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Author(s): ALAN MINTZ

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ALAN MINTZ

Agnon in Jaffa: The Myth of the Artist as a Young Man

I WISH TO BEGIN THIS STUDY of certain of Agnon's early writings by placing in apposition two facts, one concerning the status of Agnon's career in midlife and the other concerning the nature of a group of texts Agnon wrote as a young man.

Agnon's "institutionalization," by which term I mean the process whereby a writer is raised to the status of a national resource, dates, according to Arnold Band, from the early 1930s. By that time, in his middle forties, Agnon had made a series of choices which were to determine his situation for the remainder of his life. He permanently returned to Palestine after a prolonged sojourn in Germany; now married with a family, he established his home in Jerusalem rather than in the Jaffa of his youth; he reconfirmed his commitment to Orthodox practice; and he gathered and revised his writings for a multi-volume edition of his collected works. In the broader life of the Yishuv, Agnon was accorded the status of a sage: the recipient of innumerable literary prizes, the subject of a half-dozen jubilee volumes, the preferred eulogizer of political and cultural leaders. Writing in the last years of Agnon's life, Band aptly describes Agnon's passage from "person to persona."

In the last three decades Agnon has been gradually fading as a real personality. . . . The real Agnon has merged with the mythical Agnon who is partly the product of popular imagination, and partly the persona who speaks in the various novels and tales published under the name Agnon.¹

Yet the reader of Agnon who comes across certain of the early works, stories written well before the consolidation of the classical persona, is left with a sense of the young writer that is jarringly at odds with the later aura of the artist-laureate. In 1907 at the age of nineteen Agnon left his native Galicia for Palestine and lived there for six years, mostly in Jaffa. During this time he wrote such stories as *Agunot* ("Chained Souls") and *Vehayah he'akov lemishor* ("And the crooked Shall Be Made Straight") that seem roughly continuous with the writer's mature style in their use of traditional Jewish symbols, folk motifs, and the conventions of the hasidic tale. Other stories surprise us: They are almost entirely secular; they have contemporary settings of Jaffa of the Second Aliya; and they are broadly autobiographical in spirit, concerned as they are with young Hebrew writers recently arrived in Palestine. What takes us most unawares in these tales is both their extravagantly expressive style (in contrast to the allusive classicism of the later works) and their thematic preoccupation with erotic love. *Be'era shel Miryam* ("Miriam's Well," 1909), for example, the earliest of these stories, is an unhappy conflation of several narratives, which together make a statement about the death of the beloved as a necessary condition for poetic creativity, a statement that teeters on the brink of the gothic and the necrophiliac. The short tale *Ahot* ("Sister," 1910) contrasts the easy flirtations of a young Lothario, a clerk by day and a poet by night, with the Laingian madness of his sister, to whom he is deeply attracted. *Tishrei* ("Tishrei," 1911) tells the story of how an unconscious desire on the part of the young artist for a pretty though uneducated and materialistic young woman ends by crippling his will and undermining his art. The last story of this group *Leilot* ("Nights," 1913) is the most abandoned in its sensuality; it concerns the efforts of the artist-hero to resist the solicitations of a young girl in order to remain available for a series of ecstatic, dream-like encounters with the shadowy Salsibylla.

I have juxtaposed Agnon's institutionalization with a cycle of his early stories in order to support a speculation as to Agnon's dilemma as a writer in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Now a family man in his forties, resettled in Jerusalem, reconciled with Orthodoxy, already a public figure, Agnon was faced with the decision of what to do with these youthful tales, already available to the world in published form, as he set about fashioning the edition of collected works that would do so much to promote him to the status of a national sage.

There were strong reasons for suppressing the Jaffa tales as there were for conserving them. Against the stories were the romantic effusiveness of their style, with which Agnon no longer identified nor did he employ, and the bathos of the characters' engulfment in extreme and *outré* states of feeling. What must have been most disturbing was

the inevitability of an autobiographical reading of the texts. For like his heroes, Agnon too was a son of a comfortable family, neither German nor Russian, who divided his time between his writing and various clerkships and who lived in the same neighborhoods in Jaffa. Regarding his religious behavior at this time, we have no certain knowledge; it is generally accepted that during these years Agnon, like his characters, abandoned the Orthodox practice and dress to which he had adhered throughout his upbringing in Bucacz and participated equally in the teeming life of the Second Aliya. Moreover, these are the only writings in Agnon's *oeuvre* in which the autobiographical connections seem explicit and comprehensive; including them in the canon of his collected works would have been tantamount to authorizing an official account of his life and times as a young man.

Yet a great writer cannot easily leave the question of his origins entirely unanswered. One of the obligations of a writer who has been raised to the status of a national institution is to supply the nation with an account of his artistic beginnings: how a callow young man with the hopes and delusions of all young men becomes a great writer. Agnon of course could have suppressed the Jaffa tales altogether, but then he would have had either to forego offering a myth of beginnings, or to invent a new one. To take either course would have meant repudiating the stories and the experiences they represent absolutely. In addition to a writer's natural reluctance to silence his creations, there was something else. It is fair to imagine that no matter how imperfectly realized or how discontinuous with his later identity, there must have been some truth of experience embedded in these stories to which Agnon felt a sense of fidelity. To give them up would have been to give up a part of who he had been.

The way out of this dilemma involved, in the end, a combination of suppression, conservation, and revision. Here we can move from speculation to fact. Of the four stories, only *Be'era shel Miryam*, with its maudlin morbidity, was put aside altogether, though parts of it were later used for other purposes.² The remaining three stories—*Ahot*, *Tishrei* (now renamed *Giv'at ha'hol* "The Sand Dune") and *Leilot*—were substantially revised.³ Although the characters and the sequence of actions remain basically unaltered, there are other changes of great significance. In style, there is a move from a decorative, atmospheric, expressionist use of language to a spare economy of modifiers and detail that is rigorously subordinated to the thematic intentions of the works. In theme, the figure of the artist and his development are brought more squarely into the foreground and the mode of presentation of this thematic shifts from romantic sentimentality to irony and ridicule. The most interesting change has to do with an adjustment in the connections among the three stories. In their original form the

stories are related by a common milieu and a common character-type, but beyond this the links are shadowy and indeterminate. In the revisions of the 1930s the connections become considerably clarified by the addition of new cross references, such that the stories, with *Be'era shel Miryam* eliminated, form stations in a clear narrative sequence moving from *Ahot* to *Giv'at haḥol* to *Leilot*. What emerges is a triptych whose panels are episodes, admittedly episodic, in one essential movement of spirit.

There are two ways to approach the Jaffa tales. By comparing the original versions with the revised ones much can be discovered about the evolution of the structures of the individual stories and in general about Agnon's way of working and about the changes in his imagination over time. This path has been taken productively by Arnold Band and Gershon Shaked, especially in reference to *Giv'at haḥol*.⁴ The second way, the one I propose to follow, would put aside the early versions and concentrate on producing a reading of the revised texts of the three stories as a sequential whole. To read in this way would be to grasp the larger revisionary myth of beginnings that Agnon, the ascendant writer pausing in mid-career, sought to affix to his fictional enterprise. We shall be able thereby to come closer to Agnon's self-understanding in this period and to his struggles with such issues as the representation of sensuality, the relationship between experience and art, and the balance between the symbolic self-sufficiency of the text and its dependence upon allegorical solutions.

The difficulty in producing a comprehensive reading of this chain of stories lies in the difficulty of its last link, *Leilot*. While the relative accessibility of *Ahot* and *Giv'at haḥol* has fostered a respectable body of interpretation, *Leilot* has received almost no attention, and this either because the hermetic quality of narrative seemed not to repay analysis or because its shimmering fabulistic texture seemed to separate *Leilot* from the more seriously "novelistic" tale *Giv'at haḥol*, from which it may have been regarded as an atmospheric spin-off. For Agnon too the tale was troublesome. The story first appeared in *Bentayim* (ed. Y. Feldman, Jaffa) in 1913 and was revised in the form we read it now by 1931 and published in *Aḥdut ha'avodah*, but unlike *Ahot* and *Giv'at haḥol*, *Leilot* was not included in the collected works of that year, and it was not until 1941 that it was brought into the Agnon canon altogether, and not until 1953 that it appeared in its present grouping, along with the two other Jaffa tales in the volume in which it presently appears, *'Al kapot haman'ul*.

The difficulty of *Leilot*, I believe, results from its being read out of the sequence in which it is embedded. If returned to its place, it can not only be made to make sense but to disclose the full meaning of the segmented structure of which it is a consummation. I propose now to

review this myth of beginnings as it takes shape in *Ahot* and *Giv'at ha'hol* and to suggest the rather surprising turn of events that takes place in *Leilot*.

Naaman, the twenty-year-old hero of *Ahot*, works by day as a clerk in a Jaffa office. By night he writes poetry. He is attracted to women and they are attracted to him. Since he has left his parents' home in Europe and breathed the freer atmosphere of Jaffa, he has taken his pleasures in many dalliances. He is helped by his position as a clerk. While as a poet he may find his work distasteful, for the girls of Jaffa such respectable employment raises him above the run of destitute scribblers and makes him sought after, and this even though they realize that he does not intend to marry.

The story opens on a note of loathing. Confronted at the end of a long day with a stack of letters still to be copied, Naaman writhes in his confinement. His work requires him to be the quintessence of secondariness, a mere copyist of the work of others, and he despises it. The alienation of his position is further exposed by the recollection of recent sensual encounters; memories of flesh, desire, agitation, and release embitter his servitude. He forces his mind back to his work, finishes the letters, and leaves the office. Once outside he discovers that it is not as late as he had thought, and the question of how best to spend the evening presents itself. The choice is between settling down to a serious session of poetry writing and seeking pleasure in the arms of the girls of Jaffa. Naaman does not even consider the first, and we are told that not infrequently does it happen that the muses are pushed aside for other kinds of feminine charms. As he strides into the street he weighs the question of which woman might most sweeten his evening. Would it be Adah, whose mysterious form drew him to her even before they met, or Tsilah, whose full, bare arms will wildly embrace him snakelike. What a fearsome dilemma, Naaman thinks to himself jocularly, surely what I am experiencing must be the throes of love!

Naaman's manner, the names of his lovers, and the nature of their charms constitute what amounts to an anatomy of a pose. Adah and Tsilah are the two wives of Lemach to whom he addresses his taunt song in Genesis 14. Like Lemach, Naaman is cast as a *miles gloriosus*, the mock-epic figure of the braggart soldier. Though in reality he is only a clerk-poetaster who prowls Jaffa for his amatory conquests, he comports himself like the sun in Psalm 19, which strides "the land in glory like a warrior running his course." The reptilian imagery for Tsilah's lovemaking suggests the physicality of Naaman's sensual play. He experiences women not at a level of deep erotic encounter but amidst

an episodic tangle of limbs. Naaman is a master of dalliance; he savors and plays and withdraws uncommitted, having never been deeply engaged to begin with.

What happens to Naaman in the second part of *Ahot* is the undermining of his epic swagger, the undoing of his pose. This comes about in his encounter with his sister. His sister is his double. Both have been cut off from their family and planted in the teeming life of Jaffa; but whereas Naaman has flourished in his freedom, she has withdrawn into herself and lapsed into melancholic depression that presages a drift toward early death. In the dark shuttered room she sits immobilized, dressed in an overcoat in the middle of the summer, surrounded by piles of unread books. Unlike Naaman, who runs from embrace to embrace to escape an awareness of temporality, his sister is denied the least slip of insulation against this awareness; in every gesture of experience she is condemned to feel the full rush of time toward death. As Naaman struggles with himself in the silence exuded by her presence, he glimpses the truth of this knowledge for the first time and he weeps, shedding his tears not out of pity for his sister but in mourning for what he himself has lost. The story, however, does not end on a note of loss. The shining of love at the end is a breakthrough of sorts, if one hastily produced; this love is not the play of dalliance but a deeper form of eros made possible by the consciousness of time, and it carries with it a possibility of eventual usefulness to the higher purposes of art.

When in *Giv'at haḥol* we next meet the artist-hero he is named Hemdat and he has left off pursuing women and withdrawn from the gay life of Jaffa. There is no doubt that he is a version of the hero of *Ahot*, for Hemdat too has acquired a reputation as a great womanizer and is even compared to Rembrandt in his restless appetites (pp. 453–454). But now he has given up the chase and no longer seeks out stolen kisses (pp. 452, 455). He keeps to his house, which he has set up neatly to provide for all his needs, and he writes. This house of Hemdat's, which is the central presence of the story, is a version of the romantic topos of the artist's ivory tower. In *Ahot*, when we saw the artist in pursuit of sensual experience, we saw him in relation to the antithetical topos: the sacred fount of life, from which the artist must drink in order to create. But just as there was something *manqué* and faintly ridiculous in Naaman's Byronic pose, so in *Giv'at haḥol* Hemdat's creative isolation is seriously flawed. Hemdat's retreat is so tidy, comfortable, and well-provisioned that he seems much less like the august Yeats in Thoor Ballylee than simply a *ba'al habayit*, the traditional figure of the householder, the proprietor of his own physical and mental homestead.

Hemdat's domesticity is manifested in his careful husbandry of his life. The young men of Jaffa live squalidly in boarding houses, nap all day, and fritter away time between meals in endless chatter. Not Hemdat. He has been well bred, a *ben tovim*. He has his own room; in the room stands a writing table and on the table sheets of fresh paper. In every sense he provides for himself. Within reach is a well-stocked larder and a spirit burner for coffee. He prepares his own food; he measures his time into useful units and he writes poems. He may indeed be a householder, but in his household he is the only member and it is all he can do to provide for his own needs. A closed system of self-sufficiency guarantees his composure; when he is surprised by the presence of another person his response is retention, a panicked holding on to what is his. He used to joke garrously with the girls of Jaffa but now Hemdat saves his words for his poems, and when he finds himself in company he becomes nearly speechless, managing only fragments of utterance.

When in one episode in *Giv'at haḥol* Hemdat is confronted with demands on his sexual resources by one of the freer women of Jaffa, his reaction is likewise retention (p. 462). Into this domestic preserve there intervenes a disruptive presence: Yael Hayyut (Chajes, in the European pronunciation), a Jaffa girl whom Hemdat tutors and then unwittingly falls in love with. Yael is the figure of the *yored*, the person of good family who has become impoverished. At first inspection, Yael seems to be simply a spoiled girl down on her luck, an object of pity. She has ended up in Palestine by accident and her assimilated background has left her Jewishly unlettered, so she has turned to Hemdat, who has volunteered to give her Hebrew lessons. Vacant and unintellectual, an indifferent student, she is nonetheless bemused to be in the company of a poet. She comes and goes unpredictably until she finally settles down with a medical student from a well-off family.

Yet the unremarkableness of Yael's behavior is belied in fact by a set of gestures and details involving hair, teeth, dismemberment, and hunger that associate her with a dire quality of animality. Yael, as her name announces (*ya'el*=ibex, *hayyut*=vividness, animalness), embodies physicality in both its aspects of aggression and vulnerability. Her sexual assertiveness is constant and she is rumored to have had affairs with many men. Hemdat completely misreads his responses to her and fails to understand the threat she presents. He believes he is doling out pity, when in reality he is secretly being undone by the workings of desire for her and by her predatory tamperings. In the end, his self-possession is overthrown and he is left with neither love nor art.

The disintegration of the artist's will is realized largely in a single metaphor. That metaphor, as is the case in so much of Agnon's fiction, is the figure of the house, which stands here as a spatial representation

of the self's power to assert control over the organization of its being and as a version of the ivory tower to which the hero-artist has retreated after his abandonment to experience in *Ahot*. Alertness to the working out of this metaphor helps to make sense of the method of the narrative. Read as a conventional narrative, *Giv'at haḥol* may justly seem episodic and unconstructed; read as a story of a progressive dispossession and dislodgement from a symbolic space (house=will), the narrative comes into focus as a carefully wrought artifice. *Giv'at haḥol* becomes the story of how Hemdat begins as a master of his house, the true *ba'al habayit*, and ends sitting forlornly on a sand dune.

When Yael first comes to Hemdat for lessons he is fully the proprietor of his quarters, the patron who is opening his door to the less fortunate. He dispenses food as well as knowledge to the needy girl. The difference between master and mendicant is not maintained for long. There are times when Yael succeeds in dragging him out of the house for walks in the Jaffa night and even once to her house. As Yael's visits become less regular, Hemdat begins to let his own house-keeping slip and attends less to his own hygiene; he washes only when Yael is to come. Within his room her absence decenters his movements; no longer planted squarely at his writing table, Hemdat takes up a position by the window in a stance of perpetual anticipation of her coming. During Yael's prolonged absence from Jaffa for medical treatment, Hemdat reaches the nadir of affectlessness and depression. He abandons his room for aimless walks about the town. The Jaffa he encounters is not the city of nocturnal enchantment and shifting sands, but the city of dusty, contentious marketplaces, a jungle of commercial and sexual desires. On the eve of Yael's return Hemdat cleans and rearranges his room and prepares a festive meal for her, but when Yael comes by she refuses to come inside and draws Hemdat out of his house into the night.

Who gets to feed whom and under what conditions in *Giv'at haḥol* is an important indicator of power. At first Yael won't eat at Hemdat's house despite his urgings; later on in her visits she demands meals and dictates the menus. After returning from Jerusalem she will not allow herself to be fed in Hemdat's house but sees to it that he takes her to eat in a restaurant. The time Hemdat visits Yael's room he imagines he is given tea made from a bucket spit into by his competitor Shammai. Hemdat, for his part, begins by eating at his own table, priding himself in his discipline and self-sufficiency; by the end of the tale he is eating in rooming houses like the aimless emigrés he once made fun of. If Hemdat is left beholden to others, Yael manages, as we've seen, to secure a good life for herself by marrying a medical student. This reversal, in fact, is an element in a larger chiasmic structure that takes in the whole of *Giv'at haḥol*, and this in a manner

reminiscent of such tales of Naḥman of Bratslav as "The Burgher and the Pauper," about which Hemdat is supposed to be an authority. *Giv'at haḥol* could be renamed "The Tale of the *Ba'al habayit* and the *Yored*."

Hemdat is of course not the only poet in Jaffa. Yael's house overflows with poets and litterateurs, who represent various currents in the young national literature of the Yishuv, most of them in some way ridiculous. There is the poet Dorban, whose nativist verse achieves its authenticity by imitating the sound of camel hooves, and the diarist Gorishkin, who is quick to give epic memorialization to the founding of every new hospital and school. Among the serious writers, Yael's gossip thoughts probably give a version of Hemdat's critical standing. Above all towers Bialik, the great poet-sage, long a mythic figure in the national imagination. Though among Hemdat's contemporaries Hemdat himself seems to be taken very seriously, he is eclipsed by the poet Pizmoni. The greatness and innovation of Pizmoni's verse lie in its qualities of power and force, and we are meant to understand by implication that there is something in Hemdat's *balebatishkayt* that keeps him from just such effects. The determination of whether or not Hemdat's secondariness results from inherent limitation is clearly never made. What is certain is that as we see him during the time covered by the action of *Giv'at haḥol* Hemdat lacks the one essential condition of poetic identity: poetic production. As Hemdat's obsession with Yael grows, he ceases to write entirely. To save himself from insanity during Yael's absence from Jaffa Hemdat tries to rouse himself from his passivity, but does so only enough to begin a small job of translation, and this with a pen nib that has long since grown rusty.

If his imaginative production comes to a halt, his imaginary activity does not. Hemdat allows his mind to indulge in a series of non-scriptive fantasies, ones of the sort I have elsewhere described as reveries.⁵ There are five of these in *Giv'at haḥol* and they mirror both the disintegration of artistic will and the progress of Hemdat's fears and longings. Hemdat's fear of loss and his yearning for domesticity are reflected in an early reverie (p. 353) set in the forest surrounding his home village in Eastern Europe. It is a time of midsummer festivity, each tree imagined as a pole for a bridal canopy. Suddenly the joy passes and winter comes; the only voices left are those of furtive lovers seeking a melancholy tryst in the forest. Self-pity and an early premonition of loss are the essential themes of the second reverie (p. 368), in which Hemdat's mind involuntarily jumps from the thoughts of Yael in her hospital bed (where she lies at the moment) to a picture of Yael at childbirth. Hemdat sees her married well and imagines how one day he will return battered and tired from his wanderings to be

greeted by a swarm of her children and by a husband who will not bother to be jealous of such a poor creature.

The remaining reveries are impelled by a growing desperation over Hemdat's poetic barrenness, and they are composed of wish-fulfilling visions of the writing life restored and of Yael's erotic threat contained. Hemdat sees himself in one reverie seated at his writing table, hard at work on his great composition, soothed by fragrances from the garden and by his familiar coffee-making rituals (p. 372). He dreams of the one chaste kiss Yael will bestow on him that will restore his composure and remove any desire for more furtive embraces; when he will become an old man people will no longer doubt the purity of his relationship with Yael (p. 375).

In the depths of his loneliness at the end of the story Hemdat slips back into the kind of bad faith in which Naaman was mired in *Aḥot*. Afflicted with nostalgia, he now longs to abandon his artistic isolation and return to his old ways, "when he would kiss the hands of mothers in public and the cheeks of their daughters in private" (p. 387). The final reverie (pp. 387–388) indicates the full extent to which real literary production has been replaced by the fantasy of production. Blessed days will arrive, according to the vision, in which Hemdat will no longer be found wandering in the streets and quais of Jaffa; faithfully stationed at his desk, he will celebrate the new season with the sacrificial offering of his poetry (*korban shirato*). The garden wafts pleasing fragrances, the sun sets, and Yael enters. "He receives her benignly and refrains from reminding her of her former wrongdoing. They sit as one on the green divan. Yes, she is his beloved."

Much about the themes and situations of *Leilot* reminds us of Agnon's other Jaffa tales. The action of the story is clearly set sometime shortly after that of *Giv'at haḥol*, so that for Hemdat, the central figure also of *Leilot*, Yael is a memory, but one recent enough still to be painful; *Leilot* continues the preoccupation with artistic sterility and its precarious relationship to sensual experience; the house has an important metaphoric function here too, as does an entire series of symbolic details: flowers, fish, hair, thorns. But despite these pronounced continuities, a simple reading of *Leilot* tells us that this is a story told in a very different mode. *Leilot* seems suspended in a timeless world, lacking any of the density of reference to the large life and problems of the Yishuv characteristic of *Giv'at haḥol*. There seems to be no "plot" to speak of, rather a sequence of romantic gestures that appear often to lack motivation and connection. The mysteriousness of Jaffa by night casts its own spell; the air is heavy with suppressed movements and desires; this is an animistic world in which the tiniest objects stir with

sympathetic life. Snatches of folktales and parables hang in the air. The mysterious Salsibylla appears, vanishes, and reappears.

Leilot is shrouded in hermetic integuments. Because of the story's difficulty, my interpretation will proceed in two parts. (The reader is referred to the translation of *Leilot* by Hillel Halkin that accompanies this essay.) First through paraphrase and commentary, I try simply to follow what happens in the narrative and to understand the connections between one action and the next. "Simply" here is of course a naive term because any attempt to set out the "*peshat*" of a text is inevitably tintured in retrospect by the thinking one has done about its larger thematic concerns. I do my best, however, to keep the two separate and to go on afterwards to a more conceptual and generalized level of interpretation that deals with questions of theme and poetics.

Leilot opens by contrasting the serenity of Jaffa after a storm with Hemdat's increasing agitation of spirit. The waves and the shore have been reconciled in repose but Hemdat cannot gain control of himself. His restless anxiety and unstinting tears are the result of Salsibylla's prolonged and unpredictable absence. When she suddenly appears before him, Hemdat is entirely overwhelmed. His heart pounds, he loses the power of speech and can bring himself to gaze only at her feet.

Salsibylla's godlike aura is unmistakable. Her name echoes of the Sibylline Oracle. Her sudden, unpredictable materializations resemble the epiphanies of a capricious goddess; the *pleroma* of her presence cannot be easily gazed upon by mortals. Her limbs seem chthonian, grown from the earth. But it is no more than the aura we see. Here, as elsewhere in *Leilot*, the text discloses virtually nothing about Salsibylla herself; we learn only of Hemdat's experience of her presence. That experience is so powerfully elemental that Hemdat loses control of himself, just as her absence earlier in the chapter causes a similar breakdown of self-possession. Hemdat's condition at the outset of the story may be summed up as follows: The effects of his relationship with the mysterious Salsibylla are such that Hemdat's life is strung between two moments, one more miserable than the other, between a state of inconsolable desolation and agitation in her absence and a state of hyperemotionality and engulfment in her presence. This is an alternation, moreover, that is ungovernable; Salsibylla appears when she appears.

Hemdat's behavior the next day in Chapter Two reveals the depths of his desperation. He sits alone in his house with his head in his hands, listening for Salsibylla's footsteps and calling out her name. Once again his thoughts race uncontrollably, and in his anguish he is astonished to discover that his hair has turned white. That night (Chapter Three), he leaves the house and comes upon the grove of the

seven sycamores; sitting among the sands, he calls out Salsibylla's name in vain. Her absence leads not to despair but to redoubled hope. Hemdat cuts Salsibylla's name on a tree and is cheered when a glow-worm comes along and illuminates his inscription.

When Hemdat returns later that night (Chapter Four), he finds his young neighbor Ruhama on his doorstep. Who is Ruhama? She is very young, an adolescent nuisance from next door who pesters her bachelor neighbor. Throughout the tale she is compared to a flower, trembling and glistening in the dew. Ruhama is in fact anything but frail and innocent. All her actions seem systematically directed toward destroying Hemdat's faithfulness to Salsibylla and replacing her in his affections. Ruhama is the figure of the neighbor, in the literal sense of the one who is nighest unto hand, the physical temptation of that which is immediately present, in contrast to a more difficult loyalty to spiritual value at a distance. She is a version of Yael in *Giv'at ha'hol*, younger and more insistent, a figure in whom the qualities of sensuality, aggression and willfulness have been honed to the point of demonic resourcefulness.

If Hemdat's task is to wait in good faith for Salsibylla, Ruhama's is to invade and disrupt the space of his waiting. She interrogates Hemdat on each point of his ritual of waiting for Salsibylla: the late-night vigil, the preparations of the house, the placement of the flowers by the door. Though Hemdat keeps faith with Salsibylla and reveals nothing, Ruhama seizes on each evasion and afflicts him with its transparency. Ruhama's insistent sensuality is not, however, without its allure, and with his will weakened by the incessant questioning, he takes her up in his arms and they kiss. The kiss turns out to be a kind of vampirage in which Hemdat's warmth is drained from him and Ruhama's damp trembling is transferred to his own soul.

Chapter Five begins with a vignette concerning a blind beggar who knocks at Hemdat's door. The housekeeper turns him away and, recognizing her voice, the beggar curses his sightless eyes, which have brought him back to a source of futility. The episode makes explicit the theme of repetition and difference which has been latent from the beginning and which will emerge later as the story's principal teaching. For Hemdat at this point the beggar's frustration is an emblem of his own past. Before his eyes were opened to the truth, he too repeated the same ungratifying act over and over again, pursuing woman after woman, and eventually finding his nemesis in Yael Hayyut.

Hemdat has made progress in his struggle to gain release from past obsessions. Salsibylla is a relational object of an entirely different order of value; his mastery of himself in the ordeal of waiting for her coming is an index of additional change. Rather than calling out Salsi-

bylla's name in a frenzy of desperation, Hemdat sits quietly composing his thoughts in preparation for meeting her; instead of wandering through Jaffa in search of Salsibylla, he sits at home in determined anticipation. Hemdat hears a woman's footsteps approaching, but they turn out to belong to Ruhama, who has once again insinuated herself into the vacuum of Salsibylla's absence. Whether by accident or no, Ruhama breaks the lamp that Hemdat has set out as a beacon for Salsibylla. Ruhama goes on to taunt him about his nocturnal wanderings, implying that his purpose has been to station himself under *her* window. Hemdat manages to evade her probings without compromising Salsibylla and this time without yielding to her vulnerable sensuality. Instead of succumbing, he takes pity on her, as he does on all living things, even the cricket and the snake; and for these creatures he sings a song, the first of several in *Leilot*. The song is a summary of Hemdat's impasse and a hint at its eventual solution. The eye of the snake, from as far back as the description of Tsilah in *Ahot*, is an emblem of sensual experience, while the eagles represent the asceticism of artistic detachment. Hemdat has betrayed the high road, and as a punishment his poetry has been silenced. It requires an act of grace in the form of an intervention by the Angel of Song, a creature superior to the eagles and the snakes and tied more directly to the source of art itself, to enable Hemdat to resume his song.

As Hemdat walks Ruhama home, she tells him of her violin lessons and her music teacher. Ruhama's playing betrays no sensitivity to the gentler arts. It is literally music to soothe the savage beast within herself and is an instrument to torment others. The attitude of Ruhama toward this symbol of art that is revealed at this point helps us later to decode the crucial episode on the beach when she burns her violin.

Ruhama next tries to manipulate Hemdat into stroking her hair. To keep her at bay he sings another song, a song about a mermaid who shaves her hair and places it at the feet of the king, lest another caress the hair the king has stroked. In parabolic terms the song describes the relationship of divestment, faithfulness, and obeisance Hemdat is moving toward with Salsibylla. In that spirit, after he deposits Ruhama at her house, Hemdat rushes home to wait for Salsibylla. The stars accompany him on his way as if to signal cosmic approval of this enterprise of waiting. Waiting is no longer an ordeal; indeed, Hemdat has arrived at a state of acceptance in which the act of waiting is sufficient in itself.

At this juncture Hemdat recalls some of the many women he has kissed. Hemdat used to go from one to another, he claims, because he was always seeking one love, and that is the love he now has with Salsibylla. The description of the three women is distinguished in its

physicality and it is just this quality that is the subject of Hemdat's revisionary intention when they reappear in Chapter Seven.

At the opening of the sixth chapter, it is sunset and Hemdat is sitting in his house as the last rays of light irradiate his room. Hemdat fashions a complex trope out of this scene in which the house is likened to a violin. In its local context, the figure offers a lesson on the proper higher purposes of music in contrast to Ruhama's mean exploitation of it. As it refers back to *Giv'at haḥol*, the allegorization of the house in *Leilot* serves to redeem the *idea* of the house, which in the earlier tale had represented the hero's proprietary stance of retention and insulation. The very act of fashioning the trope is significant, too. As the story progresses we see Hemdat more frequently taking given reality and transforming it through imagination. Gradually he is coming to do what a poet does: he is learning once again to sing.

In contrast to Hemdat's capacity for figurative discourse, Ruhama displays a penchant for demonic literalization. When she next arrives at Hemdat's house her head is entirely shaven, for she has undertaken to fulfill in literal terms Hemdat's parable about the mermaid and the king. She has done so, however, with a difference: instead of laying her shorn tresses at Hemdat's feet, as in the parable, she has secreted them away for herself. Ruhama's pathetic appearance makes Hemdat laugh, but he soon puts aside his laughter in order to comfort her by fashioning a new simile; he compares her shorn head to an orange and her face to the blossoms of the almond. Here again we see Hemdat not only in the act of making metaphors but also using his transformative imaginative powers to redeem the ridiculous and the grotesque by elevating them from their fallen literalness. As was the case with the simile of the house, again Hemdat is at the same time acting to redeem a theme that reaches back to *Giv'at haḥol*, in which hair and its removal were signs of power and impairment.

Ruhama's confidence is shaken by the failure of her ruse to purchase Hemdat's attentions. It is clear from the efficiency of his evasions that he has gained confidence since Ruhama's earlier interrogations. He is firmly in control now and practices a kind of gnostic procedure whereby he protects the mysteries of his devotions by proffering exoteric diversions.

With Ruhama safely home, Hemdat returns to the sycamore grove. His visit here is meant to be contrasted with his visit in Chapter Three, when he sought out the grove from desperation and called out Salsibylla's name continually as a way of coercing her appearance. Now, Hemdat has come here merely to savor the pleasure of awaiting Salsibylla and to worship, as it were, at the grove made sacred to her by the inscription of her name. Hemdat compares himself to the Cyclops who kissed the many women to whom he was

attracted by his fleshy eyes; until a special spiritual eye grew in his forehead; thereafter he gazed on the princess and thereafter saw nothing else.

There in the sacred grove Salsibylla appears to him a second time. Again we are asked to read *Leilol* analogically, comparing this second coming with the first in Chapter One. The most striking difference here is the presence of human speech. Hemdat is not struck dumb and Salsibylla is not supernally silent. The apparatus of theophany seems to have undergone a kind of humanization; though Salsibylla is no more physically imaginable than before, she is accessible to us in her voice, whose tender responses and simple kindness reveal a sort of girlishness. What actually gets said in their exchange is less than clear. This encounter and the one that concludes the story in Chapter Eight constitute two difficult points of interpretation in a text which, it should be evident by now, is not difficult once the basic ciphers have been read. What actually takes place in this scene? When Salsibylla first appears she places her hand on Hemdat's eyes and Hemdat begs her to push his eyes back in their sockets until she can see into his heart. The request to be blinded is connected to the story of the Cyclops. Hemdat wishes to be rid of his wayward earthly eyes, which once lusted after many women, and thereby have created a clear passageway through which Salsibylla may gaze into his soul and see his true faithfulness.

Salsibylla laughs at his foolishness and apologizes for having awakened him from what appears to have been his slumber. Hemdat responds by relating a parable of a king, whose bearing on Hemdat's situation is plain enough. Like the king, Hemdat has no doubt that his beloved will come, and he is prepared to wait fully alert indefinitely. The risk, however, is permanent impairment; in delaying she endangers the fullness of his eventual participation. Fully secure now, even serene in his faithfulness, Hemdat seems to be issuing a gentle, coded plea to Salsibylla not to tarry. But despite the obviousness of the parable to the reader, Salsibylla herself does not seem to get the message and she is chided by Hemdat on her obtuseness. Is Salsibylla indeed obtuse? Is she unaware of Hemdat's recent ordeal? Is she uncaring or is she simply aloof altogether? Does she know that Hemdat's ordeal is about to be rewarded? Salsibylla's subsequent responses yield little clarification. Hemdat asks permission to touch her hair and that she give him leave to do whatever he desires. But Hemdat restrains himself from physical contact with Salsibylla. His heart glows with an inner light, transparent through his body, and he fears lest Salsibylla touch him and he be consumed. Hemdat is overwhelmed by his own illumination and he is not yet ready for a consummation, which is to come in the last chapter.

Sunk in thought the next day at home (Chapter Seven), Hemdat undertakes a thoroughgoing revision of his attitude to his own past in light of his transfiguring relationship to Salsibylla. In Chapter Five Hemdat had evoked the charms of his former loves in order to renounce them. Now, that is not enough. He wishes to deny their existence by arguing that these women and their embraces are not figures of real experience but only tropes: emblems in language for the *lessons* of experience. Each of the women, in this new reading, is a parable (*mashal*). The gait of the dead Dansa is now an emblem (*mofet*) of the days of youth that are gone and buried. In the case of Wilma, he stresses not the kisses themselves but the simile in which he compared them (*dimiti*) to bees which in their frantic pursuit of pleasure forget to sting. And Thea, whose eyes were likened to the eyes of a serpent in the sun, now becomes a symbol (*semel*) of the allure of the kind of love that conceals dangers within it.

Afterwards Hemdat elaborates yet another ritual in his attendance on Salsibylla. To rest his mind he goes down to the beach; there he gathers shells to place in his yard so that he may hear Salsibylla's footsteps when she comes to him. For the final time, Ruhama comes by (she is bearing her violin) to interrupt him in his act of fealty and to compel him to reveal the meaning of his behavior. But so far have the roles between them been reversed that Hemdat's subtle and fluent answers overmaster her entirely and she falls silent and begins helping him collect shells. In past encounters Ruhama's verbal aggressiveness had confused and choked him; now with Ruhama subdued, Hemdat goes on with unruffled volubility about fishermen and mermaids and the violin-like beauty of his house at sunset.

Ruhama makes a last attempt to gain control, and the stratagem she employs—trying to get Hemdat to eat food she has prepared for him, in a sense to forcefeed him—recalls vividly the power-laden connotations of food and provision in *Giv'at ha'hol*. Ruhama buys some live fish to grill for Hemdat and he playfully mocks her with a singsong reference to the *'Akedah*: "Here are the fish but where are the skewers and fire on which to grill them? (*Hineh hadagim ve'ayeh hashipud veba'esh letsalot otam?*)" In silent determination Ruhama removes the pin fastening her kerchief and impales one of the fish. While she is occupied with her preparations, Hemdat takes the fish not yet skewered, whispers to them, "Salsibylla! Salsibylla!" (the name being uttered in a much different spirit than in the early chapters) and casts them back into the sea with a command to reveal his secret to the mermaids. In the meantime, Ruhama has failed to find wood for the fire; her determination turns demonic as she seizes her violin, the symbol of art, and burns it for fuel. As from a martyred Torah scroll, music rises from

the burning instrument, as if to testify to the indestructibility of what Ruhama seeks to sacrifice.

If the body of *Leilot* is mysterious, its brief last chapter is more mysterious still. Throughout *Leilot* time and space are noted with great precision. The action is spread over five nights and four days, and in between, whether it is in the sycamore grove or on the porch of Hemdat's house, whether at sunset or dawn, we are always supplied with spatial and temporal coordinates. Yet here at the end, the text opens onto an indefinite and infinite expanse of time set not in the sands of Jaffa but in the mythic realm of heaven and earth. It is as if the text has been counting, "One, two, three . . . infinity."

It is a time of cosmic consummation. In the heavens above the angels dance and partake of the wine vinted at Creation for the delectation of the righteous in the Age-to-Come. Hemdat has been beckoned to join the celestial company but he resists ascension, choosing to remain with Salsibylla and celebrate on the earth below. (There is something of a reversal here, for at the outset it was Salsibylla who seemed godlike.) For Hemdat and Salsibylla it is a consummation also. They exchange endearments and Hemdat suggests a cup of wine to celebrate. In response, Salsibylla places her mouth on his, and as Hemdat picks her up "as a man would raise a goblet," they toast each other with endless kisses."

The story concludes with a colophon that justifies the closure of discourse. "Shall I continue to tell of the good Salsibylla," the narrator wonders, "or shall I sit by myself in silent recollection of those good days?"

What is the meaning of this consummation and for what is it a reward? Why, after all of Hemdat's struggles to disengage himself from the sensual, is the final moment so intensely sensual? The answers to these questions require us to move from commentary and paraphrase to more generalized and thematic levels of interpretation. I shall discuss the meaning of *Leilot* in three different critical contexts: first, at the highest level of abstraction, the story as a parable about the nature of authentic existence; second, in the context of the two other Jaffa tales, as the solution to Agnon's dilemmas in the 1930s; third, in the context of poetics, as an attempt to establish a balance between the symbolic self-sufficiency of the text—its textuality—and its dependence on allegorical solutions.

Hemdat's ordeal in *Leilot*, is actually two, one concerned with the nature of experience and the other with the nature of language. The first is reflected in the changes in Hemdat's responses to Salsibylla throughout the story. There is something powerfully redemptive

about her presence; whether Salsibylla is seen as a goddess bestowing illumination, or a muse vouchsafing inspiration, or the Female Other providing oceanic ecstasy, or a messiah bringing salvation—the possibilities can be multiplied—the essential pattern is clear: by the experience of her absolute presence Hemdat is flooded with a sense of being. Salsibylla's presence was first revealed to him, we assume, some time before the action of the story begins. That experience convinced Hemdat of the shallowness and futility of the kind of sensuality represented by Yael and it reoriented his desire toward a true object. This reorientation is so complete, that Hemdat feels desperate and lost in the long periods when access to her presence is denied. The problem is that no matter how redemptive her presence, its coming can be neither summoned nor predicted. Hemdat's ordeal becomes a trial of his capacity to live in absence: to be faithful, to trust in her coming, and to be sustained in the meantime by the power deriving from past experiences of presence. The test has its temptations in the person of Ruhama, who taunts Hemdat with his past foolishness and present abandonment and urges him to yield to the solicitations of the immediate. At first Hemdat does not make out well. He feels deserted; he weeps uncontrollably, he shouts Salsibylla's name in desperation, he falters with Ruhama. Gradually he masters himself, accepts the task of waiting, and discovers the joy and even sufficiency of waiting; that hopeful anticipation that purges absence of its dread. In the end Hemdat has made a successful passage from narcissistic expectation to authentic hope—and it is for this that he is rewarded.

Hemdat undergoes a deep change also in his relationship to language. He enters this story as a failed artist, whose art has been flawed both by cheap indulgence and cheap isolation. His creative capacities have shrivelled; he no longer writes. But as the quality of his experience deepens by virtue of his faithfulness to Salsibylla, Hemdat begins to reappropriate a capability for literary language. We see this in several ways. As Hemdat gains control over his emotions, he first gets back the power of ordinary speech and then goes on to produce lyric songs and to fashion parables. The parables, moreover, are not ornamental in purpose and they are far from the wish-fulfilling fantasies of *Giv'at haḥol*, for they serve to elevate and to redeem what is ridiculous and grotesque, especially in reference to Ruhama's self-debasements. It is in the redemption of the sensuality of his own past experience that the healing ministry of poetic discourse is most significant. It is through the transformative power of language that the flesh can be made spirit, turned into a symbol, a *mashal*—even if to begin with it is nothing more than the conventional linguistic symbol itself, the signifier. And once we know we are not talking about “real” kisses, then all is permitted; let the kisses flow—there is no danger.

And so they do between Hemdat and Salsibylla, but only outside of the empirical frame of the story in the mythic place beyond time and space in the last chapter—in the Land of Pure Language.

In the context of the Jaffa cycle as a whole *Leilot* represents a movement of arrival in several ways. The image of the artist, which had been sentimentalized in the original versions of the stories and then ironized in the revisions of *Aḥot* and *Giv'at haḥol*, is given new and serious value in *Leilot*. The two moments of abandonment to experience (the sacred font) and retentive isolation (the ivory tower)—both modes of inauthenticity that check artistic production—are transcended by a figure whose ordeal of denial and trust is rewarded with the gift of true imaginative potency. Yet it is not with the power of art alone that Hemdat is rewarded; he is granted Salsibylla and her delights as well. Sensuality, which loomed as a mean diversion in *Aḥot* and as a predatory threat in *Giv'at haḥol*, is rehabilitated in *Leilot* and raised to a kind of spirituality. In negotiating a disposition of the autobiographical fiction of his youth, Agnon taught the following lesson: once sensuality is converted from experience into language it loses its threat and can be reenchanting. In having Hemdat explain his past loves as really symbols, emblems, and allegories, Agnon is playfully giving the reader a set of instructions about how to interpret the earlier stories and the original versions, how, in short, to defuse them and still retain them. Agnon could allow himself to retain these compromised images of himself as a young man because in *Leilot* he documented how he had escaped them and been reborn.⁶

The transformation in the myth of the artist in *Leilot* is inseparable from changes in the means by which the literary text produces its meaning. *Aḥot* and *Giv'at haḥol* can be placed generally within the field of novelistic discourse: the characters, their motives, actions, and thoughts, and the spaces they move through seem to be representative of the world as we see it, or at least recognizable in terms of what we know from reading other works of fiction. In *Leilot*, by contrast, the mimetic basis is considerably attenuated. The identity of the characters, the meaning of their actions, their location in time and space are not on the surface of things intelligible to us. They are strangenesses that have to be naturalized through interpretation, as I've done in commentary and paraphrase, even before they yield to questions of theme and structure. The difficulty of *Leilot*, which is the quality we remove from the text when we naturalize it, defines its specialness. The production of meaning in *Leilot* depends less on a representational correspondence between the ordinary world of experience and the elements of the text proper than it depends on the play of those elements among themselves *within* the text. *Leilot* abounds with gestural details, interweaving motifs, animate objects, atmospheric soundings which,

through constant reference and cross-reference, give the text a density that makes it in itself undisplaceable. I call this quality of self-reference and self-generation textuality. Textuality is created by a process of repetition and difference that can be illustrated by an example. In Chapter One Hemdat mentions Ruhama's pigeon, which had come to Hemdat's home and had been fed from his hand. This is a detail that seems by itself to have no particular function in the text (though an over-allegorizer like Hillel Barzel will want to explicate it and every other detail as representing *something*; here he identifies the pigeon with the Shechinah!⁷); yet soon we find it related to other instances of feeding. Hemdat waters the flowers set aside for Salsibylla with his tears, while at the same time withholding water from a flower sent by Ruhama. Ruhama attempts to forcefeed Hemdat on the beach, but Hemdat repulses her and sets the fish free. Finally, in the ecstasis of the last chapter Hemdat and Salsibylla toast each other with bodies drunk like wine.

Nourishing and withholding nourishment are only one set along a larger axis of paradigmatic actions in *Leilot*. Cloaking and uncovering are another, as are piercing and incising, speaking and withholding speech, waiting and meditating, singing songs and producing figurative discourse. Along an intersecting axis of objects we find the domain of living things (flowers, thorns, glowworms, fish, pigeons, snails), liquids (tears, the sea, wine), parts of the body. In addition, a spatial axis registers the sites of the house, the sands and the grove, the beach, and the heavens. This catalogue could be elaborated and refined. It serves only to suggest the wealth of motifs with which *Leilot* abounds. Lodged at particular moments in the unfolding of the narrative, these gestural details, of course, often play a role in the thematic movements of the text. But not always, and out of sequence, grouped in chains of association that exist statically and simultaneously, they create a sense of world rather than story; they spin a web of textuality that enables the text to seize and occupy its own space.

Yet for all its enchantment, the aura of textuality does not by itself justify our interest in *Leilot*. We would not long pause over this tale of a love-sick poet *manqué*, his adolescent neighbor, and his elusive lover if it did not hint of larger matters. And indeed we have been able to discuss the meaning of *Leilot* in terms of conceptual categories that stand outside the text, such as the nature of experience and language and the issues in Agnon's career as a writer; and the way is open for even more extrinsic and speculative measures that would identify the characters themselves as embodiments of varieties of love or other abstractions. This naturalization of the text by recourse to a set of ideas beyond the text I call allegory, using the term in a broad sense based on its etymology, *allos*, "other" and *agoreuein*, "to speak." There is

little need to elaborate on the allegorical understanding of Agnon's work because allegory is the stock-in-trade of Agnon critics and the programmed response of Agnon readers from their earliest encounters with the texts.

Of course we cannot do without allegory. But allegory finds its rightful place only in its symbiotic relationship with textuality. The relationship is symbiotic because neither term by itself can produce the combination of aesthetic density and conceptual depth that transfigures the best of Agnon's work. The meaning of *Leilot* at the level of poetics, then, is that it is in this text that Agnon achieved the crystal-line balance between textuality and allegory that became the basic paradigm in the later major fictions.

I have stressed the question of textuality because I believe that the accession to textuality was Agnon's most difficult achievement. It was not hard for him to draw away from mimetic representation when the content of experience became compromising, nor was it anything but the most natural move for a writer so steeped in classical modes of interpretation to employ allegory. But to raise anchor and allow the text to float free, powered by its own internal production, to attempt to recreate the polysemousness the rabbis accorded to the biblical text—all this must have required an ordeal of faith, attended by a fear of loss and a trial of waiting, an ordeal not so different in kind from that of Hemdat, as he separated himself from the life of dalliance and waited in trepidation and then in trusting hope for the coming of Salsibylla.

NOTES

¹ Arnold J. Band, *Nostalgia and Nightmare. A Study in the Fiction of S. Y. Agnon* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968), p. 28.

² *Be'era shel Miryam* was published in *Hapo'el hatsa'ir* (Jerusalem), II:14–18 (21 May, 3 June, 17 June, 1 July, 1909). Parts of the story were used in revised form in the beginning of the novel *Temol shilshom* and the story *Hemdat*.

³ *Ahot* first appeared in *Hapo'el hatsa'ir* (Jaffa), 1–2 (11 Nov., 1910). It was subsequently published in the collection *'Al kapot haman'ul*, 1922, in Vol. IV of the collected stories of 1931, and in Vol. III of the collected stories of 1953. *Tishrei* first appeared in *Hapo'el hatsa'ir* (Jaffa) V:1–5 (22 Oct., 7 Nov., 1 Dec., 6 Dec., 1911). Under the title of *Giv'at ha'hol*, it was published separately in Berlin in 1920. Revised again, it was published in Vol. IV of the collected stories of 1931 and in Vol. III in 1953.

⁴ Band, pp. 61–63, 68–73; Gershon Shaked, *'Al arba'ah sippurim* [On four stories], in the *Iyyunim* Series (Jerusalem, 1963) and Shaked, *Omanut hasippur shel 'Agnon* [The art of the story in Agnon] (Tel Aviv, 1973), pp. 157–176, 321, n. 3. For the beginnings of an approach that stresses yet another path, comparisons with contemporary German literature, see Warren Bargard's note in this issue.

⁵ See my "Mordecai Zev Feierberg and the Reveries of Redemption," *Association for Jewish Studies Review*, II (1977), 171-200.

⁶ Although my purpose here has not been to compare early and late versions, I should be remiss if I did not make some mention of the major divergences between the two, which, I believe, lend strong support to the interpretations I have offered. The Agnon Archive at the National and Hebrew University Library in Jerusalem possesses a copy of the printed 1913 version with marginal notes in the author's hand (Reference Number 1:434) and a copy of the page proofs for the 1931 version, also with corrections in the author's hand (Reference Number 1:56). In the early version, the following are evident: the story is dedicated below the title to Dansa, Wilma, and Thea; the story is considerably longer and divided into thirteen chapters; there is no clear division of time into days; there are several more parables; Salsibylla appears more frequently and she and Hemdat talk and eat together; Ruhama's presence is not demonic; Hemdat does not attempt to conceal from Ruhama the reason for his nocturnal vigils, there is no pronounced movement toward inner tranquility in Hemdat and little sense of trial or ordeal; the last chapter lacks any cosmic reference. These particular differences should be thought of together with the broader thematic and stylistic changes mentioned earlier.

⁷ *Sippurei ahavah shel Shemu'el Yosef 'Agnon* [The love stories of Shemuel Yosef Agnon] (Ramat Gan, 1978), pp. 85-88.

Department of Middle East Languages and Cultures
Columbia University