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“Our Town”

Mr. Stern and Buczacz in *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*

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In 1912, Agnon left Jaffa for Germany. He first lived in Berlin and then moved to Leipzig in 1917, where he remained for various short periods in 1917 and 1918. Throughout the years he lived in Germany, he did not write about his life in Germany or World War I. His literary preoccupation was, rather, the life and culture of Eastern European Jewry. Only in the 1950s did he turn his attention to Germany, to write what is considered to be his valediction to prewar German Jewish life. Two major novels, ‘Ad henah (To This Day) and Behanuto shel Mar Lublin (In Mr. Lublin’s Store), first published in 1952 and 1975, respectively, resulted from his stay in Germany from 1912 to 1924. This article will examine the section of In Mr. Lublin’s Store Agnon called “The Last Chapter,” which was first published in 1964. It recalls the World War I with its corollary, the destruction and displacement of Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe which, in the novel, results in a visit to the narrator in Leipzig from his old friend Mr. Stern. The author discusses the figure of Mr. Stern and their shared home town, unnamed but clearly Buczacz, which are central to this chapter, as well as the narrator’s dilemma within his confrontation with modernity.

In 1912, S. Y. Agnon left Jaffa for Germany. He first lived in Berlin and then moved to Leipzig in 1917, where he remained for various short periods in 1917 and 1918. According to Gershom Scholem, Agnon wished to dissociate himself from Galicia and Palestine and sought a place for further artistic development.¹ “Living in Leipzig is pleasant. It doesn’t impose much on its citizens and even a person like me finds his way around.” So writes Agnon’s narrator in *Behanuto shel Mar*

Lublin (*In Mr. Lublin's Store*), echoing Agnon's own comment in a letter to Zalman Schocken in 1917: “I like Leipzig very much.”²

Classified as a foreigner, Agnon was obliged to register daily with the police despite being a national of an allied country. Generally, imperial Germany made it difficult for foreigners to settle within its borders, and few of them could evade its tight residency permit system.³ Once military rule had been established in German cities, including Leipzig, the restrictions for foreigners increased, and Agnon was eventually required to leave Leipzig permanently without having been able to obtain a residence permit, unlike his narrator in *In Mr. Lublin's Store*. He moved to Bad Homburg and left in 1924 to return to Palestine after a fire had destroyed his house and his library, including unpublished manuscripts, among them an autobiography.

Throughout the years he lived in Germany, Agnon did not neglect his literary activities but wrote, revised, and published his work. However, none of the works written between 1912 and 1924 dealt with his life in Germany, his attitude to German Jewry and Germans in general, or indeed with World War I. His literary preoccupation during the war years, as it had been for some years previously, was the life and culture of Eastern European Jewry. In the mid-1950s, he began to publish a series of stories about Buczacz, which appeared in newspapers and literary supplements in the 1950s and 1960s and culminated in the publication of *‘Ir umelo’ah* (*A City in its Fullness*) in 1973.⁴

More or less at the same time, beginning in the 1950s, he also turned his attention to Germany, to write his impressions of the country in wartime and what is considered to be his valediction to prewar German Jewish life.⁵ Two major novels, *‘Ad benah* (*To This Day*), published in two sections in 1952 and 1953; *In Mr. Lublin's Store*; and a handful of short stories were based on his impressions of Germany gleaned from 1912 to 1924.⁶ *Mr. Lublin* deals not only with the German Jewish communities but also with Germany, its history, its people, and, of course, the war. It is not inconceivable that parts of it were written concurrently with *A City in its Fullness*, for some of the anecdotes and stories, similar in style to those in *A City*, seem to have spilled over, together with the narrator's elegiac memories of his hometown.

Yet *Mr. Lublin* is a novel of modernity, set within a mechanized war and in a modern city where all the buildings are new, “for there is no building more than

forty or fifty years old.”⁷ The novel’s narrator is engaged in an internal struggle with the encroachment of urban modernity upon traditional Jewish practice and study. In terms of composition, the novel is something of a mystery. We do not know the circumstances of its creation, why Agnon put it aside, whether he intended its various parts to form a coherent whole, or whether he intended it to be a parallel narrative to *To This Day*, which is set in the same space and time. Alan Mintz, writing about the unfinished *A City in its Fullness*, consoles us:

For readers and scholars alike, this situation is both bad and good. We are deprived of the perfection that adequate time for revision would have provided; however, at the same time, we are granted access to the writing as it flowed from Agnon’s pen, and we feel the master’s imagination in the process of origination.⁸

As I have said, Agnon was preoccupied with the writing of *A City and its Fullness* from the 1950s to his death in 1970, the time when he was also publishing *Mr. Lublin* chapter by chapter. Yet *A City* is a celebration of the richness of Jewish life in Buczacz in all its greatness and baseness, a reconstruction, consecration, and memorial, whereas *Mr. Lublin* is largely a lament. There Buczacz is lost, relegated to memory, its metonym being a *revenant*, the ghost of one of its greatest sons, Mr. Jacob Stern. In fact, within its mixture of history, autobiography and fantasy, *Mr. Lublin* is a commemoration of the lost, beloved “our town” whose metaphorical and actual significance Mintz so brilliantly explored throughout his career. Agnon’s dedication in *A City* can easily refer to both wars: “This is the chronicle of the city of Buczacz, which I have written in my pain and anguish[....]” *Mr. Lublin* reveals no less pain and anguish at the destruction of the Eastern European Jewish communities in the second decade of the twentieth century both by the exigencies of wartime and the malevolence of the czar’s armies.

This article will examine the section of *Mr. Lublin* Agnon called “The Last Chapter,” which was published in a literary supplement of the Writer’s Union the same year, 1964, that the first chapter was published in *Ha’arets*. It recalls not only World War I with its corollary, the destruction and displacement of Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe, but also the narrator’s dilemma within his

confrontation with modernity. I discuss the figure of Mr. Stern as a metaphor and metonym of these elements and their significance in the narrator’s life. Through his monologues to the ever silent Mr. Stern, the narrator also exposes his deep love of and nostalgia for their shared hometown. Mr. Stern, who was the living embodiment of the town, who “almost crossed the city limits, but his shoes led him back, because they knew that he didn’t want to overstep our town’s border,” represents the narrator’s valediction to Buczacz and its vanished inhabitants.⁹

THE FRAMING STORY

In *Mr. Lublin*, the narrator, who is referred to once in the novel as “Agnon,” has moved from Berlin to Leipzig. Unable to leave Germany because of wartime restrictions, he has settled in Leipzig, a city he enjoys. On his way one Sabbath eve to buy his requirements for his Sabbath meals, he runs into his friend Mr. Lublin, the wealthy proprietor of a mail-order company.¹⁰ Through his important connections, Mr. Lublin has been able to obtain the right of residence for him. On meeting the narrator, Mr. Lublin tells him that he has an urgent appointment and has no one to mind his office. The narrator agrees to sit in the store until Mr. Lublin returns. We do not know whether he ever leaves the store or whether Mr. Lublin returns. The novel ends abruptly, presumably unfinished—or perhaps this is an intended ending, a suitable one for an enigmatic story.

The narrative is set in a series of frames, both real and conceptual, the central one being Mr. Lublin’s store and the other, the date on which this episode takes place, Friday, the 20th of Tevet.¹¹ Another significant frame surrounds a portrait of Field Marshal Hindenburg, commander of the German military, that hangs on a wall in the narrator’s room. This metonymic picture encapsulates the entire narrative: the war rages, the cannons rumble, submarines infest the seas, and menfolk are dying. Life in Germany is increasingly difficult, food is scarce, Leipzig suffers social unrest, and grief overtakes the home front. Elsewhere, Jewish communities are being decimated. The war is therefore an additional frame around the events being played out within it. In spite of all this, the narrator lives a pleasant life meeting friends, dining out, visiting the theatre, and working in a publishing company, a job he enjoys.

While in Mr. Lublin's store, the narrator has nothing to do. There are no books or magazines, and Mr. Lublin has taken the newspapers, which signify temporal specificity, with him. The absurdity of the situation is signaled from the start: Mr. Lublin not only inexplicably removes all the newspapers, but he also disconnects the telephone, ostensibly not to disturb the narrator and, less likely, because of the advent of the Sabbath. The point of having someone mind an office is to take calls, but we are not in the real business world: here the empty office signifies an anticipatory space, a stage on which many dramas and tragedies, and a few comedies, will play out. The narrator is confined to sitting in a vacant room within four walls, so all he can do is allow his imagination to range far beyond them, without boundaries of time and space.

He reflects on his life and the people he has encountered in the past both in Germany and in Galicia, his birthplace. He re-creates a world in memory, from the distant past to the present, through authentic historical events in a modern European metropolis to fantastical happenings, dreams, and adventures. Through his memories we receive a detailed account of the narrator's life in wartime Germany; the German Jewish communities before and during the war; Leipzig, where he lives; his friends and acquaintances; and, in particular, all the pressures of wartime. He also devotes much of his reflection to his hometown, which he does not name, although it is clearly Buczacz.

Because of the fragmentary, "decoherent" nature of the text, there is no continuous, cogent narrative, although the book's separate sections are bound together by an inner logic, however disparate they may seem to be.¹² In any case, even as a completed whole the novel would have retained its episodic nature, as indicated by each of its component parts. Not only this, but it possesses the characteristically Agnonic temper of many of his stories, particularly those in *Sefer hama'asim* (*The Book of Deeds*): a man sets out to undertake a mission, to celebrate a festival or reach a destination, and is waylaid or misdirected by meeting an acquaintance, whether by happenstance or by his own physical needs, such as hunger. His failure to complete the undertaking, which in many cases is to ensure his own personal or metaphysical redemption, is the underlying premise of these stories. In *Mr. Lublin*, the narrator, on his way to fulfil the laws of the Sabbath, meets Mr. Lublin, who, perhaps unwittingly or perhaps deliberately, leads him to flout them. In *Mr. Lublin*

and other stories, the distraction from a religious obligation or an important task may appear to come from an outside force, but it is the protagonist who ultimately makes the choice.

While in the store, the narrator also reflects on his present environment, Mr. Lublin's compound on Böttcher Street in an historic area of Leipzig, the Brühl, still known for its shops and markets. This area houses four old workshops belonging to a quartet of non-Jewish artisans all of them incredibly ancient and representative of the local culture of the past. The workshops belong to Götz Weigel, a knife sharpener, Jakob Weinwurzel, a beltmaker, Adam Isba, a puppeteer, and Joachim Hermann Witzelrode, an antique dealer who rarely bothers to open his shop. They represent Agnon's portrayal of the world of unadaptability to modern life. As Dan Miron writes, they are the remnants of the German Middle Ages, the guild culture trained by generations of artisans, evoking the tradition in Richard Wagner's *Der Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.¹³ This section of the story is the consolidation of the narrator's observations about the prewar German world, reflected mainly in these four characters. Their stories constitute the core of the book, reflections of Agnon's intention to emblemize these storekeepers as a Germany that has disappeared, where the builders of modern Leipzig, in addition to the war, have wiped out the traces of the past.

The narrator's friend Mr. Arno (né Aaron) Lublin is tall, blond, and blue-eyed, and, in the nature of his business and his philanthropy, very likely to have been modeled on Salman Schocken, Agnon's patron. He represents the assimilated, acculturated Jew, as well as the economic prosperity and social integration that many German Jews enjoyed before the war. Lublin is honorable, well-liked, and respected even by the city authorities. Although he seems to have completely rejected his origin in the same unnamed town as the narrator, he has befriended the devoutly Jewish narrator who struggles against his admiration of him, the ex-Galician, secular, assimilated Jew.

At the opposite pole stand two figures, both antitheses of Mr. Lublin: the learned and rigidly prescriptive Rabbi Jonathan, whom the narrator has followed from Berlin to Leipzig in the hope of studying Talmud with him, and Mr. Jacob Stern, his mentor from their native Galician town. Rabbi Jonathan is thought to be a reference to Rabbi David Feldman, a Torah scholar who was appointed as a

rabbi in Leipzig in 1910. Somehow the narrator never manages to “run through the Gemara” with the rabbi, and one wonders whether his obsessive desire to do so stems rather more from form than substance.¹⁴

The narrator is suspended between these two poles of Jewishness in Leipzig; he attempts to study with the rabbi but is thwarted, or thwarts himself, at every turn, signaled mainly by his continuing to sit in Mr. Lublin’s store. Moreover, even though that Friday is the anniversary of the death of the narrator’s much admired rabbinic and intellectual master, Maimonides, he does not have his books to read, as is his custom on this annual anniversary. The narrator’s dedication to Maimonides is undoubtedly derived from the devotion and erudition of Agnon’s father. Dov Sadan writes that Shalom Mordechai Czaczkes knew the work of Maimonides almost by heart, and he relates the story of an old rabbi who was advised to consult Shalom Mordechai if he wanted to understand a difficult portion of Maimonides’s text. Sadan argues that the emphasis on Maimonides is the authentic seed from which the story of *Mr. Lublin* grew.¹⁵ Yet, in a brief statement that seems to tilt the balance away from the pursuit of traditional learning, the narrator wonders why he has become “closer to [Mr. Lublin] than to anyone else in Leipzig.”¹⁶

MR. STERN

Mr. Jacob Stern, the narrator’s old friend from his hometown, suddenly appears in Mr. Lublin’s store shortly after the narrator imagined that he was walking with him through the streets of their town, discussing the events of the day. The town is never named but is clearly modelled on Buczacz, with the Strypa River—the town’s “living soul [...] which invigorated us every year from the eve of Shavuot in the spring to September”—running through it.¹⁷ Mr. Stern had been the narrator’s mentor, a man of great knowledge and intellect, also wealthy and prominent, who always enjoyed a good cigar. A descendant of generations who lived there, Mr. Stern was devoted to his town and its inhabitants, customs, and history to the extent that his feet resist the very attempt to cross the city limits. Only the war has shifted him from his birthplace. Now an exile, he is weary and old. When he enters the store, he sits down wordlessly and removes his hat. The narrator is pleased to see him.

Throughout Mr. Stern's visit, during which he seems to wither away as he sits opposite the narrator, his skin assuming the color of clay, Stern does not speak. His silence becomes increasingly oppressive to the narrator, who tries to arouse his interest and elicit some words by talking about their hometown. Yet there is no dialogue with Mr. Stern. The narrator strives to retain the memory of his town by summoning its stories, characters, and events while his visitor and their town fade away. Without surprise at Mr. Stern's presence in the room, the narrator tells him that once, when visiting their town, he asked about a wise man who had been buried there. The townspeople replied,

There was a certain Jacob Stern who had expert knowledge of our town and knew everyone, living and dead, and if he were here he would tell us who this righteous man is. . . . "If Jacob Stern had known that you were about to come here he would have tried to stay alive for another three or four days to tell you all about our town." Please, Mr. Stern, what do you think about this?¹⁸

Of course, Stern does not reply, and this constitutes the structure of the entire chapter: the narrator appeals to Mr. Stern, tells him a story or recalls fellow townspeople, and becomes increasingly agitated as he receives no reply. He recounts the histories of sages and various ancestors, including those of Mr. Stern and Mr. Lublin, and some communal controversies. He adds anecdotes, some of them humorous, about ordinary folk, each tale ending with a moral. As the time passes, Mr. Stern sinks even deeper into vagueness to become a kind of ghostly presence, while the narrator exhausts himself by talking. "I was deeply troubled so I stopped thinking about time and I began again to tell stories about our town which is blessed with stories. People like us can talk about our town all week long and not complete our telling."¹⁹

Mr. Stern is a refugee, having been forced to abandon his beloved home together with millions of other Eastern European Jews. He represents not only his and the narrator's shared and lost hometown but also the displaced Jews whose lives, homes, and communities were destroyed in the conflict. In addition to his personification of the town, Mr. Stern appears to be a matrix of sadness, both his and the narrator's:

I clothed this sorrow in skin and bone and flesh and sinews and found words in my mouth that I didn't say, I said them in my mind, not quite aloud. He and his father's and mother's families had been rooted in our town for ten generations, then the war came suddenly and forced him out of his town, he wandered through the world.²⁰

Earlier in the novel, the narrator meets a fellow Galician whose tale encapsulates the Eastern European Jewish experience, including Mr. Stern's, in World War I:

Wilhelm, the German Kaiser, wanted to declare war on the Czar of Russia. He said to our Emperor, join me and we shall fight Russia. Our Emperor agreed and followed him, but the Russian Czar heard about this and anticipated him. He moved into Galicia and committed widespread slaughter, destroyed its cities and burned down their houses. Those who were not killed were captured. Those who were not captured fled. Some of them fled to their relatives or relatives' relatives in Hungary, Bohemia, or Moravia, and some of them were trapped where they were, weakened, with legs that would not carry them. Some of them reached the cities of Germany and among them was I, who came here because I had heard that a number of Jews like me had fled here. When a man has been uprooted from his home every other place is the same to him.²¹

The identity of the fictional Mr. Stern is difficult to determine. "Stern" was a respected name in Buczac. Berish Stern was one of the leading citizens of the town, serving as its mayor from 1879 to 1921.²² Scholars have suggested a variety of possibilities, one being that Agnon's Mr. Stern is the narrator's alter ego and that the encounter is an internal one.²³ He may also be a symbol of the narrator's guilt for having left the town he loved and of the waning of this love as time passed and other places claimed his affection, or a projection of the narrator himself or the narrator's reproachful father. Alternatively, the narrator and Mr. Stern may both be dead and sitting in a tomb, or Mr. Stern is his judge and the narrator's nemesis. Perhaps Mr. Stern is more like a psychiatrist listening to a patient's long confession,

or he may serve as the narrator’s memory, compelling him by his silence to dig deep into his mind not only to recall the town and its present and past inhabitants but also to confront his own abandonment of them. According to Avraham Aderet, Stern’s silence allows the narrator a chance to repent of what he has done.²⁴ Sadan suggests that the story of Stern is the narrator’s dream and adds that Stern and Lublin are two sides of the narrator.²⁵

Mr. Stern embodies a mystical element associated with the most prosaic of articles: a cigar. His name, “star,” could be derived from Numbers 24:17: “I see him, but not now. I see him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob. A scepter will rise out of Israel, and shall strike through the corners of Moab, and break down all the sons of Sheth.”²⁶ The narrator regards Stern as man possessed of singular qualities. “As I remembered him with a cigar in his mouth I also remembered that fiery eye gleaming within the cigar’s ash that I imagined was leading me and I was following it.”²⁷ The burning cigar tip glimmers like a star, also, adds the narrator, like an all-seeing eye, that of the Jewish martyrs glaring at the Jews on the first night of *Seliḥot* to see if they had repented.²⁸ This is a frightening image of Mr. Stern’s power to trigger the narrator’s multilayered guilt. It is not only the war that has destroyed the town—he has done so himself by leaving, as if the town’s image disappears once has turned his back on it. “I was sitting in Mr. Lublin’s store. For that reason, the events of the day are engraved in my heart because of what was missing on that day.”²⁹

The narrator tells Stern about Mr. Lublin, who left their town and never returned. The term “left our town” recurs frequently in the text.

[W]e can assume that he [Stern] was not at ease with Mr. Lublin, for even gentiles who left our town usually went back, and worst of all Mr. Lublin had left our town while still a child and never returned for all those years. Mr. Jacob Stern was not at ease for another reason, because I had reminded him of Mr. Lublin and his ancestors, for Mr. Jacob Stern used to say, “If you come across the errant son of distinguished people do not mention his ancestors,” but I had mentioned Mr. Lublin’s two forefathers Rabbi Neta Netsaḥ and the sage Rabbi Israel Netsaḥ, the author of *Netsaḥ Israel*.³⁰

He continues,

So you see, even a gentile who was born in our town and left it, couldn't live in peace until he returned. However, Aaron Lublin whom you call Mr. Arno Lublin and his forefathers and their forefathers were born in our town but he never returned from the day he fled, as if his feet had never stood in our town, as if he had never smelled its earth.³¹

The narrator has no idea what Mr. Stern is thinking, but he projects onto him his own discomfiture at Mr. Lublin's desertion, expressing his *own* unease and using Mr. Stern's presumed admonition to admonish himself. He attributes attitudes to other townsmen that apply more appropriately to himself, referring to one who was happy and lighthearted for all the years he had lived there but seemed to have become lifeless since leaving it.³² In addition, Mr. Stern avoids mention of the ancestors not only because he thinks their sons are errant, but also because he finds the ancestors themselves to be equally so. One of the earliest *maskilim*, Israel ben Moshe Halevy of Zamosc, whom Agnon calls Rabbi Israel Netzah (1700–72), was born and educated in Galicia. One of the most important Jewish intellectuals of the eighteenth century, he represents the advent of rationalism and science within central European Jewry during the early Haskalah period. His *Netsah Yisra'el* (*The Eternity of Israel*, ca. 1737) interprets numerous passages from the Talmud dealing with astronomy and geometry from a rationalist and scientific viewpoint.³³ In the novel, his fictional descendant, Mr. Lublin, appears to have taken Rabbi Israel's intellectual rebellion to one of its regrettable conclusions, defection from Judaism and Jewish community, and assimilation.

The narrator comments, "I stopped talking, unable to find a way to defend Mr. Lublin who had escaped from our town and never returned."³⁴ He confesses,

I had meant to defend Mr. Lublin for not bothering to visit our town, for not having been there since he had left, for we knew that he had run away at age eleven because of his father and he never again showed his face in our town. In the end I told the stories of all the others who had done the same thing."³⁵

The narrator feels a compulsion to support Mr. Lublin, whose major transgression seems to be less his Germanization and secularism than his abandonment of his town. “Even a gentile who left our town usually returned,” says the narrator and substantiates his statement by telling Mr. Stern a long story about a gentile murderer who escaped from the town but returned decades later only to meet retribution there. Mr. Lublin’s total desertion is therefore not a geographical but a philosophical one. Yet the narrator forgives Mr. Lublin without forgiving himself.

The town, or “our town,” is one of the central themes of the novel, weaving through the assorted stories, ironically even in the life of assimilated Mr. Lublin. As the narrator recollects each inhabitant of the town, “he immediately appears before me and does not leave me alone.”³⁶ He searches for the names of fellow townsmen in a telephone directory he has found in the store, and he imaginatively relives the pleasant conversations during which Mr. Stern, not only a denizen of the town but also its historian, taught him about the town, its inhabitants, and its heritage. In *Mr. Lublin*, Agnon avoids enhancing the town’s fictitiousness by naming it, as, for example, Mendele and Sholem Aleichem did when constructing their imaginary towns. In other works, notably in *Oreah natah lalun* (*A Guest for the Night*, 1939), Agnon gave the town an inventive name, Szybusz or Shibush, meaning “blurred” or “unclear,” a play on its real name of Buczacz. He did not do so in *Mr. Lublin* because the hometown there is not entirely a construct but contains elements of the real heterogeneous city, including shared Christian spaces and their inhabitants. The hometown in *Mr. Lublin* also demonstrates a selection of the common tropes that illustrate the literary shtetl: the cemetery, the market places, the synagogues, the bathhouses, and the *batei midrash*. While many of the shtetls and towns in the modern Yiddish and Hebrew classics are to a large extent fabricated, the Galician town in *Mr. Lublin* is more real than imagined, as elements of Buczacz are incorporated in the story, such as the Strypa and the tailors’ synagogue.³⁷ We learn a little about the town’s layout through a few authentic street and synagogue names and other landmarks, and we are told that it has a large well-educated Jewish population that produced many notable scholars, many of them historical personalities, and that it also tends toward rationalism: “I know that Mr. Jacob Stern retains our town’s custom of disliking things that are not rational, meaning that the intellect cannot prove them, and I am also a little like that.”³⁸

When, after the Haskalah, the Jewish writers born in Eastern Europe moved away from their towns and shtetls physically and psychologically, their sense of guilt and betrayal and their nostalgia, real or imagined, led them to idealize their birthplaces and offer romanticized memories of them in their fiction while benefiting from life in their European cities. “They recall the dust of our town as if it were gold dust,” the narrator of *Mr. Lublin* relates.³⁹ Sadan says of Agnon, “He is not the only son who reconstructs his town in its entirety when he’s far away from it.”⁴⁰ After the Holocaust, memorial volumes for destroyed communities tended to present an idealized picture of a vanished way of life.⁴¹ Yet Agnon, too much the ironist, does not maintain any pattern of condemnation or idealization. Within his loving emphasis throughout the novel on the hometown, his narrator speaks of the renegade Mr. Lublin with affection, he expresses his regard for Leipzig and his gratitude at being allowed to remain there, he recounts its real history almost as much as he records the features of his semifictional town. He extols the visually observant Galician Jews in Leipzig and describes their manner of dress, he discusses the variety of Leipzig’s synagogues and stiebels, he recounts the history of the Leipzig Jews, and he also observes that many Jews who left his home town succeeded in their lives.

Agnon’s description of Buczacz in his short piece “Betokh ‘iri” (“In My Town”), part memoir, part fiction, contrasts strongly with the generic towns of Yiddish and Hebrew literature, with their houses crowded higgledy-piggledy in narrow streets. Despite writing more about the notable persons who inhabited the town than about its geographical reality, he does offer a paean to its

mountains surrounded by rivers and lakes. Waterfalls flow down to forests filled with trees that are alive with birdsong. Some of the birds are natives of the forests around my city; others have come from faraway lands and have chosen to stay, for it would be folly to leave as delightful a place as this.

The streets and avenues in the town lie against the mountains. They were made by both man and nature, each harmonizing with the other. This is one example of God’s creations and those of man residing together peacefully, complementing each other. It is easy to imagine

that those same streets and avenues go back to the earliest times when people's hearts were pure and uncorrupted.⁴²

This idyllic picture of Buczacz may be an example of "imagined geography" or irony in the implication that, even in this paradise, people's hearts are no longer pure.⁴³ Agnon does not eschew irony in "In My Town," stating that, along with wisdom, Buczacz also boasts humility: "In all of its history, Buczacz never appointed a rabbi from among its own citizens even if he were knowledgeable in all matters of Torah and Jewish law."

In *Mr. Lublin*, Agnon writes less about the town itself than about his and others' attitudes toward it, oscillating between disdain (Lublin) and nostalgia (the narrator). The narrator's memory involves the town's intellectual prowess rather than its topography. Therefore, the town's presence in the lives of the narrator, Mr. Lublin, and Mr. Stern, is more *something left behind*, something never to be regained and confined to memory alone. For Agnon as a young man encountering the bright lights of central European cities for the first time, Buczacz felt dull and small.⁴⁴ In a postscript to a letter to his publisher, Fischel Lachover, he wrote: "Actually if you do not send me [the sum of 150 marks] God forbid I shall sink into the mud of Buczacz."⁴⁵ Agnon's attitude toward Buczacz might have been ambivalent in his early years, but it became a literary subject through which he expressed his love of Jewish tradition, scholarship, and folktales and his response to their loss in the modern world. In this sense, it was preserved forever in its classical distinctiveness, a kind of innocence and purity unspoiled by modernity.⁴⁶

In *Mr. Lublin*, the narrator's nostalgia for his birthplace is a kind of expulsion from Eden.⁴⁷ In *A Guest for the Night*, which resulted from Agnon's visit to Europe—including Leipzig—in 1930, the narrator visits his home town of Szybusz, which has been ruined by the conflict of the World War I and the dispersal of the Jewish community in its aftermath. Streets are empty and filled with rubble, the Jewish population is sparse, and those who are left mourn their dead. Only the river is unchanged. The decay is accentuated by the narrator's childhood memory of the town. He asks, "Did the pictures in my memory precede what I saw with my eyes or did the sight of my eyes come before the pictures my memory drew? ... At those moments the pictures in the soul were stronger than the sight of my eyes."⁴⁸ It is

likely that the picture in his memory came first. In *Mr. Lublin*, the town remains uncorrupted by the war and death that surrounds it. It is preserved in its innocence and purity in the timeless museum of the narrator's memory.

THE DREAM

It is ultimately more than the town itself or Mr. Stern's perplexing evanescence that brings about the narrator's great unease. He is compulsively driven to treat the silent Mr. Stern as his confessor and tell him about his abandonment of his mission to study Torah and all that emanates from that.

I said to Mr. Jacob Stern, "Mr. Lublin is delayed and won't return and I haven't managed to buy what I need for the Sabbath and I'll suffer the same fate as that of those sharp and learned scholars on the eve of Yom Kippur who were so immersed in their studies that they forgot to buy food for the final meal before the fast. The circumstances are the same but the reasons are different."

I was deeply troubled so I stopped thinking about time and I began again to tell stories about our town which is blessed with stories.⁴⁹

He refers to Maimonides, whose books he has neglected to study, as he always does on this day, the commemoration of the great master's death. He makes an apparently casual observation, a non sequitur that is, in fact, laden with significance: "I have heard it said that the course of our Strypa has changed because they diverted the river."⁵⁰ The narrator's words are not a pleasantry; they indicate that he is aware of his own divergence from one course to another, from Rabbi Jonathan to Mr. Lublin. Agnon himself gives us a clue to the meaning of this divergence. Meir Hovev reports on a conversation between Agnon and Dr. Yehuda Even Shmuel in 1960 regarding national redemption, in which they compared the exceptionality of Baal Shem Tov and Maimonides. After a long thoughtful silence, Agnon declared, "Actually there were three significant personages in Jewish history, Moses, Maimonides and Herzl." Hovev describes the consternation in the room in which the conversation took place: Agnon's words came across as blasphemy. Yet, in another conversation,

Agnon said, "The redemption of the Jews will not be brought about by America or the United Nations, but the Lord God. Faith and religion are the only means by which the nation can survive."⁵¹ These contradictory ideas became the lining within the fabric of *Mr. Lublin*.

Within the context of national revival, or to cheer Mr. Stern who is gradually disappearing, the narrator tells him about the foundation of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the future use of modern Hebrew by all the Jews in the Land of Israel. Inexplicably, perhaps because of his efforts to engage Mr. Stern, the narrator falls asleep and has the dream that is central to his spiritual struggle. Both *To This Day* and *Mr. Lublin* display "divided intentionality"; that is, something left unsaid in the text is said in a dream.⁵² Agnon intentionally placed dreams throughout the texts of both novels to provide their psychological substrata and theoretical commentary on the events. In *Mr. Lublin*, the narrator dreams that his father is mourning his death, surely the most horrifying indictment of a child in all Hebrew literature. The dream follows the observation about the founding of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the dissemination of modern Hebrew. "Is there a better vision that this in all the world?" asks the narrator. Shortly afterward:

My eyes filled with tears because I dreamt that I had seen my father, my teacher. I greeted him but he didn't return my greeting because he was in mourning. I asked him, "Father, who are you mourning?" He said, "You, my son, I mourn for you." I said to him, "This mourning is over. Even I have forgotten when I died." He replied in amazement, "Over? If this is so, we are allowed to study Torah." He stretched his hand towards the bookcase and took down a volume of Maimonides's code of law.⁵³

Fathers mourning dead sons in wartime are not unusual in *Mr. Lublin*. In the narrator's dream, the son is not a war casualty but a spiritual one. Mourners are forbidden to study Torah during the *shiva* in accordance with the precept that the study of Torah is joy that the mourner may not experience. The son's unilateral decision not indicates not the seven days of mourning but some time since his death. It seems that, to the father, studying the Torah is more important than continuing to mourn his dead son despite not knowing whether or not the prescribed period is over. Or

perhaps the father's insistence on the Torah is a prescient admonition to his son that, in the joy of creating a Hebrew University, the true [religious] source of, or reason for, study should not be forgotten. On the other hand, perhaps, the father is lamenting the generational divides, the son confident in the future while the father will not enjoy the growth of Jewish culture on its own soil.

All the central spiritual preoccupations in the novel, and indeed in many of Agnon's works, are united in the narrator of *Mr. Lublin*. The symbolism of his dream reinforces Agnon's search for a *via media*: Jonathan or Lublin, Baal Shem Tov or Herzl, Buczacz or Leipzig. Through its convoluted irony the dream evokes the guilt that pervades the entire text. It is as if the son is dead to his father and to himself because he has abandoned his Torah studies, has failed to maintain his Jewish practice, visits the theatre, dines in fine restaurants, makes friends with assimilated Jews and non-Jewish women, and sits in a place of commerce on the Sabbath. In a book that, despite its humor and irony, largely deals with death and loss, the loss of the *self* in this dream is perhaps the most terrifying. The dreamer is questioning his own identity and recalling the time when he lost sight of himself and realized the need to recover what can only be called his soul. His claim in the dream, "Even I have forgotten when I died," reads as a little flippant, and the father stretching out his arm to take down Maimonides's book is an obvious remonstrance. While in the store, the narrator has been deprived of Maimonides's work, which his dream father consults immediately he is permitted to after the period of mourning. Yet, despite his mourning garb, the father is quite impassive, unamazed and unmoved at encountering his dead dream son who is also dry eyed. It is the waking son who weeps.

Jung's idea of the personal unconscious includes both memories that are easily accessed and those that have been suppressed. In an often quoted passage, Jung states,

The dream is a little hidden door in the innermost and most secret recesses of the psyche, opening into that cosmic night which was psyche long before there was any ego-consciousness, and which will remain psyche no matter how far our ego-consciousness may extend ... in dreams we put on the likeness of that more universal truer, more eternal man dwelling in the darkness of primordial night... There he is still the

whole, and the whole is in him, indistinguishable from nature and bare of all egohood. Out of these all-uniting depths arises the dream, be it never so immoral.⁵⁴

The narrator's dream signals the well-known "dark night" during which, unable to offer himself a cure for his defections and his helplessness, he evaluates his life. It is his dream that compels him to confront the crisis that has dogged him since his arrival in Leipzig, hidden under the surface of his willed memories, social activities, and minding Mr. Lublin's store. His attempts to study with Rabbi Jonathan rather than following the attractive tempter figure of Mr. Lublin have not materialized.⁵⁵ The dream about the death of the self or ego may account for his passivity about continuing to sit in an empty room with no diversions. There may be an echo of past activities in that room, the bustle of a modern office symbolized by the telephone and newspapers, but now it is suspended and void of activity and energy except the narrator's reckoning with himself.

This dream has its origin in reality: Agnon arrived in Buczacz too late for his father's funeral.

My father became ill and died and I did not manage to honor his pure soul nor did I arrive at his funeral in time, only after his burial... I tried to study some verses of Mishna to honour his soul... when I came to one of them I remembered what my father had written in his commentary to Maimonides. Then I wept for the first time and could not even say the Kaddish.⁵⁶

As Mintz comments, in light of the proliferation in Agnon's fiction of themes of lateness and delay in fulfilling important obligations, his failure to arrive in time for his father's funeral takes on a dramatic resonance.⁵⁷

Immediately after the seven days of mourning Agnon returned to Berlin.

The dream is the climax of the narrator's misery, and, when he awakens, weeping, he decides to redeem the day and himself by studying Maimonides's work: "I thought (not in a dream but awake while I was sitting in Mr. Lublin's store), 'If this is the case the day hasn't been wasted. I'll study one or two laws from Maimonides's

book'.⁵⁸ However, the text of Maimonides is not available to him, and his symbolic death continues. Yet his failure to study or his guilt at having sought intellectual rather than spiritual growth in a foreign city only partially explains the narrator's disquiet and the physical waning of Mr. Stern. There is still something more. Rather than being affected by his nostalgic memory of the *physical entity* of the town, the crucial element to him is that which it represents, the Jewish universe of cohesion that eludes almost every protagonist in Agnon's work. Rather than religious practice and scholarship, the narrator yearns for the sense of a community and the interrelatedness that defined Jewish distinctiveness in the Eastern European towns.⁵⁹

It does not matter whether the narrator's, Lublin's, and Stern's "our town" is an accurate representation, "a metaphor frozen in time," or a synthesis of both.⁶⁰ It was not only the religion or religiousness but also the sense of community and cohesiveness, of "peoplehood," that afforded the Eastern European Jews an identity and a sense of belonging that was not possible in the melee of Central European cities. The life and culture of the nonurban Jewish communities were anchored in tradition. What Agnon saw in prewar Buczacz was a "variegated vitality bubbling up from an organically Jewish life."⁶¹ He was unable to reproduce this life anywhere else or by any means other than words on the page. Even in Israel the organic amalgamation of Torah and life was absent in the Zionist reality of the modern state.⁶² It might have been easier at the time to attain in Leipzig with its large and traditional Galician Jewish community and the associated synagogues and study houses. Yet the narrator does not attain it.

Despite the metaphorical link with the narrator's father, Mr. Stern does not represent Jewish observance, religiousness, or scholarship, or Buczacz itself, but the essence of cohesive Jewish life in this idealized, somewhat mythical framework of the Galician town, the city in its fullness. This is the central topic of their encounter. The town is a metonym for an encompassing Jewish life, and Mr. Stern is the metonym for the narrator's inability to retain his fidelity to it.

In the end, while Mr. Stern is still present, the exhausted narrator decides to call Mr. Lublin's storeman, Lemke, to take over the vigil in the store until Mr. Lublin's return. "The day is ending and the company's director is still away and I haven't prepared food for the Sabbath. I'll go and call Lemke to come and sit in the store."⁶³ With a sense of relief, he tells Mr. Stern that Lemke is about to arrive, and

that they are now free to go wherever they would like to, and then Mr. Stern vanishes as suddenly as he had arrived. The strange ending invites a number of interpretations. The most obvious is that the room has indeed served as a psychiatrist's couch, that the narrator has made his confession, unburdened himself to Mr. Stern, whoever or whatever he may be, and is now free to redress the errors he has made and return his life to its correct course. The indication of this course is in the dream, where his dream father takes down the volume of Maimonides's work and, when the narrator awakens he decides to continue his studies. This is a satisfying ending with the problems resolved, the dark night banished by illumination and the path ahead clear. But we are in Agnon territory, where paths are generally not smooth and happy endings are rare. There is no doubt that the narrator felt an easing of his conscience—or soul, perhaps—and that, when Mr. Stern was no longer required to be therapist, judge, father, or avenging angel, he vanished. Yet there is a slight anomaly in this paragraph: Agnon writes "kevar Lemke ba." This means both "Lemke is already here" or "Lemke is just coming." He continues: "We can go anywhere we want to." The narrator has not yet left the store, and there is still the liminal position of decision one way or the other. If Lemke is only on his way, the narrator may sit down again and wait for Mr. Lublin. If Lemke has arrived, the narrator may leave and seek Rabbi Jonathan. Whether the Hebrew University has triumphed over *beit midrash* is left undecided.

CONCLUSION

"The Last Chapter" appears to have little narrative relationship to the rest of the novel. After many queries from readers who had read the published chapter, Agnon's daughter confessed that she was unsure whether it belonged in the book. She then found a page in her father's handwriting:

I sat in silence, filled with wonder at the amazing things I had seen. A man sits in a housewares store not far from the Leipzig crowds, thinking about his town, and suddenly a miracle happens and his entire town and its surroundings, its markets and its houses, all of them together, come into view, as close as if they were a few yards away. If I were not a modest

man and aware of my low value I would see myself as important in heaven, which takes so much trouble on my account. Inasmuch as there is no man so self-assured that he avoids pride I said to myself, "This is only a dream," and to make certain I was not deceiving myself I looked around to see where I was, and I realized that I was sitting in Mr. Lublin's store after he had gone out and left me alone.

Emuna Yaron added this passage to the end of chapter 7, the one immediately preceding the Stern chapter. At the end of this page, Agnon had penciled in two words, "niftehah hadelet" ("the door opened") the first words of the Stern chapter, indicating that this chapter was to follow.⁶⁴ The Stern chapter is therefore integral to the rest of the novel.

At the end of *To This Day*, the narrator, having lived in Berlin, resolves to return to the Land of Israel. He had dreamt of Voltaire and the best of all possible worlds. Ultimately, therefore, despite their similarity, the two novels reach different conclusions. *Mr. Lublin*, which rarely mentions the Land of Israel in modern times, is Agnon's valediction to Buczacz and its memorial.

Contrary to those who argue that *Mr. Lublin* represents Agnon's nostalgia for the old Germany with its sense of intercommunal cooperation and even affection, I believe that the novel emphasizes the death throes of two cultures. In addition to his other symbolic roles in the novel, the fading Mr. Stern also provides a sense of finality. Ultimately, he represents the multivalent facets of the narrator's life and times. Written after the Holocaust, *Mr. Lublin* presents its people as the last vestiges of a community that flits across the stage like a phantom. World War I was the beginning of the end for the German Jewish community. Every small narrative of deprivation in the novel, even if unrelated to the war and even if within a humorous context, adds up to a devastating whole, a novel about loss and pain.

NOTES

- 1 Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* (New York: Schocken, 1976), 100.
- 2 See Yaakov Shavit, "Be'iro shel hasoher miLublin," *Masa' aher* (October 18, 2014), <https://www.masa.co.il/article/מלובלין-של-הסוהר-מלובלין>.

- 3 Tobias Brinkmann, “From Green Borders to Paper Walls: Jewish Migrants from Eastern Europe in Germany Before and After the Great War,” *History in Focus*, Autumn 2006, <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migration/articles/brinkmann.html>.
- 4 See Alan Mintz, “I Am Building a City: On Agnon’s *Buczacz* Tales,” in *A City in Its Fullness*, by S. Y. Agnon, ed. Alan Mintz and Jeffrey Saks (New Milford, CT: Toby, 2016), xv–xxxi.
- 5 For comments on Germany and Germans in the novel, see Ya’akov Ariel, “Good Germans, Confused Jews, and the Tragedy of Modernity: S. Y. Agnon Remembers Leipzig,” in *Leipziger Beiträge zur Jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur* 3 (2005): 275–92; Avraham Aderet, “Taḥat mo‘aqat shetei ‘aqirot,” *‘Alei siah*, ed. Yedidya Yitzḥaḳi (September 1976), 9–28; and Dan Miron, “German Jews in Agnon’s Work,” *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, vol. 23, no. 1 (1 January 1978): 265–280.
- 6 For a recent edition of the first work, see S. Y. Agnon, *‘Ad Hena (To This Day)*, trans. Hillel Halkin (London: Toby, 2008). *In Mr. Lublin’s Store* consists of eight chapters. The first four and the last were published during Agnon’s lifetime, in 1964, 1966, and 1967, while chapters five, six and seven (about half the book) were reconstituted by Emuna Yaron from material in four large boxes that contained manuscripts connected to Lublin. The boxes also contained many drafts of chapters already published with new corrections in Agnon’s handwriting, as well as chapters and fragments of chapters that were not yet published, some of them from an earlier period and others that Agnon had written during the last years of his life. Because Yaron copied and recopied the chapters, she was familiar with the material and had a good idea of her father’s intentions for the novel. It was published as a whole in 1975. Citations from *Mr. Lublin* are from S. Y. Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, trans. Glenda Abramson (New Milford, CT: Toby, 2016).
- 7 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, 6.
- 8 Alan Mintz, “I am Building a City,” in *Ancestral Tales: Reading the Buczacz Stories of S. Y. Agnon* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 25.
- 9 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, 204.
- 10 Mr. Lublin’s name is ironic because he represents the opposite of Lublin, the spiritual center of Polish Jewry, which was completely destroyed in the Second World War.
- 11 There was no Friday, 20th of Tevet during the war years.
- 12 The term “decoherent” is used in Gershon Shaked, *Hasipporet ha’ivrit 1880–1980. Ba’arets uvatefutsah*, 5 vols. (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad 1983), 2:111.

- 13 Miron, “German Jews.”
- 14 Agnon, *In Mr Lublin’s Store*, 29.
- 15 Dov Sadan, “Zimmun, ofyo ve ‘inyano. ‘Al beḥanuto shel Mar Lublin,” in S. Y. ‘Agnon *kerekh masot uma’ amarim* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1978), 184.
- 16 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, 190.
- 17 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, 228.
- 18 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, 232–33.
- 19 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, 231.
- 20 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, 227.
- 21 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, 39.
- 22 Dan Laor, *Hayyei ‘Agnon* (Jerusalem: Schocken 1998), 17. See also Sadan, “Zimmun,” 188–89.
- 23 For discussion about the identity of Mr. Stern, see Sadan, “Zimmun,” 180–89; Ariel, “Good Germans”; Sarah Katz, “Hit ‘asquto shel ‘Agnon baḥanut hareqah,” *Moznayim* 40, no. 3 (1975): 171–77; and Aderet, “Taḥat mo ‘aqat”.
- 24 Aderet, “Taḥat mo ‘aqat,” 22.
- 25 Sadan, “Zimmun,” 186.
- 26 The sages comment: “Israel declared before the Holy One blessed be He, ‘Master of the World, how long shall we be oppressed at his [the non-Jewish] hand?’ He replied, ‘Until that day about which it is written: A star rises from Jacob, and a scepter comes forth from Israel—when a star arises from Jacob and ignites the kindling of Esau” (Deuteronomy Rabbah 1:20, following Obadiah 1:18). See Haim Beer, afterword to *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, by S. Y. Agnon, trans. Glenda Abramson (New Milford, CT: Toby, 2016), 237–49.
- 27 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, 229.
- 28 The passage actually reads: “They didn’t know that this was the eye of the Jewish martyrs who had drowned glittering at the Jews to see if they had repented [...]” (211). This may refer to some Ashkenazic women who drowned themselves rather than endure baptism. Echoing b. Gittin 57b, the eleventh-century chronicle ascribed to Solomon bar Simson connects Psalm 68:23 to these women and others like them who died by drowning.
- 29 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, 209.
- 30 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin’s Store*, 215.

- 31 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 217.
- 32 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 226.
- 33 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 215.
- 34 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 217.
- 35 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 219.
- 36 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 147.
- 37 Arnold Band, “Agnon’s Synthetic Shtetl,” in *The Shtetl: New Evaluations*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 234.
- 38 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 214. One of Agnon’s facts is erroneous: the birthplace of the poet Adam Asnyk, after whom a street was named, was Kalisz rather than Buczacz. It seems unlikely that Agnon would have made such an egregious mistake, so perhaps this is his way of suggesting the synthesis of fiction and reality in “our town.”
- 39 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 151.
- 40 Sadan, “Zimmun,” 186.
- 41 See Mintz, “I Am Building,” xvi.
- 42 S. Y. Agnon, “Betokh ‘iri. Pereq eḥad shel sippur eḥad.” <http://www.buchach.org/book/mytown.htm> (my translation). This piece does not appear in the translated version of *A City in Its Fullness*, but a translation can be found at “In My Town: One Chapter of One Story,” trans. Adam Prager, http://www.buchach.org/book/in_my_town.htm.
- 43 Israel Bartal, “Imagined Geography: The Shtetl, Myth and Reality,” in *The Shtetl: New Evaluations*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 179.
- 44 See Laor, *Ḥayyei ‘Agnon*, 99.
- 45 Laor, *Ḥayyei ‘Agnon*, 99.
- 46 Arnold Band, *Studies in Modern Jewish Literature*, JPS Scholar of Distinction Series (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 221.
- 47 See Rachel Sebbra, “The Landscapes of Childhood: The Reflection of Childhood’s Environment in Adult Memories and in Children’s Attitudes,” in *Environment and Behavior* 23, no. 4 (1991): 415.
- 48 S. Y. Agnon, *A Guest for the Night*, trans. Mischa Louvish (New York: Schocken, 1968), 411.

- 49 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 231.
- 50 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 228.
- 51 Meir Hovev, "Beḥanuto shel Mar Lublin," *Ma'ariv* 1, no. 11 (1974): 39. Hovev ends his comments with the suggestion that Mr. Stern represents a new chapter in Jewish history, that of Theodor Herzl, the "star of Jacob." It is another possible interpretation of one of the most enigmatic of Agnon's creations, although an erroneous one in my opinion.
- 52 See Lawrence M. Porter, "The Dream: Framing and Function in French Literature," in *Dreams in French Literature: The Persistent Voice*, ed. Tom Conner (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 107.
- 53 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 230–31.
- 54 C. G. Jung, *Civilization in Transition: Collected Works*, 20 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 10:67.
- 55 The question is whether Agnon conceived Mr. Lublin to be a tempter figure like Mr. Gressler in his short story "A Whole Loaf," ("Pat sheleimah") or the various tempters of the tailor in "The Garment." ("Hamalbush"). Stories that involve a temptation motif frequently focus on internal conflict or psychological drama in addition to any external plot lines. The protagonist in "A Whole Loaf" oscillates between the scholar Dr. Yekutiel Ne'emān (thought to be a symbol of Moses) and Mr. Gressler, the embodiment of evil urges who tempts him away from his task. The tempter's task is to lead a person away from God and toward other desires, either of the flesh or for some form of aggrandizement.
- 56 Laor, *Hayyei Agnon*, 100.
- 57 Alan Mintz, *Translating Israel: Contemporary Hebrew Literature and its Reception in America* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 91.
- 58 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 231.
- 59 Samuel Kassow, introduction to *The Shtetl: New Evaluations*, ed. Steven T Katz (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 12.
- 60 Bartal, "Imagined Geography," 180.
- 61 Mintz, "I am Building," xvi.
- 62 See Mintz, "I Am Building," xxi.
- 63 Agnon, *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, 233.
- 64 Emuna Yaron, "Kakh hutqan hasefer." *Ha'arets* February 21, 1975, 18.