daughters. But to each of these he gave a knife with the injunctions to slay her husband on the marriage night. They all obeyed except for Hypermnestra, who spared Lynceus.<sup>30</sup>

This motif has another source, also from Greek mythology, about Atalanta, who was a renowned and swiftfooted huntress. From her complex legend only the following incident is of interest to this study:

She offered to marry anyone who could outrun her; those who lost were to be killed. Hipomenes (or Milanion) was given three apples of the Hesperides by Aphrodite; when he dropped them, Atalanta stopped to pick them up, and so lost the race.<sup>31</sup>

The women, as they appear in all these legendary sources, are not satisfied with the attraction of the man into their service but only with their final destruction. No one is expecting anything like that when he starts to read this story:

There was a Jewish pedlar who walked his rounds in townlets and villages. One day he happened upon a clearing in a forest, far from any settlement. He saw a house that stood there alone. He went up to it and cried out his goods at the door. Out came a lady and said: "What do you want here, Jew?" He bowed, greeted her, and said: "Perhaps you need some of the nice things that I have."<sup>32</sup>

The relations between the pedlar and the Lady develop very soon to a very close and unbelievable relationship, very

convincingly described by Agnon:

... The Lady looked at him and smiled a strange smile, contemptuous or pleased or just a smile that a person smiles and his fellow interprets in his own manner. And if he is a guileless man, he interprets it in his own favour. The pedlar who was a guileless man, interpreted the smile that this woman smiled in his favor and for his enjoyment. And as he was sorry for this woman who by her age and by the measure of her beauty deserved that decent people should court her, he suddenly saw himself as one of them. He began to speak to her words that the ear of a single woman loves to hear. God knows where this simple pedlar took such words. She did not scold him and did not rebuff him. On the contrary she was lief to hear more. So he took heart and began to speak words of love. And although she was a lady and he a simple pedlar she accepted his words and showed him kindness. And also after the rains had stopped and the roads had dried they did not part from each other. And the pedlar stayed with the lady. Not in the old cowshed and not in the room of the old things that were no longer in use but in the room of the lady he lived and in the bed of her husband he slept, and she served him, as if he were her lord... Wife and children he did not have and he had nobody to long for and so he stayed with the woman. He took off his pedlar's clothes and wore the clothes of a man of leisure and associated with local people until he became like one of them. The lady did not let him exert himself in the house or in the fields; on the contrary, she took upon herself every work and pampered<sup>33</sup> him with food and drink...<sup>34</sup>

Slowly the reader is led to understand the true relationship between these two human beings.<sup>35</sup> But first, our attention is diverted to the famous Greek beauty Helen of Troy,<sup>36</sup> Menelaus' beautiful wife, who fled to Troy with Paris during the absence of her husband and was the cause of the Trojan war which was the inspiration for the Iliad and the Odyssey. Agnon has done this by a very simple trick of giving the lady, one of the main characters of this story, the name of Helene. Her behavior, however, sounds more like that of a witch or a



vampire or both. To Yosef, who asked her many times why he did not see her eating even once, she replied smilingly:

"You want to know what I eat and drink. Human blood I drink and human flesh I eat."<sup>37</sup> And while she spoke, she embraced him with all her might and put her lips on his lips and sucked and said, "I never imagined that the flesh of a Jew is so sweet. Kiss me, my raven. Kiss me my eagle, your kisses are sweeter than all the kisses in the world." He kissed her and thought in his heart, these are poetical expressions, such as a noblewoman is wont to use when they give pleasure to their husbands. And she too kissed him again and said, "Yosef, when you first showed yourself to me, I wanted to set my bitch on you and now I am myself biting you as a mad bitch, in such a manner that I fear you will not get away alive out of my hands, oh my sweet carcass mine!" So they were passing their days in love and endearments, and nothing in the world disturbed their doings.<sup>38</sup>

This atmosphere is reminiscent of the stories of the popular witch, which is almost always accompanied by the wild animals and birds, and which was available abundantly in the German language at that time.

Before the end of the story, Agnon confuses the reader by writing:

He who has dealings with women knows that every love that is not unconditional must come to naught in the end. And even a man who loves a woman as Samson loved Delilah - in the end she makes fun of him, in the end she annoys him until his soul is weary to death. So it was with the pedlar. ...<sup>39</sup>

This is to lead the reader to the conclusion that Yoseph's end will be very similar to that of Samson or of that of her previous husbands. But, no. He is finally saved in a very miraculous way reminiscent of that of Odysseus who passed by the Sirens, listened to their sweet voices and thanks to the precautions taken, in accordance with the warning given by the

goddess Circe (he was tied up strongly to the mast), was not drowned. So Yoseph felt suddenly that his soul was longing to say a Jewish prayer, which is usually said before going to bed. He left the room because he did not want to say this prayer in the presence of "... a crucifix (which) was hanging on the wall, he left the house to pray outside."<sup>40</sup> And so he was saved, as he was not in his bed when Helene came in to kill him, and so it happened that she wounded herself so deadly.

#### 4. The Motif of the Heavenly Scarf - Kerchief

Not only the motif of the charming voice of the Sirens was discretely interwoven into the web of the typical Talmudic legend but also the motif of the kerchief, upon which Hananya<sup>h</sup> sailed in the middle of the stormy sea. It has to be stressed that the legend of the kerchief already has its deep roots in the Hassidic folklore and literature about the Baal Shem Tov's wish to sail to the Land of Israel with some of his followers. We find an echo of this motif also in a Yiddish folksong,<sup>41</sup> as well as in an additional version in Agnon's anthological book Sefer Sofer veSipur.

From the heavens they informed Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov that if he will obtain the Book of Psalms in the manuscript of King David, may he rest in peace, which is hidden in the Sultan's archive in Istanbul and he will bring this manuscript to the author of the commentary "Or Hahayim" (The Light of Life) to the Land of Israel then the Righteous Messiah will come...

But because the time was not appropriate, there occurred a few hindrances. Meanwhile the King's daughter fell ill and the B.E.S.H.T. said to the King that he will cure her if he'll give him a manuscript that he will choose, because he does not want money. He healed the king's daughter and received the book. With the book in his hand he went on board a ship to sail to the Land of Israel. While at sea, a great storm developed and the

B.E.S.H.T. admitted that he was its cause. (Note the similarity to Jonah.) They stood up and they threw him into the sea, him and his family and the people who were with him... The book of Psalms fell from his hand and was pushed from one wave to the other... Because of the great sorrow the B.E.S.H.T. had forgotten all his mystical teachings of changes to bring about miracles... and he could not do anything. He told Rabbi Zvi Sofer and Eddil, his daughter, remind me of one of the mystical ways that I have taught you. They told him the Alpha Beta and their mystical influences. He started to profess the unity of God through the use of the Alef Bet and his strength returned to him. He took his kerchief and the kerchiefs of those of his chosen followers and he deployed them and he made them sit upon the kerchiefs and he also sat upon his kerchief and thus they returned to Istanbul. (Jacob Stories)<sup>42</sup>

But even so it can be clearly shown that it has a certain root also in the Odyssey, with all the essential differences of such a comparison. The conclusion may well be that this motif, as it appears in this story, has been nurtured equally and simultaneously from both sources, the Hassidic one, on the one hand, and the Greek legend, on the other. Just as in the Greek legend Odysseus went through many terrible and terrifying adventures, so did Hananyah:

How hard Hananyah had toiled until he reached them. He had gone halfway round the world, and had been stripped naked.<sup>43</sup>

Odysseus himself was stripped naked when he reached the shores of Phaeacia after Neptune had overtaken him with a terrible tempest in which he was shipwrecked, and in the last danger of death, till Leucothea, a sea goddess, assisted him in reaching the above mentioned shore.<sup>44</sup>

... and had fallen among thieves ... and has made his way barefoot, without boots. And when he had reached them he had gone to all kinds of trouble for their sakes ... and had not asked for any payment...<sup>45</sup>

And as Odysseus is advised by the goddess Calypso to build a raft which will enable him to overcome the stormy sea:

Free as the winds I give thee now the rove;  
Go, fell the timber of yon lofty grove,  
And form a raft, and built the rising ship,  
Sublime to bear thee o'er the gloomy deep.

so does Hananyah join a group of Jewish families who decided to sail to the Land of Israel on a ship. Agnon writes:

Ye sons of the living God, said Hananyah to the comrades, I have heard that you are about to go up to the Land of Israel. I beg you to inscribe me in your register.

He who will bring us up to the Land, said they to him, will bring you as well...<sup>47</sup>

Odysseus builds a raft with his own hands while Hananyah joins those who are going to sail on a ship, giving them a great and an unbelievable helping hand in all their needs. And as in the Greek legend, when Odysseus was in great danger in the stormy sea because his raft was nearly completely destroyed, he followed the advice of Leucothea, a sea goddess, who came to assist him by giving him a heavenly scarf:

What I suggest, thy wisdom will perform:  
forsake thy float, and leave it to the storm;

....

This heavenly scarf beneath thy bosom bind,  
And live; give all thy terrors to the wind.  
Soon as thy arms the happy shore shall gain,  
Return the gift, and cast it in the main:<sup>48</sup>

which saved Odysseus' life by his binding the "sacred cincture round his breast",<sup>49</sup> so did it happen with Hananyah, who received the heavenly advice in the form of a good idea to use the kerchief:

So Hananiah, seeing that he was indeed in distress raised his eyes to the sky and said, Lord of the Universe, I have nothing on which to depend except on

your many mercies. Thereupon the Holy One Blessed be He, gave Hananiah the idea of spreading out his kerchief on the sea and sitting upon it. So he spread his kerchief upon the sea and sat down upon it. The kerchief promptly floated off the sea, carrying him upon it all the way to the Land of Israel.<sup>50</sup>

But this happened only when his hope to go to the Land of Israel by a normal ship was completely destroyed by the fact that the ship he had to sail on had already sailed, leaving him behind in the port.

But now that they had embarked on the ship and were on the way to the Land of Israel, he had been left behind...

How much Hananiah had wandered about. How much trouble he had gone through. He had put himself in danger and disregarded his own life and had no fear for his body, (very similar to the legendary adventures of Odysseus, with all essential differences) desiring only to go up to the Land of Israel; and yet now that his time has come to go up, something had gone wrong and he had not come abroad...<sup>51</sup>

From these quotations it is quite clear that in both cases the heavenly advice, to use the scarf or the kerchief, helped both protagonists to pass over the stormy sea and so to reach their goals. Is this not, in both cases, a different but a legitimate use of the ancient artistical medium of "deus ex machina"?

The amazing part of this character as it is described by Agnon, is in the fact that he describes the floating image four times:

As the dawn grew bright the travelers saw the likeness of a man on the sea. They stared and saw that he had a full beard, earlocks on either cheek and a book in his hand; and a kerchief was spread out under him and on it he sat as a man who sits at his ease. No wave of the sea rose to drown him, nor did any sea beast swallow him.<sup>52</sup>

And the sea waves swayed and moved and sparkled with light, and a kerchief floated upon the waves like a ship in the heart of the sea; and a man sat on the kerchief, his face turned to the east. Not a great wave of the sea rose to drown him, no sea beast approached to swallow him, but the seagulls soared and flew around him in the air.<sup>53</sup>

Yet whenever they looked out to sea, facing them they could see the light sparkling on the waters, the kerchief floating like a ship in the heart of the sea, and a man sitting upon the kerchief with his face turned to the east.<sup>54</sup>

Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Hananiah the idea of spreading out his kerchief on the sea and sitting upon it. So he spread his kerchief upon the sea and sat down upon it. The kerchief promptly floated off to sea, carrying him upon it all the way to the Land of Israel. Nor was that all. For he actually got there before his comrades, who were first delayed at Stambul waiting for a ship, and then found themselves in distress during the storm at sea; whereas he crossed the sea peacefully.<sup>55</sup>

Agnon gives three speculative explanations to this appearance, after its first description. The first, that of the Gentiles, is that of a 'fata morgana':

And what did the Gentiles say when they saw a man sitting on his kerchief and floating in the sea? Some of them said, "such things are often seen by seafarers and desert farers."<sup>56</sup>

The second view, which is anonymous, we may interpret as hinting to Hananiah, the perpetual wanderer, as symbolizing the fate of the Jewish people and the miraculous way of their redemption.

Others said, "Whoever he is, he has a curse hanging over him so that nevermore can he rest. That is why he wanders from place to place, appearing yesterday on the dry land and today on the sea."<sup>57</sup>

The third view is that of the author himself, who appears in the story under his own name:

Then Rabbi Shmuel Yosef, the son of Rabbi Shalom Mordechai ha-Levi, said. "It is the Divine Presence, which is

bringing back the people of Israel to their own place.<sup>58</sup> However, there is still another explanation which is given by the story teller, that of the image of Hananiah, quotation four on the previous page, which contradicts all the other speculative answers including that given by the character with the author's name. Maybe this is part of the irony in this story in which there are scores of examples where one will suffice to demonstrate the point. It is also remarkable that Hananiah's image floating upon the surface of the water is described only from the narrator's point of view, which wrapped this character in mystery, while the protagonist, who experienced the adventures on the sea in the Odyssey, reports about them himself in addition to the poet's descriptive perspective. The miraculous atmosphere in the story of Hananiah is perfect because it lacks completely the activity and the physical effort that was demanded from the Greek protagonist, in spite of the fact that he followed the advice of the goddess.

There is no doubt that there are fundamentally great differences between the worlds and the characters described in the story of the kerchief on the one hand and in the story of the scarf on the other, but even so there is great similarity not only in the kerchief-scarf motif but also in the motto of both protagonists expressed in the lines:

These, if the gods with my desire ~~comp~~v... In peace  
shall land thee at thy native home.<sup>59</sup>

It is a common factor to both of them<sup>60</sup> even if the meaning and the significance of this return, which is being realized by Odysseus as well as by Hananiah, are fundamentally different.

When the story-teller tells us about miracles he mentions one that happened to the holy men of God 'who crossed the

river Danube in a trough in a dangerous season. But where is such a trough to be found nowadays?"<sup>61</sup> This question seems a "little" ironic. The writer was expected by the reader to ask a different question. Either: But do miracles happen today? Or: But are we worthy of miracles happening nowadays for our sake? There seems to be a double irony here as this view is mentioned twice in this story. Once by Rabbi Alter who answered the question of the other Rabbi Alter:

Well, said Rabbi Alter the teacher, what do you think of that story? Oho, said Rabbi Alter the slaughterer, where shall we find such a trough today.<sup>62</sup>

The second time we hear the same opinion from the story-teller himself:

Likewise, even in the generation before our own miracles were performed upon the water, such as that of the holy sage Rabbi Simeleke of Nikolsburg and his holy disciple Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov, who crossed the river Danube in a trough in a dangerous season. But where is such a trough to be found nowadays?<sup>63</sup>

##### 5. The Motif of Penelope's Web, and its Traces

There is still one more Odysseyan motif which appears twice in Vehaya he'akov le mishor in the first edition and only once in the second edition. We refer to the original meaning of the motif of Penelope's web, but of course in the Agnonian style and form.

Before Menashe Hayim leaves his home to beg alms, he tries to comfort his wife by saying:

Therefore do this Kreindili, here the remnant of the material from the shroud of the recommendation (letter) remains in your hands, take out I pray thee, from this woven material one thread a day and may it be the will (of God) that with every thread you pull out abundance and goodness and mercy will be pulled to us from above, and God willing before the threads from this material will end, also our many troubles will end and I shall



return to you and I shall remember you. 64

This description of the wife waiting faithfully for her husband's early return and meanwhile sitting and ripping a piece of material is clearly reminiscent of the Homeric motif from the Odyssey about Penelope's trick played on the suitors for more than three years:

Thus she: at once the generous train complies  
Nor fraud nor mistrusts in virtue's fair disguise,  
The work she plied; but studious of delay,  
By night reversed the labours of the day.  
While thrice the sun his annual journey made,  
The conscious lamp the midnight fraud survey'd;  
Unheard, unseen, three years her arts prevail;  
The fourth, her maid unfolds the amazing tale.  
We saw, as unperceived we took our stand,  
The backward labours of her faithless hand. 65

This very same motif appears again at the beginning of chapter four where the author describes Menashe Hayim's day dreaming, when he was on his way back home after his having given up all hopes of regaining his middle-class shopkeeper's position through begging alms:

...because his longing for his wife overcame him ... he went out on his way and returned to Buczacz... and he layed down on the high grass... for he said, I shall rest a little and I'll refresh myself and I'll not come to my home like a man that lost his thoughts... And the sun set in the west and clouds flew high and heavens fell to the earth and the wings of the winds played with the eyelashes of his eyes, and he saw a small house there his wife stood nearby watching, for her heart cared for him. The door of the room is open and she rises with a sigh; she removes from her hand the sock to prepare supper. And Menashe Hayim will come in stealthily through the open door, he'll come in and no one will hear, he'll come near until the window, he'll bend his head and he'll take the sock with its needles. Who took my sock, who took my sock, his wife shall wonder, asking, behold there was not here anybody and no man passed here? And Menashe Hayim could not control himself any more because

he heard his wife's voice talking to him...<sup>66</sup>

In his distorted imagination Krendel Tcharni was still waiting for his return, and in spite of the fact "that he left her in the lurch, in nakedness and in great poverty" he still dreamt that she kept herself busy longing for his coming and knitting socks, longing and knitting.

Does this picture not allude in a certain measure to Penelope's webbing picture just mentioned above? Of course, we must take into consideration all the differences such a comparison entails.

## 6. Conclusion

In this chapter we attempted to prove through textual comparisons the close attachment of Agnon to the classical Greek (and Roman) literature. These similitudes of motifs, tales, legends and scenes as well as certain expressions made conspicuous in this chapter, cannot be assumed to be incidental. These examples are too numerous to allow such a conclusion. Even so, the writer of this study does not exclude many more similarities in any other of Agnon's works, since he feels that the quoted examples will suffice for this purpose. Therefore the right conclusion has to be that the classical Greek literature (and Roman) had a fruitful influence on Agnon's writing. But this is only one of the sources Agnon himself mentioned as having read with interest and pleasure. One of the other sources mentioned by Agnon with similar reverence was that of Hamsun. His influence, as the main representative of the Scandinavian writers, will be discussed in the next chapter.

## NOTES

1. KURTZWEIL, B., Massot Al Sipurei Shai Agnon, 3rd enlarged

- edition, Tel Aviv, Schocken Publishing House, 1970, pp. 30-31.
2. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav (The Collected Works), 2nd Revised Ed., Vol. II, Elu v'Elu, Tel Aviv-Jerusalem, Schocken Publishing House, 1952, p. 119.
  3. Ibid., p. 118.
  4. At one of our meetings, Professor Verses pointed out to me the motifs of the Sirens as well as that of the kerchief which is discussed in his book Hasippur ve Shorsho (The Story and its Roots). The sources of the story and the method of their shaping are discussed in his chapter "In the Heart of the Seas" by S.Y. Agnon, see pages 201-244. See also BOOSAK, M., Gilgulo Shel Motiv (The Metamorphosis of a 'Motif), published in Hapoe! Hatzair on January 13, 1970 and Heidei Yavan Bitziroth Agnon (Greek Echoes in Agnon's Works), published in Davar on March 5, 1971.
  5. AGNON, S.Y., Two Tales, Betrothed, London, Victor Golancz Ltd., translated by Walter Leven, 1966, pp. 10-11.
  6. Ibid., p. 21.
  7. Ibid., p. 59.
  8. Ibid., p. 89.
  9. Ibid., p. 121.
  10. Ibid., pp. 89-90.
  11. Ibid., p. 121.
  12. Ibid., n. 127.
  13. Ibid., p. 124.

14. Genesis XVIII, 1-3.
15. AGNON, S.Y., Two Tales, op. cit., pp. 132-133.
16. AGNON, S.Y., The Bridal Canopy, London, Victor Golancz Ltd., Translated by I.M. Lask, 1968, p. 58.
17. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav (The Collected Works), 2nd Revised Ed., Vol. III, Al Kappot ha'annual, Tel Aviv-Jerusalem, Schocken Publishing House, 1952, p. 399.
18. The Odyssey of Homer, Book Nine, New York, The Heritage Press, 1942, pp. 123-139.
19. HAMSUN, K., Victoria, Warsaw, A. Y. Shtibel Publishing House, translated into Hebrew from the Norwegian by P. Ginzburg, 1921.
20. About Agnon's knowledge of Schiller's works we have a lot of evidence. See Chapter II of this study (A Brief Biography).
21. SCHILLER, F. von, Poems and Ballads with an introduction by Henry Morley, London, pp. 64-66.
22. AGNON, S.Y., Elu v'Elu, op. cit., p. 148.
23. AGNON, S.Y., The Heart of the Seas, London, Victor Golancz Ltd., Translated by I.M. Lask, 1967, p. 64.
24. It may also be interesting to compare the Talmudic source (Gittin 57b) of this story and to note the artistical changes and enlargements made by Agnon. But since our study does not deal with the influence of the Talmud, we satisfy ourselves with the attraction of the reader's attention to this intriguing subject.

25. AGNON, S.Y., Elu v'Elu, op. cit., pp. 66-67.
26. The Odyssey of Homer, Book XII, op. cit., p. 178.
27. Ibid., pp. 182-183.
28. AGNON, S.Y., In the Heart of the Seas, op. cit., p. 97.
29. The motif of the woman who attracts a lover and after she was satisfied and satiated she kills him is well known in literature as the vampire woman which also inspired writers to use it as the main motif in novels, as for instance in The Atlantide by Pierre Benoit, a prolific French writer. We find this act also in the nature of two forms: 1) the female of a certain type of spider kills her spouse after their cohabitation and 2) the male of the bees dies after he has fertilised the queen during their "honey moon".
30. Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 7., p. 29.
31. Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 2, p. 663.
32. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, The Lady and the Pedlar, London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., Nahum N. Glatzer, Ed., translated by Gershon Schocken, 1970, p. 169.
33. The behavior of our heroine is reminiscent of the old witch in Grimms' Fairy Tales, Hansel and Gretel, who pampered the boy Hansel, with the same purpose.
34. AGNON, S.Y., The Lady and the Pedlar, op. cit., pp. 172-173.
35. Agnon has impregnated in this story many allegorical and symbolical meanings according to the scholarly interpretations by the choice of names of the main characters, the scenes and the plot, which are discussed mainly by the following critics and scholars: Bahat, Yaacov; Barzel,

Hillel; Kurtzweil, Baruch and Band, Arnold.

36. It may also be possible that some scenes and situations from Hamsun's works inspired Agnon when he wrote this story, e.g., The Call of Life where we find that the name of the heroine is the same (Ellen) and she makes love in her room with somebody while the corpse of her husband is still lying in the other room. This is very similar to Helene in The Lady and the Pedlar, who makes love with somebody while the corpses of her previous husbands are, figuratively sneaking, lying in another room. There are also some style similarities. Many of the questions the pedlar asks Helene are similar to those the story-teller asks Ellen in The Call of Life.

I wanted to ask her, what is her name, where is her husband, in case she has one; I wanted to know in whose house I find myself; but she pressed herself firmly upon me, as I opened my mouth and she forbade me to be curious.

"My name is Ellen," she said... "But you must meanwhile enter here, in the bedroom."

...I whispered something to her, and she sealed my mouth with hers, speechless because of tenderness.

As we can see the answer is also similar although only partly. She does not let him be too curious, without letting him have any witchy association. These few lines were translated from the Hebrew translation of Hamsun's story through a comparison with the German translation. HAMSUN, K., Die Stimme der Lebens, München, Albert Langen, 1925, pp. 236-240.

37. The great similarity between the two situations is twofold: a) Helene says that she drinks human blood and eats

human flesh and so does the old witch, but the children understood her wish immediately while it took a long time for the pedlar to perceive that she means it.

Then she went to Gretel and shook her until she woke, and cried, "Get up, little lazybones! Fetch some water and cook something nice for your brother. He is in the stable and has to be fattened. When he is nice and fat, I will eat him." GRIMMS, J.L.W., Fairy Tales, Cleveland and New York, The World Publishing Company, 1947, p. 21.

b) What she conspired to do with Gretel, Gretel did to the old witch, while the pedlar did not do anything to harm Helene in spite of the fact that she wanted to kill him and suck his blood. He moreover cared for her after she wounded herself in her attempt to kill him, but in vain.

38. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 174.
39. Ibid., p. 175.
40. Ibid., p. 179.
41. The Yiddish folksong is quoted in Prof. S. Verses' book 'Hasippur veshorsho, p. 218.
42. AGNON, S.Y., Sefer Sofer ve Sippur, Jerusalem, Schocken Publishing House, 1938, p. 29.
43. AGNON, S.Y., In the Heart of the Seas, op. cit., p. 62.
44. The Odyssey of Homer, Books V and VI, op. cit.,
45. AGNON, S.Y., In the Heart of the Seas, op. cit., pp. 62-63.
46. The Odyssey of Homer, op. cit., n. 75.

47. AGNON, S.Y., In the Heart of the Seas, op. cit., p. 9.
48. The Odyssey of Homer, op. cit., p. 80.
49. Ibid., p. 81.
50. AGNON, S.Y., In the Heart of the Seas, op. cit., pp. 109-110.
51. Ibid., pp. 63-64.
52. Ibid., p. 67.
53. Ibid., pp. 80-81.
54. Ibid., pp. 81.
55. Ibid., pp. 109-110.
56. Ibid., p. 67.
57. Ibid., p.
58. Ibid., p. 68.
59. The Odyssey of Homer, op. cit., p. 75.
60. For Hananiah, as well as for most Jews, the Land of Israel is his native home, as Ithaca was the native home of Odysseus. As Odysseus did not concern himself with troubles or dangers when he desired to reach the shores of his hope, so also Hananiah did not worry that anything might stand in the way of his realizing his great hope and desire.
61. AGNON, S.Y., In the Heart of the Seas, op. cit., p. 109.
62. Ibid., p. 97.
63. Ibid., p. 109.
64. AGNON, S.Y., Vehaya he'akov lemishor, 1st Ed., Yaffo,



Published by I.H. Brenner, 1912, p. 22.

65. The Odyssey of Homer, op. cit., p. 18.
66. AGNON, S.Y., Elu v'Elu, op. cit., pp. 117-118.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE SCANDINAVIAN WRITERS

#### 1. Introduction

Agnon himself has testified on many occasions<sup>1</sup> concerning his attachment to the Scandinavian writers, especially Hamsun, Bjorensen and Jacobsen, which reached its anogee with the translation of Bjorensen's Dust into Hebrew. It has already been mentioned that Agnon also intended to translate some of Jacobsen's stories, an intention which was not realized to this writer's knowledge. The reasons for the non-materialization of this intent are unknown and we can find no explanation at this stage to cover this fact.

It is however very clear that Agnon had read, possibly more than once, most of the works of the above mentioned Scandinavian writers. Many critics and scholars have pointed to the dominant influence of Hamsun on world literature as well as his influence upon Agnon. None of the criticisms were based on methodical comparison. It is also clear that even a partial comparative research between such prolific writers as these were, needs more than one complete lengthy volume on its own, how much more so, a comparison of all the works of the above-mentioned writers?

It is our intention, therefore, to analyze in this chapter a few selected motifs, plots and scenes so as to compare the similitudes, resemblances and parallelisms between the works of these writers, and since Hamsun is the most known of them we shall in the main limit this chapter to him.

Professor Sadan once brought as proof of Hamsun's great

influence upon the Jewish writers, the fact that the Jewish writer, N.H. Imber, wrote a poem based on Hamsun's short love story Victoria. I.B. Singer brought as a proof to Hamsun's influence on European writers the fact that the novel Ingeborg by Kellerman is virtually a copy of Pan.<sup>2</sup> Surely such proofs have to be accepted since they are based on facts and not on feelings or general statements even if they are not based on a closer comparative study.

The methodology of this study will be based on a similar but more detailed method, namely there will be passages quoted in order to make conspicuous the similarity of the compared details. There will also be given precisés of stories to emphasize the resemblance of the compared motifs, plots and characters. It does not have to be stressed, because it is clear, that these great similarities do not, at all, diminish Agnon's merits as an ingenious original writer. There is no doubt (and this will be proved in this study) about the existence of great differences between Agnon's works and any of the works of the European writers whom it is alleged influenced him. According to Agnon's own testimony, he never started to write a story before the characters stood as if alive in front of his eyes. This excludes any allusion as to the possibility of aping or copying from the above-mentioned writers or any others. It is true that unconsciously his works were influenced by what he had read and this is what we intend to prove in this chapter.

## 2. Victoria<sup>3</sup> and its Traces in Some of Agnon's Stories

Victoria is a love story in which none of the characters involved reached their goals. Differences of social origin, nature and character, caused almost all of these characters to

fail in fulfilling their thirst for love and happiness with their counterparts. Johannes, the poor miller's son truly and sincerely loves Victoria, the daughter of the landlord, who had a lot of property and lived in big houses and was known as the owner of the 'Castle'. She, on the other hand, also loved him very much and maybe even more, but she could not show him her true feelings because of the social differences between them and her nature and character. This in turn caused him to be very shut up in himself and not able to dare more than he had. Even more so, in spite of her pure and true love for him, she had to marry someone else because her parents had betrothed her to a rich young lieutenant even though they knew quite well that she loved and intended to marry this young talented man. Their financial decline guided their decision. But all was in vain. Her betrothed got killed in a shooting "accident" when he was with the neighbouring landlord on a hunting tour of his land.

Meanwhile Johannes got engaged to Kamila, Victoria's friend, a seventeen year old girl whom he had saved many years ago from death. Victoria confessed her pure love to Johannes the day after the tragedy, but Johannes could not do anything as he had asked Kamila a few days earlier, right after Victoria's engagement party, if she would agree to respond favourably to his question. He had no way out in spite of the fact that he still loved Victoria very much. But even this engagement did not last long since Kamila was not aware, when she agreed to become engaged to Johannes, that she already loved somebody else, Richmond.

In this story there are stories within the story which repeat the main motif in similar and different situations. The first one is told by the old teacher who was Victoria's child-

hood teacher. He confesses to Johannes his personal experience in love. When he was young and rich, had a big house, many ships, etc., he loved a girl. She was also young and of a good family. She refused him. But then he became impoverished and she came and said that she wants him, but by then he did not want her. This story is told by the old teacher to Johannes at the engagement party, before Victoria's tragedy happened.

Other love stories are interwoven in this story. One concerning someone who is happy with her lover who came back from overseas, and the other who is mourning because of her love for her dead daughter. Yet another is about two sisters who loved the same person but both lost him because of their pride. Another story is about the forbidden love of the "blue-dressed" mother and the "peculiar incident with her husband" who told her in a "very confidential way": "What would you say if we would have 'cockold' ... to this one ... who left ... if we would have 'cockold'?"<sup>4</sup> Following this is a true love story in which the husband and wife show their loyalty towards one another in the most difficult times but also in most peculiar and original ways. Finally before telling us the end of the story, the author puts into the mouth of the old teacher the idea (like a philosophy of life): "Did you ever see, ever, that someone shall receive this one that he had to receive?"<sup>5</sup>

Summing up the characteristics of this story in its structure, style, scenes, plot and characters, the following points are conspicuous:

From the point of view of structure the story begins with a picturesque description of the childhood of the heroine and ends with her death. In the thirteen chapters of this story we are told about the meaningless clashes between the lovers,

the ups and downs in their lives, and their tragic end, but by the shadow of their lives we read also about other episodes in the lives of other people which are interwoven as a story within a story. It seems worthwhile to emphasize the role of the old teacher, who is acting the part of the story teller, but who is actually telling us about his own philosophy of life.

The scenes of this story change alternately from the big town to the countryside and back again. From the landlord's "castle" to the mill or to the miller's house.

Its style changes from epic description to a dramatic dialogue between the characters. We also find that the writer addresses himself to the reader. He does this many times. For our purpose it will suffice to quote him where it appears twice on the same page and in the same paragraph:

... Dear reader, today I feel so bad. The snow falls, there is almost no one passing by in the street, everything is sombre, and my soul is so deserted....

...Dear reader, in this situation I shall try to describe a clear bright night and full with excitement...<sup>6</sup>

Here and there the style of sentimentalism overflows, penetrating the way of peaceful narration of the story. The characters of the heroes give the plot its turns, sometimes expected, but most of the time not expected at all.

Victoria loves Johannes from childhood, but she becomes engaged to Otto Kamberher because of her father's financial position (the good one at the beginning and the bad one at the time of her engagement). Johannes loves Victoria, but he got engaged to Kamila because of Victoria's engagement to Otto. Kamila becomes engaged to Johannes (probably because of her feeling of indebtedness towards Johannes because he saved her life many years ago) in spite of the fact that she really loved

Richmond, who was away for a while in England. She finally breaks her engagement to Johannes so that she could marry Richmond, while Johannes does not turn back to Victoria, in spite of the fact that she is waiting for his return, free of any engagement, but she dies of sorrow, disappointment and frustration.

Victoria is only one of Hamsun's love stories in which the motif of unfulfilled love takes many variations as well as in his other stories and novels such as Pan, aus leutenant Thomas Glahns papieren (from leutenant Thomas Glahn's recordings), Mysteries, The Wanderers, Growth of the Soil, Benoni and Rosa, etc., and in his short stories like Sklaven der Liebe (The Slaves of Love), Die Stimme des Lebens (The Voice [Call] of Life), Die Konigin von Saba (The Queen of Sheba), etc. As already mentioned, this motif of unfulfilled love, in the very same variation as it appears in Victoria, but at the same time also different, has its deep roots in the classical as well as in the modern Hebrew literature and even so, we dare to point to clear Hamsunian traces in them.<sup>7</sup>

There are great similarities between this and other stories by Hamsun, and even so they differ greatly in their panorama, characters and scenes. This was also clear to the critics, and one even expressed himself openly that his novels Benoni and Rosa are variations of Pan.<sup>8</sup> A similar statement can be made about the similarities between Hamsun's and Agnon's works emphasizing that in spite of the great differences which are conspicuous, there are still enough similarities to claim that there was a fruitful and prolific influence on the latter.

Already in his first story Agunot published in 1908 under his pen name Agnon we find a variation of the same main plot

as in Victoria. The stories are completely different in style, scenes, characters and atmosphere but even so the main plot is conspicuously similar. Dinah, the only daughter of the righteous and rich Ahiezer, is engaged to the young scholar, Rabbi Ezekiel, who marries her, but their marriage is not consummated because meanwhile she fell in love with Ben-Uri, the master and artist who was engaged to make a luxurious arch in the synagogue built especially for the use of the young bridegroom, after her engagement but before her marriage, while Rabbi Ezekiel who married Dinah, because of his father's decision, still loved Freidele, whose mother had tended his father and him since his sainted mother died".<sup>9</sup> Two main motifs are clearly similar here. Victoria loves Johannes, the poor, but is engaged to Otto, the rich. Rabbi Ezekiel loves Freidele the poor but is engaged and marries Dinah, the rich daughter of a venerable Jerusalemite. Victoria's marriage is not consummated and neither is Ezekiel's. He cannot marry Freidele after his divorce from Dinah because she "had found her mate and moved together with her mother to another city..."<sup>10</sup> as Victoria could not marry Johannes because he meanwhile became engaged to Kamila.

In the thematic of the Hebrew literature, in both the classic as well as in the modern, this motif or theme may be defined as the motif of the anchored woman. Because of its being a reflection of human suffering it received the highest attention from the religious authorities in all generations. Obviously, we have to distinguish clearly between the classic motif of the anchored woman, which means that the woman is still legally married to somebody, or that she gave him her love by oath, but that person, disappeared, either abandoning her, or because he died and his death was not officially testified to,



and therefore she cannot remarry, and its modern literary form, which means that any two souls who fall in love or become engaged and their love or engagement cannot be consummated, enter under the definition of the motif of anchored souls or women.

Concerning the classical literature just mentioned, the motif of anchored women appears in many variations, as life experience already in the Talmud, in the Midrashim and in the Agada, but also enter into the rich Rabbinical responsa. There is almost an inevitable conclusion that concomitant with the Talmudic classical influence there was also an outer influence and that is from the Scandinavian writers. This does not exclude other influences in matters of love affairs and social tension descriptions, as from French writers as Flaubert and Balzac and others. And as this chapter is devoted to the research of the influence of the Scandinavian writers we will not bring any quotations from the Talmud, Midrash or Agada for comparison purposes, although such a comparison may be most interesting.

In the modern Hebrew literature this motif of 'agunot' (anchored women) appeared even beyond the legal forms of happy marriage. We find one scholar<sup>11</sup> who expresses himself about a certain heroine's behaviour, as if she committed spiritual adultery, having been married to B while she still loved A. This variety of turns gives the writer unlimited possibilities in using and reusing the same motif and still giving the impression of an ever new theme and motif.

The same is also true about world literature in general and Hamsun's works in particular. Of course, with the many differences between them, and particularly with the fact that

in world literature the motifs of anchored women or souls do not exist in this form; they all exist under the framework of love stories. As an example, in Hamsun's novel The Wanderers, Mrs. Falkenberg is asked by her husband to return to their common home, despite the fact that she lived a whole summer with her lover. Would it not be for the question of the paternity of the fruit she bore under her heart, which created such an unbearable tension between Captain Falkenberg and his wife, they would have lived in happiness until the end of their lives.

In the Hebrew literature, until Agnon, such an event was incomprehensible, and the subject was taboo in Jewish society, because after adultery, admitted, confessed or proved, there is no possibility of the reestablishment of a broken home. This is against the Jewish religious law and a divorce must be given. But there is something similar in one of Agnon's stories. Since such an event cannot be comprehended in marriage, Agnon creates a situation out of it in which a modern man, a medic, meets a nurse with whom he falls in love and marries, but finds out that she had a passing affair with a clerk, long before her marriage, and cannot forgive her. He makes her life so miserable until there is no choice but the divorce, in spite of the fact that he still loved her and was longing for her (The Doctor and his Divorcee). Many variations of the theme of love in Agnon's short stories or novels can be explained by the basic element that there is no reconciliation after adultery committed by the wife, hence the element of anchored women or souls, legally and sometimes only morally bound, is more usable for Agnon than the general motif of love as it appears in Scandinavian or in world literature. Therefore, we will find very few vulgar descriptions of adulterous love making (they are not missing

completely). Most of them are only hinted at, and these according to some critics and scholars lead to a greater erotic excitement of the reader than the described ones. This type is also found in Hamsun's stories. In some of the stories he speaks openly about making love, adultery, etc., and in others he only hints at them.

In most of Agnon's love stories, not only those included in Al Kapot Haman'ul (whose subtitle is Sipurei Ahavim [Love Stories]), we find clear traces of Hamsun's love stories. In the great novel Sipur Pashut (A Simple Story) there are described, besides other themes and motifs, also a few love stories which have a remarkable resemblance to that which was so conspicuously summed up from Hamsun's love stories.

Baruch Meir, a diligent assistant at the shop of a wealthy merchant, Shimon Klinger, loves his lovely cousin Mirel, whom he intends to marry soon. Instead of doing this, he marries his master's daughter Tsirel because of her wealth. (Her father decided to make this match because some members of the family suffered from insanity and this was a great hindrance in making a better match.) Mirel married Hayim Nacht (which means life in night or life in darkness) and had a girl whom they named Bluma (which has a double meaning - one in Hebrew which means "the withheld one" and the other in Yiddish or German which means "flower"). To make a long story short, after her mother died Bluma came to her wealthy but distant relative, Baruch Meir, where she was employed as a housekeeper. Meanwhile the Horovitzes had a son, whom they named Hirshel (deer, fig, handsome boy) and who was at the time of Bluma's arrival at their home slightly older than she. Hirshel fell in love with Bluma, who responded positively to his advances. His mother,

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Tsirel, a typical middle-class shopkeeper minded mother, was not interested in her son's love, and so prepared and premeditated his marriage to Minna Tsiemlich, the daughter of a wealthy farmer of a nearby village. Hirshel married in accordance with his mother's wishes, became insane himself, but after staying in Dr. Langsam's (Dr. Slowly's) sanatorium he returned home to be truly happy with his wife and children, forgetting completely his tragic love for Bluma which was the real cause of his insanity.

Summing up this particular motif of love we find it is twisted twice in the same story almost with the same heroes, but, more exactly, with their descendents. Baruch Meir loves his lovely cousin Mirel, but marries Tsirel because of her economical and financially good position. In other words, the protagonist loves the poor girl but marries the rich one exactly as in Hamsun where Victoria loves the poor Johannes but becomes engaged to Otto Kamerher, the rich. More exact is the situation of the second love story, since in Baruch Meir's case he himself decided to choose the rich one against the beloved one. In Hirshel's case we have the same situation reflecting even more that of Victoria. Hirshel loved the poor Bluma but married Minna against his will, because of his mother's wishes, exactly as Victoria got engaged to Otto Kamerher because of her father's pressure and distress and against her own will (she agreed to the engagement, hoping that it would save her parents from bankruptcy).

A similar situation, with an interestingly happy ending, is found in the story Bidmi Yameha (1922). Akavia 'azal, the son of a wealthy Viennese Jewish family, as a student visited the town of Shibush. There he fell in love with Leah, a local, young and sensitive girl. He decided to remain in Shibush and took up

the position of a schoolteacher. Leah's parents withheld her from him for the reason that she was a sickly girl and she therefore needed a rich husband who would be able to pay her medical expenses. So it happened that Leah, who loved the poor Akavia Mazal, married the rich Mintz. But to no avail. Leah, after giving birth to a daughter, Tirtsa, could not bear for many years this life of living with Mintz and loving him on the surface but in reality still loving Akavia Mazal, whose love letters she still kept in a box. A few years later Leah passed away.

A new love story begins between Tirtsa and Akavia Mazal, which ends with their marriage. This is an original turn in Agnon's love stories. Here we find that the love which did not reach its fulfillment in the first generation did in the next one. Namely, Mazal loved Leah, but because he was poor and Mintz was rich he couldn't marry her. But still Akavia's love was responded to, in the next generation, by his marrying Tirtsa who was his beloved Leah's daughter. Another remarkable point to be noted is that the same motif of fulfillment of withheld love in one generation which came almost to its fulfillment in the next one was virtuosily and originally used by Agnon in the abovementioned Simple Story. Since the Simple Story follows Bidmi Yameha the reader is led to think that what Baruch Meir did wrong towards his lovely and beloved cousin, Mirel, will be reconciled and complemented by their children, by the love of Hirshel towards Bluma and by their marriage. But as the reader advances in his reading he is, in a certain way, surprised by the turn of the story. But even so the resemblance to Victoria is conspicuously clear here also.

Concerning the similarity of the plots in the domain of

the motifs of love, while disregarding completely the other facets of the compared works, like their literary structure, style, etc., we may find even more works which are reminiscent of Hamsun's work. The similarity of the kernel of the story is too obvious to be overlooked.

Thus, in Agnon's story Tehila,<sup>12</sup> Tehila, who is an old (104 years old) woman, but has the ability of a young girl, is described by Agnon with great sympathy and love. She was engaged to the young Shraga, whom she liked in her naive way, since she was at the time only a young girl and he was a young lad who just became bar-mitzva<sup>13</sup> just before he was to marry her. But this marriage never took place because her father found out that the bridegroom's family had hassidic leanings and so she married another young man according to her father's choice. The kernel of this story is similar to that of Victoria. Victoria likes = loves Johannes, the poor, but is engaged to marry Otto Kamerher, the rich, because of her father's decision. That nothing good came out of this engagement is no one's fault but fate. Peculiarly enough nothing good comes out of Tehila's marriage, as her two sons die tragically just before reaching Bar Mitzva, while her daughter went mad. This occurs because of the curse which was placed on her marriage by Shraga who was so insulted and humiliated by the one sided termination of their engagement, and the persecution by her father which forced them to leave Jerusalem. But still, Tehila (like Victoria) likes Shraga who is poor not in terms of goods or of money but in terms of religious philosophy of life and therefore marries somebody else. In Victoria the social tension between the different layers of society are at the backbone of the events, while in Tehila

they are the religious tension between the Mitnagdim and Hassidim.<sup>14</sup>

The style, scenes and characters of Tehila are very interesting especially with its motif of love, which has its roots in the Talmudic literature as well. The curse and its materialization were interpreted in different ways. One interpretation, that of the writer, is based on Talmudic sources.<sup>15</sup> Another interpretation by Y. Bahat elaborates on this theme trying to prove that Tehila was punished so heavily and with these particular punishments - one boy died by drowning, the other died of fear after a cholera epidemic, and the girl went mad - because of her adultery (not factually but spiritually since she "loved" Shraga even after she married someone else), the one sided termination of the engagement, equal to "causing shame in public" which is equalled by our sages of blessed memory to a murderous deed,<sup>16</sup> and because of her not looking personally after the Jewish education of her daughter. This interpretation is very interesting in itself, but the writer disagrees with it because it completely overlooks the Talmudic sources which give a better explanation based on the similarity of the real situation in the Talmudic source and in Agnon, and not on a speculative level like spiritual adultery; there is no punishment in Judaism for evil thoughts, only for evil deeds. Who can judge thoughts? Only God! and He declared that a good thought is praised or paid if it is joined by a good deed, and surely the same is true about a bad thought. How can a capital punishment be exercised by the True Judge not for a bad deed, but for a bad thought? This is inconceivable, especially as there is no proof even for the existence of this bad intention!

### 3. The Queen of Sheba and its Traces in Some of Agnon's Stories

The Hamsunian influence is felt through two main variations of the motif of love. The one which is developed as the main theme in Victoria and in the big novels, Wanderers, Growth of the Soil and especially in Benoni and Rosa, and the other one through The Queen of Sheba, Mysteries and Pan.

The traces of the first variation were made conspicuous. In the next pages the same will be done with the second type, which is clearly guided by the variation from The Queen of Sheba which is related in the first person as a true experience. The story-teller met a young girl, not in the best of circumstances, when he was on his way to Sweden. This girl gave up her bed for him while she went to sleep with a girl friend. The writer saw in this deed a revelation of more than simple kindness towards a young man in need, and expected to meet her in the morning at breakfast. He was very surprised to find that she had already left without leaving any message for him. He had been so excited that he even forgot to ask for her name. He decided to name her the Queen of Sheba because of her resemblance to a painting of that name upon which he wrote an artistical critical review. Four years later he saw her eyes incidentally looking out towards him from a train which was on the verge of leaving the railway station in Copenhagen. He intended to travel to Malmö, but on the spot changed his mind, jumped on the train without his belongings and there he was, without a ticket, without knowing his 'beloved's' name, and even worse, without knowing his (her) destination. After a long and adventurous journey which cost him a lot of money,



mostly because of the fines he had to pay for not having bought a ticket at the station (and this he did at almost every station because he did not know her destination and was watching for her departure at every station). Finally he saw her leaving the train at the final station but had no occasion to come near her and to talk to her before she left it accompanied by her people. After more than a week of fruitless searching and embarrassing situations he saw her accompanied by somebody whom he decided to define as her brother. But unluckily for him it turned out to be her husband. It turned out that his beloved "Queen of Sheba" to whom he wanted to declare his sincere feelings of love hoping for her mutual and reciprocal reaction, had already given her love to somebody else and he had just wasted time and money on a daydream and one-sided love.

The very same motif, considerably enlarged in length and in depth, is the theme for both Mysteries and Pan. As in The Queen of Sheba the main character in Pan, Lieutenant Glahn, falls in love with Edwarda but is unable to conquer her stubbornness and pride; and finally commits suicide (by provoking his 'friend' to shoot him to death),<sup>17</sup> and in Mysteries, Nagel fell in love with Dagny Kielland in spite of the fact that he knew that nothing would come of it, since she was already engaged to somebody else, and finally he also committed suicide for the same reason.<sup>18</sup>

Summing up this variation of the motif of love we may describe its essence as follows: The main character falls in love with a girl while she herself knows little about it and after a period of daydreaming and amazing situations, the solution comes in the form of finding out the cruel reality, namely the girl not only did not know very much about the ex-

istence of this lover but she is a happily engaged or married woman, and with this discovery the story ends.

A similar variation of this plot is found in some of Agnon's works. The plot in Giv'at Ha hol (The Sand Hill) is greatly resemblant of Hamsun's The Queen of Sheba which seems to be the prototype of the frustrated one sided romance. As in The Queen of Sheba, Hemdat, the protagonist of Giv'at Ha hol, makes plans on how he will receive her when she'll come to visit him. "He'll welcome her with kindness. He'll not remind her, her first sins. Both will sit alike upon the green sofa. Surely, she is my sweetheart. ..."<sup>19</sup>

Hemdat stood by himself upon the hill. Suddenly he saw a shade opposite him... Hemdat stood and said, if it's the shade of a tree (then) it's a sign that our love is permanent and steady and it has an existence, and if it's the shade of a passerby (then) it's a sign that our love passed like a fleeting shadow... At that moment the shade agitated and started to come near to Hemdat... Hemdat felt relieved and said, thanks the Name (of God) that she is not Ya'el Chajes, because if she would be Ya'el Chajes, I would see in it an evil (bad) sign.

Ya'el Chajes passed by.

She turned her eyes aloof from him.

And Hemdat went down from upon the hill.<sup>20</sup>

From this quoted passage a few similar motifs are clear. Ya'el is Hemdat's "sweetheart" just as the Queen of Sheba is the "sweetheart" of the anonymous protagonist in the story of the same name. As the Queen of Sheba is not aware of his love for her, so Ya'el is unaware of Hemdat's love, and as the Queen was a married woman, it seems to be true of Ya'el although she was not married formally, since Shamai, her friend, supplied her with bread<sup>21</sup> and chocolate. "Hemdat reflected in

his heart, Shamai is surely kissing her, and perhaps he embraces her. Many times they are returning late from a party."<sup>22</sup> Namely, the Queen was married and Yael was not formally married but Hemdat suspected something about their relationship. It seems to be superfluous to stress that the differences between the plots are even greater than the similarities, but even so their existence can not be denied.

#### 4. Mysteries and Wanderers and Their Traces in Some of Agnon's Stories

In discussing the traces of Hamsun's love stories in Agnon's writings one cannot overlook the love story Ovadia Ba'al Mum (Ovadia, the Cripple)<sup>23</sup> which was defined by Professor Gershon Shaked as being on the verge of the level of sub-literature, because of its having more than a touch of vulgarity in it. The above story is atypical of Agnon, but still we have to discuss it as he has written it.

G. Shaked, in the analysis of this story, mentions apropos that there is in Hamsun's Mysteries a description of a naive cripple in the character of Minutten, and that the maltreatment of this cripple in this novel is very resemblant of the sadistic conduct toward Ovadia in the dancing hall,<sup>24</sup> while A. Band mentions in a footnote that "The story of Ovadia employs the same motif as J.B. Singer's Gimpel the Fool."<sup>25</sup> In any case this is the only story of this type in Agnon in which he uses vulgar and erotic descriptions and in which the Jewish society, and many of its components, are so openly criticised, ironized and satirized. But still we find another scene which has supposedly been influenced by Hamsun's Wanderers, where there is a similar ironic description of a dancing party.

The dance goes on.

The girls from the valley are armoured five layers thick, but who cares for that! All are used to hard work. And the dance goes on - ay, the thunder goes on. Braendevin helps things bravely along. The witches' cauldron is fairly steaming now. At three in the morning the local police force appears, and knocks on the floor with his stick. The dancers go out in the moonlight, and spread out near and far. And nine months later, the girls from the valley show proof that after all they were one layer of armour short. Never was such an effect of being one layer short.<sup>26</sup>

Here we are given a similar description of the dance:

And Ovadia stood and looked in front of himself. The house is full with boys and girls, their faces burn and their appearance was like glowing ambers and they dance pairs by pairs. They fly like the lightning, they storm and move, and the hostess makes for them a dance, and she sings in front of them and says:<sup>27</sup>

Further in the story, and also before this scene, there are many ironic expressions spread over here and there on account of almost everyone and everything. So, when Ovadia came out of the hospital and met with the Melamed's (teacher's) assistant, and told him that he was lying in bed in the hospital for a year, and did not get out of his bed until that very date, the assistant reacted by saying that this means that he is able to make children by telegraph. But Ovadia was innocent and naive and did not understand the irony which lay behind it. And so on in many other cases, because he did not know that his fiancée Sheine Seril committed adultery with Reuven, the Red, while he was lying sick in hospital and gave birth to a nice red haired baby.

In Hamsun's stories this was a more common occurrence which ended many times with the murder of the new born, while in Agnon we are only told about this one.

There are great differences in style and description between these short passages and even so it is claimed to have been influential on Agnon. Would Agnon have used the same expressions we would have had to point out imitating and aping and not influence, in which case only the kernel of the scene is similar.

Hamsun's irony expressed in the sentence: "Never was such an effect of being one layer short,..," is sharp and given on the spot, while Agnon's is spread over the whole story.

Another variation of the motif of love from Hamsun's works with its turns in Wanderers is told about the Captain Falkenberg's family. A situation in which the Captain's wife commits adultery for the first time in her life, with heavy consequences for their future family life, is created by the Captain through his wish to regain his wife's tenderness and love. This behaviour which created the impression of continuous infidelity on the Captain's side led in a moment of weakness to her giving in to her infidelity which lead later to an open and continuous adultery. In Hamsun's novel, the woman could return to her husband and remake their broken home, but in Agnon's novels such a turn was doomed to failure, because of the dominancy of the religious, philosophical view of the sanctity of family life. Hence Agnon wrote on the same theme, but twisted the roles, giving, in his stories, the very same position to the man and so avoiding the creation of the incomprehensible situation of adultery and keeping at the same time the completeness of the family life.

We find in Shira, published as a book posthumously, although parts of it were published in periodicals during the lifetime of the author, a love story with the piquant situations

of the committing of adultery, but this is done by the man and not by the woman and therefore it does not affect, at least most of the time, the quiet and harmonious family life of the protagonist. Professor Herbst's obsessive attachment and love toward Shira who was a nurse at the hospital, with whom he apparently had a temporary love affair on the day his wife, Henrietta, was brought into the hospital to give birth to a son, leads slowly but finally to Herbst's surrender to his temptation which became an obsession, that did not leave any room for anything else. So it happens that after finding out that Shira was hospitalized in a lepers' house he visits her. During this visit he declares his great and unreasonable love for her. In spite of her rejection he takes hold of her hand, at the last few moments of his visit, and then kisses her lips so as to make irrevocable his decision to remain with her for ever. This last chapter was published after the publication of the book, since it was found later by Mr. R. Weizer, the person in charge of Agnon's archive, among other manuscripts. His daughter, Mrs. E. Yaron, who was editing his works, explained her father's hesitation to end this novel with this description, since it was very similar to that already used in the story Ad Olam (Forever) where a scholar who was obsessedly devoted to the study of the history of a certain town and its people decided to enter a lepers' house to be able to study an ancient manuscript which was found there and was not allowed to be taken out because of the danger of contaminating the people who will touch it or come in contact with it. Agnon describes all the preventive and precautionary measures taken by the hospital authorities, but to no avail, and so it happened that the scholar, Adiel Emze, remained in the lepers' house forever.

(Hence the name of the story.) This very end, which is equal to committing suicide, is reminiscent of the end of the main character in Mysteries, Nagel, who committed suicide when he came to the conclusion that he'll never reach the aim of his love, "froken Dagni Kielland (apropos, in the same novel we are told already at the beginning of the suicide of another young man, Karlsen, who, also one sidedly, loved very much this young engaged woman) and also of the main character of Pan, Lieutenant Glahn, and that of the young Lieutenant Otto Kamerher, whose fates were mentioned above. It is also similar to Rosa's first husband's real death (the first time he agreed to disappear and play dead for a certain sum of money, which was paid him for his agreeing to renounce his wife Rosa). There is still room for a detailed and lengthy comparison between the works of these writers. The fruitful influence was, it is hoped, clearly proved through the samples. But this is true not only concerning plots, scenes, motifs and characters, but also in some stylistic way. Evidences of this influence are quoted in the next pages.

5. The Expression God Knows - Heaven Knows and its Variations in the Compared Works

Reading for the second time, or the third time or the fourth or even for the first time, some of Hamsun's works, the reader would be completely surprised to find a certain expression which appears many times in many of Hamsun's stories as well as in three or more of Agnon's. At first the impression was that this expression seemed to be in Agnon a typical original expression used mostly by pious Jews. There is no doubt that Hamsun could not in any way have been influenced at that time by any of Agnon's works, but even so there still remains two

other possibilities. One, that this is a simple, although amazing coincidence, that both writers used the same expression, and two, that Agnon was influenced by Hamsun. The expression we speak about appears in Hamsun in various forms, but it is very clear that it is variations of the same one. They are: "God knows", "Heaven knows", "Lord knows", "Lord in Heaven knows", "God Almighty knows", etc., and they appear both in Hamsun's short stories as well as in his novels. While in Agnon it struck the eye of the reader only in one of his novels, but it appears also once or twice in other stories. (A special comparative study needs to be devoted to such expressions, their frequency and regularity, in Agnon's works.) In Agnon, no one paid attention to the possibility of its having a non-Jewish origin. In this writer's opinion the only explanation of this fact is that Agnon, being known as an observant Jew, and writing about pious Jews, was expected to use such expressions, considering the fact that pious Jews use one of many similar expressions on almost every occasion, i.e., "Please God", "Thank God", "With God's help", "God willing", etc. The reader just found something typically Jewish and Agnonian in this expression. There is no doubt that the expression "God knows" and many similar ones, were also used in the spoken Yiddish language here and there, and possibly in the Hebrew occasionally. Therefore, we may also have to admit the possibility of concomitant influence, from the Jewish sources as well as from Hamsun. Perhaps Hamsun's influence was more in the literary structural form, namely that the expressions may have been known to Agnon from the Jewish sources and he only dared use them in his literary work after finding it appropriate in Hamsun's works. In his first novel Hunger he uses this ex-



pression more than three times.<sup>28</sup>

I stood up and investigated a little bundle I had over in the corner of the bed, looking for something for breakfast, but found nothing and went back again to the window. I thought, God only knows if there's any sense in my looking for a job any longer...<sup>29</sup>

Time passed. Was it absolutely certain that my sketch was a small masterpiece and inspired? God knows it wasn't free of faults here and there! Everything considered, it could very well not be accepted, no, simply not accepted!<sup>30</sup>

I counted up my money once more: one half a pocketknife, one key chain, but not an øre. Suddenly I reached into my pocket and pulled the papers up once more. It was an automatic thing to do, an unconscious reflex. I found a white page among them, not written on, and - God knows where I got the idea - I folded it into a cone and closed it carefully so that it looked as though it was full, and then threw it as far as I could out in front of me.<sup>31</sup>

Not only does he use this expression in the first of his novels, he does it in almost each of his works; in the short ones like Victoria or The Queen of Sheba as well as in the big ones like Mysteries, Growth of the Soil (in both volumes), and in The Wanderers. A few selected quotations are brought here.

#### Mysteries

This man even had a visit from a young and mysterious lady, who came on God knows what business and only ventured to stay a couple of hours in the place. But all this is not the beginning.<sup>32</sup>

Ah, God knows what his idea may have been; but, as I was saying, there was some love story mixed up in it...<sup>33</sup>

"..He's an agronomist," said the Landlord, "and he comes from abroad. He says he will stay several months; God knows what kind of a fellow he is."<sup>34</sup>

Then he does not use it again until much later where he uses it twice on the same page.

But I don't intend this for a comparison; you don't imagine I'm comparing myself to a dog, do you? God Almighty knows what you might be insolent enough to think...<sup>35</sup>

...It was wrong of me not to come down to you that evening; you signalled and signalled and I didn't come down; God knows how deeply I regret it!<sup>36</sup>

And many more!!!

#### Growth of the Soil, vol. 1

Heaven only knew if he really had money or not.<sup>37</sup>

Heaven knows what was in his mind that he took things so; whether maybe he fancied Inger might be given back to him the sooner for his gentleness.<sup>38</sup>

...he went up into the hills with Sivert, and took a big sheet of paper with him, and drew a map of the ground South of the lake - Heaven knows what he had in mind.<sup>39</sup>

But why should Eleseus then trouble to work hard and steadily as he was doing now on his father's land? Heaven knows he had some reason, maybe something of inborn pride in him still;...<sup>40</sup>

#### Growth of the Soil, vol. 2.

And Heaven knows how she managed to get out of the kitchen again. Her mother looked at her and asked what was the matter. "Nothing," said Leopoldine.<sup>41</sup>

...Heaven knows, maybe Andresen was lying there all the time, about being sent by his master.<sup>42</sup>

Heaven knows if, after all, it had not been Geissler himself that had led the whole proceedings and gained the result he wished. It was a mystery anyway.<sup>43</sup>

Heaven knows what possessed him to do it, for 'twas no work of his, but that was the sort of man he was.<sup>44</sup>

## The Queen of Sheba

God knows that my heart contracted again within me! The picture did not let me rest, too much it reminded me my happiness that I have lost.<sup>45</sup>

God knows if Golphita is not (the) name of a big river in Skania or (the) trademark of a factory or perhaps also a religious sect! But now I remembered about it: Golphita is a known weight; If I am not mistaken, then there are hundred and thirty two pounds in a golphita...<sup>46</sup>

Kalmar - why did I come to Kalmar? This name is not strange to me, I read about it somewhere. God knows if it was a political case (connected with it)...<sup>47</sup>

The God of Mercy will perhaps know, when will be the end of this...<sup>48</sup>

## Wanderers

Heaven knows if that was the way of it.<sup>49</sup>

And the Lord in heaven knows you promised me a thing.<sup>50</sup>

And you coming up yourself Heaven knows how many times a week.<sup>51</sup>

But God alone knows why even the crows and magpies shun us and our town.<sup>52</sup>

Lord knows what the women found to run after, in this tight-waisted youth with the heavy contours behind.<sup>53</sup>

What has she come for? Heaven knows! Young Lovelace, perhaps, has had a spasm of longing and wants her again. Or is she come of her own accord to tell him what has happened, and ask his advice?<sup>54</sup>

...Oh, it's so dreadful - worse than ever it's been!  
Heaven knows what the Captain'll do!<sup>55</sup>

But, God knows, I can't find words this moment to make you forgive me!<sup>56</sup>

These quotations show an amazing frequency of this expression in many of Hamsun's works. As mentioned a similar expression

is found mainly in Agnon's novel A Simple Story of which only a few examples are quoted, but they appear much more frequently than in any single work of Hamsun's or in any other of Agnon's works. Besides, it appears also in A Guest for a Night, The Lady and the Pedlar, as well as in On the Road. Pertinent quotations will be brought forth:

When Bluma arranged the table for Hirshel she did not lift her eyes higher than the tablecloth, and as she entered keeping silent so she left keeping silent. God in Heaven knows the manners of this (one).<sup>57</sup>

Hirshel stood in front of Bluma, his legs and his mouth started to quiver, it seems that he wanted to say something to her. God in Heaven knows what Hirshel wanted to say to her.<sup>58</sup>

Thousand years was his head lying upon Bluma's bed. The whole universe was wiped away, only Hirshel alone exists... God in Heaven knows how long did Hirshel lie (on the bed). Suddenly the hand of a woman touched his head and smoothed his hair. Even if I'll keep quiet and I'll not tell (you), you'll understand that this was Bluma's hand.<sup>59</sup>

Thousand things told Hirshel to Minnah. Never in his born days did he talk so much as at that time. God in Heaven knows where Hirshel took so many measures of talk...<sup>60</sup>

A wind came suddenly and a candle extinguished. A candle which was put out under the canopy is an unfavourable sign for the couple... God in Heaven knows whose candle was put out.<sup>61</sup>

How much is she worn out in this merriment (happiness). God in Heaven knows she needs the rest.<sup>62</sup>

And again twice on the same page at the very end of the novel.

When they stood both beside the cradle of the baby Hirshel asked Minna and said: "Minna what are you thinking about?"

Minna said, "about the brother of this one that is not

here."

Hirshel said, "its good that he lives with the old ones."

Minna said, "I think so also."

Hirshel said, "you think so, but not for my reason,"

Said Minna, "what is your reason?"

He said to her, "because you can not divide the love to two."

She said to him, "I thought that the way of love is that it grows with each and everyone."

Hirshel lowered his head and said, "not so, but that it comes if there is no one who is separating between it and between us."

God in Heaven knows that Hirshel did not mean but to that baby.<sup>63</sup>

The story of Hirshel and the story of Minna ended, but the stories of Bluma did not end. Everything that happened to Bluma Nacht is a book on its own... how much ink shall we pour and how many pens shall we break to write their deeds. God in Heaven knows when...<sup>64</sup>

It is quite clear that Agnon uses this expression as an irony in the web of this story.

It is also surprising that except for this novel the appearance of this expression and its regularity and frequency in Agnon's works is not conspicuous at all. It is possible that this overdose of "God in Heaven knows" has displeased the Hebrew readers and critics, and therefore was not welcomed by them,<sup>65</sup> and therefore Agnon did not use this expression any more in his later works. But it is still an amazing fact, because even before this, he did not use it at all and also afterwards he used it only twice in Ore'ah Nata Lalun and in The Lady and the Pedlar and in Baderech (On the Road). But this question must still be studied on its own, namely scrutinizing all Agnon's works. But meanwhile it is conspicuously not so frequent and regular as in Hamsun's works. A similar study may have to be devoted to the existence of this expression in the works of the other Scandinavian writers such as Bjorensen and Jacob-

sen, or generally in European literature. Perhaps we have to look for a reason in the structure and theme, namely, it has to be a novel (why? Hamsun used it also in short stories, but not in all of them!) and the theme has to have to do with social tension! But again, this is only a speculative explanation.

To these we wish to quote from the novel Ore'ah Nata Lalun and from the short story The Lady and the Pedlar which are the only ones who appear in Agnon in the combination God knows and in the short story On the Road where it appeared as God knew. While the others are God in Heaven knows, Professor Shaked did not remark on this difference, thereby claiming that the main combination is God in Heaven, while this writer claims that it is God knows, with all of its rich variations especially as shown in Hamsun's works. One of this writer's reasons is that the expression God in Heaven is an expression of exclamation, and there are many of them in Hamsun's works which were not quoted at all. The quotations from Ore'ah Nata Lalun prove also that the use of this expression is not necessarily connected with the theme of A Simple Story as Professor Shaked mentioned.<sup>66</sup>

And what shall we do to Bluma Nacht? Everything that happened to Bluma is a book by itself. God knows when we shall write it. And now let us return to our interest.<sup>67</sup>

This quotation on which Professor Shaked based his opinion is truly connected with Bluma Nacht and through her to the Simple Story, but the next ones, which were overlooked, have nothing to do with the theme of this story, unless we see in it also the theme of Zionism, childhood, etc., but if so, these are the themes of many of Agnon's stories and even so we do

not find in them this or a similar expression. It is also worthwhile to mention that these are the only three places where Agnon uses this expression "God knows" and not "God in Heaven knows" or "God in Heaven", which he claims to be the kernel of the expression, as in the Simple Story.

I stand for myself in this street, that I lived in it during my childhood and I remember days that passed that I have studied in the Cheder and Kubla the blacksmith's son used to study at the school of the Baron Hirsh. As long as he used to study at the school and I in the Cheder we were not friends, because an iron curtain separates between the schoolchildren of the Cheder and the other school schoolchildren - because these go out to study and these to craftmanship. Since he entered the gymnasium and I the Bet Midrash and from there to the Zionist group. Here we came near to each other and we became friends. Firstly, because I wanted to hear from him about Homer and Mitzkevich and secondly because he wanted to hear from me about Zionism. Where is he now, God knows his place.<sup>68</sup>

These last quotations prove explicitly that this expression is not connected in any way to the personality of Bluma or the problems described in A Simple Story. The scrutiny of Agnon's works for this or that phrase is not an easy task. It is possible that in the epoch of computers this will not be a problem. Meanwhile we found only one other similar single phrase in two different stories; one in The Lady and the Pedlar:

...He began to speak to her words that the ear of a single woman loves to hear. God knows from where this simple pedlar took such words.<sup>69</sup>

Another similar expression is in the story On the Road where we read:

...The road was long and my feet were heavy, and the day was short, and the hour was pressing. God knew when I would reach an inhabited town and whether I would see a human face that day.<sup>70</sup>

In any case the reader's impression is that this phrase does not occur with any frequency in any of Agnon's stories except A Simple Story.

A thorough and minute search was never made of all Hamsun's works for the purpose of establishing the regularity and frequency of this expression. The numerous quotations from many of Hamsun's works are brought to convince the reader of two facts: a) that this expression, Heaven knows, God in Heaven knows, is no less typical Hamsunian than any other features of his style and stylistics, i.e., that this cannot be accidental with him; b) that this expression, God knows or God in Heaven knows, which seemed to be of a typical Jewish origin, is also used even in non-Jewish literature in a frequency which is very amazing and surprising, so much so that this writer dares to conclude that if not completely influenced by Hamsun's use of it, at least its use by Hamsun inspired Agnon's use of it, as if to say, if Hamsun may use it and no one criticizes it, then it is no less natural to be used in Hebrew letters. But it may also be that even this influence was subconscious, even to the degree of its being self-misleading, i.e., Agnon used it seeming to be an original innovation in his work, in spite of its not being that, and may also be that this is a Yiddish remnant which penetrated into Agnon's Hebrew style without his being conscious of it. A support to this explanation is found in the fact that in this "social novel" Agnon used this expression too frequently, while in most of his other works we almost do not meet this expression at all.

We feel the need to point out to the reader a small difference between Hamsun's and Agnon's expression. In Agnon



we always find the same idiomatic phrase "God in Heaven knows" or "God knows" while in Hamsun we find a very large variation, i.e., "Heaven knows", "God knows", "God in Heaven knows", "Lord knows", and "Lord in Heaven knows", as well as the most amazing one "The God of mercy will perhaps know",<sup>71</sup> not to mention also the completely out of line expression "devil knows what it could be",<sup>72</sup> an expression known also in the Hebrew and Yiddish spoken language much more frequently than the pious expression mentioned above, but which has quite a different meaning.

To convince the reader of the originality of the writer's discovery there will be quoted a passage from the most comprehensive book written in English about Agnon. A. Band writes:

Agnon's caution and ambivalence might explain the noticeable frequency of two Hebrew terms that the writer uses time and again to disavow any knowledge of the motivation of his characters: the root tmh (wonder) in its various forms; and the phrase he'alokim yodea (the Lord knows = God knows) used colloquially, that is, not attributing actual knowledge to God, but denying any special knowledge on the part of the writer.<sup>73</sup>

Band claims that this is a Hebrew term, which is true, but the fact that Hamsun used the very same "Hebrew term" without any knowledge of its existence gives a new dimension to the claim of Agnon's subconscious attachment to European and World literature.

Professor Shaked devoted many pages, in the chapter "The Princess and the Mother's Feast", to a similar theme in which he wanted to elaborate upon some expressions which characterize the character of the story-teller" and that interprets through their instrumentality the protagonist of the story and its plot. These expressions have a motivistic function. They appear re-

peatedly in different contexts, and the changes in their context uncover different stages in the development of the novel. Our intention is to deal with the combinations "Elokim bashamaim" (Lord in Heaven)<sup>74</sup> which are repeated throughout the whole length of the novel.

The first linguistic expression is sufficiently frequent,<sup>75</sup> and "the character of the story-teller" repeats it for the full length of the novel and is acting through it as a go between, between the plot and its protagonists and between the character of "a hidden Lord".<sup>76</sup> The frequency of the linguistic expression testifies that here is not a fluency of language but premeditated intention, which has a function in the relationship of "the character of the story-teller" to the moulded world. Its function is generally ironic, and the story-teller stresses the vanity of the formula. This is used with "as the proverb says" with a religious meaning, which loses any poetical function in connection with the spoken language and only the craft of the story-teller returned to it vitality and function.<sup>77</sup> The formula fulfills itself in very different forms thereby giving it a new content; sometimes its concern is in protesting against Heaven when "the figure of the story-teller is defending the human being and is accusing the fate and sometimes (it happens) that its concern is different..."<sup>78</sup>

It is amazing, but it is a fact, that Shaked makes no differentiation between the expressions "Lord in Heaven knows" and "Lord in Heaven saw" or "helped", etc., which has quite a different meaning, and even an ironic intention. But the fact that he sees in the phrase "haElokim bashamaim" (God in Heaven) its kernel, it is even more amazing, since this is not a syntactical unit (because of the missing verb) unless as an

exclamation phrase as in The Lady and the Pedlar where Yoseph cried "God in Heaven"<sup>79</sup> as well as in the story The Orchestra when Charni exclaimed "God in Heaven..."<sup>80</sup> and many more.

To support his view he remarks in a footnote:

In the Yiddish folk language the combination "Lord in Heaven" is widely used (and so did Rubinstein in the translation to Yiddish), and in the German language Gott in Himmel. Agnon transferred here a Yiddish idiom into the Hebrew language.<sup>81</sup>

Our attention was attracted from the very beginning to Agnon's expression "Lord in Heaven knows" and not so much by the other ones with the same kernel. (It is felt that there is a justification in this differentiation between "God in Heaven" as the kernel of the expression and "God knows" with all its variations. Surely this question has to be studied in depth, but meanwhile we make good use of the samples quoted for our purpose.) This is also the reason why most of the quotations from Hamsun's works are connected with the different forms of the same formula, "Lord knows", "Lord in Heaven knows" and others already mentioned above. Two more points have to be emphasized: (a) that while in Hamsun there is quite a great variety in the above-mentioned formula, in Agnon they are all stereotype "Lord in Heaven knows" or "sees", etc. or only "God knows" or "God knew" and (b) while in Hamsun they appear in almost all of his works, short or long novels, they are repeated only a few times, less than ten times, in one story. Agnon uses the expressions almost only in A Simple Story, but there they appear quite frequently, more than twenty times in one novel and all of them are of the same type.

If we shall fully agree with Shaked's conclusion about the function of these expressions and their importance in the formation of "the character of the story-teller" in Agnon's

works, giving them a new and more magnified dimension, there will be no reason to withhold it from our theory about the dimension of the Scandinavian influence, especially through Hamsun. Having said this, it has to be stressed, once more, that the comparative study of Agnon's works is still at its infancy and it will take many more years to embrace the richness of their productivity.

It is also interesting to mention that while A. Band stresses the Hebraic origin of the phrase "ha'elokim yodea" (the Lord knows) as does Shaked by writing that its Yiddish origin was transferred by Agnon into Hebrew, he stresses the more general phrase "Elokim bashamain" (Lord in Heaven) which has no grammatical self-strength (it is not even a complete short sentence while the other is very much so!), while the writer of this study brought sufficient quotations and references to its amazing regularity and frequency in almost all of Hamsun's writings making conspicuous in this way its similar Scandinavian origin, admitting the possibility of its influence upon Agnon's works.

Again we shall have to come to the conclusion that different sources, as far as the Hebrew and the Yiddish are from the Scandinavian, had a remarkable, fruitful concomitant influence on Agnon's writings, an influence that cannot be denied anymore. Agnon himself never denied the pleasure that the reading of the works of the Scandinavian writers caused him. We suggest that we have shown that Agnon traversed successfully the road from pleasureous reading to subconscious influence.

## 6. The Demonic Function of the Dog in the Compared Works

The resemblances between Hamsun and Agnon are not limited to motifs, characters and style, but may be extended even to episodal scenes and situations. One such is found between Mysterries and Pan on the one hand and Bidmi Yameha (The Noontide of Her Days) on the other, and it is connected with the demonic function of the dog in Agnon's stories,<sup>82</sup> as well as in Hamsun's.

Kurtzweil already attracted the attention of the reader to the demonic function of the dog in Agnon's works,<sup>83</sup> by quoting short passages from which it is proved that everywhere the dog appears there is a prelude to an erotic episode, situation, or scene to come. The same explanation fits many of the situations, scenes or episodes in Hamsun of which only two will be quoted, in order to make conspicuous the similarities between them. And yet, the differences are even greater. Again, there is still much room for a more detailed study of all the points mentioned in this study and proved only through short samples.

In Hamsun, in Mysterries as well as in Pan, and very likely in Agnon, the presence of the dog foretells the coming erotic situation, and as in Pan and in Bidmi Yameha, but contrary to Mysterries, the active person is of the fair sex, while in the latter the man is the active one. In Mysterries the episode happens between the two main protagonists of the novel as it does in Agnon's Bidmi Yameha, while in Pan it happens between one of the main heroes and one of the secondary ones. In Mysterries the author devotes many pages to the development of the scene and situation and so it is with Agnon, even if not to the same extent, while in Pan the author gives

only the essence of the scene and situation. To make conspicuous the similarities, the pertinent passages are quoted in full, but shortened where possible, and only after elaborating generally on the similarities, there will be a concise comparison of the similar motifs.

Mysteries:

An hour later Nagel was already in the parsonage wood. The ground was still wet from the rain of the day before, and the sun was not very warm. He sat down on a stone and kept a sharp look out on the road. He had seen a couple of familiar footprints in the moist gravel; he was almost convinced they were Dagny's footprints and that she had gone into the town. He waited in vain for a good while, decided at last to go and meet her, and rose from the stone.

And he was not mistaken; he met her before he was out of the wood. She was carrying a book, Shram's Gertrude Colbjørnsen.<sup>84</sup> They talked of this book at first, and then she said:

"Would you believe it - our dog is dead."

"Is it?" he replied.

"A few days ago. We found him stone dead. I can't imagine how it happened."

"Fancy, I always thought it was a horrid brute of a dog you had; beg pardon, you know, ... I'm downright glad he's dead."

"Fie, for shame - ."

But he nervously cut her short; for some reason or other he was anxious to get away from this subject of the dog as soon as possible. He started talking about a man he once met...<sup>85</sup>

"Why do you take so much trouble to keep on talking? What makes you so nervous?"

The question came so unexpectedly that he looked at her for a moment in confusion. He replied in a low voice with beating heart "Froken Kieland the last time I saw you I promised that if I might meet you once more I would talk about all sorts of things, but not of the

forbidden subject. I am trying to keep my promise. I have kept it so far."

"Yes," she said, "we must keep our promises; we must not break our promises." And she seemed to be speaking more to herself than to him.

"Before you came I was making up my mind to try; I knew I should meet you."

"How could you know that?"

"I saw your tracks here on the road."

She threw a glance at him and said nothing. After a few moments she said, "you have a bandage on your hand; have you been hurt?"

"Yes," he answered, "it was your dog that bit me."

They both halted and looked at each other. He wrung his hands and continued in distress. "The dog bit me too, when he was fighting for his life; I killed him; I gave him poison because he always barked when I came to say goodnight to your windows."

"So it was you who killed the dog!" she said.

"Yes," he answered.

Pause. They still stood looking at each other; his chest was heaving violently.<sup>86</sup> (And they carried on walking and talking and complementing each other willingly or unwillingly and sometimes even unwittingly until the reader reaches these lines:)

They walked for a few minutes without saying anything...

They still walked in silence. He was once more perfectly calm and played carelessly with his handkerchief. In a few minutes they would come in sight of the parsonage. Then she said: "Is your hand badly hurt? Let me see."<sup>87</sup>

Whether it was to please him, or whether she actually yielded to him for a moment - she said this with feeling, almost with emotion, and at the same time she stopped.

Then all his passion ran over. At that moment, when she stood so close to him, with her head bent over his hand so that he caught the perfume of her hair and neck,

while not a word was spoken, his love leaped into madness, into frenzy. He pressed her to him, first with one arm and then, as she struggled, with both, clasped her long and warmly to his bosom and almost lifted her off her feet. He felt her back relax as she gave in. Her lovely weight rested in his embrace and her veiled eyes looked up at his. He spoke to her, told her how glorious she was and how to the end of his life she would be his love of loves. One man already had given his life for her and he would do the same, at her slightest nod, at a word. Oh, how he loved her! And he repeated time after time, as he pressed her to him more and more tenderly: "I love you, I love you!" She no longer resisted; her head fell over on his left arm and he kissed her passionately in the intervals of his fond words. He distinctly felt her clinging to him, and her eyes closed more and more as he kissed her.

"Meet me tomorrow by the tree; you remember the tree, the aspen. Meet me; I love you, Dagny! Will you meet me, dear? Come when you please; come at seven."

She did not answer, but said simply: "Let me go now."

And slowly she freed herself from his arms. For an instant she stood looking about her, while confusion spread over her face; at last her mouth twitched helplessly; she staggered to a stone by the roadside and sand down on it. She was crying.

He bent over her and spoke in a low voice. This went on for a minute or two. Suddenly she sprang up with clenched fists, her face white with rage, pressed her hands against her bosom, and said furiously: "You're a wretch! God, what a wretch you are! But perhaps you don't think so yourself. Oh, how could you, how could you!"

Again she began to cry.

He tried once more to calm her but in vain; for half an hour they stood by the roadside without leaving the spot.

"And you actually ask me to meet you again," she said, "but I won't meet you; I won't have you in my



sight; you're a scoundrel."<sup>88</sup>

Pan:

Esop ran in front of me; A wink of an eye later he started to bark. I lifted my eyes. A woman with a white kerchief on her head stands at the corner of my hut (shack). She was Eva, the blacksmith's daughter.

"Good day, Eval" I said.

She stood nearby the high, grey stone, her whole face flushing, and sucking one of her fingers.

"That's you, Eva? What happened to you?" I asked.

"Esop bit me," she answered and lowered her eyes.

I looked at her finger. She had bitten herself. An idea struck my mind and I asked her.

"Did you wait here a long time?"

"No, not a long time" she answers

And without anything being said by anyone of us, I took her by the hand and lead her into the hut.<sup>89</sup>

Bidmi Yameha:

When I came to the seminary I was surprised that Mazal did not show any sign of affection, and I said to myself he will recognize me and treat me favorably, since I am surely his acquaintance. Many days I did not stop my heart from this feeling. When I learned I listened twofold, I did not know boredom.

In those days I liked to walk alone. As I finished my lessons I went out to walk in the field. When I met a friend I did not greet her, and when she greeted me I answered in a lofty voice, perhaps she will accompany me and I wanted to go alone. And the days were winter days.

And it was evening and I was walking and behold, a big dog barked, and after the dog the sound of the feet of a man, and I recognized that it was Mazal. And I tied my finger with my kerchief and I stretched it towards him and I greeted him. And Mazal stopped and asked, "what happened to you Miss Mintz?" And I said, "the dog." And Mazal became very frightened and asked: "Did the dog bite you?" And I answered, "the dog bit me." And he said, "show me your hand."

He almost died of fright (he was greatly excited) when he spoke. And I told him may he tie, I pray him, the kerchief on the wound. And Mazal held my hand and all his bones shivered of fear. He was still holding my hand and I removed the kerchief and jumped my full height and I laughed a great laugh and I said, "there is nothing, Sir. No dog and no wound." Stunned by what he has heard with his ears Mazal stood and he did not know anymore if to cry or to laugh. And so a minute passed and after a moment he laughed a great and mirthful laugh. And afterwards Mazal said to me, "you naughty girl. How much you did frighten me." And he accompanied me until my house and he left. And before he departed from me he looked into my eyes. And I told in my heart you know that I know that you know my hidden secrets, Nevertheless I shall be grateful to you if you will not remind me of what you know.

During the whole night I tossed upon my bed. I put my finger into my mouth and I examined the kerchief. I regretted that I did not ask Mazal to come in. If Mazal would have been with me, we would have been sitting now in the room and I would not have hallucinations. I woke up in the morning and I walked gloomy in wrath. Once I lied down on the bed and once upon the carpet. I stretched myself and a spirit of delusion deluded me. Only at eventide my tranquility returned to me. Like nervous people who are sleepy during the whole day and at evening time wake up. And when I remembered what I had done last night I stood up and I took a red thread and I tied it upon my finger for memory.<sup>90</sup>

The similarities seem to be clear, but even so we would like to sum them up and so make them even more conspicuous. In all three cases the dog has a main function in creating the circumstances for the erotical situation, still keeping a great difference between them. In Mysteries the dog really bit the protagonist while in Pan and in Bidmi Yameha the protagonists acted as if they had been bitten by the dog while in reality they were not. In Mysteries the man is the active person while the fair sex is the passive one, while in Pan and in Bidmi

Yameha the fair sex is the active one while the men are passive, up until a certain stage. It is interesting to note here that in most of Agnon's stories, not only those included in the Love Stories the protagonist of the fair sex is the active one while the man is the passive figure, like in Bidmi Yameha. Tirtsa is active while Akavia Mazal is passive. Or in Vehaya he'akov lemishor Krendel Tcharni is active while her husband, Menashe Hayim, is passive and even in Temol Shilshom Itzhac Koomar is the passive figure while Sonia, his temporary girl friend, is active, etc.

In Mysteries and in Pan the dog was killed; in Mysteries just a short while before the meeting took place and in Pan long afterwards, while in Agnon nothing happened to the dog. It is also interesting to note Kurtzweil's view that the person who dominates the dog (in Agnon's stories) dominates also the women. This interesting original view seems to fit in well enough with Hamsun's use of the very same motif here; the killing (domination) of the dog had to give the protagonist the key for the domination of the woman! In Mysteries to no avail, as well as in Pan, but in most of Agnon's stories (in which any protagonist dominates the dog and doesn't fear him) he also dominates the woman. Also, the similar erotic situation is quite different in all three cases. In Mysteries it resulted in a very interesting, temporary capitulation on the part of Dagny Kieland which revealed that she had more than a simple attachment towards this peculiar man, Nagel, but which was forbidden for her because of her engagement to somebody else whom she still appreciated and loved. In Pan the picture is clearer - they had a love affair. In Bidmi Yameha it led to the clarification of the true sentiments between these two

protagonists, in a certain way it lead to their engagement. Agnon's picture seems therefore to be the most puritanic one.

Also, the style is different. In Mysteries it is a dramatic dialogue which reaches its climax when she clings to him, and he tells her a lot of words of love, giving in for a moment to her feminine weakness. In Pan there is a very short description of the preconceived meeting between Lieutenant Glahn and Eva, also in a dramatic but short dialogue, while in Bidmi Yameha there is a more detailed description of the meeting between Tirtsa and Akavia Mazal, but in a descriptive epic style which gives it a different dimension through the perspective of time.

In spite of all these differences which make conspicuous the originality of each description, there are clear resemblances and similitudes between the above quoted passages. To make even more conspicuous the similarities of style we shall compare quotations of the most similar sentences, which bring it to the fore, in spite of the fact that we deal with translated literature. As mentioned before, there are great differences between the compared passages, which is quite natural. For example, in Mysteries, there is much talk about the death of Kieland's dog and other subjects so that we find the similar sentences or pertinent details only later on in the description. We find the description of the dog barking in all three stories:

a) In Mysteries Nagel says to Dagni Kieland: "I gave him poison because he always barked when I came to say good night to your windows." (p. 210)

In Pan we read: "...A wink of an eye later he (the dog) started to bark." (p. 59)

In Bidmi Yameha we read: "...and behold a big dog barked, ..." (p. 28)

There are some situations and sentences which are similar only in two of the abovementioned works, e.g., between Pan and Bidmi Yameha.

b) In Pan: "Esop (the name of the dog) ran in front of me." (p. 59). The same idea in different words is found in Bidmi Yameha: "...and after the dog the sound of the feet of a man..." (p. 28-29)

And again similar expressions and situations found in all three works.

c) Mysteries: "You have a bandage on your hand, have you been hurt?" (p. 209); Pan: "That's you, Eva? What happened to you? I asked." (p. 59); and in Bidmi Yameha: 'And Mazal stopped and asked, what happened to you Miss Mintz?'" (p. 29); 'and Mazal asked, "did the dog bite you?"' (p. 29).

And even more,

d) In Mysteries: "Yes, he answered, it was your dog that bit me." (p. 209)

In Pan: "Esop bit me," she answered and lowered her eyes." (p. 59)

In Bidmi Yameha it is doubled: "And I said the dog." (p. 29); "And I answered the dog bit me." (p. 29)

The similarities go further:

e) Mysteries: "Is your hand badly hurt? Let me see..." (p. 217)

Pan: "I looked at her finger..." (p. 59)

Bidmi Yameha: "And he said show me your hand."

f) In Mysteries: "Then all his passion ran over. At that moment when she stood so close to him, with her head bent over his hand ..." (p. 218)

In Pan: I took her by the hand and lead her into the

hut..." (p. 59)

In Bidmi Yameha it is very restrained, puritanic: "And Mazal held my hand... He was still holding my hand ..." (but no more, not even kisses like in Mysterries and surely not what was hinted to in Pan.) In Mysterries there are detailed descriptions about moves, thoughts, situations and scenes, while in Pan, as already mentioned, this scene is described very briefly.

There are still three minor similarities between these stories:

g) Mysterries: "...while not a word was spoken, his love leaped into madness, into frenzy..." (p. 218)

In Pan it is described very simply: "And without anything being said by anyone of us, I took her by the hand and lead her into the hut..." (p. 59)

Sometimes the similarity is only between Pan and Bidmi Yameha, e.g.:

h) Pan: "... her whole face flushing, and sucking one of her fingers ..." (p. 59)

Bidmi Yameha: "... I put my finger into my mouth and I examined the kerchief," (p. 29)

We would like to take this opportunity to attract the reader's attention to the motif of the kerchief, which appears in many variations in many of Agnon's stories, and one even bears that name.<sup>91</sup> In some of these stories the kerchief has a symbolic meaning, besides the real one.<sup>92</sup> Coincidentally, as it may seem to be, we also find the kerchief in these compared passages:

i) Mysterries: "He played carelessly with his handkerchief ..." (p. 247)

Pan: "A woman with a white kerchief on her head stands near my hut." (p. 59)

Bidmi Yameha: "And I tied my finger with my kerchief ..."; "And I told him, may he tie, I pray him, the kerchief on the wound..."; "He was still holding my hand and I removed the kerchief ..." (p. 29) and again later on "... I put ... and I examined the kerchief..." (p. 29)

This minute comparison of these short passages (and not the stories as a whole) indicate to the fact that there are great similarities between the motifs and their description in spite of the natural great differences between them. The writer of this study feels that it is more than pure coincidence between so many similarities.

#### 7. Similar Literary Techniques

Carrying the comparison between these writers further we find that some literary techniques used mainly by Hamsun in Victoria and in other stories are used very successfully by Agnon.

It has already been mentioned that Hamsun made good use of the literary structural technique and had interwoven many stories as a story within a story, as well as the use of the role of an old teacher for the purpose of telling us his own philosophy of life. The same techniques are conspicuously used in Agnon's works. The first one is so common with him that it does not need any evidence. But even so we shall mention two of them. The most known in The Bridal Canopy, whose one main feature is the art of telling one story within the other. The other one from the short stories is that of Vehaya heakov lemishor which has a few stories interwoven like the story of the Besht and his followers at the very beginning and the story of the righteous hassidim who came to the holy

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preacher from Koznits nearly at its end and others. Each and every one of these stories is not externally interpolated into events or plot. They add tremendously to the interpretation and understanding of the protagonists, the plot and its turn.

Regarding the second technique there is an interesting development of this figure in Agnon's works. M. Tochner attracted the attention of the reader to the changes Agnon has made in the description of the figure of Hehacham hayerushalmi (the wise Jerusalemite) from the first edition of Hakhnasat Kala to the last one. He proves, very convincingly, that the role of this figure was, and in the last edition was even more enlarged and emphasized, to relate the author's opinion on certain subjects, as well as his philosophy of life.

Another literary technique is the addressing of the author or of the story-teller to the reader, which appears also in some of Hamsun's stories:

Dear reader, here you have a story about Diderick and Iselina.<sup>93</sup>

Dear reader, today I feel so bad. The snow falls, there is almost no one passing by in the street, everything is sombre, and my soul is so deserted...<sup>94</sup>

...Dear reader, in this situation I shall try to describe a clear bright night and full with excitement...<sup>95</sup>

It is also used by Agnon in Vehaya heakov lemishor:

And you my dear reader, I pray you don't be angry with me because I left Menashe Hayim to sighs and told the success of the tax collector...<sup>96</sup>

And the hunger to an empty pocket, oh, my brothers and friends, (is) like fire to chaff.<sup>97</sup>

And now my friend the reader I shall go and return to my first hero and we shall put our thoughts in Menashe



Hayim Hacoheh and in Krendel Tcharni his wife and we shall see what we shall do with them...<sup>98</sup>

and many more.

Agnon uses it much more effectively than his supposed unacquainted teachers. (The Hebrew critics see it also as being almost as one of Agnon's typical expressions.) Shaked expresses a similar view but in another context:

The overlapping of the bounds between reality and imagination and the penetration of the world of fantasy into the human world are dispositions characteristic to the short stories and novels of M.Y. Berdichevski on one hand, and the impressionistic novels of K. Hamsun on the other. It seems to me that Agnon was influenced by these two writers, but he exceeded them, because in contrast to them the reality in this novel (A Simple Story) does not change into a dream story. But these two sources of imitation are used in a mix-up and it creates one organic completeness.<sup>99</sup>

### 8. Conclusion

In this chapter we have quoted passages from many of Hamsun's and Agnon's works to make conspicuous the amazing resemblances between their plots, scenes, characters and even style. Taking into account Agnon's own admission of having read many times, and with pleasure and admiration, the works of the Scandinavian writers there is no impertinence in our claim to having proved the possibility of their influence on Agnon's works. There is still room enough to return even to each and everyone of the compared stories and novels for a minute comparative study between the works of these prolific writers. The examples quoted have the purpose only of convincing the reader of the undoubted existence of Agnon's attachment to this rich and voluminous literature. The accepted recognition of the influence of Hamsun on the whole world of

literature including European and American writers gives greater validity to our propositions of the similarities found in the works of the Hebrew writer Agnon and in the works of the Scandinavian writer.

This accepted recognition of the influence we suggest was not limited to Scandinavian writers, but also to Russian, French and English ones.

In the next chapter we will make an attempt to show some amazing similarities between some of Agnon's and Dostoevsky's motifs, scenes and narrative techniques.

#### NOTES

1. See the pertinent quotations from Agnon's letters and interviews in which he admitted the fact of reading Hamsun and other Scandinavian writers with great pleasure and interest in the chapter "The Influence of European Writers on Agnon's Works and Agnon's on Others".
2. "The novel Ingeborg by the German writer Kellerman is virtually a copy of Pan. Kellerman had been bewitched by Hamsun." Hamsun, K, Hunger, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967, introduction by Isaac Bashevis Singer, newly translated from the Norwegian by Robert Bly, p. X.
3. HAMSUN, K., Victoria, Warsaw, A.Y. Shtibel Publishing House, 1921, translated (into Hebrew) from the Norwegian by P. Ginzburg.
4. HAMSUN, K., Victoria, op. cit., p. 98.
5. Ibid., p, 102.
6. Ibid., p. 90.

7. In the writer's master's thesis on the subject "The Influence of the Talmud, Midrash and Agada on Agnon's Works" there are many examples which support this statement. About the modern Hebrew literature this theme was not yet thoroughly researched.
8. "The suicidal character of Hamsun's hero - all the heroes of his earlier novels are one and the same person - comes out in his masterpiece, Pan. Lieutenant Glahn in Pan is as lonely as the hero of Hunger ..." I.B. Singer's introduction to Hunger, op. cit., p. IX. This is not the place to make a comparison of Hamsun's own works, but the similarity between Mysteries and Pan and other stories is not only in the suicidal character of Hamsun's hero. The writer, I.B. Singer, expresses himself a few pages further: "His novels Benoni and Rosa, published in 1908, were nothing but variations of Pan." (p. XI)
9. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., Nahum N. Glatzer, ed., Agumoth, translated by B. Hochman, 1970, p. 39.
10. Ibid., p. 41.
11. BAHAT, Y., S.Y. Agnon v'h'Hazaz (Agnon and Hazzaz), Iyunei Mikra, Haifa, Yuval Publishing House, 1962, pp. 75-76, develops a whole thesis on the basis that the tragedies which came upon Tehila's head are a result of, and punishment for, her spiritual adultery.
12. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Ad Henna, Vol. VII, Tel Aviv, Schocken Publishing House, 1952, Tehila, pp. 178-206.

13. Bar-Mitzvah here means that the boy reached the age of thirteen, the age at which he assumes religious obligations, in a certain way similar to the confirmation ceremony of other religions, but quite different by the obligations undertaken and practised in daily life.
14. In the last centuries the Jewish people, especially in Eastern Europe, were divided into two main groups, the Hassidim, the sect of pious Jews founded by Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, and the Mitnagdim, who opposed and were the opponents of the members of the Hassidic sect. The adversarity between them extended in certain quarters of the Jewish population to such a degree that they even did not agree to "intermarry" with each other.
15. This was clearly explained and proved in this writer's Master thesis, op. cit., pp. 32-42.
16. The Talmud, in the tractate Bava Metsia, states in the name of one of the sages: "Everyone who causes shame, fig, palling someone's face, in public to his fellow man, it is like as if he shed blood." Bava Metsia, p. 58b.
17. This shooting accident described as having happened in a friendly hunting tour in the forests of India very much resembles the death of Otto Kamerher, Victoria's fiancée, who dies in a similar shooting accident when he went hunting with Victoria's neighbours' landlord.
18. Described in an interesting way in Mysteries. Translated from the Norwegian of Knut Hamsun by Arthur G. Chater, New York, A.A. Knopf, 1927, pp. 168-172.
19. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurov, Vol. 3, Al Kappot Hamanul, p. 388.

20. Ibid., pp. 388-389.
21. It may be hinting to the interpretation of the same word in Gen, 39.6, where it is written with regard to Potiphar: "And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; ...save the bread which he (Potiphar) did eat..." Rashi explains: "save the bread" this means his wife but the scriptures used clean language." And we find a similar use of the word bread or a loaf of bread in the rabbinical literature and responsa when speaking of one's wife or natural and elementary need to both. Agnon himself made good use of it on many occasions; the most impressive one was made in the story named A Whole Loaf, Twenty One Stories, op. cit., pp. 79-95.
22. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 3, Al Kapot Hamanul, op. cit., p. 385.
23. Ibid., pp. 408-428.
24. SHAKED, G., Omanut Hasipur Shel Agnon (The Narrative Art of S.Y. Agnon), Tel Aviv , The Kibbutz Haartzi Publishing House, 1973, p. 180.
25. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare, A Study in the Fiction of S.Y. Agnon, Berkely and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1968, p. 118.
26. HAMSUN, K., Wanderers (Autumm and With Muted Strings), translated from the Norwegian by W. Worster, London, Gyldendal, 1922.
27. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 3, Al Kapot Hamanul, op. cit., p. 409.

28. According to Jewish Law one who does something three times, or is in possession for three years of anything, without an appeal or protest against it (is in the position) has the status of not accidental deed, or of having the right of possession. For our case, the use of this expression more than three times takes it out from the accidental supposition.
29. HAMSUN, K., Hunger, op. cit., p. 5.
30. Ibid., pp. 42-43.
31. Ibid., p. 66.
32. HAMSUN, K., Mysteries, op. cit., p. 7.
33. Ibid., p. 14.
34. Ibid., p. 16.
35. Ibid., p. 180.
36. Ibid.
37. HAMSUN, K., Growth of the Soil, Vol. 1-2, translated from the Norwegian by W.W. Worster, New York, A.A. Knopf, 1921, Vol. 1, p. 109.
38. Ibid., p. 120.
39. Ibid., p. 264.
40. Ibid., p. 295.
41. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 127
42. Ibid., p. 128.
43. Ibid., p. 155.
44. Ibid., p. 168.

45. HAMSUN, K., The Queen of Sheba, from a collection of stories published under the name of Avdei haAhava (Slaves of Love), translated into Hebrew from the Norwegian by Pinchas Ginzburg, Warsaw, A.Y. Shtibel Publishing House, 1928, p. 71.
46. Ibid., p. 77.
47. Ibid., p. 80.
48. Ibid., p. 83,
49. HAMSUN, K., The Wanderers, op. cit., p. 157.
50. Ibid., p, 177.
51. Ibid., p. 186.
52. Ibid., p. 195.
53. Ibid., p. 204.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p. 258.
56. Ibid., p. 261.
57. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 3, Al Kapot Hamanul, op. cit., (pp. 55-272), p. 81.
58. Ibid., p. 82.
59. Ibid., pp. 82-83.
60. Ibid., p. 106.
61. Ibid., pp. 151-152.
62. Ibid., p. 152.
63. Ibid., pp. 371-372.

64. Ibid., p. 372. The concluding line of the novel A Simple Story.
65. This question was not studied and this explanation is purely speculative since he did not use much of it, if at all, in his previous works. It is possible that searching and scrutinizing the newspapers and periodicals of this period will enable us to reach a more realistic explanation to this intriguing question.
66. SHAKED, G., Omanuth Hasipur, op. cit., footnote 19, p. 325.
67. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 4, Oreah Nata Lalun (A Guest for a Night), p. 308.
68. Ibid., p. 379.
69. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 173.
70. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. VI; Samukh VeNir'e, p. 183.
71. This expression which would have been more natural in Agnon's works, because of its appearance in the Jewish prayers, was quoted above from Hamsun's works. Even though Agnon does not use it, it has a resemblance in the next quoted passage:
- Still Hirshel opens every conversation with a sigh; that is its meaning. God in Heaven will have mercy upon us and will not separate between us... (p. 84)
72. HAMSUN, K., Growth of the Soil, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 151.
73. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare, op. cit., p. 243.
74. SHAKED, G., Omanuth Hasippur, op. cit., footnote 19, p. 325.
75. Ibid., footnote 20, p. 325.



76. Ibid., footnote 21, p. 325.
77. Ibid., footnote 22, p. 325.
78. Ibid., pp. 210-211.
79. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 179.
80. AGNON, S.Y., Kol-Sipurav, Vol. VI, Samukh VeNir'e, p. 197.
81. SHAKED, G., Omanuth Hasippur, op. cit., footnote 22, p. 325.
82. There is room for a detailed study of this theme, both in Agnon's as well as in Hamsun's works.
83. About Balak, the demonic dog, see Kurtzweil, B., Massot Al Sippurei Agnon, op. cit., pp. 104-115.
84. This novel, by the Danish writer Erik Skram, appeared in 1879 and scandalised the public of that day by its "realism". As a study of a girl's psychology it is a landmark in Scandinavian literature.
85. HAMSUN, K., Mysteries, op. cit., p. 205.
86. Ibid., pp. 209-210.
87. Ibid., p. 217.
88. Ibid., pp. 218-219.
89. HAMSUN, K., Pan, From the Records of Lieutenant Thomas Glahn, translated by M. Lipson, New York, Kadima Publishing House, 1919, p. 59. This passage was translated from Hebrew from the above mentioned translation in comparison with a German edition of the same story translated from Norwegian by Maria von Gorch, since an original English translation was not available.

90. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 3, Al Kapot Hamamul, op. cit., pp. 28-29.
91. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., The Kerchief, translated by I.M. Lask, pp. 45-59.
92. See the chapters Classical Influence and Symbolism in Vehaya he'akov le'ishor and in some of Agnon's other works.
93. HAMSUN, K., Victoria, op. cit., p. 51.
94. Ibid., p. 90.
95. Ibid.
96. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 2, Elu veElu, p. 64.
97. Ibid., p. 74.
98. Ibid., p. 79.
99. SHAKED, G., Onanuth hasipur shel Agnon, op. cit., footnote 28, pp. 325-326.

## CHAPTER VII

### AGNON AND DOSTOEVSKY

#### 1. Introduction

Among the writers whose works Agnon has mentioned as having read with pleasure and which he appreciated greatly because of their artistic narrative craft, we find the name of the famous Russian writer Fyodor M. Dostóevsky. Many critics and scholars claimed to have found clear traces of many European writers in Dostoevsky's works themselves, stressing that this fact does not affect, even an iota, the greatness of this writer. One may claim that this fact may enable us to establish the true source of influence. However, it still seems to the writer of this study that the main points of similarity point vividly to the original source. Namely, even if it may be taken as proved the fact that Dostoevsky was an ingenious adapter of motifs, plots and scenes from European writers such as Shakespeare<sup>1</sup>, Honore de Balzac<sup>2</sup> and even more so from the Tales of E.T.A. Hoffman<sup>3</sup>, there is still room to prove that some influence came directly from Dostoevsky and not, for instance, from Balzac through Dostoevsky on Agnon, even if in certain cases this cannot be excluded. This fact in itself encouraged the researcher of this study to make the effort to uncover some similar motifs, phrases, plots or scenes, even if only a few, in some works of these two great writers. Having made this conspicuous, the task of proving the real source of influence will be achieved, even if it seems to be more difficult because of that. Again, it has to be stressed that in this study only samples shall be quoted, leaving room for a full and detailed comparative study of the

works of these two literary giants for a special project. The main aim of this chapter will therefore be limited to convincing the reader that there is much more than pure coincidence between some striking similarities of some of the compared works.

## 2. The Eternal Husband<sup>4</sup> and The Doctor's Divorce<sup>5</sup>

As we intend to compare only samples, we feel it appropriate to first bring the essence of the stories to be compared - The Eternal Husband by F. M. Dostoevsky and The Doctor's Divorce by S.Y. Agnon.

The Eternal Husband: In the rather slow paced opening chapters the reader is acquainted with Alexei Jvanovith Velchaninov, a good looking scapegrace, passed the prime of youth, and with the mysterious individual who for some time has dogged his footsteps - a fact which for a long time has disturbed Velchaninov's peace of mind. The latter is Pavel Pavlovich Trusotzky, the "eternal husband". Approximately nine years earlier, Velchaninov had been a frequent guest in the Trusotzky household for a one year period. Only after the death of his beloved wife, Natalya Vassilyevna, the previous March, has Trusotzky discovered in reading his wife's papers that his wife had always been unfaithful to him and that his adored Liza is not his but Velchaninov's. He first sought out a young officer who was his wife's lover for about five years after Velchaninov left, but he had died just before he found him. Velchaninov, the greater enemy, is still alive, and Trusotzky has come for revenge. A duel of will develops in a series of episodes - some serious, some comic. At one point the ineffectual Trusotzky - the very name stands for Trus, the Russian word for coward - actually tries to murder Velchaninov while the latter lies asleep and ill, but the scene ends with Trusotzky disarmed by the sick man and tied up with a window shade

cord until dawn, when Velchaninov turns him loose in the street. Afterwards, Trusotzky finds an occasion, just before he left town, and sends him a letter his wife had intended to send him, but didn't, and through which he found out also the truth about him.

Two years later Velchaninov was travelling to Odessa when he unexpectedly encounters Trusotzky anew in a Provincial railway station. An overdressed lady was trying to settle a handsome young officer in the train, but she was beset with a twofold difficulty. First, her officer friend was thoroughly drunk, and second, another drunken individual was making offensive remarks to her. Velchaninov intervenes and drove the latter away. The overdressed lady was profuse with her thanks and with her complaints about her husband, who, she said, was never on hand when needed. Just then the husband appeared. It was Trusotzky. He was once again married and even now he was in the act of accompanying his wife's lover, the drunken young officer, to the train. As a final bit of irony, he must now stand silent while his wife offers the intimacy of his house to the always attractive Velchaninov in an unmistakable way. Almost tearfully he inquires whether Velchaninov intends to accept the invitation. To his inexpressible relief, the answer is no. At the close of the story he runs to obey the shrill summons of his wife, the train bears him away, and Velchaninov waits for a different train.<sup>6</sup> And so the story ends, with the very same description, with the eternal husband.

The Doctor's Divorce: The doctor, who is a physician and has to be open-minded about worldly things, became abnormally obsessed by the fact that he found out that his fiancée had a love affair many years ago with a simple clerk. This obsession, which grows out of proportion, creates a great alienation between husband and wife, which grows deeper and deeper and causes the

inevitable destruction of their family life. Meanwhile, the doctor receives the lover as a patient in the hospital. A duel of will develops, which is expressed by an overdose of attention to this patient, thus suppressing the possible wish for revenge that struck his mind from the first moment, but which was dismissed at once with the words: "But I am a doctor". Namely, it is against the medical ethics. The clerk leaves the hospital but the doctor remains with his obsession which forces his marriage to come to a sad end, to divorce. But even afterwards the doctor's heart preserved the warm smile of the nurse he liked before his marriage and sometimes at night he sat up in bed and used to stretch out his hands calling for the nurse like those patients she used to take care of, calling: "Nurse, nurse, come to me."

And so the story ends, with almost the same picture it starts with, as if hinting to the closing of a circle.

Reading Agnon's works one finds here and there single motifs which appear also in Dostoevsky's works, which may guide us to the conclusion that there was a fruitful influence from the latter upon Agnon. But sometimes the reader is surprised by the dominance of some motifs upon the whole structure and development of a story, its plot and its characters, and even the atmosphere, in spite of the natural great difference between them in structure, style and plot. The essence of these stories is a striking similarity between the main concept and philosophy of life which lies behind Agnon's story, The Doctor's Divorce, and Dostoevsky's, The Eternal Husband. In both of them we find a psychological study of jealousy, sadism, and masochism, which is brought to the fore by both writers leading us to a pessimistic conclusion which is (in spite of some comic and tragicomic situations in The Eternal Husband) that of the impossibility of finding an adequate solution to the eternal problems of human relationships, since

they do not conform to the established laws and conventions of social behaviour, but depend more on psychological factors beyond the control of reason. As we see clearly from the comparison of the abovementioned stories, this was expressed many times in different situations and scenes in both stories. First we read in Agnon:

... My love for her grew still greater. This was beyond all logic, for to begin with, I had given her all my love. And she too, gave me all her love. But her love had a touch of sadness in it which injected into my happiness a drop of gall.<sup>7</sup>

But things being beyond all logic start to enter more deeply into the doctor's life only later when he insists on finding out the reason for "the touch of sadness" Dinah had in her love towards him. And so started the things to be beyond all logic with Velchaninov when he decided to insist on knowing who was the man who was dogging him.

Also beyond all logic are the doctor's feelings and imagination under the bridal canopy. No one pushed him or forced him to marry Dinah after what he heard had happened to her, but if he still decided to marry her his thoughts were not logical, and also not healthy at all psychologically as he couldn't dispel the idea, even on the marriage night, that his wife had an affair before she knew him, and many things which would have otherwise not attracted his attention at all, received a new dimension now, as it is clearly seen from the next quotations:

Our wedding was like most weddings in these times, private, without pomp and ceremony... During that period, moreover, it was not customary to have parties and public rejoicing.... And so our wedding took place with neither relatives nor invited guests, except for a bare quorum summoned by the beadle, miserable creatures who an hour or two ago were called for a funeral and now were summoned for my wedding.<sup>8</sup>

... and a third looked at the bride in a way that was not decent. I asked the beadle about him. "That one," the beadle replied, and he bore down emphatically on the "th" sound, "that one was an official who got fired."

Afterward, while standing under the bridal canopy, I recalled the story of a man whose mistress forced him to marry her. He went and gathered for the ceremony all her lovers who had lived with her before her marriage, both to remind her of her shame, and to punish himself for agreeing to marry such a woman, What a contemptible fellow and what a contemptible act! Yet I found that man to my liking, and I thought well of what he had done. And when the Rabbi stood and read the marriage contract, I looked at the wedding guests and tried to imagine what the woman was like and what her lovers were like at that moment. And in the same way, just before, when my wife put out her finger for the wedding ring and I said to her "Behold thou art consecrated unto me," I knew without anyone's telling me what that man was like at that moment.<sup>9</sup>

The author demonstrates before us the features of the protagonist. Surely this is a way of one torturing himself and his beloved. A similar description of the protagonist's character who is torturing himself as well as his rival Velchaninov we find in Dostoevsky where the protagonist speaks openly about the role of the eternal husband he had to play on the stage, hinting clearly to the possibility of his knowing the whole truth about himself and Velchaninov, While in Agnon these thoughts came to the fore only in the thoughts of the protagonist, even if only under the bridal canopy, in Dostoevsky they are discussed openly in Velchaninov's house, putting Velchaninov's whole nervous system to a test.

"Do you remember, do you remember," cried Pavel Pavlovich ... And our first acquaintance with you, sir, when you called on me that morning to make inquiries... and even raised your voice, and suddenly Natalya Vassilyevna came in, and within ten minutes you had become a real friend of the family and so you were for a whole year, exactly



as in Mr. Turgenev's play, A Provincial Lady. (In the play the young wife of an elderly official by the name of Stupendyev makes a visiting count fall in love with her. [Translator's note]) ... And as for A Provincial Lady and Stupendyev particularly, ... for I remember ... the precious departed and I used to speak of that ... comparing our first meeting with that drama, for there really was a resemblance. In regard to Stupendyev especially.<sup>10</sup>

... Well, we acted A Provincial Lady at his Excellency's, our most hospitable Semyon Semyonovich's private theater - Stepan Mihailovich was the 'count', I was the 'husband' and the dear departed was 'the provincial lady' - only they took away the 'husband's' part from me. Natalya Vassilyevna insisted on it, so that I did not act the 'husband', allegedly because I was not fitted for the part...<sup>11</sup>

Here we find clear hints to the self humiliating and torturing situation in which the protagonist brings himself. He had a friendly discussion with the lover of his wife, instead of taking revenge as was the custom in those days by calling his rival for a duel. In the heat of their discussion this point came up clearly.

"And what did I want Bagautov<sup>12</sup> for, do you suppose, sir?"  
"That's your affair."  
"I bet you meant a duel!"  
"Damn it all!" cried Velchaninov, growing less and less able to control himself...<sup>13</sup>

It may be that this was Trusotzky's way of revenge, by being friendly instead of threatening him with a duel or the like, but it may also be that the reason lies in his cowardly character, hinted at in the root of his name,<sup>14</sup> which is similar to the Doctor's way of revenge, even if it is at the same time very different.

The main similarity in these quoted passages is that the protagonists bring to the fore, in different ways and situations, the fact that they are or were betrayed by their dear ones, a fact

which is very humiliating to the husband. The doctor thinks about it imagining a very shameful situation, even if only for his knowledge, while Trusotzky speaks openly about it remembering a real situation in which he was personally involved, playing, eventually, his real role, that of the 'husband'. The doctor only put himself in this shameful position, in which he identifies himself with the shame and suffering of the man in the recalled story. Trusotzky himself mentioned The Provincial Lady when he spoke about his situation, while the doctor gave the essence of the story without mentioning its name.

We see here also that Agnon's character's thoughts were attracted by the image of the man who was the lover of his wife. These thoughts tormented him, even during the wedding ceremony, and distracted him from his normal way of life until the very sad end. In The Eternal Husband the very same motif appeared twisted and different. Velchaninov ( the lover) and not the husband was tormented by the image, this time the real image of the incarnated husband, a fact which became clear to him only near the end of the story. Velchaninov was tormented by the unknown reason the behaviour of the man who was dogging him. We read:

This was the third encounter. Afterward, for five days in succession, he met no one and not a sign of the "low fellow"... With some surprise Velchaninov caught himself wondering "what's the matter with me - am I pining for him or what? I fancy if I look at him closer, I shall recognise him..."<sup>15</sup>

"Damnation," cried Velchaninov in a fury, ... to the sudden appearance of that "impudent fellow". "Damnation! Is he spying on me? He's evidently following me. Hired by someone, perhaps, is he? And... and... and, I swear... I'll thrash him... I'm sorry I've no stick with me! I'll buy a stick! I won't let it pass. Who is he? I insist on knowing who he is."<sup>16</sup>

It was three days after this fourth encounter that Velchaninov was at his restaurant... He was forced at last, putting all the circumstances together, to suspect that all his depression, all his peculiar despondency, and the agitation that had persisted for the last fortnight was caused by none other than this gentleman in mourning, nonety as he was".<sup>17</sup>

From these quotations we see that the obsession of the protagonist reaches an intensity until its climax when Velchaninov loses his temper at his fifth encounter and he behaves beyond logic in his own eyes, exactly as Agnon's protagonist himself felt about the things that were happening. For instance, when he "turned around and shouted at the top of his voice:"<sup>18</sup> at his restaurant where people were sitting at their tables and definitely wondering at his behaviour: "Look here! You with the crap on your hat! Now you are hiding! Stop! Who are you?" The question (and his shouting) were very stupid, but Velchaninov only realized that after he had uttered it..."<sup>19</sup>

In the first part of Agnon's story, the image of the lover obsesses the doctor's life, and only later he meets him in person accidentally in the hospital, while in Dostoevsky's story the image of the incarnated husband in person, although his identity is still unknown to Velchaninov, obsesses Velchaninov's life. Also, their attitude toward this personality is similar in both works, even if it is expressed in different style and language. For Velchaninov he is a "nonety as he was"<sup>20</sup> while for the doctor he is like "a man for whom I wouldn't waste so much as a word"<sup>21</sup> or a "disgusting thing".<sup>22</sup> But even more, Velchaninov "... returning to the room, he spat as though he had been in contact with something unclean".<sup>23</sup> While the doctor (after the clerk wanted to thank him for his caring for his health) offered him his fingertips "in an impolite and deprecatory manner, and

immediately I wiped them on my white coat, as though I had touched a dead reptile."<sup>24</sup> The striking similarity in the use of symbols is truly amazing, and may be considered not incidental, especially if we consider that according to the Halacha (Jewish Code of Law) touching a dead reptile is like having contact with something unclean.<sup>25</sup>

There is also some amazing similarities between the tragic duality revealed in these works of these writers. It is clearly exposed both in Dostoevsky's work as well as in Agnon's:

Trusotzky's devotion in aiding Velchaninov when he had the liver attack which made him so vulnerable to any of the evil wishes of this incarnated husband when he could have taken advantage of the situation and have his revenge upon this man who humiliated him so much and destroyed in him the happy family memories connected with his (treacherous) wife. (This he found out only after his wife's death, but the shame and the feeling of impotence were there.) This description is very similar to that described by Agnon and is even more artistically created by him. The Doctor's devotion in giving his medical aid to the sick clerk, whose identity he realized on the same evening, and whose name reminded him of his wife's love affair, is also very similar. The doctor's uneasiness makes it clear that he was in the very same conflict which was expressed by his excusing himself of not taking revenge on this occasion. This is exactly like Trusotzky, who instead of thinking of revenge first thinks how to give him the most devoted medical aid. More than this, Agnon's protagonist, the doctor, became friendly with his wife's lover exactly as Trusotzky became friendly with Velchaninov who had the same role in Dostoevsky's story, but in a different manner and style.

In Dostoevsky:

"It's the liver, I know it!" cried Pavel Pavlovich, ...

One may die of it! Shall I run for Mavra?"  
"No need, no need!" ... "I want nothing,"  
But Pavel Pavlovich, goodness knows why, seemed beside himself, as though it were a question of saving his own son.... He fetched Mavra without waiting for permission, ... at the same time he succeeded in getting the sick man to bed, took off his clothes, wrapped him up in a quilt, and within twenty minutes had prepared tea and the first poultices...  
"If once the pain is blunted, then thank God, it's a good sign!" cried Pavel Pavlovich, and he ran joyfully to fetch a fresh plate and a fresh cup of tea..."<sup>26</sup>

And similar to this behaviour is that of the doctor in Agnon's story:

One day a patient was brought to the hospital...  
In the evening I entered the ward to make my rounds.  
When I came to his bed, I saw his name on the card over his head, and I realized who he was.<sup>27</sup>

And in this way I gave him various special privileges, just so he would feel completely comfortable... it was high time for him to leave the hospital.... I ... ordered the nurses to give him the best of treatment... so I gave him from my own food, which the farmers used to bring me....<sup>28</sup>

But in spite of this there is still a great conflict and it is expressed very briefly:

"What could I do? I'm a doctor and I treated him..."<sup>29</sup>

"What could I do? I'm a doctor." This is the outcry of the man who could not take revenge on the man who destroyed his tranquility and his family life, but Pavel Pavlovitz Trusotzky could, and even tried, to take revenge on "his friend", because of his incarnating him with his wife. It seems that the Doctor's dream in Agnon's story is even more suitable here than there. We are not convinced of its truth about Dinah, but it may have suited Velchaninov. In accordance with the description of Natalya Vassilyevna, Trusotzky's wife, we could have expected Velchaninov

to say (what the doctor dreamed that the lover said to him):  
"What do you want from me? Is the fact that she raped me any  
reason for you to have it in for me?"<sup>30</sup> And it is more suitable  
here since she changed her lovers, one after another, as "an  
old worn out shoe".<sup>31</sup>

But there are more similarities to which we only attract  
the attention of the reader since a detailed comparison does not  
suit the purpose of this study. We find similarity in the  
devotions and attractions of these incarnated protagonists to  
their wives' lovers. They both, the doctor and Trusotzky, were  
aware of this fact in spite of the fact that they knew it from  
their wives, one from his wife by her confession before marriage,  
the other also from his wife, but only after her death and  
through her letters and records.

We find them both attracted to their wives' lovers against  
all logic or reason. But there are still many great differences.  
Even in these scenes the doctor does not even try to take revenge  
on his rival, although he could have even killed him by merely  
not doing his best to save his life, while Trusotzky dared to  
try to kill Velchaninov with his own razor, but failed in spite  
of the fact that Velchaninov was very weak by his recent liver  
attack.

We also find similarity in the description of the wish to  
drown the sorrows in a drink. In Agnon's story it remains a wish:

I passed by a bar and considered going in to drown my  
sorrows in drink, as embittered men are accustomed to  
say, I grew a bit calmer and told myself, troubles come  
and go, your troubles will also pass..."<sup>32</sup>

because it suits the character of the protagonist,<sup>33</sup> while in  
Dostoevsky the wish is fulfilled:

He came to me yesterday because of an irresistible

malicious desire to let me know that he knew of the wrong done him, and that he knew who had done it; that was the whole reason of his stupid visit in a drunken state,<sup>34</sup>

"Surely you are not drinking that now," said Velchaninov, indicating the champagne,

"The remains ..." said Pavel Pavlovich in confusion.

"Well, you have changed!"

"It's a bad habit, come upon me all at once, sir; Yes, really, since that date. I'm not lying! I can't restrain myself... I'm not drunk now..."

"You were drunk last night, then?"

"I was, sir," Pavel Pavlovich admitted in a low voice, looking down in embarrassment..."It's because of my grief, perhaps, I drink..."<sup>35</sup>

because this reaction suits the Russian<sup>36</sup> character more, as known from life experience as well as from literature. We also find the protagonists wandering in the streets with no object.

In Agnon:

I began walking. After an hour or so, I stopped and saw that I had gone all around myself and completed a circle around the same spot.<sup>37</sup>

In Dostoevsky:

I imagine, Alexei Ivanovith ... a man ... who wanders about the dusty streets with no proper object ...<sup>38</sup>

Even a similar dream appears in both stories, in spite of the fact that they are different. As already hinted, a minute comparative study of the works of these two writers would reveal very interesting things in a voluminous study, but since we would like to attract the attention of the reader to only some similarities between other works of Agnon and Dostoevsky or of some similar motifs, phrases and scenes we will not expatiate too much. But before this we offer some general remarks:

The action in both stories express the eternal husband's

tragic conflict with the eternal lover. Between the fashionable society Don Juan-Velchaninov and the provincial civil servant Trusotzky in The Eternal Husband and the similar figures in that of the doctor and the simple clerk in The Doctor's Divorce lies an abyss. We have to attract the attention of the reader to the fact that in Agnon's story the social position and the roles they play in the tragedy are reversed. Both authors underline the contrasts - social, psychological and spiritual. Surely the development in each story is quite different, but there are still many striking similar elements in their characters, in the developing of the plots, etc. Reading with great interest and open mindedness both stories one must come to an inevitable conclusion that when speaking about the main heroes (in both stories) - Velchaminov - Pavel Pavlovich in The Eternal Husband and the doctor and the clerk in The Doctor's Divorce - the reader is aware of the fact that they are antipodes essentially - again, in a different way in each story and by one another - in thoughts and in deeds of which none of the protagonists is in control of. And so it happened that " after their first meeting we have a presentiment of the inevitability of their collision and struggle to the death in The Eternal Husband" while this point is in someway different in The Doctor's Divorce. It does not come to the fore but it is there and it is expected. (We'll elaborate later on on some more similarities and differences between the above mentioned works.) The motif of unreasonable mutual repulsion is developed with increasing intensity. However, parallel to it there gradually arises and grows a contrary motif of mutual attraction. The rivals feel themselves attracted to one another without any explanation and in a different way, but still the similarity is obvious, especially if we remark



that Agnon reversed the roles of the protagonists and the ways of their appearance. In The Eternal Husband Pavel Pavlovich Trusotzky, who is the eternal husband, encounters the lover, Velchaninov, many times. He has no explanation for this strange behaviour of the man with the crap on his hat, who looked as if to meet him and who had run into him the other day, "and again stared at him rather strangely."<sup>39</sup>

In this story the two rivals appear from the very beginning in flesh and blood while in Agnon's story at the beginning the lover appears only in the doctor's imagination and only later on does he meet him in flesh and blood.

Another point which attracted the readers attention is that this apparently unimportant detail of having a love affair before marriage has to be seen also in the special light of Agnon's way of dealing with the motif of eros. We do not recall in almost any of Agnon's stories the infidelity of a married woman. Also, Dinah sinned only from the point of view of religious people, and not in the eyes of the general public, at least not in those days (namely, in those days a love affair before marriage is not supposed to deny a happy marriage), as the doctor expressed himself. While infidelity was almost sharply condemned in almost all the social circles. So Dinah's sin shouldn't have caused this tragic result if the doctor would have behaved more reasonable. He himself condemns his own behaviour saying:

From then on that man was never out of my sight, whether my wife was present or not. If I sat by myself, I thought about him, and if I talked with my wife, I mentioned him. If I saw a flower, I was reminded of the red roses, and if I saw a red rose, I was reminded of him, suspecting that this was the kind he used to give my wife. This, then, was the reason she refused to smell the roses on

the first night, because she was ashamed in her husband's presence to smell the same kind of flowers that her lover used to bring her. When she cried, I would console her. But in the kiss of reconciliation I heard the echo of another kiss which someone else had given her. We are enlightened individuals, modern people, we seek freedom for ourselves and for whole humanity, and in point of fact we are worse than the almost diehard reactionaries...<sup>40</sup>

From this quotation some points are conspicuous. The protagonist is obsessed with the image of "that man" which destroys his calmness and makes him behave as if he was not an enlightened modern man. And it is clear again that this behaviour is beyond reason. It shows an unbearable obsession of the protagonist by the image of that man that had a love affair with his wife. This irritating obsession is similar, but twisted, to that of Dostoevsky's story. The pertinent passages from Dostoevsky were quoted earlier in which we saw clearly the way Dostoevsky's protagonist was obsessed by the image, in person, of the incarnated husband. Here it ends in a tragic form, there in a comic one. Unwillingly the thought of this writer ran to Herman Wouk's novel Majorie Morningstar,<sup>41</sup> where the main character, Miss Morningstar, had a love affair with one of her friends, and disclosed it to her fiancée shortly after their engagement. The fiancée was shocked and even lost the brightness of his happiness but still married her and they built up a true, modest and moral happy family life, completely contrary to what happened with the doctor and Dinah in Agnon's story.

### 3. Some Single Similar Motifs

Among the single motifs which appear in both stories we also find the motif of the dream, which is a universal literary

technique, and which appears not only in these works but also in many other works of both writers. The similarity of some points in them invited the comparison. In The Doctor's Divorce the doctor dreams about Dinah's sin,<sup>42</sup> while in The Eternal Husband Velchaninov dreams about his committing a crime.<sup>43</sup> We do not exclude concomitant influence from other sources as well, but these similarities can not be overlooked since they are undoubtedly very striking.

Our attention was also attracted by a small detail in this dream which appears in many of Agnon's stories. We refer to the strange fact that a friend of his, "who was dead, but had now somehow suddenly also come to see him."<sup>44</sup> Similar to it in Agnon's story Ha'autobus Ha'aharon (The Last Autobus):

My grandfather took me by my arm and went with me to the office of the buses... My grandfather preceded me and fell. Because he was dead his falling did not frighten me, since the dead have no physical feelings...<sup>45</sup>

Another striking similar motif, although very differently developed in both stories, is the motif of committing suicide, which appears many times in The Eternal Husband and only once in Agnon's story, The Doctor's Divorce. In The Eternal Husband

(a) Trusotzky threatened Liza that he will commit suicide:

When he'd come home dead drunk he'd frighten her. "I'll hang myself too," he'd say; "because of you; I'll hang myself with this cord here on the blind," he'd say; and he'd make a noose before her eyes, And she'd be beside herself - she'd scream and throw her little arms around him. "I won't!" she'd cry, "I never will again!" It was pitiful.<sup>46</sup>

(b) In the courtyard of the Pokrovsky Hotel someone committed suicide:

And the other day a terrible thing happened in our building: a clerk, so folks say, took a room in the hotel overnight, and in the morning hanged himself... People flocked to see.

Pavel Pavlovich was not at home, ... I looked, and there she (Liza) was in the passage among the people, and peeping out from behind the others: ... I took her away as quickly as I could... - she was all atremble, ...<sup>47</sup>

(c) When Velchaninov heard Liza expressing her fear of her (supposed) father committing suicide:

"He'll ... hang himself!" she whispered, as though in delirium.

"Who will hang himself?" asked Velchaninov in dismay.

"He, he! He tried to hang himself with a noose at night!" the child said hurriedly and breathlessly. "I saw him! He has recently tried to hang himself with a noose, he told me so, he told me so! He meant to before, he always meant to ... I saw him at night ..."

"Impossible," whispered Velchaninov, perplexed.<sup>48</sup>

(d) When Velchaninov openly asked Pavel Pavlovich Trusotzky:

"Is it true that you wanted to hang yourself - is it?"

"When I was drunk I may have talked wildly - I don't remember."

And finally (e) when Velchaninov was haunted by the idea that Trusotzky might have really committed suicide, but didn't:

... already the day before, he had been haunted by the idea that Pavel Pavlovich would go back to his lodging and hang himself, like the clerk... "Why should the fool hang himself?" he kept telling himself every moment ... In his place I would perhaps hang myself, though," he reflected once,...

"I was coming to see you! What do you think of your friend Pavel Pavlovich, now?"

"He's hanged himself!" Velchaninov muttered wildly.<sup>50</sup>

In Agnon we find it only once, when after a quarrel between the doctor and his wife:

She rose, went to her room, and locked the room behind her. I came to the door and asked her to open it for me but she refused... When she still did not answer, I began to be afraid that she had taken sleeping pills and, God forbid, committed suicide...<sup>51</sup>

There are many more similarities but, as we have already mentioned, our aim is only to show that there is a positive

answer to that intriguing question of influence. We would like to make conspicuous only another two similar techniques, which may strengthen this conclusion. These are the use of the phrase "God knows" and names with meaning which we find in the works of both these great writers.

#### 4. The Phrase "God knows"

We have already devoted an almost detailed comparative study to the expression "God knows" found in even greater frequency in Hamsun's works than in Agnon's. There it was also hinted that it would be an intriguing topic for a research to find out if the very same expression appears, and to what extent, in the works of other Scandinavian writers. But now we would say this not only about this phrase but in general about other details as well. As we advanced in our study we decided to quote only from two stories of Dostoevsky, just to show the existence of this very same phrase in his works as well. As we never excluded concomitant influence we feel it important to attract the reader's attention to these amazing similarities of a phrase which, according to two famous scholars (A. Band and G. Shaked mentioned above in chapter six), was seen as either an original Hebrew term or an influence from the Yiddish language. But as these expressions are revealed now in the European literature, these statements may have to be revised. In this case the similarity is between Dostoevsky's and Agnon's style. The examples for proving this statement are taken from two of Dostoevsky's stories, The Eternal Husband and The House of the Dead,<sup>52</sup> although we are convinced that this expression appears frequently enough in many of his works. In The Eternal Husband this phrase appears more frequently but even so we shall quote only a few examples:

What really happened was that certain incidents in his past, even in his distant past, began suddenly and God knows why, to come more and more frequently back to his mind, but they came back in a peculiar way...<sup>53</sup>

The soup was put before him. He took up the spoon, but, before he had time to help himself, he dropped it and almost jumped up from the table. A surprising idea suddenly dawned upon him: at that instant - and God knows by what process - he suddenly realised the cause of his depression, of the special depression which had tormented him of late for several days together;<sup>54</sup>

Returning home at seven o'clock, he did not find Pavel Pavlovich and was extremely surprised, then became angry, and still later depressed; finally he began to be actually frightened. "God knows, God knows how it will end!" he repeated, as he walked about the room or stretched himself on the sofa, continually looking at his watch.<sup>55</sup>

... in short, there was little logic in her words, but her object was clear: that he should no longer trouble her with his love. She even allowed him to come to T--- in a year's time to have a look at the child. God knows why she changed her mind and sent the other letter instead.<sup>56</sup>

The frequency of its use by Dostoevsky is much wider, as amazing as it may be, but for our purpose these quotations will suffice. As already mentioned this phrase appears also in The House of the Dead many times, but we still quote only three examples:

And look what a mixed rabble they are. One will be a Kantonist,<sup>57</sup> another will be a Circassian, a third an Old Believer, a fourth will be an orthodox peasant who has left a wife and dear little children behind in Russia, the fifth will be a Jew, the sixth a gypsy and the seventh God knows who, and they've all got to live together, they've all got to get on together somehow, eat out of the same bowl, sleep on the same bed. And no sort of freedom.<sup>58</sup>

He wanted to get the second half of his punishment over as soon as possible and to be sent off to his place of exile hoping to escape on the road. But this man was kept up by the object he had in view, and God knows what was in his mind...<sup>59</sup>

There were some convicts, however, who remained morose and churlish to the end and seemed, God knows why, to grudge having to speak to me. It seemed as though there existed a kind of barrier between us.<sup>60</sup>

We don't have to quote again from Agnon to show the similar phrase in his works since this was done already in chapter six, as mentioned above. We also found an unusual expression in Hamsun:

... the devil only knows from what secret, underground, loathsome impulse and distorted affectation that only degrades you! Yes, degrades you!<sup>61</sup>

The question may now be even more intriguing trying to allude to Dostoevsky's influence upon Hamsun, which could be true historically. Since this is not the subject of our study, but could be very interesting, we find it pertinent to mention that there are some similarities between Dostoevsky and Hamsun but there is no hint that Hamsun had ever read any of Dostoevsky's works, a fact that may hint to a third more ancient spring of influence which has still to be uncovered, but which may have simultaneously influenced all these writers.

## 6. Names With Meaning

The attention of the Hebrew reader was attracted to the fact that Agnon gave to most of his protagonists meaningful names. Kurtzweil<sup>62</sup> also made conspicuous the fact that the names of the protagonists of the story Edo and Enam start with E=A which in Hebrew is the same letter that Agnon's first name begins with but the majority with G which together are the main first components of his own name and this could not be incidental. He also based these facts and others on the concept that the names of the protagonists many times have the key to the correct interpretation of certain stories. This view is strongly supported by

M. Tochner in his book<sup>63</sup> in which he discusses, among others things, this subject as well. So we found out that Menashe Hayim's name (a fairly common Jewish name) is very meaningful, since it is like a prediction of the main events of his life, namely 'forgotten alive'.

Similar to it is his wife's name which is a mixture of a pet name in Yiddish and Polish, namely Krendel Tcharni, which means a black crown. And so it happened that she really was her husband's black crown. Also in the story The Whole Loaf Kurtzweil<sup>64</sup> identifies the protagonist, Dr. Yekutiel Neeman, as representing Moses in accordance with ancient Hebrew homilectical interpretation of Moses' name about whom it was said in the Bible "Bechol beiti neeman hoo"<sup>65</sup> and the four dots in parenthesis (...) as representing the Tetragrammaton, the Omnipresent, who is expressed in the Holy language (Hebrew) by four letters, and so he could give an additional symbolical interpretation to this story, to which all critics and scholars agree. One scholar even expressed himself about Kurtzweil's interpretation in an essay published in Le'Agnon Shai, stating:

it seems that we shall not exaggerate if we shall say that from the point of view of that we have benefitted from this essay to our understanding of Agnon perhaps it is the most important thing written about him.<sup>66</sup>

This literary technique was not used almost at all in the modern Hebrew until Agnon, except here and there for mockery purposes. There is no doubt about its ancient Hebrew source, since almost all the names in the Bible, especially in the Pentateuch, are meaningful. Even more so, at least one explanation is given, while in the homilectical interpretation we have sometimes more than one. For instance in Genesis:

And the man called his wife Eve (Chava) because she was the



mother of all living (chay).<sup>67</sup>

Another example from Genesis;

... and she called his name Reuben; for she said, "Surely the Lord has looked upon my affliction, because now my husband will love me,"<sup>68</sup>

(The meaning of Reuben is to look.) There are many, many more examples! But even so we have to recognize that this was a novelty in Modern Hebrew literature, innovated by Agnon.

It seems to this writer that the explanation given to the existence of similar phrases in Agnon and in other European writers' works is true also about this question, namely, for instance, that Agnon used the phrase God knows in his literary works, neither because he copied it from foreign writers nor that it is only a Hebrew term (which it may have been in certain circumstances and among social religious groups, but only in the oral and colloquial language), so that as explained there he used it in his literary works unconsciously because he found it also in the foreign "classical literature". And so we came to prove this point also by quoting a few lines with meaningful names from many of Dostoevsky's works:

Balchanov was a peasant of Yaroslav province, Myshkin district. Such is the origin of Prince Myshkin's name.<sup>69</sup>

In the footnote the author states: "It might also be noted that in Russian mysh means mouse." That means that Dostoevsky intentionally uses meaningful names, as Agnon does in most of his works.

A similar meaningful name is Prekrasny which means "morally, beautiful, excellent".<sup>70</sup>

In a note by George Bird, the translator of The Double, we read:

Several puns on the name Golyatkin are lost in English, but their loss seems preferable to renaming the hero 'Mr. Poorfellow'.<sup>72</sup>

One may agree or disagree with the translator's point of view about what would be preferable, but one thing he also felt and that is that it is necessary to let the reader know at the beginning of the reading the meaning of the protagonist's name. We also have the remark of Mochulsky (in parenthesis and in a note) about the meaning and connotations of certain names.

He writes:

Out of Bashmachkin's mania Dostoevsky created Devushkin's disinterested love. (The name Bashmachkin has the connotation of a simple object, the name Devushkin, on the other hand, implies something personal and human. Bashmak in Russian means shoe; deva, a virgin or maid; devrushka, a young girl.<sup>73</sup>)

Other examples we find in The Eternal Husband itself:

One of them, Katya, undertook to find Pavel Pavlovich anytime, because nowadays he was all the time with Mashka Prostakov, and he had heaps of money, and she ought to have been Mashka Prohvostov instead of Prostakov..<sup>74</sup>

At the bottom of the same page we have the editor's note:

"Pun: Prohvost and Prostan mean respectively 'scoundrel' and 'simpleton'. - A.Y." namely that again not incidentally Dostoevsky makes good use of meaningful names. Also Charles A. Passage attracted the attention of his readers to the fact that "the very name (Trusetzky) is based on trus, the Russian word for coward",<sup>75</sup> which gives an explanation to his character and his reaction to many important events in his life.

Again, we would be able to quote many more examples of names with meanings both from Agnon and Dostoevsky but it seems to this writer that these examples will suffice to convince the reader of their existence, as well as of the possibility of their being a stimulus to Agnon's creative soul, who did the same thing in many of his works as quoted above, and in appropriate

contexts.

## 6. The Artistical Evaluation of the Compared Stories

Discussing the comparison between The Eternal Husband and The Doctor's Divorce (the writer of this study feels that 'The Doctor and his Divorcee' would be a much better translation of the story's title), it would be pertinent to quote a scholar's view about the artistical value of Dostoevsky's abovementioned story. From it we would like to also evaluate the artistical value of Agnon's abovementioned story. Mochulsky, discussing this work in his book, writes:

One can conjecture that in The Eternal Husband Dostoevsky set himself a formal task and resolved it brilliantly. The structure of the tale is striking in its severity, the proportion of its parts, unity of plan, and symmetry of episodes. The action falls harmoniously into three parts, of which the first, the prehistory - is concerned with the past (Velchaninov's liaison with Trusotzky's wife in the City of T.); the second takes place in Petersburg (Velchaninov's dueling with Trusotzky); the third - the epilogue - at the station of one of the southern railways (Velchaninov's meeting with Trusotzky's second wife). The central part is divided into three periods... The composition satisfies all of the rules of classical poetics (exposition, complication, rising action, culmination, catastrophe, denouement, epilogue); the episodes are apportioned according to a strict plan, the details seem to be measured out in advance, "Harmony" and a "sense of measure" triumph. This time the writer fully mastered his means. The Eternal Husband is a chef-d'oeuvre of Russian narrative art.<sup>76</sup>

Mochulsky's critical evaluation of Dostoevsky's The Eternal Husband is valid, and suits almost completely - except for the structural division - the critical appreciation of Agnon's, The Doctor's Divorce. Agnon's work is not less, if not even more, brilliantly built up - the structure of the plot, its development, the proportion of the parts of the story, the unity of its plan and the symmetry of its episodes. The story can be divided

into three main parts, (a) the happy and harmonious relationship that developed between the doctor and Dinah until he found out about her affair with somebody before their engagement; (b) the obsession, the self abusing and the torment of his wife as well as himself, the mixture of masochism and sadism in the doctor's behaviour, and finally; (c) the inevitable end, in the epilogue, of this "happy bound" marriage, the divorce. But even more so, even this circle ends in an interesting final scene which is truly a varied repetition of a scene from the first chapter:

When I joined the staff of the hospital, I discovered there a blond nurse who was loved by everyone and whose praise was on the lips of all the patients. As soon as they heard her footsteps, they would sit up in bed and stretch their arms out toward her as an only son reaches for his mother, and each one of them would call, "nurse, nurse come to me..." Not that it was her way to give orders: the smile that illuminated her face was enough to make patients obey her. In addition to her smile, there were her eyes, a kind of blue black; everyone she looked at felt as if he were the most important thing in the world...<sup>77</sup>

And so we parted from one another, the way people will part outwardly. But in my heart, my friend, the smile on her lips is still locked up, and that blue black of her eyes, as on the day I first saw her. Sometimes at night I sit up in bed like those patients she used to take care of, and I stretch out both hands and call, "Nurse, nurse, come to me."<sup>78</sup>

Namely, the story ends like a closing circle. In spite of the great differences between these works we find an additional interesting similarity in the very same point here as well, in the last chapter of Dostoevsky's work, where Velchaninov again meets Pavel Pavlovich Trusotzky in the situation of the incarnated husband, thus closing the circle of his life and character as the eternal husband. So does Agnon, in his original way, close the circle of the life of the doctor who behaved in a similar way to the eternal behaviour of the patients to the nurse. "Nurse, nurse

come to me" impressed the doctor at the beginning and Agnon concludes the tragic story with the same expression. We dare to say that in spite of many comic situations in The Eternal Husband it is still a tragedy for the husband, just like it is still a tragedy for the doctor (the husband in this story) in Agnon's work.

Reading carefully and with real and true interest and curiosity, but with critical eyes, Agnon's work, we dare to conclude the same thing, namely that "the composition of this work satisfies all of the rules of classical poetics (exposition, complication, rising action, culmination, catastrophe, denouement, epilogue); The episodes are apportioned according to a strict plan, the means seem to be measured out in advance." (In the view of this writer, Agnon's structure and style are much more compact, and there is also no degression from the main plot, while we find it in The Eternal Husband especially in chapter XII, At the Zahlebinins). "Harmony and a sense of measure triumph! (This time it is quite true about Dostoevsky, but we can say this many more times about Agnon, either in reference to his short stories like Vehaya he'akov lemishor, etc. or about his novels, A Guest for a Night, The Day Before Yesterday, etc.) The writer fully mastered his means."<sup>79</sup> And by changing the last of the above quoted lines a little, we dare to write: The Doctor's Divorce is one of the chef-d'oeuvre of Agnon's and the Hebrew narrative art. And this, again, in spite of the influence that was made conspicuous in the above comparisons, because only the kernel of the twisted story and some motifs are similar, while the rest is Agnon's invention.

But not only in this story do we find similarities between Dostoevsky and Agnon. Some similarities are spread in many

stories, but we shall not quote many more examples, hoping that these quoted passages will suffice for our declared purposes. We would like to attract the attention of the reader to just one other similarity between these writers and not between these stories. We will quote a few short passages to make conspicuous the similar motifs in The Eternal Husband by Dostoevsky and Bidmi Yameha (In Her Noontide) by Agnon. In both passages, although different in style and in stress, there are many similar points.

In Dostoevsky we read:

You are aware, too probably, of the practice, or rather bad habit, - common to many ladies and very likely their admirers as well - of presenting all sorts of rubbish in the way of love letters... It would be much safer to put them in the stove, wouldn't it, sir? ... So it happened that Natalya Vassilyevna dies, and an ebony box inlaid with mother of pearl and silver was left standing on her bureau. And it was a little pretty box, with a lock and key... In that box everything lay revealed, sir, absolutely everything; all without exception, with the year and the day, everything for the last twenty years... A pleasant surprise for a husband. What do you think, sir?...<sup>80</sup>

In Agnon it is in someway different. There we read:

My mother went down from her bed and she sat near by the window. Near the window there was a small table and in the table was a box. The box was locked with a lock and the key of the box hung on my mother's neck. Quietly my mother opened the box and she took out a bundle of handwritings. And she read them the whole day. My mother read until evening...

And the scripts were written calligraphically on thin paper, and short and long lines they were written. And when I saw my mother reading I told myself, that she will never leave these scripts. The thread of the key which was upon my mother's neck bound her to the box and to the scripts. But towards evening she took the bundle of scripts and she bound upon them the thread that was on her neck and upon the key and she threw them and the key into the stove...<sup>81</sup>

From these quotations the next points are clearly similar.

(a) The love letters - in The Eternal Husband they are simple love letters which are found unfortunately and they reveal everything unpleasant. In Agnon's work they are not found, in spite of the fact that they were only poems written out of love for the protagonist.

(b) There are the boxes with their locks and keys in both stories.

(c) The stove is also there but while in The Eternal Husband Trusotzky says that it would be much safer to use it, in his case it was unfortunately not used. However, in Bidmi Yameha it was used but here incidentally it was also unfortunate, since these poems which seemed to have a literary value couldn't be published.

The difference in the characters caused the differences in the reaction to similar situations. We know that both Trusotzky and Minz (from Bidmi Yameha) knew about the love between their wives and their rivals (the love was also different) and the reaction is therefore also different. Trusotzky is unlucky in finding the box, while Minz is unlucky in not finding it. Trusotzky wants to take revenge and kill Velchaninov. The whole attempt is described in pages 439-441. We will just quote Velchaninov's conclusion:

That is, he came to kill me, and thought that he was coming to embrace and shed tears...<sup>82</sup>

While in Agnon the rivals not only remain friends but the husband wants to publish the love poems:

And we came to the house of Mazal... and he (my father) said, "I wasted energy. I looked after but I did not find."  
... and he (my father) said, "I thought to publish in a book your poems, and I looked in all her wardrobes and there was none. But surely you have a copy?"  
And Mazal said, "there is none."<sup>83</sup>

After these comparisons the conclusion seems to be convincing.

## 7. Conclusion

It seems to this writer that there were many varied examples of striking similarities between Agnon's works on one hand and Dostoevsky's on the other.<sup>84</sup> According to this writer's view these similarities may be explained as being a fruitful result of the natural artistic craft of Agnon to perceive from other writers, according to the root of his soul, even if completely unconsciously.

The originality and ingeniousness of each of these writers does not need to be made conspicuous, and these artistical qualities may explain the great differences in spite of the many similarities. The infidelity of the woman has a great role in both stories, but even so the characters of the women and the situations in which their deed occurred are very different. The obsession, sadism and masochism are there also in both stories and these are also described very differently. In one story the protagonist "knows the facts" before his marriage. In the other, only after his wife's death. The psychological conflict is there in one story mostly between the lines, in the other it is given a full and quite large coverage. The conscious fact that things happen beyond logic is in the foreground here as well as there. In both stories the conflict between the strong wish of revenge and the duty to help a man in trouble is also conspicuous, both with the doctor and Tursotzky. We found also similar, stylistic expressions like "God knows" and the expressions: "he spat as though he had been in contact with something unclean" in Dostoevsky and: "I wiped them on my white coat, as though I had touched a dead reptile" in Agnon. As we have already stressed, we may conclude that the



the kernel of both stories as well as other minor similarities is almost the same, but the turns of the plots and the development of the stories differ in accordance with the artistical craft of each artist-writer.

Until now we brought only samples to demonstrate our views about the influence of Russian writers through Dostoevsky. The next chapter will be devoted completely to the comparison of Balzac and Agnon.

#### NOTES

1. For instance:

The similarity between the endings of The Idiot and of Othello - both bedroom scenes in which a young woman is killed by a jealous lover - is more than coincidental. At the end of his notes Dostoevsky again refers twice to Othello, which shows how much Shakespeare's tragedy was in his mind at the time of the writing of The Idiot, and it is more than likely that Othello suggested his ending to him.

2. For instance the similarity of the description of the office in Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment which seems to be influenced by Balzac's description of Dervill's office in Colonel Chabert. See also Fanger, D., Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism, A study of Dostoevsky in relation to Balzac, Dickens and Gogol, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1967.
3. PASSAGE, C.E., Dostoevski the Adapter, A study in Dostoevski's use of the Tales of Hoffman, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1954.
4. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels (The Eternal Husband), Translated by Constance Garnett, revised and edited by Avram Yarmolinsky, Garden City, New York, Ancor Books,

Doubleday & Co., 1960.

5. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories (The Doctor's Divorce), London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1970, Nahum N. Glatzer, ed.
6. This precis was influenced by passages given in his book Dostoevski The Adapter, where he discusses The Eternal Husband, op. cit., pp. 145-147.
7. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 140.
8. Ibid., p. 142.
9. Ibid., p. 144.
10. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., p. 327.
11. Ibid., p. 328.
12. Bagantov was the name of the young officer who was his wife's lover for five years.
13. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., p. 363.
14. The name Trusotzky hints to a cowardly character, since the root "trus" means coward in Russian.
15. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., p. 312.
16. Ibid., p. 313.
17. Ibid., p. 314.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 152.

22. Ibid., p. 153.
23. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., p. 330.
24. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 153.
25. This law from The Jewish Code of Law is based on a statement from the Bible in Leviticus 11. 24.  
And through these shall ye be rendered unclean; whosoever touches the carcass of them shall be unclean until the evening....
26. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., pp. 436-437.
27. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 151.
28. Ibid., p. 152.
29. Ibid., p. 151.
30. Ibid., p. 155.
31. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., p. 332.
32. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 154.
33. It is a well known fact that this is not a typical feature of a Jewish character (getting drunk) while it is also well known that it is true of the Russian people of all social strata to this day.
34. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., p. 353.
35. Ibid., p. 340.
36. See the second part of note 33.
37. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 154.
38. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., p. 325.

39. Ibid., p. 311.
40. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., pp. 146-147.
41. WOUK, H., Marjorie Morningstar,
42. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 195.
43. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., p. 316.
44. Ibid.
45. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav Samuch Ve'nire (Haautobus Ha'aharon [The Last Autobus])  
pp. 111-112.
46. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., p. 368.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., p. 355.
49. Ibid., p. 376.
50. Ibid., pp. 448-449.
51. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 158.
52. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., The House of the Dead, a novel in two parts translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett, New York, The MacMillan Company, 1919. (The Novels of Fiodor Dostoevsky, Vol. V.)
53. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., p. 305.
54. Ibid., p. 310.
55. Ibid., p. 356.
56. Ibid., p. 451.

57. Kantonists were soldiers' sons brought up in a military settlement and bound to serve in the army - a special class no more existing. Translator's note.
58. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., The House of the Dead, op. cit., p. 29.
59. Ibid., p. 185.
60. Ibid., p. 280.
61. Ibid., p. 375.
62. KURTZWEIL, B., Heavoth le'Edo ve'Enam (Remarks on the story of Edo and Enam), Massot Al Sipurei Agnon, Israel, Schocken Publishing House, 1970, pp. 141-160.
63. TOCHNER, M., Pesher Agnon, Israel, Massada Publishing Ltd., 1968. See especially pp. 97-167.
64. KURTZWEIL, B., Nittuach Hasipur Path Shleimah, Kedugmah leplanuach Sipurei Sefer Hama'asim (The Analysis of the Story A Whole Loaf as an example for the interpretation of unraveling of the stories of the Book of Deeds) in Massoth Al Sipurei Shai Agnon, op. cit., pp. 86-94.
65. Nu. 12.7.
66. LEVINGER, Y., Hearoth lePeirush Al Path Shleimah (Remarks on an interpretation of A Whole Loaf), LeAgnon Shai, pp. 179-183.
67. Genesis, chap. III., 20.
68. Ibid., chap. 29.32.
69. MOCHULSKY, K., Dostoevsky, His Life and Work, Translated with an introduction by Michael A. Minihan, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1967, p. 343.

70. Ibid., in the translator's footnote, p. 343.
71. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., The Double, A Poem of St. Petersburg, translated by George Bird, Bloomington and London, Indian University Press, 1958.
72. Ibid., note by translator, p. 9.
73. MOCHULSKY, K., op. cit., p. 30.
74. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., p. 383.
75. PASSAGE, E.C., Dostevsky The Adapter, A Study in Dostoevsky's Use of the Tales of Hoffman, op. cit., p. 146.
76. MOCHULSKY, K., op. cit., p. 388.
77. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 135.
78. Ibid., p. 161.
79. MOCHULSKY, K., op. cit., p. 388.
80. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit., pp. 361-362.
81. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 3, Al Kapoth Hamanul, Tel Aviv, Schoken Publishing House, 1953, pp. 6-7.
82. DOSTOEVSKY, F.M., Three Short Novels, op. cit. p. 441.
83. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol 3, op. cit., p. 10.
84. It may be just a coincidence that S.Y. Agnon published a small poem with the title 'A Little Hero', his first Hebrew publication, when he was yet Czaczkes, and the fact that Dostoevsky published an amazingly serene story with the same title 'Malenkei geroi' ('A Little Hero'). But even so it attracted the attention of this writer.

## CHAPTER VIII

### BALZAC AND AGNON

#### 1. Introduction

Until now we showed clear traces of classical Greek and Roman literature, Scandinavian literature, as well as Russian literature. The emphasis in the previous chapters was put on single motifs, scenes, and plots of love stories which were compared through their partial similarity for the main purpose of making conspicuous the great attachment between Agnon and works of these writers as far as claiming influence. The main aim of this chapter will be to make a more detailed comparison, not of single motifs, scenes, etc., but an almost full scale comparison and as detailed as possible between one of Balzac's works and some of Agnon's works. Nevertheless, this will not exclude possible references to works of other writers. We will also pay attention to the differences between the protagonists, their characters and their fate.

In spite of the fact that we have devoted a whole chapter to the subject of the influence of classical literature, in which we have dealt mainly with the Homeric influence, we can not refrain from returning to this source as the starting point of this chapter.

The main motif of the Odyssey, which was defined as the late-return motif, because of the fact that the protagonist returned home after a long absence of twenty years and still found his wife faithfully waiting for his return, is also the main motif of the stories we are going to discuss and compare

in this chapter.<sup>1</sup> According to Kurtzweil such a solution can materialize only in a miraculous world, and therefore it had a happy end in the Odyssey, and also in The Bridal Canopy. He adds that for the same reason there could not be a happy ending in Vehaya he'akov lemishor or in similar stories of the last centuries. Hence, the many variations in this theme in the modern literature, so much so that we may have to reformulate the definition of our motif changing it into 'the motif of the dead husband who returned alive'. It seems to the writer that with this reformulation we did not achieve anything since that very same motif was the kernel of Odysseus' story as well. He was also counted among the dead, but still returned very much alive. The very same motif (defined either way) is the kernel of many stories (plots) from European literature and the interesting point of it will be to see the direction this motif took in different cultures as a result of a fruitful literary influence or as a result of the personal experiences of the writer or by one of his relatives.<sup>2</sup> However, as this dissertation is mainly concerned with the study of the traces of European works upon Agnon, this chapter will deal with the similarities of this motif and its different developments and variations in the stories and the characters from the writings of Honore de Balzac through the personality of Colonel Chabert and in the stories and characters of Agnon's writings through the personality of Menashe Hayim from the story And The Crooked Shall Become Straight<sup>3</sup> and through the personality of Ferenheim from the story of the same name.<sup>4</sup> The tenth chapter will be devoted to the same purpose but it will focus upon some other works from English literature.



## 2. The Similar Tragic Kernel in the Compared Works (the essence of the stories)

Reading the Iliad we came across the name of Odysseus for the first time in verse 138 where we are introduced to him as being a godlike personality who is proud to fight for his own people and who encourages them on the battlefield through his personal example. We have no idea of why he is in Troy for almost nine years; we know almost nothing about his age, his family life and his upbringing. Only later on in the story are we told about his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus. There is no reference here at all to all the miraculous adventures that Odysseus went through from the time he left the shores of Troy until he reaches the shores of Ithaca. These adventures are so supernatural and so fantastic that it would be meaningless to try and find any similarity to them in modern writings. Even so this very same motif appears in some of the works of Modern European writers, Balzac being one of them,<sup>5</sup> in a certain way with no less fantastic and supernatural adventures. But in spite of this, it appears to seemingly convince the reader of its "natural" turns and developments. Some critics stress the social aspects made conspicuous in Balzac's story and not the personal ones. The society, they say, is described with all its cruelty.<sup>6</sup> It is true that we can not pick out a protagonist from his social background and analyse his character and behaviour as though he does not live and react in accordance with the society and the circumstances created by it. This point is true and correct about any protagonist in any work except in those works where the social background is given in such general terms that it cannot be identified with any society or with anyone.<sup>7</sup> This is true

about Balzac's protagonist Colonel Chabert as well as about Agnon's protagonists Menashe Hayim, Ferenheim and Karl Neiss.

a. The Tragedy of Menashe Hayim (The essence of The Crooked Shall Become Straight<sup>8</sup>)

In And The Crooked Shall Become Straight<sup>9</sup> the hero Menashe Hayim Hacoheh,<sup>10</sup> a middle-class shopkeeper, who lived happily with his wife Krendel Tcharni<sup>11</sup> for ten good years, decided to take to the road to beg alms because they were driven out of their business by being so deep in debt. He leaves his wife and home, hoping to make up the sum of money which will enable them to regain their middle class position in a short time, to come home as soon as possible and to be as happy a couple as previously.

Menashe Hayim, who felt very uncomfortable in his new position as a beggar, decided to sell for a huge sum of money the letter of recommendation he received from the town rabbi to a professional beggar after he was compelled by his wife to take to the road to beg alms. With this huge sum of money and with what he had already collected he decided to buy merchandise for his new business. Instead of following his firm decision to buy the merchandise and go home, he continued to receive alms (because he surrendered to his evil inclination after being given alms when he entered a wholesale business to buy merchandise). Besides this, he decides that in satisfying his curiosity about the famous fair he is also doing a good religious deed. As a result of walking around, Menashe Hayim suddenly felt very hungry. He entered an inn where he decided to eat and to drink so that he will go home to his Krendel Tcharni a strong and good looking husband, in which he also

sees a good religious deed. The strong liquor caused him to start singing, but not for long. He fell asleep and when he woke up in the morning he found himself bereft of his wallet and his Tefillin (phylacteries). Without money and without the letter he starts to beg again, but this time as a professional beggar. Meanwhile the beggar who bought the letter of recommendation was so happy with his achievement that he decided to celebrate with a good drink. The beggar died from overdrinking and as the letter from the Rabbi of Buczacz was found on his body, the Rabbi was notified of the death of the alleged Menashe Hayim Hacoheh. His wife was declared a widow and three months later she remarried. Four years had past since her husband had left her a straw widow, without worrying very much about her difficult time. She received no letters from him, and no money, except for the very beginning when he sent her some letters and some money.

Five years after he left home to beg alms Menashe Hayim returned to his home town just in time to hear from another beggar that Krendel Tcharni, his 'beloved' wife, had given birth to a son by her second husband. Menashe Hayim decides not to appear at all at the house of his wife, thus renouncing her without claim because of his "self-sacrificing" love<sup>12</sup> towards her and because of Jewish religious reasons.<sup>13</sup>

b. The Essence of Colonel Chabert

Turning to the story of Colonel Chabert we may state first that this is one of the most important and best stories written by Balzac, and therefore it is no wonder that it may have influenced Agnon. The kernel of the story can be summarized in a few lines, which allude to Odysseus on the one hand and

to Menashe Hayim, Ferenheim and Karl Neiss on the other.

Colonel Chabert was a young and handsome officer in Napoleon's army when he married Rose Chapotel, with whom he became acquainted in the Palais Royal where she worked. During his army service he became one of the best and most loyal colonels of Napoleon Bonaparte. One day he left his wife and his home to fulfill his duty as a loyal soldier in the ranks of his Emperor's army, hoping to come back victorious from his mission as soon as possible to continue his family life as happily as before he left. Unfortunately for him, he was badly wounded in the battlefield of Eylaw, which took place on the 8th of February, 1807. In this battle he served his Emperor and was the brain behind the action which changed a critical military situation into victory. However, at its end he was counted among the dead. His widow inherited quite a fortune and could now realize one of her dreams. She remarried with the intention of entering the circles of the nobility by marrying Comte Ferreud. Her second marriage was happy. In a short time she gave birth to two children, a boy and a girl. (She did not have any children with Colonel Chabert). The second marriage was contracted in (almost) good faith and neither of them (neither she nor her second husband) was aware of the possibility that Colonel Chabert had not been killed in action.

Meanwhile Colonel Chabert was saved in a miraculous way from the heap of dead bodies, but no one believed his identity as his death had received wide publicity. As a result he was interned in various mental hospitals after he recovered from his great physical wounds. He returned to Paris, after unbelievable natural adventures which took many years. After approximately nine to ten years of trying to establish his identity he succeeded

in finding someone to listen in the person of advocat Derville who agreed to undertake his case, to claim his wife and to claim everything that rightfully belonged to him. After finding out about the tricky and treacherous behaviour of his wife, whom he still loved until that very moment, he decided to withdraw his claims in contemptuous disgust for her after years of hopelessness and a month of hopeful endeavour. Thus, Colonel Chabert became a beggar ending his life miserably and passing into oblivion.

c. The Essence of Ferenheim

Turning to the story of Ferenheim, whose name may be understood as meaning "a distant home" or "the home is distant", we find again similarities to Odysseus and Colonel Chabert in his motivation for leaving his wife and home. However, in the same story is interpolated another similar story about another protagonist, Karl Neiss, who is Ferenheim's rival. Karl Neiss suffered a similar temporary fate to that of Odysseus, Chabert, Menashe Hayim and Ferenheim, namely, on one hand he disappeared from his home (he was as yet not married like all the protagonists just now mentioned, but was in love and engaged to Miss Ingeborg of the house of Starkmat) neither for a military reason nor for an economical one, but because of a landslide, and on the other hand, he found his former fiancée, Mrs. Ferenheim, ready to prefer him over her legal husband who had just returned after being a prisoner of war. His case is similar only to Odysseus in that the others had to renounce their wives with or without claim.

Summarizing Ferenheim's story (to which we will return later in greater detail) in a few lines we would say that it is

a story about a young man who married a girl who was formerly engaged to another man whom she loved. This man disappeared in a landslide and was supposed to be dead. The couple had a child. Meanwhile World War I broke out and Ferenheim leaves his wife and home because he was called up for military duty in the Austro-Hungarian Army. While serving on the Southern Front he fought and was taken prisoner and held in a Prisoner of War camp. Perhaps through an error he was declared dead and his wife notified. After the war when he returned home, he found out that his wife did not expect him to come back anymore and also that their only child died. More than this he finds out that his wife rejected him in favor of Karl Neiss, who had reappeared. Ferenheim tries to reestablish his home but to no avail. He leaves his wife with no hope of regaining her but retains hope for better times to come.

### 3. The Structure of the Works Compared

The formal structure of the works compared differ in a wide range from the form of the classical epos in the case of Homer through the form of the short story in the cases of Balzac and Agnon. To enable us to make a proper comparison (even if not a minuteous one) the main structural elements in each of them will be reviewed briefly both in form and in content. In spite of the particular, personal and unique mark which is so conspicuous in the techniques and forms of literary structure used by each of the writers compared, we can still find many points of similarity between them.

Again, to avoid a misunderstanding, it has to be stressed that we do not intend to make a minuteous comparison between these works, especially not with Homer's epos, which would be out of

of proportion for this purpose.

The great classical epos of Homer is divided into two books, the Iliad and the Odyssey, which are themselves divided into twenty-four books each. Since Homer is universally recognised to have achieved the greatest invention of any writer whatsoever, and because of the richness of his works - in characters, battles, miraculous adventures, crisis, hallucinations and denouements, he has no rival in the domain of literature and therefore there is no necessity, no validity and even no possibility of a detailed comparison between Homer's work and any other author's. But we will compare the works of Agnon and Balzac such as Colonel Chabert, Vehaya heakov lemishor and Ferenheim.

a. The Structure of Colonel Chabert

Agnon's stories are divided into chapters, with or without headlines. Balzac's way of writing was different, but even so we may divide it into nine main parts which may be compared to the division in some of Agnon's stories. These nine parts are: (1) The office and its description, including the clerks, etc.; (2) the meeting between the advocat Derville and the Colonel. After a short scene we approach part (3). The advocat's visit at Colonel Chabert's "home". On this occasion we hear some details about the main hero. Part (4) describes the visit paid by the advocat to the Comtesse Ferraud. With these parts we may have completed the exposition. The first dramatic climax is found in part (5) when Colonel Chabert meets his wife unexpectedly in the advocat's office. In part (6) we are told about Chabert's naivety and goodheartedness which cause him to believe for a short time that his wife may still have some sentiment for him of pity and understanding, if not of love. And so he followed

his wife to her "country house near Groslay in the valley of Montmorency"<sup>14</sup> where she promised him that "they will consider the step to be taken"<sup>15</sup> since she knows her duties towards him, but she asks for his understanding that "though I am yours by right, I am no longer yours in fact".<sup>16</sup> Part (7) discloses to the reader her true feelings towards her former husband and gives us, in a certain way, the denouement of this tragedy. Part (8) is the scene of the court where Derville accidentally met the poor Hyacinthe-Chabert, whom he asked for the expenses incurred and the allowance given to him at that time. Colonel Chabert sent a note to Mrs. Ferraud who agreed this time to pay the whole amount requested by him. Part (9) describes the final tragedy and complete degradation and humiliation of Chabert among the poor and mentally sick people.

b. The Structure of Vehaya he'akov lemishor

From the formal aspect of the structure there is no work, among those compared in this research, to which we may compare closely Vehaya he'akov lemishor. This literary work is divided into four chapters and an epilogue, like a great drama in five acts. Every chapter has a few or a lot of headlines in which hints are given to the reader about the main events described in the chapter (besides a very short introductory headline to the whole story, seven lines in the Hebrew text). In addition there are short introductory passages quoted from books of morals and ethics or from the Bible itself. Every chapter is devoted mainly to one of the heroes, except for the first chapter which is devoted to both of them.

The first chapter is a very long one because of its inner structure, namely the chapter is filled successively with tales within the main story. Besides that it gives us an outstanding



exposition of the whole plot. Here we are given all the predictions and hidden hints for the surprising turns in the other chapters, as well as the background of our heroes, which is centered - focused around the struggle of this couple to retain their middle-class shopkeeper's position. Hence the operational centre of the events in this chapter is Buczacz.

In the second chapter we are given a description of Menashe Hayim's humiliation and degradation. At the beginning he was too shy to beg alms and still for a while kept in contact with his wife. But later on, he begged alms almost as a professional beggar, dropped all contact with his wife, sold his letter of recommendation, got drunk and lost all his collected money and belongings, and instead of returning home, started to beg alms anew. Hence, the operational centre of this chapter moved away with him from his native town and wandered through many places, but most of the tragic events happened at the fair at Lashkovitz.

The third chapter is devoted mainly to the fate of Menashe Hayim's wife, Krendel Tcharni, during the period of her husband's absence, and how lucky she was to be released from the unfortunate doom of an "Aguna" (abandoned wife) by the testimony accepted by the rabbinical court about the death of the alleged Menashe Hayim, and how she soon happily remarried and immediately conceived.

In the fourth chapter the writer described the great excitement of Menashe Hayim, whose imagination knew no bounds in portraying the happy meeting between the two longing spouses. But woe and behold, at the end of the short chapter we reach the climax, at the very moment when Menashe Hayim finds out the bitter truth and gets the shock of his life, i.e., that his wife

remarried and bore a son for her second husband. The tension decreases immediately and there follows a certain degree of relaxation.

In the epilogue we are given the denouement which is, to a considerable extent, not surprising at all. The writer gives us a detailed description of Menashe Hayim's behaviour after he found out that he is a living-dead. His attitude towards after life, Divine justice, the beggar who enticed him to sell the letter of recommendation and himself as well, condemning his own conduct because he did not resist the temptations of the beggar and later of the fair of Lashkovitz, and how finally his 'dear' soul rested in peace - all these we have in the epilogue.

Comparing the inner structure of Vehaya he'akov lemishor, we find great similarities between the works compared, i.e., the similarity of the crises in some of the compared plots as well as the similarity of some halucinations. However, first we shall continue in the methodical way and we will elaborate on the structure of Ferenheim.

c. The structure of Ferenheim

In spite of being much shorter than Vehaya he'akov lemishor and in spite of its lacking the headlines and the quoted passages Ferenheim is no less dramatic. The four chapters of this story are like a great drama in four acts. In every chapter-act Ferenheim has to meet and to confront a different person. At every meeting Ferenheim himself finds out more and more about his personal tragedy and the heartlessness of his present situation. The reader finds out more and more about Ferenheim's past and present and the relationship between him and the other persons who act in this story by following him step by step. The meetings

are arranged in such a manner that they increase the tension in the already tense atmosphere, as we advance in the reading of the story. The meeting with the doorkeeper, the locked house, the sad news about the death of his only child, create in the reader a premonition of a Greek Tragedy and not of a love story. His meeting with Gertrude Steiner, his sister-in-law, at her villa at Luckenbach, gave him, and the reader as well, the second shock, since no one expects that he will be so unwillingly welcomed by his family. The tension is highest when he meets Hans Steiner, his brother-in-law, whose harshness and arrogance is met with Ferenheim's objection. Hans questions his right to visit them, to expect Inge to welcome his return, and Ferenheim accuses him of being exempted "from any duty" even to serve in the army! because he was such "an important personage". To this irony Hans replies later with the same coin, offering him "a definite sum" which "will be enough to set him on his feet" on the condition, of course, that he will leave Inge forever. And finally, we have the meeting with his estranged wife, Ingeborg of the house of Starknät.

Inge greeted Ferenheim politely. If we did not know what we do know, we would think that she was glad to see him. A new light, a deep contentment shone from her eyes. Happiness is a wonderful thing; even when it is not intended for you, you bask in its light.<sup>17</sup>

In spite of this happiness emanating from her, which could be wrongly interpreted as being because of, and for, Ferenheim, and in spite of his longing for this very moment, when it came "not one of the thoughts that filled his heart reached his lips, even though his heart urged him to say something".<sup>18</sup> Thus, a broken dialogue starts between them which ends up with his final humiliation. When she rises to leave

the room, after he failed to awake in her any wish for a reconciliation, any feeling of love towards him, he kneels before her, trying to awake in her some of the pleasant memories of their common past, but in vain.

Inge shrugged her shoulders and left. Ferenheim opened his eyes. "Inge!" he cried. But Inge had vanished...<sup>19</sup>

One cannot free oneself from the feeling that in spite of the fact that Karl Neiss, Inge's first lover and fiance, does not appear in person in the story his presence overshadows all the events, which are so dramatically woven together in four short chapters. The whole story is given partly dramatic and partly narrative, and it encompasses three days, but in the last three chapters the tension rises high to its final climax in an original and dramatic course which does not take even one hour in real time.

In spite of the fact already mentioned, that Agnon used to divide even his short stories into chapters and Balzac did not do so, we may find some structural similarities between them. Therefore, we may say that part (1) and (2) in Colonel Chabert gives us two scenes which may be compared to the scenes described in chapter one of Vehaya he'akov lemishor, since both give us the large exposition of the main characters. Part (3) and (4) may be compared to a certain degree to chapter two in Vehaya he'akov lemishor, while part (5) and (6), which are dedicated more to the description of Mrs. Chabert is similar to chapter three, where Agnon described Krendel Tcharni. Part (7) may be compared to chapter four, where the tension starts to diminish, after reaching its climax, with its denouement and parts (8) and (9) are parallel to Agnon's epilogue where Menashe Hayim's tragedy is described, and his final degradation and humiliation

come to an end only by his death. We will also make conspicuous the similar inner structure.

Some similarities in the structure of Colonel Chabert can also be found in Ferenheim if we pinpoint them more on the inner structure, i.e., the confrontation between the protagonist and reality or his rival, etc. Thus we find in Colonel Chabert, as well as in Ferenheim, in spite of the fact that in Colonel Chabert there is no division of chapters, the same confrontation between the protagonist and reality. In Colonel Chabert it takes a long time until he reaches Derville in person and even later this theme dominates the whole story. This is also true from the very beginning of Ferenheim, when he found his own home locked, and until the very end. But we find the confrontation between Chabert and the lawyer similar to that of Ferenheim and his brother-in-law, Hans Steiner. We also find the confrontation between Colonel Chabert and his wife similar to that of Ferenheim and his wife.

#### 4. The Motif of Leaving Home and Late-Return in the Compared Stories

Here we find a bold similarity to Homer's hero in the beginning of the story. Ulysses-Odysseus, Colonel Chabert and Ferenheim left their homes and wives for a military mission which they took upon themselves, but there is a deviation in the story of Colonel Chabert and Ferenheim from the "happy end" which is truly speaking not happy at all for the heroes although it is for their wives.

Interestingly enough is the striking similarity between Odysseus, Colonel Chabert and Ferenheim concerning the stimulus for leaving their wives and their homes, which is the same in

all three stories. And this is even stronger between Odysseus and Ferenheim, having an additional point of similarity. Odysseus leaves a child when he leaves home and so does Ferenheim, but this is not true of either Colonel Chabert or Menashe Hayim. At the same time there is also a strong difference. Telemachus, Odysseus' son who had grown up to manhood, is searching for his father and helps him regain his masterhood of his home. Ferenheim's child dies before he comes home and widened the gap between him and his wife.

Carrying on with the general survey of the similarities and differences between these works, we have to emphasize that some of them are similar and different at the same time. For instance, we find the similarity to Homer's hero in the beginning of Agnon's story, i.e., Menashe Hayim leaves his wife and home because he undertook a mission, but in this very same motif, there is a big difference, since in our case it is a very personal one, to regain a personal position, and not for the sake of society as in Homer's epos, or in Balzac's story, or even in Agnon's other story, Ferenheim. After the similar starting points between the abovementioned heroes we find a striking deviation from Homer's original development, and in spite of a very strong similarity between the "happy end" in Balzac's and Agnon's stories, there is yet very much originality in Agnon's characters and in their genuine personalities.

Ferenheim, Agnon's other story, is more similar to Odysseus and to Colonel Chabert than to Vehaya he'akov lemishor, but even so it has the mark of Agnon's virtuosity and genuineness, in spite of some similarity to a German story published in 1927 by Leonard Frank under the name of Karl Und Anna.<sup>20</sup>

The same deviation from Homer's main motif that we find in Colonel Chabert and in Vehaya he'akov lemishor, namely the late unsuccessful return, we find also in Ferenheim. But there is also the successful one, that of Karl Neiss.

Until now we showed the close but general similarities and differences between the works of these writers and how they made use of the same main motif giving special characteristics to the personalities of their heroes and the determination of their own fates. Before comparing them, we would like to proceed with more details on Menashe Hayim and so reveal the variations and the subtle nuances through which Agnon gave his readers the experience of his genuine virtuosity.

5. Aspects of Vehaya he'akov lemishor and its Main Protagonist, Menashe Hayim

For a better understanding of the richness of Agnon's style and to follow consistently the evolution of the events and characters, we have to quote some passages from the original text, for we do not feel that we can be satisfied with the summarized contents of the specific chapters, since this story is not yet available in English.<sup>21</sup>

The story of Vehaya he'akov lemishor starts with some headlines given on the first page of the tale:

And The Crooked Shall Become Straight<sup>22</sup>

A tale about a man named Menashe Hayim, a resident of the H.C. of Buczacz, M.A.P.H.<sup>23</sup> who became impoverished, and the poverty, Heaven forbid,<sup>24</sup> caused him to transgress the commandments of his Creator and he cast a defect in (the people of) Israel and he was reprimanded and persecuted and was compelled to wander about, but he did not deprive other lives and he bestowed a name and a memory as it is explained within the book in length. And about him and the like, the scripture says: "And then they

shall be paid the punishment of their iniquity"<sup>25</sup>. And Rashi<sup>26</sup> O.B.M.<sup>27</sup> commented: "And they shall atone for their sins through their sufferings".<sup>28</sup>

After these few headlines, in which the writer explains in a few very general sentences what is going to happen in this tale as a whole, as a complete book, we have some other headlines at the beginning of every chapter, commencing with the first chapter, revealing their contents in a few lines.

#### First Chapter

in which he is complaining about the bad times for the man shall plunge towards his downfall and the blows of the world lead him astray. The salvation of God comes in a twinkling of an eye. (The darkest hour is just before dawn.) Undertakings of righteous (people) and the rhetorical language of the fine writer in Taich language (in the Yiddish language). Those who are spending the day in poverty and of the letter of commendation. Its contents is successive a tale within a tale and therefore this chapter is exceedingly long.<sup>29</sup>

The writer alludes in these lines to different interesting situations, thus awakening the curiosity of the reader in the evolution of the plot, but also to Psalm 107 whose main subject is thanksgivings to the Lord by the people whom He delivered from their affliction after they prayed to Him when they were in distress. Agnon's hint, "Those who are spending the day in poverty", sounds very similar in Hebrew<sup>30</sup> to Ps. 107:23, to what Agnon most likely wants to say:

Our heroes will be in great distress, they will cry and they will hope for good, and you, the reader, may think that they will be delivered from their affliction, as happened with those who gave the thanks, but you have to read the whole story to find out yourself what is really going to happen to our heroes.

After these enlightening headlines which deal specifically



with the contents of the first chapter, the writer quotes a few lines from the book of sermons in which the reader may find some hints to the development of the story, as follows:

And the wise<sup>31</sup> (man), may he rest in peace,<sup>32</sup> said:  
"Wealth for vain deeds will be diminished<sup>33</sup> a.s.o.,<sup>34</sup>  
to teach and to acknowledge how weak and inferior is  
the money which has no intrinsic value at all." He  
said that the wealth because of its nature and its  
character will be reduced, will diminish and will  
perish for vanity and for another reason. Because there  
is no need for strong reasons to make it perish, since  
for its major weakness and its lack of importance, that  
for any minor or light reason which is not considered  
as something, as if it would be vanity, it will go  
down the drain and it will be belittled in its limited  
capacity. So that when we shall see a rich (person)  
who becomes poor and loses his money, we have not to  
wonder and to investigate how it decreased and to reflect  
on its method, for it is from its character and nature  
to decrease for a small reason. (Bina Le'ittim<sup>35</sup> Sermon  
sixty nine (see there))<sup>36</sup>

Now let us try to analyze these three short quoted fragments and let us see what they hint at and what they mean.

Usually when we read headlines we know that their main aim is to give the reader an inkling as to what he may expect in the book or in the chapter respectively. Is it the same in Agnon's works? Yes and no. Generally speaking, we may say yes, but reading his headlines carefully we find that they may induce us into erroneous foresight or into predicting the evolution of the story or the characters involved, so that we can never know in advance what will be the next step of this or that hero. For example, in the headlines to chapter one, after he hints that "the man shall plunge towards his downfall", he also says that "the salvation of God can come in the twinkling of an eye". The reader is optimistic about the happy end, at least of the first chapter, but that is not so. On reading what Agnon quoted

from the book of sermons our eyes come across a statement like:

When we shall see a rich (person) who becomes poor, ...  
we shall have not to wonder... and to reflect on its  
methods

and we are already accustomed to the idea (taken from the burial service), that we are not supposed to wonder and to reflect after His methods, about the way He conducts His world, so that at the first reading we may understand, wrongly, and it usually happens like that, i.e., that the quotation speaks about the Almighty, but really it speaks about the methods and the nature of money. And such ironic "misunderstandings" are found many times in this story as well as in others.

This original aspect of Agnon's way of writing must be emphasized so that even the uninitiated reader will be able to read between the lines of his works in spite of reading them in translation and not in the original language. Comparing this side of Agnon's work to a similar one in Homer, Balzac and Hamsun, we shall have to recognize that we are fortunate to savour a richer taste in Agnon's works, for we find in their works neither the Biblical allusions nor reminiscences, nor the play of the expected and unexpected situations and such surprising natural<sup>37</sup> turns in the events and the characters described.

From the beginning of the story Agnon describes an almost happy couple who have an idyllic and ideal family life. We said 'almost' because right from the beginning the author builds up the tension of the story ironising the husband's passivity and his wife's activity.

Not many years ago settled down in the town Buczacz, may the Almighty protect her, an honest and righteous Jewish man whose name was Menashe Hayim Hacoheh, a native from the H.C. Yazlowitz, and even so that he was not from the mighty people and among the rich ones his place would not be recognized. Anyhow his maintenance was available

generously and not frugally from the grocery shop business, and he enjoyed life with his wife, Krendel Tcharni, whom God granted him from his boyhood. He ate bread in abundance, he and his wife with him, and he did charity and good deeds all his lifetime, and in him was confirmed the saying of O.S.O.B.M.<sup>38</sup>: Which one is this one who does charity at all times,<sup>39</sup> this one who maintains his wife and his children - in (half or in third) part because the man went barren and he had no children, and she, his helpmate<sup>40</sup> was engaged in commerce and all the business of the shop were decided in accordance with her wish, as it was customary in all the countries of Israel's dispersion in those days. Apparently it was possible for a man like him to live in peace and in tranquility, he and his wife, and to end their days in pleasure, to enjoy themselves from the fats of the land and to behold the loveliness of the Lord,<sup>41</sup> after one hundred and twenty years<sup>42</sup> when the time to be judged shall come.<sup>43,44</sup>

The irony here is very subtle, but even so we are able to feel it quite strongly. Our hero is not one of "the mighty people" and even "among the rich ones his place would not be recognized" and before we reach the bottom of the first page of the first chapter we are already acquainted with some of his main characteristics. Not only does he not confirm the truth of the saying of O.S.O.B.M. in half part or in third part, but really not at all because he does not support his wife. On the contrary, she supports him, and there is no excuse that it was "as it was customary... in those days" because even where it was customary, it was only where the husband had dedicated his whole life to the study of the Torah; namely, the husband used to sit in the House of Study day and night. In these cases it was natural that the wife was active in the business. While here we see Menashe Hayim being the helpmate of his wife, in spite of the natural and healthy situation where the husband is the business man,

Also, from the very beginning there is the hint about the economical and spiritual decline due to come into the welfare of this family:

But when the Almighty wants to shatter the ways of a man, his luck will fast fly away then, and messengers the Omnipresent has many, to bring down to the dunghill the needy.<sup>45,46</sup>

In these few rhymed lines Agnon hints that the welfare of these people will soon be shattered very seriously. The reader's curiosity is aroused and he wants to know how, when and where it will happen. Maybe he would also like to ask why, but it cannot be known whether he will be satisfied with all the answers Agnon gives, sometimes outspoken and sometimes only hinting, to these questions.

The character of Menashe Hayim is entirely different from that of Odysseus and from that of Colonel Chabert as well. We cannot imagine that one of these heroes' wives would dare to act or to react in such a manner as Krendel Tcharni did towards Menashe Hayim, her husband, before they finally felt the long arm of their decline. First of all, "all the business of the shop was decided in accordance with her". Secondly, even the other side of the business was in her hands, so much so that she was the only business man in their business. She negotiates with the owner of the shop about the renewal of their contract and she conducts their business both de-facto and de-jure. More than that, when it seemed to her that her husband was not vigilant enough, she attacked him in an unbelievable manner, taking into account that they were described up till now as quite a happy couple who lived ten years together.

And Krendel Tcharni dead-tired and very exhausted from the course of the difficult day, sat on the chair to rest a little bit. She did not move from there for a

short while, because she was really not able to rise on her feet. She passed a few minutes until she regained her strength (lit: her spirit returned to her) and she lifted her eyes on the surface of the shop and she uttered a great and exceedingly bitter cry,<sup>47</sup> because all the chests were empty and the boxes and the cases were completely emptied, there was nothing in them. And she tore the buttonholes of her dress and she showered grievous curses on the head of Menashe Hayim, on the head of her good-for-nothing<sup>48</sup> husband, because he fell in a negligent sleep when she went to pay her debt and he gave room to a thief to empty all the articles. And despite all that Menashe Hayim stood and swore that he did not distract his attention from the shop even for one minute; it did not help him at all, because the tongue once she starts to curse, again she does not stop. And Krendel Tcharni added one curse upon another and she sobbed bitterly, "whether to dances did I lift my feet, or to put make-up on my face,<sup>49</sup> to go to a feast of pleasures? Is it not for your sake, for your sake, good-for-nothing, that I went in order that your alimony will not collapse, but you sat like a boor. To preserve the fruit of my labour you couldn't? Woe, Jews, why did God create to you eyes, is it only in order that you will see my labour and the food that I serve you with the sweat of my face and with my wholeheartedness and with my blood?" At that moment Menashe Hayim kept quiet and he became gloomy (lit: and his face was blackened like the bottom of a pot) and a clear Mishna<sup>50</sup> slipped his memory, that the earning of the woman belongs to her husband. But he did not answer her anything, and she annoyed him still more, but immediately her power, the power of a female weakened and she could not curse him anymore, and the fury of Krendel Tcharni was appeased.<sup>51</sup> But Menashe Hayim took the bundle of keys and he went out after his wife and he locked the shop, doors and bar. Then Krendel Tcharni cried again bitterly and she suffered bitterly (spilled her gall in front of him) and she said: "That is what people are saying, whence the horse was stolen one locks the doors of the stable. Good-for-nothing, wherefore do you lock up as the shop is empty?" While speaking she jumped and she rolled-back her sleeves which were worn out and she started scrutinizing and examining every lock and key to see if it was locked well enough, and she slipped away and

went to her home...52

Without exaggeration it may be said that the description of this incident is a psychological and sociological masterpiece, which emphasizes even more the irony of the first lines of this story. In less than two pages we were offered a concentrated and meaningful description of the most important characteristics of the two main characters of our tale. Any qualities we shall uncover during our reading will only add to these already revealed so intensively in this part of the story. The behaviour of Menashe Hayim throughout every phase of his life will be better understood with this incident in the background. Krendel Tcharni made herself the master of her husband so much so that Menashe Hayim was no longer not only the master of their fate but not even of his own.

#### 6. Colonel Chabert and Menashe Hayim

Let us first see the similarities between the plots and characters, etc. and afterwards we shall shift our attention to the differences. Colonel Chabert was happily married for a couple of years, as was Menashe Hayim - Colonel Chabert for at least six years (from 1799 until the end of 1806 or the beginning of 1807 when he was declared dead after the battle of Eylaw) and Menashe Hayim for ten years. Both did not have any children, while their wives gave birth to children after they remarried - Rosine to two, a boy and a girl, while Krendel Tcharni only to a boy. Both heroes left their homes for an indefinite period hoping to fulfill their goals quickly and return home to be as happy as before, Colonel Chabert by advancing in his military career and Menashe Hayim by collecting a sufficient sum of money with which to regain his middleclass

shopkeeper's position. Both however lost their identity; Colonel Chabert by being severely wounded on the battlefield of Eylaw, his "death" being "an historical fact, recorded in 'Victories et Conquetes' where it was related in full detail",<sup>53</sup> and whose death certificate "was probably made out in accordance with the rules of military jurisprudence"<sup>54</sup> while Menashe Hayim's loss of identity was a result of the death of the beggar who bought his letter of recommendation, with the death certificate made out in all probability in accordance with the rules of the rabbinical jurisprudence.<sup>55</sup> As a result of these events, both were in the position of beggars that were not recognizable even by their closest friends. Colonel Chabert describes the meeting with his best friend, Boutin, who recognized him only after he related to him certain details of their adventures (at Ravenna, in Italy) which could be known only to both of them, "and when I recalled them to his mind his incredulity diminished. I then told him the story of my singular experiences. Although my eyes and my voice, he told me, were strangely altered, although I had neither hair, teeth, nor eyebrows, and was as colorless as an Albino, a thousand questions which I answered triumphantly, he at last recognized his Colonel in the beggar".<sup>56</sup> A very similar description is found in Agnon, where Menashe Hayim's return home, after an absence of five years, is described. He returned home with great hopes, day dreaming, repeating without an end the verse: "For thy salvation, I hope, O Lord".<sup>57</sup> But while walking his spirit sank. Everyone he met failed to recognize him, as it is written (in the Holy Scriptures):

A stranger have I become unto my brothers,<sup>58</sup> and when he greeted somebody he was answered half-heartedly, and even the porter did not pay any attention to him. And Menashe Hayim said to himself, if I wouldn't recognize

these people then I would have believed that this is not the way and this is not the town Buczacz. And he wondered very much, what is this? Is it possible that he changed so much, during such a short time, until he is not recognized. Behold there didn't pass five years from the day he left his town....<sup>59</sup>

From these few lines it is clear that Menashe Hayim changed so much that he was not recognized.<sup>60</sup> Chabert, because of his physical and psychical deformity resulting from his battle wounds and the sufferings he went through for nearly ten years, while Menashe Hayim, mainly because of his physical deformity resulting from his surrender to his passive character and evil inclination which transformed his middleclass-shopkeeper's character into the character of a professional beggar. But here their ways differ. Chabert did his best from then on to be recognized and identified officially hoping to gain back his wife with greater ease, as well as his fortune and social position for which he fought as vigorously as possible until the moment that he decided to give up all his hopes, while Menashe Hayim did his best not to be recognized, so much so that he decided to walk from place to place only at night and live on the outside of Jewish society, staying near the cemeteries, etc., hoping not to be identified, a fact which would have had disastrous results for the happiness of his wife, her child and her second husband, according to his knowledge of Jewish law. There are still more differences between these two characters. Chabert tried to renew the contact with his wife by writing her letters, of which one reached her even before she remarried. It is true that even so it did not help him, but he wrote four letters to her, while Menashe Hayim neglected to keep in contact with his wife, who was left at home without a penny, a fact he was fully conscious of, but which did not stir up any activity on his



part as far as sending her any letters with money in them even for her daily bread. On the contrary, he failed to write to her at all. Also, in other similarities we still find the specific differences between them. For example, both came to the final conclusion that they will never return to their wives or to their homes, but reached this conclusion differently. To Chabert it takes a few painful years until he reaches the same conclusion as Menashe Hayim, who makes the decision on the spot. Chabert dreams of regaining his wife and if not her, at least his fortune and his former social position, while Menashe Hayim had only one wish, which filled his whole being - to die as soon as possible since he knew there was no possibility whatsoever of regaining his wife, and there was no fortune to start with. In other words, there are many pages in Colonel Chabert in which his hope for the regaining of his rights, at least partially, pervades through the lines even after meeting his wife and talking to her personally, while in Vehaya he'akov lemishor such meetings or similar discussions or arguments are incomprehensible because of the Jewish background of the protagonists. Even when Chabert found out that his wife remarried and had two children he didn't give up, while Menashe Hayim gave up any hope at the very moment of hearing that his wife had remarried and gave birth to a son. (There would have been the same religious legal situation even if she had not borne a child.) And there are still some more differences.

Colonel Chabert did not contribute even by a hair's breadth to the tragic situation into which he finally fell so unexpectedly. It was an unfortunate event that he was so badly wounded and that he was counted among the dead, but it was not his misbehaviour which brought this catastrophe upon him. And it was

also not his fault that he was absent from his home for such a long time. These facts are clearly described by Balzac.

Can we say the same for Menashe Hayim? Definitely not. Menashe Hayim caused himself, by his misbehaviour, to be counted among the dead. By selling his letter of recommendation he lost his identity (this alludes to the selling of his birthright by Essau for a pot of pottage). And it was also his fault that he was absent from home for such a long time without giving any sign of his existence.

Carrying on with this comparison between the two heroes, we find that Colonel Chabert tries to get his wife back, first of all because he is a person of action and there are no religious impediments in fulfilling his wishes, and yet he goes away with nothing because his wife does not want to go back to him. But why? Because she remarried and she is very happy with her second husband. Colonel Chabert lost not only his charm, which he had as a young officer, but he lost even the normal good looks of a man. So why should she agree to destroy her happiness for nothing?

And what is Krendel Tcharni's position? Why does Menashe Hayim not really try to do what Colonel Chabert had done? First of all, and above all else, there is the religious impediment. But even if the religious impediment would not have existed, why should she go back to him? She remarried and she is happier in her second marriage than in her first. Also, she has a son! Now she was finally released from the terribly painful thought that it was her fault that they were barren for ten years, because now she knows for sure that it was not her fault. Her second husband is also in a very good financial position and Menashe Hayim now looks like a professional beggar. Why should

she agree to destroy her happiness for a good-for-nothing?

Colonel Chabert was a courageous fighter on the front and also in his civil life, but only until the moment this fight could produce positive results. The moment he was convinced that he lost the battle, he gave up. His pride as a man was hurt by his treacherous wife, and he renounced her with the greatest contempt.

Menashe Hayim gave up from the beginning because he knew that he had no chance. He himself was conscious of the possible religious implications of his deeds and misdeeds.<sup>61</sup> But, in the opinion of this writer, no heroic decisions 'made' by Menashe Hayim gave him an exalted spiritual rehabilitation. Even his not committing suicide is misinterpreted by many readers. He did not commit suicide not because the Halacha<sup>62</sup> explicitly forbids it, but because to commit suicide he had to commit a certain act which he was unable to do because of his passive character, which, as was already mentioned, was so virtuously portrayed by Agnon in the first few pages of the story. There is also no room for admiring his passivity by attributing to him a high degree of readiness for a conscious self-sacrifice because of his love for his black crown.

A. Band writes:

Menashe Hayim's heroism assumes great proportions when we realize that in spite of his relentlessly precipitate course towards death and complete loss of identity, he never considers ending his misery by his own act.<sup>63</sup>

Entirely unfounded! We will bring just a few examples to show that he never made his own decisions and even when he did, he did not stick to them and any slight wind made him forget all about them.

Menashe Hayim wanted to make a living from teaching. His

'black crown' told him no, so her word was holy. She decided it was better, for a while, to beg alms, so he takes to the road and begs alms. He does not want to sell the letter of recommendation but he finally does so against his own will - and in spite of knowing that he is doing something very unlawful - because somebody influenced him. He decides to go to the fair to buy merchandise and be at home the next day before sunset, but instead he continues to get alms, because somebody to whom he came to buy merchandise gave him alms, and before dawn he remains with nothing. It seems that this list of misdeeds of Menashe Hayim, which were performed as a result of outer influences, is convincing enough of his passive character, and if he did not go to the rabbis to tell them that he was alive<sup>64</sup> it was also because he had to decide to go, and he could not decide, and even if he would have decided to go we still have to be convinced that even in that case he would have gone. The same applies to his committing suicide. He had to decide to commit suicide and then he had to commit it. And that according to the record of his character he was unable to do.

For Colonel Chabert there is also a very good reason to end once and for all the suffering caused him by his wife (which he agreed to take upon himself voluntarily because of his self-pride on the one hand and the contempt towards the chicanery of his wife on the other) by committing suicide. Although he had no religious impediments he did not do it. So, shall we say that Colonel Chabert's heroism assumes great proportions because he never considered ending his misery by his own act? The answer will be no! In spite of the fact that this idea struck him for a moment, as he says:

He felt such disgust of life, that if there had been any

water at hand he would have thrown himself into it; that if he had had a pistol, he would have blown out his brains...<sup>65</sup>

He did not think about it seriously, he just felt a strong feeling of disgust towards life as a result of finding out that his wife acted as if she still loved him, the Colonel, her husband, but only until the very moment he would have agreed to sign a document in which he would have recognized that he is not he, but a great swindler, as it is clear from the next few lines:

Delbecq had arrived some days before, and in obedience to the Countess's verbal instruction, the intendant had succeeded in gaining the old soldier's confidence. So on the following morning Colonel Chabert went with the erstwhile attorney to Saint-Leu-Taverny, where Delbecq had caused the notary to draw up an affidavit in such terms that, after hearing it read, the Colonel started up and walked out of the office.

"Turf and thunder! What a fool you must think me! Why, I should make myself out a swindler!" he exclaimed.<sup>66</sup>

After this first terrible shock he witnessed a short, but very important and impressive talk about him between his wife and her secretary, Delbecq, which revealed to him the cruelty and the egoism of the woman he loved so much and to whom so many times he declared his readiness to make the highest sacrifice in order to save her honour and her family life. What should be his reward according to her morals and ethics?

Unexpectedly he heard:

"Well, Monsieur Delbecq, has he signed? the Countess asked her secretary, whom she saw alone on the road beyond the hedge of a haha.

"No, madame. I do not even know what has become of our man. The old horse reared."

"Then we shall be obliged to put him into Charenton," said she, "since we have got him."

The Colonel, who recovered the elasticity of youth to leap the haha, in the twinkling of an eye was standing in

front of Delbecq, on whom he bestowed the two finest slaps that ever a scoundrel's cheeks received.

"And you may add that old horses can kick!" said he.<sup>67</sup>

This was an even greater shock to him than the first one. Here and now he had the final and most convincing proof of his wife's villainous intentions, and this could have awakened in him the thought of vengeance which he expressed already, thereby paying her back for her impertinence and villainy, but instead of this he says:

"Madame," he said, after gazing at her fixedly for a moment and compelling her to blush, "madame, I do not curse you - I scorn you. I can now thank the chance that has divided us, I do not feel even a desire for revenge; I no longer love you, I want nothing from you. Live in peace on the strength of my word; it is worth more than the scrawl of all the notaries in Paris, I will never assert my claim to the name I perhaps have made illustrious. I am henceforth but a poor devil named Hyacinthe, who asks no more than his share of the sunshine. --Farewell!"

The Countess threw herself at his feet; she would have detained him by taking his hands, but he pushed her away with disgust, saying -

"Do not touch me!"

The Countess's expression when she heard her husband's retreating steps is quite indescribable. Then, with the deep perspicacity given only by utter villainy, or by fierce worldly selfishness, she knew that she might live in peace on the word and the contempt of this loyal veteran.<sup>68</sup>

And so finally he gives up - with the promise of a loyal soldier - everything which could guarantee him an honoured life. We should also remember that Colonel Chabert, even at that time, would have been quite a rich man if he would have insisted on being recognized as Colonel Chabert, as it is clear from the next few lines:

"I hope, monsieur," the attorney went on, "that you will follow my advice. Your cause is mine. You will soon

perceive the interest I take in your situation, almost unexampled in judicial records. For the moment, I will give you a letter to my notary, who will pay you to your order fifty francs every ten days. It would be unbecoming for you to come here to receive alms. If you are Colonel Chabert, you ought to be at no man's mercy. I shall regard these advances as a loan; you have estates to recover; you are rich."<sup>69</sup>

Which means that he really made an incomparable great personal sacrifice when he decided to give up his hopes to get back his wife who was legally still his wife! Colonel Chabert renounced not only his wife but also his name, his estates and everything that belonged to him and was connected with his very honourable and heroic past! In other words he had chosen for the rest of his life a life of misery instead of regaining his famous name, his social and economical position, at least, if not his wife as well. However, he renounced all this and agreed to live a miserable life in different public homes with a borrowed name out of contempt towards her. He really made a sacrifice because he had renounced what he had or what he could have had.

In Menashe Hayim's case, it was his own fault that he lost his identity. The five years he spent away from home were not at all honourable, he had no estates and no belongings at all, and if he would have appeared at any civilized place and reclaimed his wife according to his true identity, he would have deserved only shame and punishment; shame because of his shameless social and moral behaviour (not caring for his wife for five years) and punishment for the legal aspect (the selling of his identity, the letter of recommendation). Heroism in renouncing is to be appreciated as such only if there is truly something to renounce. Menashe Hayim had nothing to renounce and therefore there is only a pseudo-heroism in his pseudo-renouncement. (Or do we see in a renouncement from doing harm,

without any personal positive gain, heroism? We wonder!)"<sup>70</sup>

In other words, Menashe Hayim's behaviour at the end of the story is not a result of a change in his character, caused by the shock of his life, but it is (in this writer's opinion) a natural, genuine, and true continuance of his passive character which was imposed upon him by his 'black crown', and which may have had its roots in the early days of his life when the character of the man is shaped.

These main differences are due to a considerable difference in the plot and in the background of the protagonists. Chabert's possibility to claim his wife and fortune even if only for the purpose of gaining a yearly allowance to make a living and even to remarry and be happy for the rest of his life, give an additional dimension to this literary work from this point of view, while the impossibility of Menashe Hayim to ask for such things altogether gives an additional dimension to this literary work of Agnon's from another point of view. Hence, the gravity of Chabert's tragedy lies on the level of material and social gain while that of Menashe Hayim is much deeper and of a transcendental level. And this is also the explanation for the great part of the story that is developed concerning the right of the protagonist and his fight for the restoration of his rights and the descriptions of the meetings between the lawyer and Chabert as well as his meetings with Countess Ferraud upon which almost the whole story is based except for digressions here and there in the story in which we read about the milieu of the restoration time in Paris in general, and in the houses of the attorneys in particular, as well as about the sufferings of this veteran soldier who had to die twice as well as be buried twice.

While nothing similar in space could have been devoted in



the story of Menashe Hayim because in his story no attorney could have been involved for a similar purpose, it is also true that he did not want to go to rabbis to ask for help, advice or salvation as explained, because of his passive character, and also because of the religious and social implications which would have resulted from such a deed on his part upon the happiness of his wife and new family. Therefore, it is not incidental that there is nothing similar in Agnon's story concerning the character of the attorney, his meetings and arguments with either of the counterparts about the possible solution to their problems. Hence, Menashe Hayim dies soon after the discovery of his tragedy, and we are told in the epilogue about his last days in which his second and final burial is described. Amazingly enough, even this point is similar; Chabert is buried twice - once alive under a heap of bodies and again under a heap of papers, while Menashe Hayim was buried first under a 'heap of papers', namely by the misleading death certificate, and the second time for real under a heap of earth. The writer of Chabert satisfied himself by burying him only twice, thereby leaving his final death to our imagination,

Summing up, in general terms, what has been proven up to now, we may say that the kernel of the main plot and that of the main characters is conspicuously similar, in spite of the many great differences between them and between the protagonists of these stories. In this writer's opinion, most of the differences are a direct result of the different backgrounds of the protagonists. Even the difference in the missions of the protagonists can be explained as being due to the difference of backgrounds. In the middle of the 19th century, the time of Menashe Hayim's tragedy, there were no Jewish soldiers in the Polish army or in any other armies, and even if there would have

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been, it is almost incomprehensible that he would have attained such a high position, as to cause the personal interest and involvement of the Head of State, as happened in the case of Colonel Chabert. It also has to be emphasized that the economical motivation of leaving the house for an unforeseen period, which was the elementary cause of Menashe Hayim's tragedy, is not a typically Jewish motif. As it will be shown in the coming parts of this study, there are at least three literary works in the English literature of the last centuries in which the Homeric motif is developed upon an economical motivation. This does not exclude the explanation of the impossibility of a military motivation in a story in which the protagonists are of Jewish origin and with a Jewish religious background. This is true about the story of Menashe Hayim and his period, but it is different in a story in which the period is different. Before the First World War there already were many Jewish soldiers serving in the armies of all the nations, even in armies which fought against each other. There is a well known Hebrew ballad written by Shaul Tchernichovsky in which he describes the tragedy of two brothers who served in two different armies and so without knowing it, they killed each other.<sup>71</sup> One of the sons was called to serve in the Turkish army and the other one, studying in France, joined a group of French volunteers to fight for the independence of Greece. This ballad ends: "And by the light of the flash of the shot they (the brothers) recognized each other".<sup>72</sup> Therefore, in a story like Ferenheim, which covers the time of the First World War, we are not surprised at the tragedy of a Jewish soldier who lived in Austria and served loyally in its army. But even so he is a mere soldier and not a high ranking officer. Before going over to the other similar points of this story to

that of Colonel Chabert it is important to attract the attention of the reader to the differences between Chabert's legal position and Ferenheim's. We can not be misled by the similarity of their daring to return to their wives and claim their rights from them. Chabert's position has already been clearly elaborated on, therefore now we'll try to do the same concerning Ferenheim. The only explanation of the fact that Ferenheim could claim his wife, Inge, was because she had not as yet married Karl Neiss. From the Jewish legal point of view, she could marry Karl Neiss because she was never married to him before she married Ferenheim. Thus, she could refuse to return to Ferenheim and hope to marry Karl Neiss if she received a bill of divorce from Werner Ferenheim, her first and still legal husband.

#### 7. Ferenheim - Chabert - Menashe Hayim

As was already mentioned, the story of Ferenheim is very similar to the story of Menashe Hayim and to that of Colonel Chabert as well. This writer dares to say that it is much more similar to the latter one, but even so very genuinely and originally treated.

In Ferenheim, Agnon gives us quite an interesting variation of the main Odysseyan motif with a Chabertian "happy end" for Ferenheim and an Odysseyan ending for Karl Neiss. Ferenheim, like Colonel Chabert, was a courageous fighter on the front. Both Colonel Chabert and Ferenheim did not do anything for which they could be blamed for creating their own misfortunes, as we can say without any doubt about Menashe Hayim. They were both good soldiers who fulfilled their duties to the best of their abilities and it was nobody's fault that one was fatally wounded and counted as dead and the other considered as dead after falling prisoner into enemy hands.

Ferenheim, like Colonel Chabert, came home and claimed his wife, asking her to return to him and to return his love and understanding after so many years of absence. But it was to no avail, and finally both contemptuously renounced their wives, as the only solution to their powerless position. Their positions were helpless only from the emotional point of view. From the legal point of view the second marriage was null and void according to the French law and the Austro-Hungarian or Austrian law as well, in Chabert's case. Ferenheim's wife could not have remarried until she received a legal divorce from her husband. But neither took advantage of his opportunity to harm his wife or to destroy her happiness. Still, we do not see in their helpless and hopeless behaviour any degree of heroism. Why then should we assume it in Menashe Hayim's more passive similar behaviour?

Continuing the comparison, we find in Colonel Chabert many details about the happiness of the second marriage which was already consummated, and there were two children already born (similar to Menashe Hayim's position). But in Ferenheim the reader finds an entirely different situation. The woman had not as yet remarried and the first husband had proven, beyond any doubt, his virility, which is not the case with Menashe Hayim or Colonel Chabert. In spite of all this the final rupture between Inge and Ferenheim is unexpected and nevertheless convincing.

Reading Ferenheim one will be aware of the fact that in spite of its compactness and brevity we have in this very short story all the motifs doubled and twisted. Inge was in love with, and engaged to, Karl Neiss whom she wanted to marry, but because he was supposed to have died in an accident she marries Ferenheim.

Now, after a few years of silence Karl Neiss comes back, very much alive, and he is going to marry Inge because Ferenheim is supposed to have died during the First World War. And now Ferenheim is coming back, also very much alive, and is claiming his rights to his wife. However, he soon gives up when he finds out that he has lost the battle for the second time. He tried to get Inge to recall the highlighted moments of their short marriage but Karl Neiss' presence overshadows everything.

Ferenheim's honourable past is questioned by two clear hints given by Steiner, his brother-in-law, when he comes to claim his wife, Inge. One hint is that Steiner does not mention his "absconding with the funds and staining the firm's reputation" which seems to go unnoticed or else slipped Ferenheim's attention because of the unbelievable and more exciting news he has heard about Karl Neiss. This reveals a non-direct additional accusation that he (Ferenheim) told a lie when he reported that Karl Neiss was dead and that he did it to win the heart of Inge:

"I myself, everybody with me - we all saw him disappear beneath a landslide and I never heard of his being pulled out of the debris... And even if they did get to him, he could not possibly have come out alive."<sup>74</sup>

Later on Ferenheim tries to clarify this accusation, saying:

"You suspect me of having deceived you when I came and told you that I saw Karl Neiss buried in a landslide. I was ready to tell a hundred lies in order to win you. But that was true,"

"True and not true,"

"True and not true? What's not true about it?"

"It's true that a landslide fell on top of him, but it didn't bury him."

"Then where was he all these years?"

"That's a long story,"<sup>75</sup>

And because Agnon wanted to tell us a short story we have to guess what and how much of this first insinuation or open

accusation is true, and to imagine the long story about the miraculous way in which Karl Neiss was covered by a landslide and yet was not buried alive; and how this dead man came back very much alive and is now challenging Ferenheim's right to come back to his wife.

In Ferenheim's words:

Suddenly he comes and says, 'Lo and behold, here I am, and now, all we need to do is pluck Werner Ferenheim out of the world and take his wife! Right Inge?'<sup>76</sup>

When Colonel Chabert speaks to his wife he does not mention or attack his wife's second husband, as Ferenheim does towards his wife's old-new suitor. But just as Colonel Chabert, he is still left with an elementary sense of self-pride when he decided to reject any contact with his wife. So we find Ferenheim saying to his wife:

"I did not come to force myself on you against your will. Even the lowest of the low isn't utterly lacking in honour. But you do understand, don't you? I had to see you, I have to speak to you: but if you don't want me to, I'll go. And may be the future will be brighter for me than Mr. Hans Steiner and Miss Ingeborg of the house of Starkmat think. My black fate isn't sealed forever. Not yet. Tell me, Inge, is he here? Don't be afraid of me, I don't want to do anything to him. What could I do, if even mountains make a fool of me?"<sup>77</sup>

Here we also find a feeling of submission and of sacrifice as in Colonel Chabert and even more (from the religious point of view) like in Vehaya he'akov lemishor, and not of vengeance, as we could have expected from such a man in these circumstances.<sup>78</sup> Even in an expressed moment of weakness in which the idea of committing suicide strikes Ferenheim, as we have seen happen also with Colonel Chabert (but not with Menashe Hayim), such an idea is dismissed immediately, saying:

Or it would be better were this same Werner, this same Werner Ferenheim, Inge's husband, to pluck himself out of the world, so that Mr. Karl Neiss might take to wife Mrs. Inge Ferenheim, excuse me Miss Ingeborg of the house of Starkmat. This is the woman Werner took in holy matrimony, who even bore him a child, and though God did take him, his father is still alive, and means to go on living; yes, to go on living after all the years he was half dead. But this same Werner Ferenheim, this unlucky fellow, does not want to pluck himself out of the world. To the contrary, he seeks new life. Yesterday I was at our son's grave. Do you think that with him we buried everything that was between us?<sup>79</sup>

In Ferenheim the motif of committing suicide is more conspicuous than in Colonel Chabert, possibly because he repeats this thought many times in the positive way as well as in the negative one and he immediately dismisses them as soon as they come to his mind and his lips. While in Colonel Chabert they do not even reach his lips, possibly because Colonel Chabert knows that a reverse of the situation is not possible any more whereas Ferenheim may still have a hidden hope that through an honourable approach he will be able to regain his lost position. But as we have seen, it is in vain.

We still find the main differences, besides the style and the length of the stories, in the space and stress dedicated to the different aspects of the very same motif and plot. Colonel Chabert was declared dead because of his deadly wounds which left their deep mark on his physical and psychical appearance. Ferenheim's death was declared because of his disappearance in a prisoner of war camp, but which did not leave upon him any deep physical or psychical marks. This, therefore, makes Ferenheim's rejection by his wife Inge even worse than that of Chabert's by his wife. Chabert had no children while Ferenheim had a child (who unfortunately died) but he found his wife had

not as yet remarried. And the most interesting point is that Colonel Chabert's story, as well as Menashe Hayim's, end under the impression of darkness, gloom and despair, while Ferenheim's ends with great hope. He says:

And may be the future will be brighter for me than Mr, Hans Steiner and Miss Ingeborg of the House of Starkmat think. My black fate isn't sealed forever. Not yet,<sup>80</sup>

This hope is expressed again where his misfortune is completely clear. After Inge left him in her room kneeling with closed eyes, he came to the only conclusion:

Now I have no choice but to leave this place. That's clear;...<sup>81</sup>

without bitterness or moaning and when:

he thought, now I'll go to the railroad station and leave. And if I've missed the afternoon train I'll take the evening train...<sup>82</sup>

he did not give up the hope for a better time that will take the place of this unfortunate one.

#### 8. The Heroines in These Stories

The interest of the reader was focused, in the previous pages, on the heroes, their character, their deeds and misdeeds, as well as upon their spiritual elevation in the different but tragic situations they found themselves in. It is of no less importance to do justice also to the fair sex and to make conspicuous as well their contributions to the developments of the plots in all these works.

Going back to the Odyssey we find that Penelope always mourned the disappearance of her dear husband Odysseus, and she could not make up her mind to get married again to one of the suitors, in spite of the fact that nearly twenty years passed since her beloved husband left her.



Can we expect in our time that a woman should wait and mourn the disappearance of her husband for such a long period of time? Could this have even happened a few centuries ago? The literature gives us a clear and unequivocal answer. Five years, ten years, twelve years, but no woman came near the twenty years. Maybe the real answer is that Odysseus returned to his beloved wife after twenty years of absence, and he found her still waiting for him because the plot of his story is mingled with dozens of miracles, i.e., in a miraculous world anything unbelievable, inconceivable and unnatural can happen, but in our times, and even a few centuries ago, when miracles did not and do not happen, according to Kurtzweil and Band's reading, this also cannot happen. Hence there is no value and no literary importance in a detailed comparison between such different characters as Penelope and Krendel Tcharni or Inge. Therefore, except for the main motif of waiting faithfully for the return of the husband, there will not be any comparison between all the other heroines of our research and Penelope's character and behaviour. However we will compare the other heroines of our stories since all of them seem to be described as real, cruel and tragic, as reality can be.

a. Chabert's Wife - Rosine Ferraud

Mrs. Chabert-Ferraud was still a young and "always charming woman" when she again met her first husband who returned alive from under the heap of bodies after the battle of Eylau. Her external appearance did not mirror her inner qualities. "She has no heart"<sup>83</sup> at least not towards her first husband, whose great fortune and misfortune helped her remarry well. She had no pity for Colonel Chabert, her husband, and she was

prepared to exploit his pure and naive sentiment of love towards her to get rid of him as soon as possible, and she actually succeeded. She wanted him to remain dead, and if not she would have liked to see him dead for a second time. This time, forever.

Before she remarried, Mrs. Chabert received a letter from her husband, but she did not take it into consideration claiming that she suspected it to be a forgery and an attempt at blackmail. She received some more letters from her husband who asked for her help in his distressed situation. Even one of his friends, Boutin, brought her a message from him, but to no avail. She camouflaged her existence very originally. Being married to Count Ferraud, Colonel Chabert could not find any trace of Mrs. Chabert, and although she owed him all her wealth and all her happiness, she did not help him out with anything, not because she could not afford to financially or for social reasons, but because she did not want to.

She did not love him any more. She did not care at all about his wellbeing. All she cared about was how to get rid of him, and the sooner the better. "At any rate she meant to annihilate him socially..."<sup>84</sup> From the story it is not clear how many "happy years" they were married before Colonel Chabert went out to his last military engagement from which he returned a broken person, physically and mentally. But we do know that he "made a will before your (his) marriage..."<sup>85</sup> in 1799 which means that they lived together for approximately seven years, since he was counted among the dead in February 1807. We also know that she did not bear him any child, so it was easier for her to wipe out any sentiment towards her former husband. She is described as being still a young and goodlooking woman while he is described as the old soldier. (No wonder that she re-

jected him.)

Her second marriage seemed to be a happy one since she had two children with her second husband and she was very fond of him. When she discussed with the advocate the claims of her first husband, she claimed to reject all the trials of the 'faked' Chabert who appeared in the past years or should appear in the future. Even when Colonel Chabert appeared suddenly from the other room, and she recognized him immediately, she tried unsuccessfully to hide her great excitement denying his identity. But meeting him outside the advocate's office she acted as if she still loved him. She played on his heart strings, hoping to avoid any unpleasant publicity, and tried to persuade him to sign his own verdict. This he actually did but for different reasons - she, for her egoistic and selfish purposes and he, because of his contempt for her attitude and behaviour. In any event, she achieved her aim of putting Colonel Chabert out of her way in the cheapest way possible. She even tried to avoid the payment for the advocate's services but she finally had to honour this bill.

The main similar points are conspicuous and will be summarized briefly in the following lines:

- 1) She was married to Colonel Chabert but had no children from this marriage, similar to Krendel Tcharni whose marriage to Menashe Hayim was childless but different from Inge who had a child with Ferenheim, but the child unfortunately died.
- 2) She waited for the return of her husband until she was advised of his heroic death, similar to Krendel Tcharni who waited for the return of her husband until she was advised of his tragic death and also similar to the attitude of Inge who agreed to marry Ferenheim only after her fiance, Karl Neiss,

was reported dead.

3) She remarried in spite of the fact that the first letter from her "dead" husband reached her before her remarriage. Her excuse was that she suspected it to be a forgery since it was an unbelievable contrast to the official statement, similar in a certain way to Inge who received the message personally of Ferenheim's return and his being well and alive although she had not yet remarried, but different from Krendel Tcharni who remarried only after Menashe Hayim's "death" was officially confirmed.

4) She had two children with her second husband with whom she was happy, similar to Krendel Tcharni who had only one child with her second husband with whom she was also very happy but different from Inge who was not happy with her husband, Ferenheim, but had not as yet remarried to her first fiance.

There is a main difference between these compared stories. Only in this story was the subject of the legal position of the marriages elaborated on so openly between the parties involved and also the question about what would be right or which circumstances would be taken into account by the judges if the case came to court, and which of them would gain priority.

Summing up the character of Rosine Chabert we may say that she seems to be an egoistic woman who loves herself and who was interested only in her own well-being and happiness without regard about the situation of the man who lifted her to the high social, economical and financial position which enabled her to remarry to the Count Ferraud,

Agnon portrayed Krendel Tcharni differently.

b. Krendel Tcharni - Menashe Hayim's Wife

Krendel Tcharni loves her husband in the frame of the ideas

of her time and her environment. Tenderness and signs of affection are kept mostly out of the public eye, but they existed in almost every family except where it was stated otherwise. In the description of Krendel Tcharni we find moments of true sentiment expressed, When we say true sentiment we mean not only the true sentiments of love towards one another but also true sentiments of bitterness, of humiliation and of contempt. Her inferiority complex towards her husband, which stemmed from the fact that they were barren for ten years, which she thought, wrongly, was her fault, caused her to have an ambivalent attitude towards Menashe Hayim, her husband. On the one hand she consciously recognized and appreciated his love for her, as well as his attachment to her in spite of what she supposed was her fault, and on the other hand her subconscious feelings caused her to dominate their daily life and even their fate and future.

During the ten years of her marriage to Menashe Hayim she may have had happy years since Agnon describes their lives only from the beginning of their decline. Thus we can be wrongly impressed from the tensed times and make a generalization covering all their years together.

We may say, in spite of the few humiliating scenes described by Agnon at the beginning of the story, that there was a great deal of understanding and steady love between them, a fact which may also help us to understand some of the romantic scenes in which we are shown the tenderness and the affection that existed between them. However, her ambition to regain their middle-class shopkeeper's position, even through some humiliating and degrading means, pushed her husband, Menashe Hayim, out of their home forever and so she unwillingly and unwittingly caused the tragic and horrible end of her husband. But she also got her

punishment; she had to live a lonely and miserable life for four years poverty stricken swaying between hope and despair and vice versa, which gave a new dimension to her affliction. However "the salvation of God comes in the twinkling of an eye", and after three months of widowhood she remarried as soon as she found the right match and Jewish law permitted. She was convinced that her second marriage is willed by Heaven since she conceived immediately.

Being happily married to a well-to-do husband she did not entirely forget her first husband. She still had a feeling of a certain duty towards him since there was nobody to care for the posterity of his name. Maybe this would be the most suitable explanation of her visits at the cemetery at the grave of her supposed husband, until the tombstone was erected upon it. We must grant Krendel Tcharni the right of being different from all the other heroines of our compared stories. In all the stories we mentioned, there is no assurance that the beloved husband or friend died, which is only supposed because of lack of communication. However, here there is clear evidence that her husband died and therefore there is nothing abnormal in her decision to remarry, especially if we take into account her miserable life for four years without hope of help even from the Helping Hand Society of the community.<sup>86</sup> Her husband left her in growing poverty, in such great misery that even Agnon abstains from giving its full description. Even if she loved her husband very much when he was near her, its dying flame seems to have been extinguished finally only shortly after the dreadful message reached her. All the other heroines had a hope, sometimes a very vague one, but still a hope, that her beloved husband might reappear right after she might remarry and this hope could keep

the flame of love from dying.<sup>87</sup> This could not be the case with Krendel Tcharni whose husband's death was confirmed by the Rabbinical Court.

Summing up the character of Krendel Tcharni we may say that she was a good hearted woman who loved and cared for her husband in her way, but in accordance with the times in which she lived. And even after his "death" she still showed a certain care for his posterity and looked after the fact that he should have a tombstone on his grave. This is quite different from what we know about Rosine or Inge. They would have preferred to erect a stone upon their living first husbands. However, Mrs. Ferenheim's character is different from both of them.

c. Mrs. Inge Ferenheim

Agnon tells us very little about Mrs. Inge Ferenheim but even so we are able to make up a picture of her character. We also know very little about her "happy years" with Werner Ferenheim but we know that they had a child, which unfortunately died not long before her husband returned from his imprisonment of war.

She truly loved and still loves another man, Karl Neiss, and there still is a big question mark concerning her true sentiment to Werner Ferenheim when she agreed to marry him. Apparently she succumbed to Werner's courtship. This we may conclude from what he told her:

My soul was stirred as on that day when you placed your hand in mine and agreed to become my wife. Do you remember that moment, when you rested your head on my shoulder while we sat together as one, your hand in mine? Your eyes were closed, as were mine, as I close them now and pass before me all the events of that matchless day.<sup>88</sup>

About this matchless day, Hans Steiner thinks differently:

Why did he win her and why did she marry him? This I leave to riddle solvers. I can't say why. From the very beginning the match was no match, but what happened happened. At any rate there is no need that it be so forever....<sup>89</sup>

And according to this interpretation of the matchless day we may conclude that Inge was, one way or another, not always the strong character who could make up her mind whom she truly loves. But maybe we can assume for ourselves the title of riddle solver and answer the question "Why did she marry him?"

When we discussed Krendel Tcharni's remarriage we explained that her decision was the most moral one in her circumstances, based especially on the fact that she was widowed on the testimony that her husband died. The same reasoning may apply also in the case of Ingeborg. As long as she was sure about the fact that Karl Neiss was dead, she could not help herself from switching her love and her sentiment to the person who was nearest to her at that tragic time. This man was Werner Ferenheim. Maybe this is indeed the explanation to the question of why she married him. And this also gives a reasonable answer to why when Karl Neiss reappeared Inge did not even want to listen to Ferenheim, with whom she had entered into holy matrimony, while with Karl Neiss she was only in love and engaged and many years had passed since then. In spite of that she went back to her first true love.

Her position is different from all the other protagonists of the compared stories. She is legally still married to her first husband, who was her second lover, and she wants to get married again to her first lover who will become her second husband, in spite of the fact that her first legal husband came back very much alive and is claiming her now. She rejected his



claim on the grounds that she married him on false testimony, i.e., that her fiance was killed in a landslide, a fact which was only apparently true. Hence, since her husband disappeared meanwhile and was reported dead, which was also only apparently true, and her first lover came back, she decided to reject the renewed courtship of her legal husband when he returned to marry the man she really loved, her first lover. This is different from the other compared plots.

We have compared here on the one hand a simple and not so complicated situation (Vehaya he'akov lemishor) in spite of its complicated plot and on the other hand a complicated situation (Ferenheim) in spite of its not so complicated plot where it is true that her first lover came back but her marriage was not yet dissolved because her first husband who is alive would not release her so easily from her marriage bond.

There is also a striking similarity between Inge's situation and Mrs. Rosine Chabert. Rosine got the news of her husband's return before she remarried as did Mrs. Inge Ferenheim but with a difference. Inge not only got the news but she met him personally and rejected him personally and immediately. Mrs. Rosine Chabert, on the other hand, received the news through a letter she received from her "dead" husband and she did not dare to reject him as openly and immediately as Inge did. Maybe Inge's character was really stronger than we thought before. Maybe the weakness she showed by agreeing to marry Werner Ferenheim was a result of her temporary personal tragedy, and was not a permanent feature of her character which seems to be quite a strong one taking into account her reactions toward Werner's renewed courtship. She had no feelings of love for him, and we did not find a sign of pity in her behaviour.

It was as if they were strangers to each other and not husband and wife who were unfortunately separated for a period of time (less than five years) by the misfortunes of World War I.

From a few hints scattered in this short story we also find out some of Inge's physical features. She had a slender figure and shiny blonde hair, and 'the white of her neck shone', and when she was happy a certain radiance beamed from her eyes. But there are no hints as to the physical appearances of the heroines in the compared stories, except a few about Rosine Chabert, as already mentioned.

Summing up Inge's character we may conclude that she was a modern young woman with 'new' views about love and the holiness of marriage. A strong character, in some way also an egoistic and as heartless as Rosine, she wished for the same thing as Rosine, to see her first husband pluck himself out of her way.

## 9. The Crises in the Compared Stories

An additional point of comparison between the stories compared may be the crises which focus around them, the course of the events in the compared plots. There is no doubt that even Odysseus' departure to sea was a moment of crises, and in spite of the fact that it is not described in Homer's epos it is there all the way. Even on his return, the moment of crisis is there, even if very different from the others, since he found his wife still waiting for him while the others were remarried.

### a. The Crises in Colonel Chabert

There are many of these crises which are strikingly similar in the works compared. In Colonel Chabert we find some of these moments of crises and even these are not so closely

exposed as in Vehaya he'akov lemishor and in other works.

The first crisis is the departure of the husband to the front, which is not described in the book, but is very much there, since it is the starting point to the whole tragedy (of Colonel Chabert, of course).

The second crisis is his being deadly wounded, and counted among the dead, and the many years of his wandering from hospitals to mental homes, until he reached Derville's office (the lawyer) where his history reached its climax.

The third crisis is when his wife did not want to recognize him openly, and consequently as he accompanied her to her hamlet on the outskirts of the forest of Montmorency (about eight miles north of Paris where Rosseau and Robespierre had lived), where he dreamed of a form of reconciliation between them, where he dreamed that she might still have a certain sentiment for him, and where it reaches the climax since he finally got the shock of his life there. It was then that he decided to disappear since he could no longer stand the villainous intentions of his wife.

b. The Crises in Vehaya he'akov lemishor

Trying to focus the events in Vehaya he'akov lemishor around the moments of crisis, we may clearly point to at least five main crises in this story.

The first crisis is in the discernment of the couple that they had lost their position of middle-class shopkeepers, possible forever.

The second crisis is Menashe Hayim's departure from home, going to the road to beg alms, without having the faintest idea when he may be back home, if at all.

The third crisis is when Menashe Hayim decides to look around at the fair of Lashkovitz, instead of buying the merchandise he came for, and after which he ate, got drunk, fell asleep and lost everything.

The fourth crisis is when Krendel Tcharni got the tragic news about the death of her husband, but was really the death of the fictitious Menashe Hayim, on account of which she got permission to remarry and finally be happy.

The fifth crisis is when Menashe Hayim returned home still hoping to remake his broken family life, and instead of finding his wife waiting for him, he discovered that she remarried upon the news of the death of the fictitious Menashe Hayim and that she gave birth to a son by her second husband.

c. The Crises in Ferenheim

Speaking about the crises in Ferenheim we must take into account the doubled and twisted situation of this short story.

The first crisis is when Karl Neiss disappears and is thought to be dead, after which Inge gives in to Ferenheim's courtship and agrees to marry him.

The second crisis for Inge, but the first one for Ferenheim, is his departure for the front.

The third crisis for Inge, but the second one for Ferenheim, is when he was captured as a prisoner of war and counted among the dead.

The third crisis for Ferenheim is when he comes back and finds his way blocked by the return of his rival Karl Neiss.

There may be a fourth moment of crisis for Inge when Karl Neiss returned and she was still bound to Ferenheim, but nothing is mentioned about it. Also the tragic moment of the death of her

only child is also cause for a crisis, but it is mentioned only in passing.

The similarity of the crises is quite clear and we will just sum them up. The first crisis in Chabert is parallel to the second one in Vehaya he'akov lemishor and to the first one in Ferenheim either for Inge or for Ferenheim. The second crisis in Chabert is parallel to the second one for Ferenheim in Ferenheim and to the fourth one in Vehaya he'akov lemishor. The third one in Chabert is parallel to the third one in Ferenheim and the fifth one in Vehaya he'akov lemishor.

As we have already mentioned on many occasions the similarities are there all the way and are conspicuous even here, a fact which may not be overlooked in a dissertation of this type.

#### 10. Conclusion

Summing up the special characteristics of the heroes compared above and the twists of their fate we have made conspicuous the similarities between them. This does not belittle the great differences between the heroes and the plots, but even so the similarities are too many to dismiss completely the evidence for influence. The motif of leaving the house for an unforeseen number of years, either for military reasons (Odysseus, Chabert, Ferenheim) or for economic reasons (Menashe Hayim) or other reasons (Karl Neiss) is the main one in all the works compared.

The protagonist's being assumed dead and the death being confirmed (officially or not) is also of great importance in the development of the plots in each of these stories.

The return of the dead protagonist is there in each of these stories, but because of the different realities they find

when they return , their reactions and the results are different - Odysseus is happy with his wife because she waited for him; Chabert claims his wife, but finally renounces her because his wife did not expect his return and remarried happily; Menashe Hayim renounced his wife without claiming her at all; Ferenheim claims his wife, similar to Chabert, but finally renounces her because she intended to marry her first lover, whose claim was favourably responded to by her.

The happy second marriage of the wives and the fact that they gave birth to children) is in Colonel Chabert and Vehaya he'akov lemishor, as well as in the atmosphere of Ferenheim.

Besides these there are also many minor similar motifs like the motif of committing suicide which is considered by Chabert as well as by Ferenheim, although rejected by both, or the similar crises, etc. The fact that Agnon dealt twice with the same theme, giving it each time a different social and cultural background, as well as an almost completely different development of the plot speaks for itself. Even in their style and structure they are completely different. All these make even more conspicuous Agnon's narrative virtuosity, especially if we consider the fact that this type of story is not typical of Agnon's topics, although some of their motifs are found again and again in his works in very original variations.

Through the comparison of two different Agnonian works and one of Balzac, the famous French writer, we are amazed by the great similarities in spite of the clear differences which make conspicuous the originality of every one of the compared writers. But even so we cannot overlook that the very same motifs, characters and plots have great resemblances, not only to the classical Greek literature (Odysseus), the French literature (Balzac) but

also to the English literature (Tennyson, Miss A.A. Procter and G. Crabbe) whose similitudes we will discuss in chapter ten. But before going on to this subject we would like to bring our interpretation of the story Vehaya he'akov lemishor in chapter nine.

#### NOTES

1. This motif appears in many of Agnon's stories in quite interesting variations, but we shall deal with this motif only in these two stories of Agnon: Vehaya he'akov lemishor and Ferenheim.
2. The Poems of George Crabbe, A Selection, Arranged and Edited by Bernhard Holland, London, Edward Arnold, 1909, see note of the editor at the end of the book.
3. AGNON, S.Y., And The Crooked Shall Become Straight, Jaffa (Jerusalem), ,1912.
4. AGNON, S.Y., Ferenheim, Tel Aviv, Ha'Aretz, published April 13, 1949.
5. As already generally mentioned above chapter ten will be devoted to the same subject but to English writers, namely Tennyson, Miss A.A. Procter and George Crabbe.
6. STRAUSS, A.L., Studies in Literature, Jerusalem, Israel, Copyright by the Bialik Institute, 1970, p. 243.
7. This type is known more as the symbolic or alegoristic story which is not connected with no known place and even the protagonists are anonymous, as in some of Kafka's or Agnon's works.
8. The title is taken from Isaiah 40:4. A commentator on this

verse writes:

Whatever would obstruct the path of the returning exiles would be smoothed away, in order to make a level and easy road for the returning exiles.

Hence some readers find in this title a hint to the development of the story and to its very happy end.

Others seem to find it hinting to the going to exile of Menashe Hayim which symbolizes the being in exile of the Jewish nation. Even so we fully agree with the first readers. We must disagree with the latter ones especially because it contradicts entirely the long aged longing for a true return to Eretz Israel and to a true "happy end" and not like the one we find in this story.

9. In the story of Menashe Hayim Hacoheh we realize that the tale of his tragedy is written in such a virtuous manner that the reader does not expect it to be a tragedy at all. Only near the last chapter does it become very clear how tragic our hero's life was.
10. Not only the title of this story has an inner deeper meaning but almost every name in Agnon's stories has a special meaning, or hints to a Biblical passage or has a symbolical connotation or association. Menashe Hayim means making to forget alive, and it hints to the Biblical story of Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, who was sold as a servant to the Ishmaelites who brought him to Egypt where later on he got the position of the Viceroy. Upon the birth of his first son, he gave him the name "Menashe, for God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house:"Genesis 41:51. During the reading of the story we shall understand how meaningful and prophetic



was this name given to this hero by the writer.

11. 'Krendel Tcharni' means (in the Yiddish language) a 'black crown'. Some husbands used to call their wives not by their real names but with pet names like 'my love', 'my crown', etc. Agnon gave her this name probably as a prediction that she will be the black crown of Menashe Hayim's life.
12. Kurtzweil is the main source of the positive attitude towards, and appreciation of, Menashe Hayim's behaviour. That is, seeing the reason for his renouncing his wife in his self-sacrificing love to her and in his heroic decision to retreat into oblivion which gave him a spiritual rehabilitation in the eyes of the reader. But to us the true reason for his behaviour lies in his character which was so wonderfully described and portrayed by Agnon and quoted on pages 260-7 of our research, and also in the relationship between him and his wife which was also stressed on page 267. The whole subject is more fully discussed on chapter IX.
13. According to the Code of Jewish Law, Menashe Hayim could never remarry Krendel Tcharni or come back to her because of her having married another man, and not because Menashe Hayim was a Cohen. Arnold Band writes on page 85: he could not remarry her for, being a Kohen, he could not marry a woman under these marital circumstances. This statement is not correct, since it is against the spirit and wording of the Jewish law. Such a marriage (to remarry one's wife after she was married to someone else is not different even if the second marriage was

dissolved by divorce or by the death of the second husband) is forbidden even to an ordinary Jew, i.e., one who is not a Cohen and this law is explicitly cited in Deuteronomy (24:1-4):

When a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it came to pass that if she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some scandalous thing in her, he may write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her away out of his house. And if she go(es) and become(s) another man's wife; and the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement and give it in her hand and send her away out of his house; or if the latter husband; who took her as his wife, should die; Then shall her former husband, who had sent her away, not be at liberty to take her again to be his wife; after she had been defiled for that is abomination before the Lord; and thou shall not bring sin upon the land...

In this verse there is no mention of a Cohen, which means that this law included all Jews indifferent of their tribal, social or political affiliation. Even the king, if he would have wished to remarry his former wife after she had been married to somebody else, would not have had the permission of the law.

14. BALZAC, H. de, Five Stories, edited and introduction by Edmund Fuller, U.S.A., a Laurel reader, Colonel Chabert, translated by Ellen Marriage and Clara Bell, 1832, p. 107.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, T.N. Glatzer (Ed.), London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1970, p. 245.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.

20. LEONARD, F., Karl and Anna, op. cit., see our note 36 on pages 115-116 of chapter IV.
21. It is worthwhile to attract the attention of the English reader to the fact that this story was translated into many languages. Its first translation was into German in 1918.
22. Isaiah 40:4; see also footnote 8.
23. From very ancient times any name of a Jewish community was preceded by the words The Holy Congregation, and so the H.C. of Buczacz, and was followed by the words May the Almighty protect her. Both are usually written only by their initials.
24. In the original text there appear only the initials of these words and they are usually added every time any trouble is mentioned or anticipated.
25. Levitius 26:41.
26. This name is composed from the initials of the famous commentator's name which was Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki, a paramount Bible and Talmud commentator, born in Trojes, France in the 11th century, who studied in the Rabbinical Academies in France and in Germany of that time. Later on he opened his own Academy and became an authority in Biblical and Talmudical commentary and in Halacha (Jewish laws and customs).
27. These initials are of the words "of blessed memory" and are usually put after mentioning the name of a Rabbi or any person whose memory is blessed.

28. Leviticus 26:41 in Rashi's commentary; The Hebrew text, AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Elu ve'Elu, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 57.
29. Ibid., p. 61.
30. To show the strong intonation and connotation to Ps. 107: 23, we bring here both lines in the original Hebrew reading. Agnon: Yordey Hayom Baaniyut: Ps. 107:23: Yordey Hayam Baoniyot. In the Jewish European (Ashkenazi) accent both the intonation and the connotation are even more similar.
31. "The wise" mentioned anonymously here means King Solomon whose wisdom is testified by the Bible. I Kings V, 11: "And he was wiser than all men...."
32. The Hebrew writer, through the ages, especially the religious minded, or with religious background, will put in the words "may he rest in peace" or "of blessed memory" after mentioning the name of one of the sages or of the rabbis or of any venerated person or the initials of these words.
33. Proverbs 13:11. "Wealth gotten by vain deeds will be diminished..."
34. The Rabbis used to quote from the Bible, from the Talmud and from the Post Talmudical Responsa short quotations to which they added "and finish" which meant, continue to read the original text; or they put in the words "and so on" with the same purpose. In most cases the reader knew the whole paragraph or chapter by heart. Using the same way of writing, it gave to the modern Hebrew writers' style

a certain allure, of which Agnon took a great deal of advantage.

35. Bira Le'ittim is a well known book of sermons, for all the festivals during the year, written by Rabbi Azarial Figo, Rabbi of Piza and Venice. The translation of the title may be 'The understanding of the times'.
36. The same remark as above (footnote 22) applies to the writer's note. Look up there meant mostly that for more details or for better understanding of the subject look up there in the original text as mentioned, and see there the whole subject.
37. It is stressed 'natural turns...' otherwise we shall have to take into account the most surprising supernatural turns from Homer's writings.
38. Our Sages of Blessed Memory.
39. In accordance with what is written in the Talmudic tractate Ketuboth 50a.
40. Namely, his wife, based on Gen. 2:18. "I will make him a help suitable for him."
41. Ps. 27:4, namely to be entitled to reach the world to come.
42. A common expression among Jewish people wishing others or themselves, on different occasions, a long and happy period of life, until One Hundred and Twenty years. The number is based on Gen. 6:3.
43. This expression means when the time to pass away will come and he will have to give an account of his deeds on this world before the Supreme Judge.

44. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 2, Elu Ve'Elu, Vehaya he'akov lemishor, in the Hebrew text, pp. 61-62.
45. Ibid., p. 62.
46. In contrast with Is. 2:8 and Ps. 113:7 "From the dunghill he lifteth up the needy."
47. Gen. 27:34, Est IV, 1.
48. The Hebrew equivalent Batlan is not as strong as it sounds in English, in our opinion. It is possible that Batlan should be translated idler and not good-for-nothing.
49. In accordance with the description from II Kings 9:30: "And when Isibel heard of it, she painted her eyes..."
50. It hints to the first Mishna in chapter 6 of tractate Ketuboth.
51. Es. 7:10: "... and the fury of the King was appeased."
52. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 2, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit., pp. 66-67.
53. Ibid., p. 73.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., pp. 110-111.
56. Ibid., p. 79.
57. Gen. 49:18. Agnon does mingle the quotations in his style, so that the average reader is even not aware of the different layers of his style.
58. Ps. 69:9.
59. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 2, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit.,

- p. 119.
60. We could also point here to the very similar motif in Homer. Odysseus appears also as an old beggar and is not recognized until later.
  61. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. II, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit., pp. 121-122.
  62. The Jewish Law!
  63. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare, Berkely and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1968, p. 88.
  64. And so he would have saved his wife and her husband from living in sin. But at the same time he would have destroyed their happiness because according to his (and common) knowledge Krendel Tcharni would have had to be divorced by her second husband as well. That is not so in all the cases. There are records of a Rabbinical Court's decision given in Haifa in a similar case in which the second husband did not have to divorce his wife.
  65. BALZAC, H. de, Five Stories, op. cit., p. 113.
  66. Ibid., p. 112.
  67. Ibid.
  68. Ibid., pp. 113-114.
  69. Ibid., p. 82.
  70. Additional arguments on this subject can be seen in chapter nine, "Our interpretation of the story Vehaya he'akov lemishor".

71. Kol Shirei Shaul Tchernichovsky, Bein Hametzarim (Between the devil and the deep blue sea), Tel Aviv, Schocken Publishing House, 1957, pp. 63-69.
72. Ibid., p. 69.
73. Derville explained the legal position of both Chabert and his wife in a very professional way, on pages 88-90, of which a select group of quotations are brought as follows:  
'Colonel, it is an exceedingly complicated business," said Derville.  
"To me," said the soldier, "it appears exceedingly simple. I was thought to be dead, and here I am! Give me back my wife and my fortune; give me the rank of general, to which I have a right, for I was made Colonel of the Imperial Guard the day before the battle of Eylaw."  
(pp. 88-89).

"Things are not done so in the legal world," said Derville.  
"Listen to me. You are Colonel Chabert, I am glad to think it; but it has to be proved judicially to persons whose interest it will be to deny it... But even if we hope for the best; supposing that justice should at once recognize you as Colonel Chabert - can we know how the questions will be settled that will arise out of the very innocent bigamy committed by the Comtesse Ferraud?

'In your case, the point of law is unknown to the Code, and can only be decided as a point in equity, as a jury decides in the delicate cases presented by the social eccentricities of some criminal prosecutions. Now, you had no children by your marriage; M. le Comte Ferraud has two. The judges might pronounce against the marriage where the family ties are weakest, to the confirmation of that where they are stronger, since it was contracted in perfect good faith. Would you be in a very becoming moral position if you insisted, at your age, and in your present circumstances in resuming your rights over a woman who no longer loves you? You will have both your wife and her husband against you, two important persons who might influence the Bench. Thus, there are many elements which would prolong the case; you will have time to grow old in the



bitterest regrets.'

"And my fortune?"

"Do you suppose you had a fine fortune?"

"Had I not thirty thousand francs a year?"

"My dear Colonel, in 1799 you made a will before your marriage leaving one quarter of your property to hospitals."

"That is true."

"Well, when you were reported dead, it was necessary to make a valuation, and have a sale, to give this quarter away. Your wife was not particular about honesty to the poor. The valuation, in which she no doubt took care not to include the ready money or jewelry, or too much of the plate, and in which the furniture would be estimated at two thirds of its actual costs, either to benefit her, or to lighten the succession duty, and also because a valuer can be held responsible for the declared value - the valuation thus made stood at six hundred thousand francs. Your wife had a right to half for her share. Everything was sold and bought in by her; she got something out of it all, and the hospitals got their seventy-five thousand francs. Then as the remainder went to the State, since you had made no mention of your wife in your will, the Emperor restored to your widow by decree the residue which would have reverted to the Exchequer. So, now, what can you claim? Three hundred thousand francs, no more and minus the costs."

"And you call that justice!" said the Colonel, in dismay.

"Why, certainly - "

"A pretty kind of justice!"

"So it is, my dear Colonel. You see that what you thought so easy is not so. Madame Ferraud might even choose to keep the sum given to her by the Emperor."

"But she was not a widow. The decree is utterly void - "

"I agree with you. But every case can get a hearing. Listen to me. I think that under these circumstances a compromise would be both for her and for you the best solution of the question. You will gain by it a more considerable sum than you can prove a right to."

"That would be to sell my wife!"

"With twenty-four thousand francs a year you could find a woman who, in the position in which you are, would suit you better than you own wife, and make you happier. I propose going this very day to see the Comtesse Ferraud and sounding the ground; but I would not take such a step without giving you due notice."

"Let us go together."

"What, just as you are? said the lawyer. "No my dear Colonel, no. You might loose your case on the spot."

"Can I possibly gain it?"

"On every count," replied Derville. "But ... you overlook one thing. I am not rich, ...  
... The expenses of the preliminary inquiries will, at a rough guess, amount to ten or twelve thousand francs. I have not so much to lend you -- I am crushed..."

Large tears gathered in the poor veteran's faded eyes, and rolled down his withered cheeks. This outlook of difficulties discouraged him. The social and the legal world weighed on his breast like a nightmare.

"I will go to the foot of the Vendame Column!" he cried. "I will call out: 'I am Colonel Chabert who rode through the Russian Square at Eylaw!' - The Statue - he will know me,"

"And you will find yourself in Charenton."

At this terrible name the soldier's transports collapsed..  
(p. 91)

...He thought it would be impossible to live as party to a lawsuit; it seemed a thousand times simpler to remain poor and a beggar, or to enlist as a trooper if any regiment would accept him. His physical and mental

suffering had already impaired his bodily health in some of the most important organs. He was on the verge of one of those maladies for which medicine has no name, and of which the seat is in some degree variable, like the nervous system itself, the part most frequently attacked of the whole human machine - a malady which may be designated as the heart. (p. 91)

74. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 244.
75. Ibid., p. 246.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid., p. 247.
78. The story of the Count of Monte Cristo by A. Duma is dominated completely by the supernatural wish and realization of vengeance. But also Colonel Chabert expressed his wish for vengeance at least twice:

"To see the countess come home from a ball or the play in the morning, I have sat whole nights through, crouching close to the wall of her gateway, my eyes pierced to the depth of the carriage, which flashed past me with the swiftness of lightning and I caught a glimpse of the woman who is my wife and no longer mine. Oh, from that day I have lived for vengeance," cried the old man in a hollow voice, and suddenly standing up in front of Derville, "She knows that I am alive; since my return she has had two letters written with my own hand. She loves me no more! I - I know not whether I love her or hate her. I long for her and curse her by turns. To me she owes all her fortune, all her happiness; well, she has not sent me the very smallest pittance. Sometimes I do not know what will become of me!"

With these words the veteran dropped on to his chair again and remained motionless. Derville sat in silence, studying his client. "It is a serious business", he said at length, mechanically. "Even granting the genuineness of the documents to be procured from Heilsberg, it is not proved to me that we can at once

win our case. It must go before three tribunals in succession. I must think such a matter over with a clear head; it is quite exceptional."

"Oh," said the Colonel coldly, with a haughty jerk of his head, "if I fail, I can die - but not alone."

The feeble old man had vanished. The eyes were those of a man of energy, lighted up with the spark of desire and revenge." (pp. 81-82)

But when it came to the materialization of his fight for his right to his fortune and when the advocat told him:

"But you lost your chances. Your wife knows that you are unrecognizable" he does not hesitate and exclaims:

"I will kill her!" Only the advocat's reaction could cool him down.

"Madness! You will be caught and executed like any common wretch. Besides, you might miss! ... A man must not miss his shot when he wants to kill his wife - Let me set things straight; ... Go now. Take care of yourself; she is capable of setting some trap for you and shutting you up in Charenton. I will notify her of our proceedings to protect you against a surprise." (p. 105)

And he gave up in an unrealistic manner.

79. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., pp. 246-247.

80. Ibid., p. 247.

81. Ibid., p. 250.

82. Ibid., p. 251.

83. BALZAC, H. de, Five Stories, op. cit., p. 105.

84. Ibid., p. 109.

85. Ibid., p. 89.

86. Agnon lifts up a sharp tongue whip against the passivity of

the people who saw her tragedy, before and soon after Menashe Hayim "died", and knew her critical financial position, and besides talking about the need to give her a helping hand nothing was really done to help her out, until she was granted the heavenly blessing in the shape of her second husband.

87. As we see in a powerful poetical description in Enoch Arden by Tennyson and in the works of Miss A.A. Procter and George Crabbe quoted and elaborated on in this dissertation in chapter ten.
88. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty One Stories, op. cit., p. 250.
89. Ibid., p. 243.

## CHAPTER IX

### OUR INTERPRETATION OF VEHAJA HE'AKOV LEMISHOR

#### 1. Introduction

We have devoted the previous chapter to a detailed comparison of two of Agnon's works to one of Balzac's, in which we have also brought some quotations and hints to differences of opinion of the interpretation of the story Vehaya he'akov 'lemishor and its main protagonist. It was not the place to expatiate on this subject. Therefore we felt that bringing to the fore the interpretation of this story is essential to the understanding of Agnon's originality in spite of the different interpretations of his work. We shall return to some parts of this story in Chapter XII where we discuss the symbolism in Agnon's stories, but here we shall discuss only the Kurtzweil-Band interpretation and also the interpretation of this writer.

Two essays<sup>1</sup> as well as another one in Band's monumental work on Agnon are well known in the Israeli Hebrew critical circles in which some remarks and/or the interpretation of this story are found. Even so the writer of this study finds it very important to give his own interpretation, which may, here and there, even contradict some of the assumptions of the above-mentioned scholars. For our purpose we shall quote from Band since he brings in his book also the main views of the Israeli critics and scholars.

#### 2. Kurtzweil's, Band's and our interpretation.

Arnold Band writes:

Kurzweil's reading (of the story: Vehaya he'akov le'mishor), presented in two separate articles,<sup>2</sup> deserves special attention at this point, because it has both formulated the basis for our understanding of this story and is symptomatic of the contribution this critic has made towards the comprehension of Agnon. Working against the prevalent conception, most forcefully stated by Lipschütz,<sup>3</sup> that Agnon is a modern reincarnation of the hasidic raconteur and therefore fundamentally a teller of pious folktales, Kurzweil posited that Vehaya he'akov le'mishor is not a religious story, even though it moves through a religious milieu toward which it is mostly sympathetic, but rather a secular, realistic story that has its own inner artistic laws. The story looms as a tacit accusation against the cruelty of God who let Menashe Hayim descend into a world of chaos for no glaring sin, if any at all. The hero is forced to leave his home and his wife to depart on a journey from which there is no return. Menashe Hayim's return to his wife can be effected only by a miracle, but there are no miracles today; ..... Faced with two possibilities, madness in refusal to accept a world of chaos or submission and sacrifice, he chooses the latter, which Kurzweil feels is the choice the strong man must make. Kurzweil's reading of the story was revolutionary, but it is far from complete.<sup>4</sup>

There is no question that Kurzweil's reading (not only of this particular story of Agnon but generally of all his stories and even of other writers and poets) was revolutionary, as we may fully agree with Band's statement about Kurzweil's contribution to our better understanding of Agnon's stories. We can also agree with him that "it is far from complete", which mirrors the true position of his own analysis. But we must disagree with some of Kurzweil's statements. It seems to this writer that some of them (at least in the way they are put by Band) are even contradictory to each other. Just one example: "Kurzweil posited that Vehaya he'akov le'mishor is not a religious story (underlining by this writer) .....

but rather a secular, ...." and then Band continues to write:

Faced with two possibilities, madness in refusal to accept a world of chaos or submission and sacrifice, he chooses the latter, which Kurzweil feels is the choice the strong man must make.<sup>5</sup>

Is not this mainly also the choice of the religious man? Does not the religious man prefer to choose submission and sacrifice? Is not this the way Agnon describes Menashe Hayim's action and reaction, at least from the first sight or from the first reading?

Hence, we dare to state that Agnon's stories, and Vehaya he'akov lemishor among the others, have more than one facet, and therefore Vehaya he'akov lemishor can be understood at the same time by different readers in a different way. To one it may be a religious story with its morals and teachings besides its literary values, and to another it may be a secular, realistic story that has its own artistic laws, besides its religious hints. But there are some points in Band's conclusions to which we cannot agree. He writes:

The story looms as a tacit accusation against the cruelty of God who lets Menashe Hayim descend into a world of chaos for no glaring sin, if any at all.<sup>6</sup>

First of all we must understand that one of the basic elements in Judaism is that every man has a free choice to do good or evil. Now, it is true that Menashe Hayim lost his middle class position, but he still had a choice. He had the possibility of earning an honorable living as a teacher. And even after he agreed to beg alms he could still have come back to live with his wife until a hundred and twenty years, if he would have kept in contact with his wife. A man who did not write a letter to his wife for more than four years - Is this not a glaring sin? A man who deserts his wife for more than



four years and does not care how she is passing the difficult time and that she does not have at least her daily portion of bread, for four years - is this not a glaring sin? He did not send her a penny for more than four years! He sold his letter of recommendation which was then equivalent to a passport or other identity card - is this not a glaring sin? What would have been the attitude of a court today regarding his deed of selling the letter of recommendation? Or to his other deeds? This writer wonders if these are not sins towards one's fellow man and God, what then are sins? And what about his going astray at the fair of Lashkovitz where he got drunk and was bereft of his wallet and phylacteries? What was this? A good deed or a fulfillment of a commandment? (according to the reading of Kurtzweil-Band). And what does Menashe Hayim feel about his punishment? Does he think that he is an innocent victim of God's cruelty? Or does he recognize that only he is to be blamed, because he listened to his wife and went to beg alms? Not only does he not complain against the 'injustice' done to him by God and not only does he accept his fate but he openly recognizes his personal responsibility to the tragedy he brought upon himself through being so easily influenced. At the very first moment, before he acknowledged the magnitude of his tragedy, he did not recognize his part in the course of the events as Agnon writes (after he was bereft of his wallet and phylacteries):

And he cursed the poverty that brought him to beggarliness and the beggar which enticed him to sell the recommendation document and the innkeeper more than all of them. But himself he did not remember and he did not feel folly in his soul, although he himself was the source of all the evils and the cause of the chain of these troubles, because he gave a listening ear to the delusion

of the evil inclination and he went mischievous after his heart.<sup>7</sup>

And later on he used to say to himself, with the intention of blaming the other:

I shall go down to the Gehena and there I shall meet the beggar which enticed me to sell the letter and I shall revenge my revenge from him.<sup>8</sup>

This decision to revenge himself does not require from Menashe Hayim any factual deed. But this shows that he still does not blame himself for what happened to him. Only at the penultimate page Menashe Hayim reckons finally his main contribution to his present tragic situation counting one by one, in chronological order, all his 'good deeds':

And then Menashe Hayim told the watchman of the graveyard that the Almighty had dealt very bitterly<sup>9</sup> with him, and that he went after the advice of his wife and he went going and wandering in little towns and in villages to beg alms, and before he went out to the way he took a letter of recommendation from the town Rabbi and with the letter he begged from door to door and he collected a little money. And subsequently when he decided to revisit his home it occurred to him to meet a beggar on the way and he enticed him to commit a sin, and he sold him the letter of recommendation for a huge sum of money, and he gave his mind to travel to the fair of Lashkovitz and to deal with merchandise before he returned to his home and there he drank until he got drunk and all his money was stolen and they robbed him of all his possessions (and they presented him like an empty vessel), so he thought to himself how shall he return to his home with empty hands, and so he returned to beg alms from door to door, and after many seasons he returned to his home and he heard that he was counted among the dead and his wife was married to another man and she saw a life of tranquility, behold he returned as he came so as not to disturb the peace of her home and he renewed his wanderings as before, and he was wandering between the living and the dead and again he had no rest in this world and also in the world of truth<sup>10</sup> and he does not expect to rest.

And Menashe Hayim thought how easy it would have been that that deed would not have been done.....

But Heaven forbend! to murmur against His methods, as the Holy Shelah wrote:

You have to know, my children, that the keys are handed over in man's hand and there is in it a top secret because really in the hands of the man, given are the external keys and the internal keys.<sup>11</sup>

It seems to the writer that these quoted lines speak for themselves, i.e., that Menashe Hayim recognizes very convincingly that now he got the punishment for his many sins, which he mentions very distinctly one by one to the watchman of the graveyard, and he does not at all accuse the cruelty of his God but himself and of course the beggar who enticed and persuaded him to sell the letter of recommendation, the deed which had the most tragic influence upon his fate. That he was conscious of it we see from the fact that it comes back again and again to his mind and even shortly before he died we are told that:

From time to time he (Menashe Hayim) used to leave his place (the tent which was next to the graveyard) and go to the fence of the cemetery to see from far the tombstone of that beggar, that pseudo Menashe Hayim, which instigated him to a deed of transgression and took from him his wife and cut off his name from Israel for ever. And fire was kindled against his bones!<sup>12.....13</sup>

So it was clear that he was conscious of his part in his tragedy until the very last moment. And even Band says:

While Menashe Hayim accepts his fate, the reader, according to Kurzweil, does not, and Agnon places us on the side of the hero but against the silent God who lets such undeserved tragedy exist on earth. For Menashe Hayim ....., was doomed to death from the beginning. He was granted no children; his means of support were taken away and he was therefore forced to leave home.<sup>14</sup>

Here again we must disagree with a few of their statements. If the reader is against the Almighty it is only because he is not aware of Menashe Hayim's sins towards his wife and society. What would have been the attitude of the reader should Krendel Tcharni have asked the court (if she had not been Jewish) to grant her a divorce on the argument of being deserted by her husband? What about a jail sentence for Menashe Hayim for selling his identity card? Should the reader in this case also be against the court's decision or would he say 'well deserved' even if he would have been sympathetic. We agree that he was not granted children, and that is a great hindrance not only in Jewish family life, but if he lived in sin, without divorcing his wife, it is not again because of his love for his 'black crown', as Kurzweil-Band suggest, but very much because of his very passive attitude towards everything in his life, a characteristic of his which we have, we hope, convincingly shown a few pages above. We also agree that "his means of support were taken away" but we must again disagree with the concluding statement that "he was therefore forced to leave home". If Krendel Tcharni would have agreed to the idea that they will never again be middle-class shopkeepers, and if she would have been satisfied with the righteous, even if small, income of the salary of a teacher, a position her husband suggested that she agree with, and if she would have been a true lover of her husband she would have said to him: "My love, what does it matter, we shall have bread and water, and please don't leave me alone." Instead, we see that she is pushing him out of her home, for an unforeseeable period for both of them; she is pushing him to an income which is connected with a very strong humiliating feeling, even a de-

grading one. And as Agnon puts it on page 67 that a clear Mishna slipped his memory, that the earnings of the woman belongs to the husband, so two other wise sayings of O.S.O.B.M. slipped his memory:

- (a) Play a carcass in the market and get a fee, and do not say: I am important. (Baba Batra 110) (One should not be ashamed to do any job for a living.); and
- (b) Make your Sabbath a weekday and be independent of men! (Sabbath 118) (One should be satisfied with as little as possible rather than to get financial support from men.)

The positive attitude towards making a living from a job, any job, but not to beg alms is clear. Even more so, Menashe Hayim could have had quite an honourable job in comparison with flaying a carcass in the market. But Krendel Tcharni persuaded her husband not to be satisfied with what little they could have. Therefore, they were punished by not getting even this and unfortunately, the main portion of the punishment fell, of course, on Menashe Hayim's poor shoulders, because it was his duty to consider, to decide and to do what was right, and not just to follow his wife's good intentions but bad advice, because he and not she had to be the master of the house and of their fate. But was he really what he was supposed to be? the master? And what was the feeling of Menashe Hayim's town people? How did they judge his behaviour?

When the bad news reached Buczacz that Menashe Hayim passed away, on the road, begging alms,

everyone who heard the voice of Krendel Tcharni's crying didn't refrain his mouth and tongue from speaking evil of Menashe Hayim that he left his wife a grass widow and the arm of sin killed him. But the one who has eyes didn't spare his eyes from tears upon the man to whom happened what has happened, because

for sure he wanted to return to his wife, but alas,  
the angel of death was clinging after the heels of man.<sup>15</sup>

This means, in our opinion, a very strong accusation of the man for leaving his wife for such a long time without any means of living and that the man got his well deserved punishment on one hand, and pity and tears for the sufferings of this poor and unlucky man on the other.

We hope that after reading this story again carefully, every reader will agree with us that we cannot blame "the silent God who lets such undeserved tragedy exist on earth", but we shall have to reaffirm what Agnon quotes from the holy Shela, that the keys are really in the hands of every man, and as one makes his bed so he must lie on it.

Band says:

His life situation is irreparable. He cannot recoup his wealth; (he never had any at any time. I.M.) he cannot retrieve his wife in legal marriage since she is now married to another man. (That's true. I.M.) But he dies happy in the knowledge that he has withstood temptation and been rewarded with the two gifts that were most important to him: assurance of his wife's continuing love for him even though she remarried, and confidence that he would have his posterity even if it were merely his name on a tombstone.<sup>16</sup>

It seems to us that some readers, we do not know for what reason, consider expressions of pity as expressions of love. Let us face the facts mentioned in the story. Three months after Krendel Tcharni received the bad news she remarried. (According to the Jewish law this is the minimum period required before a woman may remarry.)

And Krendel Tcharni entered into a second marriage and the Lord made her have a pregnancy and the woman has comforted herself (very quickly if she truly loved her husband so much. I.M.) after the death of her husband

and she made an effort to tear him out of her heart and she thanked God for His favour that He redeemed her from hunger and that He sent her the desirable mate in lieu of her affliction up till now. And when she remembered Menashe Hayim that she had no child from him and from this, her husband, may he live long, she was visited with mercy<sup>17</sup> and so she knew that the first marriage was not crowned with success even in the sight of the Heavens. However her heart went melting<sup>18</sup> for Menashe Hayim that he had died and had no remainder in Israel<sup>19</sup>. And she thought to call her son's name, which will be born to her, with the name Menashe Hayim. But she reconsidered her intention because Krendel Tcharni was afraid perhaps the name is the cause, lest she will extend upon him heaven forbid! the luck of Menashe Hayim, and she put an end to her thought and she made a vow saying: "If God will be with me<sup>20</sup> I shall erect a tombstone on his grave."<sup>21</sup>

From these quoted lines it is quite clear, in our opinion, that Krendel Tcharni had pity for poor Menashe Hayim that he had died in tragic circumstances in strange garments and far away from his native home. But from these feelings to feelings of love there is a great distance. To this we have to add that according to the Jewish law a remarried partner is supposed neither to keep mourning of the first partner after the remarriage nor to keep the yearly mourning date, and of course one is not supposed to remarry as long as the love for the deceased is still alive. To see that a beggar should have a tombstone on his grave may be a result and a deed of pity and should not be regarded as love, even if this poor man was related to her. And even the tears she shed over his grave are not a testimony of love but of pity and sorrow for his sufferings. Did all the people who shed tears, when they heard the bad news of the tragic death of Menashe Hayim, love him? Or did they even know him personally? It is doubtful! But they did cry! And they did shed tears, but these were tears

of compassion and surely not of love.

About the second part of the same statement:

.... and confidence that he would have his posterity even if it were merely his name on a tombstone.

according to our reading, Menashe Hayim was not happy at all and he had the contrary confidence, because otherwise why did he do what Agnon tells us he used to do?

From time to time he (Menashe Hayim) used to leave his place and go to the fence of the cemetery to see from far the tombstone of that beggar, that pseudo Menashe Hayim, which instigated him to a deed of transgression and took from him his wife and cut off his name from Israel for ever. And fire was kindled in his bones.<sup>23</sup>

It is true that the watchman of the graveyard put the right stone upon the right grave after Menashe Hayim had truly passed away and so it could happen that when later Krendel Tcharni stood upon his grave and her tears were mingled into its dust it was indeed his grave, but he didn't come out of it to see it and to be happy about it. And just for the general reader's knowledge, according to Jewish law she was forbidden to do this, to come and visit her first husband's tombstone and to shed tears upon it, unless they were tears of pity. But this complaint is against the ignorance in laws and customs of some of Agnon's characters, and not against Band's or Kurtzweil's reading.

We also think it is pretty reasonable for a second husband to hope and to believe that as long as he lives the love of his wife will be directed exclusively towards him. Otherwise the woman can be accused of spiritual adultery, at least.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

Finally, the question will arise, if you reject, even if



only partly, the Kurzweil-Band reading, what do you say is the "truth" that is operative in this story? First of all we have to admit that the main motif of this story is a universal one, and it has been shown how many European writers dealt with the same motif, with some striking similarities which even so do not lower our esteem for Agnon's genuine literary genius. On the contrary! Hence, in our opinion, Agnon's greatness in dealing with this theme must be at least partly due to the special aspect it took because of the Jewishness of his characters. In spite of its universal facet, this story has its unique turns, in thoughts and in deeds, because of the fact that the heroes have a continuous consciousness of what might or might not be done according to the Jewish law, properly interpreted and understood, or unfortunately inadequately and superficially applied. We would say that the motivation of the plot is pointless unless we realize that Menashe Hayim and his wife are Jewish characters who are as religious as their environment, even if their knowledge about laws and customs is not so accurate and up-to-date, and their observance is less than expected.

There is in Hebrew an expression: "Crime does not pay". We would dare to say that the hidden mottoes of this story may be:

(a) The revolt against God's will does not pay.

Krendel Tcharni and her husband, Menashe Hayim, agree that it was the will of God to get them out of their shop. But they came to the wrong conclusion, that God wants them to be dependent, at least temporarily, upon men. If they would have stopped yearning to return to their middle-class shopkeeper's position their life would have been different, and the whole

story would have taken other turns.

(b) We are still guided by the proverb: "The end does not justify the means!"

To humiliate and degrade oneself, even for the most important cause, does not pay, because the humiliation and degradation are very real and sure, but the recovering and the ascending out of it again is an illusion or at least no more than a fruitless hope which mostly is being transformed into a very great disillusion.

(c) The Divine Providence keeps a continuous open eye upon His Universe and if one can blind the people's eye he cannot do so with the Heavenly one.

This idea is wonderfully camouflaged and elaborated on in the fantastic story, within this story, of the Rabbi and the thief, which is brought in chapter XII under the title: The Symbolism in Vehaya he'akov lemishor and in other stories. All this, of course, besides all the other aesthetic and artistical points revealed by Kurtzweil, Sadan, Band, Bahat and others in their comprehensive critical essays and books.

#### NOTES

1. One is Kurtzweil's essay He'arot le Vehaya he'akov lemishor, Massot Al Sipurei Agnon, Tel Aviv, Schocken Publishing House, 1970, pp. 26-37 and the other one is that of Y. Bahat, Iyunei Mikra, Shay Agnon/ Hayim Hazaz, Haifa, Israel, Yuval Publishing House, 1970, pp.
2. These articles were later included in Masot 'al sipure Shai Agnon, Tel Aviv, Schocken Publishing House, 1963.

3. LIPSCHÜTZ, E.M., Ketavim 2, 1953, pp. 207-223; also as Shai Agnon, Berlin, 1926.
4. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare, op. cit., pp. 86-87.
5. Ibid., p. 87.
6. Ibid.
7. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 2, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit., p. 106.
8. Ibid., p. 122.
9. Ruth: 1:20.
10. He felt that he would not be lifted from the gehena forever as a punishment for his not disclosing his identity thus saving his wife and her second husband from living in sin, as well as for his causing, by his passivity, that a bastard could join the Holy Congregation, which is forbidden by the Bible for ten generations. A bastard, according to Jewish law, is a child born from adultery of the woman or incest.
11. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 2, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit., in the Hebrew text, pp. 126-127.
12. Ps. 78:21.
13. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 2, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit., p. 127.
14. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare, op. cit., p. 87.
15. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 2, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit., p. 115.

16. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare, op. cit., p. 87.
17. In Biblical language it means she conceived.
18. Ps. 58:9.
19. This expression means that he did not leave children who bear his name, and continue the chain of the generations.
20. Gen. 28:20,
21. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 2, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit., p. 116.
22. BAND, A., Nostalgia and Nightmare, op. cit., p. 87.
23. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. 2, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit., p. 127.
24. See the reading and commentary of Y. Bahat on Agnon's story Tehilla where he explains the tragic punishment of Tehilla as a result of spiritual adultery.

## CHAPTER X

### AGNON AND SOME WORKS OF ENGLISH WRITERS

#### 1. Introduction

Besides the comparison made between Agnon's stories and some of the works of writers that he mentioned as having read, it is of great importance to compare his works as well with those of other writers whose names he did not mention at all. There are no testimonies that he may have read their works, but even so, and maybe especially because of this last statement, it is interesting to see some striking similarities between Agnon, Tennyson, Miss Adelaide A. Procter and G. Crabbe.

#### 2. The Essence of Enoch Arden<sup>1</sup>

We begin with Tennyson's poem, Enoch Arden. A young man by the name of Enoch Arden, a sailor by profession, grew up in a little seashore town. He married a girl whom he loved very much. His wife, Annie, really loved him as well, but she was also very kind to another young man, Philip, whom they had both befriended, all being playmates from childhood. Fortunately for Enoch she decided to marry him and not Philip. They were very happy for seven years and Annie bore him three children, a girl and two boys.

Then came a change because once by accident he slipped and fell while climbing a mast and broke a limb.

And while he lay recovering there, his wife bore him another son, a sickly one.<sup>2</sup>

He seemed, as in a nightmare of the night,  
To see his children leading evenmore

Low miserable lives of hand-to-mouth,  
And her, he loved, a beggar: then he pray'd  
"Save them from this, whatever comes to me".<sup>3</sup>

And while he prayed the master of a ship that Enoch once served in proposed to him to become a boatswain on his vessel which was supposed to leave for China soon.

And Enoch all at once assented to it,  
Rejoicing at that answer to his prayer.<sup>4</sup>

Enoch decided, without telling his wife about his plans, to take the job of a boatswain and to go on a far and dangerous trip. Meanwhile, he thought he would sell his white boat with which he used to carry out his independent journeys and with which he made a fair income. He was prepared to take such dangerous trips many times before finally settling down:

This voyage more than once? Yea, twice or thrice  
As oft as needed - last returning rich,  
Become the master of a larger craft,  
With fuller profits lead an easier life,<sup>5</sup>

And so with these dreams in his mind he prepared himself for the first voyage, which unknowingly was also his last one. He let Annie plead with him in vain not to go. After he opened a little shop for her with the money he got from the sale of his boat he left her hoping for better times, when he would come back richer than ever. But she was not fit to be a shopkeeper and her economical situation was soon very bad.

Their old friend Philip offered her some honest help without demanding any reward other than to be allowed to help his good old friends Enoch, Annie and their children, and when Enoch would come back he could reimburse him for all the expenses.

Ten years passed and no news came from Enoch. This time Philip dared to ask Annie, whom he loved silently even before she married Enoch, to marry him. She asks him to wait another year

because she did not want to do a possible wrong to her absent husband, but after the twelfth year passed since Enoch's departure for his first-last voyage she finally agreed to marry him.

Annie slowly but steadily entirely forgot her love for Enoch, especially after she gave birth to a child by Philip, her second husband. Meanwhile Enoch, who had a successful trip to China, was unfortunate on his return journey and only miraculously survived "the crash of ruin, and the loss of all" who were with him on the ship "Good Fortune" except for two others who were later killed by accidents. He remained isolated for twelve years like a modern Robinson Crusoe.

Luckily for Enoch a ship that was passing by sent a crew to search for fresh water on the island. They found him:

long-haired and long-bearded solitary,  
Brown, looking hardly human.

Muttering and mumbling, idiotic it seemed<sup>6</sup>

but finally they credited him with his unbelievable story, rescued him and brought him to his little seashore town in England after a dramatic and no less dangerous trip which, because of the bad conditions of the ship, took much longer than expected. When he visited the house

Where Annie lived and loved him, and his babes  
In those far-off seven happy years were born;  
But finding neither light nor murmur there<sup>7</sup>

he understood that the inevitable tragedy had happened.

Living in the house of a widow who was "good and garrulous" he found out everything that he wanted to know:

His baby's death, her growing poverty,  
How Philip put her little ones to school,  
And kept them in it, his long wooing her,  
Her slow consent, and marriage, and the birth  
Of Philip's child:....<sup>8</sup>

Enoch would like to see her face again

And know that she is happy...<sup>9</sup>

But when he went there and he saw her happiness and his daughter  
and his son he was afraid:

To send abroad a shrill and terrible cry,  
Which in one moment, like the blast of doom,  
Would shatter all the happiness of the hearth.<sup>10</sup>

Enoch prays for strength

Not to tell her, never to let her know.<sup>11</sup>

Never - no father's kiss for me - the girl  
So like her mother, and the boy, my son.<sup>12</sup>

Not to tell her, never to let her know.<sup>13</sup>

Enoch decides that after he dies his wife Annie could know that  
he did not want to shatter her happy and peaceful life. So he  
confesses to his widow, Miriam Lane, but only after she promised  
to:

Swear upon the book  
Not to reveal it, till you see me dead.<sup>14</sup>

And to be credited with the truth of his confession, he  
gives Miriam Lane the curl of hair:

.... she cut it off and gave it,  
And I have borne it with me all these years.<sup>15</sup>

Take, give her this ....  
It will moreover be a token to her,  
That I am he,<sup>16</sup>

Enoch Arden then passed away.

### 3. Enoch Arden, Menashe Hayim and Ferenheim

There are many great differences between the tragedies  
of Menashe Hayim, Ferenheim and Karl Meiss on the one hand and  
Enoch Arden on the other, but there are also some striking  
similarities between some of the details.



The first striking similarity is the main theme of this poem, namely, the protagonist leaves his home for an unforeseen period (hoping to soon be back home) leaving his home and wife like the other protagonists already mentioned (in this case with three small children) and is considered dead after twelve years of silence. But still the protagonist returns very much alive and finds his wife remarried to somebody else to whom she also bore a child. He decides not to claim her at all and remains in the shadows until he dies.

Some of Tennyson's readers point out that there are many unconscious prophecies in Enoch Arden which can be compared to similar "prophecies" in Menashe Hayim's and in Ferenheim's stories. For instance, when Enoch, Philip and Annie as children

played at keeping house  
Enoch was host one day, Philip the next,  
While Annie still was the mistress;<sup>17</sup>

When Philip, being powerless against the determination of Enoch who wanted to keep Annie as his little wife for a whole week, got angry, then

The little wife would ....  
... pray them not to quarrel for her sake,  
And say she would be little wife to both.<sup>18</sup>

This prophecy, so innocently expressed, to save her from a childish quarrel, came true after about nineteen years with little change, when she became a true wife to both of them - first to Enoch and then to Philip after seven happy years with Enoch and twelve years of painful waiting for news of him and his return.

We find a striking similarity in Vehaya he'akov lemishor when Krendel Tcharni goes to one of her 'good neighbours' and asks to borrow a little flour because she wants to make some cakes for Menashe Hayim, her husband, who is going on a trip to

buy merchandise from the fair. Actually she needed a little flour to make some glue to strengthen the letter of recommendation by sticking it to a woven piece of tablecloth. Her 'good neighbour', who spoke to her like an angel but had a heart of a snake, said to her:

Bake Kreindeli, my crown, bake, until hundred and twenty years, and even for two Menashe Hayims, may they live long, and if only we would be worthy to see soon baking in your house for a circumcision feast.<sup>19</sup>

Here we also see a prophecy, in our case said with villainous intentions, to hurt the heart of her neighbour who unfortunately had no children for ten years. And yet the prophecy came true fully because in the story there were two people with the same name of Menashe Hayim - one the pseudo one, who died and released Krendel Tcharni from being a grass widow, and the true one who wandered around paying for his iniquities with his sufferings. And after she remarried there really was a circumcision celebration, not for Menashe Hayim's son, but for the son she bore for her second husband, which happened to be the day after Menashe Hayim arrived back from his journey which he started on the day this woman wished Krendel Tcharni her 'good wishes' five years earlier.

We find a few more unconscious prophecies which came true later, both in Enoch Arden as well as in Vehaya he'akov lemishor. Enoch Arden's wife expressed a premonition once:

That I shall look upon your face no more.

"Well then," said Enoch, "I shall look on yours."<sup>20</sup> Her husband tried to comfort her asking her to laugh at all her fears, but this double presentiment came true later, because even when Enoch came home finally after an absence of more than

thirteen years he was the one who looked upon his wife's face and she, as she unwillingly and unwittingly foresaw, did not look upon his face anymore because just before he died, Enoch asked not to let her see his face lest his "dead face would vex her after-life",

Also, another presentiment came true. When Annie objected to his leaving her for an unknown period, he answered her tenderly:

Annie, this voyage by the grace of God  
Will bring fair weather yet to all of us.  
Keep a clean hearth and a clean fire for me.  
For I'll be back, my girl, before you know it,<sup>21</sup>

And so it happened that he was back long before she knew about it. For when he came back he went to his house where he found nothing and only later, after being with Miriam Lane, the "good and garrulous" widow, he found out the history of his wife and children and only after he died could Annie find out that it was him.

Similar unconscious prophecies, even if in a different way or situation, are found in Agnon's story Vehaya he'akov lemishor. When Menashe Hayim leaves his home town in a coach on his way to beg alms he turns his face towards the place where Krendel Tcharni was standing, but she disappeared and he could not see her any more. It is mentioned there that he saw only the white stones from the cemetery. Some readers, headed by Kurtzweil's reading, see these hints as meaning that Menashe Hayim will never again see his 'beloved' wife, and that he may end his life in a tragic way, an interpretation with which the writer of this study fully agrees.

Many similar presentiments are also found in Ferenheim's story. He may have experienced a strong, strange feeling, when

upon his return from captivity he did not find anyone waiting for him at the railroad station. He felt a second setback when upon coming to his house he found it empty and locked and even the keys were not available because Mrs. Ferenheim "took the keys"<sup>22</sup> with her. She didn't imagine there'd be any need for keys, like now, for instance, that Mr. Ferenheim's back and wants to get into his house."<sup>23</sup> These two events were only the prologue to his tragedy of which he was not yet at all aware. "Ferenheim pressed his lips together tightly"<sup>24</sup> when he got the sad news that their only child had died. Besides this sad news he got the information as to the whereabouts of his wife, which he did not interpret as portending a storm or a tragedy for him, because we see him spending two days in the city. Except for the sake of visiting his son's grave we do not understand why he delayed going to see his wife whom he still loved and whom he did not see for a good couple of years. Maybe he had an inner presentiment which kept him in a world of wishful thinking for those two days, since he had nothing to gain by going there earlier. Surely the reader doesn't know this in advance, and he may therefore wonder at this behaviour. The reader may also wonder why Ferenheim bought himself a round-trip ticket to Luckenbach, the village where his brother-in-law, Hans Steiner, had a summer home<sup>25</sup> where his wife was now, and according to his information "the Steiners plan to stay there in the village until the big Israelite holy days at the end of the summer",<sup>26</sup> and the door-keeper added that she guessed that "Mrs. Ferenheim won't come back to the city before then."<sup>27</sup> In a certain way his behaviour contradicts itself. Maybe he stayed in the city for these two days to meet and "to speak to each and everyone of his acquaintances" because he may soon not have an occasion to do

so, since he is going to his wife at the Steiner's where he intends to stay for quite a long time until he will again be in the city. If so, the wonder is even stronger as to why he took the round-trip ticket?

Another deed which bears a contradiction is the pawning of "the present he had bought for his wife". The thought to buy and bring a present for his wife was a most appropriate deed in his situation and in these circumstances. Therefore it is prophetic when we read that he pawned the present he had bought for his wife, as if to warn the reader that maybe he pawned not only the present he had bought, but his wife as well, for the present as well as for the future.

It seems that reading this story a second time would make us conscious of these prophetic events and deeds, i.e., the empty railroad station (for him); the empty and locked house without the keys; the sad news of the death of his son (which may also foretell that there's nothing which can keep them together again); the pawning of the present; and finally the round-ticket.

It might be that in describing the hero, Agnon gave us in these dramatic elements a realistic story of a husband (a soldier) who left his house, was considered dead and now re-appeared very much alive, and is asking his wife to join him again for life.

In spite of these contradictory acts, or maybe because of them, this common story seems to be so dramatic and so enhancing.

An additional presentiment is found in Enoch Arden when Enoch asked Annie to borrow a seaman's glass and to see him at the date when his ship passes by.

She when the day that Enoch mentioned, came,  
Borrowed a glass, but all in vain; perhaps  
She could not fix the glass to suit her eye;  
Perhaps her eye was dim, hand tremulous;  
She saw him not; and while he stood on deck  
Waving, the moment and the vessel past.<sup>28</sup>

She watched it, and departed weeping for him;  
Then, tho' she mourn'd his absence as his grave,<sup>29</sup>

which means that even for a last look she had no luck, because of her already expressed fear that she may see his face no more.<sup>30</sup>

These unconscious prophecies and presentiments have an important role in the structure of the plot because they help to create the special atmosphere of the story. The reader will be fully aware of their artistic effect only after reading the story again or at least through reconstructing the plot after he finished reading it for the first time, because only then can we fully understand, and only then can we pay the right attention to their true meanings and to their contributions in forming its special atmosphere.

Before turning to the great and fundamental differences between the characteristics of these heroes in their similar situations, it would be pertinent to show yet another few similarities.

Menashe Hayim returns after his wife gave birth to a son by her second husband, and the same happened to Enoch, But there is still a fundamental difference. Annie had seven happy years with Enoch and she gave birth to his three children, one girl and two boys, of whom the girl and one boy were still alive and well brought up. He could be proud of them. It is true that Krendel Tcharni lived with Menashe Hayim before he left to beg alms for ten years but these years were not too

happy, for many reasons. Their barrenness surely created a great tension between them even if only beneath the surface. Their good middle-class shopkeeper's position, which was of a short duration, was another reason for tension in their home, even if covered with kind words. Enoch's love was pure, true, and fruitful. Menashe Hayim's love, even if it was true and pure, was unfortunately sterile. And now when Enoch came home and he finds his wife remarried and bringing up a son for Philip, her second husband, he is still in a position to reclaim his wife because they still have very much in common. They have their two children and according to law her second marriage is null and void from the very moment of his re-appearance.

When Enoch sees that Annie is happy and his children are happy as well he decided not to shatter their happiness even if that may mean for him to go into self continuous isolation after so many years of compulsory isolation, even if it means for him that he will never be able to embrace his own children and even if he will never be able to hear them calling him father.

They know me not, I should betray myself.  
Never! no father's kiss for me - the girl so like her  
mother, and the boy, my son.<sup>31</sup>

And in spite of the fact that his misfortune was not caused by him<sup>32</sup> he decides to break away.

Not to tell her, never to let her know.<sup>33</sup>

A very similar expression is found by Menashe Hayim:

I shall sin but I shall not return to her, I shall sin  
but I shall not return to her.<sup>34</sup>

He is conscious of the fact that even if he will return it will

be to no avail for him, but his wife's happiness would be destroyed. But how different are the positions of these two heroes? Menashe Hayim did not have to renounce the embracing of his children as Enoch did. There was no question of a father's kiss, etc. Therefore the writer of this study agrees with those who define Enoch's renunciation as being determined by his self-sacrificing love, but that of Menashe Hayim was determined mostly by his passive character even if he gives it the allure of a self-sacrificing love, saying that by not declaring his being alive he will be punished also in the world to come. (In this world he gets his punishment by wandering from place to place mostly at night to minimize the possibility of being recognized, and living on the kindness of people until he came to the cemetery where the pseudo Menashe Hayim was buried). We also have to bear in mind that in the case of Enoch Arden he could have gotten back his wife and children with their love, because according to law the second marriage was null and void. Also, in spite of his long absence he could have been able to provide his family with means of living, even if not on the same level as provided by Philip. Probably we could say the same about Menashe Hayim, with a difference of course.

After Menashe Hayim's long absence, in which he got so deeply involved in begging alms (so much so that when he reached his home town and he saw children going to a feast held on the eve of a circumcision he wanted to join them, and only after a moment he remembered who he was and why he came to this town), even if he would have been entitled to get back his wife he would not have had the ability to provide her with means of living. But maybe, and this is also conceivable, he still had



for his wife and children, the truth about his misfortune and his apparent death, as soon as he truly and finally died. Menashe Hayim, on the other hand, kept his secret only for himself and when he died he took his secret with him to the grave. And even when he revealed his secret to the graveyard watchmen, he gave a sworn promise to Menashe Hayim not to disclose anything of what he had heard and known to anybody at any time.

And so we find an additional difference between the two heroes and their heroines. Menashe Hayim's wife did not know, and did not even suspect anything about her husband's double fate, a living dead for a number of years, because he explicitly did not want her to know anything about it. And not only her, but nobody at all. Enoch Arden, however, in spite of praying for strength and saying:

Not to tell her, never to let her know.<sup>37</sup>  
could not bear it any more and before he passed away he explicitly guided Miriam Lane as to what to tell his wife and children and to Philip his rival as well:

..... I charge you now,  
When you shall see her, tell her that I died  
Blessing her, praying for her, loving her;  
Save for the bar between us, loving her  
As when she laid her head beside my own.  
And tell my daughter Annie, whom I saw  
So like her mother, that my latest breath  
Was spent in blessing her and praying for her.  
And tell my son that I died blessing him.  
And say to Philip that I blessed him too.<sup>38</sup>

Maybe he wanted, at least after his death, a certain way of recognition of the sacrifice he had made, maybe he wanted a sort of appreciation, even a post mortem, and maybe he wanted his children to be able to visit his grave. We may assume as well that he did not want to lose his name forever and for no

the option of taking up the position of a teacher and so be able to provide his wife and himself with a minimal, but righteous and honest, standard of living for the rest of their lives. And if we do agree on this first elementary point we may have to agree to an entirely different additional reading of Menashe Hayim's last behaviour, which may take new dimensions and may even overshadow the behaviour of other heroes as well.

It is true that Menashe Hayim had nothing materially to renounce, and only to harm his wife and her second husband and child by claiming Krendel Tcharni. But after a second thought we may find the whole picture different. There is a great difference between Enoch Arden's saying:

Not to tell her, never to let her know,<sup>35</sup>

and Menashe Hayim's saying:

I shall sin but I shall not return to her, I shall sin  
but I shall not return to her.<sup>36</sup>

By not returning to his wife he is making a supreme sacrifice in no measure to compare with the others. His sacrifice cannot be evaluated in material value because it is entirely in the spiritual and transcendent sphere.

Enoch Arden's sacrifice was made on the material, sentimental and emotional strata while Menashe Hayim's was made on the spiritual and transcendent. To this we have to add that Enoch Arden did not stick to his word, "Not to tell her, never to let her know". It is true that he never told her and he did not let her know personally of his tragedy. But he himself cancelled the "never to let her know" by confessing to the widow, Miriam Lane, and by guiding her as to how and when she could reveal to his beloved wife all about his last few years. That is, Enoch Arden released for general knowledge, and not only

real sin, because everything he had done during his lifetime was done in good faith, and no one could have foreseen the tragic implications of his courageous deed. On the other hand, he was not at all aware of the emotional and sentimental effect this disclosure would have on his wife and children, and maybe on the whole society.

This point is completely different in Ferenheim who was not at all bothered with this question since his wife had not as yet remarried, so that he could still hope for a reconciliation of their family life, but in vain as we saw. Even so, the other similarities are too striking to be overlooked.

This is not the only story in English literature of the 19th century which deals with the theme of the disappearing and reappearing of the presumed dead husband. Another interesting variation of this motif will be discussed in the next pages.

#### 4. Miss A.A. Procter's Hero

Another interesting and similar story, which is quite original and also genuine, we find in Miss A.A. Procter's poem Homeward Bound<sup>39</sup> in which we are told the story of a seaman who

was wrecked off Red Algiers, ..... bruised, half dead  
alone and helpless I was cast upon the shore.<sup>40</sup>

where he was fettered between "the lonely desert" with its  
"burning dreary sand" and the great sea, being dependent upon  
his cruel masters "The Black Moors of Barbary".<sup>41</sup>

For ten years he lived among these people 'hopeless' but still hoping for the day that freedom would come for him again, for he "left a wife and child" and he longed very much to be with them again. And the day arrived when some good Christians,

"a self-devoted band", rescued him from his ten years of captivity for a certain sum they paid as ransom. In spite of his ten years absence, he still hoped to find his wife and child waiting for him:

I would picture my dear cottage,  
See the crackling wood-fire  
burn,  
And the two beside it seated,  
Watching, waiting, my return.<sup>42</sup>

When he reached the house, however, and put his hand on the door, "the bitter truth" struck him, that his wife remarried and had a baby from her second husband. "He had been an ancient comrade" and she was happy. Unfortunately for him, or for them, their first child died (very similar to Ferenheim's tragedy) and with him any relationship between them. They, all three, got very excited and cried:

Bitter tears that desolate moment  
Bitter, bitter tears we wept,  
We three broken hearts together, ....  
Tears alone - no words were spoken, ...  
Then at last I rose, and, turning,  
Wrung his hand, but made no sign; ..  
Nothing of farewell I uttered, ...  
Then in silence passed away.<sup>43</sup>

Because it was quite clear that it would be of no avail to him to try and awake the first loving feelings towards him after his ten year absence and especially after the death of their child. He had to leave without claiming his wife who could have for him at this stage and in this situation no more than pity, understanding for his sufferings and sympathy for his misfortune, but no more. It was inconceivable to think that she would leave her second husband, the father of her child, for her first one, in spite of the fact that the law was on

his side. (The second marriage is null and void, but we may assume that in such a case the judge would have declared the first marriage as dissolved and would have given a reaffirmation of the second marriage.) He left the house without anger and without any complaints; more than this, without uttering a word he prayed "that God would ever guard and bless her",<sup>44</sup> and so he continued his life for more than twenty-six years after this tragic and dramatic event happened.

5. The Hero,<sup>45</sup> Menashe Hayim and Ferenheim

Again there is a striking similarity to Agnon's hero, Menashe Hayim as well as a great difference.

The similarities: Both left their homes and were considered dead. (Because there is no mention of any military mission we may assume that it was for economic-personal purposes.) The first one, Menashe Hayim, returned after an absence of five years, the latter, after ten years. The first one's wife remarried and bore a child to her second husband and the same happened to the latter one.

The differences: Menashe Hayim's wife was barren while the latter one bore him a child, which unfortunately died during the period of his absence. After the tragedy Menashe Hayim left the town to an unknown destination and destiny, unknown even to himself, without revealing his existence to his wife, while the latter one did appear at the house where he found out about the double or triple bitter situation into which his fate dragged him, having no possibility of changing it at all, but it was also too late to retreat without finding out the whole truth. (In the opinion of the writer of this study the picture painted by the poetess does not reveal the whole truth of the tragic moment<sup>46</sup> when his wife and second husband

saw 'the dead man' entering the house and coming near to the woman whom he saw "seated by the fire. In her arms she held a child, Whispering baby words caressing..."<sup>47</sup> (The impression of the writer is that it lacks the colourful colours of a true picture.) But after a few moments of a triple embarrassed situation he leaves the house forever - with an unpronounced blessing, to his new life which lasted approximately twenty-six years, and now, feeling the flapping wings of the angel of death he decides to tell the tragic story of his life.

The distance of time between the tragic event and the moment of revealing the whole story gave the story-teller a calmer perspective of everything that happened at the critical moment. And maybe this is also the explanation for the lack of some true elements from the faintly painted picture of their meeting mentioned a few lines above. Since the whole tragedy happened twenty-six years earlier, it is no wonder that the story-teller's memory was not clear about a few of the actual details of this event.

There is still room for a comparison also on the transcendental strata between these two heroes. Miss A.A. Procter's hero, when he thinks about the world to come, which is metaphorised in the Bible as the last and most lasting home of every human being, says:

Home! Yes I shall reach a  
haven,  
I, too, shall reach home and  
rest;  
I shall find her waiting for me  
with our baby on her breast.<sup>48</sup>

In the world to come, according to his plain and simple belief, he shall meet his wife and child as he left them when he left them thirty-six years ago, i.e., he believes in a certain

possible reconciliation between himself and his wife beyond age, time, reason and reality, while Menashe Hayim feels the burden of his tragedy not only there and then, but forever, even in the world to come he shall be haunted for his transgressions and iniquities.

To these it would be fitting to add just that Menashe Hayim is aware and worried about the legal and religious sides of his deeds, misdeeds and position, while our hero is not only not aware or worried by either of them but he even has a romantic view of his own tragedy.

6. Allen Booth<sup>49</sup> (G. Crabbe's Hero)

Another original and, at the same time, very simple story from the legal and moral point of view is found in George Crabbe's poem, The Parting Hour. Allen Booth is a youngster with ambition,

A lighter, happier lad was never seen,  
For ever easy, cheerful, or serene;  
His early love he fixed upon a fair  
And gentle maid - they were a handsome pair.<sup>50</sup>

The lovers waited till the time should come  
When they together could possess a home.<sup>51</sup>

But this not being easy, they had to wait for an extraordinary opportunity to enable their hopes to materialize.

At length a prospect came that seem'd to smile,  
And faintly woo them, from a Western Isle;  
A kinsman there a widow's hand had gain'd,  
Was old, was rich, and childless yet remain'd:  
Would some young Booth to his affairs attend,<sup>52</sup>

And because his brothers "Feared the false seas," it remained for the young Booth, Allen, to go to the far Western Island and come back as soon as possible a rich man. But unfortunately he fell into the hands of Spanish forces and being:

There, hopeless ever to escape the land,  
He to a Spanish maiden gave his hand;  
In cottage shelter'd from the blaze of day,  
He saw his happy infants round him play; ...

Thus twenty years were passed....<sup>53</sup>

His wealth awakened the envy of the Spaniards who accused him of making "An English heresy on Christian ground".

"Whilst I was poor", said Allen, "None would care  
What my poor notions of religion were;  
None asked me whom I worshipped, how I prayed,  
If due obedience to the laws were paid."<sup>54</sup>

And in spite of the fact that he behaved as a most obedient Catholic and did not preach "no foreign doctrine to my wife, And never mentioned Luther in my life;"<sup>55</sup> he was compelled to fly away from:

His wife, his children, weeping in his sight,  
because he had the only choice to flee or to die. But this did not yet mean the end of his troublesome and adventurous life.

He told of bloody fights, and how at length  
The rage of battle gave his spirits strength:  
'Twas in the Indian seas his limb he lost,  
And he was left half-dead upon the coast;  
But living gain'd, 'mid rich aspiring men,  
A fair subsistence by his ready pen.<sup>56</sup>

And again many years passed by until the end of his wanderings and he was finally privileged to reach England's shore. There he found his once beloved girl free to keep him company and to make him happy for the rest of his life. This was forty years after he left England as a strong young man full of hope but now he was

a worn-out man with withered limbs and lame,  
His mind oppressed with woes, and bent with age his frame.<sup>57</sup>



And only after inquiring assiduously about his family and his beloved Judith he found out about her sufferings, her ten years of painfully awaiting his return, her unhappy marriage, her loneliness after her children married and left her house and finally her being widowed. And so after a separation of forty years they got together again, as happy as before, in spite of the fact that we do not hear a word about marriage.

Comparing the plot between Agnon's Menashe Hayim and Ferenheim - Karl Neiss, we find this story very simple from the legal and moral point of view in spite of being quite complicated from its structure. If we consider the bond between Allen Booth and Judith as strong as a marriage in spite of its never being officiated, we may also have an explanation of their last relationship, and this makes the points of comparison more interesting. As Menashe Hayim, Allen leaves his girl friend for an economical reason, and as Ferenheim, his wandering is prolonged for military reasons, and as Karl Neiss he was as well not married to the girl he loved to whom he also came back and was granted a welcome by her exactly as Inge welcomed Karl Neiss to whom she was only engaged, although meanwhile she had married Ferenheim. And as all of them were supposed to be dead, so was he. But differently from Menashe Hayim who never saw his wife, and also differently from Ferenheim who saw his wife and asked her to return to him, but in vain, Allen Booth found Judith free from any marital obligations and able to respond to his renewed courtship, exactly as it happened to Karl Neiss who came back and got a positive response to his renewed courtship.

In Crabbe's description there is no proportion in the details dealing with Allen on one hand and with Judith on the other. Some details are even incredible, i.e., the long period

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of disappearance (forty years) and the freshness of the feelings of the once fond lovers, the many adventures and their temporary happy outcome, which are only partly credible, as well as his military activity in the later years, and their unpleasant results. The main difference, in the opinion of the writer, (even if comparing it with Agnon's, Tennyson's and Miss A.A. Procter's heroes) is the simplicity of the slightly twisted situation and also in the fact that the original happy pair are happy again at the very end.

Before turning to the comparison of the heroines we would like to compare the crises in these stories.

A peculiar feature in the character of Allen Booth is to be underlined. When he was with the Spanish Girl "he thought of England"<sup>58</sup> and when he was finally with his beloved Judith he dreams about his wife Isabel and his children who had already grown up and may be were even fathers of their own. This is in great contrast to a similar but unnatural feature of Judith's character. We are told about her children - it is stressed by the poet:

.... her children sought their bread   59  
In various places, and to her were dead.

In the opinion of this writer Crabbe reversed the true and natural feeling of a mother and gave too much sensitivity to a man, to a father, especially if we recall that he left his Spanish wife and children nearly twenty years before, if not more.

We would not like to harshly criticize Crabbe's poetry, but we dare to say that for pseudo poetical achievements he sacrificed the naturality of human feelings and psychology, if not to be more extreme by saying that Crabbe had no idea about

psychology and human nature.

7. The Crises in the Compared Stories

a. The Crisis in Enoch Arden

The most similar crises to those mentioned above from Vehaya he'akov lemishor and Ferenheim we find more precisely in Lord Tennyson's, Miss A.A. Procter's and partly in G. Crabbe's poems.

In Enoch Arden there are the following similar crises:

The first crisis is when Enoch Arden by mischance slipped and fell and broke a limb, and could no longer provide his Annie and children with their necessities, as before, from his independent business. Similar to Menashe Hayim who sank in debts and lost his middle-class shopkeeper's position.

The second crisis is Enoch Arden's departure to sea, in spite of his wife's fears and premonitions, for one trip or more, until he'll become rich. Similar to Menashe Hayim's departure to beg alms until he'll be able to regain his economical and social position,

The third crisis is when the ship "Good Fortune" had bad luck and was wrecked, and only Enoch and two other crewmen were saved (the two crewmen dying later) to live for about twelve years in an isolated tropical island. Twelve years of loneliness pending between hope and despair. Similar to Menashe Hayim's tragedy when he woke up being bereft of everything he had.

The fourth crisis is when Annie, Enoch's wife, came to the conclusion that there was no more hope of his coming back after twelve years of absence. Even so, her consent to marry Philip was given with much anxiety and extreme hesitation on her part and as a result of a misinterpretation of a dream which had a message, the sun may rise again upon their marriage.

Similar to Krendel Tcharni's tragedy when she received the news of her husband's death.

The fifth crisis is when Enoch was, at length, saved by a passing ship who returned him to England, where he found out the tragic truth of his present situation, namely, that his Annie married Philip, with whom she is happy and even bore him a child. Similar to Menashe Hayim's tragedy, when he came home and found out the cruel truth.

b. The crises in Homeward Bound

In Miss A. A. Procter's poem we have four moments of crisis, even if they are not mentioned in their chronological occurrence.

The first crisis is the moment of the departure to sea of the protagonist. Similar to Ferenheim's departure for the front, Karl Neiss' disappearance because of the landslide and Menashe Hayim's departure to beg alms.

The second crisis is when he was wrecked off Red Algiers and was taken captive by the Black Moors of Barbary, almost losing any hope of return. Similar to Ferenheim's falling prisoner during the war.

The third crisis is when his wife had given up hope of his return after nearly ten years of painful waiting for his return. Although the writer does not mention it at all, this moment of crisis is there. Similar to Inge who agreed to marry Ferenheim after she gave up hope of Karl Neiss' reappearance.

The fourth crisis is when returning home, after being ransomed, he finds his wife holding a newborn child and besides her her second husband, after which he renounced her without even a claim. Similar to Menashe Hayim, but also different, since

he only heard about the tragic situation.

c. The Crisis in Parting Hour

In G. Crabbe's poem we can also find at least four crises which are focused mainly on his personality and adventures:

The first crisis is when Allen Booth decides that he cannot marry his beloved girl Judith until he will have his own house.

The second crisis is the departure of the fond lover, Allen Booth, to sea, with the girl's consent but also with her fears and presentiments.

The third crisis is his giving up any hope of escape and of marrying his Judith, and consequently marrying instead a Spanish girl. This turn is unique and does not happen in any of the other stories compared, except in Ferenheim, where it is also twisted. Inge marries Ferenheim for similar reasons.

The fourth crisis is when, accused of being a Protestant by faith, he is forced to flee leaving behind his wife, children and wealth, starting his wanderings again.

The fifth crisis is when Judith, after ten years of painful waiting for the return of her lover, gives up all hope and marries. The death of Judith's husband and her children leaving home is not described at all as a crisis, in spite of what it seems to us, that of being a double crisis.

Instead of another crisis with his return, there is a happy ending, because coming home to England he found his once fond girl friend free to be happy with him again, similar to Karl Neiss' return to Inge Ferenheim.

In spite of the many crises in all these stories, the entire absence of wrong-doing on the part of the personages of all the stories compared is conspicuous except for Colonel

Chabert where there is a chain of misdeeds on behalf of his ex-wife and of Menashe Hayim with the conspicuous difference that Menashe Hayim did them innocently while Mrs. Chabert did them villainously. Analysing Tennyson's Enoch Arden from this aspect W.T. Webb writes:

They (all the personages of this story) cannot even be reasonably convicted of error; and it is remarkable how careful the poet is throughout to represent their conduct as unexceptionable, while perfectly simple and natural. No sympathy is demanded of the reader for Enoch on the ground of his having been wronged in any way. Everyone acts for the best, and with the utmost care and forbearance. The disastrous result of Enoch's departure could not be foreseen; the chances were that he would succeed, Annie's failure at shopkeeping is explained rather to her credit than otherwise. The sickly child dies, but not without being "cared for with all a mother's care."

Philip's advances to Annie are made with the greatest delicacy and with the tenderest consideration for her feelings, and are prompted, partly at any rate, by an unselfish desire to help her and her family in their need. Annie's consent to the marriage is won only after long hesitation. The representation of human beings as puppets in the hands of Fate and Circumstance was a favourite subject with the old Greek dramatists; but there is always a substantum of error, or even guilt, in their heroes for Fate to work upon. "Here everybody does their duty, everybody acts even wisely and nobly, and yet, such are the conditions of our complex and incalculable circumstances in this world, that the fruit is heartbroken misery and disappointment....<sup>60</sup>

These words of W.T. Webb, written about Tennyson's Enoch suit as well all the other protagonists of the works compared, as both of Miss A.A. Procter's anonymous heroes, and both of G. Crabbe's heroes: Allen Booth who went to sea hoping to make a fortune at a Western island and then come back, and his Judith who waited patiently and painfully for ten years; and even

Agnon's heroine Inge, Ferenheim's wife cannot be accused or blamed for marrying Ferenheim, since she did it only after and because her lover Karl Neiss, to whom she was only engaged, disappeared in a landslide and was thought dead, and it was neither as a result of any wrongdoing on the part of Karl Neiss or Inge.

However, we cannot say the same about Colonel Chabert's wife or about Menashe Hayim. Both of them, in different stories and under different circumstances, can be accused and blamed of being consciously wrong-doers, with the one being promptly 'paid' for his iniquities, in spite of his wrong doing not being the result of a vicious character, but more precisely the result of a passive and naive character, while the other one is being rewarded for them in spite of her villainous intentions.

#### 8. The Heroines of the Compared Stories

In the previous chapter we compared some of the similar details between Penelope, Rosine Chabert, Krendel Tcharni and Inge Ferenheim who were the heroines of the compared stories. We would not like to repeat any details except those which are connected with the heroines of Agnon's stories since this is our aim - to compare the heroines of the English writers to those of Agnon's works analysed before.

There are many similarities between all the heroines compared, in spite of the normal differences between them, i.e., the motif of waiting for the return of the beloved husband, or the active or passive role played by the different heroines in their fate and in the fate of their husbands, etc. are there in all the stories we already dealt with in this chapter.

a. Annie, Enoch Arden's Wife

Annie, Enoch's wife, waited patiently and faithfully for more than twelve years for the return of her beloved husband. She and her children were also poverty stricken, but they were lucky enough to find a helping hand from the generous friend of her childhood, Philip, who silently loved her since they used to play together as children.

Contrary to Krendel Tcharni, Annie not only does not push her husband to go on the trip from which he returned thirteen years later (after she was married to Philip) but she tries, in vain, to influence him to change his mind. She tells him her fears and about her presentiments, but to no avail. Annie, again contrary to Krendel Tcharni, is a passive character whose decisions and deeds are influenced by others, either by her husband, or by her friend. Her husband decides to go on a long journey and therefore asks her to make a living from the shop he opened and arranged for her. She agrees, in spite of the fact that she had no idea how to do business, and so it happens that in a short time she is hardly able to make a scanty living.

In her darkest moments she never asked actively for a helping hand from anybody, but she agreed, even if not so willingly at the beginning, to accept Philip's generous help in putting the children to school as well as other kinds of goodwill on his part, hoping that when Enoch returns he will surely repay him for everything. But even after Philip's proposal of marriage to her she still yearned for Enoch, her husband, and only after she interpreted a dream and a biblical sign wrongly, thinking that Enoch "is happy, he is singing Hosanna in the highest"<sup>61</sup> does she act actively; she "sent for



him (Philip) and said wildly to him, 'There is no reason why we should not wed'." <sup>62</sup> Even this single act of hers must be viewed as a result of her delaying so many times her positive answer to Philip's marriage proposals.

Annie remarried on a very weak legal basis, and the reality showed later that the dream and the Biblical sign were both true and only their interpretation was wrong. On one hand Annie waited much longer than Krendel Tcharni before she remarried. But on the other hand Krendel Tcharni does not remarry until she is freed of her marital status by the religious ecclesiastical court which gave her the status of a widow. There is nothing similar to this in Tennyson's Enoch Arden. It is possible that she was granted a similar status before she remarried, but this is not mentioned. And even if she would have been granted it, it would have been based on presumption and not on facts or on testimony as was the case with Menashe Hayim. Therefore Enoch Arden's tragedy could have happened as it had and is so different from that of Menashe Hayim.

Annie loved Enoch Arden, her husband, very much. She appreciated his natural intellect and wisdom, and had profound confidence in him and in everything he did. She lived with him for seven happy years and contrary to Krendel Tcharni gave birth to three children by her husband, a girl and two boys, one of whom passed away during Enoch's absence in spite of the loving care the child received from his mother. And similarly to Krendel Tcharni she gave birth to a child by her second husband. And again contrary to Krendel Tcharni who never knew the truth of her husband's death, Annie's life afterwards was vexed by the knowledge that Enoch had been alive, but returned a little bit late, and not because of his wrong deeds, but because of his

bad luck<sup>63</sup> and her wrong interpretation of the dream and Biblical sign. But at with Krendel Tcharni who was forewarned about two Menashe Hayims and a circumcision celebration at her house as soon as possible, which came true five years later, so it happened with Annie that what she had prophesied so innocently for herself, that "she would be little wife to both"<sup>64</sup> also came true, not after five years as with Krendel Tcharni but after twelve-long years of longing for her husband and nineteen years of Philip's longing to marry her.

b. Miss A.A. Procter's Anonymous Protagonists

To this writer it is very difficult and also strange to make any comparison with an anonymous protagonist,<sup>65</sup> but we have no choice since Miss Procter did not take the trouble to give them names.

From the story told by the old seaman it is quite clear that this heroine did not wait even ten years after the disappearance of her husband to remarry because when he came back after ten years of absence he found her:

... seated by the fire,  
In her arms she held a child,  
Whispering baby word caressing.<sup>66</sup>

This was in great contrast to what he expected to find when he came back freed from his unfortunate imprisonment.

I would picture my dear cottage,  
See the crackling wood-fire burn,  
And the two (his wife and his child) beside it seated,  
Watching, waiting my return.<sup>67</sup>

And instead of waiting for his return she remarried and was happy with her second husband who "had been an ancient comrade" to her first husband.

Although the description of the meeting between the heroes'

seems to be not a true picture<sup>68</sup> it sounds truer than the others. Here we have "a shriek of fear and terro" and we see "a white face of despair" and "a trembling hand" whereas on all the other occasions we rarely hear an expression of surprise.

Also the description of the three heroes - the one woman and the two husbands as not being able to utter even one word, only to cry - seems to be as natural as possible. She did not tell her husband even one word. Her tears spoke for her quite clearly. (He did not even hear about the death of their son from her, but from his old friend.) She did not reject him, but she also did not encourage him to stay, and he understood where his place was and therefore he decided immediately and bravely to leave the house, to leave her in her happiness with her second husband, and rightly, even without saying a farewell. In this poem the heroine does not occupy even a small proportion of its whole length. She is described so briefly as if she would have had only a very unimportant part in the whole tragedy described in this poem. In spite of its brevity, this enables us to make conspicuous a few similar points mentioned so briefly about her;

- 1, She bore a child to her first husband. (The child unfortunately died.)
2. She waited less than ten years and she did not know for sure that her husband died, but
- (3) She remarried and had a baby by her second husband.  
When her first husband reappeared:
- (4) She did not reject him, but she
- (5) Also did not ask him to remain and to remake their first marriage (as Judith<sup>69</sup> did with Allen Booth and Inge with Karl Neiss).

c. Judith, Allen Booth's Girl Friend

Judith, the heroine of Crabbe's poem The Parting Hour loves from childhood a certain Allen Booth to whom she was to be married as soon as he would be able to purchase a home. With the hope of coming back rich, Allen ventured to go to a Western island to be a helper to a childless kinsman. In spite of the danger of this plan "The faithful Judith his design approved".<sup>70</sup>

As in the other plots we also find here the presentiments which come true only partly in this case.

For they meet no more.<sup>71</sup>

This came true partially because temporarily, even if for a long period, they did not meet, but finally they met again and this suits another prediction of his well:

Sweet were the painful moments - but how sweet,  
And without pain, when they again should meet!<sup>72</sup>

which came true after they both had their adventurous lives.

She used to tell the lasses of her vow,  
And of her lover's loss, and I have seen  
The gayest hearts grow sad where she had been;  
Yet in her grief she married, and was made  
Slave to a wretch, whom weakly she obeyed,  
And early buried.....<sup>73</sup>

To these few details about her life we may add some more:

..... She had stayed  
Ten troubled years, a sad afflicted maid;  
Then was she wedded, of his death assured,  
And much of misery in her lot endured;  
Her husband died; her children sought their bread  
In various places, and to her were dead.

The once fond lovers met; nor grief nor age,  
Sickness or pain, their hearts could discourage:  
Each had immediate confidence; a friend  
Both now beheld, on whom they might depend:<sup>74</sup>

In this poem Crabbe gives us only a few details about Judith (more than Miss A.A. Procter gave us in her poem) but even so in very great disproportion to the part devoted to Allen Booth and to his adventures. Even so we are able to make ourselves a portrait of her, pinpointing the following points which are similar to the other heroines.

(1) Judith was in love with Allen Booth and she made a vow to wait for his return and then to marry him. (The vow was as strong as an engagement.) In this point her situation is very different from all the heroines of our compared stories, since all of them were married to their lovers, except for Inge whose situation is very similar to hers in her relations to her first lover, Karl Neiss, to whom she was only engaged when he disappeared and to whom she returned with love when he reappeared, as did Judith when Allen reappeared.

(2) She waited ten painful years and only thereafter, when she gave up any hope for his return, married somebody else, as did most of the other heroines of our compared stories with differences in the period of time waited.

(3) Unfortunately for her, her marriage was not a happy one, but she had children who grew up and left her home. Later she became widowed. This is very different from all our compared heroines whose second marriage was a happy one, except for that of Inge which broke up at the moment of the reappearance of the first lover, but which was on the verge of being broken even without it.

(4) Her once fond lover, Allen Booth, returned after forty years of absence, looked for her and found her free to build their once dreamed of home. (In the meantime he himself was married as well and was fortunate enough to have many happy

years with his Spanish wife and children). This is very similar, as I have already mentioned, to Inge's situation after the return of her once fond lover Karl Neiss.

## 9. Conclusion

In this chapter we have compared Agnon's two works with single works of Tennyson, Miss A.A. Procter and G. Crabbe and we may conclude that we succeeded in making conspicuous great similarities between the works compared. We would even have dared to say that also here there is more than a pure and simple coincidence in the similarities between these works. But the conclusion of this chapter is in a certain way different from the others for one main reason, which is: Agnon did not mention the names of these writers as having read their works. Even so, this does not exclude the possibility that he read them and was influenced by them, but this cannot be seen as having been proved, in this case, beyond any doubt, in spite of the great similarities between the plots, the protagonists, the crises of these works and the other conspicuous similarities. Different is the position of Agnon's The Bridal Canopy which shows clear signs of Cervantes' influence. We will discuss it in the next chapter.

## NOTES

1. TENNYSON, Lord A., Enoch Arden, with introduction and notes by W.T. Webb, London, M.A. MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1916. The writer of this study prefers to quote short passages in their original language instead of giving their content in his words because of their poetical beauty, even if this causes lengthier quotations.

2. Ibid., lines 107-108.
3. Ibid., lines 114-119.
4. Ibid., lines 126-127.
5. This voyage more than once? Yea, twice or thrice  
As oft as needed - last returning rich,  
Become the master of a larger craft,  
With fuller profits lead an easier life,  
(Ibid., lines 142-145)
6. Ibid., lines 633-635.
7. Ibid., lines 681-683.
8. Ibid., lines 701-705.
9. Ibid., lines 715.
10. Ibid., lines 764-766.
11. Ibid., line 782.
12. Ibid., lines 786-787.
13. Ibid., line 794.
14. Ibid., lines 834-835.
15. Ibid., lines 890-891.
16. Ibid., lines 895-897.
17. Ibid., lines 24-26.
18. Ibid., lines 34-36.
19. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. II, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit.,  
p. 82.
20. TENNYSON, Lord A., Enoch Arden, op. cit., lines 212-213.

21. Ibid., lines 190-194.
22. The motif of the keys is one of the key motifs in Agnon's writings.
23. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty-One Stories, Ferenheim, Nahum N. Glatzer (ed.), London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1970, p. 236.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 237.
26. This is the only reference to the religious affiliation of the characters, which seems to hint at their cultural, social and religious milieu, that is, they may be members of an assimilated Jewish family who may belong to a Jewish Reform Congregation.
27. AGNON, S.Y., Twenty-One Stories, op. cit., p. 237.
28. TENNYSON, Lord A., Enoch Arden, op. cit., lines 268-274.
29. Ibid., lines 275-276.
30. Our Sages O.B.M. guide us not to express fears, even unconditionally. For instance, it is advisable to say in such a case: I hope to see your face sooner than one may expect. In the positive way rather than in the negative one. There are many examples in the Bible where we find that an oath, even if its condition was fulfilled, had an effect similar to a curse. A case in point is that of Samuel and Eli, when the latter told Samuel that God shall do such and such to him if he shall conceal anything from him. When Eli told Samuel not to conceal



from him anything from what he was told by God, he said to him: "Do not, I pray thee, conceal it from me; May God do to thee thus, and continue to do so, if thou conceal anything from me of all the word that he hath spoken unto thee. And Samuel told him all the words, and concealed nothing from him." (Is. 3:17:18). And in spite of the fact that the Bible testifies that Samuel did not conceal anything from Eli, he got, even so, the conditional punishment. From this and similar cases O.S.O.B.M. learned that we are advised to use a clean language, and never curse or take an oath even unconditionally.

31. TENNYSON, Lord A., Enoch Arden, op. cit., lines 785-787.
32. Except perhaps for his stubborn and irrevocable decision to leave his home. However, this turn of the plot is so essential to the story that without this there would not have been this story at all.
33. TENNYSON, Lord A., Enoch Arden, op. cit., lines 782 and 794.
34. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Elu Ve'Elu, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 122.
35. TENNYSON, Lord A., Enoch Arden, op. cit., lines 782 and 794,
36. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit., p. 122.
37. TENNYSON, Lord A., Enoch Arden, op. cit., lines 782 and 794.
38. Ibid., lines 872-882.

39. The Complete Poetical Works of Adelaide Anne Procter,  
Cabinet Edition, Charles Dickens Intr., Cambridge,  
The United Press, , pp. 19-24.
40. Ibid., p. 20, column 1.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid, p. 23, col. 1.
43. Ibid, pp. 23-24.
44. Ibid., p. 24.
45. Miss A.A. Procter did not give any name to any of the  
heroes of her poem Homeward Bound.
46. See the possible explanation in the next page.
47. PROCTER, A.A., Homeward Bound, op. cit., p. 23, col. 7.
48. Ibid., p. 24, col. 1.
49. The Poems of George Crabbe, A Selection by B. Holland,  
London, Edward Arnold, 1909, pp. 98-113, The Parting Hour.
50. Ibid., p. 99.
51. Ibid., p. 100.
52. Ibid., p. 101.
53. Ibid., p. 109.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p. 110.
56. Ibid., p. 112.
57. Ibid., p. 104.
58. Ibid., p. 109.

59. Ibid., p. 108.
60. TENNYSON, Lord A., Enoch Arden, op. cit., introduction, pp. xxxiv-xxxv.
61. Ibid., line 499.
62. Ibid., line 504.
63. It is worthwhile to mention here that Enoch Arden asked the widow, Miriam Lane, not to let Annie come and see his face, "For my dead face would vex her after-life", but he was not aware at all that the knowledge that he was alive and denied the parental rights to his own children, etc., may have vexed Annie's after-life even more. Revealing his identity he opened a healed wound in Annie's heart and also may have awakened in her a sense of guilt towards his tragic and early death.
64. TENNYSON, Lord A., Enoch Arden, op. cit., line 36.
65. The question arises why did the author not take the trouble to give names to her protagonists. One explanation may be that the author wanted to give the story of a universal event which is not connected to place or time. Another possibility is that perhaps, this was a true story whose personalities were still alive at the time of the publishing of this poem.
66. PROCTER, A.A., Homeward Bound, op. cit., p. 23, col. 2.
67. Ibid., p. 23, col. 1.
68. The picture seems to be not true because of some contradictory situations:  
She was seated by the fire,  
In her arms she held a child,

Whispering baby-words caressing, (page 23)

. . . .

But she rose and turned towards me (ibid)

. . . .

And with a shriek of fear and terror (Ibid)

. . . .

While the baby smiled and slept. (Page 24)

The picture as a whole seems to be forced; the turns are not convincing with their "natural" atmosphere.

69. See next pages where her behaviour is discussed.
70. The poems of George Crabbe, A Selection by Bernard Holland, London, Edward Arnold, 1909, p. 101.
71. Ibid., p. 102.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., p. 106.
74. Ibid., p. 108.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE BRIDAL CANOPY<sup>1</sup> AND DON QUIXOTE<sup>2</sup>

#### 1. Introduction

Discussing the similarities between Agnon's works and those of other European writers we made the comparison mostly between the main motifs and the different development of the plots in their works.

Before starting the comparison we would like to introduce the reader to some special aspects of the Hebrew work. The English translation of Hakhnasat Kala as the Bridal Canopy is a shortened one, because in Hebrew it means bringing the bride under the Bridal Canopy, but it has a much wider meaning as well. Namely, it includes the selection of the groom by the bride's father and mother (the young couple meet before the official engagement is made) and sometimes only by the father; the agreement between the families about the terms of the marriage, dowry, housing and furniture, wedding expenses and so on; helping the groom in opening a business, or in some cases of a rabbinical student, the support of the family (his in-laws) for many years to enable the groom to continue his studies. For this purpose almost every Hebrew Congregation has Helping Hand societies affiliated with it who collect funds during the year to enable the poor members of their own congregations, or of others, to marry their daughters in an honourable way and to well-educated and well-to-do grooms. Besides this assistance given by the societies, individual donations are also collected from generous donors

for the same purpose. It was an honor to be a donor for such a worthy charitable cause. The collector was not seen as a beggar because he did not do it out of laziness, but because otherwise he would have caused with his own hands a tragic life for his daughters or other Jewish girls who would either have to remain old spinsters or worse, lead a life of immoral behaviour.

It is also worthwhile to attract the attention of the reader to the fact that underneath the title of the book, Hachnasat Kala, in the middle of the front page of the Hebrew text, two lines are printed in which the author gives us the epitome of the whole book. Translated it means:

The wonders of Reb Yudel the Hasid of Brod and his three modest daughters and the exposition of the greatness of our brethren, the children of Israel, (the) inhabitants of the Emperor's country may his glory be exalted.

Agnon, in his writings, used to mention with admiration and honour the Emperor's liberal rule in the Austro-Hungarian empire adding this expression of gratefulness everywhere he used to mention the Emperor.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Reb Yudel and Don Quixote

In comparing The Bridal Canopy with Don Quixote, it seems to the writer that the similarities will be found more in the form than in the content, more in the characters than in what they say or do, even though there is a reflection of the form on the contents and of the characters on what they do or say. The main similarities will therefore be found in the structure of the books and in the similitude of the two main characters, Don Quixote and Sancho Pansa on one hand and Reb Yudel the Hasid and Nuta the waggoner on the other.

We may find many more points of comparison, but to deal with them all, it will require an additional separate volume devoted entirely to a detailed research on its own. Amazing as it may seem is the fact that one of the main motifs in all the stories we have largely discussed and compared is also the main motif of both our stories, i.e., the heroes leave their homes for an undefined and unforeseen period, at the end of which they return to their homes, sometimes just in time to save their marriages, but many more times a little too late.<sup>4</sup>

Don Quixote and Sancho Pansa also leave their homes but for psychological, ideological and political reasons, while Reb Yudel the Hassid and Nuta the Waggoner do so purely for economical reasons. (We may add for religious reasons as well, because it is the religious duty of a father to see that his daughters marry learned and good-mannered grooms.) His return is successful since he fulfilled his mission, and his world is a world of miracles according to the reading of Professor B. Kurtzweil.<sup>5</sup> Don Quixote's return is only successful in a certain way but cannot be compared in its details with that of Reb Yudel.

As will be seen from the next quotations there are great similarities between the main protagonists of these novels. Both Don Quixote and Reb Yudel the Hasid were deeply impressed, inspired and influenced by the books they were reading, although in different ways and with very different results. Both pairs of heroes went out on their missions with great faith in their necessity and with the greatest confidence that their missions, in spite of being so different and difficult, will be most successful. On their way out of their houses and native towns and on the way back, they were involved in many adventures and

episodes which intrigue the reader in a most genuine way. And in spite of the apparently episodic broken structure, one feels the pulse of a great work unified under the adventurous story of Don Quixote on the one hand and Reb Yudel on the other.

There are many details, motifs in the history and behaviour of these protagonists, which are very similar and different at the same time. There is a great 'mark of poverty' in the description of "the quality and living of the renowned Don Quixote" and of Reb Yudel as well.

At a certain village in La Mancha, which I shall not name, there lived not long ago one of those old fashioned gentlemen, who are never without a lance upon a rack, an old target, a lean horse, and a greyhound. His diet consisted more of beef<sup>o</sup> than mutton; and with minced meat on most nights, lentils on Fridays, griefs and groans on Saturdays, and a pigeon extraordinary on Sundays, he consumed three quarters of his revenue; the rest was laid out in a plush coat, velvet breeches, with slippers of the same, for holidays, and a suit of the very best homespun cloth, which he bestowed himself for working days. His whole family was a housekeeper something turned forty, a niece not twenty, and a man who served in the house and in the field, and could saddle a horse, and handle the pruning-hook. The master himself was nigh fifty years of age, of a hale and strong complexion, lean-bodied and thin-faced, an early riser, and a lover of hunting. Some say his surname was Quixada, or Quesada (for authors differ in this particular); however, we may reasonably conjecture, he was called Quixada (i.e., lanthorn-jaws) though this concerns us but little, provided we keep strictly to the point of this history.<sup>7</sup>

This detailed description of Don Quixote's daily life and wealth at the very beginning deserves our careful attention, since in these few lines we have some hints about what is going to happen in the near future. These many details, the age of



our protagonist, his being a bachelor, an early riser and a lover of hunting are of very great importance to us, especially taking into account that:

... when our gentleman had nothing to do (which was almost all year round), he passed his time in reading books of knight-errantry, which he did with such application and delight, that at last he in a manner wholly left off his country sports, and even the care of his estate; nay, he grew so strangely besotted with these amusements, that he sold many acres of arable land to purchase books of that kind; by which means he collected as many of them as could be had; but among them all none pleased him like the works of the famous Feliciano de Sylva for the brilliancy of his prose, and those intricate expressions with which it is interlaced, seemed to him so many pearls of eloquence, especially when he came to read the challenges and the amorous addresses, many of them in this extraordinary style: "The reason of your unreasonable usage of my return, does so enfeeble my reason, that I have reason to expostulate with your beauty." And this, "The sublime heavens, which with your divinity divinely fortify you with the stars, and fix you the deserver of the desert that is deserved by your grandeur." These and such-like expressions, strangely puzzled the poor gentleman's understanding, while he was breaking his brain to unravel their meaning which Aristotle himself could never have found, though he should have been raised from the dead for that very purpose.<sup>8</sup>

After this introduction about the daily, cultural, and spiritual life of Don Quixote we are not surprised at all that this master decided to take to the road, and we see this as a natural result of his being so influenced by his reading "that all the fables and fantastical tales which he read seemed to him now as true as the most authentic histories".<sup>9</sup>

We are no more amazed by the 'logic' of his new enterprises and their 'holy' purposes:

... for now he thought it convenient and necessary, as well for the increase of his own honour, as the service of the public, to turn knight-errant, and roam through the whole world, armed cap-a-pie, and mounted on his steed, in quest of adventures; that thus imitating those knights-errant of whom he had read, and following their course of life, redressing all manner of grievances, and exposing himself to danger on all occasions, at last, after a happy conclusion of his enterprises, he might purchase everlasting honour and renown.<sup>10</sup>

In this detailed description of the metamorphosis undergone by Don Quixote as a direct and unavoidable result of his enamoured reading of the chivalry books, we have to pinpoint a few points similar to those of Agnon's description of Reb Yudel.

In the description of Don Quixote we may underline these particulars for later comparison.

- (a) He is one of those old-fashioned gentlemen.
- (b) His diet bears the mark of poverty.
- (c) He is not married but has a family consisting of a housekeeper, a niece and a man that served him in the house and in the field. His "true" lady was Dulcinea de Toboso.
- (d) Our gentleman passed most of his time reading books of knight-errantry.
- (e) Influenced by his reading he decides to be a knight-errant himself, to go out of his village and to look for adventures, to change the world into a better one, and to purchase for himself through his 'good deeds' everlasting honour and renown.
- (f) He arranges for himself a 'suit of armour' and other items of chivalry which will give him the authentic allure of a true knight-errant.
- (g) He leaves his house and native village as a thief at midnight.

Agnon gave us a similar description of Reb Yudel's daily cultural and spiritual life, and even in the greatest similarity we find the greatest differences. But before dealing with the details to be compared, it would be appropriate to quote from Agnon's description as well;

The following story deals with a devout man, a Hassid, who was so poor as to be overborne by his poverty, may Mercy deliver us,<sup>11</sup> but who always sat at the holy toil of the Torah<sup>12</sup> because he kept his distance from the current affairs of the world; so he had no commerce nor traffickings nor dealings like other folk, but found his entire delight in God's Torah, both the generally revealed and that which is held secret to wit, the lore of Kabala. He served the Name<sup>13</sup> in awe and fear and love and never thought of acquiring honour through study or of being esteemed a scholar by himself or by others; ...

His dwelling was underground in a damp, narrow, gloomy cellar lacking seat upon which to sit and table at which to sit, bed upon which to lie and all other household furniture save a straw mat spread out on the ground; upon it his folk would lie..... And so poverty stricken was he that his only property was one cock called Reb Reveille<sup>14</sup> because of the verse in Psalms "He rallied light through the darkness for the upright"<sup>15,16</sup>

Now the Hassid was burdened with daughters, each older than the next by a year or more; that is, Gittele, the youngest, was about seventeen; then came Blume, her sister, who was about nineteen; and oldest of all was Pessele, the first-born, about twenty; ... and they were all charming, graceful and fair, with well-grown breasts and well-grown hair, but within their hearts, alas, fluttered despair at the days of their youth that were almost done; but redeemers from their maidenhood there were none.<sup>17</sup>

This detailed description of Reb Yudel's life and wealth at the very beginning is very similar to that of Don Quixote's and here as well as there we have some clues about what is going to happen in the near future.

The many details about the ideals of our protagonist and his family life, about his being an early riser to worship the Creator, are of great importance to us especially taking into account that he "found his entire delight" only in the reading of the books of religious subjects. Also, the many details about his young daughters who were waiting for their redeemers, put the reader on the alert about the possible turns of our protagonist's life.

Now comparing the quoted passages from Cervantes and Agnon, we may conclude that the first one (Cervantes) portrayed Don Quixote's poverty giving us a detailed list of his belongings, his estate and his way of life. The latter one (Agnon) did it in a similar but different way by giving us a list of what was wanting and even when he mentions his "havings" these are but adding to his poor position and tragic situation. Cervantes did not mention the word poverty in the quoted passages, or elsewhere in connection with Don Quixote, while Agnon mentions it from the beginning many times. Reb Yudel's great material poverty is in no measure greater than Don Quixote's; We dare say that in comparison with Reb Yudel, Don Quixote was a rich man. The only income Reb Yudel's family had was from "plucking feathers for cushions" and with this they eke out a scanty living.

Carrying on with the comparison between these two gentlemen we find that as Don Quixote was described as one of those old-fashioned gentlemen, so was Reb Yudel, but in a different way of course. Reb Yudel is described as a Hassid which means "a pious Jew or a righteous man; or both; or a follower of any Hassidic movement, founded by "The Besht".<sup>18</sup>

But according to the view of the modern Jews, and mainly according to the Reform movement or to the 'progressive minded Jews' the Hassid is one of those old-fashioned Jews, who are literary characters of a wonderful world which does not exist any more, exactly as the knight-errant was in the times of Cervantes. Many of the critics of Agnon's work, like Kurtzweil, Band, Hochman, Bahat and many others, take this reading of this character for granted,<sup>19</sup> adding to it their conviction that this type of old-fashioned Jew does not exist any more nowadays and that Agnon's main aim in writing this book was to erect a monument on the tomb of this Jewish world and its archetype which, as it has already been mentioned above, does not exist anymore.<sup>20</sup>

And so we find that Don Quixote was an early riser as was Reb Yudel, but how different are their aspirations. Don Quixote loved hunting and thereafter the reading of the books of chivalry took away the position of everything. Reb Yudel put his whole delight in studying God's Torah, in praying and in fulfilling the Commandments. Don Quixote passed most of his time reading books of false value or without value at all, not to speak of the dangerous and negative impact they had on Don Quixote's soul and brain. Reb Yudel passed most of his time reading books of eternal value which had a moderate and positive influence on his character. Reb Yudel's material situation is bad beyond imagination,<sup>21</sup> but his cultural and spiritual high level has gained an objective recognition, while Don Quixote's material situation is not so bad, his cultural and spiritual high level gained only his (and his squire's) subjective appreciation.

To this we may add that Don Quixote had no burden

of a family while Reb Yudel had a very great family burden, since he had three daughters of marriageable age whom he had to supply with a valuable dowry if he wanted to obtain well-to-do grooms for them. In spite of all this Agnon stresses the fact that Reb Yudel "never thought of acquiring honour through study or of being esteemed a scholar by himself or by others;.." while Don Quixote dreams of purchasing for himself "... everlasting honour and renown".

Carrying on with the comparison, we find that Don Quixote as well as Reb Yudel went out of their homes for a journey from which both returned to their families. But, again, how different are the stimulants of their enterprises? None of their decisions was a result of a monetary and non-calculated apprehension. It was rather as a result of a minutiaeous consideration on the side of both of them. Once he, Don Quixote, made up his mind of the necessity and paramount importance of his decision, he

thought it now a crime to deny himself any longer to the injured world, that wanted such a deliverer; the more when he considered what grievances he was to redress, what wrongs and injuries to remove, what abuses to correct, and what duties to discharge.<sup>22</sup>

Namely, he undertook to improve and to change the world into a better one. From where did these ideas come to obsess our protagonist? From where did his 'original' and 'genuine' ideas originate? He himself discloses the secret of the source of his stimulus - the books of knight-errantry he was so enamoured with and continually read.

And what is the origin of Reb Yudel's 'original' and 'genuine' ideas? Contrary to those of Don Quixote his stimulus emerges from his real life and from his being enamoured in

the reading and studying of his books, which give the right directions to the decisions taken for the sake of improving or changing his personal world, "that wanted such a deliverer", because his charming three daughters who were "graceful and fair" waited with great despair for the successful results of their father's travelling affair,

Let us see now how the idea of travelling developed in the original.

When the youngest reached the age at which a virgin should be wed, Frumet, the wife of the Hassid in question, began to address herself to her husband. How much longer, said she to him, will you be as unfeeling as a raven toward your children? Have you no pity for your hapless, hopeless daughters who sit sighing and weeping like wives whose husbands have vanished, and who know not whether they are widowed or not?...<sup>23</sup> The words went to the heart of the Hassid and aroused with him his fatherly pity. He sighed a bitter sigh, then turned his gaze back upon the Gemara,<sup>24</sup> putting his trust in the Lord, since all things accord with His will and word.<sup>25</sup>

What did Frumet do? She went to the saintly Rabbi of Apta, ... and she cried out to him... Rabbi, aid me. My daughters have reached a fitting age for marriage, but I lack the wherewithal to wed them off, while their father is too far from worldly matters to concern himself. The saint ... said, go and borrow some fine garments for your husband. I and my acquaintances will hire him a covered waggon so that he can make the round of the villages and hamlets for money, to carry out the commandment of bringing a maiden under the Bridal Canopy, until such time as His Blessed Name prepares a suitable match for him. Frumet's heart overflowed with joy, and she asked, Rabbi, what portion shall he promise his daughter? Whatever sum the bridegroom's father may promise for his son, he answered, let your husband promise as much for your daughter. And he gave her his blessing and she departed.<sup>26</sup>

From this passage we learn about the relations in Reb

Yudel's family, between wife and husband, but also between the Rabbi and his folk, and how much confidence the people have in the Lord and in His word but which is expressed by trust in their Rabbi. It is possible that here there is also part of Agnon's irony, namely, their confidence is truly and blindly in the word of the Rabbi and not in the word of the Lord.

It is worthwhile to attract the attention of the reader to an interesting motif which dominates many of Agnon's writings and is conspicuous in The Bridal Canopy as well as in Vehaya he'akov lemishor. In both stories the protagonists leave their homes as a result of the activity of their wives. Kurtzweil mentioned, and rightly, on many occasions, that in most of Agnon's stories and novels the males distinguish themselves by their passivity while their wives are remarkably shown off by their activity. Reb Yudel's wife tried to influence her husband by talking logic to him, but his reaction was similar to that of "a lump of clay in a form of a man", and instead of doing something to further relieve the suffering of his daughters, his reaction was to sigh "a bitter sigh, then turn his gaze back upon the Gemara, putting his trust in the Lord.."27

Reb Yudel puts his trust in the Lord, while Don Quixote would like that others should put their trust in his word and/or in his sword. Don Quixote stopped all his activities, "his country sports, and even the care of his estate", because he was so absorbed in the reading of his knights-errant books. Reb Yudel was too far from worldly matters to concern himself with anything "so he had no commerce nor traffickings nor dealings like other folk because he kept his distance from the



current affairs of the world',<sup>28</sup> also because he was absorbed in the reading of his God's Torah. In spite of this, in the case of Reb Yudel, and because of it in the case of Don Quixote, they had to go out on their way. For Don Quixote his purpose was clear, and he had only 'to pray' that he ventures successfully on his adventures and that he will be able to show the vindication of his ideas and his righteous deeds. For Reb Yudel, even if the purpose of his enterprise was clear as well, he did not know what to do and how long to be on his way, therefore he got his guidance through the words of the Rabbi, namely:

Until such time as His Blessed Name prepares a suitable match for him (for his daughter)...<sup>29</sup>

But there was still the question:

What portion shall he (Reb Yudel) promise his daughter?

And the guidance of the Rabbi is:

... Whatever sum the bridegroom's father may promise for his son.<sup>30</sup>

With this advice and with a letter of recommendation as well, Reb Yudel's wife returned home.

Returning home Frumet told her husband all the details of her discourse with the holy Rabbi of Apta.

The Massid hesitated whether to take the road, since travel diminishes the study of the Torah and prayer with the congregation, as well as disturbing a man's customary ways. Nonetheless he did not dismiss the matter, for it is a duty to hearken to the words of the wise. So he applied to himself the saying of the Sage, When your daughter attains puberty free your slave;<sup>31</sup> that is, free yourself, for you are one of the slaves<sup>32</sup> of the Blessed Creator.<sup>33</sup>

And the holy Rabbi, that lover of Israel, took pen in hand, soared on the wings of lofty speech and wrote a letter for Rabbi Yudel to inflame the hearts of all

good people who love charity and deeds of loving-kindness; and blessed him, that the Name might prosper his way.<sup>34</sup>

Cervantes had to care for Don Quixote's apparel of chivalry so he included in advance in the list of his belongings some used and forgotten items of knights-errant, i.e. "a suit of armour that had belonged to his great-grandfather" so that he may have the authentic allure of a true knight-errant. Agnon could not do the same with Reb Yudel because of his poverty, so he had to put into the mouth of the holy Rabbi the advice for Reb Yudel's wife that she should borrow some fine garments, and "setting a small cushion over his belly after the fashion of worthies who have not been blessed with a paunch", Reb Yudel will have the authentic allure of a true worthy, as Don Quixote of a true knight-errant.

Cervantes was also concerned about the need of a steed for his protagonist so he put it in advance in his stable. But Agnon could not do the same because of the poverty stricken portrait he gave his protagonist. Hence, he resolved this problem by having the holy Rabbi tell Reb Yudel's wife:

I and my acquaintances will hire him a covered waggon so that he can make the round of the villages and hamlets for money, to carry out the commandment...<sup>35</sup>

Reb Yudel left his house listening to the voice of the wise, as he learned from his books, and Don Quixote left his house listening to his inner voice which was also the result of his reading from his books.

There is still a great dissimilarity between their very similar deed mentioned just now but yet to be pointed out:

Rabbi Yudel took the letter of recommendation, folded it, put it away, took his leave of the Rabbi and returned home to his wife and daughters. They brought

him the fine garments and he put them on, setting a small cushion over his belly after the fashion of worthies who have not been blessed with a paunch...<sup>36</sup>

Now the neighbours came, men and women, when they heard that Rabbi Yudel was starting out. And Rabbi Yudel took three of his friends<sup>37</sup> and said in front of them, A song of degrees,<sup>38</sup> ... My help cometh from the Lord who maketh heaven and earth. And after him they responded, The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in now and evermore....<sup>39</sup> Rabbi Yudel moved a short pace, said, Right away, set his lips to the mezuzah, kissed it three times, and said, The Lord is my guardian, The Lord is my keeper; He shall guard my going out and my coming in. And his wife and daughters said, For life and peace, now and henceforth ever more.<sup>40</sup> And then he mounted the waggon.

To cut a long story short, Rabbi Yudel sat on the waggon and turned his face to all the four quarters, while his family called after him, go to life and blessing and success, and all his neighbours, men and women, called, And to joy and to peace without ill meetings, and may you merit to return home speedily to life and peace, amen...<sup>41</sup>

And as Don Quixote wanted to do good for the world, so Reb Yudel also wanted to do good for the world, again with a difference. Don Quixote through his hopes for adventures, and Reb Yudel by beginning "to perfume the air with holy words for a great and special purpose..."<sup>42</sup> so giving an opportunity to the souls, which had no time to repent before they died, to be released from their wandering punishment. And so he did good with words although he could not do the same with his money (because he had none).

After the Hassid had done his good deed for the dead, he bestirred himself to do a good deed for the living, ... He began to ask him (the waggoner) how business was, and all those questions with which people ... try to do good with their words when they cannot do good with their money. He let his face give light on the whole

world. When they passed a man he greeted him. If a non-Jew greeted him he answered, Amen, according to the advice of Rabbi Tanhuma in the Jerusalem Talmud ...<sup>43</sup>

Rabbi Yudel left his house and native town singing and in full light, in midday, accompanied by the greetings, good wishes and blessings of his family and his neighbours, besides the blessings he already received from the holy Rabbi, while Don Quixote after having made all preparations he:

one morning before day, in the greatest heat of July, without acquainting anyone with his design, with all the secrecy imaginable, he armed himself cap-a-pie, laced on his ill-contrived helmet, braced on his target, grasped his lance, mounted Rozinante, and at the private door of his back-yard sallied out into the fields,<sup>44</sup> wonderfully pleased to see with how much ease he had succeeded in the beginning of his enterprise...<sup>45</sup>

But immediately he was alarmed by a terrible thought 'that his way is not paced with roses' as is prescribed in the books of chivalry, but

having thus dismissed these busy scrupules, he very calmly rode on, leaving it to his horse's discretion to go which way he pleased; firmly believing that in this consisted the very being of adventures.<sup>46</sup>

In this last detail there is still a similarity with Reb Yudel's enterprise because he himself, or rather his driver, let the horses take them in the way they were pleased, as Agnon describes his protagonist's adventures:

The horses went along after their fashion, now leaping and now crawling, while Nuta switched his whip about their tails to remind them that no horse may shift along without a director. And why did Nuta see fit to agree with Reb Yudel?

Because, said Nuta, since Reb Yudel respects my horses and goes along the path they lead him, I'll likewise show respect to Reb Yudel by accompanying him whither

he desires to go. For Nuta did not realise that 'twas not his own wish that Reb Yudel desired to go whither the horses took him, just as it was not of their own wish that the horses went on, and just as the whip does not crack on its own; but that which is high is guarded by that which is higher, while there are yet higher to keep watch and ward over these in turn.<sup>47</sup>

Reb Yudel's waggoner as his master himself believes that there is a Highest Director who is directing every single deed of every single human being in this world, according to their personal wishes, and Don Quixote had also a firm belief but a little bit different. This may also explain a major difference between these two protagonists. Don Quixote is happy leaving his house and his books, because he sees in his being a knight-errant the ideal of his life and the realization of the highest ideas ever dreamt of. While Reb Yudel is very hesitant before he leaves his house and family and especially his books and during his trip, which is in itself of a paramount religious importance since it received the personal special blessing of the Holy Rabbi of Apta, Reb Yudel regrets many a time that he left his house, with the possibility of studying and whorshipping the Almighty God in the right way. Were it not for the Rabbi's words, Reb Yudel would have come home immediately without thinking twice.

### 3. Some Other Similarities

In this analysis of only the first few pages of The History of Don Quixote de la Mancha and The Bridal Canopy, we found many similar details which are at the same time quite different as well. It seems to the writer of this study that we shall be at fault if we carry on with a detailed

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comparison between these two books all the way through all their episodes and adventures, and furthermore, it is not necessary for the purpose of this research.

At the same time we feel it is quite important to elaborate on two similar details, namely:

(a) The similarity and the differences between Sancho Panca and Nuta the Waggoner; and the intriguing question:

(b) Does the author appear in his work? How? And who is expressing his views? What is the position in each of these works? That is, which one of the protagonists in Don Quixot<sup>o</sup> and in The Bridal Canopy can be positively and undoubtedly identified with the author?

This subject has its own merit and importance, beside that of showing an additional point of comparison.

(c) The similarity between the structure of The Bridal Canopy and Don Quixota.

(a) Let us start with Sancho Panza, who is described as: one of his neighbours, a county labourer, and a good honest fellow, if we may call a poor man honest, for he was poor indeed, poor in purse, and poor in brain; and in short the knight talked so long to him, plied with him so many arguments, and made him so many fair promises that at last the poor silly clown consented to go along with him, and become his squire. Among other inducements to entice him to do it willingly, Don Quixote forgot not to tell him, that it was likely such an adventure would present itself, in the time he might be picking up a straw or two, and then the squire might promise himself to be made governor of the place. Allured with these large promises, and many others, Sancho Panca (for that was the name of the fellow) forsook his wife and children to be his neighbour's squire.<sup>48</sup>

But in spite of this description of Sancho Panza, especially of his being poor in brain as he was in purse, we find him

many times acting and thinking with more brains than his master himself. As in the case

Of the good success which the valorous Don Quixote had in the most terrifying and never-to-be-imagined adventure of the wind-mills, with other transactions worthy to be transmitted to posterity,<sup>49</sup>

where we are told about the encounter between Don Quixote and the "giants" who were in reality but simple wind-mills. And when, as a result of his blindness, Don Quixote was hit by these windmills' wings

till down he fell, rolling a good way off in the field. Sancho Panca ran as fast as his ass could drive to help his master, whom he found lying and not able to stir, such a blow he and Rozimante had received...<sup>50</sup>

He was given a lesson, a very logical one, with a tone of reproach by this "poor silly clown" who was also "poor in brain". (This is only one of many more occasions on which Sancho Panca is shown as having more 'brains' than his master.)

As for Nuta (who is addressed at times by Reb Yudel as <sup>51</sup>Reb Nuta) he was called the Brody Waggoner in spite of the wellknown fact that he was born in Bisk. And as Sancho Panca has some true philosophical ideas about Don Quixote and the whole world around, so does Nuta as well, because that is what he says:

..... they only call me the Brod Waggoner because it's the way of the world to hold fast to what's false, falsehood being a thing they're fonder of than truth...<sup>52</sup>

Differing from Sancho Panca, Nuta did not accompany Reb Yudel for the sake of realising a dream of being a governor of an island, or the like, but just for the fact that this was his job, he was a waggoner, and as soon as Reb Yudel did not need his services any more he released him and paid him up to the last penny.

Nuta's stories about his being robbed because of a drink of water, and his being not so happily married to his wife because of his being fond of eating, give us some of the characteristics of this man, which seem to be quite similar to those of his prototype from Cervantes' novel. And as some readers define Sancho Panca as the more realistic in comparison to his master, so do some readers about Nuta. For instance, when they journeyed and

they passed through the gentile villages, Hotnik and Kuzmir, also the village New Smolensk, where little urchins came out and began throwing stones after them. Reb Yudel, says Nuta to him, keep your head inside the waggon under cover so the stones won't hit you. I have no fear of them, responds Reb Yudel, I've already said the prayer for a journey, so I'm safe.<sup>53</sup>

Here we see the realistic way of thinking of Nuta the Waggoner on one hand and the great and naive confidence of Reb Yudel in his Almighty God on the other.<sup>54</sup>

(b) And now to the question: Does the author express his views by one or more of the protagonists? Or does he do it only through a certain character? And who is it?

In Don Quixote we found that Cervantes expresses his views mainly through the Canon of Toledo. E.C. Riley writes:

The Canon seeking to canalise Quixote's interests, advises him...<sup>55</sup>

The simple statement of the aim of writing is made by the Canon of Toledo. It is 'jointly to instruct and to delight'.<sup>56</sup>

Thus the Canon argues against the novels of chivalry...<sup>57</sup>

And on many more occasions we find Cervantes' views expressed by the Canon of Toledo.



And according to J.G. Lockhart, this is a commonplace, since he writes in his introduction to Cervantes:

And if the Canon of Toledo to be introduced, as is generally supposed, (underlined by I.M.) to express the opinion of Cervantes himself, the author of Don Quixote had certainly, at one period of his life, entertained some thoughts of writing not a humorous parody, but a serious imitation, of the Amadis.<sup>58</sup>

Namely, it is generally supposed that the Canon of Toledo expressed the opinions of Cervantes himself.

In The Bridal Canopy, Agnon expresses his views through the Sage of Jerusalem (Hechacham Hayerushalmi). Meshulam Tochmar<sup>59</sup> dedicated a whole essay in which he demonstrated this point, namely, he proved very convincingly, through comparing the first with the second edition, and this with biographical details, that Hechacham Hayerushalmi may be identified positively and undoubtedly with Agnon himself, or more exactly as expressing Agnon's views.

As has already been mentioned, there is room for a detailed analysis on this subject, which is not the purpose of this study.

(c) Finally, comparing the structure of The Bridal Canopy with that of Don Quixote we may also find many striking similarities. Speaking about the structural technique in Don Quixote Riley finds that Cervantes needed a binding agent when he expressed opinions or judgments, not to say weltanschauung, which he found in irony. Many readers like Kurtzweil, Sadan, Werses and others speak about Agnon's The Bridal Canopy in similar terms, namely he is ironic when he portrays the pious hero and his naive world.

But there is also another definition of irony, that of Riley, who writes:

By this (irony) I mean what is unhelpfully called 'romantic irony'. We can use Wellek's definition of the terms as employed by Friedrich Shlegel (who so admired Don Quixote), since it is applicable in all its breadth to Cervantes (to Agnon as well. I.M.):

Irony is his recognition of the fact that the world in its essence is paradoxical and that an ambivalent attitude alone can grasp its contradictory totality. For Shlegel irony is the struggle between the absolute and the relative, the simultaneous consciousness of the impossibility and the necessity of a complete account of reality. The writer must thus feel ambivalent towards his work: he stands above and apart from it and manipulates it almost playfully.

Irony allows Cervantes to criticize while he writes,...<sup>60</sup> and so does Agnon, thus presenting different points of view with considerable impartiality.

It has already been mentioned the resemblance between the two pairs of heroes Reb Yudel and Nuta the Waggoner on the one hand and Don Quixote and Sancho Panca on the other, as well as the similtude in their episodical structure created by the adventures encountered by the heroes through their travels.

Agnon as well as Cervantes writes headings to each and every one of the chapters of his books in which the essence of the respective chapter is given. Other fine examples of Agnon's<sup>61</sup> as well as Cervantes<sup>62</sup> techniques we may find in their way of interpolating folktales or stories which were already published as artistical works on their own. And as Cervantes' work of art 'becomes a complex of delicate relationship between the author, the work and the reader'<sup>63</sup> so does it with Agnon's, and as

...In Cervantes' novels the awareness shows itself in his critical detachment, the realisation of his power

to control and manipulate his creation and his sensitivity to the reader's reaction...<sup>64</sup>

so does Agnon in The Bridal Canopy where he allows himself to appear, here and there, with a remark like this:

Now let us remove our mind from Reb Yudel's thoughts and let us see where he is<sup>65</sup>

or like this:

But we who know how much trouble Reb Yudel took for his daughter, we'll return to him and we'll tell one to one everything that happened to him from the moment he left Polycrif, and finally we'll bring him to his wife and daughters.<sup>66</sup>

and many, many others in which he associates the readers in the secrets of his creation, not fearing that this act may diminish the interest of the reader in the flow of the events because of lack of curiosity, since he (the reader) knows in advance the happy end.

Riley, speaking about Cervantes' technique, writes:

The importance of being brief is an aphorism with Cervantes. At least half a dozen times he says words to the effect that prolixity engenders tedium,<sup>67</sup>

and so it is with Agnon, who many times just writes:

To cut a long story short....

which he still keeps long.

There are many more points to be pinpointed for making conspicuous the similarity between them but they may lengthen this research. Therefore we shall be satisfied with these main similar points compared up till now.

#### 4. Some Views on the Reading of These Works

Kurtzweil, when comparing Menashe Hayim's going out of his house with Reb Yudel's, reaches the conclusion that

Menashe Hayim's return had to fail; he was a tragic character from the very beginning and as in our time and in Menashe Hayim's time as well there are no miracles; hence the late coming back of Menashe Hayim and his tragic end was unavoidable. This is also the explanation, according to Kurtzweil's reading, as to why Reb Yudel's return is not late and therefore not tragic, i.e., the whole story of Reb Yudel happens in a world of miracles, so there is no wonder that he came home and everything had a happy end.

This writer fully agrees with Kurtzweil that Reb Yudel's world is a world of miracles, but he disagrees that they do not happen any more, even today.<sup>68</sup> Even Menashe Hayim, according to our reading, would have had another end if he would have had the confidence in the Almighty God that Reb Yudel had had, or the Hassid of the same story had. Reb Yudel, the Hassid, returned home empty handed as he left, but with great happiness because of his confidence in the Word of the Lord and His holy servants. Reb Yudel was not away from his house for even a year. He never thought of selling his letter of recommendation (as Menashe Hayim did) and he himself met at least with another two people who had the same name as his, and even so, and maybe because of it, there was no danger of a similar tragedy like that of Menashe Hayim. It seems to the writer that Kurtzweil's interpretation is very much influenced by the fact that he believed sincerely that this world of Reb Yudel which Agnon so genially portrayed does not exist any more, and therefore his stress is on the comic and on the satire and even on the naivety of Reb Yudel and the Hassidim. Sadan comes to the conclusion that Reb Yudel is a true believer, but the reader is not, and therefore he finds this portrayal flawed by modern

ironies. To him also the whole journey is fantastic and the ending incredible. A. Kariv thinks in a different way. He considers Reb Yudel the true archetype of the Jew of the described era, without these ironical flaws.

But what can be done if we find even today Hassidim who have as great a confidence in the Almighty God as Reb Yudel had two centuries ago? They leave their houses as Reb Yudel did. They promise to give their portion of dowry for their daughters equal to that which the bridegroom's father promises in spite of the fact that they hardly make a living, and this type of 'miracle' and many others still happen today.<sup>69</sup>

This means that Agnon did not portray a world which does not exist any more, and being, in a certain way, a creative distance from his subject he could give it the objective artistical touch, but he did it in spite of the lack of the above mentioned distance attributed to him by some critics.

This writer is convinced that the correct reading of Agnon's work is that Reb Yudel and his fellow Hassidim are characters whom we still meet today in our midst. And that is true not only in certain parts of Israel but in almost all the countries of the world. Therefore Reb Yudel's return is not late and not tragic, because it just was not late; there was not time for it to be late, and there was also no reason for it to be tragic. Even in the most tragic moment when the groom's father finds out who the true Reb Yudel Natanson is, namely that he is a poor Jew, and there was a real danger that the match would be dissolved, even then, if the cock, Reb Zerah, would not have led to the discovery of the fortune, which saved the match, even then there could have been a happy ending.<sup>70</sup> The events could have taken this turn:

The true Reb Yudel Natanson, who was childless could say, Don't worry, every promise which was promised by the father, the poor Natanson, will be fulfilled but do not let down these righteous people. And even today we see similar things happen. We live today in a welfare society which looks after the needy. We can also imagine the story published in a newspaper, which could result in a hearty response of the readers, thus being supplied with the sum necessary for saving the happiness of this new couple. <sup>71</sup>

This elaboration is very important for it demonstrates that the understanding of some readers is influenced not by that which was written by the author but by that which they read between the lines, and not by what is really in themselves. Which reading is correct? May we take recourse to the writer himself? May we have our answer from his reply? He may tell us what his intention was, and this we shall have to believe, if he said it. <sup>72</sup> But even so we are entitled to find much more than what the author openly hints to in his work, and we may find even a different interpretation in it, or a much more symbolic one.

A similar opinion that Salvador de Madariaga wrote about Cervantes suits Agnon very much as well in our opinion:

But again, Cervantes did not and could not see Don Quixote in his true greatness - which, so far as we are concerned, is the greatness that he attained today. Numberless - and futile - discussions have been wasted on the question whether Cervantes meant to give his characters the symbolic value which we now attach to them. The quarrel is based on a misunderstanding of the very essence of art, of true, that is, creative art, which is concerned purely with creation in the concrete, but which, when successful, attains a symbolic value by the very fact that it is creative. .... It is the outcome of the universal unity and harmony

of things. Had Cervantes meant to symbolise attractions, he would have failed to create a work of art. He was, however, concerned purely with creating characters, and that is why he succeeded in giving the world eternal symbols. For even as a stone that strikes the water, though merely intent on obeying the law of gravity, will cause ever-widening circles to rise on the surface of the liquid, even though the creator that succeeds in touching the sea of the spirit will stir circles on it beyond the bounds of his limited sight. Not what Cervantes meant, but what he did is our patrimony, and when speaking of Don Quixote we can choose any of the infinite number of circles which surge wider and wider round the spot where the book first fell.<sup>73</sup>

Just by inserting the name of Agnon everywhere Cervantes is mentioned we shall have the similar correct appreciation of Agnon's work.

It seems to be general knowledge that there is a certain gap between the intentions of the writer, even when they succeeded and between the reading of many readers in some works. This view is sustained by Lockhard's remarks. He writes that there is a general opinion "that Cervantes wrote (his books) for the purpose of ridiculing knight-errantry;"<sup>74</sup> This last opinion he dismissed writing that Cervantes "continually prevents us from confounding the absurdities of the knight-errant with the generous aspirations of the cavalier...."<sup>75</sup> namely, what he wanted was not to ridicule real heroism, but to show us that even with all good qualities of a cavalier, the most noble could become ridiculous if they were misdirected or spoiled by vain imaginations, but he showed us unconsciously much more than he ever dreamed of when he wrote his books.

Was Agnon's wish the same? Did he want to present us with a parody of Reb Yudel the Hassid and the likes?

There are some readers who feel this way, excusing their interpretation by saying that it was not Agnon's intention as it was not Cervantes', but as it was just mentioned, it just went out of the writer's hand. According to M. Tuchner, one of the most appreciated critics of Agnon's works, besides Kurtzweil and Sadan, Agnon wanted, and did very successfully, to describe the men and the world who were as real to him as himself, in spite of the opinion of many readers, headed by Kurtzweil, that this was only a great monument put up for a type and an environment which does not exist any more in reality.

M. Tochner succeeds, in our opinion, to demonstrate from Agnon's work that he (Agnon) identifies himself fully "with Reb Yudel, his community and with its manners". Agnon says explicitly, and he almost declares, that "it did not effect any change in the authentic meaning of The Bridal Canopy. Now, as then, his ideological platform is the love of the Name, the love of the Torah and the love of Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel). His ideal Judaism is the Judaism of Reb Yudel..."<sup>76</sup>

To his testimonies it has to be added that not only this hero and this environment were as real for Agnon as reality can be, in spite of the fact that he describes a period at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but that such a world with such living types still exists with us and among us, in Israel, in America, in South Africa, and in other parts of the world as well, Reb Yudel the Hassid of Brod, with his unshaken confidence in Almighty God, with his great love of Torah, the people of Israel and people in general, the land



of Israel and everything that was created by God, is not a protagonist merely of the past and of Galicia about 200 years ago under the reign of the Austro-Hungarian Kaiser, but such types are very much alive and live among us to this very day, but their names are different.

It is also true that the description of Reb Yudel's behaviour seems to be so exaggerated that one may think that the writer's purpose was to parody him, but those who meet such God fearing people during these very days, with the same degree of naivety, trust in the Divine Providence as Reb Yudel's, will be more at ease when they read the novel guided by M. Tochmer's interpretation, with which we fully agree.

Agnon did not want to make a caricature of Reb Yudel the Hassid and the God-fearers of his generation or of ours, as Cervantes did about the chivalry book-writers and their readers. He gave a praiseworthy description of the adventurous events of a devoted but poor Jew who conducted himself in the frame of his time and faith (which is also in a certain way and to a certain type of people also ours), when he wanted to marry his modest daughters and was granted heavenly help in finding a hidden treasure, well deserved, and so bringing his wandering to a happy end.

The end of these two great epos are very different, but this could be expected because Cervantes had no choice but to kill his genial protagonist, Don Quixote de la Mancha, at the end of his original second part lest he would have left open the door for another forgery, maybe the "Third Part of the History of Don Quixote de la Mancha" or even for a fourth part, since he himself had no chance or appetite to write them any more himself.<sup>77</sup> As Agnon did with his protagonist,

Itzhack Koomar, at the end of his great novel The Day Before Yesterday, Itzhack Koomar at last left the new modern world and returned to his old world, which he left many years ago, but could not properly return. His going out of his old religious milieu was a tragic one and therefore his return could not succeed. But Agnon does not have to kill Reb Yudel and so end his adventures, first of all because Reb Yudel did not leave his religious world even for a moment. He went out of his native place, but kept himself always on the highest level of his religious way of life. Secondly, because helping him to marry successfully his first daughter, Agnon opened the way for other well-to-do matches to follow for the other two daughters. And thirdly, as Reb Yudel fulfilled his parental religious duty in marrying his daughters to well learned and well mannered grooms from well renowned religious families, he had no reason to go out for another round of collecting money for his daughters. There remained only one religious commandment still to be fulfilled and this was, and still is, for all Jewish people as well, "to ascend to the Holy Land to be given light by the Light of Life".

And so his adventurous life ended shortly after "The Hassid and his wife saw the children of their daughters", after which they finally settled in the Land of Israel.

## 5. Conclusion

It seems to the writer that he succeeded in illustrating and demonstrating a wide range of similar details between Cervantes' and Agnon's works in spite of making use of only a sample of their works. About the possible influence of Cervantes upon Agnon there were only general remarks, but no one bothered himself to make even a brief comparison to

make conspicuous their similarity even of a part of their works. This need was fulfilled by this chapter.

#### NOTES

1. AGNON, S.Y., The Bridal Canopy, Trans. by I.M. Lask, London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1968 (first published New York 1936/37).
2. CERVANTES, S.M. de, Adventures of Don Quixote de la Mancha, Trans. from Spanish by Motteaux, London, Frederick Warne Co.
3. In most cases he uses as usual only the abbreviations of this expression: the country of the Emperor may his glory be exalted.  
The writer of this study expresses his amazement of the fact that the translator of this book overlooked these lines. Possibly he just didn't attach any importance to them. But upon reading Don Quixote one sees in this small detail also something similar.
4. Odysseus leaves his wife and home for military reasons and is back home after twenty years of absence. His return is safe and successful, because it occurs in a world of miracles; Colonel Chabert leaves his wife and home for military reasons and is back home after nearly thirteen years of absence. His return is not as successful as Odysseus' because he was declared dead after the battle of Eylau, and the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries are worlds without miracles, according to a certain reading; Menashe Hayim leaves his wife and home for economical reasons, and returns home after five years of absence. His return is also not as successful as Odysseus'

because he was declared dead on account of switched identity caused by his selling his letter of recommendation, and the 19th century is also a world without miracles; Ferenheim left his home and wife for military reasons and returned after nearly five years of absence. His return was also not successful because he was taken prisoner-of-war and was counted among the dead. Meanwhile his rival, Karl Neiss, who was also counted among the dead reappeared and revived the first love of Inge, Ferenheim's wife, towards himself. The 20th century is also a world without miracles; Enoch Arden leaves his wife and home for economical reasons and returns after thirteen years of absence. His return is also not successful because he was supposed to be dead and his wife Annie married Philip, his rival. His world was also a world without miracles; The anonymous hero of Miss A.A. Procter left his wife and home for economical reasons and returned home after ten years of absence. His return was also not successful because his wife remarried assuming that he was dead. His world was also a world without miracles; Allen Booth left his home and his girl friend for economical reasons and returned after an absence of forty years. His return was also not successful in the normal sense of the meaning because meanwhile his girl friend, although free again to be happy with him, had married not too happily, her husband died and her children left her home.

5. According to Kurtzweil's reading a successful return can

happen only in a miraculous world, It happened thus with Odysseus and with Reb Yudel because, according to Kurtzweil, Reb Yudel's world is also a world of miracles, in spite of describing the period and the people of the nineteenth century. It is possible that the Kurtzweilian interpretation is valid also for the return of Don Quixote, i.e., Don Quixote's return alive to his country village after all these unbelievable adventures is due to the fact that they happened in a world of miracles created by Cervantes in spite of its being in the sixteenth century when miracles no longer occur.

6. In Motheux's translation there is a remark in a footnote: "A mark of poverty: Beef was cheaper in Spain than mutton."
7. CERVANTES, S.M. de, The History of Don Quixote de la Mancha, Vol. I, London, J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., New York, E.P. Dutton & Co., 1913, p. 7.
8. Ibid., p. 8.
9. Ibid., p. 9.
10. Ibid.
11. ALCALAY, R. in the Complete Hebrew English Dictionary, column 2439 translated the Hebrew expression 'rachmana litzlan' as Heaven forfend! This expression is used by pious Jewish people everytime when they mention any sad event or situation, as to say: Heaven forfend us from something similar.
12. Torah may be translated in two ways:

- (a) The Five books of Moses, The Pentateuch, only or as a wider concept,
  - (b) The Jewish Law, including the
    - (1) Written Law, i.e., the Holy Scriptures on its three divisions: The Law of Moses, The Books of the Prophets and the Holy Writings, and
    - (2) The Oral Law, which is also divided into two subdivisions: The Talmud (including the Mishna)-Palestinian and Babilonian which may be studied by everyone, and The Kabbalah which means Jewish mysticism, which may be studied only by selected Talmudists who reached a certain degree of learning and only after the age of 40. The mystic writings point to the deeper layers of the Jewish religion and understanding of the Scriptures. The simple meaning of the word Kabbalah means receiving or tradition.
13. The Name, means the Name of Almighty God, may His name be blessed. This is the shortened way of mentioning the Name of God (M.H.N.B.B.) by the Pious Jewish people who do their best to avoid the mentioning of God's name in vain. It is based on two Biblical verses:
- a) "And the son of the Israelitish woman pronounced the (holy) Name..." (Lev. 24.11), and
  - b) "to fear this glorious and fearful Name, the Lord thy God..." (Dt. 28.58).
14. In the Hebrew text the name of the cock is Reb Zerah which is a noun and is translated into shiny, glowing, light, brightness or phosphene. It is possible that the

translator gave it the name of reveille because of its duty to awake him every morning to the worship of God. In the quoted passage the verbal form is used. In Isaac Leeser's translation of the Bible (Hebrew Publishing Company, New York) we find this line translated so: "There arises in the darkness a light to the upright."

15. Ps. 112.4.
16. AGNON, S.Y., The Bridal Canopy, op. cit., p. 3.
17. Ibid., p. 4.
18. The founder of the Hassidic movement was Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (The Master of the Good Name) (1700-1760). His name is mostly mentioned in the abbreviated form "The Besht" which is formed by the initials of his name: Baal Shem Tov.
19. As there are many, many others like Lupshutz, Sadan, Kariv and Tuchner, who do not agree with the other more conservative reading.
20. How far this reading is from reality may be illustrated by the fact that, in the eyes of the simple Jew in Israel and/or elsewhere, the writer of this study is himself considered a follower of the Hassidic movement. (An estimation of which he is proud.)
21. In Agnon's description of Reb Yudel's poverty and 'property', when mentioning the cock as the only property, there is an allusion in his style to the only lamb the poor man had in the parable of Nathan the Prophet: "But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe." (2 Samuel 12:3)

22. CERVANTES, S.M. de, The History of Don Quixote de la Mancha, op. cit., p. 12.
23. AGNON, S.Y., The Bridal Canopy, op. cit., p. 4.
24. Gemara (lit. completion) = The second and supplementary part of the Talmud, providing a commentary on the first part, i.e., on the Mishnah.
25. AGNON, S.Y., The Bridal Canopy, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
26. Ibid., p. 5.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., p. 3.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., p. 5.
31. The original meaning of the saying, which was said in ancient times when slavery still existed, is: "When your daughter attains puberty free your slave" which means that in case a father cannot find a husband for his daughter, it is better to release his slave from slavery so that he will be able to marry his daughter, according to law, lest his daughter be pushed into an immoral life or deeds.
32. This expression is based on the Bible where it is said: "For unto me are the children of Israel servants, my servants are they..." (Lev. 25,55)
33. AGNON, S.Y., The Bridal Canopy, op. cit., p. 5.
34. Ibid., p. 6.



35. Ibid., p. 5.
36. Ibid., p. 6.
37. According to Halacha, three fellow men not related to each other form the smallest quorum of court. This deed symbolizes his appearing before the court.
38. Ps. 121, 1.
39. Ps, 121, 8.
40. These verses hint to the verses 5-8 in Ps. 121.
41. AGNON, S.Y., The Bridal Canopy, op. cit., pp. 7-8. There are no quotation marks and the simple reader is not aware of the Biblical allusions and connotations.
42. Ibid., pp. 7-9.
43. Ibid., p. 9.
44. It is worthwhile to mention here also the great similarity between Cervantes' Don Quixote and Mendele Mocher Sefarim's Binyamin Hashelishi (Benjamin the Third) which was no doubt a result of a clear influence if not of a poor imitation. Surely the situation in Benjamin The Third is more comic and much more satirical than in Don Quixote, but this picture of leaving the house at the private door of his back-yard is almost the same in both and has a strong reminiscence in Benjamin the Third to many more particulars from Don Quixote, while the departure of Reb Yudel is entirely different and is essentially contradictory to both. In Benjamin the Third the hero leaves his house before dawn and the appointed place for the meeting with his

'squire' was a millhouse at the end of the village.

45. CERVANTES, S.M. de, The History of Don Quixote de la Mancha, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 12.
46. Ibid.
47. AGNON, S.Y., The Bridal Canopy, op. cit., p. 218.  
It is also worthwhile to attract the attention of the reader to the philosophical ideas the story-teller puts in the mind and the mouth of this simple character, Reb Nuta, not speaking about his master Reb Yudel. But possibly all these are but salted with the famous Agnonian irony.
48. CERVANTES, S.M. de, The History of Don Quixote de la Mancha, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 43-44.
49. The headlines to chapter VIII, The History of Don Quixote de la Mancha, op. cit., p. 46.
50. Ibid., p. 47.
51. Reb is a title given mostly to a religious Jew who has quite a good knowledge of Jewish laws and customs, the Holy Script and Oral Law. It is a shortened version of the title Rabbi (one who received a diploma from a Rabbinical authority).
52. AGNON, S.Y., The Bridal Canopy, op. cit., p. 23.
53. Ibid., p. 9. There is a religious custom of saying a prayer every time one goes on a voyage out of town.
54. This confidence guides Reb Yudel's conduct all the way, through all the pleasant and unpleasant adventures, until he finally reaches his aim, to make the right match for

his daughter, in accordance with the prediction of the holy Rabbi of Apta, namely that the bridegroom had a father and he promised his son a certain sum, and Reb Yudel promised a similar sum for his daughter, in spite of the fact that he hadn't a penny to spend.

55. RILEY, E.C., Cervantes' Theory of the Novel, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 83.
56. Ibid., p. 84.
57. Ibid., p. 85.
58. CERVANTES, S.M. de, The History of Don Quixote de la Mancha, Vol. I, op. cit., Introduction by John Gibson Lockhardt, L.L.D.
59. TOGNER, M., Pesher Agnon, Hechacham Hayerushalmi, Israel, Massada Publishing Ltd., 1968, pp. 50-61.
60. RILEY, E.C., Cervantes' Theory of the Novel, op. cit., p. 20.
61. Agnon added fifteen stories to the kernel of The Bridal Canopy which was first published in 1920, in addition to much new material which was not published before.
62. Cervantes made a similar use of stories, the most striking one is The Novel of the Curious Impertinent, which was published before as a work of art on its own, and many other stories and episodes which were never published before.
63. RILEY, E.C., Cervantes' Theory of the Novel, op. cit., p. 20.

64. Ibid.
65. AGNON, S.Y., The Bridal Canopy, op. cit., p. 288.
66. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. I , The Bridal Canopy, Schocken Publishing House, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, 1963, quoted from the Hebrew text, p. 325.
67. RILEY, E.C., Cervantes' Theory of the Novel, op. cit., p. 120.
68. My personal survival during the pogrom which took place in Jassi, Roumania on the 29th of June 1941 and as a combatant in the Israeli Army as well, especially in the War of Independence, is a result of a chain of miracles. If one would try to convince this writer of the opposite, he would be asked to admit that it is a question of reading or seeing or explaining certain facts.
69. People find fortunes even today. If we'll read the newspapers carefully or listen to the radio we'll be able to make up quite a nice list of these type of modern financial miracles.
70. All the inhabitants on earth would have had to say that there was a miracle.
71. The idea behind the fact that the parents are very much involved in the making of the right match is that the peak of love, understanding and happiness will be reached through gradual ascension during the marriage, and not as in the ultra modern circles where very often it is reached even before the formal wedding.

72. See the interesting essay The Author and his Protagonist by Prof. Leah Goldberg in Le'Agnon Shai, op. cit., on this subject: Has the reader to believe or to consider the author's declarations about his intentions or aims he had when writing a certain work or not? pp. 47-61.
73. MADARIAGA, S. de, Don Quixote, An Introductory Essay in Psychology, London, Oxford University Press, pp. 8-9.

74. This opinion is based, rightfully, on his own double declarations, one in the prologue and the other one at the very end of his second part. In the prologue 'where he discusses with a friend' the problem of writing a preface to Don Quixote he puts in his friend's mouth these words:

Keeping your eye still fixed on the principal end of your project, the fall and destruction of that monstrous heap of ill-contrived romances, which though abhorred by many, have so strangely infatuated the greater part of mankind. Mind this and your business is done. (Don Quixote, Vol. I, p. 6.)

And at the end of the second part before he dictated Don Quixote's will he puts in his mouth:

My judgment is returned clear and undisturbed and that cloud of ignorance is now removed, which the continual reading of those damnable books of knight-errantry had cast over my understanding. Now I perceive their nonsense and impertinence, and am only sorry the discovery happens so late.. (Don Quixote, Vol. II, p. 472)

And at the very end Don Quixote says in the last words of his confession:

As for me, I must esteem myself happy, to have been the first that rendered those fabulous nonsensical stories of knight-errantry, the object of the public aversion.

They are already going down, and I do not doubt but they will drop and fall all together in good earnest, never to rise again. (Don Quixote, Vol. II, p. 477)

There is a remark in Putnam's translation to these Don Quixote's last words:

This proved to be true. No new romance of chivalry appeared after Don Quixote and only a few of the old ones were printed. The last work in this category was the Policisne de Boecia, published at Valladolid in 1602. (Don Quixote, Putnam's translation, Vol. II, p. 473).

75. CERVANTES, S.M. de, The History of Don Quixote de la Manche, op. cit., Introduction by J. G. Lockhart, LL.D., p. xxvii.

76. M. Tochmer in Le'Agnon Shai, published on Agnon's seventieth Jubilee, Jerusalem, Schocken Publishing House, Ltd., ed. D. Sadan and E. Urbach, 1959 and later in his book, Pesher Agnon, op. cit., p. 59 .

77. As we are told that the curate asked for the certificate of death,

lest any other author but Cid Hament Benengeli should take occasion to raise him from the dead, and presume to write endless histories of his pretended adventures. (The History of Don Quixote, Vol. II, pp. 475-476).

## CHAPTER XII

### SYMBOLISM IN VEHAYA HE'AKOV LEMISHOR AND IN SOME OF AGNON'S OTHER WORKS

"Let thy garments be always white, and let thy head  
lack no oil..."<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Introduction

At first we hesitated about placing a chapter on this subject in this dissertation. But to this writer it seems essential in spite of, or maybe because of, the fact that it does not deal with the influence of European writers upon Agnon. On many occasions in the course of this dissertation we stressed that proving European literary influence on Agnon's writing does not diminish, even one iota, Agnon's greatness, originality and genuine artistical craft, but this was not proved in spite of the fact that almost everywhere we have shown his originality in all aspects despite the many and great similarities to works of European writers. In this chapter we would like to do justice to this statement by showing, even partly, the other facet of this famous writer's works.

Before discussing the intriguing subject of symbolism in Agnon's works, we would like to clarify, as much as possible, its exact meaning and use.

One explanation of this term is that the symbol is a word of various meanings, derived from the Greek word symbolon, a sign, or symbole, a composition. In

the early period of Christianity the word was often applied to the creed and is still applied in Latin countries...<sup>2</sup>

while Wellek and Warren's definition and explanation is more detailed and suits our purpose more. They make a differentiation between image, metaphor and symbol, but like them the symbol appears:

... in widely different contexts and very different purposes. It appears as a term in mathematics a.s.o.; it has also had a long history in the worlds of theology ("symbol" is one synonym for "creed"), of liturgy, of the fine arts and of poetry. The shared element in all these current uses is probably that of something standing for, representing something else. ... In literary theory, it seems desirable that the word should be used in this sense: as an object which refers to another object but which demands attention also in its own right, as a presentation.<sup>3</sup>

But there is also an opinion in modern psychology that "We may say that every spontaneous mental image is to some extent symbolical".<sup>4</sup>

In many of Agnon's works, we find the symbolical interpretation provoked by the author's use of descriptions, which take the events out of their natural turns and so the sensitive reader does not satisfy himself with the simple reading, in spite of the fact that it can stand on its own as well, namely it may be read as a simple story or as a folks legend, etc.

Sometimes we find it in whole short stories, while at other times we find it in parts or episodes of his great novels. For instance, the episode with the demonic dog, Balak, in his novel Temol Shilshom (The Day Before Yesterday) can be explained also on the deeper level, on the symbolic level, in spite of the fact that the novel as a whole deals especially with the period of the second Aliyah, a very realistic period. We also



find shorter novels like Ad Olam (Forever), Edo ve Enam, Shvuat Emunim (Bethrothed) which can be read on both levels. As these were already analysed by other scholars or critics this chapter will deal only with short stories or parts of them, which may be interpreted symbolically besides their standing on their own merit on the simple narrative level. Their symbolical interpretation is that of the writer of this dissertation. The motto of this chapter was taken from the Bible, because most of the commentators give to this verse a metaphoric-symbolic interpretation which influenced, without a doubt, Agnon's way of writing. This very theme or motif of a (white) garment is the main motif of one of his short stories and in another story it is also symbolically interpreted. The title of the story is Hamalbush (The Garment), a story we will pay attention to in this chapter.

In the commentary to the above quoted Biblical verse we read:

The Targum, Midrash and Rashi interpreted the verse metaphorically... The whiteness of the garments being a symbol of a sinless life and the oil of a good name.<sup>5</sup>

Rashi bases his interpretation on the Midrash which says that King Solomon gave us the advice in the form of a parable to always do good so that we shall be prepared for the day we may have to depart from this world unexpectedly so that even in such a case we shall be sinless. The parable speaks about a man who was invited by the king to a festival meal, but he did not tell him the time of the invitation. If he is wise or clever he immediately washes his garments and washes himself and does so daily, until he is called to the meal. Then his garments will be white and he clean for the moment when he will be called up to the king.<sup>6</sup> This theme comes up in many

of Agnon's stories. But this is not the only symbolic motif found in Agnon's works. Most of his works were not as yet scrutinized from this aspect but some symbolic interpretations were published, as already mentioned above.

## 2. Views on Symbolic Interpretation of Some of Agnon's Stories

Most of the scholars who interpreted Agnon's works during the last decades could not overlook the double and sometimes triple layers of meaning to his stories. The symbolic layer, even when it is the most important part of the story, still does not stand only on its own, i.e., there is no work of Agnon's as yet interpreted which is only an allegory or a symbolic story. Therefore we must be careful when we speak about Agnon as a symbolic novelist, since his characters have, besides their overt life, an inner hidden one, to which he hints in the "simple story" sometimes openly and sometimes only for the sensitive reader.

Many essays were published on this subject and many of Agnon's works were analysed with this key in mind. This will also be the key to our interpretation as well. Professor Sadan hinted in many of his essays to the fact that one is not allowed to attach to all of Agnon's works the simple-one-layer reading. For instance, he quotes from The Bethrothed to substantiate his convincing opinion, that besides the love story between Ya'akov Rechnitz and Shoshanah on the background of Jaffa during the time of the Second Aliyah, there is a hidden symbolic kernel describing the eternal link in the chain of Jewish history between Yaakov-Israel and the sleeping beauty Shoshanah, who symbolizes the Shabbath as well as the Shekinah,

namely one can read this story two or three times and each time will enjoy it anew, in accordance with each new meaning he finds in the protagonists and in their deeds:

Truly we read the story The Betrothed aimlessly, but when we reach its end come two last words "The seven girls" and they are like saying: Now that you have heard that the story-teller wanted to call the story on our name, return and read it as if it was called on our name, and you will stand on its secret, because two stories were given in it, on the way of a double course...<sup>7</sup>

Based on these hints an extreme, but a very interesting, symbolic interpretation was given to this story by Dinah Stern in a booklet entitled The Betrayal and its Lesson: A Study in Agnon's Betrothed<sup>8</sup> in which she quoted from the ancient Jewish sources such as the Talmud and Midrashim showing Agnon's allegory and symbolic layer. This was seen as an extreme approach to this story since it did not consider practically at all the first simple-story layer.

We have already mentioned the symbolic interpretation of The Whole Loaf where the four dots in brackets (...) symbolize the Tetragrammaton and Dr. Neeman symbolizes Moses, but we have to add that we may go even further saying that Mr. Gressler symbolizes the evil inclination and the letters, the commandments, etc., an interpretation given justly by Professor Kurtzweil to which some enlightening remarks were written by Ya'akov Levinger. Band also devotes space to his views, claiming to have an even deeper insight into this story. Also, Y. Bahat discussed the whole literary phenomenon of symbolic writing in Agnon in his essay The Sentimental Dreamer as well as Harold Fish in his essay Agnon's Tales of Mystery and Imagination. G. Shaked devotes a whole chapter in his book The Narrative Art of S.Y.

Agnon to this theme, entitled Galui ve'Sammui Basipur (The Overt and Covert in the Story).<sup>10</sup> We can continue this list of scholars and critics and summarize their interpretations, but that is not the purpose and aim of this chapter. We would like to make conspicuous our little but original contribution on this very same theme even if here and there we will make use of the interpretations of others to sustain ours, or to bring theirs, one or two steps further. But the main aim is to make conspicuous even more Agnon's originality and literary craftsmanship.

Agnon wrote many short stories which give a first impression of legendary tales or stories for little children and not for grown ups. But after a second or third reading the reader asks himself the question: Is this truly so? And he comes to the conclusion that it consists of both layers, and sometimes even more. Such an example is the story From Foe to Friend, to which the editor of The Jerusalem Post wrote a short foreword, as follows:

This translation first appeared in these pages in 1958 with the permission of Schocken Publishers, on the occasion of Agnon's 70th birthday. We are pleased to reprint it now because yesterday was Tu Bishvat,<sup>11</sup> and this story by Israel's 1966 Nobel Prize laureate - convalescing in Gadera - deals with the planting of trees. Or does it? ....<sup>12</sup>

As we have already mentioned above, we may answer this question both yes and no. On the surface the answer is yes, on the deeper level there is much more. The writer of this study found in this story three deeper levels, besides the superficial one.<sup>13</sup> The essence of the story, which is written in the first person, tells us about the experiences

the story-teller went through when he wanted to settle down in Talpiot, a suburb which overlooks the site where the Holy Temple stood, but which was not inhabited almost at all in those days, and where Agnon lived after he decided to settle down in Jerusalem until he fell ill and was taken to the hospital where he died. The main fight was against the wild winds which became friendly only at their last attempt to destroy his house which failed because of the accumulated experiences of the story-teller with the wild winds. Since then they both changed their attitude towards each other. The story-teller said to himself: "I'll plant a garden here",<sup>14</sup> and so he did. And he also made himself "a bench and sat in the shade of the trees".<sup>15</sup> The wild wind did not understand any language but his own, namely the language of power and strength as the story-teller tells it:

One night the wind returned (after its last failure) and started knocking the trees about. What did the trees do? They struck back at him. The wind rose again and shook the trees. Once more they struck in return. The wind lost his breath. He turned and went away.<sup>16</sup>

Even before trying to interpret the story deeper the reader is impressed by the personification of nature. Winds and man have talks and fights of which only at last the man comes out victorious, but even winds and trees have an understanding between them.

And again to let the reader get a taste of Agnon's original text (even the translated one) we would like to quote the ending passage of this story, which reads as follows:

From that time on the wind has been quite humble and meek, and when he comes he behaves like a gentleman. And since he minds his manners with me, I too mind my manners with him. When he comes I go

out to meet him and ask him to sit with me on the garden bench beneath the trees. And he comes and sits by my side. And when he comes he brings with him a pleasant scent from the mountains and valleys, and he blows the air around me gently like a fan. Since he behaves like a complete penitent, I never remind him of his former deeds. And when he leaves me and goes on his way I invite him to come again, as one should with a good neighbour. And we really are the best of neighbours, and I am very fond of him. And he may even be fond of me.<sup>17</sup>

From these quoted lines we may learn a lot about relations and relationships between people and nature, but no less about relations between people themselves. The most interesting statement, in the opinion of this writer is: "And we really are the best of neighbours", namely we are sure about our pure and honest feelings towards our previous foe and we hope, but are not sure, that he feels the same about us.

The second layer can be explained as symbolizing the fight between the Jewish settlers who came to the Holy Land (the Land of Israel), represented by the person of the writer, and the Arabs who try to destroy them and their houses, represented by the winds, but who finally become friendly after they were met with the language they understand, namely a strong wish for self defence and devotion to the main aim.

The third layer can be explained as symbolizing the general world fight by civilization which fights against natural obstacles, which are represented by the two main characters of this story.

The fourth layer can be explained as symbolizing the final redemption of the Jewish people from their sufferings during the years of their exile by their finally settling down in the Holy Land. This writer also found hints from

ancient literature about the fact that the third kingdom, namely the third return to Israel, will never be shaken or destroyed and all the neighbours will be friendly to the Jewish people in Israel.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. The Symbolism in the Story Vehaya he'akov lemishor

In one of his interesting essays, Professor Kurtzweil writes in passing about symbols in the above-mentioned story.

And this is not at all incidentally that the poet (Agnon) speaks about "the wanderer's garb" of his protagonist. This phrase is known from the book of Ezekiel (the prophet). The departure from the little town, the source, is in Agnon's stories, a great national symbol. The protagonists of his stories, by leaving their original place, repeat a personal repetition of the national tragedy - they are sent to exile. From this point of view, Menashe Hayim's wandering symbolize the wandering of the Jewish people in the Diaspora. His passive heroism elevates to the grade of the symbol of the passive heroism of the Jewish nation during his years of exile.<sup>19</sup>

There is no doubt some truth in Kurtzweil's view, but this writer can not agree with the statement that Menashe Hayim's wandering symbolizes the wanderings of the Jewish people, since their end is completely different by reason and result. But we do agree that there are in this story episodes, or a story within the main story, which invite the symbolic interpretation beside the simple one on the surface.

In this story we find interpolated integratively among many more two small stories whose essence and interpretation is given here very briefly: Menashe Hayim's visit at the Lashkovitz Fair and the story with the holy preacher of Kuznitz, may also be interpreted as having a deeper symbolic meaning. In the description of Menashe Hayim's visit to the fair,

we read about his aim, to buy merchandise and to return home before sunset the next day. Unfortunately for him he is distracted from his main aim by many unimportant things, which are very important in his eyes. In addition to the other idea, that he has still enough time to achieve his aim, he dedicates himself to looking around at the wonderful things, eating and drinking and thereupon falls asleep and loses everything he achieved until that very date and was bereft of even his own most personal belongings, and remained with nothing. Together with these events we are also told about different types of people who came to the fair only for their own special aims, while there were others who came solely to enjoy themselves or to waste their time, looking around and wondering, etc. Reading deeper into this episodic story we may reach a completely different interpretation besides the usual, on the surface, one. The fair and the shopping in it symbolizes our short time on this materialistic world where we come for the main purpose of buying merchandise, which means to study the Bible (in a Jewish folk song this is "the best merchandise"<sup>20</sup>), and to do good deeds. If we allow ourselves to be distracted from the main aim of our coming to this world by eating and drinking and by looking only for worldly things we may wake up one morning like Menashe Hayim and find ourselves bereft of everything we had with no proper garment for our soul and/or merchandise with which to go home. Again, home means symbolically the eternal home which is, for the souls, heaven. This is also found in a poem by the great Jewish poet, Yehuda Halevy: "when shall I do also for my home?"<sup>21</sup> hinting clearly to the world to come.<sup>22</sup> (This verse was taken from Genesis: "... and now when shall I provide also



for my own house?"<sup>23</sup>)

Summing up the symbolic essence of the episode of the fair of Lashkovitz, we may say that the fair symbolizes this world<sup>24</sup> with its wonderful things, sights and temptations, the people who come for many purposes, but mainly to buy merchandise, symbolize the souls who came to this world to study the Bible and to do good deeds, and afterwards to go home means to return to the eternal world with these positive achievements. Our distraction from our aim, and our devotion to eating, drinking and other worldly temptations in the fair symbolize the very same things but on a deeper level, namely not in the fair but during our seventy or so years of our visit on this world. And being bereft of our wallet and belongings means that the soul comes up to heaven empty handed.<sup>25</sup> And Menashe Hayim's thought that he would still have enough time left to do his shopping after he saw all the wonderful things of the fair symbolizes the thought of some people who postpone for later the doing of good deeds thinking that they will live long enough to do it later. This is also in accordance with the sayings of the Fathers which hints at the moral of this episodic story, namely 'do not leave for tomorrow what you can do today'.

But the story-teller has also interpolated in this story a hassidic tale about a Rabbi and one of his followers who was advised by him that his luck will come only by stealing. The irony of this episode compels the reader to look for a deeper layer, otherwise the reader may take this story as an anti-rabbinic element which infiltrated into Agnon's story unwillingly and unwittingly. The essence of the hassidic tale

is that one of the Rabbi's followers, who was very poor and had many children at home, came to ask for his Rabbi's blessing and advice. The Rabbi did not want to tell him how he would make a fortune but the Hassid insisted and the Rabbi agreed to tell him that his success lies in stealing. The Hassid was revolted and excited. How could his Rabbi tell him such a thing? The Rabbi answered that he had already told him that he would not be prepared to do this. The Hassid departed from his Rabbi with the firm decision not to do it even if the worst happened. But after a while he had no choice and he made up his mind to steal with the thought that he would take only one golden and when he would be rich he would repay each and everyone of the shop owners. So he went to a shop, opened it, and took from the drawer one golden, so that he could buy bread for his wife and children. After that money was used, there was again no bread in the house. Again, he went and did the same thing successfully. He did this many times until the people of the town wondered why the thief steals only one golden. They decided to put guards by each shop, but it was impossible to catch him. The mayor of the town heard about what was happening and wondered how he was not caught in spite of the fact that there were many guards at each shop. Finally the mayor decided to be on guard personally. And so he guarded many nights but he didn't catch the thief because the Hassid had some bread at home and he didn't go out to steal the golden. Only when there was no more bread did he go as usual on his way to steal a golden. And each night the mayor walked around the shops to know who the thief was and the guardians kept with open eyes every shop, and in spite of it the Hassid opened one shop to

steal a golden. The watchmen did not see and did not hear. But the mayor saw when he opened the shop and took one golden from the chest. The mayor caught him and said you are the one who steals the goldens. "And the mayor was dressed in simple garments in order that he shall not recognise him...."<sup>26</sup>

To easier understand the symbolic interpretation of this peculiar tale we shall pinpoint its main elements and characters. Surely the tale with the Rabbi and his follower is only the frame for its symbolic content. We have in it the thief, the watchmen, the mayor of the town, the shopkeepers and their shops (Agnon describes artistically their shock until they found out that their whole fear was because of one golden). In passing, to add colour, we have the thief's family (which gives a realistic explanation to the behaviour of the Hassid in the moments of desperation). The writer of this study found these characters and situations as inviting the following symbolical interpretation:

The mayor of the town symbolizes the master of the world (otherwise there is no explanation to the fact that only he was able to catch the thief in spite of the fact that every shop was guarded by many watchmen); the watchmen symbolize our social and political system, whose duty it is to see that laws shall be observed by society and that order shall prevail everywhere; The thief may symbolize the needy ones who are honest as much as possible in such circumstances (we do not approve of their behaviour!); and the shopkeepers symbolize the higher social layer in our society.

It seems to the writer of this study that this story had a moral which is "if one thinks that he may cheat the people, he will never succeed in cheating the Almighty" and that is

the idea behind the symbolic interpretation. The key to this interpretation is to be found also in this story in another place where the story-teller clearly states:

But what will give and what will add cheating of human beings, if there is no cheating before the Omnipresent.<sup>27</sup>

We dare to say that the story-teller gave in a literary-dramatic form the idea expressed in the above mentioned philosophic statement.

It is also worthwhile to mention that in the continuation of this tale there are stylistic hints to the story of Mordechai and Esther which taken in account can give an even deeper insight to our symbolical interpretation, but on which this writer would not like to touch upon in this dissertation as it needs a minutieus analysis which seems to be out of place here in spite of its novelty.

Although we gave this symbolic interpretation we do not claim that these were Agnon's intentions, but we also do not completely exclude this possibility. We would also like to stress here again that this topic itself leaves room for many volumes for the person who will undertake the task of scrutinizing all of Agnon's works, giving them the symbolical interpretation based on the hints the author himself gives in his stories both consciously and unconsciously. Therefore, as mentioned already, in the next few pages we will give only a few of the symbolic interpretations of Agnon's works which were formulated by the writer of this dissertation.

4. The Symbolism of the Short Stories: Hamalbush<sup>28</sup> (The

Garment) and Ba'al HaReihayim ve Hatochen<sup>29</sup> (The Owner  
of the Mill and the Miller)

Shaked analyzes two stories Hefker (Ownerless) and Hamalbush (The Garment) to prove his theory about the overt and covert layers in Agnon's non-realistic stories. We will deal here only with the part needed to clarify our symbolic interpretation of Agnon's stories.

In Hamalbush Agnon tells us a story of a tailor who received very fine material from the minister's best workshop to make a garment for the minister. But instead of finishing up this work "when the sun was still high", he does other things which he thinks are very important, but then he realizes that this was not so and meanwhile he became afraid of the minister's servants who will come and beat him for not being punctual in handing in the finished garment. He knows that the minister is merciful but his servants are very cruel. He wants to finish the garment but each time there is an interruption which detains him. Meanwhile he got hungry and ate carelessly, making a spot on the minister's garment. He decides to go to the river to clean the garment by washing it but a fish comes and swallows the garment whereupon he jumps into the water to save the garment and drowns.

Every sensitive reader feels the pulse of the allegoric layer and the symbolism of this story even in its essence, and even more so in the detailed story, besides the nice tale about the careless tailor.

The learned and sensitive reader immediately feels the connection between the homiletical interpretation to the above-mentioned verse from Ecclesiastics ("At all times should your garments be white", namely, lead a sinless life) and

Agnon's story through the linguistic and stylistic connotation to the ancient sources. To the interpretation mentioned above it would be important to quote a short passage from the Alskeich<sup>30</sup> which gives, in the essence of his comment, the next interpretation:

This is a parable about the body which is a cloth and a garment for the soul, that shall be always white without spots of sins.<sup>31</sup>

With this interpretation for our background it seems to us that the symbolic interpretation of the story is clear and inevitable. In the story the tailor who had to make a garment from the finest material which he received from the best workshop of the minister symbolizes each and everyone of us who received the soul, which comes from the best workshop of the "Minister". (The "Minister" being used as a symbol for the Creator appears in the Agadoth (legends) about Abraham who saw a fortress and came to the conclusion that there must be one who is the minister-owner of it. So he started to believe in the Almighty because he saw the world (fortress) and it must have a leader - a minister.)

Summing up the homiletical interpretation we may conclude that we received the finest material (the soul) to make from it a garment (the body for doing good deeds) without having been given an exact date for its completion, but it had to be finished in such a time and manner that any time we will be called to hand it in we shall be able to do so to the best of our ability. This very point is stressed in Agnon's story as in the homiletical interpretation of the above-mentioned Biblical verse. The tailor didn't do his best, he wasted time dealing with unimportant things and so he died without being able to hand in the completed garment. Agnon does not

leave this interpretation to our choice. At the end of the story the story-teller says:

What he found in his grave we do not know. But to suppose we can, that much good he did not see in his grave. It's true that the Holy One blessed be He is merciful, but his servants, these angels of destruction (who torture the dead in hell)<sup>32</sup> are bad and severe and bitter and cruel. Above as below. And about the garment that the tailor did not complete, and even more he besmirched it, and even more but he lost it. The minister has many garments and he can renounce upon one garment, but the tailor who lost the garment that was made from the fabric of the minister's workshop, what will he answer and what will he say when they will ask him where is the garment.<sup>33</sup>

Namely, he gives us clear hints to the symbolical interpretation of the whole story. The last line alludes clearly to a Midrashic expression, which warns men against sinning, telling him that he has to remember that when he will come before the supreme judge what will he answer and what will he say when he will be asked about the utilization of his time on this world, i.e., what did you do for the benefit of your soul during your stay here in this world. This story ended with the person in charge not only not completing the garment but he even lost it. In its symbolized interpretation it means that the soul came up to the heavens after seventy years, more or less, of its visit on this world, namely, after seventy years of preparing the garment, of good deeds, without it at all.

We shall now turn to another short story of Agnon's where he shows us how a person, through hard work, and through sticking to his aim, talking only as much as was necessary to complete the job he undertook, succeeds in having his garments

in a state that they were completely white.<sup>34</sup> We can come to an interesting conclusion from the comparison of the tailor's behaviour in this story and that of the miller's in that story, and that is that in a certain way Agnon completes the story of the tailor with the story of the miller who, as mentioned, succeeded in causing his garments to be completely white, i.e., sinless.

To make this clearer to the reader we will also bring the essence of the story The Owner of the Mill and the Miller. A poor Hassid who used to visit his Rabbi, Rabbi Mottili of Tchernobil of blessed memory, every year did not visit him one year because of his bad financial situation. He didn't have anything but the hope that if his Rabbi would have known about his situation he would surely have mercy upon him and have helped him. Before he finished expressing his thoughts the Rabbi appeared accompanied by a man to whom the Rabbi spoke as if he was reproaching him for some evil things he had done, and asked him to stay there and put the mill on its feet. This person stuck to his work. Nobody saw him eating or drinking and he did not make visits, even to the owner of the mill.

... He was never seen talking with a man irrelevantly, and none saw him eating or drinking. All those days he did not change his garments or shoes, and if they were worn out -the flour with which they were covered, overlaped upon them and they looked complete and white...<sup>35</sup>

After exactly three years had passed the Rabbi arrived at the very same moment as three years earlier. During this time the owner of the mill became rich, but the Rabbi didn't have time to waste and did not accept his invitation to eat dinner with them. Instead he asked the owner of the mill



to immediately call the miller. The miller immediately followed the Rabbi's instructions and appeared at once. The dialogue between them is very important as well as the end of this story. Therefore we shall quote a short passage from it:

The rabbi looked upon the miller and said, all your garments are white.

The miller moved his lips and whispered, yes rabbi. Said the rabbi to the miller, sit on the carriage. As he sat (down), said the rabbi to the waggoner, tell the horses that we are moving. The carriage travelled slowly, slowly, and the Hassid and his wife followed it. Perhaps the rabbi will change his mind and will lunch with them. They saw that the rabbi sat in wonderful devoutness, as if he does not notice them and the miller sits at the left of the rabbi and keeps silent.

When they went out of the village said the rabbi to the waggoner, near by here there is the house of life, turn the horses thither. The waggoner turned the horses and drove until the cemetery. When they arrived at the cemetery said the rabbi to the miller, are you ready?

Whispered the miller and said, I am ready.

He told him, come down.

He came down.

He told him return to the place that you came from.

The miller went and entered the cemetery. At that moment a grave opened itself.

The man entered into his grave as he was in his white garments, and the grave closed itself after him.

And the Hassid<sup>36</sup> and his wife looked on.<sup>37</sup>

This quotation, as that of most of the quotations from Agnon, have a twofold purpose. The usual one is to convince the reader of the truth of his theory based on textual evidence and the other one is to enable the reader to taste a bit of Agnon's style and the atmosphere which dominates some of his stories, etc.

From the attentive reading of this story the reader

comes to the conclusion that the Rabbi took out of his grave the person who caused almost deadly damage to the owner of the mill, and he could not come to rest even in the world to come until he repaired completely the wrong done. The dialogue between the Rabbi and the miller unfolds to the reader that the person was ready, his garments were white (the symbol of a sinless soul), and only then the Rabbi takes him to his place where he will find his final rest. And the end of the story, which alludes so clearly to the verse in Judges:

And Manoach and his wife looked on...  
gives it an allure of a truthful happening because of its Biblical allusion and connotation.

Returning to the connection between these two stories, we see clearly that in Hamalbush the tailor did not hand in the minister's garment clean, but besmirched it and then lost it completely, while in this story we read about the miller who achieved his white garment by repairing the wrong done through hard work and the maintenance of his objective in a certain way in accordance with a Talmudical saying about the Torah, with all the differences between them, that the words of the Torah are poor in one place and rich in another, i.e., particulars missing in one place are completed in another place. Agnon's story Hamalbush leaves the reader under the impression that the tailor received capital punishment for his negligence towards the minister, without telling the reader of the possibility of repentance and repairing what was wronged. In the story of the miller, we are impressed by this possibility in spite of the fact that to achieve the forgiveness the soul could not rest until

it expiated its sin and repaid the damage caused to the poor Hassid.<sup>38</sup>

The symbolic interpretation is provoked by the author by mingling supernatural powers and happenings in a tale in which reality is mingled with a legendary atmosphere, and only the attentive reading of the sensitive reader with a background of Jewish tradition, culture and knowledge of Jewish folklore is able to uncover the deeper interpretation, namely the symbolic layer of the tale.

##### 5. Symbolism in The Cave or The Story of the Goat<sup>39</sup>

Among the short stories there is also The Tale of the Goat. Many interpreters expressed their opinion that this story makes conspicuous the gap and tension between the old generation and the new one, which seems to be true, but we found much more in it. To enable the reader to follow more or less the events and explanation, we quote almost the complete tale:

There is a tale of an old man who used to cough heavily. He visited the doctor and the doctor ordered him to drink goat's milk. So he went and bought a goat and put her in the shed. Within a few days she disappeared. They sought for her but could not find her,... The goat returned of her own accord in a few days, her udders gushing with milk that tasted of Paradise. And not only on this occasion but on many others did she vanish from the house.... until she returned of her own accord, her udders filled with milk that was sweeter than dew and tasted of Paradise.

On one occasion the old man said to his son, my son, I desire to know whither this goat goes and whence she brings this milk which is so sweet

in my mouth and a healing to all my bones.....

And so the youth tied a cord to the goat's tail and gave heed to her. As soon as he saw that she was about to go away he grasped the cord and did not let it go. She went and he followed until they reached a cave.

The goat entered the cave while the youth held fast to his cord and followed her. And so they went for an hour or two, or maybe for a day or two, for on account of the novelty he did not notice how time passed. The goat switched her tail and bleated, and the cave came to an end.

When they left the cave they saw lofty hills and mountains with rich fruits and a cistern filled with living water flowing from the hills; and the wind was perfumed with every manner of spice and balsam. And the goat climbed a tree and seized its branches and at once honey filled carobs fell; and she ate of the carobs and drank from the garden spring.

The youth stood up and called to the passers-by, I adjure you, good folk, tell me where I am and the name of this spot. They said to him, you are in the Land of Israel and close to Safad. His heart at once overflowed with love and affection for the place and he could not depart thence. He raised his eyes aloft and said, Blessed is the Omnipresent, blessed is He who has brought me to the Land of Israel. He kissed the dust on the ground and sat him down beneath the tree. He said, till the dayspring doth blow and the shadows flee I shall sit me upon the hill beneath the tree. Then I shall go to my home and bring my father and my mother to the Land of Israel.

But that day was the Eve of the Sabbath, and while yet he sat thus and feasted his eyes on the hallowed Land and sustained himself with the fruits of the Land, he heard the call, come let us go forth to greet Queen Sabbath. And he saw men like to angels robed in white cloaks with myrtle boughs in their hands; and

all the houses were illumined with many candles. He understood that Sabbath Eve would come with the darkness and that he had not sufficient time to return. He broke off a reed, dipped it in an oak-apple, from which ink is made to write in a scroll of the Torah, took a piece of paper and wrote a letter to his father:

"From the ends of Earth shall I make heard my song since I am come in health to the Land of Israel and am near Safad the Holy, drenching myself in her sanctity. Do not ask me how I am come hither, but grasp the cord that is tied to the goat's tail and follow the goat; then you will find your way in certainty and arrive in the Land."

The youth rolled up the note and put it in the goat's ear, saying to himself, when she comes to father, father will stroke her head and she will twitch her ears. The note will fall out at once, father will take it and read what is written there; then he will grasp the cord and accompany her to the Land of Israel.

The goat returned to the old man's house, but did not twitch her ears, and the note did not fall. When the old man saw that the goat had returned but his son was not there, he began beating his head and cried and wept and wailed, my son, my son, where art thou? My son, would that I had died in thy stead, my son, my son. And he wept and mourned his son, saying, a wild beast has eaten him, he is surely torn to shreds. He mourned his son for many a day and would not be comforted, saying, I shall go down to the grave mourning my son. And whensoever he saw the goat he said, woe to the father who sent his son away, and woe to this creature which forced him from the world. And the old man could find no rest till he summoned the slaughterer, to slaughter her.

And the slaughterer came and slaughtered the goat. He flayed her skin and the note fell from the ear. The old man took the note and said, my son's handwriting! He read the note according to all that his son wrote him, and began to smite his head, crying

O, O, woe to the man who himself destroys his own good fortune, and woe to the man who repays evil for good. And he mourned the goat for many a day and would not be comforted and said, woe is me that I might have gone up to the Land of Israel at a single leap, but now I must maim my days in this exile.

Since then the entrance to the cave is hidden from the eye, and there is no longer a short way to go by. And the youth? If he is not yet dead, he flourishes still in his green old age, in the lands of the living, a greybeard sage.<sup>40</sup>

We find in this legendary tale a condensed history of Zionism for the last fifty years, before the establishment of the State of Israel. Again we have to pinpoint the elements and characters of this tale before analyzing it more closely on the symbolic level. We have the father, the son, the goat, the cave, the Land of Israel, the place near Safad, the Shabbath and the letter, the miraculous arrival of the son to Israel, the failure or lack of communication between father and son, the killing of the goat, the late recognition of the father of his wrong interpretation of his son's or the goat's deeds. The father symbolizes the old generation, but only the part of it which did not recognize Zionism (symbolized by the goat since by following the goat the old generation, which was suffering in the Diaspora, could be healed) since by following the goat (with Zionism) the young man arrived in Israel. And he found it more religious than he thought. There is a description of the observing of the Shabbath in the holy town Safad, namely, there is room in the land of Israel for very religious Jews to come and settle and follow the way of Zionism. The father does not receive the message because he kills the goat - he is against

Zionism - because it was at its inception socialistic minded and anti-religious and factually it took away his son. But when the Nazis took over the power in Europe and even earlier, before World War I when Jewish people suffered more than others, many parents thought how clever were their sons who followed the way of Zionism. It would have been like entering in one side of the miraculous cave and coming out on the other side in Israel, and because they did not do it they will die in the Diaspora.

## 6. Conclusion

The quotation from the Bible at the beginning of this chapter has an enlarged symbolic interpretation in the Talmud which reads as follows:

We learned elsewhere, R. Eliezer said: Repent one day before your death.<sup>41</sup> The disciples asked him, Does then one know on what day he will die? Then all the more reason that he repent today, he replied, lest he die to-morrow, and thus his life is spent in repentance. And Solomon too said in his wisdom, Let thy garments be always white; and let not thy head lack ointment.<sup>42</sup> R. Johanan b. Zakkai said: This may be compared to a king who summoned his servants, to a banquet without appointing a time. The wise ones adorned themselves and sat at the door of the palace ['for'] said they, 'is anything lacking in a royal palace?'<sup>43</sup> The fools went about their work, saying, 'can there be a banquet without preparations?'<sup>44</sup> Suddenly the king desired [the presence of] his servants: the wise entered adorned, while the fools entered soiled. The king rejoiced at the wise but was angry with the fools. 'Those who adorned themselves for the banquet,' ordered he, 'let them sit, eat and drink. But those who did not adorn themselves for the banquet, let them stand and watch...'<sup>45</sup>

This enlarged symbolic motif of sinless life which appears in the Talmud, and was quoted above, has undoubtedly

influenced Agnon's writing. Many scholars and critics commented on many occasions and this was admitted by Agnon himself that he was very much influenced by the Talmud and Rabbinical literature. Analyzing this source we find that its core appears in many of Agnon's stories in different variations, even if unrecognizable at first glance.

The king of the Talmudic parable, who undoubtedly symbolizes God, appears in Agnon's stories as the mayor of the town in the hassidic tale of the holy preacher of Kuznitz and his hassid, the thief, and as the minister in the story Hamalbush, as well as in the background of many short stories such as The Owner of the Mill and the Miller, or the other symbolically interpreted stories already analyzed by others and mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. The writer of this dissertation could have brought many more examples to make conspicuous Agnon's greatness in this aspect as well as in the others of Hebrew literature or world literature in general, but as already mentioned on other occasions, this topic has the merit and the need of a great and voluminous study on its own, and these examples brought in this short chapter will suffice for our abovementioned purpose.

#### NOTES

1. Eccl. 9.8.
2. The Encyclopedia Americana, 1959 edition, Vol. 26, p. 159, col. 1.
3. WELLEK R. and WARREN A., Theory of Literature, New York, 1956, p. 193.
4. BAUDOIN, C., Psychoanalysis and Aesthetics, New York,



5. The Five Megiloth, edited by the Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, M.A., Ph.D., D.H.L., London and Bourmemouth, The Soncino Press, 1952, p. 170.
6. Rashi's interpretation to Eccl. 9.8.
7. SADAN, D., Al Shai Agnon, Israel, Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1959, p. 88.
8. STERN, D., haBeggidah ve'Likehah, Mechkar he'Shvuath Emmunim Le Shai Agnon, Israel, Machbaroth le'Sifruth Publishing House, 1964.
9. FISCH, H., Agnon's Tales of Mystery and Imagination, New York, Tradition, A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought, Vol. 9, Nos. 1-2, Spring-Summer 1967.
10. SHAKED, G., The Narrative Art of S.Y. Agnon, Merchaviah and Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz Ha'Artzi Publishing House, 1973, pp. 89-132.
11. Tu Bishvat, the fifteenth day of the Jewish month Shevat is celebrated in Israel as in the past as Arbor Day by planting trees and eating of the fruits mentioned in the Pentateuch as typical of the Holy Land. This folkloric festival is also celebrated in the diaspora.
12. The Jerusalem Post, January 23, 1970.
13. As some views on symbolic interpretations were summarized briefly in this chapter, there is no reason for the writer of this dissertation to discriminate against himself by not summarizing his own views since he himself published two essays in which he dealt with this specific

subject as well as in his Masters thesis as yet not published.

14. The Jerusalem Post, January 23, 1970.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. An original symbolical interpretation was given in a detailed analysis of this story in this writers Master's Thesis under the title: From Foe to Friend, University of Cape Town, 1970, pp. 83-90 (not yet published).
19. KURTZWEIL, B., Massot Al Sipurei Agnon, Tel Aviv, Schocken Publishing House, 1970 (third enlarged edition).
20. "Die Toireh is die beste shoireh." The study of the Torah (the Bible) is the best merchandise.
21. In his religious poem "Almighty! In front of you (before you) (is) all my passion..." p 522, verse 12. HaShirah haIvrit beSefarad ubeProvance, H. Shirman (ed.), Copyright by the Bialik Institute and Dvir Co., Israel, 1954.
22. It is also clearly used in the same meaning by Miss A.A. Procter in her poem Parting Hour, see chapter p. of this dissertation.
23. Genesis XXX:30.
24. This motif of the fair as symbolizing this world is found also in a ballad by Shimshon Melzer, Hagilgul (The Metamorphosis), which is surely based on folklore and/or found in a sermon of a preacher. The motif of the soul that has to come back to this world (still as a

- soul) and to bring three presents to be allowed to enter Paradise is well used by Y.L. Peretz (see Footnote 25).
25. This motif of the souls appearance before the Supreme Judge is very ancient. It usually appeared in the religious literature but we find it also in modern Hebrew literature, i.e., in Y.L. Peretz's story Shalosh Matanoth (Three Presents) as well as in some of his other works and in the works of other Hebrew writers as well.
  26. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. II, Elu ve'Elu, op. cit., pp. 76-77.
  27. Ibid., p. 70.
  28. Ibid., Vol. VII, Ad Henah, pp. 305-320.
  29. Ibid., Vol. II, Elu Ve'Elu, pp. 327-331.
  30. The Alscheikh was one of the most famous commentators of the Bible (1508-1600).
  31. In the concise commentary of the Alscheikh to Eccl. 9.8.
  32. ALCALAY, R., The Complete Hebrew English Dictionary, Ramat Gan-Jerusalem, Massada Publishing House, 1963, p. 1336.
  33. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. VII, Ad Henah, op. cit., p. 320.
  34. The analysis of this story was published by this writer in Bise Hemed, Adar-Nissan 1964 but then and there he was not aware of the additional dimension it had and which he is mentioning here and now.

35. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. II, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit., p. 329.
36. Almost completely similar to Judges 13,20:  
"And Manoach and his wife looked on..."
37. AGNON, S.Y., Kol Sipurav, Vol. II, Elu Ve'Elu, op. cit., pp. 330-331.
38. Since a detailed analysis of this short story was published by the writer of this study, he would like to bring forth only the new symbolic interpretation which he was not even aware of at that date. (See Bisde Hemed, X, 4, Teveth 5727 [January 1967], an edition dedicated to Agnon, the 1966 Nobel Prize Laureate).
39. "Davar" English Edition, Vol. III, No. 88, 1932.  
From the Hebrew by C.L.
40. Ibid.
41. The Babilonian Talmud, translated into English with notes, glossary and indices under the editorship of Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein, B.A., Ph.D., D. Lit., London, The Soncino Press, 1938.
42. A similar thought is expressed in the Book of Ben Sira, V, 8.
42. Eccl. IX, 8.
43. The summons to enter may come at any moment.
44. Lt., 'trouble'.
45. Shabbath 153a.

## SUMMARY

Many questions arise for the reader, critic or scholar who is reading works of literature in general, and even more so when one is reading the works of this giant of spirit, S.Y. Agnon, in particular. There is no doubt about the fact that each and everyone of these readers, critics and scholars brings with him a very personal approach and attitude towards the writers and/or their works upon which he weaves and founds the foundation and frame of his research. The best known among them are Kurtzweil, Sadan, Tochner and Bahat in Hebrew and Band and Hochman in English. Almost all of the others follow in their footsteps. Since they dealt mostly with the different facets of Agnon's works and elaborated on their interpretations only some of their views were considered in this study within the appropriate subjects.

This dissertation was not devoted just to the interpretation of another story or to another interesting facet of some of Agnon's works, but mainly to the question of Agnon's indebtedness to European literature through the comparison of motifs, plots, scenes, etc. in some works of some famous European writers and Agnon's, making conspicuous the traces found in Agnon's works and their similarity to some European literature. Since:

The study of literary indebtedness has never given up its place as an important branch of literary research within particular literatures, and especially in comparative literature<sup>1</sup>

we felt that we were entitled to elaborate almost exclusively on this topic, surely considering the unavoidable by-product

from our main subject for the better understanding of it. We achieved this by adding at the beginning a chapter about the problem of translating Agnon from Hebrew, where we also discussed general views about translation, since

Literary influence has a number of aspects...  
The first of these has to do with translations,...<sup>2</sup>

which

play a special role in the inception and the transmission of literary influences. The direct influence is often produced by the translation rather than the original work...<sup>3</sup>

(We have to remember that Agnon read European literature in translation except for German literature which he read in the original.) As we have shown, we hope convincingly:

...Influence may occur within or across genre lines. There may be a juxtaposition of influences in a particular work, as when Dostoevsky in The Brothers Karamazov uses Schiller for the characterization of Dmitri, Goethe for Ivan, and "The Wanderings of the Monk Parfemy" for Father Zosima; but the total is his own enriched by the influences utilized.<sup>4</sup>

Similar points were made conspicuous in almost every chapter of our dissertation. Therefore, we have also given a brief review about the problems of translating literature from one language into another in general, and Agnon's works from Hebrew in particular. We have shown that in spite of the fact that the reader enjoys it differently than the reader of the original text his pleasure does not diminish. But since the works of a man, and more so of an artist, are influenced by his spiritual and cultural as well as his physical background, we felt that the first part of this research must be indispensably devoted to a brief biography of the writer and his cultural background.

The question of Agnon's indebtedness to European literature

is naturally raised. As we could not begin discussing this subject from Agnon's point of view or that of the young Israeli writers' without considering in advance the opinions of scholars and critics about this intriguing question, we decided to review first just a few of the main thoughts on this subject. We could have brought many more views, but we felt that the main opinions were appropriately represented. We also brought Agnon's own opinion, expressed in different forms or different occasions, i.e., in letters, speeches or interviews, and only then we brought the opinion of some representatives of the new generation of Hebrew writers on the very same question, from which we could conclude that the author's view about indebtedness or influence, as well as that of the young writers', was affirmative, although with a restriction, i.e., no one can deny influence, which is a fruitful product of human nature, but at the same time the writer is entitled to be trusted completely and we have to believe him when he sticks to his declaration that he was not conscious about it. At the same time we have to stress time and again that in spite of the fact that:

Some scholars and critics, including many who have studied literary indebtedness, seem to feel that to suggest an author's literary debts diminishes his originality<sup>5</sup>

we must say that this is not correct since:

...originality should not be understood in terms of innovation. Many great authors had not been ashamed to admit that others have influenced them, and many have even paraded their indebtedness to others. They seem to have felt that originality consists, not exclusively or even primarily in innovations in materials or of style and manner, but in the genuineness and effectiveness of the artistic moving power of the creative work... The original author is not necessarily the innovator or the most inventive, but rather the one who succeeds

in making all his own, in subordinating what he takes from the others to the new complex of his own artistic work.<sup>6</sup>

That is undoubtedly true about Agnon as well and in this way we have to understand his declarations that everything he has written came from the depth of his soul. We may add and say that when speaking about influence, one does not have to imagine to himself that the writer took one of these works (which has supposedly influenced him) and looked in it and said: Yes, now my protagonist will follow this course or the exact opposite one. And so on during many stages of his writing.

We must understand, at least in this case, and agree with the meaning of influence as it was expressed by the writer himself. He said:

I have read Homer, Cervantes, Tolstoi, Hamsun, Balzac and Flaubert, but I cannot tell if and in which measure I was influenced by them, ... it happens that the most important influences occur without the consciousness of the man and he does not know about them....  
These are things which do not occur consciously....<sup>7</sup>

And he also admitted on another occasion that:

It is a pleasure to read Homer, Cervantes, Balzac, Gogol, Tolstoi, Flaubert, Hamsun and even less famous than them....<sup>8</sup>

It seems to this writer that the right conclusion from these quotations has been made, i.e., that not only does Agnon not deny that there was an influence on his writing, as is natural that there would be, but he even admits that he read European literature with pleasure and that their influence could be a fruitful one, but he is not conscious of their various sources and he is not able to say precisely which, when, where and how his writing was influenced by it. This is exactly what we tried to point out in our dissertation.



It seems to this writer that he succeeded in proving the close attachment of Agnon to the Classical Greek (and Roman) literature through textual comparisons. We have made conspicuous the Classical Greek and Roman elements that penetrated his stories, as well as the usage of pagan expressions and names of Greek origin. The protagonist of the Betrothed is reading Homer and is spreading the knowledge of Greek and Roman poetry and mythology in Yaffo, as well as discussing Greek customs and habits. We have quoted from the Odyssey and from other sources such as Schiller's adaptation of a story of the fatal ring of Polycrates in order to convince the reader of the Greek traces in some typical Agnonian legendary stories and variations thereof. We have also shown traces of some Greek legends in his stories, i.e., the Danaides and Atalanta, as well as the famous Greek beauty, Helen of Troy. We have shown traces of the sirens and their charming voices in some of his works. No less amazing was the similarity between the heavenly scarf in The Odyssey and the kerchief in Agnon's story In the Heart of the Seas. It has to be stressed that in most cases these motifs are discretely interwoven into the web of the typical Talmudic or Hasidic legendary sources. At the same time, we have also shown the traces of the motif of Penelope's web which he used twice in one of his stories in the first edition but only once in the revised edition.

As we did not intend, in this dissertation, to compare Agnon's works to those of all the writers whose works he mentioned as having read with great pleasure, we decided to focus our study on only a few who may be considered as representative enough for our purpose.

We devoted a chapter to Hamsun's influence on Agnon, where we have brought the essence of the story Victoria and

its traces in some of Agnon's stories. But we also found traces of some of his other love stories such as The Slaves of Love, The Call of Life, and The Queen of Sheba, as well as of his great novels such as Pan (from Lieutenant Thomas Glahn's recordings), Mysteries, The Wanderers, Growth of the Soil, and Benoni and Rosa. Besides this we found an amazing similar usage by Hamsun as well as by Agnon (but even more by Hamsun) of an expression which was defined by Arnold Band as a Hebrew term and by G. Shaked as a Hebrew-Jewish term. We refer to the expression "God knows" - "Heaven knows" and its variations in the compared works. The conclusion of the writer of this study is that it is a juxtaposition influence, namely from Hebrew-Jewish sources like a colloquialism, but had he not found it in the European literature (it was also found by this writer in some of Dostoevsky's works as well - see chapter on Dostoevsky) Agnon might not have dared use it in literary works.

We also showed the demonic function of the dog in some of Hamsun's works as well as in Agnon's by quoting short passages and making conspicuous the close similarities.

These similarities are even more amazing if we consider the general opinion which was common in Israeli literary circles (and still dominates today) that Agnon was not influenced by foreign literature.

In chapter VII we showed the possible influence of Dostoevsky upon Agnon through a detailed comparison between The Eternal Husband by Dostoevsky and The Doctor's Divorce by Agnon making conspicuous, among other details, the similar subject of a great obsession, a psychological study of jealousy, sadism, and masochism, which was brought to the fore by both writers, with great similarities, but at the same time

with great differences.

The inner conflict between the wish for revenge and the duty to help their rivals is there in both works as well as similar minor motifs like the similar wish, although very differently described, to drown their sorrows in a drink, and the more important one, that of the obsession because of the woman's infidelity. We also found the expression "God knows" as well as another typical Agnonian technique, namely the use of meaningful names by the storyteller, which we also found in Dostoevsky's works, and which in spite of having its deep roots in the ancient Hebrew literature, may have influenced Agnon to dare to use it as a literary technique in foretelling the future and/or the fate of the protagonists.

In chapters VIII-X we gave a detailed comparison between Balzac's Colonel Chabert and two of Agnon's stories which have great resemblance to each other, but which received a different artistic touch from Agnon. In spite of the very interesting variation of the same main motif which is found in both of Agnon's stories, Vehaya he'akov lemishor and Ferenheim, there are great similarities between the protagonists and their fates as well as between the heroines of these stories in spite of all the normal differences because of cultural and geographical background. The motif of leaving the house for an unforeseen period, and of the supposed dead husband who returns very much alive, which is also a Homeric motif, is there in all these stories. Moreover, in Ferenheim we have it twice. The rejection of the husbands by their wives is there in spite of the individualistic natural differences, as well as the second marriage which is happier than the first, in part because of the children born (except in Ferenheim).

The fact that the protagonists are resigned

to their tragic fates is there in all three stories as well as the similarities in the crises in the lives of all the protagonists, as well as other minor motifs, i.e., the motif of committing suicide which is considered but immediately dismissed, etc. The conclusion is inevitable since Agnon appreciated Balzac very much as a writer and he read his works with great pleasure. Since we could not agree with the interpretation given to the main story of this chapter, namely of Vehaya he'akov lemishor, we devoted a short chapter to our interpretation showing through textual analysis why and what is wrong with the other one and why our interpretation is the correct one.

In spite of the fact that Agnon did not mention English writers but since we know about his wide range of reading and because we found great similarities to some English short literary works we decided to devote one chapter to the comparison of Agnon's two works to the works of three English writers. Amazingly, we found almost the same motifs as in the chapter comparing Balzac and Agnon, namely the motif of the protagonist leaving the house for an indefinite period as well as his being supposedly dead, the happy remarriage of the wife, the renouncing of the husband by his wife, and other minor similar motifs. But because Agnon did not mention these writers as having read their works we did not conclude, without doubt, that he was influenced by their works in spite of their great similarities. We found it important even if only for the sake of the value of comparative literature.

In chapter XI we hope we have shown convincingly Cervantes' influence upon Agnon. In spite of the fact that we gave only a few examples of the compared works the similarity in the description of the main heroes, Don Quixote and his

squire on the one hand and Reb Yudel and his waggoner on the other, is too striking to be incidental. In both stories we find structural similarity and the use of one protagonist expressing the views of the author, i.e., the Canon of Toledo in Don Quixote and the Sage of Jerusalem in The Bridal Canopy. We must again take into account the great differences between the protagonists because of their different cultural and geographical backgrounds. Again, in spite of the fact that it may be superfluous, we stress that the influence upon Agnon, which we claim to have proved, does not diminish at all his being an original artist in the true sense of the word.

To convince the reader of this fact we decided to add a chapter for this main purpose - to make conspicuous, even if partly, his original facet which was made clear on every occasion, but on a simple level. This short chapter allows the reader to look into the depth of Agnon's writing without discussing on this occasion how conscious the writer himself was about the depth of his own works. His originality and greatness was recognized by the world by awarding him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966. This, even if it was clear many years before, created general interest in Agnon's works, to which we hope we added our small contribution.

Finally, we venture to think that we have, to a considerable extent, succeeded in showing that there was a fruitful influence, even if not a conscious one, on Agnon. We can find nothing unsound, improbable, or inconsistent with facts in the views given above. At the same time we were well aware of how easy it is to be led astray by a theory, since it is known that scholars who are engaged in special research are too willing to acquiesce to evidence, particularly

when that evidence has been discovered by their own efforts, and comes before them with all the charms of novelty. But, as we were aware in advance of this danger, we based our views only on clear and palpable evidence, which will at least in part find acceptance with many. The comparative study of Agnon's works is still at its very beginning - a fact that may add to the importance of this dissertation.

#### NOTES

1. SHAW, J.T., Literary Indebtedness and Comparative Literary Studies in Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective, Newton P. Stallknecht and Horst Frenz (ed.), Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1961, p. 58.
2. Ibid., p. 68.
3. Ibid., pp. 68-69.
4. Ibid., p. 67.
5. Ibid., p. 59.
6. Ibid., pp. 59-60.
7. YARDENI, G., Shesh Esreh Sichot Im Sofrim (Sixteen Interviews with Writers), Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1961, pp. 50-51.
8. A speech given at the house of R. and M. Tochmer by Agnon at a party in honour of Dov Sadan on the occasion of his sixtieth jubilee on February 17, 1962. The speech was printed in Haaretz on March 13, 1972.

APPENDIX ITHE MOTIFS AND THEIR SIMILARITIES: A COMPARATIVE TABLE

<u>Author</u>	<u>Hero</u>	<u>Leaving the house for unfore- seen period</u>	<u>The reason: Military, Economical or Other</u>	<u>Child or children in first marriage</u>	<u>Death of child during absence of father</u>	<u>Supposed dead but returns alive</u>
Homer	Odysseus	X	X	X	-	X
Balzac	Chabert	X	X	-	-	X
Agnon	Menashe Hayim	X	X	-	-	X
Agnon	Ferenheim	X	X	X	X	X
Agnon	Karl Neiss*	X	X	-	-	X
Tennyson	Enoch Arden	X	X	X	X	X
Procter	Anonymous	X	X	X	X	X
Crabbe	Allen Booth**	X	X	-	-	X

\* In the case of Karl Neiss there was an engagement even if it was not consummated in marriage, but for our purpose it may be regarded as such because of its strong bond of love.

\*\* In the case of Allen Booth there was only a vow, but not a contractual and official marriage or engagement, but even so it was regarded by them as such.

<u>Author</u>	<u>Hero</u>	<u>Wife re-married before return of husband</u>	<u>Returned after years of absence</u>	<u>Claimed wife and remade marriage</u>	<u>Renounced wife without appearing; after claiming her; after appearing but without claiming her</u>	<u>Child or children born in second marriage</u>
Homer	Odysseus	-	20	X	-	-
Balzac	Chabert	X	13	-	X	X
Agnon	Menashe Hayim	X	5	-	X	X
Agnon	Ferenheim	-	4	-	X	-
Agnon	Karl Neiss	X	4	X	-	X
Tennyson	Enoch Arden	X	13	-	X	X
Procter	Anonymous	X	10	-	X	X
Crabbe	Allen Booth	X	40	X	-	X



<u>Author</u>	<u>Hero</u>	<u>Thought of committing suicide</u>	<u>Wife informed of truth about the "death" of first husband by him or by somebody else</u>	<u>The legal side of second marriage was raised by any one of the heroes. Bigamy!</u>
Homer	Odysseus	-	X	-
Balzac	Chabert	X	X	X
Agnon	Menashe Hayim	-	-	X
Agnon	Ferenheim	X	X	-
Agnon	Karl Neiss	-	X	-
Tennyson	Enoch Arden	-	X	-
Procter	Anonymous	-	X	-
Crabbe	Allen Booth	-	X	-

<u>Author</u>	<u>Heroine</u>	<u>Loved each other and were happily married</u>	<u>Loved each other made a vow or became engaged but did not marry</u>	<u>Were happy during their 1st marriage</u>	<u>Child or children in first marriage</u>	<u>Child of first marriage dies</u>
HOMER	Penelope	X	-	X	X	-
BALZAC	Rosine	X	-	X	-	-
AGNON	Krendel Tcharni	X	-	X ?	-	-
AGNON	Ingeborg	X*	X**	X	X	X
TENNYSON	Annie	X	-	X	X	X
PROCTER	Anonymous	X	-	X	X	X
CRABBE	Judith	~***	X	-	-	-

\* Loved Werner Ferenheim and married him.

\*\* Loved Karl Neiss but was only engaged to him, and only then did he disappear to leave room for Werner Ferenheim's courtship and marriage.

\*\*\* Although Judith did not really marry Allen Booth, we consider her waiting and her feelings and behaviour in general as if she was.

<u>Author</u>	<u>Heroine</u>	<u>Husband left for unfore- seen period</u>	<u>Waited for return of first husband but in vain (except for Penelope)</u>	<u>Waited until officially declared widow</u>	<u>Remarried after hesitation</u>
HOMER	Penelope	X	20 years	-	-
BALZAC	Rosine	X	-	X	-
AGNON	Krendel Tcharni	X	5 years	X	-
AGNON	Ingeborg	X	4 years	-	X
TENNYSON	Annie	X	12 years	-	X
PROCTER	Anonymous	X	Less than 10 years	-	-
CRABBE	Judith	X	10 years	-	X

In addition to the table we would like to add a very brief summary which makes conspicuous the similarities and differences between those heroes who had to make certain sacrifices by renouncing their wives.

ODYSSEUS: Does not renounce anything because he finds his wife still faithfully waiting for him.

COLONEL CHABERT: Renounces at the same time his wife, his estate, his glorious and heroic past and also his name and lives a miserable life.

MENASHE HAYIM: Does not make any marital sacrifice, except that he cannot try to make an honourable living because of the danger that he will be recognized as the true Menashe Hayim, a fact which could bring disastrous consequences upon Krendel Tcharni and her new happy marriage. For this reason he wandered from place to place especially during the nights in spite of the physical danger involved. However he is sacrificing his position in the world to come and this, for a religious man, is a manifold sacrifice.

FERENHEIM: Does not have to make any sacrifices in addition to renouncing his wife. (Of course he will have to grant her a divorce, although no word is mentioned about this in the story.)

KARL NEISS: Does not have to renounce his fiancee since, it seems, she never stopped loving him and was happy to marry him. This is similar, in a certain way, only to Odysseus, with the great difference that she meanwhile married Ferenheim and bore him a child.

ENOCH ARDEN: Renounces at the same time his wife, his paternal right to see his own children, to give them a kiss, to be recognized by them as their legal father and as long as he lived also his name.

(MISS PROCTER'S) ANONYMOUS HERO: Renounces only his wife. He keeps his name and reveals the whole tragedy about twenty-six years after it happened.

ALLEN BOOTH: Does not renounce anything because he finds his beloved "girl" free to marry him (even if marriage is not mentioned in the story).

To summarize we may say that these comprehensive tables give us a very clear condensed picture of similarities between the motifs of the abovementioned writers and Agnon's works. We would not have dared to assume any influence from Homer and Balzac had Agnon himself not mentioned their names among others in a list he left of the writers he had read with great pleasure and that he also acknowledged that there is an undoubted relationship between writer and reader and vice versa.

Summing up all the evidence quoted up till now, there are three possible conclusions:

1. We consider the findings in which we emphasized the allusions, reminiscences and associations to motifs from the abovementioned European writers and we cannot come to a definite conclusion as to whether we succeeded in our aim to show convincingly that there was any real influence or not.

2. In spite of all that has been brought forth as evidence of the possible influence of the European literature on Agnon's works, we cannot still agree fully with this statement,

especially if we consider the special background of Agnon's protagonists.

3. As we have shown, the strong similarities between the motifs in Homer, Balzac, Tennyson, A.A. Procter and Crabbe's works on the one hand and in Agnon's on the other, and taking into consideration the wellknown fact, which Agnon himself admitted about himself\* which is a blessed product of human nature, that the reader is more or less influenced by everything he reads, we may conclude quite undoubtedly that there was a possible influence of those writers on Agnon's works.

In our opinion we dare to say that we are inclined to assume that the nearest opinion to historical truth is the third one, namely that there was a very constructive, productive and fruitful influence of the European writers, whose names he himself mentioned, upon Agnon, even if this influence was a subconscious one and Agnon was not aware of it. Moreover, we dare to say that even from writers he did not mention, like Tennyson, Miss A.A. Procter and Crabbe, he may have been influenced so striking are the similarities between some motifs and situations in Enoch Arden, Homeward Bound and The Parting Hour on one hand and in Vehaya he'akov lemishor and Ferenheim on the other. But this we cannot claim to consider as proven.

\* See Sixteen Sichot Im Sofrim by Galia Yardeni, pp. 47-65, who had two interviews with Agnon.

## APPENDIX II

We have mentioned this poem in footnote 21 of chapter II as proof of the great influence Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav had upon Agnon. We decided to quote it verbatim here so that it can make an impression on the reader directly without any other opinions. It was published in Jewish News, Detroit, Michigan on March 6, 1970 with this short foreword of the editor:

The Robber and the Jew - S.Y. Agnon's Version of  
Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav's Tale

How does one pay tribute to the memory of Shmuel Yosef Agnon, the Hebrew writer who won the Nobel Prize in literature? He was a great story-teller, a mystic who endowed Israel and Jewry with great gifts, who passed on to his readers the vast treasures from Hasidic lore.

He was a novelist, a short story writer, a poet. One of his magnificent poems was based on a tale from the legendary folklore of Rabbi Naham of Bratzlav. Under the title The Robber and the Jew, Mr. Agnon wrote the following, published in June 1949, and translated into English by Herbert Howarth:

A certain Jew used to travel the land,  
Gold in his pack, and his pack in his hand.  
As he drove through a lonely wood on his wain  
Sharp as a man bewitched he drew rein.  
For a robber, with tricks up his sleeve and a gun,  
Who infested the highways and troubled everyone,  
And slew men for their money, never fearing  
God or the Tsar, stood there in a clearing.

The Jew perceived his position was nice.  
The robber could put him down the nick in a trice.  
He fell on his knees. "Have pity, sir," he cried.  
"Please take my pack and everything inside.  
Only show mercy if I give you the pack.  
What good is my death to you once you have that?  
At home are my daughters, my son and my wife -  
Let me return to them, spare my life."  
The robber's heart inclined, unlike Pharaoh's of old,  
He spared the Jew's life and accepted the gold.

The Jew now blessed him, and, still on his knees,  
Said "Generous friend, one more favor, please.  
Give me some sign that you took the gold by force,  
Or I fear I may suffer in the criminal courts.  
For all that you kindly took from me, sir,  
Was money which others had requested me to bear,  
And if I return and can't account for it.  
They may misunderstand and issue a writ.  
So give me some simple memento, some token  
That though my life is intact, my trust is unbroken."

"Delighted, good friend," the robber replied to that.  
"Do me the honor to pass me your hat."  
So the hat was passed, and he balanced it well  
On a bough. Then he shot like William Tell.  
His missile soars, stirs earth and heaven, and mortars  
A hole in the hat like a breach in a fortress.

Said the Jew: "They say 'Twice done is done best'.  
Now double the holes, I would suggest.  
Then at home I can give them proof  
How I resisted till you shot off my roof."

The robber agreed. He turned to the tree  
And fired at the target - one, two, three.  
The bullets soar into the heaven and down  
And riddle the hat, brim and crown.

"My benefactor and friend" cried the Jew,  
"As you've done to my hat to my coat please do,  
To show how I made a desperate defence -  
And with that your work of charity ends."  
He took his long coat off and stretched it on a rock  
To receive the immaculate marksman's shot,



Who was gracious enough to turn and agree  
And fire at the mantle - one, two, three.  
'O valiant sir," cried the Jew, "Well hit!  
Put just another bullet into it."  
The gun opens angry jaws again  
Like a battling lion - but roars in vain.

"I fear," said the robber, "it can't be done.  
There's not a bullet left in the gun."  
'Now, sir," said the Jew, "don't be mean. God hates  
A man who is mean and prevaricates."  
'Now God be my witness," he told the Jew,  
"I've spent every bullet I had on you."

The Jew approved those words. It was clear  
Nothing remained in the gun to fear.  
He jumped on the robber, grabbed his throat,  
Wrenched his arm, wrestled, smote,  
Hammered his chin, made him smart, and made  
Him pay sevenfold for his wicked trade.  
The robber sank, a limb was shattered,  
His bones to the four winds nearly scattered.  
Nor did the Jew let his anger slack  
Till justice was done and the gold given back.  
Then he mounted his trap and went on through the  
land  
With gold in his pack, and his pack in his hand.

## APPENDIX III

### THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE

Speech by Anders Osterling, D. Ph., member of the Swedish  
Academy

Translation

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen.

This year's Nobel prize for literature has been awarded to two outstanding Jewish authors, each of whom represents Israel's message to our time - Samuel Agnon and Nelly Sachs; the former's home is in Jerusalem and the latter has been living in Sweden since 1940 as an emigrant and is now a Swedish subject. The purpose of combining these two prizewinners is to do justice to the individual achievements of each, and the sharing of the prize has its special justification: to honour two writers who, although they write in different languages, are united in a spiritual kinship and, so to speak, complement each other in a splendid striving to present the cultural heritage of the Jewish people by the written word and from a common source of inspiration which in them has proved to be a vital power.

Samuel Agnon's reputation as the foremost writer in modern Hebrew literature has gradually penetrated linguistic barriers which in this case are particularly obstructive. His most important works are now available in other languages, and there is even a selection of his short stories available in Swedish

with the title I havets mitt ("In the Middle of the Sea"). Agnon, now 78 years old, began writing in Yiddish but soon changed to Hebrew, which according to experts he handles with absolute mastery, in a taut and sonorous prose style of extraordinary expressiveness. He was only twenty when he left his native town in East Galicia, where he had received a learned upbringing as the scion of an old and respected family. He felt drawn to Palestine, where now, as an aged classical author, he can look back on the long struggle for national re-establishment and where the so-called cultural Zionism owns in him one of its finest productive champions.

Agnon's unique quality as a writer is chiefly apparent in the great novel cycle from his native town of Buczacz, once a flourishing centre of Jewish piety and rabbinical learning, now in ruins. Reality and legend stand side by side in his narrative art. "The Bridal Canopy" is the name of one of his most characteristic stories, in its ingenious and earthy humour a Jewish counterpart to "Don Quixote" and "Tyl Eulenspiegel". But perhaps his greatest achievement is his novel "Guest Only for a Night", which tells of a visit to the war-ruined city of his childhood, Buczacz, and the storyteller's vain attempts to assemble the congregation to a service in the synagogue. Within the framework of a local chronicle we see a wonderful perspective of destinies and figures, of experience and meditation. The lost key of the prayerhouse, which the traveller finds in his knapsack only after his return to Jerusalem, is for Agnon a symbolic hint that the old order can never be rebuilt in the Diaspora, but only under the protection of Zionism. Agnon is a realist, but there is always a mystical admixture which lends to even the greyest and most ordinary scenes a golden outline of strange fairytale poetry, often

reminiscent of Chagall's motifs from the world of the Old Testament. He stands out as a deeply original writer, endowed with remarkable gifts of humour and wisdom and with a perspicacious play of thought combined with naive perception; in all, a consummate expression of the Jewish character.

**Doctor Agnon!**

According to the wording of the diploma, this year's Nobel prize for literature has been awarded to you for your "profoundly characteristic narrative art with motifs from the life of the Jewish people". We should be happy if you would consider this international distinction as a sign that your writing need not be isolated within the boundary of its language and that it has proved to have the power of reaching out over all confining walls and of arousing sympathy, understanding and respect in the general consciousness. Through me the Swedish Academy conveys its sincere congratulations, and I now ask you to come forward and to receive the prize from the hands of his Majesty the King.

## APPENDIX IV

Samuel Joseph Agnon, Nelly Sachs -

This year's literary prize goes to you both with equal honour, for a literary production which records Israel's vicissitudes in our time and passes on its message to the peoples of the world.

Mr. Agnon - in your writing we meet once again the ancient unity between literature and science, as antiquity knew it. In one of your stories you say that some will no doubt read it as they read fairytales, others will read it for upliftment. Your great chronicle of the Jewish people's spirit and life has therefore a manifold message. For the historian it is a precious source, for the philosopher an inspiration, for those who cannot live without literature it is never-failing riches. We honour in you a combination of tradition and prophecy, of saga and wisdom.

Reponses Des Laureats

M. Agnon:

Traductim en anglais, version hebraique p. 71

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies,  
Members of the Swedish Academy, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Our Sages of blessed memory have said that we must not enjoy any pleasure in this world without reciting a blessing. If we eat any food, or drink any beverage, we must recite

a blessing over them before and after. If we breathe the scent of goodly grass, the fragrance of spices, the aroma of goodly fruits, we pronounce a blessing over the pleasure. The same applies to the pleasures of sight: when we see the sun in the Great Cycle of the Zodiac in the month of Nissan, or the trees first bursting into blossom in the spring, or any fine, sturdy and beautiful trees, we pronounce a blessing. And the same applies to the pleasures of the ear.

It is through you, dear sirs, that one of the blessings concerned with hearing has come my way.

It happened when the Swedish Charge d'Affaires came and brought me the tidings that the Swedish Academy had bestowed the Nobel Prize upon me. Then I recited in full the blessing that is enjoined upon one that hears good tidings for himself or others: "Blessed be He, that is good and doeth good". "Good", in that the good God put it into the hearts of the sages of the illustrious Academy to bestow that great and esteemed Prize upon an author who writes in the Sacred Tongue; "Who doeth good", in that He favoured me by causing them to choose me. And now that I have come so far, I will recite one blessing more, as enjoined upon him who beholds a monarch: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who hast given of Thy glory to a king of flesh and blood". Over you, too, distinguished sages of the Academy, I say the prescribed blessing: "Blessed be He, that has given of his wisdom to flesh and blood."

It is said in the Talmud (Tractate Sanhedrin 23a): "In Jerusalem, the men of discrimination did not sit down to dine in company until they knew who their companions were to

be"; so I will now tell you who am I, whom you have agreed to have at your table,

As a result of the historic catastrophe in which Titus of Rome destroyed Jerusalem and Israel was exiled from its land, I was born in one of the cities of the Exile.

But always I regarded myself as one who was born in Jerusalem. In dream, in a vision of the night, I saw myself standing with my brother-Levites in the Holy Temple, singing with them the songs of David King of Israel, melodies such as no ear has heard since the day our city was destroyed and its people went into exile. I suspect that the angels in charge of the Shrine of Music, fearful lest I sing in wakefulness what I had sung in dream, made me forget by day what I had sung at night; for if my brethren, the sons of my people, were to hear, they would be unable to bear their grief over the happiness they have lost.

To console me for having prevented me from singing with my mouth, they enable me to compose songs in writing.

(Out of respect for the time, the rest of my words will be read in translation only.)

I belong to the Tribe of Levi; my forebears and I are of the minstrels that were in the Temple, and there is a tradition in my father's family that we are of the lineage of the Prophet Samuel, whose name I bear.

I was five years old when I wrote my first song. It was out of longing for my father that I wrote it. It happened that my father, of blessed memory, went away on business. I was overcome with longing for him and I made a song. After that I made many songs but nothing has remained of them all.

My father's house, where I left a roomful of writings, was burned down in the First World War, and all I had left there was burned with it. The young artisans, tailors and shoemakers, who used to sing my songs at their work, were killed in the First World War and of those who were not killed in the War, some were buried alive with their sisters in the pits they dug for themselves by order of the enemy, and most were burned in the crematoria of Auschwitz together with their sisters, who had adorned our town with their beauty and sung my songs with their sweet voices.

The fate of the singers who, like my songs, went up in flame was also the fate of the books which I later made. All of them went up in flame to Heaven together in a fire which broke out one night at my home in Bad Homburg as I lay ill in hospital. Among the books that were burned was a large novel of some seven hundred pages, the first part of which the publisher had announced he was about to bring out. Together with this novel, called Eternal Life, was burned everything I had written since the day I had gone down into exile from the Land of Israel, including a book I had made together with Martin Buber, besides four-thousand Hebrew books, most of which had come down to me from my forebears and some of which I had bought with money set aside from my daily bread.

I said, "since the day I had gone down from the Land of Israel", but I have not yet related that I had dwelt in the Land of Israel. Of this I will now speak.

At the age of 19 1/2 I went up to the Land of Israel to till its soil and live by the labour of my hands. As I did not find work, I sought my livelihood elsewhere. I was appointed Secretary of the Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) Society, and



Secretary of the Palestine Council - which was a kind of parliament-on-the-way - and I was also the first Secretary of the voluntary Jewish Magistrate's Court. Through these offices it was my privilege to get to know every Jewish person, and those whom I did not come to know through these offices I came to know through love and a desire to know my brethren, the members of my people. It is almost certain that in those years there was not a man, woman or infant in the Land of Israel whom I did not know.

After all my possessions had been burned, God gave me the wisdom to return to Jerusalem. I returned to Jerusalem and it is by virtue of Jerusalem that I have written all that God has put into my heart and into my pen. I have also made a book about the Giving of the Torah, and a book on the Days of Awe, and a book on the books of Israel that have been written since the day the Torah was given to Israel.

Since my return to the Land of Israel, I have left it twice; once in connection with the printing of my books by the late Salman Schocken, and once I travelled to Sweden and Norway. Their great poets had implanted love and admiration for their countries in my heart, and I decided to go and see them. Now I have come a third time, to receive your blessing, sages of the Academy.

During the time I dwelt in Jerusalem, I have written big stories and small. Some have been printed, most I still have in manuscript.

I have already told how my first songs came out of longing for my father. The beginnings of my studies also came to me from my father, as well as from the Rabbinical Judge of our

town. But they were preceded by three tutors under whom I studied, one after the other, from the time I was three and a half till I turned eight and a half.

Who were my mentors in poetry and literature? That is a matter of opinion. Some see in my books the influences of authors whose names, in my ignorance, I have not even heard, while others see the influences of poets whose names I have heard but whose writings I have not read. And what is my opinion? From whom did I receive nurture? Not every man remembers the name of the cow which supplied him with each drop of milk he has drunk. But in order not to leave you totally in the dark, I will try to clarify from whom I received whatever I have received.

First and foremost, there are the Sacred Scriptures, from which I learned how to combine letters. Then there are the Mishna and the Talmud and the Midrashim and Rashi's commentary on the Torah. After these come the Poskim - the later explicators of Talmudic Law - and our sacred poets and the medieval sages, led by our Master Rabbi Moses, son of Maimon, known as Maimonides, of blessed memory.

When I first began to combine letters other than Hebrew, I read every book in German that came my way, and from these I certainly received according to the nature of my soul. As time is short, I shall not compile a bibliograpjy or mention any names. Why, then, did I list the Jewish books? Because it is they that gave me my foundations. And my heart tells me that it is they who recommended that I be honoured with the Nobel Prize.

There is another kind of influence, which I have received from every man, every woman, every child I have encountered

along my way, both Jews and non-Jews. People's talk and the stories they tell have been engraved on my heart, and some of them have come up into my pen. It has been the same way with the spectacles of Nature. The Dead Sea, which I used to see every morning at sunrise from the roof of my house, the Arnon Brook in which I used to bathe, the nights I used to spend with devout and pious men at midnight, beside the Wailing Wall - nights which gave me eyes to see the land of the Holy one, Blessed be He, which He gave us, and the city in which He established His Name.

Lest I slight any creature, I must also mention the domestic animals, the beasts and birds from whom I have learned. Job said long ago (35:11): "Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth. And maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?" Some of what I have learned from them I have written in my books, but I fear that I have not learned as much I should have done, for when I hear a dog bark, or a bird twitter, or a cock crow, I do not know whether they are thanking me for all I have told of them, or calling me to account.

Before I conclude my remarks, I will say one more thing. If I have praised myself too much, it is for your sake that I have done so, in order to reassure you for having cast your eyes on me. For myself, I am very small indeed in my own eyes. Never in all my life have I forgotten the Psalm in which David said (131): "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." If I am proud of anything, it is that I have been granted the privilege of living in the land

which God promised our forefathers to give us, as it is written (Ezekiel 37: 25): "And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob My servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever."

Before concluding, I would say a brief prayer: He Who giveth wisdom unto the wise and salvation unto kings may He increase your wisdom beyond measure and exalt your Sovereign. In his days and in ours may Judah be redeemed and Israel dwell in safety. May a redeemer come to Zion, may the earth be filled with knowledge and eternal joy for all who dwell therein and may they enjoy much peace. May all this be God's will. Amen.

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## APPENDIX V

### A CRITICAL REMARK (TO COLONEL CHABERT)

In his introduction to Tennyson's Enoch Arden Frederick Allen writes:

The story of a seaman's return to his wife and family after a long absence is very ancient and very common amongst the maritime nations of both Europe and Asia....<sup>1</sup>

We fully agree with this statement and even support it by mentioning a few of these stories. It starts, to our knowledge, with Homer's protagonist who returned after twenty years of absence but may have started long before that. The same motif appears in G. Crabbe's poem The Parting Hour, Miss A.A. Procter's poem Homeward Bound as well as in A. Tennyson's idyllic poem Enoch Arden.

In the same way we may say that the story of a husband who, assumed dead, returns to his wife who meanwhile remarried to somebody, or was on the verge of doing so, is an ancient one and appears already in the Greek tragedies (it also served Racine in his drama Pedra) and is quite a real one in conception, especially in time of war or after war, or in time of distress or afterwards. Hence we disagree with a statement made by Mrs. Juanita Kramer Bromberg in which she states:

The situation in Le Colonel Chabert, that of the return of a husband, supposed dead, to his wife, who has remarried, is essentially unreal in conception. But by approaching the plot from the standpoint of the legal considerations involved, and of the psychology of the actors and by dwelling upon the physical and social background of the incidents, Balzac has made

of this situation a convincingly realistic study.<sup>2</sup>

I disagree with this statement especially because it does not take into account the cruel, but true, realities of times of war and after war and of times of economical crisis and after crisis. All the main motifs of the compared stories of this research can be classified as one or the other category. I also disagree with the second part of the above quoted statement, that is, that

by approaching the plot from the standpoint of the legal considerations involved, and of the psychology of the actors .... Balzac has made of this a convincing realistic study.

In my opinion the study was realistic enough even without Balzac's approach. The turns in the plot, especially those that are outlined through the description of Colonel Chabert's behaviour and decisions, seem to me to be not as realistic as they were appreciated by Mrs. Bromberg.

To mention just one point - Colonel Chabert says that he is not a fool to sign a document that states he is not he, but in reality he does exactly that. For a moment he thinks about vengeance committing suicide or killing his wife, which may be appreciated as very natural under such circumstances; but instead he decides to commit a spiritual and social suicide for no plausible reason, particularly after he found out the wickedness of his wife who was not scrupulous at all in trying to find any way to get rid of her good, loving and brave but unfortunate husband. Instead of paying her with the same coin, he decides contemptuously to disappear. To my mind, it is unnatural that a person of Colonel Chabert's personality, military and social high position, had no friends or acquaintances (all of them were swallowed by the

earth) who could recognize him and give evidence of his being Colonel Chabert, and/or giving him a helping hand in regaining an honourable social position. Moreover, there is no real or natural reasoning to back his giving up his fight for rehabilitation just when it was nearly won for him by his faithful lawyer, Derville. His turning away, thereby agreeing to live a miserable life for more than twenty years, without any true inner or outer stir, is inconceivable both from the legal standpoint and from the psychological one. This motif, the reappearance of the absent husband, before or after his wife's remarriage, with or without claiming her, is described most truthfully and most convincingly in all the stories we have compared, except Balzac's, whose description, in my opinion, is not at all convincing in certain parts of the story Colonel Chabert.

And just to bring evidence for the statement that such a story (of a husband being supposed dead and discovered alive) has its deep and true roots in the cruel realities of life. We quote a note which was published in the edition of G. Crabbe's poems in 1834 and was republished in the selected edition of 1909. The note discloses that:

Mr. Crabbe's fourth brother, William, taking to a seafaring life, was made prisoner by the Spaniards: he was carried to Mexico, where he became a silversmith, married and prospered, until his increasing riches attracted a charge of Protestantism; the consequence of which was persecution. He at last was obliged to abandon Mexico, his property, and his family, and was discovered, in the year 1803, by an Aldborough sailor, on the coast of Honduras, where again he seems to have found some success in business. This sailor was the only person he had seen for many a year who could tell him anything of Aldborough and his family; and great was his

perplexity when he was informed that his eldest brother, George, was a clergyman. "This cannot be our George," said the wanderer, "he was a doctor!" This was the first, and also the last, tidings ever to reach Mr. Crabbe of his brother William; and upon the Aldborough sailor's story of his casual interview it is obvious that he built this tale.

And finally, most convincing evidence from our very days. We know personally of many cases, which came before the Court in Israel, of people who came back alive from behind the "Dark Mountains" or the "Iron Curtain", after an absence of even more than twenty years, to their wives and/or children. Their tragedies cannot be described, but it shows us that we do not have to invent such tragic situations. Sometimes the cruelty of reality is beyond imagination.

#### NOTES

1. TENNYSON, Lord A., Enoch Arden, Frederick Allen (ed.), London, University Tutorial Press, n.d., p. 7.
2. The Evolution of Balzac's "Comedie humaine", E.P. Dargan and B. Weinberg (eds.), 1942, p. 386.



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II	Hakhnasat Kala	1931	Novel, Part 2
III	Me'az Ume'ata	1931	Short Stories
IV	Sipure Ahavim	1931	Short Stories
V	Sipur Pashut	1935	Novel
VI	Beshuva Vanahat	1935	Short Stories
VII	Ore'ah Nata Lalun	1939	Novel
VIII	Elu Ve'Elu	1941	Short Stories
IX	Temol Shilshom	1945	Novel
X	Samukh Venir'e	1951	Short Stories
XI	'Ad Hena	1952	Short Stories

Kol Sipurav Shel Sh. Y. Agnon, Second Edition, Vol. 1-VIII,  
Tel Aviv;

Vol. 1	Hakhnasat Kala	1953	Novel
II	Elu Ve'Elu	1953	Short Stories
III	'Al Kapot Hamanul	1953	Short Stories
IV	Ore'ah Nata Lalun	1953	Novel
V	Temol Shilshom	1953	Novel

VI Samukh Venir'e	1953	Short Stories
VII 'Ad Hena	1953	Short Stories
VIII Ha'esh Veba'Etsim	1962	Short Stories

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We also have to mention here that there are in English only six books in which there are translated novels, short stories and other types of literary work by S.Y. Agnon. They are also listed below. Besides these, there are in English only two books which are devoted to the life and work of S.Y. Agnon. They are listed in Critical and General (Bibliography) on S.Y. Agnon and his works.

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A Whole Loaf  
From Lodging to Lodging  
Metamorphosis  
The Doctor's Divorce  
The Face and the Image  
The Lady and the Pedlar  
On the Road  
The Orchestra  
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