The Jew, the Beauty, and the Beast

Gender and Animality in Modernist Hebrew Fiction

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Roosters in Jewish Thought and Literature

Chickens seem to be the most victimized species, considering that over fifty billion of them are densely confined in factory farms and slaughtered for their meat every year.[1] Roosters, however, are used as insignia of virility in various cultures, arguably due to their congenital aggression toward other males of the same species.[2] The concept of the virile rooster also abounds in Judaic writings, insofar as the word *gever* in biblical and rabbinical Hebrew refers to both a male human and a rooster. The man-rooster parallelism is expressed in numerous Talmudic sources, foremost among them: "Torah scholars would not be with their wives like roosters" (Berakhot 22a:17), which implies that roosters are very sexually active; "one who sees a rooster in a dream should anticipate a male child" (Berakhot 57a:11); and "had the Torah not been given to us, we would have learned modesty from the cat, honest toil from the ant, chastity from the dove and gallantry from the cock, who first appeases the hen and then mates with her" (Eruvin 100b:29).

Roosters are also associated with Jews, as reflected in the Talmudic tractate Beitzah 25b:8: "There are three impudent ones: The Jewish people among the nations; the dog among animals; and the rooster among birds." In S. Y. Abramovitsh's coming-of-age Yiddish novel *Dos vintshfingerl* (The Wishing-Ring, 1865), this Talmudic teaching is echoed by its protagonist Hershele, a young

Jewish boy in the imaginary shtetl of Kaptsansk (Poorville), who realizes that "Jews are the roosters among the peoples of the earth, forever perched by the domestic hearth, close to their wives and children. . . . And Hershele's father was a Jew's Jew and a cock's cock."[3] Shortly after comparing Jewish men to roosters, a rooster is depicted anthropomorphically, described as a dominant and controlling man: "And *he* was the rooster of the house, leading the hen and her chicks behind him while he foraged."[4]

Alongside the roosters' masculinist typology, which includes both virility and male dominance, roosters also serve in Judaism—and not merely symbolically—as the ultimate *korban*, which is a Hebrew word that translates to both "sacrifice" and "victim." While animal sacrifice in Jewish tradition was prohibited after the destruction of the Second Temple (the only place allowed by *Halakhah* for sacrifices), chickens are sacrificed to this very day in the atonement ritual of *Kapparot* on the evening of Yom Kippur.[5] After being swung overhead while still alive, a rooster is slaughtered for each man (a hen would be slaughtered for a woman) with the recitation "this is my exchange, this is my substitute, this is my atonement. This rooster will go to its death, while I will enter and proceed to a good long life and to peace."[6]

Due to this ritual sacrifice on Yom Kippur, roosters also exemplify vulnerability and victimization in Jewish literature. It is evident, for example, in the dream Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772–1810) had ahead of his death, in which he virtually serves as a Kapparot rooster: "And I saw in a dream that it was Yom Kippur. And I knew as a matter of course that every Yom Kippur a person is offered as a sacrifice. . . . I agreed to be the sacrifice. And they told me I should commit myself to this in writing, and I committed myself to this in writing. Afterwards, when they wanted to offer the sacrifice, I changed my mind, and I wanted to hide. . . . A person who agreed to be a sacrifice in my place was found. But nevertheless I am fearful about the future."[7]

In modern Jewish fiction, the victimization of roosters in the Kapparot ritual is often analogized to Jewish victimization in hostile gentile society. In Abramovitsh's *Dos Vinshfingerl*, whose epilogue eulogizes the destruction of Kaptsansk in a pogrom, the rooster encapsulates—apart from Jewish male dominance—Jewish victimization: "When the rooster for *capores* is taken from his perch in the middle of the night—'come, be slaughtered for my sins!' and he trembles and groans in a cocked voice—does his granting leave your heart unmoved?"[8] Later on, Hershele Jewifies the rooster, stating that over the Jewish mourning day of *Tish'ah be-Av*, "even the randy rooster has lost any desire to fool around with his wives. His posture, his crow, weren't what they should be; the crowing was more of a whistle, like something from a cracked shofar."[9] Mourning for the destruction of the ancient temples in Jerusalem, he nevertheless maintains his male dominance, as "all of a sudden he shuffled his feet, moved himself to the side, scratched the ground with a

downcast wing, gathered all his wives, and—good night—went off with them to his home."[10]

The duality of roosters, as exemplary of both virility and vulnerability, also appear in Abramovitsh's novel *Di Kliatshe*, where the protagonist—a young Jew named Isrolik—reproaches a cock for his toxic masculinity: "Ever since you've been with us, all one hears is that you're forever kicking up a row, scrapping now with one rival, now with another, and always over some female, over some foolish trifle or other. . . . You really deserve *kaparot*."[11] Similar to Nachman's dream of Kapparot, Isrolik has a repeated nightmare, in which he is a Kapparot rooster: "Wild apparitions would spring up before me, staring at me with distorted countenances, and the game, the horror game, would begin. A comedy was being enacted, in which I was the kapparot rooster, gazing at human beings, without knowing what 'human beings' mean, what are these 'human beings.' I felt that I was spinning, rotating in the air, bound hand and foot, as someone uses me for *kaparot*."[12]

The Fowl of Man: S. Y. Agnon's Roosters

The linkage between roosters and men, and Jewish men in particular, is well established in modernist Hebrew writings too, foremost among them in the oeuvre of S. Y. Agnon. Two of his brief tales center around roosters. In "ha-Nagar veha-tarnegol" (The Carpenter and the Rooster, 1941), the tragic fate of the rooster and the tragic Jewish fate are thus ironically interconnected. A Jewish carpenter plans to eat a rooster, received from a gentile woman, for Passover. Alas, the rooster eats beetles that had been poisoned by the carpenter. He rushes to slaughter and cook the rooster, then, wrapped in a burial shroud, waits to die from the poisoning. The fate of the rooster and the fate of the Jewish man here are tragically connected, "as one dies, so dies the other" (Ecclesiastes 3:19, NKJV). Moreover, the rooster is not only poisoned and slaughtered by the Jewish man but also serves as his doppelgänger, insofar as his neck is like *tefillin* (phylacteries) and his tail is compared to a *shtreimel*, a fur hat worn by some Ashkenazi Jewish men.[13]

Agnon's "ha-Tarnegol u-tefilat bene ha-adam" (The Rooster and Human Prayer, posthumously published in 1985) tells of a rooster happily living in a home where a Jewish man treats him very kindly. The rooster's peaceful life is abruptly interrupted on the night before Yom Kippur. While the Jew whirls him around his head, the perplexed animal wonders, "doesn't this Jew know that his movements make me feel bad in the head?"[14] Only when his throat is cut by the slaughterer's knife does the rooster finally realize the nature of the events. Describing the ritual of Kapparot from the perspective of the sacrificed rooster creates a defamiliarization, in Boris Shklovsky's term, which critically revisits the sacrificial ritual.[15] In "Yamim Noraim" (Days of Awe, 1938), his

anthology of Judaic sources on Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur, Agnon expresses his aversion to the Kapparot ritual.[16]

Interestingly, this tale remarkably resembles Bertrand Russell's famous case study, in which "the man who has fed the chicken every day throughout its life at last wrings its neck instead, showing that more refined views as to the uniformity of nature would have been useful to the chicken."[17] In both cases, even when a bird seemingly has a good life, the slaughterer's knife, like the sword of Damocles, is an imminent threat on its life. Russell uses the chicken to illustrate the philosophical problem of induction, doubting the presumption that our past observations necessarily justify future predictions; our world can unexpectedly change, Russell argues, just like a chicken's can. Agnon's piece may convey a similar message, according to which human life—and Jewish life in particular—is as vulnerable as a rooster's. "ha-Tarnegol u-tefilat bene ha-adam" can thus be read as a Holocaust allegory, according to which the rooster stands for the Jews while the Jew actually represents the German murderers.

Whereas these two parabolic tales have galline protagonists, "Kisui ha-dam" (Covering the Blood, published posthumously in 1975) revolves around their slaughterer—a Holocaust survivor named Hillel, who fled the Nazis then became a chicken slaughterer in America. Throughout the story, the killing of the Jews by the Nazi slaughterers and the killing of the chickens by the Jewish slaughterers are provocatively analogized. Hillel slaughtered six hundred chickens daily, standing in for the six million Jews slaughtered by the Nazis. He ceaselessly slaughtered chickens, every day from morning to night, year after year, "until three years before the declaration of the State of Israel."[18] The declaration of the State of Israel took place in 1948, which means that Hillel stopped slaughtering chickens in 1945, just when the Nazis stopped slaughtering Jews.

Nevertheless, unlike Bialik's poetic response to the 1903 Kishinev pogrom "be-'Ir ha-haregah" (In the City of Slaughter), which famously portrays the pogrom victims as slaughtered animals and their victimizers as slaughterers, in "Kisui ha-dam" the metaphor is bidirectional: not only are the Holocaust victims parallel to slaughtered animals but slaughtered animals are also compared to Holocaust victims.[19] The chickens in "Kisui ha-dam," as is true for most nonhuman figures throughout Agnon's corpus, are not mere signifiers for intrahuman issues.

The title of the story refers to the religious duty of covering the blood of animals killed for food, according to which a person that "hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust" (Leviticus 17:13, NKJV). The rationale for this duty is also indicated—the blood is the soul (*ha-dam hu ha-nefesh*)—hence "You shall not eat the blood of any flesh. . . . Whoever eats it shall be cut off" (Leviticus 17:14, NKJV). Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of British Mandatory

Palestine, whose writings greatly influenced Agnon, argues in *Ḥazon ha-tsimḥonut veha-shalom* (The Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace) that the demand to cover the blood of slain animals is a divine protest against the permission to eat meat, which is fundamentally conditional upon the corrupt state of the human soul: "'For the inclination of the human heart is evil from its youth' (Genesis 8:21). And this soul says 'I will eat meat, because of the craving to eat meat,' and even eats meat as much as it pleases, without any concept of inner opposition on the part of the feeling of righteousness and justice. The Torah, however, declares, 'cover the blood; hide your shame and your moral laxity.'"[20]

If the purpose of covering the blood is to conceal the immorality of killing animals, as Rabbi Kook suggests, in Agnon's "Kisui ha-dam" the immorality cannot be concealed. The blood is not covered but overflows and leads to moral decay, symbolized in the decayed leg of the slaughterer. After the slaughterhouse owner, Gitli, does not allow him to cease slaughtering while fasting on the Seventeenth of Tammuz, Hillel's leg is hurt. She then gives him some money for the sake of saving his leg, but *damim* (which means both "bloods" and "money") cannot cover the *dam*. Alluding to the punishment in Leviticus of cutting off for not covering the blood, Hillel's leg was indeed cut off. The parallel between the Jewish man and the chickens is thus twofold. First, the Jewish victimization by the Nazi slaughterers is compared with the chickens' victimization by the human slaughterers. Then, both Hillel, the Jewish man, and the chickens he slaughters are presented as victims of the Jewish woman that owns the slaughterhouse.

The victimization of chickens by humans is compared with the victimization of Jewish men by intimidating women (and not by hostile gentiles) in several other Agnonian works, where the galline figures dually function as a manifestation of both vulnerability and virility. Their ambivalence is thus utterly related to gender dynamics, inasmuch as they symbolize male dominance and virility as well as male vulnerability and victimization.[21]

In Agnon's "ha-Ne'elam," whose second part ("Divre ha-yamim shel ha-adonit") is discussed at length in the previous chapter, the victimization of men and chickens is analogized, as the scarcity of men to send to war is mentioned alongside the shortage of chickens for Kapparot.[22] This analogy is further strengthened by indicating that, due to the chicken shortage, seven women hold one single chicken, an allusion to Isaiah 4:1 ("seven women shall take hold of one man," NKJV). The Jewish community sacrifices Dan, the disadvantaged young man, like it sacrifices chickens for Yom Kippur. By sending Dan to war, the privileged Jews save their sons from such a dismal fate. Paraphrasing the Kapparot prayer, Dan is their exchange, their substitute, who will go to his death while they will enter and proceed to a good long life and to peace.

Dan eventually survives the military service, but he fails to overcome the ruthless predatory woman. When he is finally released after six years in her captivity, Dan only says—before completely losing his speaking ability—"kosher, kosher," which can be read as "I'm a kosher rooster," indicating that he did not sin.[23] If at an early stage of the plot Dan is victimized by both gentile society and the Jewish community through his prolonged compulsory military service, his utmost victimization is perpetrated by a femme fatale. The victimization of the Kapparot chickens at the commencement of the narrative thus anticipates Dan's victimization by the noblewoman.

The incident between Hemdat and the German girl in *Shira*, closely read in the previous chapter, is likewise relevant here, considering that the chicken's victimization is related to the victimization of men by women, as well as the victimization of Jews by the Germans during the Holocaust. In that scene, set in late 1930s Jerusalem, Hemdat is sexually attracted to a young blonde visitor from Stuttgart. Upon witnessing her breaking a chicken's neck in the backyard, the Jewish man throws up. It seems that Hemdat's virility is at once transformed into the chicken's vulnerability. He is no longer a man glancing at an attractive young woman but a Jew watching a German killing a helpless living being.

Unlike the episodic appearance of chickens in "ha-Ne'elam" and *Shira*, in two of Agnon's novels—*Hakhnasat kalah* and *Sipur pashut*—roosters play a significant role, addressing the interrelation between the virility and vulnerability of human and galline males.

The Rooster Motif in *Hakhnasat kalah*

Agnon's first novel, *Hakhnasat kalah* (The Bridal Canopy, 1931), takes place in early nineteenth-century Galicia, where the pauper Reb Yudel embarks on a journey in search of a dowry and a bridegroom for his daughter. This frame story encompasses dozens of Hasidic tales, among them "The Mouse and the Cock." In this tale, a mouse asks a rooster why he perpetually looks grief stricken, particularly when the month of Elul approaches, despite the abundance of food at the Jewish home. Like in "ha-Tarnegol u-tefilat bene ha-adam," this rooster also protests against his forthcoming ritual sacrifice in Yom Kippur. Sharing his Kapparot-angst with his murine friend, the cock quotes several biblical verses with the word *gever*, originally referring to a human *gever*, in a galline context. Adopting the perspective of the cock, doomed to be slain for Kapparot, the phrase "curst is the cock that trusts in man" (following Jeremiah 17:5, "*arur ha-gever asher yivtaḥ ba-adam*") is undoubtedly true. Likewise, "I am the cock who has seen affliction" (following Lamentations 3:1, "*ani ha-gever raah 'oni*") is applicable to virtually all cocks, denoting their victimization for either the ritual of Kapparot or the consumption of their meat.

Within this Jewish animal tale, Agnon refers to Aesop's famous fable of the Lion and the Mouse,[24] as the mouse suggests chewing through the Jew's prayer book like his father did with the rope of the lion's net, thereby redeeming the cock (BC, 63–64).[25] Notwithstanding the distinctly anthropomorphic representation of the talking cock and mouse, which is further pronounced due to the reference to the Aesopian animal fable, the Agnonian tale is not to be reduced to solely intrahuman concerns, which exclude the animals from its thematic level. Unlike Aesop's "The Lion and the Mouse," Agnon's "The Mouse and the Cock" reflects on human-animal relations, presenting the roosters' perspective on their ritual sacrifice on Yom Kippur.[26]

Whereas the cock in this tale is not reduced to intrahuman context but rather represents galline interests, he is indeed fully anthropomorphized and not individualized. Apart from this emblematic cock, *Hakhnasat kalah* also features a realistic individualized rooster. The second figure introduced in the novel after Reb Yudel, prior even to his wife and daughters, is actually his rooster, Reb Zoraḥ, "who used to rouse him to serve the Creator."[27] Reb Zoraḥ is nevertheless much more than a living alarm clock. The profound affinity that exists between Reb Yudel and Reb Zoraḥ is reinforced by the allusion to the biblical parable of the poor man's ewe. Agnon's description of Reb Yudel, "*ve-larash ein kol ki im tarnegol eḥad*" ("the poor man had nothing, except one rooster," HK, 7), clearly cites Nathan the prophet's parabolic words: "*ve-larash ein kol ki im kivsah aḥat*" ("the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb," 2 Samuel 12:3, NKJV). The allusion suggests that the intimate bonding between the biblical poor man and his ewe, who "ate meat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter," also exists between the Galician poor man and his beloved rooster.

Troubled by the possible consequences of his prolonged absence from home and reflecting on his corporeal vulnerability, Reb Yudel recalls—even before thinking of his wife Frummet and his daughters—Reb Zoraḥ: "and since his cock came to mind, Reb Yudel's eyes filled with tears, for he said to himself, maybe Frummet could not withstand" (BC, 214). The corporeal vulnerability is shared here by both the human and the winged *gever*; Reb Yudel's concern that his wife would be tempted to slaughter his beloved cock clearly has a sexual connotation, reflecting his own angst over her sexual temptation. As Baruch Kurzweil proclaims: "[It] leaves no doubt as to the special symbolic function for the *gever* Reb Zoraḥ in the life of Reb Yudel. The *gever* there is reminiscent of the *gever*'s situation here. If Frummet slaughters Reb Zerach, it means that Reb Yudel's house has been destroyed. Therefore, without requiring any psychoanalytic explanations, the rooster Reb Zoraḥ is a kind of symbolic representative of Reb Yudel and his masculinity . . . Reb Yudel's masculinity is indisputable: 'he was burdened by many daughters' and in his house is the sole 'rooster' among the 'hens.'"[28]

Kurzweil's view of Reb Zerach as a symbolic representative of Reb Yudel is akin to his reading of Balak, the canine protagonist in Agnon's novel *Temol shilshom* (Only Yesterday, 1945). Kurzweil approached Agnon for assistance in allegorizing the dog: "I read the book about three times, and made numerous comments, but I'm doubtful about Balak. There is no consistent symbolism here." Agnon's reply was "I don't see symbolism in Balak, particularly not consistent symbolism. . . . You know I don't like allegories, and there Balak is not allegorical. As an animal, I attempted to do something here that I couldn't have done by a human."[29] While Balak is certainly more individualized than Reb Zoraḥ, Agnon's statement about Balak can be also applied to other animal figures in his work, Reb Zoraḥ included. Reb Zoraḥ can thus be regarded as the doppelgänger of the protagonist without being reduced to this symbolic function. The rooster does not merely shed light on the protagonist; conversely, the shared features of cocks and men are foregrounded.

The virility-vulnerability dialectic of the rooster is further underscored toward the end of the novel. After several months of wanderings, a wealthy Jew offers his son as a match for Reb Yudel's oldest daughter, pledging a huge sum of gold coins toward the dowry. Ahead of the forthcoming visit of the bridegroom's father, the bride's family faces a substantial obstacle: they are, in fact, so poor that they cannot even prepare a decent meal for the esteemed guest. Frummet consults the local rabbi, who advises her to cook Reb Zoraḥ. So she sends her daughter Pessele, the intended bride, to the slaughterer. The *shiddukh* is therefore literally connected to the rooster; the victimized rooster, who is about to be killed, is supposed to enable the matrimonial union of the young man and woman.

In *The Raw and the Cooked*, Claude Lévi-Strauss analyzes various rituals and ceremonies from tribal societies from around the world, where marriage is compared with cooking. Just as marriage brings sex from the natural to the cultural sphere, cooking does the same for food. The woman is thus analogous to the cooking vessel, with semen equivalent to the raw cooking material and the newborn child parallel to the cooked food.[30] Such symbolism is clearly expressed in Agnon's novel as well: "So Pessele tripped along cuddling the cock to her bosom and stroking his comb, chanting him all manner of things such as he had never heard in all his days. Sweetheart, says she to him, do you know where we're off to? It's the slaughterhouse we're off to? It's the slaughterhouse we're off to. And do you know what for? To have you killed. And for why? So as to prepare a fine meal for my father-in-law-to-be. And what will we make him that fine meal of? Of meat" (BC, 353).

While Pessele ponders the forthcoming meal, proving herself a fine match through her luscious chicken stew, Reb Zoraḥ flees. Chasing the cock, her dress tears, leaving her all but naked (BC, 354–355). As Pessele lingers, Frummet sends her sister Blume for her. Blume finds Pessele lying on the ground, crying out

and weeping, certain that the escape of the rooster will result in the cancellation of her wedding. In the original Hebrew, Pessele uses the very words that Jephthah's daughter says to her father upon realizing that he vowed to sacrifice her as a burnt offering to God: "*harpi ve-elkha el he-harim ha-ramin ve-evke 'al betulai*" (HK, 31), following Judges 11:37 (NKJV): "let me alone . . . that I may go and wander on the mountains and bewail my virginity."

The erotic significance of the situation is further emphasized when Gittle, Reb Yudel's other daughter, is sent for her two sisters, announcing that "the pot it boils and the fire's aflare" (BC, 356). This image is also repeated by Frummet, while waiting for the slaughtered rooster by the stove: "the pot did boil and fume like Hell, hurry and fetch me the cockerel" (BC, 356). The lament for the absent rooster includes, as Baruch Kurzweil points out, several allusions to the absent lover in Song of Songs, which of course intensify the sexual overtone of the situation.[31]

At this point, the novel takes a legendary turn; chased by Frummet and her daughters, the fleeing rooster fortunately finds shelter in a cave that happens to hold secret treasure. The treasure allows for a happy ending, in which no cocks are harmed, neither in the making of this *shiddukh* nor in the making of the novel.[32] Unlike the mythological parallelism, according to which the conjugal execution requires the execution of the cock, in Agnon's vegetarian interpretation, the interconnections between virility and vulnerability, as well as between man and rooster, are concluded with salvation and blessing for all, human and galline alike.

The Rooster Motif in *Sipur pashut*

Agnon's novel *Sipur pashut* (A Simple Story, 1935) takes place in the Galician shtetl of Szybusz on the threshold of the twentieth century. Its young protagonist, Hirshl Hurvitz, is in love with Blume Nacht, an orphaned relative working as a servant in his parents' house, but he is manipulated by his dominant mother Tsirl to marry Mina Zimlich, a rich farmer's daughter. Consequently, Hirshl spirals into melancholy and madness, catalyzed by the sound of a rooster crowing at night.[33]

The rooster motif in *Sipur pashut*, as pointed out by various scholars, is pivotal.[34] The first fowls to foreshadow Hirshl's downfall are actually not living roosters but two lifeless fowls: a porcelain goose and a dead Greek chicken. The main course in Hirshl and Mina's engagement feast is a Greek chicken served in china shaped like a goose. Chickens are traditionally related to Jewish weddings, as indicated in the Talmud: "when leading a bride and groom to their wedding, a rooster and a hen is taken out before them, as if to say Be fruitful and multiply like chickens" (Gittin 57a6). Unlike the Talmudic chickens, the ones introduced in Hirshl and Mina's engagement party are already lifeless, foretelling the young couple's upcoming lifeless marriage. Moreover, the

chickens served at the feast are of an exotic breed, whose kosher status is questionable, which also raises doubts regarding the kosher status of the upcoming marriage.[35]

Upon removing the lid, "the china bird stood flat and backless, its beak angrily open" (SS, 78). The china fowl seems to express the resentment that Hirshl does not dare utter. Unlike the china fowl, Hirshl's anger cannot be traced in his countenance; his resentment over his upcoming marriage at this engagement feast can only be conveyed through culinary resistance:

> Hirshl, who had hardly eaten, glanced about at the company, which looked exhausted from its labors. Though he did not enjoy being hungry, he was glad his stomach felt so light. Just a few days before, he had come across a pamphlet attacking the consumption of meat, fish, wine, and other extravagances, and now that he saw so many full people still cramming their stomachs with food he wondered whether his late uncle might not have been a misunderstood vegetarian who took to the woods to lead a healthier life; perhaps indeed the pamphlet was right about overeating and the craving for luxuries being the root of all evil. If my mother did not have her heart set on Ziemlich's money, thought Hirshl, I would not have to be sitting here right now with all this cooked dead flesh in front of me. He looked up to see if anything was left of these abominations, whose smell was making his mouth water, and caught sight of Mina. (SS, 80)

The resistance to what, in biblical terms, is described as becoming one flesh (basar) with Mina ("Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh," Genesis 2:24, NKJV) is embodied in Hirshl's resistance to eat, and to eat meat (*basar*) in particular, during his engagement party. The linkage between sex and meat in Jewish culture, and particularly in modernist Hebrew fiction, which is extensively outlined in the first chapter, also takes place in *Sipur pashut*. While Hirshl is not a *talush*, he is reminiscent of the vegetarian *talush*, whose abstention from meat is often analogized with his sexual abstention. Such interpretation correlates with Amos Oz's reading of *Sipur pashut*, according to which Hirshl is cousin to the tormented *telushim* of early twentieth-century Hebrew fiction, "loathing for his wife's flesh-and-blood femininity and his longing for Blume's asexual angelic nature."[36] However, shortly after his marriage, Hirshl seems to become reconciled to his conjugal life, and his rejection of meat simultaneously fades out: "Indeed, his stomach seemed to have expanded since his marriage, and his interest in vegetarianism and the simple life was a thing of the past" (SS, 115; translation modified).

Hirshl's resistance to the *basar*, in both the carnal and carnivorous senses, does not last long. As the above scene continues, Bertha, Mina's mother, watches

him take a second helping: "Hirshl ate in silence, his eyes on the angry beak of the china fowl. Once he glanced up and saw Mina. What on earth, he wondered, was she doing there?" (SS, 115; translation modified) Hirshl's silent surrender to the *basar*—both Mina's *basar*, in the carnal context, and her mother's *basar*, in the carnivorous context—is in opposition to the fowl's angry beak. The connection between both senses of *basar* is underscored, inasmuch as in his attempt to avoid gazing at the china fowl, he finds himself instead glancing at Mina.

Furthermore, the china fowl metonymically stands for the fowl in the bowl. In *The Civilizing Process* (1937), Norbert Elias famously traces the shift in the way meat is served in modern times, going from piling up whole animal corpses on the table to concealing any signs of life or violence by serving them cut and processed without their heads. Elias regards this change as part of a wider paradigm shift, characterizing the process of civilization, according to which all manifestations of overt cruelty are rejected by the upper and middle classes.[37] The faces of the animals served as meat were indeed removed, yet the serving bowl here is ironically shaped in the bird's image, serving as a reminder. Hirshl allegedly forgot his interest in vegetarianism, but the angry fowl stands also for his guilt thereof.

And, indeed, Hirshl soon ceases his silent surrender to the *basar*, becoming an angry fowl himself. It all started on a sleepless night, when hearing a cock crow: "The whole world is asleep and resting, except for me," thought Hirshl. "Tomorrow the shopboys will see me yawning in the store and think I spent the night making love" (SS, 154; translation modified). Here too, the fowl expresses resistance that Hirshl does not venture to convey. The crowing of the cock—*keriat ha-gever* in the original Hebrew—can also be translated into "the call of the man." The galline *keriat ha-gever* calls for the human *gever*, functioning as "a call for the wild," which prevents Hirshl from sleeping, both literally and metaphorically. Hirshl's insomnia would be wrongly associated by his colleagues with his virility, though it is in fact vulnerability related.

Keriat ha-gever is first mentioned in the novel when Hirshl returns from his last nocturnal pilgrimage to Blume's current home. That night, unlike previous nights, Blume actually goes out to see Hirshl standing at the open garden gate, yet upon recognizing him, she turns around while he rests his head on the latch of the gate and begins to cry (SS, 148). In the original Hebrew, Hirshl rests his head *'al kapot ha-man'ul* (SP, 152), on the handles of the lock.[38] This wording echoes the sexual imagery in Song of Songs, where the lover is standing at night by the door of his beloved, and she rises up to open for him, saying that "my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the lock" (Song of Songs 5:5, NKJV). This biblical allusion highlights Hirshl's erotic failure; instead of a woman placing her fingers, flowing with

myrrh, on the handles of the bar to open up for her lover, here the man is resting his head, flowing with tears, on the handles of the forever-locked bar.

After this anticlimactic moment, it is evident that Blume, who was repeatedly designated as Hirshl's twin (SS, 27; 50; 153), is no longer his twin flame; hence he is to find another twin. The biblical allusion also draws attention to the animalistic meaning of Hirshl's Yiddish name;[39] "Hirsh" is deer, and the letter L is a diminutive suffix. Interestingly, the lover in the Song of Songs is also compared with a young stag (Song of Songs 2:9). Hirshl's new twin is thus of animalistic nature—the rooster. On the way home from his nightly visit at Blume's, Hirshl hears the cock's crow and is determined to reveal to his wife his love for Blume, creating a detailed dialogue in his mind (SS, 149). This conversation is not realized, as Mina is asleep, but from this point onward, Hirshl is no longer passively accepting the societal dictation.

On another insomniac night, Hirshl almost falls asleep, yet just then the roosters "standing with their erect combs . . . while the warm smell from Mina's bed, which should have had a sporadic effect, only reminded him that she has taken all the sleep for herself and left not a wink for him." Looking at the woman sleeping beside him in a pink nightgown, her chest rising and falling, "Hirshl had every reason to be content with her. Yet when the feeling was missing, thinking did not help very much" (SS, 155; translation modified). The roosters' erect combs (*karbolotehem zekufot*, SP, 158) are an unequivocal reference to the roosters' virility. The Talmud teaches that "one who seeks to castrate a rooster should remove its comb and it will become castrated on its own" (Shabbath 110b). Scientific accounts actually similarly indicate that the comb—which are testosterone dependent and considered as secondary sexual traits—has the most influential impact on female mate choice, as redder and larger combs increase the possibility of mating.[40] Uninterested in his wife lying next to him in bed, Hirshl definitely does not "engage in sexual relations excessively and frequents his wife like a rooster," in the sages' words. There is an antithetic parallelism between the erect-comb roosters and "atrophied-comb" Hirshl. While the rooster's comb atrophies following castration, Hirshl is symbolically castrated. His dissatisfying marriage to Mina is proof of his defected masculinity.

The next time Hirshl ponders roosters, while vainly endeavoring to sleep, is in a violent context. He recalls a story he once had heard about two business partners who went on a journey, during the course of which one was killed. The remaining partner, being both pious and rich, was above suspicion. One day, however, a rooster hopped on his table and defecated there, and the wrathful man tore the bird apart. A police inspector who happened to be present seized him and cried, "It's you who murdered your partner!" The case was reopened, and the man was found guilty (SS, 156–157). This tale seems to demonstrate the ethical notion, according to which—in Kant's words—"he who is cruel to

animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men. We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals. We can already know the human heart, even in regards to animals."[41] The rooster serves in this tale as a human equivalent; by ruthlessly killing the rooster, the man also exposes his cruelty to humans. Hirshl, however, draws an alternative moral from this story: "When a man lost his temper, he was not in control of himself. Why he might suddenly leap to his feet and kill all the roosters in the world!" (SS, 156).[42] He thus "put away his pocketknife at night. In fact, when sometimes he forgot, he rose from bed especially to do it. There was no point in looking for trouble" (SS, 156–157).

Hirshl wishes to get rid of the cock, who is a constant and shameful reminder of his own passivity and timidity (which is stereotypically associated with flawed masculinity), but ironically, due to these very same traits, he does not dare do that. Hence, he attempts to plant this idea in Mina's mind, then vehemently denies it was his own idea:

> "Mr. Coocoo kept me up all night again. I do believe it's time we got rid of him. Don't you think we might take him to the throat-slitter? He just has to go *whisht* and there's no more cock-a doodle-doo." Hirshl ran a finger over his throat and laughed.
>
> "Do you want to slaughter the rooster?" Asked Mina.
>
> "That, Mina," said Hirshl, "is the most marvelous idea."
>
> "But it was your idea," Mina said.
>
> "My idea, Mina? Why, I never said a word about a rooster. How can you call it my idea when I never said any such thing?" (SS, 167)

As soon as the plan to slaughter the rooster is made, the rooster is no longer viewed as the foil to Hirshl's defective manhood; intended for execution, the rooster is now the epitome of vulnerability, with whom Hirshl closely identifies.

After denying his suggestion to slaughter the rooster, Hirshl asks Mina for the time, since his watch has stopped (SS, 168). The crowing rooster is known to serve as the natural alarm clock, hence symbolizing time. As the rooster's crow is soon to cease due to his upcoming slaughter, Hirshl's watch stops as well. Included among *Birkot ha-shaḥar* (the Jewish morning blessings) is "Blessed are you Hashem, our God, king of the Universe, who gives the rooster understanding (*binah*) to distinguish between day and night." The *binah* of the rooster is about to be taken due to his forthcoming death, and so does Hirshl's *binah*. Not only does his watch stop working as a result of the plot against the rooster, but his mind does as well. "It's half past seven," Mina gives the time

per his request; "half past seven" is the answer he later gives to all questions asked by the doctor examining his mental fitness (SS, 175).

If so far, by letting his mother control his love life, Hirshl does not act manly, as is socially expected in terms of both age and gender, at this point—by losing his *binah* and identifying with the rooster—he has stopped behaving "like a man" in terms of species. Hirshl is already agitated, following his conversation with Mina about killing the rooster when visiting the synagogue that morning. After hearing two men discussing a Talmudic text on slaughtered fowls, "he pinched a bit of wax from a candle and kneaded it with his fingers" (SS, 170). Pinching the candle wax in synagogue recalls "mad Nachman" in Mordecai Ze'ev Feuerberg's seminal novella *le-An* (Whither, 1899), who picked up the wax candle burning on the synagogue podium during the service on Yom Kippur and scandalously blew it, indicating his madness.[43] And, indeed, shortly after pinching the candle wax, Hirshl experiences a mental breakdown: "I'm glad I'm not screaming, because if I was I might crow like a rooster and seem crazy. Perhaps someone can tell me why it is that a man's a poor devil when he screams like a man and crazy when he crows like a rooster, but a rooster that crows isn't crazy at all, it's just talking rooster talk. I suppose that a rooster barking like a dog would be as crazy as me crowing like a rooster. It's a good thing I'm screaming like a man and not crowing like a cock" (SS, 171; translation modified).

As long as Hirshl is in the synagogue, he represses his *keriat ha-gever*, his call for the wild. Rushing to leave the synagogue, "feeling as light as feather" (SS, 171), he heads to the forest. The forest, Hirshl's destination, has a long tradition of signifying, both physically and symbolically, the threshold of human civilization, as Robert Harrison states in his exploration of the role of forests in Western thought and culture: "The forests were *foris*, 'outside.' In them lived the outcasts, the mad, the lovers, brigands, hermits, saints, lepers, the *maquis*, fugitives, misfits, the persecuted, the wild men. . . . Outside of the law of human society one was in the forest."[44]

Like in numerous literary woodlands, such as the Forest of Arden, where Shakespeare's pastoral comedy *As You Like It* is set, in the forest of Szybusz, too, social identities and dynamics are radically undermined.

In modern Jewish literature, the forest—the embodiment of natural life—is oppositional to the synagogue, which signifies the Jewish civilization. Serving as a foil to the synagogue, the forest in Mendele Mokher Sforim's fictionalized autobiography *ba-Yamim ha-hem* (Of Bygone Days, 1900) is therefore demonized, feminized, and eroticized: "The Evil Impulse drew him out to the green fields and to the forests, thick with foliage: 'come my friend,' it said to him. 'Come take a walk with me!'"[45] Feuerberg's mad Nachman is also drawn to the forest, which he experiences as contrasted with social life, and with religious life in particular. "Another language was spoken here," he states in regard to the forest, "different from that of the heder and the rabbi, the synagogue, and the marketplace, the

house and the street. A fine sun rode haughtily high through the unblemished heavens. The air was pleasant and pure. It was another world here."[46]

Likewise, the forest of Szybusz is also "another world," standing in stark opposition to the Jewish world. In fact, the very same sylvan setting of Szybusz has already served as a site of transgression in "bi-Demi yameha" (In the Prime of Her Life, 1923), Agnon's earlier narrative of forbidden love. There, young Tirtza gets secretly engaged with Akavia, her late mother's love, in the forest.[47] The continuity between the two stories is emphasized in *Sipur pashut*, as after leaving the Hurvitz residence following Hirshl's wedding plans, Blume works for Tirtza and Akavia and lives in their home.

In Lewis Carroll's 1871 *Through the Looking Glass*, a fawn enters the woods "where things have no name," and due to the fundamental suspension of all identities there, he wanders around fearlessly with Alice, a human child.[48] Since, at least to some extent, in all forests—due to their exterritoriality—"things have no name," Hirshl, whose name means "fawn" in Yiddish, also experiences a radical suspension of his identity in the woods. He is back to the state of nature in Rousseauian terms, "wandering in the forests, without industry, without speech, without dwelling, without war, without relationships, with no need for his fellow men, and correspondingly with no desire to do them harm, perhaps never even recognizing any of them individually."[49]

Hirshl's first act upon arrival in the forest is taking off his hat and one of his shoes, which he later loses. Leaving behind these items symbolizes Hirshl's wish to break free from the societal shackles and release his inhibitions, as Ziva Shamir points out,[50] but taking off the garments that protect the top of his head and the bottom of his fit, also makes him socially and physically vulnerable: "The sun beat down on him. [He] then removed his other shoe, placed it on the top of his head, and began to hop on one foot until a stone sent him sprawling" (SS, 172). Vulnerability, as Judith Butler states, can be a way of being exposed and agentic at the same time.[51] Hirshl's deliberate exposure to powers of nature here is a poignant act of resistance to the socially restrictive forces.

While the hat signifies his belonging to the Jewish society, the shoe—an item that literally allows us to find grounding in the world—is synecdochical for his human identity. Promptly removing these top and bottom garments, Hirshl wishes (knowingly or not) to be stripped of both his Jewish and human constraints. Venturing into the forest and disrobing may also be regarded as a counternarrative to the biblical story of the Garden of Eden, where after eating the fruit of knowledge, Adam and Eve clothe themselves. Conversely, Hirshl takes the opposite route; he takes off some of his garments upon entering the forest as if he has tasted the fruit of unknowledge and enters a prelapsarian state of being: "I'm not crazy, I am not," he suddenly cries out, striking his head. "You said I was crazy because I cock-a-doodle-do, but now you can see that I cock-a-doodle-don't think that I'm gaga that I'm ga ga ga ga ga a crazy man crows like

a rooster but I go ga ga ga ga" (SS, 172). Hirshl seems to struggle with his becoming-cock by croaking like a frog instead of crowing, as it seems that remaining human is no longer an option. He thus prefers the free frog over the domestic cock, who is soon to be slaughtered. Ironically, as Nitza Ben-Dov shows, his croaking sound—ga, ga—echoes the Hebrew words *meshug'a* (mad), as well as the reason for his madness: *ga'agu'a* (longing).[52]

Despite Hirshl's obstinate attempts to deny his becoming-cock and replace it with becoming-frog, his self-perception as a rooster is nonetheless still active, insofar as he was found at sundown with one shoe on his forehead—which resembles a cock's comb—and expression of great anguish in his eyes, crying, "Don't cut my throat! I'm not a rooster! I'm not!" (SS, 174) In the *History of Madness*, Foucault critically addresses the theme of the madman as a wild animal to be tamed, which owes its fullest development to the eighteenth century.[53] The association of madness with becoming-animal, and particularly with becoming-cock, is well established in modern Hebrew literature, harking back to Rabbi Nachman of Breslov's famous parable "The Turkey Prince," to which *Sipur pashut* has been recognized as alluding.[54]

"The Turkey Prince" tells of a prince, who becomes mad and thinks that he is a turkey; hence he sits under the table, pecking at bones. After several physicians fail to cure him, a sage undertakes to cure him. He sits under the table next to the prince and also begins picking crumbs and bones. When the prince asks him what he is doing, the sage replies that he is a turkey too, and they become friends. One day, the sage asks for a shirt, saying, "What makes you think that a turkey can't wear a shirt? You can wear a shirt and still be a turkey." This same line of reasoning continues with food and sitting at the table. The sage continues in this manner until the prince is completely cured.[55] Human identity, as perceived in Nachman of Breslov's parable, is strikingly parallel to Judith Butler's theorization of gender, according to which identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results.[56] In both scenarios, the "duck test" (or "the turkey test," in this case) is applied: If one acts like and passes as a (wo)man, then they practically are (wo)man.

Whereas the becoming-cock in Nachman's tale is not reasoned, in other literary cases, it is evidently triggered by adverse life events and/or mental stress. In Abramovitsh's *Di Kliatshe*—apart from the corporeal transformation of the Jewish prince into a ragged mare[57]—an additional animalization occurs, as Isrolik's insanity is depicted in terms of becoming-cock: "I went *cockadoodledoo*! In a voice that was not my own and, frightened to death by my own clamor, I leaped up as if asphyxiated, jumped out of bed, drafted for the door, and began running with all my might."[58] In *Me'ever le-ḥayim* (Beyond Life, 1904), S. Ben Tsiyon (the nom de plume of Simḥah Alter Gutmann) likewise describes his protagonist's mental breakdown in terms of becoming-cock. Involuntarily croaking while dining with his sisters, Haikel Gelfan wonders, "Why he croaks

like a chicken? Can't he say 'please'? What's wrong with him?!—Nerves?"[59] Curiously, becoming-cock as a signifier of mental unsoundness in modern Hebrew literature is not restricted solely to humans. Balak, the mad dog in Agnon's later novel *Temol Shilshom* starts jumping like a chicken, suggesting that even nonhuman protagonists may become cocklike in their madness.[60]

Hirshl's becoming-cock is undoubtedly triggered by adverse life events and mental stress. Nonetheless, alongside the psychological explanation for his becoming-cock, a mythical one is also provided. Long before Hirshl goes mad, we are told that a rabbi had once cursed the grandfather of Tsirl's grandfather, and "from that day on there was not a generation in Tsirl's family without its madman" (SS, 16). Another possible hypothesis for Hirshl's becoming-cock is provided by the people of Szybusz, who assume that Hirshl merely pretends to be a madman to avoid compulsory military service.

Agnon does not determine what the true reason for Hirshl's madness may be, but regardless of its cause, Hirshl's becoming-cock seems to exemplify Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-animal, as an ongoing and never-ending path of escape, stems from changing drives and desires, where one no longer occupies a realm of stable identity as determined by social forces.[61] In their book on Kafka and minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari describe Gregor Samsa's transformation in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* in terms of becoming-animal. Gregor becomes vermin, they claim, in order "to find an escape where his father didn't know to find one, in order to flee the director, the business, and the bureaucrats, to reach that region where the voice no longer does anything but hum."[62] Hirshl's madness, which involves becoming-cock, has likewise long been regarded as an asylum from the oppressive societal forces and his life with a woman he does not love—a witting, unwitting, or semiwitting protest thereof.[63]

Moreover, the mythical hypothesis of Hirshl's madness relates his becoming-cock to metamorphosis tales, wherein the protagonist's corporeal animalization is often a result of a curse. In mythical narratives of metamorphosis, including many of Ovid's tales, becoming-animal is in fact not necessarily a negative occurrence, and in some cases, it is even redemptive.[64] Hirshl's becoming-cock can be thus dialectically regarded as both catastrophic and redemptive. It is noteworthy that Szybusz, the fictional town where *Sipur pashut* takes place, is associated with Buczacz (Agnon's birthplace), but also with the Hebrew word *shibush*, which means disruption. Hirshl's becoming-cock can be thus viewed as a disruption, to be corrected in Dr. Langsam's sanitorium. Alternatively, Hirshl's becoming-cock can be also understood as a response to disruption, his subversive *tikkun* for the *shibush*.

Eventually, like Nachman's prince, Agnon's Hirshl has also stopped behaving like a cock, yet in both cases, we cannot tell whether the behavioral change is a result of an authentic therapeutic experience. By the end of the story, Hirshl

is back with Mina. What seems to become another insomniac night, like the one that triggered his becoming-cock breakdown, turns into sexual intimacy between the married couple: "Mina's blanket moved. Hirshl's lips met hers. 'It's you, Heinrich,' she said when she could breathe again. Hirshl clung to her with all his might and said nothing" (SS, 222–223). Ironically, being with his wife like a rooster, as the Talmud describes sexual activity, indicates Hirshl's healing, his becoming-man in all senses. He is finally Heinrich, which translates into "home ruler." Yet is he the home ruler, or does he merely surrender to societal rules?

57 Biale 1997, 172; Kurman 2005, 31–32; Shait 2014, 136.
58 Szobel 2014, 188.
59 Ben-Dov 1997, 39–41; Weiss 2002, 120, 141.
60 Agnon 2008, 50.
61 Laor 1998, 348–349, Roskies and Diamant 2012, 39–40.
62 Alter 1975, 197; Barzel 1972, 282–285; Grumberg 2019, 38; Lambert 2014, 120; Laor 2008, 132.
63 Barzel 1972, 291, Kurzweil 1970, 127; Shaked 1989, 119; Shenhar 2013, 575, Stern 2000, 97–106.
64 Schwartz 2010, 226; Shaked 1989, 119; Shenhar 2013, 576–577. For the myth of Joseph Della Reina in the work of Agnon and other modern writers, see Dagan 2012.
65 Agnon 1975, 207, hereafter abbreviated LP and cited parenthetically in the text.
66 Arbell 2013, 140–145.
67 Bill 1987, 79.
68 After realizing Joseph was not in bed, Helen stabs herself instead. This scene is also foreshadowed in the opening sequence when Helen pays for Joseph's knife. In the original Hebrew, the word used for payment is *damim*, which means money but also blood. See Agnon 1998d, 75.
69 Benvenuto 2004, xii.
70 Estraikh 2003, 165, Jaher 1983, 522. The *shiksa* typically does not intimidate the Jewish man, but the Jewish community, and particularly the Jewish mother, often regard her as a "sexual seductress, the femme fatale who effortlessly lures the bedazzled Jewish male away from his own best interests, decimates his family lines, and weakens the Jewish people." See Benvenuto 2004, 15.
71 Roth 1994, 146.
72 Laor 1998, 67; Oz 2000, 173; Weiss 2012, 70.
73 Lee 1993, 23.
74 Agnon 1998d, 77.
75 Agnon 1998d, 78, 79.
76 McGhee, Pintor, and Bell 2013, 706. Such a behavior is also typical reaction of sexual assault victims. See Bucher and Manasse 2010 and Moor et al. 2013.
77 Agnon 2016a, 419, hereafter abbreviated LD and cited parenthetically in the text.
78 In the original Hebrew, the predatory heroines in both "ha-Adonit veha-rokhel" and "Divre ha-yamim shel ha-adonit" are referred to as *adonit*, which literally means mistress (the female form of master).
79 Lipsker 2015, 227; Mintz 2017, 333.
80 Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 205.
81 Spivak 1988, 308.
82 Adorno 1974, 105.
83 Dijkstra 1986, 292.
84 Agnon 1999, 477.

Chapter 3 Of Cocks and Men: The *Gever* between Virility and Vulnerability

1 Butterworth 2017, 155. For further information on the exploitation of chickens in the food industries, see Butterworth et al. 2021, Davis 2019, Gisolfi 2017, and Rüttger 2017.
2 Barber et al. 2018, 110–111; Leach and Fried 1949, 239.

3 Abramovitsh 2003, 12.
4 Abramovitsh 2003, 12.
5 Stroumsa 2009, 63–64.
6 For further information on this ritual and the ethical controversy thereof, see Kemmerer 2017.
7 Mark 2015, 303–304.
8 Abramovitsh 2003, 54. The linkage between animal and Jewish victimization is underscored, insofar as the narrator mentions that the destruction of Kaptsansk took place in springtime, "a time when hunting birds and animals is forbidden, and when it's open season on Jews." See Abramovitsh 2003, 266.
9 Abramovitsh 2003, 204.
10 Abramovitsh 2003, 204
11 Mendele Mokher Sforim 1955, 62–63, modified translation. For the original Yiddish, see Mendele Mokher Sforim 1889, 35.
12 Mendele Mokher Sforim 1955, 77, modified translation. For the original Yiddish, see Mendele Mokher Sforim 1889, 43.
13 Agnon 1998b, 160–161. For an elaborate account of this tale, see Golan 2006, 240–246.
14 Agnon 1998e, 249. My translation.
15 Shklovsky 1965, 14–15. To demonstrate the effect of defamiliarization Shklovsky also uses a case of animal perspective: Tolstoy's short story "Kholstomer," which is narrated from a horse's viewpoint.
16 Agnon 1995b, 150. For a detailed survey of Agnon's depiction of chickens sacrificed for Kapparot, see Lee 1993, 142–149.
17 Russell 1997, 33–35.
18 Agnon 2001, 74. My translation.
19 Bialik 1948, 129–143.
20 Kook 1983, 23. My translation.
21 Such dialectics can be found in Gnessin's novella *Etsel*, among others. Sitting in a Kiev café around several women, protagonist Ephraim perceives himself as a "rakish rooster proudly surveying the barnyard audience of women" (Gnessin 2005, 216). Yet soon after—as mentioned in the previous chapter—he analogizes these women to predatory animals, not to hens, and the man/rooster position changes accordingly from a sexually dominant creature to a vulnerable prey animal.
22 Agnon 1999, 449, 455.
23 Agnon 1999, 485.
24 Aesop 1998, 206.
25 The ending of this tale is reminiscent of Kafka's "Little Fable," which, like Agnon's *Hakhnasat kalah*, was first published in 1931. Struggling to evade traps, the mouse in Kafka's tale is eventually eaten up by the cat. In Agnon's tale, "out came the mouse from his hole to eat up the prayer book, and thereupon the cat on the watch fell upon him and consumed him" (BC, 64).
26 For analysis of the reconstruction of the animal voice even in animal fables, which is typically considered utter anthropomorphic representation, see Harel 2009.
27 Agnon 2015, 3, hereafter abbreviated BC and cited parenthetically in the text. Reb Zoraḥ's Hebrew name connotes the dawning of day (*zeriḥah*) at which he crows to rouse Reb Yudel for his morning prayer. The English translation, attempting to capture this connotation, changes his name to Reb Reveille. Quotations from the

original Hebrew novel (Agnon 1998c) will be abbreviated as HK and cited parenthetically in the text.

28 Kurzweil 1970, 211. My translation.

29 Kurzweil and Agnon 1987, 19. My translation.

30 Lévi-Strauss 1970, 334–336.

31 Kurzweil 1970, 214–215.

32 The legendary closure recalls Agnon's "Ma'aseh ha-Ez" (The Tale of the Goat, 1925). Inspired by several Midrashim and Jewish folk tales, it tells of an old sick man, whose doctors advised him to drink goat's milk. He then gets a goat, who tends to disappear for a few days and returns with udders full of delicious milk that tasted like it came from the Garden of Eden. The man's son follows the goat into a cave, which leads him to the Land of Israel. He writes a note to his parents, asking them to follow the goat and join him in Zion. He places the note in the goat's ear, but when the goat returns to the shtetl, the old man does not find the note and thinks that his son has been torn apart by a wild animal. Heartbroken, he orders the slaughter of the goat, who is a painful reminder of his loss. Upon skinning the goat, the note is revealed, and the old man realizes what he has done. See Agnon 1998b, 303–305.

33 There is a fairly universal superstition that the ghosts and evil spirits who roam at night are obliged to vanish at cockcrow. See Leach and Fried 1949, 239. It is expressed, for example, by Horatio in *Hamlet:* "I have heard / The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn, / Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat / Awake the god of day, and, at his warning, / Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air, / The extravagant and erring spirit hies / To his confine." See Shakespeare 2003, 12.

34 Arbell 2019, 596–597; Hakak 2017; Kurzweil 1970, 216–222; Shaked 1973, 222–223.

35 Agnon 1985, 77, hereafter abbreviated SS. References to the original Hebrew novel (Agnon 1998a) will be abbreviated as SP. Further quotations from the original and translated novel are cited parenthetically in the text.

36 Oz 2000, 33, 53.

37 Elias 1994, 95–99.

38 "Sipur pashut" is published in *'Al kapot ha-man'ul*, a collection of several love stories.

39 Hirshl himself reflects on the correlation between names and their meaning, examining his friends' names, but not his own. See: SS, 56. For the significance of names in *Sipur pashut*, see Hadad 2013.

40 Barber et al. 2018, 34.

41 Kant 1997, 212.

42 Baruch Kurzweil argues that Hirshl actually uses this story in a similar context to the original one, since his murderous thoughts regarding the rooster seem to be aimed at Mina, who as his partner is the equivalent to the business partner in the story. Like the cock crowing outside, she—who "has taken all the sleep for herself"—keeps him from falling asleep. See: Kurzweil 1970, 219–220.

43 Feuerberg 1973, 126.

44 Harrison 1993, 61.

45 Mendele Mocher Sforim 1986, 321. In a letter to a friend, S. Y. Abramovitsh writes: "I completely agree with Rousseau, who urged man to throw his stupid civilization to the devil and turn back to forests." Quoted in Miron 1996, 107.

46 Feuerberg 1973, 139.

47 Agnon 1983, 206.
48 Carroll 2001, 59–60.
49 Rousseau 1983, 137.
50 Shamir 2001, 216. In addition, Haim Be'er interprets Hirshl's act of taking off his shoe as a version of *Ḥalitsah* ceremony, which is a shameful way to get out of levirate marriage, expressing his wish for a way to get out of his marriage with Mina.
51 Butler 2016, 24.
52 Ben-Dov 1997, 267.
53 Foucault 2006, 149.
54 Falk 2018, 327; Zierler 2019, 641n94. In addition, Doctor Langsam, who treats Hirshl's mental illness, has been viewed as the modern manifestation of the Hasidic rabbi. See Miron 1995, 182 and Shaked 1973, 199.
55 Nachman of Breslov 1983, 479–480.
56 Butler 1990, 25.
57 The transformation of the Jewish prince into a mare has been vastly read as an allegorical depiction of the Jewish people as despised beasts of burden. See Aberbach 2004, 224; Dauber 2005, 301; Pines 2018, 25; and Wisse 2003, 332–333.
58 Mendele Mokher Sforim 1955, 77, modified translation. For the original Yiddish, see Mendele Mokker Sforim 1889, 43.
59 Ben Tsiyon 1949, 85.
60 Agnon 2018, 299. Uri S. Cohen argues that marking Balak as *kelev meshug'a* (mad dog), instead *kelev shote*, which is the typical term for a rabid dog, provides a modern social context of Balak's madness. See Cohen 2013, 160.
61 Deleuze and Guattari 2000, 96–97.
62 Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 13.
63 Green 2001, 88; Hakak 2017, 23; Hochman 1970, 95; Shaked 1989, 134. Other scholars point to this reading alongside other interpretations. See Ben-Dov 1997, 214; Kurzweil 1970, 43; Sadan 1978, 34; Shaked 2000, 138; Zierler 2019, 627.
64 Harel 2020, 39, 41.