

# Agnon's Moonstruck Lovers

THE SONG OF SONGS  
IN ISRAELI CULTURE

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## The Biblical Ethnographies of “Edo and Enam” and the Quest for the Ultimate Song

“**E**DO and Enam,” one of Agnon’s most enigmatic tales, a renowned Agnonian riddle that has generated as many readings as the dog Balak, opens with the narrator’s puzzlement at finding his friends, the Greifenbachs, “so dark and distracted” before traveling abroad. The story takes place in Jerusalem under the British Mandate (after “the war”), a time of instability, and the Greifenbachs, who are about to leave for a vacation in Europe, fear that their house will be plundered during their absence (143). They do have a tenant, Dr. Ginat, but given that he is constantly on field trips connected with his philological-ethnographic researches, he is rarely at home. The narrator’s heart beats fast on listening to his friends. Both Ginat and his famous discovery of the Enamite hymns move him with unexpected force. Ginat, he informs us, published articles on the grammar of Edo, but what made him “truly famous was his discovery of the Enamite Hymns . . . they were not only a new-found link in a chain that bound the beginnings of recorded history to the ages before, but—in themselves—splendid and incisive poetry.” One thing, however, surprised the narrator. “All these scholars affirmed that the gods of Enam and their priests were male; how was it that they did not catch in the hymns the cadence of a woman’s song?” (145–46).

Although Ginat’s studies do not address the question of female poetic traditions, there is, we discover at the very end, a woman singer behind his findings. Her identity is revealed on a mysterious night in which all the principal

characters of the tale meet, unexpectedly, at the Greifenbachs' abode. The narrator happens to be there because he had promised the Greifenbachs to keep an eye on their house. On hearing a woman singing, he approaches Ginat's moonlit room, where he sees "a young woman wrapped in white, her feet bare, her hair disheveled, her eyes closed. And a young man sat at the table by the window and wrote in ink on paper all that she spoke" (220). The man turns out to be Ginat, and the woman is Gemulah, Gamzu's Mizrahi (Eastern-Jewish) wife, who was brought up in contemporary Enam—way out in the deserts of the Orient—but left its rocky mountains and followed her husband to Jerusalem. She is now revealed as Ginat's primary informant, the source of his knowledge of the Enamite hymns and of the inscrutable language of Edo. But this is not merely an ethnographic scene of writing. It is also the dramatic moment in which all the desperate loves of the tale intersect. Gamzu begs Gemulah to return to him; Gemulah, in turn, rejects her husband and attempts to lure the young scholar: "Let me stay with you," she says to Ginat, "and I shall sing you the song of the bird Grofit, which she sings only once in her lifetime" (221–22).<sup>1</sup> Ginat succumbs for a moment and says "sing" but later urges her to follow her husband. At the tale's end, Gemulah and Ginat fall to their deaths when the young scholar tries to prevent the moonstruck Gemulah from walking on the roof.

Agnon wrote "Edo and Enam" sometime between March and October of 1949, when he was staying at the apartment of Gershom and Fania Scholem in Rehavia while his friends were in the United States for a visit. Many have consequently read Dr. Ginat and his mysterious preoccupation with ancient esoteric texts as a comment on Gershom Scholem and the academic study of Kabbalah. Tochner regards the tale as a critique of the rational, cold manner in which the modern scholarship of the Kabbalah treats Jewish sources.<sup>2</sup> More recently, Tzachi Weiss has suggested that the tale calls into question Scholem's attempt to define his research as a detached "pure science," supposedly untainted by the mystical materials it sets out to explore.<sup>3</sup>

When Dan Miron asked Scholem in an interview in 1982 whether he saw himself as Dr. Ginat of "Edo and Enam," Scholem was infuriated. "That interpretation," he exclaimed, "is wrong from start to finish!"<sup>4</sup> Scholem, however, was not unaware of the great interest Agnon had in his scholarly friends—both in their work and in their lives. "As a matter of fact," Scholem writes in his "Reflections on S. Y. Agnon," "Agnon never felt as comfortable in the company of writers as he did in that of scholars who, surprisingly enough, appear as central figures in some of his strangest stories. The calling of the

writer seems to have held no mysteries, whereas the utter and largely hopeless devotion of the scholar obviously filled him with sinister fascination.”<sup>5</sup> In the Hebrew and German versions of this essay, he actually refers to “Edo and Enam” as exemplary in this connection and defines it as “an enigmatic story about the greatness and failure of scholarship.”<sup>6</sup>

My reading of “Edo and Enam” follows the traces of another scholar and close friend of Agnon: the ethnographer-philologist, historian, and biblical critic Shlomo Dov Goitein. Here, as in the previous chapter, my objective is not merely to identify yet another possible face (or partial face) behind the portrait of an Agnonian scholar. The Goitein connection serves as a point of departure for a broader consideration of Agnon’s response to Israeli biblicism and to the privileged position of the Song of Songs in this connection. More specifically, I read “Edo and Enam” in relation to a plethora of modern ethnographic studies of the Song—from Wetzstein’s study of Syrian wedding songs to Goitein’s essays from the 1940s and 1950s.

The relevance of biblical criticism to Ginat’s research is by no means explicit. Ginat’s official field of interest is, after all, the ancient, Eastern culture of Enam. But a scholar who is wholly immersed in a search for the wondrous, ultimate songs of the past and whose name is “Ginat”—the first word of the construct form *ginat egoz* (the “nut garden” of the Song)—can hardly be innocent of hidden passions for the ancient biblical love poem.<sup>7</sup> That scholars have blind spots is something to which the narrator calls our attention from the very outset on wondering why no investigator of Enam has managed to “catch in the hymns the cadence of a woman’s song.” Indeed, Ginat’s lack of awareness to the resonance of his own cultural heritage in his work is inextricably connected to his failure to even hear, let alone cope with, the feminine lure of the ancient songs he collects. The dialogue with psychoanalysis is less elaborate in “Edo and Enam” than in *Betrothed*, but here too the dynamics of scholarly blindness is pivotal, and Enam has some of the qualities of Freud’s Pompeii. One may also wonder whether the ancient Enamite culture also bears some resemblance to the hidden, matriarchal Minoan-Mycenaean civilization Freud discovers (to his surprise) behind Greek civilization in his exploration of female sexuality.<sup>8</sup>

The ironic discrepancy between the overt and covert aspects of Ginat’s studies is accompanied by an ironic probing of the methodologies of biblical ethnography. The predominant tendency among biblical ethnographers of the Song was to regard the contemporary Orient as the ultimate exegetical key to the understanding of the actual love songs and rituals of biblical times. In his

attempt to retrieve the authentic hymns of Enam through Gemulah's Mizrahi tunes, Ginat, as it were, follows such practices. But given that the question of the affinity between Gemulah's Oriental songs and the ancient Enamite hymns remains palpably open, Ginat's research seems, at times, closer to a wild goose chase or a grand artistic feat than to a rigorous scientific project.

Agnon reflects on such Orientalist research but is, as always, interested in the ways in which scholarship forms part of a broader cultural scene, in this case, the Zionist fascination with the Orient. The question of the Oriental features of the Song, which is only on the margins of the Jaffa gardens of *Betrothed* becomes central in "Edo and Enam." Appearing on no known map, Enam is something of an imaginary Eastern oasis, bearing a phonetic similarity to *teyman* (Yemen) and *'elam* (a biblical designation for Persia) as well as to *eynot* ("fountains") and *eynam* ("nonexistent"). It serves not only as a site through which to examine the ancient and contemporary culture of exilic, Eastern communities but also as a screen through which to explore the dreamy, allegorical zones of Zion—where national love is renewed within the Oriental, erotic-poetic, pastoral landscapes and music-scapes of the Song.

Agnon spells out large the magic of individual and collective dreams spun around the Orient but does not hesitate to flaunt their delusional qualities and the hazards they may entail. What is more, he ventures to add a meta-poetic dimension in which he meditates on the ways in which his own Song and quest for poetic epitome is set against, yet deeply embedded in, the imaginary realms of Gemulah's songs.

In "Edo and Enam," as in *Betrothed*, we witness a spectacular exegetical juggling. Here too Agnon points to the allegorical innuendoes embedded in the new Zionist literalism. Here too he offers a remarkable juxtaposition of literalist readings of the ancient love poem along with traditional and aesthetic allegories. And yet Agnon now ventures to develop his inquiry of the Song's reception in new contexts. His move from *Betrothed* to "Edo and Enam" entails a transition from biblical botany to biblical ethnography, from Zionism's craving for renewal via Nature to its craving for renewal via the Orient, from the Second Aliyah to the postwar years. But it also provides a different blend of traditional allegories of the Song. Whereas in *Betrothed* the Zohar is a vibrant backdrop, in "Edo and Enam" kabbalistic texts are boisterously foregrounded.

I focus on Goitein and his ethnographic precursors but also refer, at points, to the ways in which the interpretive practices of biblical ethnographers in "Edo and Enam" merge with kabbalistic exegetical pursuits. Accordingly, I

will also consider, however partially, some aspects of the dialogue between Agnon and Scholem. Much as Agnon does not hesitate to cross the boundaries between marine botany and psychoanalysis, so too he allows biblical criticism and the Kabbalah to intersect in unexpected ways.

#### SHLOMO DOV GOITEIN: THE STORY OF A FRIENDSHIP

The friendship of Agnon and Goitein has become more visible lately with the publication of their correspondence.<sup>9</sup> Goitein was the Arabic teacher of Esther Marx (Agnon's wife) in Frankfurt and through her came to know Agnon (her Hebrew teacher at the time). Later on in Jerusalem, Agnon and Goitein met on a weekly basis. In its initial stages, Dan Laor comments, their close friendship "was nurtured by the literary ambitions of Goitein, who wished to become a playwright and saw Agnon as an astute advisor in this matter."<sup>10</sup> Goitein's play, *Pulcellina*, never acquired much acclaim, and he did not venture to write additional plays (though he occasionally published poems in *Haaretz*). His gift as a writer, however, is evident in his engagingly written academic publications, often punctuated with anecdotes and moments of dramatic spark.<sup>11</sup> Between Agnon's scholarly inclinations and Goitein's literary sensibilities, not to mention their unorthodox mingling of religiosity and secularism, their paths crossed in a variety of ways, making their friendship all the more intimate in the course of time.

Most of their correspondence is from the late fifties on, after Goitein had moved to the United States and founded the Geniza research, first at the University of Pennsylvania and then at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton. It reveals a familiarity of each of them with the minute details of the other's familial and professional life. They exchanged notes on their work in progress and responded to each other's new publications. Agnon complains of interruptions in his work on *A City and the Fullness Thereof* (*Ir u-melo'a*), and Goitein reports: "The day before yesterday, I sent the second volume of my book *A Mediterranean Society* . . . to the publisher, 1078 pages (without index). . . . Never before have so many interesting sources on public life in Israel been collected in one volume."<sup>12</sup> In a letter from September 4, 1966, Agnon apologizes that his handwriting (which was notoriously illegible) is even more obscure than the Geniza fragments. Goitein, in turn, deciphers this letter with the same methods he used in examining Geniza documents (words he was sure of were marked in pen and the rest in pencil).

When Agnon won the Nobel Prize in 1966, Goitein was interviewed on various TV programs and was vital to the reception of Agnon's oeuvre in American literary circles.<sup>13</sup> In 1970, in a ceremony at Dropsie College commemorating Agnon's death, he spoke of his late friend with great admiration. "Since biblical times," he declared, "there has not been in Hebrew language a corpus of narrative prose of the magnitude, dignity, and meaningfulness of Agnon's creation. He has done for Hebrew prose what Yehuda Halevi has achieved in religious poetry. Halevi wrote in the forms and spirit of the 12th century. Agnon expressed the mood and refinement of the 20th. But both are the mouth-pieces of genuine and integral Judaism."<sup>14</sup>

Agnon could not have read Goitein's 1957 essays "Women as Creators of Biblical Genres" and "The Literary Character and Symbolic Interpretation of the Song of Songs" while writing "Edo and Enam," but he may have come across an earlier, very brief sketch titled "On the Song of Songs" ("Al shir ha-shirim"), published in *Davar* on April 23, 1943, where Goitein first speculates about the female poet who composed the Song. And given the ample intellectual exchange between the two, Agnon must have heard of Goitein's ideas in the late forties, at the time his friend's ethnographic work with Yemenite women singers led him to develop and substantiate his previous intuitions regarding the Song of Songs and female poetic traditions.

"AH, FOLKLORE, FOLKLORE!":

#### THE QUESTION OF ETHNOGRAPHIC LITERALISM

What makes Ginat something of a Goitein? The fact that his name begins with *gimel* seems almost a prerequisite to becoming part of a tale where most names begin either with *gimel* or *ayin* (Agnon's implicit signature).<sup>15</sup> In fact, there is greater phonetic similarity given that in both names there is a *nun* and a *tet-taf* (the two Hebrew *t*'s are interchangeable).<sup>16</sup> Beyond the shared letters, there are, of course, more substantive points of affinity. Like Goitein, Ginat is an ethnographer, a philologist, and a biblical critic (if latently so) whose research entails a quest for the remnants of an ancient language, the collection of traditions of Jews from the lands of Islam, and an interest in scriptural leaves with mysterious inscriptions. The very root "*ganaz*" ("hidden"—the base of the term *geniza*) appears at various points, most significantly in the depiction of the "hidden," precious traditions that Gemulah's father had passed on to his daughter and in the account of the earth wondrously "opening up" and allowing for the discovery of the manuscripts that previous gen-

erations had concealed (*ganzu*) (214). But, above all, it is Goitein's Orientalist, ethnographic study of the Song that comes strikingly close to Ginat's research: in both cases, it is the singing of Mizrahi women that serves as a window to the songs of the past; in both one finds a leap from the contemporary Orient to the ancient one (biblical and prebiblical); in both there is an unknown female poetic tradition that protrudes between the lines.

Gamzu's amusing comments on biblical criticism, which implicitly refer to Ginat's work, convey, I suspect, something of Agnon's own critique of the pretensions of such scholarship. The observant Gamzu, the seller of rare manuscripts, admits that traditional exegetes, even "true *zaddikim*," may "twist the words of the Holy Writ," but whereas they do it "with the intention of serving heaven," Bible critics "who have not the merit of studying the Torah for its own sake, their teaching is perverted in accordance with the emptiness of their own spirit" (180–81). At a later point, he spells out his resentment with greater pathos: "Ah, folklore, folklore! Everything which is not material for scientific research they treat as folklore. Have they not made our holy Torah into either one or the other? People live out their lives according to the Torah, they lay down their lives for the heritage of their fathers; then along come the scientists, and make the Torah into "research material," and the ways of our fathers into—folklore" (210).

Gamzu's debunking of biblical folklore bears some resemblance to Rosenzweig's scathing account of Wetzstein's ethnographic research of the Song, though the latter engages in a theoretical debate that is, of course, foreign to the bookseller's vocabulary:

The hopeless caprice and text-critical adventurousness of all those interpretations into the objective realm of the "musical drama" made the learned spirits receptive to a new view. . . . [I]t was suddenly discovered that among the peasants in Syria the wedding is celebrated on the analogy of a royal wedding to this day, with the groom as the king and the bride as the royal choice. . . . Now everything is once more enclosed in the lyrical duo-solitude of the lover and the beloved. And now, above all, the simile is brought back into the "most original" sense of the Songs . . . the shepherd who is bridegroom by the king whom he feels himself to be. This, however, is the point at which we are aiming. Love simply cannot be "purely human."<sup>17</sup>

In this climactic moment of Rosenzweig's "theological anti-historicism," to use David Myers terms, biblical ethnography is mocked for its fanciful, reductive

so-called literalism.<sup>18</sup> The “objective realm” such scholars have found in Syrian weddings, the supposedly authentic, Oriental window to the “most original” historical sense of the Song, is nothing but an “adventurous” interpretation of “learned spirits” who ironically end up decontextualizing the biblical text in overlooking the inseparability of human and divine love.

The critique of Orientalism does not begin with Edward Said. Rosenzweig’s reading of the Song, as Samuel Moyn points out, is an interesting example of an earlier critical assessment of a different bent.<sup>19</sup> Rosenzweig is not concerned with the political implications of the Western imposition on the East, but he is a precursor of Said in laying bare the misconceptions at stake.

Agnon would agree with Rosenzweig only to a point. He surely flaunts the absurdities and fallacies of ethnographic literalism. And yet it is precisely the paradoxical moves of scholars who have no intention to “serve heaven” but are compelled by the biblical text to the extent of seeking new exegetical methodologies that are of interest to him.

Gamzu’s perspective is not the sole one. The narrator, the primary spokesperson of Agnon in the tale, the one who is moved even by the mention of Ginat’s name, calls upon us, from the very outset, to see the charms of such ethnographic-philological studies and the aesthetic wonders of their object of investigation. Whether or not the Enamite hymns are authentic relics of the ancient Orient (the language of Edo is presented both as a real ancient tongue and as a language Gemulah and her father had invented to amuse themselves), they are exquisite poems that stir the heart. In being far more drawn to Ginat than to Gamzu, Gemulah, one should bear in mind, also testifies to the power and seductions of modern scholarship.

The inventiveness of biblical ethnographers could hardly bother Agnon as such. There is something about the imaginative dimension of scholarship that makes it refreshingly similar to literature. It is no coincidence that Agnon’s closest scholarly friends—and this is true of both Goitein and Scholem—were also great writers. Projections (in the broad sense of the term), for Agnon, are indispensable for any literary feat, much as they are part and parcel of the most intriguing inner dramas of the mind. When Ginat seeks echoes of the hymns of ancient Enam in Gemulah’s songs, his quest resembles that of Norbert Hanold and his search for the actual traces of *Gradiva rediviva* in the streets of contemporary Pompeii: “And ‘traces’ literally; for with her peculiar gait she must have left behind an imprint of her toes in the ashes distinct from all the rest.”<sup>20</sup> At one point in his study of *Gradiva*, Freud comments on Hanold’s “lively imagination” and claims: “This division between imagination

and the intellect destined him to become an artist or a neurotic.”<sup>21</sup> Hanold turns out to be the latter rather than the former, but his delusions shed light on artistic imagination as well as on the centrality of fantasy in the realm of love, not only among neurotics.

Inasmuch as Agnon is concerned with the darker aspects of the delusional dimension of ethnographic literalism, he strives to lay bare the hopeless blindness of scholars, their adherence to dreams of mastery while ignoring the utter fragility of any pursuit of knowledge, whether academic or not. Ginat may wish to remain an uninvolved observer, but, despite himself, he becomes trapped in the Song of Songs culture that he unwittingly investigates. For all his detached Western secularism, he cannot escape Gemulah, who, like the Shulamite, seeks her loved one desperately at night in the moonlit streets of Jerusalem. He is, in a sense, an Agnonian Faust (Gerda Greifenbach surmises that he may be writing the third volume of *Faust* for all she knows [150]) whose fervent, somewhat sinister, pursuit of knowledge leads him to an amorous brink.

In Agnon’s biblical ethnographies, the one maddening inscription that all the characters in the tale—be they Mizrahi or Ashkenazi—seem to bear on their back, unbeknownst to them, are the dream sequences of the Song of Songs. The premise that Eastern communities are more authentic preservers of the biblical text seems groundless. I mentioned Gemulah and Ginat, but Gamzu too has a pivotal role in this drama. Echoes of the verse “I sought him, but I could not find him” (3:2 and 5:6) appear time and again in the depiction of his nocturnal searches for his moonstruck wife. On the first of these searches, he finds himself at the abode of the Greifenbachs, on another mysterious night when the narrator happens to be there. “Forgive me’ he said, ‘for suddenly bursting in on you. Just imagine: I came home after the evening service at the synagogue to get my wife settled for the night and found the bed empty. I went off in search of her. ‘Going to the south, turning to the north, turning turning goes the wind, and again to its circuit the wind returns.’ Suddenly I found myself in this valley without knowing how I came here” (162–63). The Shulamite’s search and meandering in the city—*asoveva a-’ir* (3:2) and *metsa’uni ha-shomrim ha-sovevim ba-’ir* (5:7)—blend with the melancholy, monotonous rhythms of Ecclesiastes (“turning turning goes the wind,” *sovev sovev holekh ha-ruah*) in a combination of obsessive seeking and turning round and round in vain.<sup>22</sup> The only one Gamzu keeps finding, in a mock imitation of the Shulamite’s meandering, is the narrator, who is always there ready to hear more tales.

The amorous entanglements of “Edo and Enam” underscore yet another mistaken premise of biblical ethnographers: a true literal reading of the ancient love poem cannot remain solely in the peaceful, pastoral zones of rural weddings or in the pleasurable setting of Solomon’s court, where the *bat-nadiv* allegedly sings her songs. Here, the nightmarish, if magical, Jerusalemite nocturnal scenes of the Song are intensified. In the modern Jerusalem of the late 1940s, yearnings are never reciprocal and the amorous search is perpetual—Gamzu searches for Gemulah who searches for Ginat who searches for the ancient hymns of Enam.<sup>23</sup>

#### GINAT VERSUS GAMZU: IRONIC CONTINUITIES

If Rosenzweig sees the scientific approach to the Bible as distinctly secular (he even overlooks the more pronounced theological underpinnings of Herder’s hermeneutic aesthetics), Agnon thrives on finding unexpected continuities between religious and secular scholarship. Historians have often located the origins of the human sciences to a gradual secularization of knowledge in the wake of the scientific revolution. Agnon’s project entirely recasts this history. It calls attention to the domain of religious exegesis where these disciplines first took form.

In “Edo and Enam,” the topic of ironic continuities is raised explicitly when the narrator responds to Greifenbach’s observations regarding the mystery of the formation of languages—based on his philological readings of, among others, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, one of the major books of German biblical Orientalism—with a wry comment on the ways in which the Kabbalah “anticipated academic scholarship” in this matter (152).

The thrust of the irony is evident in the juxtaposition of Ginat, the quintessential modern scholar, and the traditionalist Gamzu, or rather in the questioning of the dichotomy at stake. From the little that we hear of the enigmatic Ginat (his inner world remains blocked throughout the tale), we learn that during his ethnographic field trips, the young scholar dresses as a Jerusalemite sage and is regarded by the Enamites as “the Sage Gideon” (Hakham Gideon).<sup>24</sup> This may be a strategy to disarm his informants, but it also discloses an unexpected familiarity with traditional Jewish modes of knowledge and a latent preoccupation with Jewish sources.

Gamzu, in turn, may passionately scorn biblical critics and ethnographers, but he himself is an avid collector of *piyyutim*.<sup>25</sup> In fact, he is so fond of traveling among remote Jewish communities in the East in pursuit of lost

*piyyutim* and old manuscripts that he is driven out of the yeshiva (207). Better still, Gamzu provides detailed accounts of the manners and customs of Enamite Jews that come surprisingly close to biblical ethnographies. “If you had seen my father-in-law Gevariah when he stood on the peak of a rock,” recounts Gamzu, “a sky-blue turban on his head, his complexion and beard set off by his flowing hair . . . his big toes striking the towering rock while he raised a song from the depths . . . and Gemulah his daughter sang . . . [trilling her voice] and between twenty-two and twenty-seven maidens danced, all of them beautiful and high born, then you would have seen a likeness of the festive days of ancient Israel, when the daughters of Israel went out to dance in the vineyards” (176). To travel to Enam, for Gamzu, means to step into an exegetical landscape of enchanting worlds of biblical texts, the Song of Songs among the most prominent.<sup>26</sup> Songs, shepherds, hopping over rocks, vineyards, and dancing maidens are very much part of the ancient love poem. Towering over the other maidens with her singing, Gemulah is allotted the role of the Shulamite whose exceptional voice is lauded by her loved one (*ki kolekh ‘arev*—Song 2:14). To capture the exquisite, Oriental quality of Gemulah’s singing, Gamzu depicts her as “trilling her voice” (*mena’an’at kola be-shir*), as if she were rocking her voice, with the spiral, rhythmic beats of a musical arabesque.<sup>27</sup> In using this expression, interestingly enough, the bookseller also harks back to Rabbi Akiva’s famous admonition against those who venture to “trill their voice” while singing the Song of Songs in banquet houses, treating a song of divine love as if it were an earthly song.<sup>28</sup>

As one with a face “of a Jew out of the Middle Ages” (209), who has no interest in books that are “less than four hundred years old” (179), Gamzu’s primary sources of inspiration, one may assume, are the travel narratives of Eldad the Danite (ninth century) and Binyamin of Tudela (twelfth century) as well as other early reports on the lost tribes of ancient Israel (he regards the Enamites as pertaining to the lost tribe of Gad). Modern ethnography, Agnon reminds us, did not invent the craving to explore remote communities, nor did it invent the desire to look for a window to biblical times through travel. What is more, biblical ethnographers were not the first to discover the literal dimension of the Song. In evoking the trace of a literalist tradition of singing the Song as a secular love song in Rabbi Akiva’s times, Agnon highlights a somewhat forgotten precursor to modern literalism. The irony, then, is double-edged: Ginat is far more indebted to traditional exegetical modes than meets the eye, while Gamzu rejects modern scholarship without realizing that there are unforeseen similarities between the interpretive practices

he is accustomed to and the new scholarly trends. To top it all, it is none other than Gamzu who sells old manuscripts and ancient leaves to scholars (among them Ginat), thus taking part in this modern desecration of scriptural texts.

In an essay published in the proceedings of the conference “Religion in a Religious Age,” Goitein wonders whether as “sons of the secular age,” scholars of today, can truly understand the religious culture of medieval times. “My trepidation,” he claims, “is soothed somewhat by remembering that once I myself was a thoroughly medieval man, that is, one for whom religion is the overriding concern in life.” “In the course of the years,” he jokingly adds, he became a “medievalist” rather than a “medieval man,” but that early experience never vanished, providing him with certain insights in his current scholarly work.<sup>29</sup> Whether or not Agnon was thinking of Goitein in turning Ginat and Gamzu into an oddly inseparable pair, his insistence on having their respective worlds implicated in each other complicates any attempt to regard the secular and the religious modes of erudition as distinct realms.

Leah Goldberg, with the admirably combined sensitivities of a critic and a poet, distinguishes between three circles in “Edo and Enam.”<sup>30</sup> The first circle is that of the Greifenbachs, who live close to the sources of mystery and belief but can approach them only intellectually, grasping not even a speck of their power. When they hear the voice of Gemulah’s singing burst forth from Ginat’s room, they can only make jokes about it and find it a worthy topic for gossip. The second circle belongs to the dreamers (*ba’aley ha-dimyonot*)—Gamzu, Gemulah, and her entire tribe—who live in the world of their imagination, close to poetry, pain, and the depths of the soul (*tehomot ha-nefesh*). They own that invented tongue with which they can express the kind of things no human language can capture. On the border between the two circles, in the third circle, lives the artist. This artist has two faces. His revealed face is that of the narrator, who lives in the secular, mundane world but can hear the tales of Gamzu and the voice of Gemulah, sense the magic of the moon, and turn them all into a story. The artist’s hidden face is that of Ginat. As a modern philologist of European background, he bears resemblance to Greifenbach, but he is nonetheless something of a unique Hakham as well, one who is capable of drawing Gemulah to him and turning her songs into a “tremendous artistic experience.”<sup>31</sup>

In calling attention to the interrelations between the exegetical worlds of Ginat and Gamzu, I have somewhat redefined these circles. Both Ginat and Gamzu, I suggest, wander between the world of the Greifenbachs and the Enamites in a zone where scholarship and poetry meet, ancient cultures are

explored, tales are spun, and lost poems are brought back to light. Both, if differently, are immersed in a passionate pursuit of a supreme Song and are helplessly drawn to the enchanting singing of Gemulah. Both, I would add, are immersed in their pursuits to the extent of losing sight of her flesh. In the scene in which Ginat urges the somnambulist Gemulah to return to her husband, the Enamite woman bluntly declares that she is nobody's wife. "Ask him," she implores, "if his eyes have ever seen my flesh" (*she'al 'oto 'im ra'u eynav 'et besari*).<sup>32</sup> And although Gemulah seduces Ginat, thinking him better than her husband, the young scholar can only disappoint her, for he too seems incapable of approaching the intensities of human love.

#### THE RESURGENCE OF MYSTICAL ALLEGORIES: REDEMPTIVE IMAGININGS

Gemulah holds a peculiarly paradoxical position: she is at once the primary window into the realities of the Song and the allegorical crux of the tale. Her name, accordingly, is linked to diverse words and worlds, among them to "Jamila," a common Arabic name meaning "beauty" (though Agnon denied the connection), to *gemul* (recompense), and to *ge'ulah* (redemption).<sup>33</sup> Characteristically, Agnon allows the literal and the allegorical lines in his tales to preserve their "wondrous autonomy" while playing them against each other.

Of the various traditional allegories of the Song that intersect in Gemulah, the Zohar has a distinct presence.<sup>34</sup> In adhering to the term *allegory* while speaking of kabbalistic readings of the Song, I primarily mean to locate them in the realm of commentaries that focus on divine love, but one should bear in mind the controversial position of the symbol/allegory contrast in Kabbalah studies. In *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Scholem regards the symbol—rather than allegory—as the privileged trope of the world of Kabbalism.

In the mystical symbol a reality which in itself has, for us, no form or shape becomes transparent and, as it were, visible through the medium of another reality which clothes its content with visible expressible meaning. . . . The thing which becomes a symbol retains its original form and its original content. It does not become, so to speak, an empty shell into which another content is poured; in itself, through its own existence, it makes another reality transparent which cannot appear in any other form. If allegory can be defined as the representation of an expressible something by another expressible something, the mystical symbol is an expressible representation

of something which lies beyond the sphere of expression and communication, something which comes from a sphere whose face is, as it were, turned inward and away from us.

. . . The symbol “signifies” nothing and communicates nothing, but makes something transparent which is beyond all expression. Where deeper insight into the structure of the allegory uncovers fresh layers of meaning, the symbol is intuitively understood all at once or not at all.

. . . The infinite shines through the finite and makes it more and not less real.<sup>35</sup>

Scholem shares Goethe’s definition of the symbol as a living, instantaneous revelation of the inscrutable. For both Scholem and Goethe, as Susan Handelman puts it, the symbol is the “natural, intransitive, immediately intuitable, existing in and for itself as well as for what it signifies . . . an indirect expression of the inexpressible, a passage from the particular to the general via *participation* of the ideal in the object.”<sup>36</sup> Allegory, by contrast, is a mechanical “empty shell” that is an arbitrary container of “another content,” closer to the realm of meaning than to the infinite. Scholem, to be sure, does not do much justice to allegory: in the best allegories of all times, there is nothing mechanical or empty. His observations, however, can shed light on the ways in which kabbalistic hermeneutics strive to move beyond earlier, midrashic allegorical modes.

In previous chapters, I addressed Agnon’s Benjaminian tendencies in discussing his redefinition of allegory and suspicion of the organic wholeness of the symbol. I would now like to suggest that while savoring the capacity of allegory to underscore the complication of signification in modernity with Benjamin, Agnon is at the same time gripped, like Scholem, by the tangibility of mystical language, by the poetic power of such language to create a different sense of reality—to create heavenly spheres more real than earthly ones, thus dismantling, more forcefully than midrashic allegorical configurations, the boundaries between immanence and transcendence in language.<sup>37</sup>

Gamzu’s account of his first encounter with Gemulah is undoubtedly the most conspicuous kabbalistic moment in the tale. Gemulah (unlike Shoshana) is affiliated with the Shekhinah explicitly:

When I saw her for the first time poised on a rock at the top of a mountain which not every man can climb, with the moon lighting up her face while

she sang, “*Yiddal, yiddal, yiddal, vah, pah, mah,*” I said to myself, If she is not one of the angels of the [Shekhinah] who have union with angels of the [Holy One, blessed be He], she must be one of the twelve constellations of the Zodiac, and none other than the constellation Virgo. (164–65)

This heavenly union, with its sudden shift to Aramaic, calls to mind the Aramaic formula *le-Shem Yihud Qudsha’ Berikh Hu’ u-Shekhinteih*, meaning “For the sake of the union of the Holy One, blessed be He, with His Divine Presence [the Shekhinah].” As Moshe Idel points out, this pivotal kabbalistic pronouncement reflects a supreme aim: “to induce the union, which means the sexual union, between a masculine divine attribute, on the one hand, described by various terms like *Tiferet*, ‘the Holy One, blessed be He,’ or ‘the sixth sefirah’ and, on the other hand, a feminine divine manifestation, designated by various terms like *Shekhinah*, *Malkhut*, *Knesset Israel*, *Atara*, and ‘the tenth sefirah’”<sup>38</sup> The Song is the underlying text of this Aramaic formula. In fact it is the very base of all kabbalistic representations of the Shekhinah and theurgical inducements of divine eros.<sup>39</sup>

In Gamzu’s tale of love at first sight, kabbalistic theurgical interventions are amusedly bidirectional, for divine eros is construed as an inspiring model for a sexual union on earth (he is determined to marry Gemulah). But he does follow the kabbalistic hermeneutic dictum of relying heavily on the Song in his depiction of Gemulah as Shekhinah. When Gemulah appears as a moonlit, larger-than-life Shekhinah, her enchanting song, “*Yiddal, yiddal, yiddal, vah, pah, mah,*” though delivered in the incomprehensible, nonsensical language of Edo, bears echoes of the ancient love poem. Tochner contends that “*Yiddal, yiddal, yiddal, vah, pah, mah*” is based on a kabbalistic play on the initial letters of the Hebrew text of Song 4:16: “Let my beloved come to his garden and eat his pleasant fruits (*yavo dodi le-gano veyokhal pri megadav*).”<sup>40</sup> Even without the kabbalistic letter juggling, this passage bears the stamp of a fascinating commentary on the Song in Zohar Shemot (*Terumah*), which is quoted in Agnon’s compilation *Book, Writer, and Story*:

Rabbi Yose opened, saying, “*Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s* (Song of Songs 1:1). This song was aroused by Solomon when the Temple was built and all worlds were consummated, above and below, in single perfection. Although the Companions differ on this, still this song was uttered solely in completeness, when the moon became full and the Temple was constructed according to the pattern above. When the Temple was built below, since the day that the

world was created there has never been such joy before the blessed Holy One as on that day.<sup>41</sup>

In Shir Ha-Shirim Rabbah 1:12 (on 1:2), Daniel C. Matt notes, “various opinions are offered as to where and when the Song of Songs was uttered: at the crossing of the Red Sea, at the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, as the Tabernacle was erected in the desert, or when the Temple was built. However, Rabbi Yose insists that this perfect song must have been composed and sung at the moment of perfection: when King Solomon completed the Temple and *Shekhinah* descended to dwell on earth.”<sup>42</sup> The Zohar thus associates the first utterance of the Song with a perfect moment in the life of its composer, Solomon, in which the *Shekhinah* appears above the fully constructed Temple as a full moon (one of her prominent symbols), in an utterly joyful scene of redemption, reenacting another renowned verse of the ancient love poem: “Fair as the moon [*yafa kha-levana*] / Clear as the sun” (Song 6:10). Later, Gamzu will highlight this connection on longingly praising his wife’s celestial radiance: “Perfect as the moon was Gemulah [*tama kha-levana hayta Gemula*]: her eyes were sparks of light; her face was like the morning star; her voice was sweet as the shades of evening” (200).<sup>43</sup>

Just as Gamzu oscillates between literal and allegorical perceptions of Gemulah, so too does Ginat. To the extent that Ginat, like Goitein, traces a new polytheistic dimension in the Song (the “cultic” approach), he too surely leaves the plain sense of the Song behind. Whether Gemulah is associated with the *Shekhinah* or with Ishtar, the “Queen of Heaven” (Gemulah has a peculiar craving to bake and eat *kavanim* [178], the kind of cakes idolatrous women prepare for the “Queen of Heaven” in Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17–20)—she transcends the human, earthly realm. What is more, as strange as it may seem, Ginat’s research is comparable to kabbalistic hermeneutics. If the Kabbalah probed the mystery of the formation of languages long before *Gesenius* (as the narrator suggests), it also preceded biblical criticism in unabashedly highlighting the mythical layers of biblical texts. One of Scholem’s projects was indeed to call attention to the eruption of myth—including the eruption of a divine feminine principle—within the kabbalistic godhead, a project that was further developed by Moshe Idel and Yehuda Liebes.<sup>44</sup>

But there is another mode of modern reallegorization of the Song that is of great interest to Agnon, one that will lead us from the blind spots of biblical critics to the fissures within Zionist literalism. Indeed, the ironic continuities between traditional and modern modes of scholarship in “Edo and Enam” set

in relief the absurdities of the Zionist tendency to disavow interpretive modes that precede the Enlightenment. Against the Zionist rejection of traditional allegories, Agnon points to their ongoing relevance and to their reformulation in modern Israel. In singing “Kol dodi” and dancing to the so-called Mizrahi tunes of “El ginat egoz,” Israelis in the 1940s may well have attempted to advocate secular literalism and retrieve the authentic, Oriental biblical past. But in their understanding of the ancient love poem as vital to scenes of national redemption and revival corresponding to poetic-musical perfection, Agnon intimates, they are far closer to the allegorists of the Zohar than one would expect.

The singing, radiant, Mizrahi Gemulah could have leaped out of the golden Oriental gate in Raban’s *Come to Palestine* poster, with its inscription “For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land,” or out of the alluring Zionist publicity material Bloom ruminates on in *Ulysses*. Within the ever-growing allegorical zone of the tale, she is not only the embodiment of the Shekhinah and Ishtar but also a feminine personification of the Zionist quest for national renaissance within the Oriental habitat of the Song.

Agnon may also be referring to the somewhat forgotten earlier wave of immigration from Yemen, in 1882, known as *e’ele ve-tamar* (“I will climb up into the palm-tree”—Song 7:9). These Yemenite ‘olim envisioned their “ascent” to Palestine as a fulfillment of an allegorical reading of the ascent up to the palm tree in the ancient love poem (their choice was also based on a play of letters, *sikul otivot*, between *ve-tamar* and the Hebrew year of their immigration, *tarmav*). While secular Zionism recruited Yemenite culture to enhance literalism, Yemenite immigrants—from *e’ele ve-tamar* to the Magic Carpet Operation—were actually very much immersed in religious modes of life and allegorical exegesis.

#### THE DIMINUTION OF THE MOON AND THE FALL OF THE NATIONAL HOME

Agnon’s provocative juxtaposition of traditional, redemptive allegories of the Song with Zionist allegorical configurations is bound up with a sharp critique of the idealization at stake. Here, as in *Betrothed*, somnambulism—by and large enacted by a somnambulist woman—is the symptom that marks not only the enchantment of individual and collective dreams but also their proximity to illness. Gemulah is at once glorious as the *levana* and struck by her.

She is a somnambulist, sick woman who loses her capacity to sing on reaching Jerusalem, except on nights when the moon is full. Both Shoshana and Gemulah stand for the returning Zionist community as a whole, but whereas the former primarily represents the hardships of German-speaking newcomers (the Yekehs), the latter primarily underscores the estrangement and disillusionment of the Eastern Aliyot. As Ariel Hirschfeld points out, the dream of the “ingathering of exiles” turns out to be a colossal, erotic failure in “Edo and Enam.”<sup>45</sup> Instead of leading to rejuvenation or to a “creative symbiosis,” in Goitein’s terms, the marriage of the Mizrahi Gemulah and the Ashkenazi Gamzu is never consummated.

Writing in 1949, right after the foundation of the State of Israel, Agnon is still haunted by doubts regarding the prospects of the Zionist enterprise. He seems to wonder whether Zionism has led to a construction of a national home that may be ruined or deserted in ways that are all too similar to the ancient catastrophe of the destruction of the Temple. Kurzweil rightly defines the literal, familial, and national “house/home” (*bayit*) as a central motif in the tale. All the leading characters of “Edo and Enam,” he contends, are restlessly away from their home and spouses, dislocated in one way or another. Their return to the Land of Promise does not rid them of their inclinations to remain wandering Jews.<sup>46</sup> The quest for the archaic in Zionist culture is thus nothing less than a sign of “spiritual bankruptcy, an illusory attempt at renewal which is but a step in a process of decay.”<sup>47</sup>

Agnon invents a powerful modern version of a whole array of bleak allegories of the Song, in which the ancient love poem accentuates the pain of destruction and the eclipse of God. “Woe how the Rose of Sharon sits alone,” cries Elazar HaKalir in one of the famous *piyyutim* of Tish’a be’Av, where the Song of Songs and Lamentations merge into each other. There is a soundtrack of dirges underlying “Edo and Enam.”<sup>48</sup> Gemulah is a great singer not only of love songs but also of dirges, the other major female tradition in the Bible that Goitein discusses.<sup>49</sup> “Gemulah mourned her father for seven days and nights, with songs of lamentation every day and night. At the end of her first week of mourning she made him great obsequies, with songs and dances full of dread and wonder” (203). And then there are dirges (reminiscent of those of Gemulah) that are sung by an unknown woman, wailing and weeping, while trilling her voice, over her deceased young lover in a funeral that happens to take place alongside the funerals of Gemulah and Ginat (229).

The Zohar is a rich source for mystical commentaries in this grim venue as well. Most relevant to Gemulah are commentaries on the diminution of the

Shekhinah in times of exile. In exilic times, when the sins of Israel deprive her of the bounty of the upper spheres, the Shekhinah's "voice separates from her," and her legendary, lunar light diminishes to the point of becoming an almost invisible, black point. At that dark moment, she declares, "I am black" (*she-hora 'ani*), expressing her agony via the Shulamite's memorable words (Zohar 3:191a).<sup>50</sup>

It is precisely the minute black point of the Shekhinah that needs to be aroused, as Melila Hellner-Eshed puts it, in order to enhance redemption in kabbalistic theurgy.<sup>51</sup> But in Agnon's tale no one can handle the intense wakefulness of Gemulah.<sup>52</sup> The Three Oaths, with their admonition to refrain from awaking love "until it please," reappear in "Edo and Enam" within a mystical framework. Gemulah is, at times, a cross between the Shekhinah and a haunting golem who cannot be laid to rest. Indeed, the letters of Gemulah's name, may be "set free to recombine: a female golem," as Cynthia Ozick points out.<sup>53</sup> The golem, according to one legend, has the word *emet* ("truth") inscribed on his forehead. The only way to control the creature is by erasing the letter *alef*, thus forming the word *met* ("dead").<sup>54</sup> In imagining potential remedies for Gemulah's somnambulism, the narrator playfully raises the possibility of taking the letter *bet* out of *levana*, allowing the remaining verb *lana* ("she sleeps") to take its course.<sup>55</sup> His pun, however, remains imaginary and has no impact on Gemulah's conduct.

#### TEXTUAL EXTRAVAGANZA:

#### THE LEAVES AND THE DREAM OF THE LUNAR SONG

In yet another breathtaking allegorical twist of the tale, Gemulah, much like the "mad dog" (*kelev meshuga*), is a text cut loose. When Gemulah dances in the rocky hills of Enam, there are approximately twenty-two maidens—the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet—who accompany her.<sup>56</sup> Here, as in the pun on *levana-lana*, and the bewildering proliferation of the letters *ayin* and *gimel*, Agnon playfully relies on the primary premise of *Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Creation), one of the earliest kabbalistic texts: that the Hebrew alphabet was the foundation of all creation. "All the real beings in the three strata of the cosmos: in the world, in time and in man's body . . . came into existence through the interconnectedness of the 22 letters."<sup>57</sup>

Beyond Gemulah's ties with the twenty-two letters—maidens and far more visibly, she is inextricably connected to the magical, inscribed leaves of Enam. We first hear of the leaves when Gamzu goes up a steep mountain, "the high-

est of the range of steep mountains that raised themselves up to heaven,” with his future father-in-law, Gevariah. Gevariah, at one point, digs beneath a rock and lifts a stone, under which a cave opens up. He comes out of the cave holding an earthenware jar and lays bare the hidden leaves placed there. Let us consider yet again the passage in which our two tales intersect:

On the way back, he opened the jar and showed me a bundle of dry leaves unlike any I had ever seen; and on them were the strange characters [letters] of a script unlike any that I knew; and the color of the characters, that is, the color of the ink in which they were written, was not like any color we know. At first sight I should have said that the scribe had mixed gold, azure and purple with all the primary colors of the rainbow and written with them. But as I stood gazing, the colors altered before my eyes and changed into the tints of seaweeds drawn from the depths, such weeds as Dr. Rechnitz drew up from the sea near Jaffa. Then again, they were like the silver strands we observe on the moon. I stared at the leaves, at the characters, at Gemulah’s father. At that moment he seemed as if transported to another world. And then it became increasingly clear that what at first sight seemed an illusion was the truth itself. . . . And if I have no words to describe the experience, yet it was more distinct than anything one can explain in words. . . . As I stood marveling, Gemulah’s father replaced the leaves in the jar and spoke to me simply, with these words: “They are plants of the earth, and they have been given power to influence the upper air.” (165–66)

Gevariah reveals the leaves to his future son-in-law and designates them as an antidote against his daughter’s somnambulism: in marrying Gemulah, Gamzu must bind himself to these leaves. But on an allegorical level, Gevariah is a Moses who brings down from the mountain a very strange Torah, “unlike any [we have] ever seen.”<sup>58</sup> With its mysterious jars, caves, and magical leaves, this scene offers a unique mixture of a carnivalesque *One Thousand and One Nights* version of the revelation on Mount Sinai, a variation on Zohar Shemot’s account of the spectacular moment in which the letters of the Torah were engraved, and an unexpected scientific dive into the depths from which Rechnitz draws up his wondrous weeds.<sup>59</sup> What the Holy Writ is depends on the eye of the beholder. Even a single beholder, if he is as wild an exegete as Gamzu, can wander between several perspectives at once—the fabulous, the mystical, and (in spite of himself) the scientific—admiring the ever-changing shifts in color.

Gemulah is a woman of many biblical leaves, but she is a grand embodiment of one leaf in particular: the Song of Songs. More specifically, she is an aesthetic allegory that probes the great intensities of the language of love and the love of language. The aesthetic, allegorical aspect of Gemulah is most apparent in the narrator's dreams. The narrator, a writer of sorts, falls asleep during one of his stays at the Greifenbachs and dreams of being on a train.<sup>60</sup>

Sleep came quickly, and I knew nothing until I was roused by the sound of train wheels. The train reached Garmisch and stopped there. The door of the compartment opened and there was a view of high mountains and streams; I could hear a voice singing *yiddal, yiddal, yiddal, vah, pah, mah*. I was drawn by the voice and wanted to follow it. The door was shut against me. The moon came out and covered me with her light. I smiled at her with one eye and she smiled back with a grin that covered all her face.

But there was no train. I was in bed at the Greifenbachs'. I turned over to one side and pulled the blanket over my eyes, because the moon was shining on my face. I was thinking of how the world has shut itself in so that none of us can go where he wishes, except for the moon, that wanders over all the earth, singing *yiddal, yiddal, yiddal, vah, pah, mah*. (182–83)

Gemulah herself does not appear in the dream. Instead, the moon is personified as a seductive woman who covers the narrator with her light and shines on his face while singing Gemulah's song. The Song, then, becomes the beloved as it becomes one with the Shulamite's moon metaphor. Something of the mystical reading of the Zohar resonates here, but in the narrator's dream-world the *levana* seems more of a teasingly, uninhibited song or an uninhibited singer/poetess than a divine being (note the unusual use of the term *meshoreret*—a term that means both “singing” and “poetess” but is more commonly used in the latter sense in Modern Hebrew—in the depiction of the “voice singing”). The flirtatious, singing moon lures the narrator through the shut door like the voice of the lover “upon the handles of the lock.” And although the enchanting *levana* makes her way through the locks with the immense erotic tangibility of her dazzling light and voice, she remains high up in the sky, wandering “over all the earth,” with a wide grin on her face, while the narrator's movement is obstructed as he is trapped in the train compartment below.

But why is the narrator in Garmisch (a town located in Bavaria)? In this context, the European qualities of Gemulah's song become more evident. It

seems closer to a German shepherd tune (*yodilahihu*) than to an Oriental melody. Is this yet another moment in which Agnon lays bare the absurdities of the projection at the base of biblical ethnographies of the Song? What is even more vital for Agnon, I believe, is maintaining the mobility of any imagining whatsoever. One can be in Germany, like Herder, and imagine folk-life in the Orient, and one can lie in a bed at the Greifenbachs' and dream of Garmisch. The Song is not bound up with a particular culture or with a fixed geographic zone.

The linguistic-cultural multiplicity of Gemulah's Song does not end here. Given that there are no vowels in Hebrew, she could be singing *Yiddel, Yiddel, Yiddel, vah pa mah*, introducing into Garmisch's German a touch of Yiddish and a latent evocation of the Yiddish term for "Jew," *Yid*.<sup>61</sup>

Gender is as unstable as geographic and linguistic distinctions in this dream. The narrator is both the male lover and the dreaming Shulamite yearning for her loved one. Gender fluidity, as we have seen, is a central feature in the dramatization of Song 5 in the dreamy, lunar race in *Betrothed*. In "Edo and Enam" an actual dream is at stake where the *levana* is a character and the writer (via the narrator) is implicated in this scene of blurred gender distinctions. Indeed, it seems as if this fluidity between male and female roles is a prerequisite for writing.

To go back to Goitein, let me suggest that despite Agnon's ironic stance, he couldn't but have been fascinated by his friend's speculation that the composer of the Song was a great female poet who imprinted her own tale within the Song. Goitein's admiration for the Shulamite and his tracing of a poet's sensibility in her Song must have struck a special chord for Agnon, who was drawn to the beloved's song from the very beginning of his literary career, when he chose to name himself "Agnon," identifying with the Shulamite-like *agunah*. No wonder that the narrator's heart beats fast upon hearing the Greifenbachs speak of the Enamite hymns, like a lover who has heard the name of his beloved evoked all of a sudden. And perhaps it is no coincidence that in "Edo and Enam" it is the narrator who assumes something of Goitein's role in tracing a woman's song in the cadences of the Enamite hymns, discovering what scholars failed to notice.

#### THE ENDING: THE SONG OF GROFIT

The tale does not end with the tragic death of Gemulah and Ginat. It concludes with the narrator's note on the inexplicable ways in which the Enamite

hymns keep circulating after Ginat's death—acquiring ever-growing recognition among readers round the world—despite the latter's attempt to prevent their future publication. In the stubborn vitality of the hymns and the unexpected light that emanates from them, one can glimpse a less bleak potentiality of life and love in Jerusalem. But the foregrounding of the fate of the manuscript is, above all, a final reminder of Agnon's ever-present passion to reflect on the unexpected twists and turns in the lives of authors and texts.<sup>62</sup>

The discarded texts of Ginat bear some resemblance to the Geniza manuscripts, documents that were meant to be buried but were brought back to the cultural stage unexpectedly. They may also call to mind the Mosaic text in *Moses and Monotheism*, returning from the realm of the repressed with greater force, reminding Freud of Schiller's poem: "All that is to live in endless song / Must in life-time first be drown'd."<sup>63</sup> But, above all, the ghostly quality of the Enamite hymns—capable of springing back to life even though their ethnographer or author sought to get rid of them—leads us back to "And Solomon's Wisdom Excelled" (a piece published during the same year as "Edo and Enam," 1950). Agnon's King Solomon, as we have seen, tries to hide his love songs.<sup>64</sup> He goes to the various sites of the ancient biblical love poem in search of a burial space, but all seem far too exposed to unwanted intruders. When he finally buries them in the well-guarded vineyard of Ba'al Hammon, he discovers that despite his efforts, the songs "arose from the ground and were heard between the vines," arousing the young maidens who were dancing there. Solomon does not lose hope and conjures the maidens with the Shulamite's words: "I charge you, O, daughters of Jerusalem. . . . Do not stir up nor awaken love." On hearing his admonition, the maidens "hid their songs in their hearts." And yet they too cannot quite set limits to the songs. The love songs that were supposedly "forgotten" in their hearts are depicted via the verses of the Song of Songs and thus seem to be part and parcel of the known collection of Solomon's poetry. Or else the Song of Songs as we know it is but a remnant of the lost amorous corpus and as such serves as a fragmentary clue to the songs Solomon and the maidens tried to conceal.

The Enamite hymns are reprinted in increasing numbers, but what about the Song of Grofit? Is it the hidden aspect of the Enamite songs, both akin to them and unattainable? In many ways, it is indeed a peculiar version of Solomon's esoteric corpus. Gamzu depicts the Song of Grofit in an overflowing, winding, highly poetic sentence: "The songs of the springs cling to the songs of the high mountains and the high mountains cling to the birds of the sky, and among those birds there is one whose name is Grofit. When Grofit's hour

comes to leave the world, it hangs its head in the clouds and trills its voice; and when the bird finishes its song, it departs from the world. And all those songs are linked to Gemulah's tongue. And if she were to utter the song of Grofit, her soul would depart and she would die."<sup>65</sup> The Song of Grofit is a poem of mythical proportions that encompasses the entire world in a grand chain that links the earth and the heaven with nothing less than Gemulah's tongue and trilling voice. It is a mode of poetic expression that is so absolute that it loses touch with content and is closer to music than to the realm of words.<sup>66</sup> To sing it means to fly up onto the alluring, though ominous, realms of heaven, where the clouds are both the epitome of poetic inspiration and an executioner's rope. To utter it means death. It is an exhilarating combination of a whole array of legendary songs—the Siren's song and a swan song—and a series of legendary birds, from the eagle of Psalm 103, allegedly capable (like the Phoenix) of renewing its youth, to Grafit, the inscrutable bird on Solomon's throne in the esoteric midrash "King Solomon's Throne and Hippodrome"<sup>67</sup> In its unparalleled totality, the Song of Grofit calls to mind another sequence in Zohar Shemot, *Terumah* (also quoted in *Book, Writer, and Story*): "Solomon uttered the praise of this song, which is totality of the whole Torah, totality of the whole work of Creation, totality of mystery of the patriarchs . . . totality of Israel's exile among the nations and their redemption. . . . Whatever was, whatever is, and whatever will eventually be . . . is all in Song of Songs."<sup>68</sup>

The Enamite hymns bear resemblance to this ultimate Song: they are defined as the splendid primary "link in a chain that bound the beginnings of recorded history to the ages before," and they too are tied to Gemulah's singing. And yet with all their monumental beauty, they are apparently only a trace of the primeval cadences of Grofit.

In his banquet speech on receiving the Nobel Prize, Agnon, as one recalls, recounts a dream:

In a dream, in a vision of the night, I saw myself standing with my brother-Levites in the Holy Temple, singing with them the songs of David, King of Israel, melodies such as no ear has heard since the day our city was destroyed and its people went into exile. I suspect that the angels in charge of the Shrine of Music, fearful lest I sing in wakefulness what I had sung in dream, made me forget by day what I had sung at night.

Agnon could have just as well said (had it been in keeping with the decorum of the occasion): "In a dream, in a vision of the night I saw myself stand-

ing with Solomon, singing with him songs of love . . . melodies such as no ear has heard since the day our city was destroyed. . . . I suspect that the angels in charge of the Shrine of Music, fearful lest I sing in wakefulness what I had sung in dream, made me forget by day what I have sung at night.”

“Edo and Enam” is a tale about the aesthetic irresistibility of the Song of Songs, its capacity to emerge, in all contexts, sacred or secular, stirring the hearts of its listeners, defying any attempt to hide it. But it is also a tale about the obstacles that stand in the way of those who search for aesthetic models in the biblical text with the assumption that this archaic literary past is wholly revealed or accessible.<sup>69</sup> In Agnon’s meditation on epitome, any attempt to retrieve the originary Song of Songs or the originary setting of its composition—be it by German biblical ethnographers or their Zionist followers—is doomed to be partial, if not deadly. Modern times, with their advanced technology (the train in the narrator’s dream) and advanced science, may have created an illusion of hermeneutic progress but by no means made the ancient love poem any more graspable or intelligible.

When the narrator rebukes Gamzu for endangering his somnambulist wife in leaving the door unlocked at night, the bookseller smiles slyly and says:

Even if I hung seven locks upon the door, and locked every one with seven keys, and threw each key into one of the seven seas of the Land of Israel, my wife would find them all and open the door. (164)

His response sounds like an amusing inversion of Saadia Gaon’s commentary on the ancient poem, where he likens the Song of Songs to a lock whose key had been lost. To pin down the Song to a sole interpretation would be, as far as Agnon is concerned, as futile as trying to stop the moon. Even if one were to try to lock the Song with what may seem as the ultimate exegetical key, like *Gemulah* it would find a way to escape into the moonlit night.

woman and “poetry.” See Alter’s comments on *Shira* in “Agnon’s Last Word,” 77. See also Dan Miron, “Ashkenaz: Ha-havaya ha-yehudit-germanit be-kitvey Agnon” [Ashkenaz: The Jewish-German Experience in Agnon’s Writings], in *Ha-rofe ha-medumeh: Iyunim ba-siporet ha-yehudit ha-classit* [La Médecin Imaginaire: Studies in Classical Jewish Fiction] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1995), 297–306; and Mintz, *Translating Israel*, 106.

#### 4. THE BIBLICAL ETHNOGRAPHERS OF “EDO AND ENAM” AND THE QUEST FOR THE ULTIMATE SONG

- 1 Adhering to the Hebrew name, I use the transliteration “Grofit” rather than Lever’s “Grofith” here and throughout the chapter.
- 2 Tochner, *Pesher Agnon*, 106–22.
- 3 Tzachi Weiss, *Mot ha-Shekhinah bi-yetsirat Agnon: Kri’ah be-arba’ah sipurim* [Death of the Shekhinah: Readings in Four Agnon Stories and in Their Sources] (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2009), 117–32.
- 4 “Gershom Scholem on Agnon,” interview by Dan Miron, pts. 1 and 2, *Ariel—Israel Review of Arts and Letters* 52 (1982): 94–106; 53 (1983): 61–75, 63. Scholem’s comment on Agnon’s relationships with writers is something of an exaggeration. Especially in his first years in Palestine, Agnon had significant friendships with Yosef Haim Brenner and Bialik. See Haim Be’er, *Gam ahavatam gam sina’atam: Bialik, Brenner, Agnon—ma’arakhot yehasim* [Their Love and Their Hate: Bialik, Brenner, Agnon—Relations] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2002).
- 5 Scholem, “Reflections on S. Y. Agnon,” 62.
- 6 For an English translation of the German version, which includes this reference to “Edo and Enam,” see Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, 103.
- 7 Agnon goes so far as playing with the pun in the Song between *gan na’ul* (locked garden) and *gal na’ul* (locked spring) when the newspapers mistakenly print the name “Gilat” instead of “Ginat” (227).
- 8 Freud, “Female Sexuality” (1931), in Standard Edition, 21:226. Freud returns to the question of matriarchy in *Moses and Monotheism* in his study of the rise of monotheism against its predecessors.
- 9 *Bein Shlomo Dov Goitein ve-Shmuel Yosef Agnon* [Between Shlomo Dov Goitein and Shmuel Yosef Agnon], ed. Ayala Gordon (Jerusalem: private publication, 2008). A copy is available at the National Library at Givat Ram.
- 10 Dan Laor, review of the collection of letters between Agnon and Goitein, in “Gentlemen and Scholars,” *Haaretz*, January 14, 2009.
- 11 See Ayala Gordon’s introduction to *Between Shlomo Dov Goitein and Shmuel Shai Agnon*, 4–11.
- 12 Quoted in Laor, “Gentlemen and Scholars.”
- 13 As Agnon’s American connection, Goitein also informed his friend of the young promising American critic of modern Hebrew literature—Robert Alter. See letter no. 55, in *Between Shlomo Dov Goitein and Shmuel Yosef Agnon*, 88.
- 14 Goitein, “S.Y. Agnon: Personal Account,” in *A Memorial Tribute to Dr. Shmuel Yosef*

- Agnon, presented by Dropsie University and the Consulate General of Israel, Sunday, March 29, 1970 (Philadelphia: Dropsie University, 1970), 12. Note that in addition to this personal account, Goitein wrote other essays on Agnon's work: "Rabbi Yudil," *Davar*, April 1932, reprinted in *Shai Agnon ba-bikoret ha-ivrit* [S. Y. Agnon: Critical Essays of His Writings] (Tel Aviv: Open University of Israel and Schocken, 1992), 2:6–11; "Al sippur pashut" [On a Simple Story], *Haaretz*, August 12, 1938; "Al 'Shevu'at emunim" [On *Betrothed*], *Gazit* 5, nos. 9–10 (1943): 32–34; and "Besh'ah ahat" [Within One Hour] in *leAgnon Shai* [A Homage to Agnon] (Jerusalem, 1959). All are reprinted in the volume edited by Ayala Gordon, *Between Shlomo Dov Goitein and Shmuel Yosef Agnon*.
- 15 Note that Scholem's first name—Gershom/Gerhard—also begins with a *gimel*, not to mention the fact that Greifenbach's first name is "Gerhard."
- 16 I am indebted to Nitza Ben-Dov for calling my attention to the relevance of the *tet* and the *nun* as well.
- 17 Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 200–201.
- 18 David Myers, "Franz Rosenzweig and the Rise of Theological Anti-Historicism," in *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 68–105.
- 19 Moyn, "Divine and Human Love," 210–11. Note that Said devotes a brief section to the projection entailed in the quest for biblical realities through the contemporary Orient in his consideration of Holy Land travel narratives. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), 168.
- 20 Freud, "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*," 17.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 22 Kurzweil underscores the network of allusions to Ecclesiastes but overlooks the resonance of the Song in the tale. See Kurzweil, *Masot 'al sipurey Shai Agnon*, 141–60.
- 23 For more on the representation of Jerusalem in "Edo and Enam" and elsewhere in Agnon's writings, see Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, "S. Y. Agnon's Jerusalem: Before and after 1948," *Jewish Social Studies* (forthcoming).
- 24 One of the questions in Goitein's questionnaires regarding Yemenite culture is, "Are there Hakhamim in your community? Or authors of books and poems?" Goitein, *HaTeymanim*, 350.
- 25 On the aesthetic passions Ginat and Gamzu have in common, see Michal Arbel, *Katuv 'al 'oro shel kelev: Al tfisat ha-yetsira etsel Shai Agnon* [Written on the Skin of a Dog: S. Y. Agnon, Concepts of Art and Creativity] (Jerusalem: Keter and Ben-Gurion University, 2006).
- 26 The other major biblical text at stake is Judges 21:20–23. Other pertinent sources, as Shlomo Zuker observes, are Mishnah Ta'anit 4:8 and a parallel *braitā* cited in the Talmud: Ta'anit 31a. See Zuker, "Mekorot be-'itsuv ha-merhav ve-hadmuyot be-Edo ve-Enam le-Shai Agnon" [Sources for the Fashioning of Space and Characters in Agnon's "Edo and Enam"], *Mehkarey Yerushalayim be-sifrut ivrit* 3 (1982): 44. See also Hillel Weis, *Agnon: Agunot, Edo ve-Enam; Mekorot, mivnim u-mashma'uyot*, vols. 2–3 [Agnon: "Agunot" and "Edo and Enam"; Sources, Structure, and Sig-

- nificance] (Tel Aviv: Open University Press, 1981). Note that in his ethnographic account of another remote village in the East, Gamzu actually refers to the practice of reciting the Song of Songs (193).
- 27 “Edo ve-Enam, in *Ad hena*, 284 (Hebrew text).
- 28 Tosefta Sanhedrin 12:10. This commentary appears in the section on the Song of Songs in Agnon, *Sefer, sofer ve-sippur (Book, Writer, and Story)* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken, 2000), 71. Ta’anit 4:8 is yet another remnant of an ancient literalist tradition, as Ephraim E. Urbach suggests (“Drashot hazal u-ferushei origenes le-Shir Ha-Shirim ve-ha-vikuah ha-yehudi-notsri,” *Tarbiz* 30 [1965]: 148 [a homage to S. D. Goitein on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday]). “Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel said: There were no happier days for Israel than the 15th of Ab and the Day of Atonement, for on them the daughters of Jerusalem used to go forth in white raiments; and these were borrowed, that none should be abashed which had them not. . . . And the daughters of Jerusalem went forth to dance in the vineyards. And what did they say? ‘Young man, lift up thine eyes and see what thou wouldst choose for thyself: set not thine eyes on beauty, but set thine eyes on family’ (Mishnah Ta’anit 4:8, Danby translation, 200–201).
- 29 Shlomo Dov Goitein, “Religion in Everyday Life as Reflected in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza,” in *Religion in a Religious Age*, ed. Shlomo Dov Goitein (Cambridge, Mass.: Association for Jewish Studies, 1974), 3–4.
- 30 Leah Goldberg, “Agnon bi-shlosha kolot” [Agnon in Three Voices], *Al HaMishmar*, October 27, 1950; reprinted in Goldberg, *Ha-Ometz le-hulin* [Courage for the Quotidian] (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat HaPoalim, 1950), 190–95.
- 31 Goldberg, “Agnon bi-shlosha kolot”; my translation.
- 32 My translation, “Edo ve-Enam,” 304 (Hebrew text).
- 33 For more on Gemulah’s name, see Zuker, “Mekorot be-’itsuv ha-merhav.”
- 34 My understanding of the kabbalistic themes in this tale is indebted to Zuker, “Mekorot be-’itsuv ha-merhav,” and to Michal Oron, “Semalim u-motivim kabbaliyim ba-sipur ‘Edo ve-Enam’ le-Shai Agnon” [Symbols and Kabbalistic Motifs in Agnon’s “Edo and Enam”], *Baseminar*, 1976, 160–72.
- 35 Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 27–28.
- 36 Susan Handelman, *Fragments of Redemption: Jewish Thought and Literary Theory in Benjamin, Scholem, and Levinas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 106.
- 37 In a sense, Agnon’s mingling of the two approaches to the symbol/allegory debate underscores the points of affinity between Scholem and Benjamin. Despite the dispute between the two, their theories of language, as Steven M. Wasserstrom notes, are quite similar. See Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999). Many of the traits of Scholem’s symbol may be found in the lost Adamic language Benjamin sketches out in “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 314–32.
- 38 Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 2. See also Yehuda Liebes, “Eros ve-Zohar” [Eros and the

- Zohar], *Alpayim*, no. 9 (1994): 67–119.
- 39 See Arthur Green, “Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs: Reflections on a Kabbalistic Symbol in Its Historical Context,” *AJS Review* 26, no. 1 (2002): 1–52; Asulin, “Ha-parshanut ha-mistit le-shir ha-shirim be-sefer ha-Zohar ve-rik’ah.”
- 40 Tochner, *Pesher Agnon*, 111.
- 41 Matt, *The Zohar*, vol. 5, *Terumah* 2:143a, 309.
- 42 Ibid., 309n336. On the midrash in Song of Songs Rabbah regarding the singing of the Song during the crossing of the Red Sea, see Daniel Boyarin, “The Song of Songs, Lock or Key: The Holy Song as Mashal,” in *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), chap. 7.
- 43 As Yair Zakovitch notes, in Song 6:10 the feminine terms for both the sun and the moon are used (*hama, levana*) to underscore the Shulamite’s feminine beauty. See Zakovitch, *Shir ha-shirim*, 115. Agnon follows the Song in preferring the term *levana* in his depictions of Gemulah.
- 44 See Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988); and Yehuda Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth and Messianism*, trans. Batya Stein (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). Note that Ginat’s name, among other things, evokes the common kabbalistic use of the verse “I went down into the garden of nuts” (*ginat egoz*—Song 6:11) as a code for a mode of hermeneutic speculation that seeks the “innermost kernel.” See Gershom Scholem, *On Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 58.
- 45 Ariel Hirschfeld, “Locus and Language: Hebrew Culture in Israel, 1890–1990,” in Biale, *Cultures of the Jews*, 1053.
- 46 Kurzweil, *Masot ‘al sipurey Shai Agnon*, 141–60. For more on the legends of the wandering Jew, see Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes, eds., *The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).
- 47 Robert Alter’s paraphrase of Kurzweil’s reading, in “Agnon’s Symbolic Masterpieces,” *Hadassah Magazine* 48, no. 2 (1966): 24.
- 48 My understanding of Agnon’s evocation of the dirges of Tish’a be’Av in this tale is indebted to a seminar paper titled “Agnon’s Lament: Song of Songs and Lamentation; Intertextuality in ‘Ido and Enam,”” by Batnativ HaKarmi Weinberg.
- 49 My understanding of the role of women as dirge singers is indebted to Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature*, trans. Batya Stein (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000); and Vered Madar, “Text bein kol li-tnu’a: Kinot nashim mi-teiman” [Between Voice and Gesture: Dirges of Yemenite Women], *Mehkarei Yerushalayim be-folklore yehudi* 23 (2005): 89–119.
- 50 See Oron, “Semalim u-motivim kabaliyim ba-sipur ‘Edo ve-Enam,”” 163; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 224–25. For more on the diminution of the moon, see Betty Rojzman, *Selihat ha-levana: ‘Al ha-tagiyut ha-mikra’it* [The Forgiveness of the Moon: Essays on Biblical Tragedy] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2008).
- 51 For more on the Zohar’s configuration of the arousal of the Shekhinah, see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, 204–51.
- 52 Both Gemulah and Shoshana are moonstruck, but each, as Hillel Barzel point out, has

- her own distinct malady. Whereas Shoshana is a somnambulist whose greatest desire is to sleep, Gemulah is excessively awake. Barzel, *Sipurey ahava shel Shai Agnon* [The Love Stories of S. Y. Agnon] (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1975), 89.
- 53 Cynthia Ozick, "Agnon's Antagonisms," *Commentary* 86 (1988): 45. Note that traces of the golem story are already evident in the opening exchange between the narrator and the Greifenbachs regarding the question of whether or not Ginat has "created a girl for himself" (151).
- 54 For more on the golem, see Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 351–55; and Moshe Idel, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990). On the golem in Agnon's oeuvre, see Hagbi, *Language, Absence, Play*; Maya Barzilai, "S. Y. Agnon's German Consecration and the 'Miracle' of Hebrew Prose," *Prooftexts* (forthcoming).
- 55 The narrator's playful remark regarding *levana* and *lana* does not appear in Lever's translation. In the Hebrew text it may be found in "Edo ve-Enam," 289.
- 56 To be more precise, Agnon mentions "twenty-two to twenty-seven maidens." The former number is the standard number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet whereas the latter includes the five final letters (*otiyot sofiyot*).
- 57 Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 25. *Sefer Yezirah* was found, of all places, in the Cairo Geniza. For more on *Sefer Yetsirah*, see Liebes, *Torat ha-yetsira shel Sefer Yetsirah*. Agnon's compilation *Book, Writer, and Story* (*Sefer, sofer ve-sippur*) includes many passages from *Sefer Yetsirah*. The very title of this compilation, as Liebes points out, is taken from *Sefer Yetsirah* (Liebes, *Torat ha-yetsira shel Sefer Yetsirah*, 273). What is more, there is a whole section in *Sefer, sofer ve-sippur* on the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
- 58 On the evocation of the revelation at Mount Sinai in this passage, see Tochner, *Pesher Agnon*, 117.
- 59 The passage from Zohar Shemot, titled "All of Israel Saw the Letters," goes as follows: "The moment these letters came forth, / secretly circling as one . . . and comets shot out in colors like before. / And so on every side . . . Now they came forth, these carved, flaming letters / flashing like gold when it dazzles." *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment*, trans. Daniel C. Matt (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 119.
- 60 For more on the centrality of the narrator, see Band, *Nostalgia and Nightmare*, 394–96.
- 61 I am indebted to Ruth Weise for this observation.
- 62 The question of the bleak ending of "Edo and Enam"—and how bleak it is—has troubled many critics. Tochner's account is one of the most intriguing. In contrast to Kurzweil, he claims that on the ideational level the tale is gloomy, but on the aesthetic one it is utterly exhilarating. And the most captivating feature in this aesthetic "castle of marvels" is the rising, bodiless figure of the maiden of the Shekhinah (*ne'arat ha-Shekhinah*)—Gemulah. See Tochner, *Pesher Agnon*, 122.
- 63 Quoted in Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 130. Agnon may also be alluding to the Dead Sea Scrolls which were found between 1946 and 1956. I am indebted to Galit Hasan-Rokem for calling my attention to this possibility.
- 64 The term for "hide" in "And Solomon's Wisdom Excelled" is *ganaz*, much as it is in

- the Zohar's commentary on Solomon's hidden corpus.
- 65 My translation of "Edo ve-Enam," 305 (Hebrew text), based on Lever's translation, 223–24.
- 66 On the musicality of Agnon, see Ruth HaCohen, "Lishmo'a el ha-rina o el ha-tefila: Leida hadadit shel milim u-lehanim be-hekshrei ha-zemer ha-'ivri" ["To Hear the Singing and Prayer": From Words to Music and from Music to Words in the Israeli Song Culture], *Mehkarei Yerushalayim be-sifrut ivrit* 20 (2006): 14–15.
- 67 Yaacov Bahat suggests that "Grofit" may also be affiliated with a musical instrument used in the Temple—*magrefa*—an ancient precursor of the organ. Bahat, *Shai Agnon, Haim Hazaz: Iyoney mikra* [S. Y. Agnon, Haim Hazaz: Biblical Studies] (Haifa: Yovel, 1970), 169. For a comparison between the Song of Grofit and Heinrich Heine's "Die Lorelei," see Ozick, "Agnon's Antagonisms." Franz Kafka's "Josephine the Singer" may also be relevant in this connection. In associating music, madness, and death, Agnon engages in a dialogue with German Romanticism. While doing so, he is attuned to Kafka's critique of the Romantic perspective. For more on music and madness in German Romanticism, see John T. Hamilton, *Music, Madness, and the Unknowing of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).
- 68 Matt, *The Zohar*, vol. 5, *Terumah* 2:144a, 314.
- 69 On Agnon's frustrated quests for a lost perfection, see Kurzweil, *Masot 'al sipurey Shai Agnon*, 283–91.

#### EPILOGUE: FOREVERMORE

- 1 Kurzweil, "Ha-yesod ha-dati be-kitvey Agnon" [The Religious Element in Agnon's Writings], in *Masot 'al sipurey Shai Agnon*, 328–52. See Moshe Golchin's account of Kurzweil's reading of Agnon in this connection, in *Baruch Kurzweil ke-farshan tarbut* [Baruch Kurzweil as a Cultural Interpreter] (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2008), chap. 4.
- 2 Zemach, "Al ha-tefisa ha-historiosofit bi-shnayim mi-sipurav ha-me'uharim shel Agnon," 381–85.
- 3 The Canaanite movement (founded in 1939, reaching its peak in the 1940s) promoted the idea that the Land of Israel was that of ancient Canaan. It sought to continue the traditions of prebiblical cultures in the ancient Near East and accordingly rejected Judaism in favor of a native and rooted Hebrew identity.
- 4 Benjamin Lazier, *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination between the World Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 4.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 6 Scholem, "Redemption through Sin," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism, and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 78–141.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 111–12. For more on the perception of the meaning of the Torah in Jewish mysticism, see Scholem, *On Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 32–86; and Moshe Idel, "Torah Hadashah: Messiah and the New Torah in Jewish Mysticism and Modern Scholarship," in *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 21 (2010): 57–110.
- 8 The more accurate transliteration of her name is thus Aldag rather than Eldag.