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Kaiser of Austria – King of Jerusalem: Genealogy of Identity in Agnon's "The Bridal Canopy"

In this paper I will examine S.Y. Agnon's first novel, The Bridal Canopy, from a postcolonial perspective and based on the discourse of Jewish identity in central Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. Both aspects are related to the concept of the Jewish identity being a singular phenomenon, with its own attributes, that is separate from other identities. It is a phenomenon that manifests its own, individual voice, a voice constantly at the borderline of the familiar and the unfamiliar. Both poetically and ideologically, this voice stands apart from the realistic novel of the West, and thus, also from values recognized as being part of the Age of Enlightenment. This voice has been created by what I will call the "genealogical novel".

The theoretical part of my paper will present some of the anti-assimilative ideologies developed in central Europe by great Jewish thinkers, in particular Martin Buber. The latter was a friend of Agnon and both men shared a great interest in the revival of Hassidic literature and the culture of Central-Eastern Jewish communities. I will then show how these anti-assimilative views were related and similar to views expressed many years later by some of the great postcolonial theoreticians.

The Bridal Canopy, described by one critic as "a bizarre novel"[1], has a remarkable and odd textual structure, with dozens of folk tales from the life of Hassidic Jews in Galicia being combined with a profound understanding of Western high literature. I will focus on the anecdote in which Lasunka, the beloved cat of the community leader, is discovered to be missing exactly when the Jewish town is in the middle of preparations for a bishop's visit. This anecdote, like many others in the novel, expresses an idyllic life (drawn from the "idyllic" literature genre), where Jews and Christians have solid descriptive and correlative identities in what is repeatedly described by the narrator as "the lands of his Highness the Kaiser".

A

Agnon's first novel was written after he had already established himself as one of the greatest storytellers in Modern Hebrew by publishing a significant number of short stories. These showed his immense capacity for creating refined Western-style prose that portrays an emerging protagonist

[1] Dan Miron, Under the Motley Canopy. A Study of S.Y. Agnon Narrative Art in The Bridal Canopy, Tel Aviv 1996, 40 [OBY]. The book is written in Hebrew.

through well-developed events. However, it seems rather peculiar that when finally creating a novel, he chose to frame the story loosely around a poor Hasidic figure and his constant wandering in the country of Galicia looking for a dowry for his three daughters, a passive figure who always accepts the events of the world (even unfortunate ones) as being pre-ordained and the blessed intentions of God. He is finally saved by a striking deus ex machina miracle. This almost shocking path is the focus of Dan Miron's long and elaborate book about the novel[2], which, because it is relatively up-to-date and very comprehensive, will here be my main reference. Agnon's protagonist, Rebi Yudel, trusts God's system in a way that makes him a solid and stable figure, with a resilient identity, despite the fact that changing identities is one of the novel's main themes, presented within a comedy of errors.[3]

Miron's conclusion, based on Meschulam Tochner's understanding from 1968, that Agnon intentionally wished to "relate the world of tradition and nothing more, totally ignoring the human-universal values that might be embodied in it"[OBY][4], I argue is correct. However, Miron's explanations of this idea, although very clever, have some hierarchical tendencies that perhaps show that he didn't fully understood Agnon's counter-argument about our common perceptions of enlightenment. Be that as it may, this is the reason for Miron's justified objection to the well-known comparison between the novel and Cervante's Don Quixote. In that masterpiece, according to Miron, like in any other profound work of Western literature, there is a permanent gap between what is desired and reality, and this is what makes great protagonists fight and act. In our case this is not so.[5] In his discussion, Miron clearly shows his preference for the author's serious, reflective and seemingly 'high' short stories, over the description of the 'mundane' and everyday 'low' manner of his novel.[6] In part, he dismisses its folk-like or even comic and buffoonish manner, as can be seen for example in Gershon Shaked's interpretation (of 1978).[7]

But still, Miron's contribution is powerful, mainly because he understands Agnon's attributes as a rejection of his own (first) engagement with

2 Miron, Motley Canopy, 49.

3 Ibid., 61f.

4 Ibid., 73.

5 Ibid., 68–72.

6 Ibid., 70–77.

7 In Miron's argument, one feels as if the discussion is really about the worthiness of a well-established work of art, or even about his preference of things that are serious. This might be defined as somewhat Wagnerian, contradicted here by a novel, which has rather all the virtues of a Rossini opera buffa. See, for example, Miron's discussion about the Liebestod, ibid., 65.

the genre of the historic and realistic novel. Here are some of his significant observations:

> "The book creates a hidden analogy between the Torah [...] and the novel, and argues: the two try to do what can't be done. As the Torah cannot maintain a norm without been forced to subvert it by another [...] so the story [...]."[OBY][8]

> "Agnon mixed reality and legend in The Bridal Canopy [...] because he wanted to expose the falseness of fictitious reality, especially in one that has a pretention of realism."[9]

> "Agnon fought a crucial battle when against any premises of coherence, continuity and consecutiveness portrayed in the story and its reality. He took every narrative deconstructive measure [...] for that war [...]."[10]

I would like to add to this notion of Miron, and argue that he should be seen in the light of Nietzsche's and Foucault's concept of genealogy. Agnon's text establishes, both in its textuality (in relation to the novel) and, as I will show later, in its ideology of the subject – which is located somewhere in between hundreds of villages, in a land that is both familiar and distant – exactly what Foucault describes as the power over the body:

> "[...] a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege that one might possess [...] a perpetual battle rather than a contract regulating a transaction or the conquest of a territory. In short this power is exercised rather than possessed [...]."[11]

Such a system cannot, of course, pretend to have the organizing features of the classical novel. In addition, I would like to refer to David E. Wellbery's description of the emergence of the Romantic song from Idyllic prose. In juxtaposing Solomon Gessner's pastoral scenes and Goethe's lyrics, Wellbery points to a "discursive event" (a concept also put forward by Foucault): "The lyric emerges across a series of borrowings and displacements, distortions and transformations, a process that in Nietzsche's genealogical theory carries the name 'reinterpretation'."[12] In the case of Agnon, it is a discursive event in which the (particular, genealogical) novel emerges from such a series based on both the Torah and the Talmud.

8 Miron, Motley Canopy, 206.

9 Ibid., 207.

10 Ibid., 263.

11 Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison, New York 1995, 26.

12 David E. Wellbery, The Specular Moment. Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism, Stanford 1996.

This Torah quest and inauguration, in what one might call a Torah-exile chronotope, after the concept of Bakhtin that refers to both the production of text and the production of ideology, can clearly be seen in the novel's chapter nine ("The Terror by Night"). On the way to the "Holy Congregation" of Zlotchov (the title the narrator gives to all major towns with a prominent Jewish community), a snowstorm approaches. This scene is followed by a huge number of citations from the Holy Scriptures and the Talmud. The same is found in a long dialog between the two horses, with one of them bringing an excerpt from the book of Ben-Sirach.[13] The experience of exile is very perceptible in its most basic form: being far from home, unable to find rest, wandering between hundreds of villages (whose names are taken from the records of the Austrian army; see Miron[14]). In this darkness they finally hear the voice of the Torah being studied. This is Yudel's response:

> "His blessed mercies is making us lose our way [...] and at the last letting us hear His voice; as a man calling to his little sons and saying [...] by your lives you'll come out of your toil to comfort and will enter a chamber brightly lit, where you'll sit before the stove and be fed on cake and study Torah."[15]

After this, Yudel and his driver Nuta (his Sancho Panza, so to speak) have a quarrel in which the latter blames Yudel for hearing the studying of the Torah as wishful thinking on his behalf, because the village they are approaching is clearly a Christian one. Nevertheless, in the end he meets the master of the house, who is in the middle of studying the Torah. Both the Torah and the interaction between the two scholars are described erotically. Yudel addresses him as "My dear man (in the Hebrew original: "My beloved") [...] how do you come here?"[16], and the latter responds: "The Torah is very sweet; I converted myself a trifle, and now I sit and study the Torah in peace and plenty."[17] This strongly expresses something familiar and desirable but also disturbing and alienating, something "unheimlich", if Freud's great concept might be used here: The Torah can be studied at will, in complete ease as a private initiative, by someone who is both within and without ("a trifle converted").

After what is seemingly a moment of calm, the terror returns. Agnon chooses to depict Yudel and Nuta escaping the house in a style that is broadly folkloric. Thinking the master of the house a demon sent by His

[13] Shmuel Yosef Agnon, The Bridal Canopy, New York 1967, 111.
[14] Miron, Motley Canopy, 157.
[15] Agnon, Canopy, 112.
[16] Ibid., 113.
[17] Ibid.

greatness, Yudel uses special verses and names in his hour of need.[18] Here is an example of Agnon's mastery in using interjections.[19] Unfortunately the translator, for obvious reasons, has chosen to delete these. The narrator explains to us that the terrified Yudel cries "AYY!!!!" rather than the more common "OY VA-A-VOI", because of his profound and innate righteousness, pronouncing the initials Abraham, (Y) Isaac and (Y) Jacob (the latter two begins in Hebrew with Y). We will see another example of this later. At this point, the dark picture in the snowstorm is intensified with a gothic scene in which the two face a cemetery. However, this time it is a Jewish cemetery, the one that belongs to the Holy Congregation of Zlotchov. The description is grotesque and macabre: it features howling wolves, the cemetery splitting into two, a figure garbed in shrouds and an open grave. At this point the story changes its goal from a quest for the Torah to the second major quest contained in the novel: a quest for the Land of Israel.

The chapter ends quietly with Yudel, the old man from the cemetery, Rabbi Michele the saint, and the holy Rabbi of Apta longing for Israel. Let's take a careful look at this depiction:

> "If they turn back the wolves would eat them, while if they stood still they would find their graves here...Within another moment or so they saw a light coming from the cemetery-hut and heard a voice wailing, How long shall there be weeping in Zion [...] Reb Yudel argued, What can be the haven of desire for any man of Israel other than the Land of Israel? Although I have not attained it my heart and soul are already there." And the next paragraph begins: "When the eastern sky lightened up they saw Zlotchov before them [...] then the Rabbi took him by the hand and conversed with him... For if, God forbid, he blemish the Land of Israel he straightaway drops back into Exile even though he be in the Land of Israel [...] (he) then bent his own head before Reb Yudel, saying, Yudel my beloved, bless me too."[20]

The Land of Israel is depicted as a moral and spiritual goal. And so is exile. A genealogy of influences and changes of attributes and identity is being crystallized here in a tone that is serious and ridiculous, superficial (like in well-known Hassidic gestures of love) and genuine. Here, Agnon's own special language (a mixture of Talmudic Hebrew, Biblical Hebrew,

[18] It is worth mentioning that in the Hebrew original, the storyteller, after declaring that he won't state these names and verses, then actually does. See: Shmuel Yosef Agnon, The Bridal Canopy, Tel Aviv 1998, 82.
[19] Agnon, Bridal Canopy, 82.
[20] Ibid., 116–118.

Yiddish and Aramaic) creates a genealogical world, where the language (with its many allusions) is a reflection of ideology (Heimat and the Unheimlich), which in itself is a reflection of topography (the villages, exile and Israel). The east is both the Torah and Israel, Israel is both the Land and Zlotchov. The light (or voices) is both ours – familiar – and also the light of the one on the bridge (in the figure of the master of the house).

The next chapter opens again by manifesting the territory and its time, as well as the strong bond-through-displacement between exile and Israel, Jerusalem and, this time, the town of Brod. This is all presented in a clearly idyllic manner, with the people a vital part of their surroundings, a theme I will discuss later.

> "Now Reb Yudel had already been on the road more than four weeks; for he had started out at the beginning of Kislev, being the end of November, when potatoes were being dug up from the soil, as we found occurred the day he stayed with Paltiel, who did not delay him long because the time had come to dig up the potatoes [...]. But because Reb Yudel delayed on the way the country expanded before him after the fashion of the Land of Israel in days to come. Indeed, that entire district is known as the Lesser Land of Israel, for it is a pleasant land, with pleasant people dwelling therein, and Brod is seated in the midst thereof, after the fashion of Jerusalem [...]. The tale is told that when the Kaiser of Austria came to Brod and saw his Jewish subjects standing to receive his presence he said, This is my Jerusalem; for the kings of Austria seal their edicts with the title Kings of Jerusalem [...]."[21]

B

As we have seen, there is a clear relationship between the text and topography of the world (one might also say geography). Thus, we might add, the Torah, as the proto-text of the novel, reflects a genealogy of an identity at the borderline, in exile. If one reflects on the Bible in general, it seems that from the beginning to the end, the Land of Israel is a desire, a desire which is meant to be only that. It is thus interesting to examine Agnon's identification with the Torah rather than with the realistic novel. It is something very natural, but from a nationalistic perspective this is also quite challenging, as at the time of the novel's writing, Zionism was in its most enlightened and enthusiastic era. I will first shortly summarize Agnon's presumable relationship towards the Jewish identity and the world in which it is a part. Then I will attempt to elaborate this with some theories concerning

[21] Agnon, Bridal Canopy, 119.

nationality and the novel. Lastly, I will examine another passage from the novel to form some final conclusions.

Martin Buber described the impression Agnon made on German Jews when he arrived in Germany in the following way: "Galician and Palestinian, Hasid and pioneer, he carries in his faithful heart the essence of both worlds in the balance of initiation."[22] This clearly summarizes the primary phenomenon of Agnon's artistry. As shown by Weilbacher, Buber considered the synthesis of West and East as being the epitome of Jewishness[23] (an opinion that can also be seen in Buber's article "The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism"[24]). Buber was also aware of the function of the Hebrew language as a reflection of particularism (something that can be seen more fully in Agnon's prose): "[...] whosoever takes the Hebrew language [...] no longer simply on account of the content of his thought and desire, but according to the innermost of his being is he a Jew."[25]

For Buber and his circle, the concept of revival, and within that, also of Zionism, was based on differentiation. This differentiation is realized, above all, in the cultural notion of peoplehood. The concepts of "soul of the people" and the "cultural nation"[26] are astonishingly similar to the ideas proclaimed by many post-colonial thinkers, including Franz Fanon and Homy Bhabha, whom we will examine later. For both Fanon and Buber, the poet plays a crucial role in this development[27], an aspect that clearly invites future study.

It is a famous anecdote that Agnon resented the sign his famous neighbor, Prof. Klausner, put in front of his home: "Judaism and Humanity". This copulative form suggests a differentiation that could be combined in only some cases, but not all (!). In Agnon's mind were apparently these words of Buber: "[...] The most deep-seated humanity of our soul and its most deep-seated Judaism mean and desire the same thing."[28] Weilbacher's discussion of a particularism that enables humanism is quite justified, but I think it needs further investigation. When approaching Judaism as humanism, there is a certain inner negation of the latter, in its Western universalistic sense. Julia Kristeva's Étrangers à nous-mêmes takes a course that originates in Herder and the German Romantic understanding of diversity,

[22] Andrea Weilbacher, Agnon and the Jewish Renaissance, in: Hans-Jürgen Becker – Hillel Weiss (Eds.), Agnon and Germany. The Presence of the German World in the Writings of S.Y. Agnon, Ramat Gan 2010.

[23] Weilbacher, Renaissance, 29.

[24] Martin Buber, On Judaism, New York 1972, 56–78.

[25] Buber, quoted in Weilbacher, Renaissance, 29.

[26] Weilbacher, Renaissance, 33. See also Buber, Judaism, 53–55.

[27] Weilbacher, Renaissance, 27.

[28] Buber, Judaism, 55.

which is based on the plurality of languages.[29] Whereas one path of that understanding developed into the nationalistic ideology of Nazism[30], the other led to Freud's daring description of people as not-integrative. Our others, our strangers, are in no way assimilated, because the movement of strangeness is within ourselves, constantly and reflectively:

> "It is through unraveling transference–the major dynamics of otherness, of love/ hatred for the other, of the foreign component of our psyche–that on the basis of the other, I become reconciled with my own otherness- foreignness, that I play on it and live by it. Sychoanalysis is then experienced as a journey into the strangers of the other and of oneself, towards an ethic of respect for the irreconcilable."[31]

This anti-assimilative tendency in the German-Jewish movement at the beginning of the 20th century, which is characterized perhaps best in the name of the journal edited by Buber, Der Jude, is most distinctively portrayed in the figure of the Hassid, for which Agnon and Buber held their greatest mutual interest. Dan Laor's depiction of the long correspondence between the two shows that from the beginning, their dialogue mainly concerned east-Jewish Galician Hassidim, and that the book Buber cherished most was none other than the The Bridal Canopy, with all its strange discrepancies.[32] It seems now that the bizarre features of the novel are part of a very elaborate ideology that stands apart from, or in contrast to, the European nationalistic and well-established model of the "novel", with its search for accurate realism and depiction of Western and universal subjects.

C

Let us now examine Kristeva's interpretation of the interest held during the German Romantic movement for the abnormal:

> "Rooting the specific in human universality's (the gift of speech) diversified manifestation (national languages) went hand in hand, with Romanticist, with the concept of an invisible foundation of universal, visible nature. One imagined that such a Grund, specific to nature itself as well as to the human soul, was engaged less in intellectual research than in an emotional, instinctual, and intimate quest–the Gemüt. The romantic eaning towards the supernatural, parapsychology, madness, dreams, the obscure forces of the fatum, and even animal psychology[33] is related to the desire to grasp the strange, and by omesticating it, turn it into an integral component of the human."[34]

Freud's perception of the borderline between what is familiar and what is foreign, and as Kristeva has shown, the hidden part of nature itself, of our own nature, could not find, perhaps, a more explicit and yet disturbing expression than in the tales in The Bridal Canopy about Reb Israel Solomon, the community leader of the town of Shebush. Especially in the third and last tale, "Lasunka, or Man and Beast", one can see the Romantic interest in what was strange or odd in nature, based on the diversity of languages, expressed here in the voice and language of the cat Lasunka, who is desired erotically by Reb Solomon. This is described by Miron in the following manner:

> "Agnon showed not only the severe faults in the leader's behavior–who is responsible for his community but alienated from his job and duty–but also the most glaring symptoms of zoophilia pathology [...] It is clear that Reb Israel Solomon, if not in love with his cat, is surly such a deeply narcissistic man that he cannot have any relationship with objects other than with his own pet, which is again a mirror of his own capricious and flawed nature."[OBY][35]

As Miron has pointed out, according to Dov Sedan the name of this female cat is derived from the Yiddish verb לאשטשען זיך, which means to caress or rub against one another.[36] One might also think of the German noun Latschen, which means slippers, which might be a better image if one thinks of the many descriptions of the cat between Reb Solomon's legs. But the cat's original name, Xenia[37], reminds us of Kristeva's reading of Freud and her elaboration on the 'disturbing strangeness' in us, in nature, and in what we consider to be close, for which she uses the Greek word xenoi.[38] Again here, Agnon depicts the cat's utterances in length, which for some reason has been ignored by the translator:

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[29] Julia Kristeva, Strangers to Ourselves, New York 991, 178–180.

[30] Ibid., 178–180.

[31] Ibid., 182.

[32] Dan Laor, Agnon-Buber. A Relationship Anatomy or the Rise and Fall of 'Corpus Hasidicus' [translation by the author], in: Emuna Yaron – Rafael Weiser – Dan Laor – Reuven Mirkin (Eds.), Kovets Agnon. An Agnon Miscelllany, Jerusalem 1994, 109f. [OBY]. The book is written in Hebrew.

[33] It is noteworthy that, in general, Agnon's oeuvre contains many animalistic proclamations as well as many Jewish or Hassidic proclamations of abnormalities.

[34] Kristeva, Strangers, 180.

[35] Miron, Motley Canopy, 93.

[36] Ibid., 94.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Kristeva, Strangers, 191f.

> "Lasunka came and lay down next to his feet, and started meowing and meowing out of contentment and pleasure, as she used to do [...]."[OBY][39]

> "Lasunka was meowing from the basket such meows of wonder, for never in her life had a man treated her with such impertinence [...]."[OBY][40]

As described by Miron, this voice is narcissistic and flawed, and the narrator is fascinated with it, just as he is fascinated with the dark figure of Reb Israel Solomon himself. This attraction to evil should perhaps be investigated further.

Anderson[41] has described a nation as something that is articulated and defined by the printed media, in the form of newspapers and the novel alike. Homi Bhabha has taken up this notion, but suggests that reading this print of an imagined community is not at all well defined, nor is it homogeneous. In a discussion based on the 'uncanny' of Freud as well as Bakhtin's understanding of the 'ghostly' (Gespenstermässiges) and the 'disagreeable' (Unerfreuliches) in the Romantic conception of time, Bhabha refutes Anderson's view: "Such an apprehension of the 'double and split' time of national representation, as I am proposing, leads us to question the homogeneous and horizontal view familiarly associated with it."[42] We are aware that within the equation of the realistic-Western novel and national representation, there are semiotic 'shreds and patches', to use the words of Bhabha[43], that interestingly are displayed by what I define as Agnon's genealogical novel. This can be seen in Miron's emphasis on the story of Lasunka and the general form of the novel, but I would like to take these ideas one step further.

Miron's reading of the Lasunka anecdote focuses on two main aspects: First, the weird, pathological behavior of the community's leader in his strange attachment to his cat. The second, based on Dov Sedan, the subversive fact that the community was not saved in its hour of need by its leaders, or the higher personages of the community such as its scholars or wealthy people, but by a group of simple craftsmen. It is true, as Miron has

[39] Miron, Motley Canopy, 130.

[40] Ibid., 144. In the Hebrew original: "באה לסונקה ורבצה לרגליו והתחילה מייאייאת מיאו, מתוך קורת רוח והנאה כדרכה]...")עמ' 130(. "הייתה לסונקה מייאייאת מתוך הסל מיואיים של תמיהה, שמימיה לא נהג בה אדם בחוצפה שכזו.")עמ' 144).

[41] Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson, Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, London/New York 1983.

[42] Homi K. Bhabha, DissemiNation. Time, Narrative and the Margins of Modern Nation, in: Homi K. Bhabha (Ed.), Nation and Narration, New York 1990, 295.

[43] Bhabha, DissemiNation, 294.

pointed out, that the miracle, suggested by the inter-narrator, of the town being saved by the cat's return exemplifies the ridiculousness of the town as well as the heroism of the simple people of the community. But let us look at the scene in more detail, paying attention to its pastoral features, as well as to the two figures who brought the cat from its love escapades, thus saving Reb Israel Solomon from his deep, paralyzing melancholy and leading to the magnificent celebration at the end. In this inimitable, tumultuous scene, depicted at length by Agnon, the craftsmen mistakenly think that the two figures loudly crying out "Lasunka! Lasunka!" are shouting about the horror of a pogrom that has begun after the bishop's visit. Thus, they bring their work tools as weapons, but when discovering that all the uproar is about the cat, they use the tools to celebrate. The bishop then mistakenly believes that all the excitement is in his honor:

> "The woman-folk, hearing their children's voices [...] said to one another, It seems as though the Holy and Blessed One must have wrought a miracle. And at once they put on their finest clothes and went out into the open and began clapping their hands, and calling la la la [...]. And there was never a Jew in Shebush but went out to meet and greet Lasunka. They were following two Jews and patting the bundle those two held and stroking Lasunka through the bundle and calling her by all manner of pet names. The butchers went ahead clashing their cleavers and fighting imaginary duels; the smiths swung their hammers until the spark flew; the porters flung up their ropes on high, caught them as they descended and flung them up again; and the music makers were making music. And just at that time the bishop came past and saw all the Jewish population jubilating. Said he, and all these have come in honor of me [...]. And what was more he repented his former ways and become a lover of Israel."[44]

This is a pastoral rural scene that first changes to aggression, and then changes to a scene of music and celebration by all the village folk, the woman and children, the rich and poor. It is a bacchanalia that equates work and peace. These idyllic values[45] are portrayed by the two figures who initiated the situation, the village Jew and the poor man (in the original, sometimes also referred to as the 'owner of the basket' in which the cat was caught). The village Jew is clearly one of the tale's major figures. Parallel to the plot of Lasunka and Reb Solomon, his story is also told. Since he is facing financial problems, he has taken a journey to Shebush, where he hopes to attain the help of Reb Israel Solomon.[46] A motif in the tale is the

[44] Agnon, Bridal Canopy, 196f.

[45] Terry Gifford, Pastoral, London 1999, Second chapter.

[46] Agnon, Bridal Canopy, 188.

search for grain (mentioned three times in the original version[47]), which is the main product of Shebush. And it is grain that they buy immediately upon receiving their reward for finding Lasunka.[48]

Thus the tale ends. Again the image of work is portrayed, this time together with the image of permanence in the depiction of Lasunka's offspring. The original text also includes a phrase connecting work, grain and being peaceful subjects in the land of the Kaiser:

> "And at the end of the appointed period her [Lasunka's] womb brought forth many tiny creatures [...] they had grown to delight the eye of everyone who saw them, with their charm and graceful movements. And she brought them up to do their duty and hunt mice and make an end of them in Shebush."[49]

In the original: "[...] hunt mice for human benefit and for the benefit of Shebush, which is the greatest metropolis for grain pounders in the kingdom of the Kaiser, may his honor be praised[50] [...]."[OBY][51]

This pastoral reality seems to end with a subversive comment on the pedagogical symbols of Land, the Kaiser and his subjects. It is this that reflects its Jewish performance practices, if one accepts Bhabha's concept of the nation being represented by the pedagogical and performative:

> "The liminal figure of the nation-space would ensure that no political ideologies could claim transcendent or metaphysical authority for themselves. This is because the subject of cultural discourse – the agency of a people – is split in the discursive ambivalence that emerges in the contestation of narrative authority between the pedagogical and the performative."[52]

Recalling again Foucault's words, this novel does not describe a single stable territory, nor a stable power. Rather, identity and storytelling are always in a relationship, in tension. In his deep pastoral understanding of genealogy, Agnon's novel seems to expose the inner depths and the essence of the pedagogical symbols of nation, religion, land and authority. Unquestionably a Zionist, in his time Agnon was able to offer a critical attitude toward

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47 Agnon, Bridal Canopy, 139, 147, 149.

48 Ibid., 198.

49 Ibid., 199.

50 In the Hebrew original: "[...]לתועלתם של בני האדם, ולתועלתה של שבוש שהיא מטרופולין לכותשי גריסין שאין כמותם בכל מלכות הקיר"ה[...]".

51 Agnon, Canopy, 148.

52 Bhabha, DissemiNation, 299.

the nationalistic idea as such. This can be seen in the original title of his first novel:

הכנסת כלה
נפלאות החסיד ר' יודיל מבראד וג' בנותיו הצנועות
ופרשת גדולת אחינו בני ישראל יושבי המדינה הקיר"ה

The Bridal Canopy
The Wonders of Reb Yudel the Hassid of Brod and his Three Modest Girls and the Story of Our Brothers the Israelis Inhabiting the Land of the Kaiser may his Honor be Praised