Breaking the Idyll: Rereading Flaubert's Madame Bovary and Agnon's Sippur pashut through Devorah Baron's "Fradl"

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Breaking the Idyll

Rereading Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Agnon's *Sippur pashut* through Devorah Baron's "Fradl"

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It has been a commonplace in the criticism and interpretation of the fiction of Devorah Baron (1887–1956) to refer to her fiction as a form of poetry in prose, or as an "idyll" that poetically represents a static shtetl past. This article breaks the idyll, so to speak, showing how Baron's ambitious fiction reshapes the narrative perspective, plot, and motifs of several layers of (male) canonical tradition, specifically. Part of a larger comparative study of the fiction of S. Y. Agnon and Devorah Baron, it focuses on their shared admiration for and common intertextual engagements with Flaubert's Madame Bovary *(1856–57), as seen in Baron's translation of the classic novel, Agnon's realist novel* Sippur pashut *(1935) and Baron's "Fradl" (1946). A close reading of Baron's later story "Fradl" discloses the intertextual traces of both Baron's* Madame Bovary *and Agnon's novel, references that can be read as overturning elements of Agnon's and Flaubert's masterworks in specifically feminist and non-idyllic ways. The presence in many of her stories, including "Fradl," of a controlling first-person female narrator, one who lives apart from the world being described and employs multilayered intertextuality and ars-poetic reflection, suggests an effort to craft an image of the woman writer capable of intervening in and reconfiguring the literary past.*

Tucked away among the hundreds of volumes in S. Y. Agnon's personal library in Beit Agnon is a copy of Devorah Baron's 1933 book, *Ketanot*, inscribed with the following dedication:

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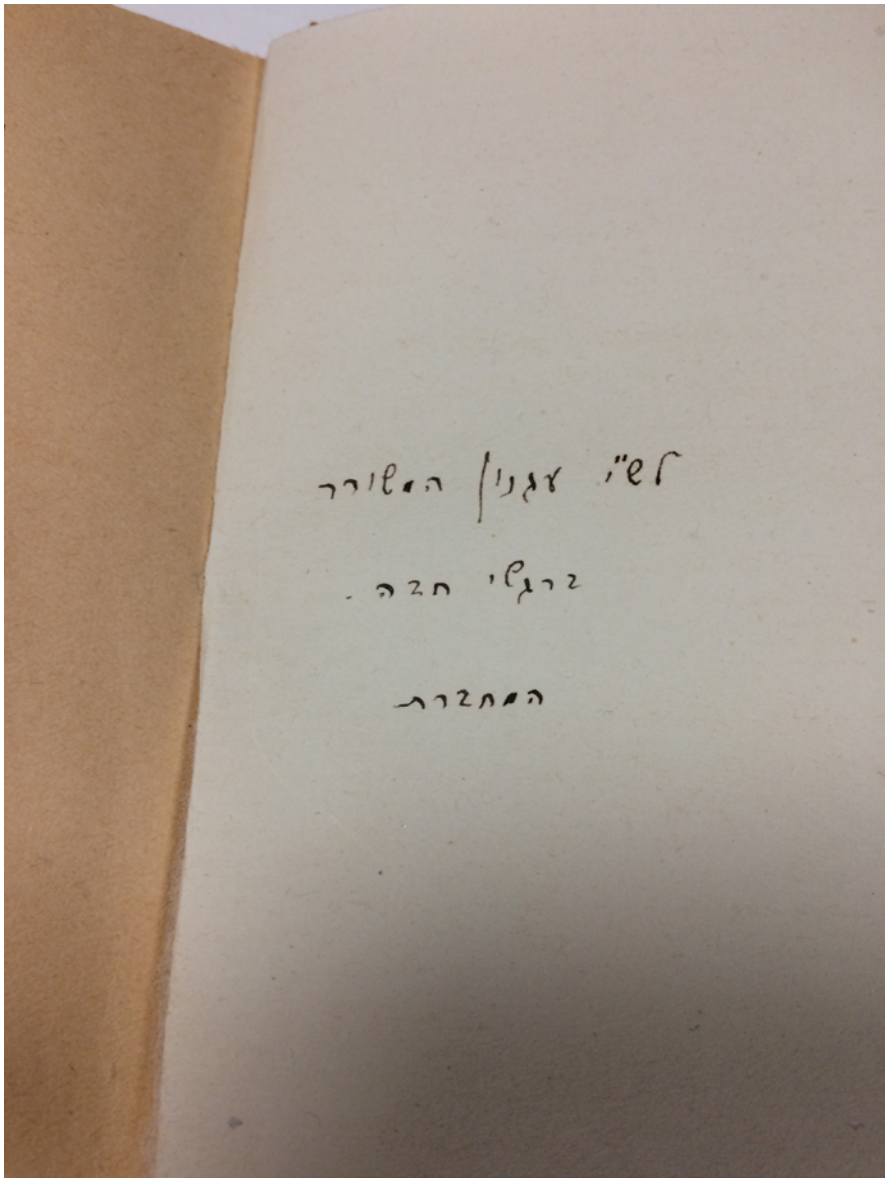

Figure 5: Courtesy of Agnon House
To Shai Agnon, the Poet
With Fond Feeling
The Author

At first blush, the inscription seems unexceptional, significant only as a marker of an ongoing, connection between Agnon (1888–1970) and Baron (1887–1956) that dates back to 1910 when they both lived in Neve Tsedeq and Baron served on the editorial staff of *Hapoʿel Hatsaʿir*, where both writers published early works of fiction.[1] Baron's reference to Agnon as "Hameshorer" (the poet) rather than as "Hasofer" (the writer) might seem odd given Agnon's major reputation as a prose artist.[2] Then again, Agnon filled his 1931 novel *Hakhnasat kallah* with verse, ending with a rhymed coda that includes both terms used in the inscription: "Tamu divrei hameḥabber / vehameshorer beshir yedabber" ("The words of the author have been completed / the poet will speak in verse").[3] Agnon also fancied himself a Levite, a descendant of the biblical *meshorerim* and employed the term *meshorer* as a high form of literary praise.[4] We see this in a 1916 letter to his patron Zalman Schocken about Gustave Flaubert, where he praises the French realist master's unstinting dedication to his craft, describing him as "hameshorer shehayah meimit ʿatsmo beʾoholah shel hashirah" ("a poet who mortified himself in the Tent of Poetry").[5] By the time she inscribed this book for Agnon, Baron had already published her classic translation of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*[6]; without doubt, she shared Agnon's regard for Flaubert's economical style and psychological characterizations, as well as his detailed depiction of small-town life. Given their common admiration of Flaubert, Baron's inscription to Agnon as "Hameshorer" (the poet) might be understood simply as way of praising the major literary achievements of a respected colleague.

Closer inspection, however, reveals another potential meaning for the inscription, given that, from early on, critics often characterized Baron's fiction as a form of poetry in prose. In one of the earliest published articles about her fiction, Dov Kimḥi avers that, in essence, Baron doesn't write stories at all; "these [works] are really tiny idylls."[7] The title of a 1934 article in *Hadoʾar* about her fiction boasts the title, "meshoreret haʿayarah Devorah Baron" ("Shtetl Poet Devorah Baron").[8] Yaakov Fichman describes her fiction as "hashirah hamutsaqah hazoʾt" ("this solid poetry"), while Asher Barash would later dub Baron, in his introduction to *Parshiyyot*, her 1951 volume of collected stories, "hameshoreret biprosah" ("the poetess of prose").[9] On the one hand, this talk of the poetic quality of her fiction reads as admiring praise of her concise, resonant style. On the other hand, the habit of calling her a poet in prose becomes a way of lumping her together with the

other prominent female Hebrew literary figures of her day, all of whom were poets: Rachel Bluwstein, Esther Raab, Yokheved Bat Miriam, Elisheva Bikhovsky, and Anda Pinkefeld Amir. This, together with the frequent attention to the idyllic, retrospective, shtetl-centered subject matter, drawn as if unfiltered from Baron's own memories of her shtetl youth, serves to downplay the element of currency, invention, and narrative ambition in Baron's work.[10] Add to this Baron's relatively slim literary output, which Agnon himself lamented in a letter to Baron, even as he praised the stories in her book, *Ketanot*: "May you be blessed for the good hours that I spent next to your stories. Were I to come and write you all that I liked and took pleasure in from this book, I would have to copy over every page and verse. You have so much in you and yet you write so little. A pity."[11] In this context, being a *meshoreret*, a short-form artist, amounts to being something decidedly less than a novelist—a creator, very literally, of idyllic *ketanot*, small works too brief and few in number to earn serious literary regard.

In dubbing Agnon "hameshorer" and calling herself "hameḥabberet" might Baron have been trying to shrug off the sense of limited or stereotypically feminine accomplishment associated with being labeled an idyllic, small-form poet in prose? Was Baron attempting for a moment to shed the poet moniker and foist it on her better known male contemporary, who, like she, often wrote about the town of his youth, yet, in marked contrast to the difficulty she had in securing a publisher for her first book (which finally appeared in 1927, twenty-five years after she published her first story), was never charged with being a mere memoirist or writer of simple shtetl idylls?[12]

To be clear: Baron wrote short stories and novellas; she practiced brevity and restraint and never undertook to write an epic novel about Erets Yisraʾel like Agnon's *Temol shilshom*. Her book *Ketanot* was indeed quite small, not just in terms of the number of pages, but also in terms of the physical size of the volume, measuring roughly 4 x 6 inches. Even smaller in size was her 1946 book, *Halabban,* where she first published "Fradl," the story I will be analyzing later in this article in relation to Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Agnon's *Sippur pashut* (1935).

All this does not mean, however, that Baron did not have grand literary aspirations. Indeed, a careful reading of her fiction indicates the extent to which her taut, compact, emotionally restrained short stories and novellas manage to engage

and reconfigure the narrative perspective, plot, and motifs of canonical (male) writings. As one of the only early female prose writers in a company of men who often dramatized the silencing of women, Baron found a way to register her desire to gain entry into the Hebrew literary "male-stream" even as she departed significantly and conspicuously from it, often highlighting alternative female communities. The provincial short story genre, with its seemingly modest proportions, shtetl subject matter, and concerns for patterns and mores from the past, suggests for some readers a modest and conservative orientation on Baron's part. Yet the presence in many of her stories of a controlling, first-person female narrator, who lives apart from the world being described and engages in multilayered intertextuality and independent ars-poetic reflection, points to Baron's effort to craft an image of the woman writer as author of narratively sophisticated, modernist prose.

The extent to which Baron's undersized reputation as poet in prose endures to this day is noteworthy, even in some feminist re-readings and reevaluations of her work. In *Spoiling the Stories*, a recently published study of Israeli women's novels, scholar and novelist Tamar Merin reinforces the impression of Baron as an admired but marginal poetic prose writer who insisted on "the short, lyric impressionistic, mode" and "never developed into a novelist, nor did she become fully integrated into the evolving Hebrew canon."[13] Throughout the introduction to her study, Merin defines the importance of a writer on the basis of having written novels rather than short stories. Each of the writers she includes in her book, she writes, "successfully passed the most crucial test of a Hebrew author by writing novels."[14] Merin's study attempts to look beyond the hierarchical relationship between the female text and the canonical male text by identifying what she refers to as "intersexual dialogue" in the works of Israeli women novelists, "a literary technique which allowed the first Israeli prose fiction authors [read: novelists] to join with the Hebrew canon while still challenging its gender boundaries, unmanning it, imagining it anew."[15]

Yet her insistence upon privileging the novel over other forms of prose even as her study includes analyses of works of short fiction by Israeli novelists essentially upholds the very hierarchy it seeks to undo. By beginning her book with a 1947 short story by Yehudit Hendel that engages in intersexual dialogue with two short stories by Agnon rather than with a comparable work by Baron, Merin bypasses the ways in which Baron's fiction anticipated many of the intersexual engagements she seeks out in the

writings of the next generation of women novelists. Merin's study focuses on literary daughters and canonical fathers, but Agnon and Baron were contemporaries—literary siblings, as it were—who edited, read, and responded to each other's work. Not just that: several scholars have identified occasions when they seemed to have borrowed from and revised one another's work: Nurit Govrin has suggested that Baron's early story "Hasavta Hanye" (1909) might have served as a template for Agnon's beloved novella "Tehillah" (1950).[16] Marc Bernstein has argued that Baron's story "ʿAgunah" (1920) responds directly, from a feminist perspective, to Agnon's signature story, "ʿAgunot."[17] And my own work on Baron's "Mishpaḥah" (Family) shows how Baron's novel revises aspects of Agnon's "Aggadat hasofer" (The Tale of the Scribe).[18]

This article adds to the account of the literary dialogue between Agnon and Baron by focusing on one hitherto unexplored nexus between their work, namely, their shared admiration for and common intertextual engagements with Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, as seen in Agnon's realist novel *Sippur pashut* (1935) and Baron's 1946 novella "Fradl."[19] Critics like Robert Alter, Dan Miron, Nitza Ben Dov, and David Aberbach have already identified allusions to certain key symbolic passages from *Madame Bovary* in Agnon's realist novel, showing how Agnon remade Flaubert's story of female adultery into a story of a man who learns to renounce the romantic allure of such escapades and return in peace to family life.[20] Baron's two-volume Hebrew translation of *Madame Bovary* was published between 1931 and 1932, and, while Agnon had already read Flaubert in German during his long sojourn in Germany, he owned a copy of Baron's translation and might very well have consulted it in the writing of *Sippur pashut*. A close reading of Baron's later story "Fradl" also discloses the intertextual traces of both *Madame Bovary* and Agnon's novel, references that can be read as overturning elements of both masterworks in specifically feminist and non-idyllic ways.

As Naomi Seidman notes, translation theorists often employ a marriage metaphor to describe the relationship between the original text and its translation, with the original being seen as the husband, the translation, the wife, and the accuracy of the translation being assessed in terms of fidelity or faithfulness to the original.[21] It is significant in this context that Baron, a founding feminist modern Hebrew woman writer known for her negative literary representations of and caustic statements about the institution of marriage, undertook to translate a novel, the deep center of which,

as Charles Baudelaire first observed in 1857, "resides in the adulterous woman; she alone possesses the attributes of worthy hero."[22] Baron publicly insisted on the fidelity of her translation of Flaubert's novel; in a somewhat carping early review of the first volume of the translation, S. Tsemaḥ took Baron to task for specific "negligent" changes to Flaubert's original, minute modifications that Baron herself defended in a subsequent letter to the editor.[23] According to Allison Schachter, Baron takes such pains to refute the minutiae of Tsemaḥ's critique because they threaten to undermine her authority as a (woman) translator; Schachter points out, however, that Tsemaḥ overlooks the far more significant ways in which Baron transforms, and in that sense is explictly "unfaithful" to, Flaubert's novel.[24] As Arza Tir-Appelroit's 2004 doctoral dissertation demonstrates, Baron's Zionist-socialist commitments, as well as her critical attitudes about the conventional role of women in society, can be detected in numerous swerves away from the meaning of the original French text.[25] And, while in Baron's translation the basic contours of the plot and Emma's tragic fate clearly remain the same, according to Schachter, Baron's translation subtly but substantively rewrites Emma as a woman aware of her limitations but nevertheless intent on pursuing "her desire for personal and aesthetic redemption to the death."[26] I would add to this Baron's decision in various places in the translation to endow Emma's otherwise ludicrous musings and observations with an almost revelatory, biblical quality, as I will demonstrate below.

MADAME BOVARY AS (ANTI-)FEMINIST TEXT?

What does it mean for a pioneering feminist Hebrew woman writer, a student of both sacred and secular literature and a serious writer in her own right, to translate and respond in her own fiction to *Madame Bovary*, a novel that depicts the dire consequences of religion, reading, and aesthetics on a middle class woman's life and confirms many misogynist stereotypes even as it explodes others? What does it mean for this woman writer to revise the plots of two prior realist masterworks, one in French and the other in Hebrew, each of which hinge on the killing off and/or silencing of a female reader-protagonist?

The question of what Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* offers the woman/feminist reader or writer is complicated, to be sure. Male and female critics alike, beginning

with Baudelaire, have called attention to the ways in which Emma Bovary flouts contemporary norms of femininity and motherhood and assumes masculine behaviors and postures, thereby undoing rigid gender stereotypes.[27] According to Baudelaire, Emma is endowed with a scandalous variety of masculine qualities that defy contemporary gender expectations, including a "manly" capacity to enjoy life, great imaginative faculties, "forcefulness and quickness of decision," and "an unlimited urge to seduce and dominate."[28] Baudelaire also points to the centrality of hysteria in *Madame Bovary* and refers to Emma as a model of the "hysterical poet," an image that more recent critics have associated with Flaubert himself.[29]

According to this reading, Emma not only challenges gender norms but also becomes a serious figure of literary aspiration in her own right. As feminist critic Naomi Schor highlights, "Emma seeks a lover not only to become a novelistic character, but especially to become an author. When, in the early stage of her marriage, Emma settles in to wait for 'something to happen,' she outfits herself in advance with a writer's tools."[30] Later, during her affair with Léon, she becomes an avid writer of love letters, as if emulating the epistolary romance novels that initially inspired her adolescent longings even before marriage.

In the end, of course, Emma patently fails—in love, in life, and in literature. As Ashley Hope Pérez observes, "Emma's only narrative strategy, it seems, is pastiche," rendering her writing at best derivative and at worst "a Frankenstein monster of romance made grotesque by his many contradictory attributes."[31] Thus, in writing her letters to Léon, Emma summons up a

> phantom fashioned out of her most ardent memories, of her favorite books, her strongest desires, and at last he became so real, so tangible, that her heart beat wildly in awe and admiration, though unable to see him distinctly, for like a god, he was hidden beneath the abundance of his attributes. He dwelt in the azure land where silken ladders swung from balconies in the moonlight beneath a flower-scented breeze." She felt him near her; he was coming and would ravish her entire being in a kiss.[32]

So it is that Emma's life of writing culminates quite literally with self-destruction. Even her last piece of writing—a suicide note—proves fragmentary and unrealized.

The gendered nature of this literary failure is glaringly evident in the way in which Flaubert juxtaposes the failed writing efforts of Emma, whose name approximates the French word *femme* ("woman") with the literary successes of the writer/apothecary, Homais, whose name approximates *homme* (man).[33] Michael Danahy points to "Emma's utter deprivation [at the end of the novel] of a tongue of her own," a condition that, in my view, Baron clearly registered and endeavored to counter both in her translation and in her fiction.[34]

One can discern this countereffort quite clearly in Baron's Hebrew rendering of the passage quoted above, which subtly transforms Emma's misguided letter-writing into a sacred literary endeavor. Whereas Flaubert dismissively describes the Léon of Emma's letters as a phantom, Baron translation renders him a *demut*, an artistic image, evocative of God's creation of Adam in Genesis 5:1 "bidemut Elohim"—in the image of God. As opposed to Flaubert's French, which has Emma fashion Léon out of "ses lectures les plus belles, de ses convoitises les plus fortes" ("her most beautiful reading and her strongest passions or lust"),[35] Baron's Hebrew translation describes Léon's image as "ʿutsvah memeʾavyyehah vetupeḥah beruaḥ tovei hasefarim" ("fashioned out of her longings and cultivated in the spirit of the best books").[36] Here "ruaḥ" and "tovei hasefarim" considerably elevate Emma's sources and efforts, and "ʿutsvah memeʾavyyehah" evokes and plays on the famous opening of Y. L. Gordon's "The Tip of the Yud," in which the poet laments the sorrows (*ʿotsbekh*) of the Hebrew woman and her quashed hopes (*maʾavayyayikh*).[37] Baron renders the "contrée bleuâtre" ("azure lands") where her imagined Léon resides as "beʿolam shekulo tekhelet," an expression that calls to mind the expression *tallit shekulah tekhelet* ("a completely blue prayer shawl"), a figure for absolute purity without blemish. And, while in the French original, Emma envisions Léon carrying her off and ravishing her entire being with a kiss—"il allait venir et l'enlèverait tout entière dans un baiser"—in Baron's translation, Emma imagines that "hinneh yavo veyeqaddesh otah bineshiqah" ("Behold he will come and sanctify her with a kiss"). Admittedly, Baron's revisions of Flaubert's novel are subtle and easy to overlook. The literary revisions of Flaubert and Agnon that she undertakes in her own fiction, I would argue, are even more fundamental and sweeping, involving a reconfiguration of prior plots from female to male infidelity, and from emphasis on female indiscretion to the transformative capacity of women's empathy, community, and storytelling.

AGNON MEETS FLAUBERT

In order to flesh out this argument relating to Baron's revision of Flaubert and Agnon in her fiction, I need first to establish certain important connections (as well as certain crucial distinctions) between Flaubert's novel and Agnon's *Sippur pashut*. Agnon's novel, like Flaubert's, takes place in a provincial town, tells the story of an unhappy marriage that results in an emotional breakdown, and features a woman, Blume Nacht, whose first name half rhymes with Emma, and who is frequently seen in the novel reading by candlelight.[38] Like Emma and Léon, Blume and Hirshl share and talk about books as they begin to fall in love; eventually, however, Hirshl acquiesces to the wishes of his mother, Tsirl, and marries the wealthier Mina Ziemlich, while Blume goes from serving (Cinderella-like) as an unpaid domestic servant in the Hurvitz household and romancing with her cousin, Hirshl, to working as a paid domestic servant in the household of Akavia and Tirtza (Mintz) Mazal. The Mazal house, located on the outskirts of the community, is a noteworthy place of employ insofar as Tirtza Mazal, the protagonist of Agnon's 1925 novella, *Bidemi yamehah,* is the one major female protagonist created by Agnon who writes her own story—in biblical Hebrew, no less! Because of Tirtza's authorship, one might expect Blume to develop some manner of agency and voice. The lack of information about Blume's life after Hirshl thus looms at the novel's end as thick absence.

Instead of giving voice to Blume, Agnon's *Sippur pashut* foregrounds the inner life of Hirshl and his nervous breakdown, a form of hysteria unleashed in the wake of his marriage to Mina, even as he continues to love Blume, his would-be spiritual "twin."[39] If, as Baudelaire argues, Flaubert's achievement in *Madame Bovary* consists in his representation of Emma's tortured, "ambiguous temperament," Agnon's achievement centers on his complex psychological depictions of Hirshl's madness and consequent therapy.[40] Dr. Langsam, Hirshl's therapist in Lemberg, lends Hirshl his dead wife's romance novels—like Emma Bovary, Langsam's wife commits both adultery and suicide—yet urges him to shun their tawdry plots, dealing as they did with nothing but "ʿiskei semalot veqishutei nashim," matters of dresses and women's decorative accessories.[41] Everything about Dr. Langsam's treatment of Hirshl—Miron and other critics connect Dr. Langsam's story therapy to Agnon himself—seems to hinge on dislodging him from Bovaryian impulses and ambitions and restoring him to proper small-town family values.[42]

And so, if Flaubert's novel highlights an aspiring female literary hysteric only to squelch her romantic fantasies and kill her off, Agnon transmutes hysteria into a plot that elevates a bourgeois male (anti-)hero and mutes his female, spiritual twin. In this sense, the silencing of Blume in *Sippur pashut* outstrips that of Flaubert's Emma—a fact symbolized in the oxymoronic double meaning of Blume Nacht's name as "night flower," destined to open up and elaborate through maturation, and as completely sealed or blocked off in the darkness.[43] The silencing of Blume is underscored by the respective narrative structure of each novel. *Madame Bovary* initially focuses on Charles Bovary's point of view but shifts early on to Emma; likewise, the narrative focus of *Sippur pashut* begins with Blume but quickly moves to Hirshl. But, whereas *Madame Bovary* returns to Charles's point of view after Emma's suicide, *Sippur pashut* never revives Blume's storyline, offering only a few tantalizing glimpses (from Hirschl's perspective) of her life at the home of the Mazals. At the very end of the novel, Agnon's narrator concedes that, while the story of Hirshl and Mina has reached its conclusion, that of Blume has not yet been told, although it merits of a book of its own. "God in heaven knows when that will be," says Agnon's narrator, "when this book will ever be written."[44] According to Miron, this concluding "remark testifies openly to the narrator's discomfort with this ending."[45] Baron's "Fradl," I would like to argue, responds, as it were, to this uneasiness, decidedly countering and unsealing the twin literary fates of Emma Bovary and Blume Nacht.

TRITEXTUAL ENGAGEMENTS: FLAUBERT, AGNON, BARON

A number of additional intertextual connections between the novels of Flaubert and Agnon, and, by extension, to Baron's story "Fradl," serve to ground this reading. To begin, *Madame Bovary* and *Sippur pashut* share a whole list of common motifs and themes, including cakes and sweets, coins, orphanhood, physical and mental illness, the role of literature and reading in abetting romance and promoting freedom, women's education (Emma and Mina), and the adoption of aristocratic names, as well as the recurrent use of bird imagery to symbolize a (thwarted) quest for freedom and romantic passion.[46]

Yet the most prominent critically acknowledged borrowing from *Madame Bovary* in Agnon's *Sippur pashut* is that of the blind singing beggar who follows the

Hirondelle, the coach that Emma rides to her trysts with Léon and that appears in the novel on three separate occasions.[47] The beggar is first mentioned after Emma and Léon begin their affair, serving as lurid externalization of what Emma's dreams as a younger girl have now become.

> There was a wretched creature on the hillside, who would wander about with his stick right in the midst of the carriages. A mass of rags covered his shoulders, and an old staved-in beaver hat, shaped like a basin, hid his face; but when he took it off he revealed two gaping bloody orbits in the place of eyelids. The flesh hung in red strips and from them flowed a liquid which congealed into green scales reaching down to his nose with its black nostrils, which kept sniffing convulsively. To speak to you he threw back his head with an idiotic laugh;—then his blueish eyeballs, rolling around and around, would rub against the open wound near the temples. He sang a little song as he followed the carriages:
>
> Often the warmth of a summer day
> Makes a young girl dream her heart away.[48]

In Baron's Hebrew translation of this passage, Emma's encounter with the blind beggar takes on a luridly revelatory quality, as his hat is likened to a *giggit* ("tub" or "cask"),[49] a Hebrew word choice evocative of the famous midrash about the coercive and fearsome nature of the revelation of Sinai.[50] The second time the beggar appears and sings, he is seen rolling his eyes, sticking out his tongue, and howling like a famished dog, provoking outright disgust in Emma. To counter this disgust, Emma tosses the beggar a five-franc coin, the only money she has left, a gesture she considers beautiful, but that clearly presages her financial and physical ruin.[51] Fittingly, the third time the blind beggar appears coincides with Emma's suicide, during which he sings a longer, smuttier version of his original song. Emma erupts into bitter wild laughter in the middle of the song; by its conclusion, she experiences a final spasm and is thrown back onto the mattress, at which point, in Flaubert's words, *Elle n'existait plus*—she "had ceased to exist,"[52] a moment that Baron more reverently renders as "yats'ah nishmatah" ("her soul departed"),[53] in effect refusing to write Emma out of existence in her death.

The figure of the blind singing beggar also appears three times in Agnon's *Sippur pashut* but in a much more positive guise. When Hirshl has his mental breakdown, he is sent for treatment to the hospital of Dr. Langsam who treats Hirshl by telling him stories of the shtetl of his own youth, including references to blind beggar-musicians "who sat on empty sacks in the marketplace of his town and coaxed from their instruments such boundlessly sweet music that it could put one into a trance."[54] In marked contrast to Flaubert's grotesque, blind *vagabond*, the singing beggars in Agnon's novel are nostalgic, folkloric figures who sing pleasing songs that provoke a sense of warm sadness, maternally wrapping and swaddling the heart—thus standing in for the cradle songs that Hirshl never heard from his emotionally stinting mother.

The image of the singing blind beggar appears a second time mid-way through Hirshl's treatment, as part of Hirshl's renewed struggle with insomnia and nightmares, including one in which a blind beggar sings songs that have no beginning and no end, followed by a cloaked woman who cuts him a piece of cake and a man who throws coins in his eyes.[55] According to Nitza Ben Dov, this dream, with its references to the singing beggar, the cake, and the coins, recalls the cakes that Blume served the Hurvitzes the morning after her arrival, as well as the domed cake, topped with sugar coins that is presented at the home of the Ziemlichs after Hirshl and Mina's engagement; as such, it is a compressed representation of the conflict between Tsirl and Blume, which Hirshl wishes somehow to resolve.[56] The conclusion of this dream reflects Hirshl's guilt that, in abandoning his love for Blume, he has emotionally beggared himself to his family and their pursuit of money. Hirshl's telling cure at the hands of Dr. Langsam ultimately leads him away from such self-incriminating thoughts and back to his wife and newborn child. Indeed, by the end of the novel, when the blind singing beggar appears for the third time, Hirshl has returned to Mina; together they are strolling in the country in the snow, where they come upon a blind musician sitting and playing sad music that "seemed to have no beginning and no end" and to whom Hirshl throws a valuable coin.[57] In Flaubert's novel, the image of Emma, throwing her last coin to the blind beggar who follows the coach, appears just as Emma's world is falling apart, while, in *Sippur pashut*, Hirsh's tossing of a coin coincides with the restoration of stability to Hirshl's life and marriage. Critics of Agnon's fiction differ as to whether this

moment in the novel is meant to be seen as truly restorative or lamentable, with some straddling both positions.[58] All of that discussion, of course, pertains to an evaluation of Hirshl's life with Mina; none of it directly addresses the status and future of Blume, which is where, I would argue, Baron steps in to break the idyll.

BARON'S REVISIONARY NARRATION

I began this article with a discussion of the reception history of Baron's fiction and the tendency on the part of critics to view her stories as poetic idylls: small, static, lyrical evocations of places and times gone by. In *The Dialogic Imagination,* Mikhail Bakhtin critically targets what he sees as the idyllic, petit bourgeois, provincial setting of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*:

> In Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* the provincial town serves as a locus of action […] Such towns are the locus for cyclical, everyday time. Here there are no events, only "doings" that constantly repeat themselves. Time here has no advancing historical movement; it moves rather in narrow circles: the circle of the day, of the week, of the month, of a person's entire life. A day is just a day, a year is just a year—a life is just a life. Day in, day out the same round of activities is repeated, the same topics of conversation, the same words and so forth. In this type of time people eat, drink, sleep, have wives, mistresses (casual affairs), involve themselves in petty intrigues, sit in their shops, play cards, gossip. This is commonplace, philistine cyclical everyday time… Time here is without event and therefore seems to stand still. Here there are no "meetings," no "partings." It is a viscous and sticky time that drags itself slowly through space. And therefore it cannot serve as the primary time of the novel.[59]

It would seem to be an interpretative simplification to view either *Madame Bovary* or Agnon's Flaubertian *Sippur pashut* as mere idyll, inhabiting an eventless world where time stops; both master novels actually include "meetings," "partings," and historical disruptions to the way things have always been. The famous obscenity trial following the publication of Flaubert's novel indicates just how threatening

the novel's representation of gender norms and sexuality was to nineteenth century France.[60] Likewise, Agnon's novel offers considerable evidence of the changes afoot in Galicia in the early twentieth century and the chaos of modernity.

That said, both *Madame Bovary* and *Sippur pashut* reinstate the prior patriarchal social order in some manner and, in that sense, evince a conservative, idyllic aspect, one which, I would argue, Baron's "Fradl" subtly disrupts. In my reading, Baron's story subverts both novels, compensating, as it were, both for the killing off of Emma, and for the narrative silence surrounding Blume Nacht in *Sippur pashut* by offering an entire story about orphaned Fradl, one that supplies her with a happy ending befitting a character whose Yiddish name means "happiness" or "joy."[61]

It might seem strange to argue for the subversive or disruptive quality of a story that offers a happy ending in marriage, especially because, with few exceptions, Baron avoids writing in a happily-ever-after vein.[62] In fact, in the *sefer "zuta*"—the tiny book in which "Fradl" was initially published in 1946—it appears alongside "Halabban," a tragic narrative about a brick maker who slaves his entire life, loses his wife and two sons to death, and, by the end of the story, loses his only daughter, too. And it is this tragic tale that caps the book and furnishes its title.[63] In his introduction to *Halabban*, A. Kariv refers to the unstinting honesty of Baron's prose, noting Baron's writerly practice of looking directly "upon the lot of each person without an averting of the eyes, never embroidering her vision with sweet delusion."[64] Even in "Fradl," I would argue, the happy end comes only at great cost and as a result of a fundamental break with the past—both anti-idyllic narrative features. Beyond that, the restitutive ending of the story itself can be read as subtly ironic, given its Lithuanian shtetl setting and the publication date of 1946.

On the most basic level, the eponymously titled "Fradl" engages with the idea of happiness, pointing back to the centrality and ultimate failure of the search for happiness in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. Note that Emma's narrative strand begins with her quest, after her marriage, to understand the meaning of "bliss, passion, and ecstasy."[65] Surrounding Emma in Yonville are figures whose names literally mean "happiness"—Felicité ("joy") and Lheureux ("the happy one")—underscoring Emma's quest and ultimate failure to achieve the bliss she so desires. Reading errantly leads Emma to admire heroines who are famous, beautiful and unhappy ("nashim mefursamot o **qeshot** hayom"/"**rabbat hahen"**, according to Baron's

rendering[66]), figures whom she tragically mistakes as models for her own life. Fittingly, Baron's story of a young woman with a happy name but an unhappy marriage begins with a description that repeats verbatim elements of Baron's translation of Emma's misguided reading: "**Rabbat ḥen** aval ʿatsuvat ruaḥ haytah beʿir moladetah shel Ḥannah haʾishah Fradl, asher goralah heimer lah veʾasher neʾevkah ʿimah **qashot** bemeshekh hashanim."—"Beautiful but unhappy was the woman Fradl in Hannah's shtetl, whom fate had dealt with harshly and she struggled long and hard against it."[67] What Emma romanticizes, Fradl unromantically and unwittingly suffers, beginning with the match made for her by her guardians with the erstwhile *maskil* Avraham Noah, a biblical name that connotes regressive (from Abraham backward to Noah) rather than progressive development. As in *Sippur pashut,* where *maskilim* are seen as petty, cigarette smoking, chess playing, and materialistic, Avraham Noah is a selfish, taciturn, inattentive husband, a kind of gamester and playboy who eventually leaves home altogether, seeking employment out of town and rendering Fradl an undeclared ʿ*agunah*.[68]

Like Hirshl, Fradl is unhappy despite apparent familial and financial advantages. She, too, comes from *benot tovim*, a good (read: wealthy) family.[69] But, like Blume, she is orphaned, forced to spend her youth living with other relatives. In this sense Baron's Fradl is a hybrid figure, combining aspects of Agnon's Hirshl, Blume, and Mina. Upon marrying, Fradl returns to her family's large house in the center of town, which is outfitted (presumably by her relatives) with furnishings from the city, while she herself is dressed "kenusakh benei hakerakhim," in city fashion. All of these trappings, though, serve only to reinforce Fradl's sense of loneliness, enveloping her in "demamat qippaʾon:"[70] a frozen silence that Baron herself invokes in personal correspondence as a figure for loneliness in the absence of family and that also recalls the motif of orphanhood and silence in Agnon's *Bidemi yamehah*.[71] This silence persists even in the presence of her husband, who is seen early on in the story reading a book or a newspaper, "davar shehasheqet yafeh lo," an activity befitting silence.[72] As for Fradl herself, she sits alone on a bench outside. The narrator describes in free indirect discourse how the female neighbors observe Fradl's lack of newlywed joy, a condition that the town *rebbetzin* (mistakenly) attributes to Fradl's "emptiness"—that is, her current lack of a child.

At this point in the story, a typographic break marks a shift to backstory and draws attention to the perspective of the narrator. In the same way that Flaubert shifts back in time after Emma's wedding to Charles in order to provide the backstory of her convent education, Baron's narrator announces: "umin hanimnaʿ hu shelo lehazkir"[73]—it would be remiss not to mention the widow Sarah Leah and her son Ḥayyim Raphael, both of whom were close companions to Fradl when she was a small child. The narrator notes how Sarah Leah, who did not herself have a daughter, would delight in giving sugar cakes to the orphan Fradl. In Agnon's *Sippur pashut*, Blume Nacht presents sugar cakes to the Hurvitzes the first breakfast after her arrival. Hirshl delights in Blume's cakes and whispers in his mother's ear: "You must admit, Mother, that these cakes are delicious," an intimation of his attraction to Blume that Tsirl will eventually set out to block.[74] Later in the novel, at a dinner party, Mina's mother, Bertha Ziemlich serves a pudding, topped with sugary coins, suggesting the sweetness of money.[75] In the context of *Sippur pashut,* sugar cakes come to represent Hirshl's ultimate acquiescence to the lure of money over love. Likewise, Flaubert scholar Barbara Vinken notes the excess use of sugar in the Bovary household, as if to compensate for a lack of authentic spiritual nourishment.[76]

In opposition to use of the cake motif by Agnon and Flaubert, Sarah Leah's cakes in "Fradl" represent a simple offering of love and kindness from a widow to an orphan, a gift that accords her the merit not just of the two matriarchs for whom she is named but of all four.[77] Sarah Leah's surrogate maternal gestures are free of guile and charge; they do not originate, as in the case of Tsirl, with a desire to squelch freedom. Insofar as Sarah Leah seeks out a relationship with Fradl, the daughter she never had, Baron's story also affirms the value of daughters and not just sons.

Not so in the case of Flaubert's novel. In *Madame Bovary*, Emma's sense of feminine limitation, inferiority, and self-hatred finds specific expression in her fervent desire to have a black-haired, brave-hearted son. To her great chagrin, she has a daughter instead, whom she goes on to neglect in egregious ways as she pursues extramarital affairs. Baron's Fradl *does* give birth to a son, and, for a brief time, happiness replaces gloom in her home and marriage. But when Fradl's baby suddenly dies of illness, her husband Avraham Noah begins to escape whenever he can, going down to the garbage dump to play chess with his buddy Zanvil Elkes and seeking other undisclosed (Bovaryian) pleasures outside the house.[78]

In Flaubert's novel, as previously mentioned, it is the blind beggar who appears three times and sings a song about a young girl who dreams her heart (and her petticoats) away, who embodies and broadcasts the ugly truth about Emma's financial indiscretions and infidelities and augurs her ruin. Instead of a blind (male) beggar, the socially marginal "seer" in Baron's "Fradl" is a woman, *Gitl hamevulbelet* ("Mixed-Up Gitl"), whose Yiddish name implies both goodness and Fradl's need for a *get* (a divorce) to free herself from her unloving and, by implication, unfaithful husband.[79] Like the blind singing beggars in the novels of Flaubert and Agnon, Mixed-Up Gitl appears in "Fradl" on three crucial occasions to bear witness to Fradl's suffering, beginning with the following scene:

> Mixed-up Gitl, Fradl's neighbor on the kitchen side, once saw him [Avraham Noah] steal into the house through the back entrance, and then from the inside came the sound of words and a moaning cry, and the next day she told the women about it at the community bench, where the relations between the couple was now a frequent subject, and little Hannah, who was playing there listened to the story.[80]

Her nickname notwithstanding, Gitl is neither mixed-up nor blind when it comes to her observations about things going on around her. On the contrary, she witnesses with wide-eyed clarity the abuse suffered by unhappy Fradl as a result of her husband's behavior and reports it to the town *rebbetzin* and others in the community, thereby fulfilling an important communal function. Gitl's reports also find their way into the mind and later the stories of the young Hannah, who emerges later, in her adult guise, as the narrator of the story."[81]

Adult narrator Hannah reports that she managed to learn about the sufferings and ultimately the joys of Fradl because her shtetl community made no effort to shield children from harsh reality:

> In that place, in those days, they did not believe in shielding the eyes of a child by throwing an elegant blue prayer shawl [*tallit shel tekhelet*] over life's nakedness, and so, along with the song of sun-dazzled birds and the scent of dew-drunk plants, she also absorbed impressions of daily

> life, bits of local color, of heartache and heart joy, which in the course of time—when they had been refined and illuminated by the light of her intellect, and experience had bound them into life stories—became for her, in the solitary nights of her wandering, a source of pleasure and comfort.[82]

Baron's use of the phrase *tallit shel tekhlelet* recalls the famous midrash on the biblical rebellion of Qoraḥ, based on the episode's proximity to the commandment of wearing *tsitsit.*[83] According to this midrash, Qoraḥ questions Moses's interpretive authority by posing a halakhic question in the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*: if one were to have a tallit that were completely blue (*kulah tekhelet*), would that tallit not be exempt from the mitzvah of *tsitsit*? The phrase *tallit shekulah tekhelet* thus indicates a notion of complete purity, as well as an attitude of smug certainty and arrogance.[84] Recall Baron's use of a version of this sanctifying phrase in her translation of Emma's outsized image of Léon, in which he inhabited an *ʿolam shekulo tekhelet*, an azure land.[85] Here in "Fradl," this phrase similarly refers to a romanticized, idyllic depiction of reality, a mode of storytelling that stands in the way of depicting "*yesurei lev veḥedvat lev*," authentic pains and joys of the heart.[86]

Fradl herself clings for a time to an unrealistic, idyllic hope that she can save her marriage. Baron's narrator likens her to a terminally ill person who nevertheless pursues every sort of therapy,[87] a connection between love and medicine that calls to mind Emma's lovelorn hysteria and Charles's ineptitude as a doctor, as well as Hirshl's dubious cure in *Sippur pashut*. The real cure for Fradl (and perhaps for Hirshl) would be to let the marriage die; nevertheless, she employs various desperate means to win over her husband's affections that recall Emma's frenetic and ultimately financially ruinous purchases from Lheureux: wearing bright colored dresses that only accentuate her pallor and eating rich dairy foods to fatten herself up.[88] All of this renders her an object of curiosity and derision among many in her town, like a misguided character in a tawdry novel of the sort devoured by Emma Bovary or Dr. Langsam's wife. To Baron's narrator, Fradl's behavior recalls the *senuʾah* of the Bible, Jacob's hated wife Leah "who degrades and humiliates herself by chasing after a little bit of husbandly affection."[89] In Agnon's *Sippur pashut,* Hirshl, who hates his wife Mina, invokes the same biblical story about Leah giving away the

mandrakes in exchange for a night with her husband in order to question why God made one of the wives hated, and why Jacob ever married Leah in the first place. Had he never married her, she never would have been hated.[90]

Of course, God has little to do with any of this. It is Tsirl who engineers Hirshl's marriage to Mina and Hirshl who acquiesces. Fradl's relatives similarly arrange her marriage to Avraham Noah, preferring him to the (poorer) neighbor, Ḥayyim Raphael, although, in Fradl's case, there is no discussion of her feelings about the marriage. Is it possible that, when she gets married, she is simply too young and naïve to know how she feels? In her naïveté, does she (like Hirshl) blindly and pliantly acquiesce to her relatives, agreeing to marry Avraham Noah (instead of Ḥayyim Raphael) for purported financial reasons?[91] How do the various intertextual resonances from *Madame Bovary* and *Sippur pashut* help us interpret Fradl's story?

As previously noted about *Madame Bovary*, critics disagree about the feminist implications of Emma Bovary's behavior. Some maintain that Flaubert gives voice, through Emma, to the fundamental inequities of middle-class women's lives and to a quest for self-expression beyond the roles of wife, mother, and nun. Others emphasize her inability to see through the clichés of romance fiction and her easy seduction, unremitting narcissism, and financial irresponsibility, which render her a veritable misogynist stereotype. A similar interpretive ambiguity and debate surrounds the meaning of the ending of Agnon's *Sippur pashut*. Does Hirshl actually ever cure himself of his love for Blume and embrace the life and marriage staged for him by his mother? Is the end of the novel a comedy of strengthened marriage or a tragedy of unconsummated love that leaves both Hirshl and Blume in a condition of unending emotional abandonment or *ʿaginut*?[92]

This much is clear: if Agnon vacillates in his novel between a condemnation of traditionalism and the bourgeois middle class and a countervailing condemnation of modernity, he does so all at the narrative expense of Blume Nacht. Similarly, if Flaubert introduces the feminist complaint but replaces it with a female adulterous stereotype, if he teases the reader with the idea of the woman writer/reader but delivers a mere writer of love letters, Baron counters with a story about a woman who is mistreated by the man she ought never have married, and about a community of women who witness her torments, including young Hannah, whom we know from other stories where she is featured, eventually becomes a student/reader/

writer in her own right.[93] Hannah is introduced in the very first line of the story together with Fradl herself, a twin narrative presence that challenges Fradl's silence and suggests an alternative to her way of life.

In the ars-poetic *tallit shel tekhelet* interlude in the story discussed above, Hannah's childhood impressions and storehouse and memories fuse with those of the narrator, presumably an older Hannah who has already left home and begun to read and write realist literary fiction based on lived experience.

The distinction drawn here between imagined and lived experience is crucial. In *Sippur pashut*, when Hirshl Hurvitz has his nervous breakdown and begins crowing, he begs not to be slaughtered, for he is a man rather than a rooster.[94] Hirshl's fear of being slaughtered is either a paranoid delusion or a conscious strategy to appear insane so as to escape military service and, for a time, his marriage. Mixed-Up Gitl's reports of Fradl's suffering employ a similar vocabulary of slaughter: "Come and look how he has butchered her now," she tells the Talmud students in the community house the second time she appears in the story,[95] once again calling urgent attention to the emotional abuse of Fradl by her husband. Gitl's use of the vocabulary of slaughter suggests, however, that Fradl's misery can be escaped only by attentive, realistic witness and real-life action, rather than fantasy or escapism.

Fradl's misery mounts significantly when Avraham Noah escapes from her and takes a job away from town. Upon his departure, Fradl is consigned like many other women of her time whose husbands have gone away to seek their fortunes elsewhere, to live "ḥayyei niyyar" ("a life of paper/letters")—a tragic echo of Emma's romanticized epistolary exchanges. As Fradl's sense of abandonment intensifies, Hannah's writerly life of paper, exemplified through her narration of Fradl's story, begins to emerge as an alternative to the dead-end writing of both Emma and Fradl.

All this becomes clear when, suddenly, after months of being away and without previous warning, Avraham Noah returns to town for a visit. Because of his prolonged absence, Fradl has not been adhering to the laws of family purity, so her relatives submit a question to the rabbi regarding the permissibility of Fradl proceeding immediately to the ritual bathhouse for immersion. At this point in the story, Baron's narrator briefly digresses from the storyline to offer an ethnographic description of Jewish women's observance of the laws of mikvah, with their attendant humiliations and hardships:

> About this commandment, and how the daughters of Israel in the shtetls fulfilled it, it's worth writing a special section.
>
> They, these shy women, who concealed themselves within their kitchens, would make their way, when the time came, through the alleyways to the bathhouse before the eyes of the curious, each of whom knew them by name.
>
> The kerchief was too small to obscure their flushed, shamed faces, and the ground beneath was stiff and unforgiving, and so slippery that it was easy to trip.
>
> And behind them, had they not left a house in disorder, a goat waiting to be milked, hungry children crying for their supper, and an unperturbed husband who paid them no mind? He was a moody man, who did not pamper his household or speak softly to them, and against him, the heart swelled with rage. And indeed, it was not the desire for a little lovemaking that propelled these women, but rather, the holy duty, a matriarchal inheritance, the commandment of life itself.[96]

Fradl had previously been described as demeaning herself like the hated biblical wife, Leah, "by chasing after a little husbandly affection." In casting Fradl's trip to the *miqveh* against the backdrop of this description of Jewish matriarchal fortitude and devotion to ritual, the narrator explicitly dissociates Fradl and her female community from a demeaning pursuit of "a little love." At the same time, the presence of an authorial voice that subtly judges and laments the suffering of these women points to the need for another way, one made more urgent when, in a cruel twist of fate, Fradl emerges from the ritual bath only to discover that her husband's coach—an ironic nod, perhaps, in the direction of the Hirondelle from *Madame Bovary*—has already left town.

In her third appearance in the story, Mixed-Up Gitl observes Fradl's reaction to this climactic act of betrayal, saying, "You see, I told you he was a murderer; now he's really spilled her blood."[97] Gitl's exclamation points to the potential for a tragic Bovaryian ending to the story. In happy contrast to Emma Bovary, however, who dies at her own hand against the background of the beggar's last song, Gitl's outcry presages an emotional and intellectual breakthrough: Fradl finally musters "me'at hasekhel asher natan Elohim belibbah" ("the little common sense God had put in

her heart)[98]—and seeks a divorce from Avraham Noah. The above reference to God instilling a bit of wisdom in her heart recalls the moment at the end of *Sippur pashut* when Hirshl resigns himself to his life with Mina because "our father in Heaven inserts love for his son, Meshulam, into his heart."[99] Divine intercession in Agnon's novel results in Hirshl remaining bound to a woman he previously did not love, whereas, in Baron's story, it allows a woman to read the truth of her own life and seek a better course.

Recall the moment before Emma Bovary's final breakdown and ultimate demise when, on a whim, she tosses the blind beggar the five-franc coin, as well as Hirshl's recapitulation of this gesture at the end of *Sippur pashut*. "Fradl" boasts a similar moment: After recovering from her breakdown, Fradl gives away to poor girls the dresses that she had previously bought merely to please her husband, a deed that aids the indigent and also signals a purging of her prior, deluded ways. If that isn't enough, Fradl also burns the love letters she received from Avraham Noah, a move that both counters Emma Bovary's saving of all her letters from Rodolphe and recalls Leah's burning of Mazal's letters in Agnon's *Bidemi yamehah*.

After these symbolic acts of dissociation from Fradl's former life—distinct literary swerves, as it were, from the plots of *Madame Bovary* and *Sippur pashut*—the story finally supplies its happy ending. Fradl marries her neighbor Ḥayyim Raphael leading to a taking down of the *gader* ("fence") between the two properties; this recalls the moment in Baron's translation of *Madame Bovary* where Emma is seen longing for a son because, unlike women, only men can burst through every *gader*,[100] a translation choice that departs somewhat from Flaubert's *traverser les obstacles*.[101] The taking down of the fence signals a blurring of class, family, and gender (*migdar*), enabling Fradl to assume control of her own decision making and personal life. Her new mother-in-law, Sarah Leah, who had always longed for a daughter and had fed her sweets when she was a young girl, now indulges Fradl even more thoroughly. Sweet treats are associated here not with an acceptance of bourgeois norms (as in *Sippur pashut*) or with romantic indulgence (as in *Madame Bovary)*, but with a socially conscious attitude of caring for the orphan, something conspicuously lacking in the novels of both Agnon and Flaubert, where two orphans (Bertha and Blume) languish in servitude.

At the very end of the story, Fradl gives birth to another son. Like his father Ḥayyim Raphael, who is described earlier in the story as frequently risking his life

to save people during town fires, this son, Yeruḥam David, will grow up and become known among his townspeople for teaching his fellow Jews the principles of self-defense against their anti-Semitic aggressors. Compare this to Hirshl's evasion of military duty in *Sippur pashut* and Emma's complaints about Charles's lack of physical, manly aptitudes such that "he could neither swim, nor fence, nor shoot."[102] To be sure, Baron's ending hardly overturns gender norms or expectations insofar as Fradl's redemption seems to hinge on her having a heroic masculine husband and son (rather than a daughter). As Sheila Jelen explains, "Fradl" is "a story about the possibility of happy endings for a Jewish woman in a nineteenth-century shtetl, within the confines of proscribed tradition" and the conventional marriage plot.[103]

That said, one cannot ignore the role of Baron's female narrator and her *ḥayyei niyyar* ("life of letters") in the shaping of this seemingly conventional plot. This narrator, who enters into the story's world and comments upon it at various crucial junctures, repeatedly reminds us that the events in this story do not unfold naturally or inevitably. Rather, they are shaped by a narrative hand that remains both bound to and set apart from this world of the past. The narrator's metapoetic reflections and ethnographic descriptions of Jewish women's ritual observances set Fradl's story against a broader communal story of continuities and discontinuities, of insiders and outsiders to that world. Describing events from several years before, but published in 1946 in the tragic aftermath of the Shoah, "Fradl" grants its female narrator the voice and prerogative to conjure up a wistful and restitutive dream of stability and self-preservation at the very moment when the shtetl idyll has been irretrievably lost. Having grown up among honest folk, Baron's narrator knows better than to cover that world and its history in a narrative *tallit shel tekhelet*. Nevertheless, she rejects the long-standing deterministic script that imagines only tragedy or ridiculousness for its yearning, aspiring, female protagonists. In a stubborn assertion of agency, and faith, the narrator offers a story about a suffering woman, who—in marrying Ḥayyim Raphael, whose name means both "life" and "cured by God," and in having a son named Yeruḥam David ("David will be pitied")—manages at long last to find hope, happiness, and security. After 1946, readers know that no Ḥayyim Raphael will be able to stave off the afflictions to come; no amount of pity will suffice to save Yeruḥam David and his community. Only in *ḥayyei niyyar*—the stubbornly inventive life on paper that is Baron's story—will they endure.

NOTES

I began working on a joint study of Agnon and Baron in 2013. Alan Mintz was one of the first people to respond to my preliminary efforts to establish the contours of this new project. His February 5, 2014 email to me in response to an early draft of this paper was helpful in prodding me to consider "some consideration of the role that genre plays here," given that "*Sippur pashut* is a novel, although not in the epic, sprawling tradition of *Hakhnassat kallah* and the others," while "Fradl is something else, a long short story […] This must be a factor," Alan insisted, "in the compositional options each writer takes advantage of and is limited by." Alan also urged me to consider the interpretive benefit of comparing these three texts. Five years later, this article attempts to address Alan's queries. I only wish he would have been able to read and comment on whether they had been properly answered. I also wish I could be consulting with him in the editing of this journal that he helped found. Thanks go out to the Hadassah Brandeis Institute for their financial support of this project; to Nitza Ben Dov, Yael Halevi-Wise, David Aberbach, and Robert Alter for sources and insight; to Yoram Bitton, Tina Weiss, and Marilyn Krider of the HUC-JIR Libraries for research assistance; to Allison Schachter and Sheila Jelen for helpful feedback; and to Jeffrey Saks, who not only commented carefully on an early draft but also hosted me at Beit Agnon, located a copy of Baron's translation of *Madame Bovary* as well as the copy of Baron's *Ketanot,* inscribed by Baron, featured above, and offered much helpful feedback on earlier drafts.

1. For evidence of early correspondence between Agnon and Baron's husband Yosef Aharonovitz that also refers to Baron, see S. Y. Agnon, *Missod ḥakhamim: mikhtavim 1909–1970* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 2002), 18–20, letters 8 and 9.

2 Young Agnon also wrote a good deal poetry. For more on his earliest writings, see Yitzhak Bakun, *ʿAgnon hatsaʿir* (Tel Aviv: Dekel, 1989).

3 S. Y. Agnon, *Hakhnassat kallah*, vol. 1 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmuel Yosef ʿAgnon* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1952), 470 (translation mine).

4 See, e.g., Ezra 2:41; 10:24; Nehemiah 7:44; 10:29; 11:22, 12:28, 12:29, 12:42. In his story "Ḥush hareiaḥ" ("The Sense of Smell"), Agnon writes of how, as a Levite, he would be standing together with his brothers, the *meshorerim*, singing the daily Levite song, if the temple in Jerusalem were still standing; see S. Y. Agnon, *Eilu veʾeilu* Volume 2 of *Kol sippurav shel S. Y. ʿAgnon,* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1959), 297. See also Shmuel Agnon, "Banquet Speech," The Nobel Prize, December 10, 1966, https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1966/agnon-speech.html.

5 In using this expression, Agnon substituted the word *shirah* for *torah*, thereby revising a statement from b. Berakhot 63b: Reish Lakish said: Whence do we learn that the words of the Torah are firmly held by one who kills himself for it? Because it says, 'This is the Torah, when a man shall die in the tent'" (Soncino translation from https://halakhah.com/berakoth/berakoth_63.html). For more on Agnon's admiration of Flaubert as a model "for the painstaking devotion to the writer's craft," see Robert Alter, "The Great Genius of Jewish Literature," *New York Review of Books* (April 6, 2017), http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2017/04/06/sy-agnon-great-genius-jewish-literature/. For the letter, see *Sh. Y. ʿAgnon–Sh. Z. Schocken: Ḥilufei iggerot* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1991), 36–37. In a letter from Agnon to Dov Sadan, in which Agnon denies being influenced by Kafka, he admits to reading Homer, Cervantes, Balzac, Gogol, Tolstoy, Flaubert, and Hamsun; see S. Y. ʿAgnon, *Meʿatsmi el ʿatsmi* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1976), 245.

6 Gustave Flaubert, *Madam bovary: roman*, trans. Devorah Baron (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Hapoʿalim, 1966). "Misifrei haʿonah," *Lamerḥav* (January 17, 1958), 8, a roundup of the season's literary offerings, includes a hundred-year anniversary reprinting of *Madame Bovary* in Baron's translation (it had already been reprinted several times since its original 1932 publication), which it describes as a "targum mofet," a classic translation that maintains the clarity and precision of Flaubert's style. See also Y. Livkhi, "Haroman ladorot," *Maʿariv* (January 17, 1958), 15.

7 See Dov Kimḥi's essay, "Devorah Baron: Lidemutah hasifrutit," in ʿAda Pagis, ed., *Devorah Baron: Mivḥar maʾamarim ʿal yetsiratah* (Tel Aviv: ʿAm ʿOved, 1974), 23. A later review by Kimḥi of Baron's book, *Ketanot*, refers to the stories as *shirah hazoʾt shelah* ("this poetry of hers"); see Dov Kimḥi, "Meʾaron hasefarim," *Doʾar hayyom* (11 August 1933), 6. F. Laḥover's essay, "Devorah Baron," in Pagis, *Devorah Baron*, 26, makes a similar observation, referring to "the almost idyllic quiet" of Baron's descriptions. Likewise, Y. Lichtenbaum's essay, "Devorah Baron," in Pagis, *Devorah Baron*, 31, writes of the reader passing from "the tiny, from the extremely quiet idyll, to the lofty and the sublime […] of poetry sprouting as if organically from ugly matter."

8 Y. Ovsei, "Meshoreret haʿayarah Devorah Baron," *Hadoʾar* 13, no. 16 (Adar 8, 1934): 315–16.

9 Yaakov Fichman, "Yetsirat Devorah Baron," in Pagis, *Devorah Baron*, 59, and Asher Barash, "Hameshoreret biprosah," in *Parshiyyot* by Devorah Baron (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1968), 5–6, respectively. Barash's introduction also appeared in *Hapoʿel hatsaʿir*, Shevat 16, 5711/January 23, 1951 and was reprinted in Pagis, *Devorah Baron*, 46–47.

10 For a discussion of the mythic/idyllic aspects of Baron's fiction, see see Dan Miron, "The Endless Cycle: The Poetic World of Dvora Baron," in *Hebrew, Gender, and Modernity: Critical Responses to Dvora Baron's Fiction,* ed. Sheila E. Jelen and Shachar Pinsker (College Park: University of Maryland Press, 2007), 17–32.

11 Letter dated Tuesday, Parashat Vayera Eilav, תרצ"ד [October 31, 1933], from the Genazim Archives. Published in *Yediʿot genazim* 99, no. 8 (year 14, 1981), 16.

12 Note that, while Baron labels Agnon "hameshorer," she labels herself "hameḥabberet," a title that might be seen as invoking, in feminine form, the masculine authority of R. Yosef Caro, author of the *Shulḥan ʿarukh,* known in halakhic discourse as "hameḥabber"

13 Tamar Merin, *Spoiling the Stories* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2016), 20 and 5, respectively.

14 Merin, *Spoiling*, 24.

15 Merin, *Spoiling*, 24.

16 Nurit Govrin, *Hamaḥatsit harishonah* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1988), 174. For more on this, see Wendy Zierler, "From Hanye to Tehilla," in *Agnon's Stories of the Land of Israel*, ed. Jeffrey Saks (New York: Wipf and Stock, forthcoming).

17 Marc Bernstein, "On the Story 'ʿAgunah'," in *Hebrew, Gender, and Modernity: Critical Responses to Dvora Baron's Fiction*, ed. Sheila Jelen and Shachar Pinsker (College Park: University of Maryland Press, 2007), 117–44. See also Sheila Jelen, *Intimations of Difference: Dvora Baron in the Modern Hebrew Renaissance* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 79–97.

18 Wendy Zierler, *And Rachel Stole the Idols: The Emergence of Modern Hebrew Women's Writing* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 192–201.

19 In her postmodern psychobiography of Baron, Amia Lieblich seems to draw a direct connection between Baron's translation of *Madame Bovary* and the subject matter of "Fradl" by treating them right next to one another; see Amia Lieblich, *Conversations with Dvora*, trans. Naomi Seidman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 259–64.

20 See Robert Alter, "Blind Beggars and Incestuous Passions," *New York Times*, December 22, 1985, https://www.nytimes.com/1985/12/22/books/blind-beggars-and-incestuous-passions.html; Nitza Ben Dov, *Agnon's Art of Indirection* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 98–106; Dan Miron, *Harofe hamedummeh* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1995), 207; and David Aberbach, "Beggars of Love: Flaubert and Agnon," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 2, no. 7 (2008): 157–74.

21 Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 37–38.

22 Charles Baudelaire, "*Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert," first published in *L'artiste* (October 18, 1857) and reprinted in translation by Paul de Man in *Madame Bovary*, ed. Paul de Man (New York: Norton, 1965), 340. Regarding Baron's view of marriage, her daughter, Tsipporah Aharonovitz recalls her mother reading in the paper about a play entitled "I Murdered my Wife" and saying in response that "All husbands could say that." Also, when an acquaintance was getting married, and someone in Baron's house recommended they send a note of congratulations, Baron suggested that they send a message of consolation instead. See Devorah Baron, *Agav Orḥa* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Hapoʿalim, 1960), 108–9.

23 See Sh. Tsemaḥ, "Madam Bovary beʿivrit," *Moznayim* 30 (Tevet 14, 1931), 12–14 and Devorah Baron "Heʿarot," *Moznayim* 31 (Tevet 21, 1932), 14–15.

24 Allison Schachter, "Aesthetic Labor in the Yishuv: Dvorah Baron's 'Trifles'," in *Avantgarde Women in Prose and the Question of Jewish Modernism*, forthcoming.

25 Arza Tir-Appelroit, "Hatargum betselem uvidemut" (PhD Dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 2004).

26 Schachter, "Aesthetic Labor."

27 For a feminist novel that grapples with the figure of Emma Bovary as a potential feminist icon, see Dorothy Byant, *Ella Price's Journal* (New York: Feminist Press, 1997 [1972]). See also Gayle Greene, *Changing the Story: Feminist Fiction and the Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) and Suzanne Leonard, "I Really Must Be an Emma Bovary: Female Literacy and Adultery in Feminist Fiction," *Genders 1998–2013*, May 1, 2010, https://www.colorado.edu/gendersarchive1998-2013/2010/05/01/i-really-must-be-emma-bovary-female-literacy-and-adultery-feminist-fiction (accessed 1/1/2018).

28 Baudelaire, "*Madame Bovary*," 336–43. For more recent articles on this subject, see Dorothy Kelly, "Flaubert's Androgynous Representations," in *Fictional Genders* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); Tony Williams, "Gender Stereotypes in Madame Bovary," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 28, no. 2 (1992): 130–39; and Roger Huss, "Flaubert and Realism: Paternity, Authority, and Sexual Difference," in *Spectacles of Realism: Body, Gender, Genre*, ed. Margaret Cohen and Christopher Prendergast, Cultural Politics 10 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 179–95.

29 Baudelaire, *Madame Bovary*, 341. For the association of this image with Flaubert himself, see Elisabeth Bronfen, "Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and the Discourse of Hysteria," *Nineteenth Century Prose* 25, no. 1 (1998), 65–101. For more on Flaubert and hysteria, see Janet Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), particularly chapters 4, 5, and 6.

30 Naomi Schor, *Breaking the Chain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 15–16. For this passage see Gustave Flaubert, *Madama Bovary*, trans. Paul DeMan (New York: Norton, 1965), 43 and Flaubert, *Madam Bovary* (trans. Baron), 54.

31 Ashley Hope Pérez, "Against 'Écriture Féminine': Flaubert's Narrative Aggression in *Madame Bovary*" *French Forum* 38, no. 3 (2013), 37.

32 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (trans. DeMan), 211.

33 Schor, *Breaking*, 12.

34 Michael Danahy, *The Feminization of the Novel* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1991), 147. In the story "Madame Bovary bineveh tsedeq," the poet and prose writer Nurit Zarḥi has Madame Bovary rise up out of the Mediterranean Sea and visit Devorah Baron, who chides Flaubert's heroine for many of her bad choices and assumptions about men; see Nurit Zarḥi, *Oman hamasekhot* (Tel Aviv: Zemorah Bitan, 1993), 59–67.

35 Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, Édition du groupe "Ebooks libres et gratuits" (1857, French), https://www.ebooksgratuits.com/pdf/flaubert_madame_bovary.pdf, 330.

36 Flaubert, *Madam Bovary* (trans. Baron), 245–46.

37 See Y. L. Gordon, "Qotso shel yod," https://benyehuda.org/yalag/yalag_086.html.

38 S. Y. Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, in ʿAl *kappot hamanʿul*, vol. 3 of *Kol sippurav shel Shmuel Yosefʿ Agnon* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1958), 71, 72, 73. For English translation, see S. Y. Agnon, *A Simple Story*, trans. Hillel Halkin (New Milford, CT: Toby, 2014), 21, 22, 24.

39 Agnon, *Sippur pashut,* 76; Agnon, *Simple Story*, 28 translates the sentence "Zo Blume haytah bivḥinat teʾumato," as "In age she was almost his twin," which I think misses the psychological or spiritual point of the description.

40 Direct quote from Baudelaire, "*Madame Bovary*," 341.

41 Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, 234, my translation. On shunning tawdry plots, see Miron, *Harofe*, 218.

42 Miron, *Harofe,* 222–30. See also Yair Koren Maimon, *Yaḥasei metappelim-metuppalim beyetsirotav shel ʿAgnon* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2015), 161–96.

43 According to Harold Fisch, *S. Y. Agnon* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1975), 93, Blume's name, which is Yiddish for "flower," marks her specifically as the *hortus inclusus*, the closed garden of Song of Songs 4:12. That is why is she mysterious and unattainable. In Hebrew, her name also suggests "closed off" or "sealed." This interpretation essentially blames Blume's character for the failure of their love, rather than focusing on the way in which Hirshl and the narrative within which he predominates seals her off from opportunities or voice. Along similar lines, Amos Oz, *The Silence of Heaven*, trans. Barbara Harshav (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 45–60 (translation of *Shetiqat hashamayim* [Tel Aviv: Keter, 1993]) charges Blume with frigidity and emotional aridity, making her ultimately an unfit partner for Hirshl. For a counterargument that opposes the notion of Blume's frigidity and unattainability, see Nitza Ben Dov, "Haʾim Blume frigidit?" *ʿAlei siaḥ* 34 (1994): 43–50.

44 Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, 272; Agnon, *Simple Story*, 239.

45 Dan Miron, "Domesticating a Foreign Genre," *Prooftexts* 7 (1987): 9.

46 On women's education: Mina Ziemlich is a wealthy farmer's daughter-turned-*maskilah*, who knows how to play piano, just like Flaubert's Emma Rouault; this parallel does not bode well for Hirshl insofar as Emma's study of piano becomes the pretext for her visits to Rouen to pursue her affair with Léon. At the very end of *Sippur pashut*, though, when Hirshl and Mina are out strolling in the snow, Hirshl recalls gratefully that Mina had not asked him for an instrument even though she had once learned how to play piano, an intertextual nod to the fact that Mina might have turned out just like Emma. See Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, 268; Agnon, *Simple Story*, 235.

On the adoption of aristocratic names, the name Berthe/Bertha appears in both texts and follows a similar pattern. Emma Bovary chooses the name Berthe for her daughter because she heard this name in the house of the Marquise, lending the name an aristocratic association. Likewise, Mina's mother changes her name from the Yiddish Brayndel to the more German Bertha, as a mark of her rise in social station given her husband's wealth. But, whereas Flaubert's Berthe is orphaned and reduced to poverty and servitude (like Agnon's Blume Nacht!), Bertha Ziemlich remains a God-fearing Jew and enjoys a comfortable rural life, affording her the opportunity to help care for her grandson. The sad fate of Flaubert's orphaned, destitute Berthe constitutes a major critique of French bourgeois culture, whereas Agnon's Bertha seems to support and undergird the middle-class status quo.

47 Hirondelle, which means "swallow," strengthens the association between bird imagery and Emma's quest to be free of her marriage in order to indulge in other passions. Later, when her affair begins to peter out and her debts reach a crushing height, she muses on how "she would have liked to take wing like a bird, and fly off far away to become young again in the realms of immaculate purity" (Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* [trans. DeMan], 212). Agnon's novel includes too many references to birds to cite individually, but two are worth mentioning: Early on in Agnon's *Sippur* pashut, Blume is described as "as quick on her feet as a bird in flight." (Agnon, *Simple Story,* 28; Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, 74) Later, after his marriage to Mina, lovesick Hirshl develops insomnia and muses how drinking coffee makes you feel light like a bird (Agnon, *Simple Story*, 169; Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, 208). When he has his nervous breakdown Hirshl begins to crow like a rooster, less a bird of flight than one of domestic breeding or farming—the purview of his in-laws, the Ziemlichs—a mark of how will never truly flee his family's expectations.

48 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (trans. DeMan), 193.

49 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (trans. Baron), 227.

50 See b. Shabbat 88a, Soncino translation, http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Shabbath.pdf.

51 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (trans. DeMan), 219; Flaubert, *Madam Bovary* (trans. Baron), 254.

52 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (1857, French), 372; Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (trans. DeMan), 238.

53 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (trans. Baron), 274.

54 Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, 233; Agnon, *Simple Story*, 196–97.

55 Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, 236; Agnon, *Simple Story*, 199–200. The image of the blind beggar who sings songs that have no beginning and no end also appears in Agnon's unfinished posthumously published novel, *Shira*; see S. Y. ʿAgnon, *Shira* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1971), 8.

56 Ben Dov, *Agnon's Art*, 73–106.

57 Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, 268; Agnon, *Simple Story*, 234–35). Gershon Shaked interprets the scene where Hirshl throws the coin at the blind beggar who plays that song that has no beginning and no end as an external representation of Hirshl's resolve to "close his account" with fate and with a world that has no boundaries and to

embrace his relationship with Mina. See Gershon Shaked, *Omanut hasippur shel ʿAgnon* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Hapoʿalim, 1973), 220.

58 See, e.g., Malka Shaked, "Haʾim Hirshl hayah meshugaʿ," *Hasifrut* 32 (1982): 81–113, who sees the novel as accommodating both interpretations. Others have suggested other hybrid readings, where the narrator of the novel stands at an ironic remove from novel's seeming resolution. See, e.g., Gershon Shaked, *S. Y. Agnon: A Revolutionary Traditionalist* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 131–32 and Alter, "Great Genius."

59 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist, University of Texas Slavic Series 1 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 247-248.

60 For more on the trial that followed the publication of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, see Dominick LaCapra, *Madame Bovary on Trial* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984).

61 The name of Baron's eponymous protagonist also gestures back to a minor character with the same name in Agnon's "ʿAgunot." In that story, Fradl is the poor daughter of a servant woman and the beloved Yehezkel, the talmudic luminary who abandons her in Poland in order to become a Rosh Yeshiva in Jerusalem and to marry Dina, the daughter of wealthy Ahiezer. After marrying Dina, Yehezkel sadly learns that Fradl has been married off to someone else. Aside from this, Agnon provides no other information about Fradl's fate. Baron "Fradl" might be seen as compensating for this omission as well.

62 Gershon Shaked, *Modern Hebrew Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 60, notes that "Baron's plots often record the trajectory of a protagonist's life from an 'idyllic' point of departure to an 'anti-idyllic' ending. Being orphaned is the pivotal event in the lives of many of her female characters." Stories such as "Fradl" and "Mishpaḥah" reverse this tragic course but upend the idyll in other ways.

63 Devorah Baron, *Halabban* (Tel Aviv: Zuta/Dvir, 1946).

64 A. Kariv, introduction to Baron, *Halabban*, 3.

65 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (trans. DeMan), 24.

66 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (trans. Baron), 36 (emphasis added).

67 Devorah Baron, "Fradl," *Parshiyyot* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1968), 97 (emphasis mine). Translation from Dvorah Baron, *The First Day and Other Stories*, trans. Naomi Seidman and Chana Kronfeld (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 26.

68 "Fradl," like other stories in Baron's corpus, resists the use of the category of *ʿagunah* as allegory, as it appears in stories such as Agnon's "ʿAgunot," insisting instead on attending to actual women's suffering and possible remedies. For more on Baron's deallegorization of the *ʿagunah*, see Bernstein, "On the Story *ʿAgunah*,'" 117–44.

69 The epithet of "benei tovim" appears several times in Agnon's novel, including one passage that considers Blume's decision not to marry anyone else after Hirshl marries Mina: "Kelum metsappah hi shetitnasse levaḥur ben tovim? […] Lifnei yamim lifnei shanim natnah ʿeineihah bevaḥur ben tovim Hirshl Hurvitz shemo," (*Sippur pashut*, 197). "Did she really believe some wealthy young man would still come along and marry her?... Once, long ago, she had given her heart to a [wealthy] young man named Hirshl Hurvitz (Agnon, *Simple Story*, 157).

70 Baron, "Fradl," 97.

71 In a letter to her hospitalized daughter Tsipporah, dated January 23, 1947, Baron describes the sad emptiness of her house without her there: "shoreret po kemo beveit Fradl, demamat qippaʾon" ("frozen silence prevails within, as in the house of Fradl"), suggesting the significance of this fictional description to Baron's own state of mind. See Baron, *Agav Oraḥ*, 149–50. Cf. Baron's Hebrew rendition of the description of Emma Bovary in the convent as situated, "betokh demamat ḥeder hamitot, leqol shaʾon raḥoq shel eizo ʿagalah" (Flaubert, *Madam bovary*, 37), "within the silence of the dormitory against the distant clamor of some carriage or another" Flaubert, *Madama Bovary* (trans. DeMan), 27. In both narratives the static silence of the narrative is destined, for better or worse, to be broken. For a discussion of analogous themes in Agnon's *Bidemi yamehah,* see Naomi Sokoloff, "Narrative Ventriloquism and Muted Feminine Voice," *Prooftexts* 9 (1989): 115–37 and Ruth Ginsburg, "'Bidemi yameha metah tirtsah'o: 'yafah at raʿayati ketirtsah nava kiyrushalayim ayumah kanigdalot'," *Dappim lemeḥqar besifrut* 8 (1991–92): 285–300.

72 Baron, "Fradl," 98. Jelen, *Intimations*, 90–91 notes a similar silence in Baron's "ʿAgunah."

73 Baron, "Fradl," 98.

74 Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, 58; Agnon, *Simple Story*, 6. For a detailed analysis of the cake/pudding motif in Agnon's novel, see Ben Dov, *Agnon's Art*, 73–88.

75 Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, 129; Agnon, *Simple Story*, 84.

76 Barbara Vinken, "Loving, Reading, Eating: The Passion of Madame Bovary," *MLN* 122, no. 4, French Issue (September 2007), 771.

77 Baron, "Fradl," 101.

78 Implied in the story is that Avraham Noah is interested in other forms of female company, as he pays more attention to his beautiful, city-dwelling sister when she comes to visit than he does to his wife; see "Fradl," in Baron, *Parshiyyot*, 103–4.

79 Ben-Ami Feingold in "*Devorah Baron kesoferet feministit*," *Sadan* 4 (5760/1999–2000), 329–30, notes that the motif of the *get* in Baron's fiction functions alternatively as a symbol of oppression (as in "Keritut") or of liberation (as in "Fradl").

80 Baron, "Fradl," 102; Baron, *First Day*, 33.

81 For a discussion of the role of Mixed-Up Gitl (or Crazy Gitl) as well as the layers of narrative mediation in the story, see Jelen, *Intimations*, 57–59.

82 Baron, "Fradl," 102; Baron, *First Day*, 33.

83 See Numbers Rabbah 18:3.

84 Agnon alludes to this same midrashic tradition in the preamble to his story "ʿAgunot," when he describes God enfolding the feminized people of Israel in a "tallit shekulo ḥen," a mark of God's protection of the people that nevertheless proves ephemeral, as all it takes is for one thread in this same tallit to unravel, leaving the people entirely exposed and abandoned. See S. Y. Agnon, "ʿAgunot," *Eilu ve'eilu,* Volume 2 of *Kol sippurav shel S. Y. Agnon,* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1959), 405–416.

85 Flaubert, *Madam bovary* (trans. Baron), 246.

86 Baron, "Fradl," 103.

87 Baron, "Fradl," 104; Baron, *First Day*, 36.

88 In her dissertation on Baron's translation, Tir-Appelroit, *Hatargum*, 191, argues that Baron does not look down on the efforts of either Emma Bovary or Fradl to arouse greater love in their mates.

89 Baron, "Fradl," 104; Baron, *First Day*, 36. See Genesis 30:16, where Leah goes out to meet Jacob to claim the one night with him that she had purchased by giving Rachel the mandrakes.

90 Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, 200; Agnon, *Simple Story*, 160.

91 Raḥeli ʿOfer, "Meḥaʾatah shel bat harav: Feminism veʾortodoxiyah bisheloshah sippurim shel Devorah Baron," in *Ishah veyahadutah*, ed. Tova Cohen (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass/Kolech, 2013), 268, 271, suggests that Fradl plays a major role in her own unhappiness. When Ḥayyim Raphael attempts to court her, she holds herself

aloof from him. And later, when married to Avraham Noah, she humiliates herself in all sorts of ways in order to capture his affections.

92 On one side of the debate are Baruch Kurzweil, "Baʿayat hadorot besippurei ʿAgnon," in *Masotʿal sippurei Shai ʿAgnon* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1963), 38–49 and Ben Dov, *Agnon's Art*, who read Agnon's novel as waging a battle between the collectivism of traditional Jewish life and the individualism and dynamism of modernity. On the other side are readers such as Hillel Halkin in his afterword to Agnon, *Simple Story*, 240–54, who see Agnon's novel as repudiating modern life, which Agnon viewed as "synonymous with chaos." For a summary of this debate see Maimon, *Yaḥasei metappelim*, 161–96.

93 See "Fradl," "Beit qayits," "Halabban," "Metzulah," "Matmid," and "America," in Devorah Baron, *Parshiyyot* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1968), 97–113, 207–12, 216–24, 278–90, and 426–44.

94 Hirshl's obsession with not being a rooster also calls to mind R. Nahman of Bratslav's famous parable of the Hindik; see ברסלב - ספרי רבי נחמן מברסלב / ספרי ברסלב http://breslev.eip.co.il/?key=5517.

95 Baron, "Fradl," 107; Baron, *First Day*, 39.

96 Baron, "Fradl," 110; Baron, *First Day*, 42–43. Tir-Appelroit, *Hatargum* 176–77 refers to this scene in "Fradl" in her analysis of feminist issues pertaining to Baron's translation of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary,* specifically the demand that women conform to the image of the virgin/Madonna. In a letter to Yosef Rappaport dated May 9, 1955, Devorah Baron makes clear that she will not agree to re-publish "Fradl" without this *miqveh* observance scene, indicating how important this section was to her conception of the story; see Baron, *Agav orḥa*, 196.

97 Baron, "Fradl," 111; Baron, *First Day*, 44.

98 Baron, "Fradl," 112; adapted from Baron, *First Day*, 45.

99 Agnon, *Sippur pashut*, 246 (my translation).

100 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (trans. Baron), 79.

101 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (1857, French), 98.

102 Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (trans. DeMan), 29).

103 Jelen, *Intimations*, xv.