

CHAPTER 1



Deciphering the Hieroglyphics of the Metropolis: Literary Topographies of Berlin in Hebrew and Yiddish Modernism

Shachar Pinsker

The knowledge of cities is a decoding of their images, ones uttered thoughtlessly, as if in a dream [...]. Spatial images are the dreams of society. Wherever the hieroglyphics of any spatial image are deciphered, there the basis of social reality presents itself.

SIEGFRIED KRACAUER

Other cities are often mere ghosts of a better past; the hollow Berlin is possibly — there is no other choice — the ghost of a better future.

ERNST BLOCH

I

Berlin is a compelling city to explore in the context of Hebrew and Yiddish modernism. From the beginning of the twentieth century, Berlin has been a small but important enclave of Hebrew and Yiddish culture. In the Weimar period (1919–33), especially in the 1920s, it was a major hub of literary activity, when a large and very distinguished group of eastern European Hebrew and Yiddish writers lived, wrote, and published in the city. This activity caught the attention of many scholars, but they considered Berlin, for the most part, as a ‘temporary asylum’ for Jewish writers from eastern Europe; a mere ‘station’ on their way to the more established centres of Jewish creativity (Mandatory Palestine, North America, or the Soviet Union).¹ More recently, scholars have studied the encounter with the Hebrew and Yiddish writers in Weimar Berlin, and its role in the development of a distinctive German-Jewish culture searching for ‘authenticity’.²

I want to shift the direction of enquiry by examining more closely the nature of the charged but productive encounter with Berlin and to uncover the city’s role in the development of modernist literature in the two Jewish languages. In order to do so, I contend, we must abandon the tendency to study Berlin as an isolated case and begin to understand it in comparison with other European enclaves of

Hebrew and Yiddish literature in the early twentieth century (in cities like Odessa, Kiev, Vilna, Lwów, Vienna, London, Paris, and so on). Even more problematic is the prevalent tendency to examine Berlin in the context of Hebrew and Yiddish literature as if they were two different and isolated phenomena. In fact, in spite of the growing political and ideological separation between Hebrew and Yiddish, literature was created in Berlin side-by-side in the two languages by eastern European émigré writers and intellectuals who were multilingual, and for whom reading (and sometimes writing) in two or more languages — Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, and German — was natural. In an enclave of Jewish modernism within a central European metropolis like Berlin, the points of contact between Hebrew and Yiddish writers — which arose around short-lived experimental journals and ‘third spaces’ such as literary cafes — were intensive and fruitful, as was interaction with contemporary modernist German and Russian (Jewish and non-Jewish) literature and culture.

As émigrés and refugees, Hebrew and Yiddish writers with an attachment to the *shtetls* and the urban centres of eastern Europe were nonetheless far from being oblivious to the contemporary modernist discourse and preoccupations of Weimar Berlin. They engaged with issues of body, gender and sexuality, surface (*Oberfläche*), and visuality, which were inextricably linked not only to modernist ‘high culture’ (literature, art, and architecture of expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit*), but also to the new forms of ‘mass culture’ in the Berlin of this period (photography, cinema, fashion, advertising, and so on). Scholars like Miram Hansen, Andreas Huyssen, Dorothy Rowe, Janet Ward, and Sabine Hake have recently emphasized these aspects of the culture of Weimar Berlin — which they have traced in the writing of figures of Jewish origins such as Walter Benjamin, Sigfried Kracauer, Franz Hessel, Ernst Bloch, Erich Mendelsohn, and Alfred Döblin, among others — as indicative of Berlin modernity and modernism.³ The fact that all these aspects were crucial to the encounter of Hebrew and Yiddish writers with Berlin becomes evident when we read closely texts written in and about Berlin in the two Jewish languages. There is a need, though, to study Hebrew and Yiddish texts in comparison, and alongside modernist German and Russian texts written in Berlin during World War I and the Weimar period.

Like many Jewish writers from eastern Europe, the poet, critic, and translator Ya’acov Kopelovitz (known also by his adopted Hebrew pen-name Yeshurun Keshet), came to Berlin to study and work, and he lived there during the 1920s. In his memoirs, Kopelovitz evokes both the complexity and the allure of Weimar Berlin in these terms:

Weimar Berlin was then, only three or four years after the end of World War I, a prosperous city to all appearances [*klapey hutz*], a metropolis in which the surface was very different from the core [*she-eyn tokho ke-varo*], because the city was in fact stepping into the abyss. [...] Berlin was also a centre of scholarship and science, of vibrant culture and arts. The transportation and communication were extremely efficient, and it was possible to plan ahead and arrive promptly at your destination, whether it was a lecture at an institution of higher education, a concert hall, a play at the theatre, an exhibition in the museum, or a motion picture at the cinema [*re’ino’a*], [...] you could catch a recital at the

Gedächtniskirche and then walk to the nearby famous Romanisches Café to meet Ya'acov Shteinberg who lived in Berlin and used to spend his evenings in the cafe [...] with 'our people' [...]. In those days Berlin was a temporary centre for many [Hebrew and Yiddish writers], no doubt because of its location: the cultural and economical metropolitan centre closest to the 'east', [...] the place of the offices of the World Zionist Organization [...]. For the eastern European Yiddish speakers, it was much easier to get adjusted to Berlin than to London or Paris, cities that seemed like a totally strange world [...]. It is highly feasible that the prominence of so many German-Jews, in the field of commerce and intellect (especially in journalism) in this western capital was a crucial factor as well.⁴

Keshet's description captures well the manifold, even contradictory images of Berlin at this time. Together with the observation that the Berlin of the 1920s was a place 'on the abyss', he makes clear that for the eastern European writers who made Berlin their home for a short or a long time, the city, which had become a modern metropolis only recently, had much to offer in terms of transportation, communication, architecture, and access to a vibrant scene of modernist art and culture. Keshet's observations about the tension between 'surface' and 'depth', between visual appearance and what might be the 'real' meaning of Berlin, and the need to decipher the metropolis as a kind of hieroglyph, were important features in Weimar Berlin culture and in literary engagements with the urban environment in Hebrew and Yiddish. Keshet's account of meeting with Hebrew and Yiddish writers in places such as the Romanisches Café or the new massive movie theatres (*re'ino'a* in Hebrew, *Kinotopp* in German slang) reveals just how embedded Hebrew and Yiddish writers were in the urban fabric of the city, including in what Janet Ward has called 'the culture (or cult) of surface' in Weimar Berlin.⁵ This is in spite of, or maybe because of the fact that these Hebrew and Yiddish writers felt very different, as immigrants and exiles with a critical distance from local German culture, in which they nevertheless participated quite intensively.

As Keshet also makes clear in his portrayal of Berlin, in order to understand the nature of literary activity in the city and the representation of the cityscape in modernist Hebrew and Yiddish literature, we must consider Berlin in a number of different contexts which created powerful tensions and ruptures that made the place, almost literally, explosive. The volatility was clearly an important part of Weimar Berlin. In this context we must remember Peter Gay's portrayal of Weimar culture (and Weimar Berlin in particular) as 'the creation of outsiders, propelled by history into the inside for a short, dizzying, fragile moment'.⁶ When Gay writes that 'Jews [...] making themselves at home in Berlin, transformed it and imprinted upon it something of their rootlessness, their restlessness, their alienation from soil and tradition, their pervasive disrespect for authority',⁷ he surely does not have Hebrew and Yiddish writers in mind. However, his analysis applies, at least in some ways, also to the eastern European Jewish writers and intellectuals who were outsiders but made Berlin a tentative, temporary home. Eric Weitz has more recently summed up Weimar culture as spawning 'so much creativity precisely because its artists, writers and political organizers sought to unravel the meaning of modernity and to push it in new directions'.⁸ This was true also of Hebrew and Yiddish modernism in Berlin

during the Weimar period, as well as for many years to come, after the writers who encountered Berlin moved to very different locations and cultural contexts.

Not surprisingly, scholars paid much attention to the fact that Berlin in the 1920s was the locus of a bustling publishing enterprise in Hebrew and Yiddish, which has been well documented.⁹ The presence of so many Hebrew and Yiddish writers in Berlin and the intensive publishing activity are probably the chief reason for the tendency to expound, or to dismiss Berlin as a 'centre' of Hebrew and Yiddish literature during the 1920s. However, the very question of centre was — and in some sense still is — fraught with tensions and highly contested. From the early years of the twentieth century, writers and critics of modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature were forced to confront questions of geography that were entangled with concerns about 'homeland', unstable geopolitical borders, and even the uncertain future and viability of their languages. While Yiddish literature was continuously created across Europe, America, and even Palestine, there were fierce debates on where the 'true centre' was or should be located.¹⁰ In modern Hebrew literature the issue of 'literary centre' is even more problematic. Our understanding of the history of Hebrew literature seems to embody what is known as 'the Zionist meta-plot', which has focused attention on territorialization, 'negation of exile', and the search for a Jewish national home in Palestine.¹¹ The persistent attempts to write a historiography of Hebrew and Yiddish modernism as if it was a 'normal' national literature, with its own 'literary centre' miss a crucial aspect of its modernism. It conceals a dizzying, constantly shifting array of urban enclaves in which Hebrew and Yiddish modernism developed.¹²

Berlin was one of these enclaves, and thus it is important to recognize the fact that there was a huge difference between Berlin as a 'centre of publishing', and Berlin as an enclave of Hebrew and Yiddish modernism. Publishing found a base in Berlin mainly because the publication of Hebrew and Yiddish in the newly established Soviet Union became difficult. The situation was also helped, strangely, by the inflation and deeply unstable economy of Weimar Berlin, because the publishers' capital was foreign currency. In 1925, when the inflation was tamed, figures such as Bialik, and others who came to Berlin mainly in order to advance their publishing activities, left the city and abandoned the dream of a flourishing Hebrew and Yiddish 'publication centre'.¹³

The literary and cultural significance of the encounter of Hebrew and Yiddish writers with Berlin, and the city's role in the development of modernism should not be reduced, though, to economic forces or even to the highly important existence of the publishing market in the city. The publishing activity in Berlin was important for Hebrew and Jewish modernism only in journals such as *Milgroym/Rimon* (*Pomegranate*, published in Hebrew and Yiddish in 1922 to 1924) and the Berlin edition of Uri Zvi Greenberg's *Albatros* (1923). Both of these short-lived journals exhibited an unprecedented convergence of experimental literature and artwork, as well as a fruitful collaboration between Yiddish, Hebrew, and German modes of literary and artistic modernism.¹⁴

But in order to better understand the nature of the encounter of Hebrew and Yiddish writers with Berlin it is necessary to trace its spatial, topographic aspects.

For example, we must explore sites such as the literary cafes to which writers and intellectuals were highly attracted. We must remember that many Hebrew and Yiddish writers lived in proletarian areas in the east of the city — most notably in the Scheunenviertel and Alexanderplatz area — or in tiny rented rooms within pensions (boarding houses) in the more affluent western part of the city (mainly in Charlottenburg). With this kind of transitory émigré existence, it is hardly surprising that they were highly attracted to the local urban cafe, which was indeed one of the emblems of Berlin modernity/modernism.

Far from being sterilized spaces, Berlin cafes were sites of consumption, leisure, and the spectacle of commodity, but also a space in which the ‘bohemians’ displayed their eccentricities, and a space in which significant modernist literary and artistic activity occurred. Based on his first-hand lived experience of Berlin cafes of the 1910s and 1920s, Walter Benjamin articulated in his essay *Berliner Chronik* (1932) what he called a ‘physiognomy’ or ‘physiology’ of the cafe. In this essay he makes an attempt to divide cafes into ‘professional’ and ‘recreational’ establishments, but notes that this is a superficial classification since in most cases the two coincide and collapse upon each other.¹⁵ Thus, Berlin’s ‘literary cafe’ should be understood as what the cultural geographer Edward Soja has called a ‘thirdspace’ — a site of negotiation between inside and outside, public and private, mass consumption and the avant-garde, men and women, Jews and Gentiles, ‘the local’ and the immigrant.¹⁶

I have shown elsewhere the crucial role of several ‘literary cafes’ in Berlin in the intersections between German, Hebrew, and Yiddish modernism. The Café Monopol near Friedrichstraße in Berlin’s Mitte (not far from the Scheunenviertel), the Café-des-Westens, and above all the Romanisches Café in west Berlin were key locations on the spatial map of Hebrew and Yiddish modernism in the metropolis. Almost everybody who joined the Hebrew and Yiddish ‘colony’ in Weimar Berlin attested to the allure of the Romanisches Café. Uri Zvi Greenberg, Ya’acov Shteinberg, Daniel Charney, Yeshurun Keshet, Avrom Nochem Stenzel, David Bergelson, Nahum Goldman, Henryk Berlewi, and numerous others all mention the Café in their writing. In fact, some accounts create the false impression that the Romanisches Café was a kind of a pan-Jewish urban space. In his characteristically fragmented expressionist style, with expansive grammar and outrageous images, Uri Zvi Greenberg writes in his essay on Else Lasker-Schüler that they ‘drank together dark coffee in the Romanisches Café, and until midnight this bitter drink was dripping into our hearts, and seeping through even deeper to the “inner existence”, around the heart and beyond it like dark blood’.¹⁷

In Yeshurun Keshet’s writings, the cafe emerges as a kind of ‘Jewish urban space’ but also as a place whose ‘regulars’ are a ‘cultural elite full of decadence, smoke, and the syncopated rhythm of the metropolis’.¹⁸ The Hebrew and Yiddish writer Ya’acov Shteinberg, highly attracted to this mixture of urban decadence and syncopated rhythms, and to the modernist literary activity in which he participated but from which he also held a critical distance, devoted to the Romanisches Café an entire cycle of sonnets — *Sonnets from the Café* (1922), surely one of the great achievements of modernist Hebrew poetry.¹⁹

The way Hebrew and Yiddish writers described the physiognomy and topography of the Romanisches Café captures something important about their encounter with the urban space of Berlin. On the one hand, Hebrew and Yiddish writers met most figures of Berlin modernism in the Romanisches Café, and these experiences left strong marks on their literary and intellectual development. On the other hand, their experience of the café, which became a kind of hieroglyph — a concentrated spatial image of Berlin — emphasizes both their participation in modernist Berlin culture and their marginality, the commodity spectacle of ‘surface’ and the potential inherent in it for artistic creativity, the undeniable energy of the metropolis as well as its decadence, corruption, and sense of deep despair.

2

Once we realize that Berlin was *not* a centre but a small yet highly important enclave of Hebrew and Yiddish modernism, we can better understand not only the nature of the encounter of eastern European writers with the metropolis and its profound impact on them, but also the literary representations of the urban experience and the mental and physical topography of the metropolis. It is important to note that there is a manifest difference between writers of the generation of Kh. N. Bialik, Shaul Tschernichovsky, David Frishman, H. D. Nomborg, and M. Y. Berdichevsky (who lived in Berlin for eleven years, but left almost no echo of the city in his literary *oeuvre*), and the younger writers who arrived in Berlin at a point when their literary style and voice was still evolving and changing. For writers like David Shimoni, Uri Zvi Greenberg, Ya’acov Shteinberg, Shmuel Yosef Agnon, David Bergelson, Moyshe Kulbak, and others, the encounter with Berlin was highly important, regardless of the length of their stay in the city. This is best demonstrated in literary representations of the city which are, not surprisingly, far from uniform, and also far from painting an ideal picture of the hectic urban experience. Hebrew and Yiddish writers arrived in Berlin with varied modernist tendencies, but in the German capital they were exposed to, and participated in, intense debates surrounding such literary and artistic trends as Symbolism, Expressionism, and the post-expressionist *Neue Sachlichkeit*. All these different modernist trends are reflected, in one way or another, in the literary representations of the city in Hebrew and Yiddish texts.

An interesting feature of Berlin in Hebrew and Yiddish literature is that the dominant genre in poetry was the poema (long narrative poem). Although the genre of the poema, with its ancient epic roots, has been mainly associated with the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romantic poetry of Pushkin, Byron, and Heine, the poema was equally important in the development of modernism, as can be attested by the symbolist, futurist, and expressionist poems of the early twentieth century in Russian, German, and other European languages.²⁰

The modernist poema can be described as a ‘plotless novel’ that revels in lyric digressions and rejects chronological order. There are frequent changes of focus, rapid sequences of changing scenes, and an emphasis on fundamental problems of human existence. The modernist poema’s compositional form is that of an

amalgamation of parts; it does not seek a unity of stylized reality. This makes possible the integration of lyric, dramatic, descriptive, contemplative, rhetorical, and linguistic elements without detracting from the poema's loose narrative axis.²¹

A number of narrative poems written in and about Berlin in Hebrew and Yiddish between 1911 and 1933 are remarkable in the ways in which they were used by their writers to explore new poetic territories and to record a spatial topography of Berlin that is both physical and mental. A few years before the outbreak of World War I, David Shimonovitz (Shimoni) wrote a number of poems that take place in Berlin. Shimonovitz was a student of oriental philology and philosophy in Berlin between 1910 and 1914. Together with Shay Ish Hurvitz he edited the Hebrew literary collection *Netivot* (*Paths*, 1912), which published some important modernist Hebrew texts written in this period. In Hebrew literary historiography, Shimonovitz is usually seen as a (late) Romantic poet, part of the so-called 'Bialik generation'. But the narrative poems he wrote in Berlin show that Shimonovitz was an experimental poet who took the traditions of Russian and German Romantic poetry in modernist directions.

Two of Shimonovitz's poems merit attention as precursors to what was written in Hebrew and Yiddish during the Weimar period. Although they appear to be very traditional in form and structure, these narrative poems actually waver between late-romantic, symbolist, and early expressionist poetics. The first poem is entitled *Chalom leyl choref* (*A Winter Night's Dream*, 1911) and the second *Be-zohorey drachim* (*In the Splendour of the Roads*, 1913). In both of them, Shimonovitz maps the topography of Berlin from the point of view of a young Jewish student and poet. Like some Symbolist and expressionist poems in Russian and German literature, Shimonovitz retains the formal elements of the Pushkinian genre (he also translated Pushkin's poems into Hebrew), but he employs it to present autobiographical material in a highly ironic, self-conscious way.

Shimonovitz's poems trace the journeys of the speaker-poet, an impossible search for what is left of heroism and freedom in a modern, urban age. Unlike the epic and Romantic journey of the pre-modernist poema in Russian, German, and Hebrew poetry, these modernist journeys end up mainly in paralysis and a sense of ennui, and are written with a self-consciousness of their static nature. The speaker, who is the anti-hero of the narrative poem, is in the midst of a dreamy hallucination, and at the same time he is engaged in intense, solipsistic self-analysis. Shimonovitz's poems of Berlin mix and contrast a pathetic *naïveté* with sharp wit, a colourful theatrical imagination with mundane sobriety, and the world of nature and myths with modern urban experience.²²

Chalom leyl choref engages rather playfully with the tradition of the Romantic Russian poema of Pushkin, but also Goethe's 'Winter Journey' and Heinrich Heine's imaginary journey in *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen* (*Germany: A Winter's Tale*, 1844). The speaker is a poor poet without work who lives in dark rented rooms in pensions (boarding houses) in Charlottenburg that belong to harsh and cold women.²³ The opening of the poem presents the speaker as a penniless student who is about to be evicted from his room in the middle of the winter because he cannot afford to pay the rent. While he is daydreaming in the small cold room, the Winter



FIG. 5. Cover of the double issue of *Albatros*, edited and published in Berlin in 1923

King is revealed to him and takes him to an ice cave in the North Sea, where he joins Nimrod, the ancient legendary hunter. As part of his long imaginary travels to the 'secret world', he is able to witness the city of Berlin from a new vantage point. He is fascinated by the energy of the metropolis, with the rush of the crowds and the hum of the machines, so different from the serenity of primordial nature. But Berlin also emerges as a dark industrial city, where 'pure snow' immediately becomes 'black and dirty'. In the vast urban space 'dreams and flowers' alike can quickly die out. The city is described as 'a cage of stone' filled with taverns and whores, full of illicit sexuality and devoid of human warmth. When a female prostitute approaches the speaker he is revolted, and it is only the Winter King who can save him and take him away. Following this experience, he decides to leave this 'humanity in ruins' and to become a hunter in the ice-ocean, only to awaken from his dream back into the reality of Berlin in 1911.

The second poem, *Be-zohorey drachim*, uses the same narrative structure of a mock-heroic journey. The speaker leaves his rented room in the pension, which is being cleaned before the arrival of spring, and wanders in and around the city of Berlin, observing the rush and rattle of the city. He watches the display of commodity in shop windows with their promise of material abundance, as well as the spectacles of street performers, and the fleeting young women who arouse his desire before they disappear. He leaves Berlin and wanders around the forests that surround the city. Here he laments the death of the God Pan (à la Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*, 1871), and at the same time realizes that in modern Berlin, the ancient Pan is nothing but a local drunkard arrested by the police. In the final part of the poem, he falls asleep in one of Berlin's squares with a fountain and a monumental statue of King Frederick the Great. In his dream, the speaker has a tense conversation with the Kaiser about his long-lost *shtetl* and about his existence as a stranger and émigré in the city. In spite of the Romantic overtones and references, this is a distinctively urban poem with Symbolist and early expressionist elements. It probes issues of gender and sexuality, surface and 'depth', home and homelessness, power and powerlessness, the monumental and the everyday, and it ends with an ironic, meagre sense of hope that comes from the speaker's realization that he can continue wandering in the 'splendour of the roads' of urban modernity.²⁴ Shimonovitz's poems of Berlin set a tone that later eastern European Hebrew and Yiddish writers follow at the same time as exploring new poetic and spatial territories.

A decade after Shimonovitz's poems, Uri Zvi Greenberg wrote some of the most astonishing and innovative modernist poems in Yiddish and Hebrew literature. Greenberg wrote and published poetry and prose in Hebrew and Yiddish from 1912. After World War I, he was an active member of the Warsaw-based Yiddish group *Di Khalyastre* (together with Peretz Markish and Melech Ravitch) and the editor of the avant-garde Yiddish journal *Albatros*, with its expressionist and Futurist poetics. The official reason for Greenberg's decision to move to Berlin were problems with Polish censorship following the publication of his poem in prose *Royte epl fun vey-beymer* (*Red Apples from Pain Trees*) in the second issue of *Albatros*.

The short period of less than two years (1922–24) in which Greenberg lived and

worked in Weimar Berlin was one of the most dramatic and important in his life. It was here that he made the remarkable decision to switch from Yiddish to Hebrew, and to bid farewell to Europe and emigrate to Palestine. Even so, the encounter with Berlin became such a powerful experience which left a long-lasting impression on Greenberg's literary works precisely because of its tense, contradictory nature. As Dan Miron writes about Greenberg's experience in Weimar Berlin:

the time he spent in Berlin was one of the happiest in Greenberg's life. The city welcomed him, revealed its beauty to him, gave him the love of her daughters, opened up for him treasures of art and intellect, and put him in touch with important cultural and artistic sources of modernism [...]. At the same time, Greenberg's stay in Weimar Berlin revealed what seemed to him a radical atrophy, a deterioration of urban European culture. It exposed to him a perverse world of illicit sexuality, crime, and nihilistic breakdown of all values [...]. The city seemed to him as if it materialized the apocalyptic vision of Oswald Spengler in his influential book *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918–1923) [...]. Greenberg found a direct correlation between the city and 'a state of being' in crisis, and the two became one.²⁵

From a poetic and artistic point of view, Greenberg's arrival in Berlin coincided with the appearance of post-expressionistic trends that have become loosely known as *Neue Sachlichkeit* ('New Objectivity') — as well as *Neues Bauen* ('New Building') in architecture — which heralded a shift towards 'surface' in most spheres of social, economic, and cultural life. If expressionism was characterized by the emotions of the artist forcefully expressed through the work of art (poem, story, painting, or building), *Neue Sachlichkeit* sought to minimize the focus on emotions coming up from psychological depths. 'New Objectivity' would be 'flat', evenly distributed and on the surface of reality, appreciating and focusing on the way things (*Sachen*) are structured and arranged. At the same time, as many critics have noticed, the distinctions between expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit* were never clear-cut, and these artistic tendencies tended to blend with each other.²⁶ Greenberg's poetic and artistic work in Yiddish and Hebrew in the mid-1920s exhibits his wavering between the competing and partly overlapping modernist trends, as well as his active participation in the debates between (late) expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit*.²⁷

This can be seen well in the double issue of *Albatros* (3–4), which Greenberg edited and published in Berlin and was, as Avidov Lipsker has observed, 'a milestone in the integration of poetic, publicist, graphic and typographic values'.²⁸ The graphic configuration of the journal was created by Greenberg (under a pseudonym) together with the avant-garde Jewish artist Henryk Berlewi, who lived in Berlin at roughly the same time as Greenberg and was exposed to the same new trends in Berlin. Greenberg and Berlewi adopted new directions, especially a combination of the stylistic and literary innovations pioneered in the German expressionist journals (*Der Action* and *Der Sturm*) together with the 'constructivist' architectural and graphic elements associated with the surface-oriented (rather than 'depth-oriented') *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

Of course, the influence of Berlin expressionism and post-expressionism extended from the graphic and typographic to the poetic sphere. In *Albatros*, Greenberg published a number of poems and essays, including the groundbreaking poema *In*

malkhes fun tseylem (*In the Kingdom of the Cross*) and the poetic essay ‘Baym shlus’ (‘In Conclusion’). These texts, written in the most striking and ‘wild’ expressionist mode, also engaged in a phenomenological examination of *Sachen*. Moreover, in these texts, Greenberg came to the conclusion that the ‘Slavic lands’ (and perhaps Europe as a whole) are the ‘kingdom of the Cross’, in which the Jews live with their feet resting on a ‘volcanic Mount Etna’.²⁹ This paradox of writing experimental modernist texts that are in line with contemporary European modernist poetics, and nevertheless denounce European modernity and the place of Jews within it, became the dominant mode in Greenberg’s ideology and poetry. The city of Berlin itself, though, begins to appear on a grand scale not in Greenberg’s Yiddish writing, but in the ten monumental poems that comprise his first Hebrew book, *Eima gdola ve-yare’ach* (*Great Trembling and a Moon*, 1924). In these poems Greenberg transformed the very shape and poetic function of the poema genre in Hebrew, while further exploring new, expressionist and post-expressionistic themes and modes of writing.

Three out of the ten poems of *Eima gdola ve-yare’ach* were written and published in Berlin in journals such as *Milgroym* and *Ha-olam* (*The World*). Most of the poema *Hakarat ha-yeshut* (*The Knowledge of Being*) was written in Berlin, but was completed and published in Tel Aviv. *Eima gdola ve-yare’ach* was written entirely in Tel Aviv, but deals extensively with the urban experience of Berlin.³⁰ The entire book is written with an awareness of the fact that modern existence in the twentieth century (or as Greenberg calls it, ‘the beginning of the sixth millennium’) is in essence, the urban experience. The book begins with the words: ‘It has been decreed: Death to the village. Cry to the flute of the shepherd that was thrown to the grass and which will not be heard any more [...]. The shepherd went wide-eyed to the metropolis.’³¹ The metropolis takes the place of the village, the factory with smoke takes the place of the windmill, and the new urban era is the time of steam, wheels, industry, electricity, telegraph, and radio. The city of Berlin appears as an emblem of the modern western metropolis as well as a concrete urban place through the entire book, mainly in *Hakarat ha-yeshut* and *Eima gdola ve-yare’ach*.

Hakarat ha-yeshut is a poema with especially long lines (sixteen to eighteen words each). The structure of the sentences is ungrammatical and the style is ‘wild’ and extreme. All these elements create a text that is very difficult to define — a kind of poetic prose or prosaic poem.³² But the chaotic ‘wildness’ of the text, the esoteric and at times uncommunicative nature of the images, and what appears to be a lack of coherency between the stylistic and linguistic components, paradoxically work together to create a new organizing principal. The ‘wild poetics’ actually reflects the main theme of the poema: the social and moral anarchy of Berlin in the early 1920s. Through the chaos that the poema creates, it is possible to trace a kind of loose ‘narrative’ that outlines the process of the poet-speaker’s individual story, his separation from his parents’ house and his move to Warsaw and Berlin. We hear the story of the ‘poet with the red hair’ who was born in a poor house and ‘was cursed to be the big wanderer’, and a leader of a rowdy ‘gang’. He becomes the wild lover of licentious, lustful women in spite of the fact that he tries to be ‘a monk in his closed room’. The poet-speaker appears in Berlin as a *flâneur* who wanders the

metropolis's dark streets, amidst criminals and prostitutes who offer their services in the public eye. In spite of his thirst for pureness, he frequently goes to brothels around the city and thus sinks into the depths of despair, filth, and fear of death. Towards the end of the poem, the speaker has reached the bottom of 'existence', a place from which one cannot descend any further. At this point (in a separate concluding chapter) he turns to the God in which he does not and cannot believe any more. He stands 'like a purifying prostitute who left the brothel' and asks to renew his dialogue with God.³³

This idiosyncratic 'story' is actually framed in the poem (and the entire book) as a mental and existential reflection of modernity. The poem describes a number of contradicting psychological and mental changes that are typical of modern urban existence in 'the sixth millennium', developments that are accelerated in the urban condition of the metropolis. One of them is the Nietzschean 'death of God' and the loss of religious faith: 'Faith has lapsed. The beast of the field raised its voice, for it acknowledged God. But we said there is no God and there is no heaven, abode of God. Blue emptiness and what is between, which are clouds.'³⁴

The loss of faith has left the speaker, and with him all modern men, with the existential awareness of the finality and inevitability of death and oblivion. This deep knowledge makes his life full of fears that 'poison his being'. The 'death of God' is parallel to the loss of all traditional social structures (namely family and community), and in fact the disintegration of all civilization, western and Jewish alike. With the collapse of religious faith and western culture, the urban man turns to orgiastic sexual activity. All man has got now is physical existence, and from this pure physicality, he attempts — mainly by fulfilling his sexual urges — to reach some kind of ecstasy or 'drunkenness' that might be able to tame, but will never neutralize, the angst and fear of death.

At the same time, the radical 'newness' of the modern urban experience is also linked to the 'functionalist', rational taming of nature with the power of modern architecture, technology, and science. This power, emblematic of Weimar Berlin, changes not only 'nature' and urban space, but also human consciousness. Like Simmel, Kracauer, Bloch, and other contemporary critics, Greenberg's speaker identifies the fact that swiftness, power, and control enabled by modern technology become part of consciousness and 'being', and open new 'perspectives'. These two contradicting aspects of modern urban existence — the loss of faith and the disintegration of traditional civilization, and the rise of the new power of technology and science — are incommensurable. They create apocalyptic tensions between deep despair and optimistic vision that are at the heart of Greenberg's poems of 1924.

Thus, it is clear that in spite of Greenberg's declarations of a 'farewell to Europe', the speaker never cuts himself off from the European cultural context (both Jewish and non-Jewish). Even the poems that were written and published in Tel Aviv are told from the perspective of the here and now, which is what the speaker calls 'in Berlin Mitte'. Here we can see not only how Greenberg fuses the personal with the universal, but also how he turns the existence of the eastern European Jewish 'outsider'/'insider' in Berlin into an emblem of his expressionistic and apocalyptic vision of modern existence: 'I am from the race of the Hebrews. No prayer shawl

is wrapped around me. Lacquered shoes. Perfumed hair. The pipe in my mouth. In Berlin Mitte. Bridges. A journey under the base.³⁵

The urban space of Berlin is surely described as a chaotic place, violent, dangerous, full of prostitution, illicit sexuality, and emptiness (like the ‘church in the middle of Berlin after Jesus’s death’), and yet a space that is highly seductive to the ‘Jew without a prayer shawl’. In another poem in the book, entitled *Yerushalayim shel mata* (*The Earthly Jerusalem*), which deals mainly with the landscape of Palestine, the speaker declares that ‘we must have left the solid metropolis’. However, at the same time he confesses that

We really loved the smoky hours in the cafes. Opera. Frock coat. Perfumed heads and dance halls. Opium. Ballet [...]. Boulevards and brothels. Hot electron ... and the noise, the noise of the cities! The news now. Girls calling you to their beds. Antique shops. Museums, and royal libraries.³⁶

Berlin remained such a powerful locus in Greenberg’s poetic world for many years because he created it as kind of hieroglyph, an extended mental and spatial image. Greenberg calls Berlin ‘the gate’ and ‘the city of a hundred bridges’,³⁷ because for him it stands on the threshold of his own exit from Europe and his entrance to Palestine, between the Galician world of his early years and the Zionist space which he attempts to enter and create. The city is a ‘bridge’ because it is the emblem of European urbanity and modernity, the very definition of life in the twentieth century.³⁸

Shimonovitz’s and Greenberg’s narrative poems of Berlin are both similar and different from the poem that Moyshe Kulbak, the Yiddish poet and novelist, published in 1933. The book is an extended cycle of over sixty poems entitled *Disner Tshayld Harold* (*Childe Harold of Disna*).³⁹ When the poem was published, Kulbak already lived and worked in the Soviet Union, but it is based on his experience as a writer in Weimar Berlin from 1920 to 1923 and is clearly steeped in Berlin modernist poetics and discourse. The poem is written as a mock-epic, and, not unlike Shimonovitz’s poems, it creates a highly ironic dialogue with Heine’s *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen*, as well as with the English narrative poem *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* by Lord Byron (1818). However, unlike Shimonovitz’s more traditional poetic form and style and more in line with Greenberg’s ‘wild poetics’, Kulbak’s poem combines expressionist style and tone with unprecedented attention to the cult and culture of visual surface that characterized Weimar Berlin.

In the poem, Kulbak adopts a dual narrative standpoint, that of the ironic narrator and that of the semi-autobiographical character, the nameless *lyulkeman* (‘the man with the pipe’, reminiscent of Greenberg’s narrator). The *lyulkeman* is a young poet from a traditional eastern European Jewish background who arrives in Berlin with a ‘bintl vilde lider’ [bundle of wild poems], but is eager to learn about and to experience the German metropolis. What he finds there is a vast and staggering landscape, and the majority of the poem is devoted to the physical and mental topography of this urban landscape. The *lyulkeman* is an astute urban observer, especially attuned to visual surface culture of Weimar Berlin: the ‘electric advertisements’, so prevalent of the streets of the ‘New City’,⁴⁰ seem to him as if they are ‘written in the sky’; the new mass cinema and radio appear to shout and announce ‘prosperity’; the rich Berlin men go to cabaret to see and to ‘buy the girls’.

The protagonist is also a social observer. He moves between the affluent districts of Kurfürstendamm and Tiergarten and that of working-class Wedding (known in this period as ‘Red Wedding’). As if mirroring the dizzying spatial transitions within a close proximity, the poem constantly moves between a criticism of the consumerist mentality of Weimar Berlin (of what Kracauer has called ‘the mass ornament’), and a fascination not only with the vibrancy of visual culture of Berlin but also with the potential inherent in the massification of culture: ‘O country, where electricity runs | in wires, and champagne in people’s veins; | where each worker is a Marxist, | and each grocer a Kantian.’ Kulbak explores the high and low modernist culture of Berlin with its cabarets, coffeehouses, street facades, and visual images. Like Greenberg’s speaker, the speaker of Kulbak’s poem also investigates the social, political, and mental reality behind the glittering surface as a ‘lived experience’, when he comes to witness his own ‘corruption’ through drink and women. Even the Berlin high culture which he sought as a naïve young man becomes in his experience an intriguing yet threatening mixture of ‘sweet terror: | Spengler, Keyserling, and Lasker-Schüler [...]. Expressionism screams with red feet, | Dada with pants fallen down.’⁴¹ The result of this strange mixture is not rejection but a sense of ‘alienation, and sadness’.

Similarly, the end of the poem seems to offer a dramatic resolution of the tensions when the speaker unites with the protagonist to declare:

Down with Beethoven and Goethe
and with the Cologne Cathedral!
The distant skies are grey
and we are grey with them;
we — the last wolves howling
among the ruins of the system.⁴²

But even this dramatic ending is not as clear-cut as it might appear at first sight. Note that the declaration is not to bring down Else Lasker-Schüler or Alfred Döblin, but the Romantic music of Beethoven, Goethe, and the Monumental, neo-gothic Cologne Cathedral. This rings very much not only of Futurist and expressionist manifestos, but also like the ‘anti-ornament’ ideology of post-expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit* prevalent in Weimar Berlin. Thus, even the final note of this vast poem is not a triumphal one, but one mixed with strong resignation, which is embodied in the sight of grey sky and the sound of the howling wolves.

In the writing of Shimonovitz, Greenberg, and Kulbak, the poem clearly became an effective poetic tool. These narrative poems enabled these Hebrew and Yiddish poets to create spatial images and explore topographies of Berlin, as well as to successfully engage diverse and competing modernist artistic and poetic trends which they encountered in Berlin. All these elements remained important to their literary and artistic vision, long after the short but powerful period in which they lived and wrote in the city.

The two writers of fiction whose encounter with Berlin was very significant, and who captured Berlin in their fiction — in ways both similar and different — were David Bergelson and Shmuel Yosef Agnon. Agnon arrived in Berlin in 1912, after a short sojourn of three years in Palestine, where he published his first Hebrew stories and a novella. Although Agnon sometimes claimed to have been ‘stuck’ in Berlin because of World War I, he did not hurry to leave, but lived and worked in Berlin and other German cities until 1924, when his house was burned down in an accident. The twelve years which he spent in Berlin and Germany were, in more than one way, the formative period in Agnon’s life and literary career.

David Bergelson arrived in Berlin in 1921 and lived there until 1933 (in 1934 he settled in the Soviet Union). Before his Berlin period, Bergelson was an established Yiddish writer, recognized as a master stylist and one of the great new voices of Yiddish literature. He was active in Yiddish literary life in Kiev and Moscow, but uncomfortable with some of the ideological rigidities of Moscow Yiddish activities, and disappointed in the hope of launching a new literary journal, he decided to join many other eastern European writers who emigrated to Berlin.⁴³

Both Bergelson and Agnon had a successful and productive artistic life in Berlin. Not long after Agnon arrived in Berlin, he found work in the Jüdischer Verlag. Several of his stories and novellas were translated into German (by Ernst Mueller, Max Strauss, and others) and received enthusiastically by German-Jewish intellectuals such as Martin Buber, Aharon Eliasberg, Moshe Marx, Max Strauss, Ernst Simon, Gershon Scholem, and Gustav Krojanker, among others, who encouraged Agnon to remain in Germany and to establish his reputation there. In 1916, Agnon met Salman Schocken, an affluent businessman, who became an admirer of the young Hebrew writer and his lifelong patron. Schocken supported Agnon financially and helped him in the physical hardships of the war. In 1920, Agnon married his German-born wife, Esther Marx; they had two children and built a house in Bad Homburg, but Berlin remained the centre of Agnon’s literary and intellectual activity.

Although Bergelson did not become the adored eastern European writer of the same circle of German-Jewish intelligentsia, he did not do badly either. Together with the Symbolist Yiddish writer Der Nister, Bergelson was the literary co-editor of the inaugural volume of the journal *Milgroym* (1922). His novel *Nokh alemen* (*When All Is Said and Done*, 1913) was translated to German by Alexander Eliasberg and was reviewed favourably by Alfred Döblin (with whom he maintained a close relationship) and others, in spite of its being very different from the German-Jewish sense of ‘authenticity’ which made Agnon so popular. After a short sojourn in the Moabit district, Bergelson and his wife and children lived quite comfortably in white-collar Zehlendorf.⁴⁴

What was the impact of Berlin and Weimar culture on the literary output of Agnon and Bergelson? The question is not so easy to answer, because there were different, contradictory aspects to this encounter. The impact was not necessarily immediate but one that certainly left its mark, even if the writers themselves chose

to minimize it in the years in which they emigrated to the Soviet Union and to Jerusalem. Bergelson's search for new literary and artistic paths can be detected in the two pieces which he published in the inaugural volume of the journal *Milgroym* (1922): a short story entitled 'Onheyb Kisleb 5769' ('The Beginning of Kisleb, 1919'), and a review essay-cum-manifesto entitled 'Der gesheener oyfbrokh' ('The Awakening has Occurred'). The short story depicts the Revolution and the Civil War pogroms that followed it in an expressionist style with 'cinematic' depictions of landscape and colours, in which 'flashes of garish black, white and red mark the omnipresence of death, innocence and blood in a landscape cumulatively depicted through charged metonymic details'.⁴⁵ The review essay, although dealing with Yiddish poets in Russia, utilizes rhetoric and style that fuses Russian Futurism with the expressionism that still flourished in Berlin (which brings to mind some similar images of Greenberg):

Hey you! [...] don't look among the young poets of today for anything conventional, for freshly polished shoes or the twirling cane of a fashionable dandy. [...] they are one with the historical period we live in [...]. There are no laws any more, no boundaries, no order. Things of the past!⁴⁶

These two very different texts indicate the experimental nature of Bergelson's writing. Although he was far from being a novice, he was very open to new directions and influences. He was highly attuned to, and in fact participated in debates among modernist trends in Weimar Berlin. Bergelson's works of the 1920s deal mostly with contemporary life in Berlin, New York, and Moscow, rather than with the fading life of the *shtetl*, which was the topic of his early works. Although he never really abandoned his early modernist prose style, the fiction he wrote in Berlin (at least until his 'conversion' to socialist realism) surely bears the mark of the time.

The major trend in Agnon's writing during the time in which he lived in Berlin and other urban centres of Germany was its highly emphasized interest in the old eastern European world. It is easy to conclude that what was on Agnon's mind during this period was the pre-modern Jewish world of Poland and Galicia in its real or projected form.⁴⁷ This was a real preoccupation of Agnon, but it was also influenced by the encouragement of German-Jewish intellectuals who wanted to see Agnon producing something that confirmed their notion of 'East European Jewish authenticity'.⁴⁸ Agnon surely came up with the goods by seemingly remaining an almost archetypal *Ostjude*, committed both aesthetically and intellectually to eastern European Jewish life and tradition as it had been shaped for centuries.⁴⁹ At the same time, he dealt in his fiction with modernist issues of body and sexuality, space, and the artistic process. This was well recognized by young German-Jewish intellectuals such as Gershom Scholem and Walter Benjamin.⁵⁰ Furthermore, during the time he lived in Germany, Agnon became acquainted with much contemporary German and European literature.⁵¹ As Maya Barzilai has shown recently, Agnon also caught 'more than a glimpse of many of the popular and visual manifestations of mass culture that flourished during his lengthy stay in Berlin and Germany'.⁵²

Both Agnon and Bergelson were actively interested in art, architecture, theatre, cinema, photography, and fashion. They shared with many intellectuals active in

Germany during the World War I and Weimar period (Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, Ernst Bloch, and Franz Hessel) a fascination with ephemeral, unnoticed, and culturally marginalized phenomena of everyday life.⁵³ This becomes most evident when we examine the representation of the urban experience of Berlin in stories and novels that Agnon and Bergelson wrote. Agnon reported that among the manuscripts that were destroyed by the fire that consumed his house in 1924, was a text he described as a 'Berlin novel' entitled *Katte ve-Grete* (*Katte and Grete*).⁵⁴ More significant is the fact that Agnon had begun to write about his experience in Berlin and Germany almost immediately after he moved to Jerusalem, but most of his works were completed and/or published later. Between the late 1920s and the late 1960s, Agnon published a large body of fiction of varied styles and modes that describes the milieu of Berlin and other German cities.⁵⁵

Of these texts, the most important is the novel *Ad hena* (*To This Day*).⁵⁶ Agnon worked during the 1940s (and probably even earlier) on a novel he called *Bi-yemot ha-milchama* (*In the Days of War*), but the final version was published with the new title only in 1952.⁵⁷ Although critics have tended either to ignore the novel or to dismiss it as an episodically meandering work that ends tritely,⁵⁸ they have missed the fact that *Ad hena* is one of Agnon's most formally experimental, self-consciously digressive, and abortive works. The novel is, on one level, a presentation of the horrors of war as reflected in the city of Berlin, from a vantage point that only partially coincides with Agnon's own experience at the time. Shmuel-Yosef, the first-person narrator of the novella, is shown wandering around the streets of Berlin (as well as Leipzig and other places in Germany) in a kind of 'Kafkaesque *perpetuum mobile*'. In the course of his journey, the narrator 'discovers that the country is in total chaos, its streets crowded with cripples' and with ersatz substitutes, its houses filled with 'bereaved and broken families'.⁵⁹ However, it is important to note that although *Ad hena* is a novel about World War I, it is infused with figures, events, and perspectives that are more characteristic of the Weimar period. This can be seen in the preoccupation, even obsession, with clothing and fashion, architecture and cinema, physiognomy and other elements of visual surface that are described as an opaque and highly elusive hieroglyph that requires (and defies) deciphering.

Ad hena could be better understood and appreciated, I contend, when compared with Bergelson's stories that depict the urban space of Berlin: 'Tsvishn emigrantn' ('Among Emigrants'), 'In pansion fun di dray shvester' ('In the Boarding House of the Three Sisters'), 'Tsvey Rotskhim' ('Two Murderers'), 'Altvarg' ('Old Folks'), 'Blindkayt' ('Blindness'), 'Eyn nakht veyniker' ('One Night Less'), and 'Far 12 toyznt dolar fast er 40 teg' ('For 12,000 Dollars He Fast 40 Days'). These stories were published in 1926 to 1928 in Berlin, New York, and Moscow — some of them with the apt subtitle 'Berlin Bilder' ('Sketches of Berlin') — and in the volumes of *Collected Works* published by the Kletzkin Press in Vilna.⁶⁰ Out of Bergelson's Berlin stories, 'Tsvishn emigrantn' is the only one to have received critical attention, while the others have been deemed, mistakenly in my opinion, as 'strangely flat and un compelling'.⁶¹ Like Agnon's digressive and diffusive novel, these stories might be described as 'urban modernist miniatures'.⁶² They deal with the urban space of Berlin from the vantage point of eastern European Jewish immigrants and with the

intersections of home and homelessness with body and sexuality, visual surface, and mass culture. They are a fine product of the encounter of Bergelson with Weimar Berlin.

The chief element which Agnon's novel shares with Bergelson's stories is the engagement with the meaning of 'home' in the modern metropolis, especially when it comes to the Jewish immigrant's precarious life in pensions (boarding houses). Most of Bergelson's Berlin stories take place in pensions, and are presented (not unlike the urban cafe) as a 'third space' that is constituted through the provisional intimacy of strangers, at once public and private, inside and outside, embedded within an urban, metropolitan culture, and yet called into existence by the dislocation of transient masses.

Likewise, the main preoccupation of the first-person narrator in *Ad hena* is finding and maintaining a room in a metropolis after he left it for a visit to Leipzig, in an unsuccessful search for the Judaica library of Doctor Levi. At the beginning of the novel, we find the narrator living in a small pension on Fasanenstraße. Although the narrator initially does not think much of the small 'chilly' and 'dark' room in his pension, after he loses it and is engaged in an endless and unsuccessful search for a substitute, he feels like 'a man who had neither a country nor a room, having left the land he lived in and gone to live in another, where he lost even the four walls that he had' (H 88, E 99).

In both Bergelson's and Agnon's fiction, the pension is presented not only as a metonymic and metaphoric vehicle to express the existence of the individual immigrant in the metropolis, but as a hieroglyph, or a mirror-house in which visual surface — far from conforming to the realist conventions of correspondence between visual appearance and psychological 'depth' — raises doubts about the possibility of apprehension and interpretation of people and things.⁶³ In Bergelson's story 'In pansion fun di dray shvester', the boarding house is described as a space in which 'everything you see around you elicits both suspicion and doubt that the pension has been arranged deliberately to elicit some kind of suspicion, and then the thought crosses your mind that you may be mistaken' (Y 102, E 46). The intense focus of Bergelson and Agnon on life in the pension should be understood also in the context of the concerted attention given to hotels, motels, and pensions in German and Austrian modernist fiction of the 1910s and 1920s by writers such as Stefan Zweig, Joseph Roth, Erich Kästner, and Vicki Baum.⁶⁴ Also highly relevant is Siegfried Kracauer's insightful analysis of the social space of the 'hotel lobby' in Weimar literary and visual culture:

The typical characteristics of the hotel lobby, which appears repeatedly in detective novels, indicate that it is conceived as the inverted image of the house of God [...]. In both places people appear there as guests. But whereas the house of God is dedicated to the service of the one whom people have gone there to encounter, the hotel lobby accommodates all who go there to meet no one [...]. In the hotel lobby, equality is based not on the relation to God but on a relation to the nothing. Here, in the space of unrelatedness, the change of environments does not leave purposive activity behind, but brackets it for the sake of a freedom that can refer only to itself and therefore sinks into relaxation and indifference.⁶⁵

Kracauer's surprising depiction of the hotel lobby as an 'inverted house of God' is resonant with the fact that the pension in which the narrator of *Ad hena* lives is located on Fasanenstraße. It was on this street in Charlottenburg that the Jewish reform community of Berlin built its impressive synagogue — 'the Temple of the Enlightened', as Agnon's narrator refers to it.⁶⁶ The name of the street thus evokes the house of God which has been secularized and turned into the pension owned by the German war-widow Mrs Trotzmüller and her three daughters. In Bergelson's stories the lobby of the pension, in spite of being a far cry from the luxurious hotels of Weimar Berlin, is all about a visual facade that is extremely difficult to decipher:

all around, from the walls of the open, warmly furnished room, pictures and photographs of women peer down, with faces absorbed in pious thoughts, and with averted heads and misty, passionate eyes. The shadowy corridor recalls one such picture, a too naked image: you feel you are both in the city and very remote and isolated from its millions of inhabitants. You instantly think about the boarding house: 'a decent place, definitely ...' 'Yet on the other hand'.
(Y 101, E 45)

In 'Tsvishn emigrantn', the setting of the pension is equally important to the narrative. This complex story within a story is about a young Jewish immigrant residing in a pension who seems to recognize in one of its dwellers a notorious pogromist whom he believes to have known and whom he sets out to kill. The narrator, to whom this story is told, is actually living (like Bergelson himself) in a comfortable house. Thus, the dislocation of the protagonist who resides in the pension with the alleged pogromist contrasts with the narrator's existence in a private home, just as the contingent nature of the protagonist's living arrangements corresponds to his social marginality and his psychological instability. In other words, the pension and the young man who resides in it are parallel to each other, and both present to the narrator a kind of riddle that requires deciphering. The young man tells the narrator that everything has begun,

here in this city, in a squalid rooming house [*a biliken pansion*]. I, in room number 3. He, in room number 5 — our doors facing one another. I'm a stranger here. No one knows me. He doesn't know me either. But I know him very well. Sometimes we bump into one another in the corridor [...] and then, as he passes, he glances at me. (Y 179, E 24)

The glances that these two men exchange convince the young Jewish immigrant from Volhynia that his neighbour in the pension is none other than the pogromist whom he knows from 'back home'. He is convinced that the fact that the two of them live in the same pension has some meaning, which is a call for action. But the whole story seems to hang on this suspicious glance and its interpreted meaning. Thus, as a number of critics have pointed out, it is impossible to tell whether the entire story about the pogromist, or even his very existence in the pension, is a reality or a figment of the obsessed man's imagination, part of the story which he almost admits to having made up.⁶⁷

The pension in Agnon's and Bergelson's Berlin fiction, with its lobby and facade, is also thoroughly gendered. The 'guest' or 'boarder' is always a male protagonist

and the pension in which he resides is figured as a 'feminine space'. The interaction of the protagonist is always with female owners (mother, daughters, and sisters) and with the maids. But if the trope of 'home' and *hey mish* ('homely') has been feminized in Jewish tradition and modern literature as the domain of the wife and the domesticated family, the provisional pensions of Berlin are precisely the opposite. The suspicion and doubt that existence in the pension elicits are closely related to illicit sexuality and the elusive presence of the female body, which appear in these works as another example of visual surface that requires deciphering. Thus, the entire plot of 'In pansion fun di dray shvester' evolves around the tense sexual attraction that life in the pension elicits for the male dwellers. But is this sexuality a mere facade that is being put on 'display' like the eponymous shop windows of Weimar Berlin? Is it a part of a clever business scheme? The pension's dwellers and the readers never find out the answer.

In Agnon's and Bergelson's fiction of Berlin, sexuality and gender are presented and scrutinized through visual means. The 'body' — in particular the female body — is intelligible through its refractions in modern forms of image-making (photographs, cinema, architecture), which are in turn further refracted in the literary text.⁶⁸ Agnon's narrator in *Ad hena* and Bergelson's narrators and protagonists are constantly watching, trying to decipher the meaning of faces, clothing, facades, and buildings, both 'in life' and on the screen, the stage, and the page of the newspaper.

In *Ad hena*, a significant part of the narrative is devoted to the narrator's relations with Brigitta Schimmermann, a former German theatre and film actress who in wartime became a nurse, decorated by the Kaiser 'for opening a nursing home and caring for the wounded like a true sister of mercy [*achot rachmania*]'. But is she really a sister of mercy, or is this transformation part of her ability to act and charm? The narrator, who has been (and probably still is) sexually attracted to the beautiful Brigitta, informs us that he knew Brigitta from her acting days when she was an actress whose 'talents were not great', but who 'had a charm that made the critics treat her kindly [...]. Watching her in the theatre was like being in a living room with a lovely and gracious young ingénue' (H 14, E 27). Brigitta's charm, the narrator tells us, 'caught the fancy' of an extremely rich businessman, Gerhard Schimmermann. After getting married, Mrs Schimmermann cut short her acting career and became a housewife with a salon 'open to artists and intellectuals' and was known for 'charity soirees' (H 15, E 28). Who is Brigitta, then, an actress, a nurse, a society woman, a sister of mercy?

Both in *Ad hena* and in 'In pansion fun di dray shvester' the narrator proceeds to give the readers a group portrait of three sisters who are the owners of the pension. In the two texts, each one of the sisters (Lotte, Hildegard, and Gert in Agnon; Luba, Simma, and Yulia in Bergelson) is given an appearance, a distinct set of facial and bodily features, a combination of typical clothing and hairstyle; and yet at the same time, the three are strangely akin to one another in their grotesque appearance. In *Ad hena*, the grotesque, mechanical element is even further stressed by the use of inanimate nouns to describe the three sisters' physical characteristics.⁶⁹ In Bergelson's story, the narrator tells us that the younger sister is the 'opposite' of the elder and

yet, somehow, they are grotesquely identical, as if to deliberately confuse the male boarder who stares at them and wonders ‘who is more beautiful’.

The elusive nature of the female body as implicated in mass culture was an important part of Weimar Berlin’s ‘cult of surface’, apparent not only in the new architecture of the metropolis but also in cinema and theatre, and in the more tawdry entertainments of the city’s working-class districts. Siegfried Kracauer noted in his key essay ‘The Mass Ornament’ (1927) that the ‘change in taste’ in Weimar Berlin that is associated with artistic movements like *Neue Sachlichkeit* cannot be separated from mass cultural spectacles like the popular revue performances of the dancing troupe ‘The Tiller Girls’.⁷⁰ According to Kracauer, the Tiller Girls

are no longer individual girls, but indissoluble female units whose movements are mathematical demonstrations [...]. Through weekly newsreels in movie houses, they have managed to reach even the tiniest villages. One glance at the screen reveals that the ornaments consist of thousands of bodies, sexless bodies in bathing suits. The regularity of their patterns is acclaimed by the masses who themselves are arranged in row upon ordered row.⁷¹

Franz Hessel, another prominent cultural critic of Weimar Berlin, noticed the effects of *Neue Sachlichkeit* on new building projects springing up all over Berlin when he observed that ‘as soon as a house becomes dilapidated or just in need of repair, the young architects give it the page-boy haircut of a simple clear facade, and clear away all the fancy curlicues’.⁷² In Kracauer’s and Hessel’s conceptions of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, as in Agnon’s and Bergelson’s fiction, the image of female body and sexuality became the signifier for representing Berlin’s modernity.

The connection between the depiction of the human body and the mass spectacles of Berlin in Bergelson’s stories becomes apparent and thematized in ‘Far 12 toyznt dolar fast er 40 teg’.⁷³ Here Bergelson creates a story about a ‘fasting young man’, who is ‘sealed under glass’ and ‘lives purely on seltzer and cigarettes’. The spectacle of the boy who is attempting to fast for forty days takes place in a cheap Berlin café, the Crocodile, and has been ‘the talk of every Berlin café and every Berlin home’. The show is so popular that ‘tens of thousands of visitors’ are lining up, ‘waiting to buy a ticket for a quarter US dollar and be admitted so that they could see with their own eyes’. The narrator who is telling the story of the boy in order to get his ‘revenge’ on Yankl, the heretic from his *shtetl*, notices that this kind of spectacle can take place only ‘in the very heart of Berlin’.

As in Bergelson, the narrator of *Ad hena* is extremely attuned to cinema, photography, clothing, and fashion. He is not only writing a book about clothing, but even used to be the costume consultant of Brigitta Schimmermann when she was an actress. But the narrator is also fascinated by questions of architecture and design in Berlin of the 1910s and 1920s. The discourse of architecture, especially of *Neues Bauen*, is introduced into Agnon’s novel through the figure of the architect Simon Gabel, who was hired by the Schimmermann family to build a new wing for Brigitta’s nursing home. The narrator tells us that ‘there were different opinions’ about Simon Gabel’s architecture and that there was a great deal of debate about him:

Some considered him a great modernist who had dealt a death blow to the stultified architecture of the past by inventing new contemporary idiom, and

some thought him the evil genie of the nouveau-riche class that, lacking all confidence in its own aesthetic judgments, was in thrall to the pretentiousness of the self-proclaimed masters. (H 53–54, E 64–65)

The way in which the narrator presents Simon Gabel reflects public discourse about *Neues Bauen* and modernist architecture in Berlin. Is Gabel's 'functionalist' architecture an excellent example of the contemporary idiom that shuns the ornament and elevates streamlined function, or is it a cold, lifeless design that suits the nouveau-riche class? The narrator tells us that he had 'no firm view of his own'. But the debate is not just a theoretical one. Later in the novel we discover that the narrator knows Simon Gabel very well:

This is how I met Simon Gabel, who was hired by the publisher to renovate the building and redo its interior. Simon Gabel is a great architect. He was attuned to the spirit of the times and understood its needs. There wasn't a wasted or an extra inch of space in anything designed by him. Whatever you saw was there because it had to be. Different generations, different houses. Once when people's needs were smaller and their hearts were larger, they preferred ornament to convenience; we, whose needs have grown as our hearts have shrunk, like it the other way round. (H 93–94, E 103–04)

Simon Gabel, who appears not only in *Ad hena* but also in other texts that Agnon wrote in the 1940s,⁷⁴ is none other than Erich Mendelsohn, the most accomplished architect of the Weimar period.⁷⁵ Agnon met Mendelsohn soon after he arrived in Berlin. When Salman Schocken became his patron, Agnon must have been greatly impressed by the architect's designs for the big Schocken department stores during the twenties. When the narrator of *Ad hena* speaks about a publisher who hired Simon Gabel to redesign his building, he refers to the famous Jewish Berlin publisher Rudolf Mosse, who commissioned Mendelsohn in 1921 to rebuild Berlin's Mossehaus, the headquarters of the Mosse publishing company. Instead of the sandstone-fronted historicist building, Mendelsohn's new design, especially the new streamlined facade of the Mossehaus, emerged as a typical example of *Neues Bauen*, 'one of the most recognizable icons of Weimar modernism, a symbol of the new spirit of mobility, functionality and adaptability'.⁷⁶

The narrator of *Ad hena*, who has 'no roof over his head', recognizes the achievement of Mendelsohn's modernist architecture and at the same time casts a critical and sceptical gaze upon it. The narrator's remarks about the 'coldness' of Mendelsohn's functionalist architecture and its possible link to a bourgeois, nouveau-riche class ('lacking a confidence in its own aesthetic judgments') shows how attuned Agnon was to the culture of Weimar Berlin and to the ensuing debates about the social and existential meaning of Weimar modernity. This is true also of Bergelson, whose Berlin stories exhibit both an intense fascination with and an equally strong criticism of Weimar modernity, with its spectacles of commodity entertainment and cinema and its facade and surface architecture and art. In both Agnon's and Bergelson's fiction, mapping the topographies of Weimar Berlin through the eyes of the Jewish eastern European immigrants enables the creation of spatial images that are both the dreams of modern, urban society and the ghosts of the past and a possible, but mostly unrealized, present and future.

Notes to Chapter 1

A different version of this essay will also appear in Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford University Press, 2010).

1. On Berlin in the context of Hebrew literature and culture, see Gershon Shaked, 'Halevay nitna lahem ha-yecholet le-hamshich', *Tarbitz*, 51.3 (1982), 479–90; Zohar Shavit, 'On the Hebrew Cultural Center in Berlin in the Twenties: Hebrew Culture in Europe — The Last Attempt', *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*, 68 (1993), 371–80. On Berlin in the context of Yiddish literature, see Delphine Bechtel, 'Babylon or Jerusalem: Berlin as Center of Jewish Modernism in the 1920s', in *Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria*, ed. by Dagmar C. G. Lorenz and Gabriele Weinberger (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), pp. 116–23; Heather Valencia, 'Yiddish Writers in Berlin 1920–1936', in *The German Jewish Dilemma: From the Enlightenment to the Shoah*, ed. by Edward Timms and Andrea Hammel (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1999), pp. 193–207; Gennady Estraiikh, 'Vilna on the Spree: Yiddish in Weimar Berlin', *Aschkenaz*, 16.1 (2006), 103–27.
2. Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 185–212; Paul Mendes-Flohr, 'Jews within German Culture', in *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 4 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996–98), iv: *Renewal and Destruction: 1918–1945*, ed. by Michael Meyer and Michael Brenner (1998), pp. 170–94.
3. Miriam Hansen, 'Mass Culture as Hieroglyphic Writing: Adorno, Derrida, Kracauer', *New German Critique*, 56 (1992), 43–75; Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003); Andreas Huyssen, 'Modernist Miniatures: Literary Snapshots of Urban Spaces', *PMLA*, 122.1 (2007), 27–43; Sabine Hake, *Topographies of Class: Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).
4. Yeshurun Keshet, *Kedma va yama* (Tel Aviv: Am-Oved, 1980), pp. 144–45. Translations in this chapter are by the author unless otherwise stated.
5. Ward, p. 2.
6. Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. xiii.
7. Peter Gay, 'The Berlin-Jewish Spirit', in Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernist Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 171.
8. Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 4.
9. See Arthur-Tilo Alt, 'A Survey of Literary Contributions to the Post-World War I Yiddish Journals of Berlin', *Yiddish*, 7.1 (1987), 42–52; Glenn S. Levine, 'Yiddish Publishing in Berlin and the Crisis in Eastern European Jewish Culture, 1919–1924', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 42 (1997), 85–108. On Hebrew publishing, see Shimon Rawidowicz, *Sichotai 'im Byalik* (Jerusalem: Devir, 1983), pp. 42–45; Shavit, 'On the Hebrew Cultural Center in Berlin'.
10. The debate about centres can be seen in the writing of David Bergelson, Melech Ravitch, Peretz Markish, and others, for example Bergelson's well-known essay 'Dray tsentren' ('Three Centers', 1926). There is an English translation of the essay in *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism*, ed. by Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraiikh (Oxford: Legenda, 2007), pp. 337–56. For a discussion of the question of centre and Bergelson's essay, see Allison Schachter, 'Bergelson and the Landscape of Yiddish Modernism', *East European Jewish Affairs*, 38.1 (2008), 7–19.
11. Gershon Shaked, 'The Great Transition', in Glenda Abramson and Tudor Parfitt, *The Great Transition* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985), p. 124; Zohar Shavit, 'The Rise and Fall of Literary Centers in Europe, and America and the Establishment of the Center in Eretz Israel', *Iyunim bi-tekumat Israel*, 4 (1994), 422–39.
12. For further discussion see Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming).
13. Rawidowicz, p. 76; Shavit, 'On the Hebrew Cultural Center in Berlin', p. 378.

14. Delphine Bechtel, 'Milgroyim, a Yiddish Magazine of Arts and Letters', in *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096–1996*, ed. by Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 420–26; Avidov Lipsker, 'The Albatroses of Young Yiddish Poetry: An Idea and its Visual Realization in Uri Zvi Greenberg's *Albatros*', *Prooftexts*, 15.1 (1995), 89–109.
15. Walter Benjamin, *Berliner Chronik* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 46.
16. Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
17. U. Z. Greenberg, 'Dvorah be-shivya', in U. Z. Greenberg, *Kol-Ktavav* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1990–), xv (2001), p. 127.
18. Yeshurun Keshet, *Maskiyot* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1953), p. 138.
19. Ya'acov Shteinberg, 'Sonnetot mi-beit ha-kafe', in *Kol-Kitvei Ya'acov Shteinberg* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1959), pp. 64–65.
20. In Hebrew literature the poem has been an important genre for the writers of the Haskalah, for Bialik and his generation, as well as for the development of modernist Hebrew and Yiddish poetry since the 1910s and 1920s. See Yehudit Barel, *Ha-poema ha-ivrit me-reshita ve-ad reshit ha-meah ha-esrim* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1995).
21. Binyamin Harushovsky [Benjamin Harshav], 'Bi-ntiv ha-poema ha-ivrit ha-modernit', *Masa*, 2 October 1952; *idem*, *Ritmus ha-rachvut* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchad, 1978).
22. Dan Miron, *Bodedim be-mo'adam* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1987), p. 510.
23. David Shimoni, *Sefer ha-poemot*, 2 vols (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1952), 1, 3–32.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
25. Dan Miron, *Akdamut le-atzag* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2002), p. 36.
26. The critic Franz Roh was the first to theorize, in 1925, the differences between expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit*, which he called post-expressionism. On *Neue Sachlichkeit*, see Steve Plumb, *Neue Sachlichkeit, 1918–1933: Unity and Diversity of an Art Movement* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006); Sergiusz Michalski, *New Objectivity, Neue Sachlichkeit — Painting in Germany in the 1920s* (Cologne: Taschen, 2003); Ward.
27. Avidov Lipsker, 'The Participation of Uri Zvi Greenberg in the Berlin Discourse of the 1920s', unpublished paper, 2007.
28. Lipsker, 'The Albatroses of Young Yiddish Poetry'.
29. Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Albatros*, 3–4 (1923).
30. *Ba-efef ha-shishi* was published in Berlin in the journal *Ha-olam* under the title *Mispar hato'im ha-gdolim* (*A Number of Great Wanderers*, 1923). In 1923 *Ha-olam* published *Ha-dam ve-habasar* (*The Blood and Flesh*). In the same year, the poem *Ba-m'avarv* (*In the West*) was published in the journal *Rimon*. See Tamar Woolf-Monson, *Le-nogah nekudat ha-pelel* (Jerusalem: Zmora Bitan, 2005), pp. 13–33, 59–62, 107.
31. Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Kol ktavav*, 1, ed. by Dan Miron (1990), p. 9.
32. Greenberg engages French symbolist prose poems like Baudelaire's *Le spleen de Paris* and Rimbaud's *Une saison en enfer*, to which Greenberg refers explicitly when he calls his experience in Berlin 'the season in hell'.
33. Greenberg, *Kol ktavav*, 1, 29–41. See Miron, *Akdamut le-atzag*, pp. 60–62, and Woolf-Monson, pp. 107–21.
34. Greenberg, *Kol ktavav*, 1, 34.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
38. Avidov Lipsker has observed that it is possible to read Greenberg's depiction of Berlin as 'the city of a hundred bridges' in two meanings. In the Hebrew expression *me'at ha-gshrim*, the word *mea* can mean both 'a hundred bridges' and 'a century of bridges'. Thus, Berlin is also what defines the modernist twentieth century as a century of 'bridges', namely of threshold liminality. See Lipsker, 'The Participation of Uri Zvi Greenberg'.
39. Moyshe Kulbak, *Disner Tshayld Harold* (Minsk: Melukhe-farlag in Vaysrusland, 1933). Reprinted in Moyshe Kulbak, *Geklibene verk* (New York: Cyco Farlag, 1953).
40. Ward, pp. 92–139.

41. Kulbak, *Verk*, pp. 238–39.
42. Kulbak, *Verk*, p. 263.
43. See Joseph Sherman, 'David Bergelson: A Biography', in *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism*, ed. by Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraiikh (London: Legenda, 2007), pp. 25–36; Dafna Clifford, 'From Exile to Exile: Bergelson's Berlin Years', in *Yiddish and the Left*, ed. by Gennady Estraiikh and Mikhail Krutikov (Oxford: Legenda, 2001), pp. 247–58.
44. See Lev Bergelson, 'Memories of My Father: The Early Years (1918–1934)', in *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism*, ed. by Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraiikh (London: Legenda, 2007), pp. 79–88.
45. Joseph Sherman, 'Bergelson and the Irony of Milgryom, Berlin 1922', *Zutot*, 5.1 (2008), 81. Mikhail Krutikov, 'Narrating the Revolution', in *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism*, ed. by Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraiikh (London: Legenda, 2007), p. 169.
46. David Bergelson, 'Der gesheener oyfbrokh', *Milgroyim*, 1 (1922), 42.
47. Dan Laor, 'Agnon in Germany, 1912–1924', *AJS Review*, 18.1 (1993), 83–84.
48. Brenner, pp. 205–09.
49. The stories that he wrote and published during these years (sometimes in German translation even before the appearance of the Hebrew original) include 'Ha-nidach' ('The Banished One', 1923), 'Agadat ha-sofer' ('The Tale of the Scribe', 1918) and 'Hakhnasat kala' ('The Bridal Canopy', which was the basis of a later novel), and the cycle *Agadot Polin* (*Legends of Poland*).
50. Gershom Scholem, 'S. Y. Agnon: The Last Hebrew Classic?', in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* (New York: Schocken, 1976), pp. 96–113.
51. See the correspondence of Agnon and Schocken in *Sh. Y. Agnon — Z. Schocken: Chilufei igrot*, ed. by Emunah Yaron (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1991), pp. 78–79.
52. Maya Barzilai, 'Anatomies of Creation: Reviving the Golem in Times of War and Death' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 2009). My understanding of *Ad hena* is informed by Barzilai's forthcoming study of popular culture and visual surface in Agnon's novel.
53. See Hansen.
54. Laor, 'Agnon in Germany, 1912–1924', p. 82.
55. These include the important stories 'Ba-derech' (which eventually became part of 'Sefer ha-ma'asim'), 'Panim acherot', 'Ferenhheim', 'Merutzat ha-sus', 'Bein shtei arim', the novels *Ad hena* and *Shira*, and a number of stories and texts written in the 1940s and which were collected only posthumously. For a discussion, see Dan Miron, 'German Jews in Agnon's Work', *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 23 (1978), 265–80.
56. S. Y. Agnon, *Ad hena*, in *Kol sipurav shel S. Y. Agnon*, 8 vols (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem: Schocken), vii (1960 [1952]), 5–170. The novel was recently translated into English by Hillel Halkin as S. Y. Agnon, *To This Day* (New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2008). All references to the novel are from these Hebrew and English editions and will be given in parentheses in the text, prefixed by 'H' and 'E' respectively.
57. Dan Laor, *Chaye Agnon* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1998), p. 417.
58. Arnold Band, for example, deems the structure of the novel as 'unintegrated and haphazard without any clear justification'. Arnold Band, *Nostalgia and Nightmare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 347, 352–53.
59. Laor, 'Agnon in Germany, 1912–1924', pp. 90–91.
60. Dovid Bergelson, *Shturemteg* (Vilna: Kletzkin, 1928); *idem*, *Velt ayn, velt oys* (Vilna: Kletzkin, 1929). For the recent English translation by Joachim Neuregshel, see David Bergelson, *The Shadows of Berlin* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2005). All references to Bergelson's stories are from these editions, prefixed in parentheses in the text by 'Y' and 'E'.
61. Clifford, p. 253.
62. Huyssen.
63. Barzilai, p. 115.
64. Bettina Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting in Early Twentieth-Century German and Austrian Literature* (Rochester: Camden Press, 2006).
65. Siegfried Kracauer, 'The Hotel Lobby', in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 173–88.

66. Barzilai, p. 143.
67. Valencia, pp. 197–200; Sasha Senderovich, ‘In Search of Readership: Bergelson Among the Refugees’, in *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism*, ed. by Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraiikh (London: Legenda, 2007), pp. 150–66.
68. Barzilai, p. 99.
69. Barzilai, p. 117.
70. The Tiller Girls were a troupe which began performing in the Berlin Admiralspalast during the period of inflation, appearing in revues produced by Hermann Haller and Eric Charell. The Tiller Girls even danced in the Großes Schauspielhaus under the direction of Max Reinhardt.
71. Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament*, pp. 75–76.
72. Franz Hessel, *Spazieren in Berlin* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1968); the English translation is quoted in Rowe, p. 166.
73. The story, which was published in *Forverts*, was not republished in Bergelson’s collected works.
74. See S. Y. Agnon, *Pitchey dvarim* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1973), pp. 121–23.
75. On Mendelsohn, see Kathleen James, *Erich Mendelsohn and the Architecture of German Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Alona Nitzan-Shiftan, ‘Erich Mendelsohn: From Berlin to Jerusalem’ (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, MIT, 1993).
76. Hake, p. 184.