Beyond Inclusion and Exclusion

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Beyond Inclusion and Exclusion

Jewish Experiences of the First World War in Central Europe

Edited by Jason Crouthamel, Michael Geheran, Tim Grady, and Julia Barbara Köhne

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Agnon on the German Home Front in *In Mr Lublin's Store*

Hebrew Fiction of the First World War

Glenda Abramson

The literature of the First World War, written by soldier-authors and civilians on the home front during the war and for some years after it, often stands midway between a historical document and a subjective rendering of an ordeal that seems to have been, for the most part, unbearable. While there are hundreds of such works in various languages, very little has been written in any form about the experience of Jewish combatants and civilians in the First World War. Fiction and poetry in Hebrew on the topic is even rarer, too sparse to constitute a sub-genre. Nonetheless, there exists a modest body of such work about which little is known to this day. Many of these responses to the war experience were written some time after the events, or by Hebrew writers such as Yosef Hayim Brenner (1881–1921), Aharon Reuveni (1886–1971), Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888–1970), and Devora Baron (1887–1956), who were not combatants but endured considerable hardship on the home fronts or in exile.

As with much war fiction in general, Hebrew war fiction was largely autobiographical. Authors wove fictional characters together with historical personalities, into real historical contexts, blurring the boundaries between history and fiction. A good example of this occurs in Agnon's "novel" *In Mr Lublin's Store*, in which the narrator offers a friend a ticket to a symphony concert given by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra conducted by Arthur Nikisch. Nikisch became the orchestra's resident conductor in 1895 and was living in Leipzig at the time of Agnon's arrival there in 1917. Much of the Hebrew war writing is

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neither entirely history nor entirely fiction—in the sense of untruth—but a form of fictionalized autobiography, that is, stories closely based on the author's lived experience, which involve real people, events and places, and sometimes, in Agnon's case, his own name.

The contemporary re-evaluation of the opposition of fiction and history, the challenge to our preconceptions about what is meant by fiction and non-fiction, the generic blurring, all these are significant in terms of truth. After suggesting that the distinction between history and fiction is no longer tenable, Beverley Southgate asks whether this lack of distinction matters.[1] His conclusion, with which I agree, is that it does matter. If one is considering the fictional texts as providing elements of historiography, the question of "truth" is always a concern. How is the close relationship between the historical narrative and the fictional one disentangled? If we are left only with the perceived truth of the author of the fiction as opposed to the "facts" of a war, for example, does this provide us with a reliable picture of the war? Postmodernist historians may be right in identifying the limits of historical truth, giving some leave for the claim of fiction to serve historiography, and the representation of subjective experience, while not scientifically verified, may give us at least a sense of place and atmosphere.[2] The novelist who interprets historical material "with imagination" can provide such a sense.[3]

The role of fiction in the mediating of history is particularly evident in the recounting of "horrible events,"[4] the Holocaust being the obvious one. The victims of these events, even in fiction, are our messengers, serving both memory and history, the overarching topic transcending the smallness of the story. Fiction has the power to convey the unique, human quality of these events, despite the awfulness of the memories. As Jorge Semprun writes, in a widely quoted passage relating to Holocaust fiction, "Only the artifice of masterly narrative will prove capable of conveying some of the truth of such testimony."[5] This applies as well to war literature and certainly to Agnon's writing about the First World War as a commemoration of the destruction of Galician Jewry, in successive works of fiction.

Agnon was born in Buczacz, Galicia, in 1888 to a middle-class family in which Orthodox Judaism and modern European culture coexisted. He left Buczacz in 1908, partly through fear of recruitment into the Austro-Hungarian army, and settled in Palestine. On 28 October 1912, he departed from his home in Jaffa for Berlin together with Arthur Ruppin, the director of the Zionist office in Palestine. Berlin seemed to Agnon to be the ideal environment in which to develop as a writer. During the first decade of the twentieth century, Berlin was a center

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of a lively Jewish émigré culture that included Hebrew and Yiddish writers, a center that was greatly extended and enriched during the Weimar Republic.

Agnon remained in Berlin for about two years before moving between Berlin, Leipzig, Bad Brückenau, and Bad Homburg. He lived in wartime Leipzig at different periods, first in February 1917, having to depart after three months, unable to extend his residency permit in the city. He returned for a short time in June of that year, again from the end of November through mid May 1918, and again from October 1918 through March 1919.

Sponsored and supported by the wealthy entrepreneur and publisher Zalman Schocken, Agnon was able to concentrate on his work, having avoided military service in the Austro-Hungarian army through ill health and never in any danger as a civilian.[6] Despite the difficulties he had endured in attempting to find lodgings, work, and sources of sustenance immediately after his arrival in Berlin in 1912, he spent the time establishing his career as a writer, editing and publishing his work and achieving a reputation among the Jewish reading public. However, none of the works written between 1914 and 1918 dealt either with the war or with his life in Germany, or his attitude to German Jewry and Germans in general. His concern during the war years was the life and culture of East European Jewry, stories that reflected Jewish life in Galicia and his home town in particular.[7] Although the Great War had provided the historical context for *Oreaḥ nata lalun* (1939; *A Guest for the Night*, 1968), he directly confronted it only several decades later in *To This Day*,[8] *In Mr Lublin's Store*,[9] and a handful of short stories, only two of which were published.

When Agnon finally turned to the war later in his life, he portrayed it as a cataclysm that brought to an end one of the most constructive periods in Jewish history. The war is foregrounded in the two novels in all its horror and chaos, a literally inescapable part of the narrator's life, overwhelming every episode and character in the novel, manipulating their lives, their livelihood, their families, even their religious observance. In *In Mr Lublin's Store*, the war appears both as a historical phenomenon and an unavoidable element of human existence: "The world is never free of war. Every nation prepares itself for war. They make war constantly. If you know of a generation that has not experienced war, you can be sure that it is preparing itself for war."[10] Entire communities in the East, predominantly the Jewish communities, are being destroyed. The war distorts the novel's society, filling it with bereaved and fragmented families. On a more specific narrative plane, the war prevents the narrator from studying the Talmud, it interferes

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with his study of Judaism, and it is therefore a negative force in his quest for spiritual self-realization. He sees newspapers replacing the Torah, the quotidian replacing the eternal. The war therefore undermines the foundations of faith and God's law.

One of Agnon's central preoccupations, which will be explored in greater detail below, derives from the contradictory attitudes to the war by members of the German Jewish community, attitudes he depicts in both his war novels. Through his eponymous narrator, Agnon criticizes what he considers to be their self-deluded expectations of the war. Agnon did not count himself among those German Jews who believed that "only blood spilled in the struggle for fatherland and liberty would lead to emancipation."[11] In *Mr Lublin*, his narrator supports an elderly Christian artisan who questions what came to be known as "the spirit of 1914," and who unequivocally condemns the war. Agnon also represented the views of the Jews who had enthusiastically embraced the war in 1914 but whose faith in it diminished as the conflict wore on. He was, of course, writing in hindsight. The point he was making, the fruitlessness of faith in external salvation despite Jewish sacrifice, is, in hindsight, a profoundly Zionist conclusion.

Of course, we do not know the *exact* nature of Agnon's experience in Leipzig and moreover he is representing it in a work that has been designated as fiction. His imaginative excursions, mainly created out of the personifications of circumstances or ideas, are not in the purview of strictly factual forms of writing.[12] Still, in this chapter I intend to show that in *Mr Lublin*, Agnon provides us with accurate information about the locations in which he lived during the war and some of the situations he endured. Biographical evidence bears this out.[13] His fiction serves as his personal response to a time of crisis and fills out the subjective gaps missing from the historiographical narrative. I suggest, throughout this chapter, that we have the supporting evidence of historiography to allow us to presume that Agnon is not only fabricating, but also reproducing, elements of the time and place.

In Mr Lublin's Store

The story of *Mr Lublin* is simple: the narrator, who has moved from Jerusalem to Berlin and from there to Leipzig, is caught, in a sense imprisoned, in Germany because of the war that bars him from leaving: "I can't return to the Land of Israel because all the routes are blocked by the army, I can't return to my birthplace because the Russians have

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destroyed it" (36). On his way one Sabbath eve to buy what he requires for his Sabbath meals, he runs into his friend Mr Lublin, wealthy entrepreneur and philanthropist, who is the proprietor of a mail order company.[14] Mr Lublin has an urgent appointment and has no-one to mind his office. Through his contacts with city officialdom he has made it possible for the narrator to remain in Leipzig, despite rights of residence being severely restricted during wartime.[15] The author himself never obtained this right.

In gratitude, the narrator agrees to mind Mr Lublin's store. There are no books or any reading material in the single room that constitutes the company's main office, the telephone has been disconnected, and in any case, it is already the Sabbath. Mr Lublin has taken the newspapers with him, leaving the narrator with nothing to do other than reflect on his life, on German Jewry, Galicia, his birthplace, and on Germany and the war.

The novel is a study in memory and reflection. Its framing story draws on Agnon's memories of his sojourns in Leipzig. His narrator defines himself as a researcher, writing a book on clothing through the ages, an enigmatic symbolic choice. Only once he modestly admits that he is "something of a writer." In fact, the narrator is as insulated from the war as Agnon was, basking in Schocken's patronage, and whose most serious problem was the fear of conscription.[16] Confined to sitting within four walls, all the narrator can do is allow his imagination to range far beyond them, without boundaries of time and space. His is, in a sense, a double confinement: first in Germany, being unable to leave, and then in Mr Lublin's store. The absence of newspapers ensures that the news of the day is not a distraction from the narrator's own chronicle of memory. Peace reigns inside Mr Lublin's store. In fact, if we are to make a temporal demarcation in the novel, the present is fictional while everything outside Mr Lublin's store is a more direct representation of history interwoven with memory and autobiography. War as a historical reality and the social responses to it are the reference points for the documentary aspects of the novel.

Many years interceded between the events and Agnon's recalling of them in fiction. We are entitled to ask whether his memory of the time is reliable enough to offer an insight into the history of the period. An example of the fallibility of historical memory is demonstrated by W. G. Sebald in *Austerlitz*, which, by the judicious use of real photographs in a fictional text, blurs the boundaries between memory and imagination. Like Sebald, Agnon mixes past and present, fact and fiction, autobiography and intertextuality, "to create a space that destabilizes the reliability of memory."[17]

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We do not know whether Agnon kept notes at the time of his sojourn in Germany and the only form of non-fiction autobiography he left is *From Myself to Myself*. Yet we may assume that the detail in his description of life in Germany in *Mr Lublin*, while being largely a construction of memory, has a basis in the real, a "corrective" to memory alone.[18] Agnon himself enters the debate in *From Myself to Myself*: "During the Great War I was living in Leipzig. I wrote down in *To This Day* some of the things that happened to me."[19] He continues in the same chapter to describe events he subsequently incorporated into *Mr Lublin*. His literary representation and his autobiography are therefore often indivisible.[20]

In *Mr Lublin* the narrator remembers wartime Leipzig, a city Agnon liked and recalled with obvious affection, for at least one reason: the city's Jewish population was composed overwhelmingly of recent immigrants from Galicia and Russia. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, municipal officials introduced measures to encourage some Jewish traders to settle permanently in Leipzig. In contrast to German administrations elsewhere, the Leipzig municipality even relaxed its naturalization process so that dealers could acquire Saxonian citizenship. Those Galician Jews who had established themselves in Leipzig continued to play an active role in trade.[21] The percentage of foreigners among the Jews of Leipzig rose to about 67 percent just before the war.[22] The ratio of foreign-born to German-born Jews made Leipzig unique among medium-sized German Jewish communities.[23]

According to Robert Willingham, the essential division within the community was between "Germans," those whose families had been resident in Leipzig for generations, and "foreigners," those who had come from abroad, mainly Eastern Europe, and whose numbers were greatly increased by the wave of *Ostjuden* (Eastern European Jews).[24] In *Mr Lublin*, Mr Lublin crosses these boundaries from being a "foreigner" to becoming a "German," not only through residence, but also through new citizenship, wealth, and social acceptance.

Agnon (with some hindsight) illustrates the differences between Leipzig's Jewish community and that of Berlin:

> Berlin is also not entirely void of Jews. You'll find Jews from Galicia and from my town there, but a few of the Berlin Jews are worthless and if you were to encounter one of them his appearance might give you the wrong impression. The echo of his ancestors who deserted the people of Israel taunts you. You'll see a Galician Jew with his sidecurls tucked behind his ears, a styled beard and a short coat folded into itself so that it doesn't seem to be long, and when he speaks he shifts into "German," which is neither proper German nor Yiddish. (41)

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Agnon's narrator is researching a book on clothing and he therefore identifies the Galician Jews primarily by their distinctive dress: their long coats, the hats made of black silk or velvet, the high boots with colorful flaps. The Jews who arrived in Leipzig during and after the war

> did not change their style, their clothes or their language. Even those whose ancestors had already lived here for a few generations were identifiable as being of Galician origin. Even if they exactly observe the Leipzig customs, more even than the non-Jews in Leipzig, and speak perfect Leipzigese, a hint of Galicia announces that they are Galicia's children. (42)

Yet the narrator expresses his fondness for Mr Lublin who has cast off his Galician birthplace and succeeded in making the transition to complete Germanness. In addition, throughout the novel, through characters like Mr Lublin, his father-in-law, and countless others who are businessmen, dealers, entrepreneurs, and peddlers, Agnon emphasizes the Leipzig Jewish community's devotion to trade and dealing.

The Home Front in *Mr Lublin*

The War

Agnon reports the experience of an urban civilian in Germany during wartime, with the home front as his locus and the impetus for the structure of his two novels. The war was at its height and encroached on the civilian population by daily deprivation, in addition to the mounting grief of loss. It was in Leipzig in 1918 that Agnon heard that the war had come to an end. Life in wartime Germany seems to have left so deep an impression on him that he devoted two novels to his memory of it almost half a century later. He follows the linearity of the war experience: from the early excitement at its outbreak, when the young men "rushed" into it (his judgment in the novel), to the well-documented disillusionment, and then, as the years wore on, the grief and suffering and, finally, resignation. His grasp of social involvement in the novel is impressive, drawing on his daily life and his contacts among the Jewish intelligentsia of Berlin and Leipzig. He was never a conscript. He did not experience personal loss or all the privations that afflicted the entire German home front. His biographer Dan Laor reports that while on the front the cannons roared and the civilian population was feeling the effects of the war, Agnon was in the heart of Berlin, protected on all sides from any harm, free to devote his time to meeting the great writers of the period when "at that fateful time

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in the world's history, they and they alone were the only things that really interested him."[25]

In one respect, Agnon suffered certain hardships, being classified as a foreigner and obliged to register with the police despite being a national of an allied country. Generally, imperial Germany made it difficult for foreigners to settle within its borders. Few of them could evade its tight residency permit system. All those, including German citizens who moved between cities, had to register. In fact, most countries kept foreigners under strict surveillance during wartime.[26] During his first visit, Agnon had been granted permission to remain in the city for eight days, after which he had to appear at the local police station, as did his narrator, in order to extend his license. Once military rule had been established in German cities, including Leipzig, the restrictions for foreigners increased and he was eventually required to leave Leipzig permanently without having been able to obtain a residence permit. It was easier, reports the exasperated narrator, to settle in Berlin.

In *Mr Lublin*, Agnon confirms the distrust with which foreigners were treated: when the narrator, himself a foreigner, welcomes Jewish guests from Russia, his distrustful neighbors regard him as a spy. This anecdote is based on fact. All Russian Jewish civilians in Germany lost their rights once the war began. As enemy aliens they were in limbo, watched by the police and since they were objects of general suspicion they tended to keep to themselves. Russian Jewish students in particular suffered from police surveillance and were forbidden from participating in local politics.[27] Agnon's narrator in *To This Day* reports sardonically that due to their unhappy situation, the Russian Jews trapped in Germany were obliged to pray for the pogrom-loving tsar's victory so that they could go home. "Their longing made Russia seem like a utopia inhabited by the world's most virtuous people."[28]

Agnon's views on the German Jews' response to the war are quite clear. The perception that German society entered the war with unqualified enthusiasm, with even the political parties united in the spirit of the *Burgfrieden* (the so-called "fortress" truce), should be modified, even though Thomas Mann, for example, confessed that he was "tired, sick and tired" of peace and saw the war as "a purification, a liberation, an enormous hope."[29] Others followed with equally hyperbolic statements. Yet in less intellectual and middle-class communities in Germany, anxiety and fear were as widespread as jubilation,[30] and the well-documented euphoria was rather more tempered. Germans experienced the outbreak of the war differently according to class, gender, and location.[31] Rather than enthusiasm, the crowds greeted news of the war with excitement, a response that led to the myth of the "spirit of

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1914."[32] Propaganda and persuasion were used in the early years of the war to mobilize the population and to encourage a belief in Germany's desire for victory, although initially there was little collective opposition to the war.[33]

The collective *Jewish* response was driven in many instances by the hope that the Jewish community had more than their Christian German compatriots to gain from the war. Many Jewish individuals and communities believed that their participation would lead to an enhancement of their civil rights. Not only that, but some saw the fight against the tsarist regime as comparable to Moses' fight for liberation from the Pharaoh.[34] About 100,000 German Jewish soldiers of all denominations took up arms,[35] among them those who not only saw their participation as a mark of their patriotism and loyalty to their German homeland, but also anticipated civic improvement for the Jewish community. Echoing the Kaiser's speech,[36] a rabbi wrote with hopeful ecumenism on 12 August 1914: "In the German Fatherland there are no longer any Christians and Jews, any believers and disbelievers, there are only Germans. May God allow these great times to become a part of the consciousness of our people, and to make us a truly united people."[37]

Two days after the outbreak of the war, the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, CV) published a declaration of support for the war, saying, "Every German Jew is ready to sacrifice property and blood as duty demands." There were other equally patriotic calls from Jewish and Zionist organizations.[38] A number of Jewish intellectuals and artists added their names to an open letter written in support of the conflict. For example, Max Reinhardt announced that the war was necessary in defense of German culture, and Ludwig Frank, who was killed in the early days of the war, marched away "joyful and sure of our victory."[39] In Agnon's *To This Day*, the narrator describes his visit to a proud Jewish couple in Leipzig the day their son volunteered for the German army: "I remember the mother scrutinizing every item that [the son] packed into his kitbag, her eyes bright with joy at the sight of her boy going off to defend the Fatherland."[40] Agnon's Mr Lublin echoes the CV's sentiment, "… There must be some change for the better because Germany sees all of us, the German Jewish citizens, sacrifice our children and our wealth for the war against the enemy. Is it possible that after this they will still deprive us of our rights?" (189). In the spirit of the *Burgfrieden*, acculturated German Jews, like Mr Lublin, as well as Zionists,[41] demonstrated both the "authenticity of their patriotism"[42] and their hope for civil and political acceptance.

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Agnon was not one of them. He was not a German and he had worked hard to avoid conscription, making himself ill in the process. His narrator is a religiously observant *Ostjude*, as different from the assimilated German Jews as he is from blond, blue-eyed Mr Arno (né Aaron) Lublin, father of Heinz, Thomas, and Gerda, who could not wait to shake the dust of his East European town off his feet.

Like the mother in *To This Day*, many Jewish characters in *Mr Lublin* embrace the war in their self-deluded hope for its social benefit. The narrator in *Mr Lublin* reflects Agnon's own attitude to war as physically, socially, and morally destructive. He demonstrates, sometimes satirically, his scorn for any patriotic utterances by Jews. For example, the narrator and Mr Lublin's wife visit a Jewish merchant whose son is a soldier:

> When he saw her he rubbed his hands together with satisfaction and began to speak about the war and the obligation of every person to his fatherland, the Jews in particular. He was not from Germany but from Austria and not even from Austria but from Galicia, but after Germany had taken him in and made him a German citizen he saw himself as an absolute German in every respect. Particularly as a Jew faithful to God and His Torah he felt a double obligation to do as much as was possible for Germany. He sent his son to war and even before they demanded it from him he donated generously to the war effort. (161)

It is as if the narrator deliberately subverts the CV's statement by sneering: "They all utter a single phrase and one word, to volunteer for the war in body and pocket for the sake of truth and justice" (132). Agnon's bitterest statement is given to one of his non-Jewish characters, an old knife-sharpener:

> The sharpener held out the knife and Rabbi Jonathan examined it. He paid him and said, "It is sharp and smooth." The sharpener replied, "The war's teeth are sharper. I would be surprised if its teeth didn't grow larger through overeating." (57)

A gentile expresses these moral sentiments while the Jews throw themselves wholeheartedly into the war, according to the narrator's caustic judgment. Being a Galician and mourning the tragedy of East European Jewry, the destruction of towns like his own, the murder of entire Jewish communities, Jewish displacement and exile, the narrator abhors Jews' willingness to sacrifice themselves for their inevitably (according to the narrator) hostile host country. In his focus in the novel on the dislocated millions of Eastern European Jews, Agnon might have welcomed Germany's battle with their oppressors, but he proclaimed his antiwar sentiments throughout his life, including later, in Israel.[43]

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In *Mr Lublin*, the narrator accentuates what he considered to be the misguided fervor of the young Jews going to battle for their fatherland (for which, in *To This Day*, Agnon ironically uses the ideologically loaded term *moledet*)[44] and he has a few acerbic things to say about the women who encourage the young soldiers on their way, the men "intoxicated with joy" in national service.[45] "They immediately rushed into battle as soon as war was declared. The older son was taken prisoner by the French and the young one who hadn't yet reached the age of service but volunteered as a conscript was on the Russian front or somewhere on a different front," writes Agnon in *Mr Lublin* (12). He reiterates many times throughout the novel, "This boy rushed into the war, he rushed into the war and was killed. The war stretched out its arms and grabbed him …" (31). "Through love of his fatherland he rushed into the war before his time had come to join up …" (58).

> Because he rushed into the war before his time the war rushed onto him before his time and he died without coming back. Still a fledgling he died in the war and we don't know where he died and where he is buried, and perhaps he doesn't even have a small piece of land to lie in and he has become fodder for the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky. (109)

The narrator even derides his friend and admirer, the composer Grete Hinnings, for her uplifting war songs. He deplores not only the young German women's encouragement of men in uniform, but particularly those who see their men off to the war and then take their jobs.

Mr Lublin is a monument to the young men who died. The story of Mrs Salzmann, the proprietor of the café favored by Mr Lublin, is the paradigmatic testament of parents' grief. The narrator tells at length the terrible, heartbreaking story of the Salzmanns' dead son. Mrs Salzmann represents all the parents whose sons have been killed on the battlefield and her dignified agony is among the most moving parts of the book. A beloved only son, the boy volunteered for service and became the fictional representative of the thousands of anonymous casualties of the conflict. Moreover, as Mrs Salzmann laments, she has no idea where he is buried or whether he has a grave at all. Agnon has gleaned this, too, from the real tragedies of German families. For example, after a Jewish soldier from Hamburg was killed, his grave could not be located despite his wife's and rabbi's numerous appeals to the War Ministry.[46]

In *Mr Lublin*, the soldiers are always victims. In Agnon's story "Fernheim," the ex-prisoner of war, now free, remains a victim after his family's rejection of him. In "Between Two Towns," the returned soldier is so severely disabled that he disables his family as well. In *To This Day*, the central character, an infantryman, is mentally impaired

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as a result of a head wound. The only heroic Jewish serviceman in *Mr Lublin* returns home to be outdone by a religious restriction.

The narrator observes bitterly that the medals on the soldiers' chests are placed there as substitutes for the limbs and the faculties the men have lost. One of the anecdotes in *Mr Lublin* concerns a slaughtered pet goose, killed with casual cruelty as a boast. It is reminiscent of a scene in *To This Day* of dead animals in a butcher's window, signifying the dead on the battlefield. There is no hint of any glory in the returning soldier.

Even Mr Lublin does not escape the effects of the war: his eldest son is a prisoner of the French, and the parents have no idea of his whereabouts or indeed whether he is alive. The other son is somewhere in the field. The Red Cross then delivers a letter.[47] Mrs Lublin is distraught while her husband is overcome almost to the point of incoherence. Agnon implies the confusion of the normally composed Mr Lublin by his repetition of phrases, which in themselves are trivial, and his breathless sentences:

> The Red Cross advised us that a letter had arrived from our son from his place of internment. They brought us the letter and we read it standing up and again while sitting down and we recognized his handwriting, his handwriting hadn't changed and there was no difference between this letter and the earlier letters he had written to us before the war when he was touring the cities of Germany with his friends. The letters and the words were the same. There was no difference between the shape of the letters or even between the words "I am well" that he wrote during peacetime and the shape of the letters of "well" written from the enemy country. (177)

Even his strong emotion does not deter Mr Lublin from somber reflection about the nature of warfare:

> It is somewhat incomprehensible that he doesn't say that his captors forced him to write this way because we read in our papers about the brutality of our enemies who are worse than wild beasts. Even if I imagine that the newspapers exaggerate they don't exaggerate to this extent. Or perhaps there is no exaggeration, for even we can't say that we treat our prisoners mercifully. (177)[48]

Among the German support organizations were churches, synagogues, and individual clergy, which provided frameworks for comfort and assistance. Yet in his novel, Agnon mocks the vainglorious attempt of one Hasidic rabbi to console a bereaved father by boasting about the value to God of his, the rabbi's, prayer. The rabbi falls asleep while comforting the father, and moreover fails to remember the correct name of the dead son. For Agnon in *Mr Lublin* there is no consolation for the

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loss of a child, including one who has been so infected by the idea of national glory and heroic sacrifice that he embraces death. The narrator includes everyone in his implicit condemnation—the rabbis, the parents, and Jewish society as a whole. While he has little compassion for any civilians, except perhaps the bereaved Salzmanns, his compassion for the dead and wounded soldiers is unmistakable. He mocks the award of medals in accordance with the soldier's injury as payment by the war with useless symbols. His narrator comments on the sudden appearance of men with the terrible injuries of battle, missing limbs, maimed in body and spirit. He says, "… my heart aches when I see men without an arm, without legs, blind and lame because of the war" (85).

> [The war] has already taken its share of them, whether an arm or a leg or an internal organ that we do not see, which has marked him as released from war work. He has fulfilled his obligation to the war which pays him off with symbols of bravery. The calculation is made, this one with a crutch, that one with a rubber leg, this one without an arm and that one with other infirmities—and the medals on their chests are calculated accordingly. (154)[49]

Lack of Food and Rationing

In the novel, the German civilians are affected by lack of food, by fear, by the constant anxiety about sons and husbands in battle, rather than by suffering a military onslaught, bombing, or invasion. Their greatest enemy on the home front is hunger. Mr Lublin observes, "Now that the war is at its height I doubt you'll find anything to eat here" (34). The Great War affected Leipzig's economy, leading to a catastrophic drop in the production of consumer goods. Leipzig faced a serious shortage of grains, meat, dairy products, and vegetables. In *From Myself to Myself*, Agnon explains that an acquaintance was refused the right of residence in Leipzig not because of antisemitism but due to the food shortages. "Leipzig barely manages to feed its citizens," he writes. "It wouldn't be right to take food out of their mouths to give to strangers."[50] The quality of bread deteriorated after the authorities decided to save on grain by mixing increasing amounts of filler into the dough.[51] "This bread we eat is unsatisfying, it only irritates and plagues us like a stuffed belly and the bread and all the food make us ill" (*Mr Lublin*, 155). By early summer 1916, stores had run out of sugar and clothing; shoes and all foodstuffs were rationed.[52] Only the war satisfies its greed:

> Adam Isba pours himself a cup of coffee and cuts a slice of bread, which he contemplates because during wartime one must estimate whether this piece of bread we are holding in our hands to put into our mouths

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> is the last of all our food because the war swallows everything: first the slice in the hand, afterwards the hand itself, afterwards the soul, afterwards it demolishes the earth beneath the body wallowing in its own blood. (99)

Agnon refers to rationing more than once. The war "allocates food coupons to everyone and inspects everyone's name" (51). Mr Lublin admonishes his assistant: "Your wife and children are hungry and waiting for you for dinner. Go, so that the potatoes and cabbage don't get cold, because they handed out cabbage and potatoes as our food rations today" (176). In *To This Day*, the narrator describes the hunger he suffered, having forgotten to bring his ration book.[53] Rationing affected people's livelihoods. A character in *Mr Lublin* sells her possessions to open a grocery store, but the narrator asks, "When food is rationed, what income can a shopkeeper expect from his shop?" (59). Vast quantities of eggs had been imported before the war, becoming scarce as communities rationed them in wartime. Between October 1916 and April 1917, Berlin citizens received a total of eleven eggs per person.[54] In *Mr Lublin*, Agnon tells the story of Mr Lublin's solution to the dearth of eggs:

> According to the city statutes, the administrators of the city's food supply confiscated the eggs from grocers and took cellars away from their owners to store eggs, and sought, but didn't find, willing hands to prevent them from going bad because most of the specialists had been conscripted and the few who remained in the city were happy to look the other way because the mice had already begun gnawing the eggs. Thousands of eggs had already been thrown into the Alster, the Pleisse and the Parthe rivers. Mr. Lublin told the City Councillors to take out the eggs and give them to the populace to eat. His advice was accepted and they distributed three eggs to each person. The councillors were satisfied with having found a solution that diverted the people's anger away from them and the people were satisfied because while Berlin sees an egg only once in three weeks, in Leipzig every person eats three eggs a week. (150–51)

The narrator describes Leipzig's workers encountering each other "with their tired legs, their exhausted limbs, their threadbare clothes, their patched shoes, their pain" (155). His comment about "the people's anger" is more than an aside. Deteriorating home front conditions began to ignite frustration and anger, which occasionally turned violent.[55] Street protests took place not only against the lack of food, but against black marketers' hoarding of it. The food riots of 1916 represented the most serious public disorder in Leipzig. Almost invariably they would break out after women in a queue complained that the shop owner

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was holding back goods for sale to put them on the black market.[56] The narrator observes: "Because of the war all the good merchandise has disappeared. The war has swallowed up all of it. Black marketers have hidden what was left of it…" (157). He asks, "Where does she [a greengrocer] obtain her excellent products when hoarders and black marketeers proliferate…?" (117).

The unfair trading, rather than the shortages themselves, sparked the disturbances.[57] The government announced a cut in the bread ration in April 1917. Major strikes erupted in several cities, most notably Berlin and Leipzig.[58] *Mr Lublin* is peopled with petty food vendors, black marketers, housewives who return from the market and stores empty-handed, peddlers who eke out a living selling vegetables, and cooking pots that are so empty they do not require cleaning.

In the absence of food and everyday necessities, substitutes began to flood the market. Agnon's narrator informs us that the visitors to the Leipzig fair sit in the café at the main train station and in other restaurants and cafés, drinking coffee that is not coffee, eating food that is food in name only. According to Laurence Moyer, "Every facet of life, large and small, became one gigantic ersatz experience."[59] The narrator in *Mr Lublin* describes shop windows filled with *Ersatzprodukten* (substitute products), merely images of the real thing, "not even imitations of the counterfeits" (229). Ersatz products "were not infrequently substitutes for substitutes."[60]

While the narrator generally dines well and avoids the severe hunger that afflicted Leipzig's citizens, the surrounding shortages affected him to the extent that one of the main focuses of the novel is food. Almost every character, including the conductor Nikisch, is associated somehow with food. From the wealthy Lublins and their elegant table to poorer characters who earn their living by purveying food, and those who suffer near-starvation, food and eating are central themes in the novel, to the extent of debating the correct fodder to offer an elephant. The reader may assume that food was uppermost in the narrator's mind even though he himself did not go hungry. On the contrary, he remembers eating pastries, drinking good wine, and dining in a fine restaurant (179–80). Yet the novel begins with the narrator's statement, which he repeats throughout the text, that he was on his way to the market to buy food for the Sabbath. He does not reach the market or buy the food. Sitting in Mr Lublin's store in the present moment, he repeatedly reiterates that he has failed to buy his supplies for the Sabbath meals, he has no food or drink. He is as hungry as the rest of the wartime populace.

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The War at Sea

The mechanics of the war were not lost on Agnon. The narrator refers in general terms to weapons of war, "all kinds of weapons able to kill from near and far, destroying many men at once" (54), but mentions only one explicitly: the German U-Boat.

> Outside rages the most vicious war of all previous wars because earlier wars stopped at nightfall but this one does not stop day or night, it kills both on and off the battlefield, in the skies above and the seas below. All the instruments of war can be found in the Bible, apart from the submarine that makes its war under the sea … But in our time these submarines that make war under the seas are unimaginable and therefore the end of the world has come and with it the End of Days. (75)

Despite ongoing controversy, the German military command, believing that a victory against Britain would force it out of the war, decided to use submarines for an all-out offensive against the British Empire. Because the British blockade had been the source of so much suffering and deprivation on the German home front, the idea of submarine warfare became popular with the public.[61] Discussion was so widespread—leading to rallies and school projects, posters, brochures, and popular literature—that Agnon could scarcely have avoided it. The U-boat campaign destroyed not only passenger ships, the most tragic being the *Lusitania* as early as 1915, but also tons of merchant shipping, and eventually brought the USA into the war.[62] In due course, the Germans apologized for the sinking of the *Lusitania* but not before one of the newspapers, the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, hailed it a "success of moral significance."[63]

Women

In *Mr Lublin*, women are not spared. The narrator, who tells us that he is twenty-seven years old, mentions more than once, with a certain disapproval, that women have taken over the essential work during wartime while their men are serving, and "when they take up the men's work they assume an angry expression, a mistake they make because they think that an angry face is a sign of manliness" (135). According to the narrator, "We ride a trolley car—a woman is driving it. We travel in a train driven by a woman. If the war does not end soon there will not be a man left in the country" (151). After the outbreak of the war in Germany, women who had not previously gone out to work were obliged to join the workforce once their

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breadwinners were on the battlefield. At the start, the women's role was supportive, keeping the home fires burning, taking care of their children. Maintaining the home front was still conceived as a woman's task.[64] Before the war, women were expected to be homemakers and find a husband to support them. Later, however, women became indispensable to the war effort and to the war economy, although in many cases they earned less than the men for the same work.[65] Women joined the labor market to an unprecedented extent. By the end of the conflict, over one-third of the industrial workforce was female. The case of Leipzig illustrates the "feminization" of the home population, where 60 percent of the population in 1917 were women.[66] All this reinforces the argument that the First World War bolstered women's emancipation in Germany, as it had in other countries, but the question remains whether the war brought long-term improvement to the status of women.[67]

Even middle-class women found that the war had created opportunities they had never had, mainly as health workers, secretaries, and in other clerical positions. Wealthy upper-class women, like the fictional Mrs Lublin, created women's and soldiers' clubs to help both the disadvantaged and the heroic. All these activities increased the anxiety about women's so-called "invasion of the workplace,"[68] which Agnon's narrator shares.

Yet despite his apparent misogyny, the narrator often commends the work women do: in the novel, almost without exception, lower-class women, both Jewish and gentile, are the breadwinners, often purveyors of foods. One of the anecdotes in the book concerns an enterprising young woman who takes over her husband's business raising chickens while he is at war. A canny greengrocer grows and sells her vegetables to the wealthy housewives. On a different social level, Mrs Lublin, an occasional playwright, has founded a soldiers' club, her daughter works in a military hospital, a young Orthodox woman keeps her father's company books, Mrs Salzmann runs a café, Lotte Lemke, the narrator's young acquaintance, is an athletics star, and Grete Hinnings is renowned for her patriotic songs that keep the civilians' spirits up. While women populate the novel in a variety of functions, the eroticism that is a feature of *To This Day* is absent. However, the narrator tells many stories of romantic love, including that of Mr Lublin's elevation from extreme poverty to financial success, thereby winning the hand of the daughter of a prominent Leipzig Jewish family.

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Agnon's Return to the First World War in the 1950s and 1960s

Agnon's two-month visit to Leipzig in 1930 to supervise the printing of his collected works in Hebrew undoubtedly brought the First World War to mind. Yet it took a further two decades for him to commit his impressions to paper. The reason for his having written *To This Day* and *In Mr Lublin's Store* so long after the events they describe has never been clarified. It may be connected to the loss of his library in a fire at his home in Bad Homburg in 1924, which occasioned his return to Palestine. Agnon was too much the ironist to have interpreted the fire as divine punishment for his years in the diaspora, yet after settling in Jerusalem he did not go abroad again, except to visit Sweden for medical attention in 1951 and then again on winning the Nobel Prize in 1966.

His only significant response to Germany during the Great War occurred in his work only after the Second World War. It could be, therefore, that by focusing on the First World War Agnon was, in hindsight, foretelling the second, implying that the moral and political chaos sparked by the Great War led to Nazism. In *To This Day*, the narrator's Leipzig friend, Dr Mittel, comments, "One war leads to another."[69] According to Mittel, there is no escape from history. Hillel Weiss similarly attributes to Agnon his own view of the Second World War and the Holocaust as the continuation of the Great War.[70] By 1960, the Holocaust had rarely appeared overtly in Agnon's writing, although he had been deeply preoccupied with it since the 1940s. In his autobiographical "confession"[71] "*Ha-siman*" (The Sign), which appeared first in 1944, expanded in the 1950s, and published in 1962, shortly after the Eichmann trial in 1961, Agnon portrays, with vivid grief, the destruction of the Galician communities, including Buczacz, in the Holocaust.

In his war novels, Agnon perhaps tried to comprehend the historical continuity, the etiology of genocide in Germany in the closing of a historical era. In *Mr Lublin*, the narrator encounters a city official called Dr Paul Bötticher who enables him to remain in Leipzig when residence for foreigners was restricted. This fictional Paul Bötticher is the namesake of a real Orientalist and German nationalist, Paul de Lagarde (1827–91), born Paul Bötticher, one of the leading advocates of what was later to become National Socialism. He was a so-called "prophet" of a group who espoused racial purity, hatred of foreign nations, nationalism, antisemitism, and pan-Germanism.[72] In the novel, Dr Bötticher has fulfilled the narrator's profound wish to remain in Leipzig by placing his seal of approval on the official document. The

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narrator is overjoyed and expresses his gratitude to Bötticher at many junctures throughout the novel, giving the reader the impression that Bötticher is a fair-minded person. Yet underneath the cover, the prim outer clothing, of the implicitly benign Dr Bötticher lurks de Lagarde, one of the early architects of the deadly system that brought an end to the dream of the narrator and others like him of sharing their fate with Germany and its people. Agnon, writing in the 1960s, seems to reprimand the German Jews for their reliance on the metaphorical Böttichers into whose trap they willingly fell and whose sons "rushed" into battle in the well-meaning defense of Bötticher's fatherland.

Agnon says little overtly about antisemitism in the novel, apart from a few taunts about Jew-haters in general, such as those learned Germans, for example, "steeped in the Scriptures and the Holy Tongue who write evil and bitter things about us" (85). On the contrary, one of the characters in *Mr Lublin* says, in relation to the trial of Mendel Beilis in 1913, "Given dark times of slander and benighted nations, our own time and the countries in which we live, which regard the Jews as citizens, are exemplary and even if there is a country or a state that has bad laws that distinguish between the Jews and the local population, they have no fear of such contemptible lies" (112). Yet throughout the text there are small incidents that offer implicit confirmation that antisemitism "was never far below the surface in Wilhelmine Germany."[73] In one example, a lawyer refuses to act for Jews, and in another, the narrator encounters a wealthy arms manufacturer, a Mr. von Herr, while on holiday at a spa. The two men begin a pleasant conversation until von Herr says, "'I'm sick and tired of Katzenau because of the Jews one runs into on every sidewalk.' I said to him calmly, 'You surprise me, Mr. von Herr, you're sick and tired of the Jews and yet you come to visit one.' Mr. von Herr said to me, 'But you are not like the other Jews'" (10). The *Judenzählung*, the "Jewish census" of 1916, shocked the Jewish community. In the face of all the joyous fervor and patriotism, young Jewish men joining up in their thousands and serving with distinction, the *Judenzählung* emerged from unfounded and untrue accusations that Jews were shirking frontline military service and remaining safely in support roles behind the lines. In addition to this blow to German Jewish self-esteem, postwar social and political factors entrenched antisemitism throughout the country. This is perhaps Agnon's point in his strong emphasis on the war in both novels: that this war, with its consolidation of already existing antisemitism, was the first stage in bringing Jewish life in Europe to an end. He did not, however, mention the Jewish census. By the time of writing in the 1960s, he would certainly have heard about it. It had been openly debated from 1916 onwards.

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A totally different perspective on Agnon's late contending with the war is proposed by Yaakov Ariel, who suggests that the novel's context of Leipzig and the Great War points to Agnon's idea of a choice between Jewish tradition and modernity, rigid Orthodoxy or assimilated Jews espousing German art and culture. These, Ariel argues, are the realities of 1960s Israel no less than in Leipzig of the early twentieth century, and although *Mr Lublin* unfolds at that time and place, it represents Agnon's opinions at the time of writing.[74] A third possibility is offered by Agnon's biographer Dan Laor, who suggests that Agnon might have been affected by the death of his mentor and patron, Zalman Schocken: "The closeness of events, between his beginning to write *Mr Lublin*—the first chapters were published in 1964—and Schocken's death in 1959 raise the possibility that this novel, in which the narrator presents himself as Mr Lublin's protégé, is, among other things, a tribute to the character of that same successful German Jewish businessman."[75]

Conclusion

The war brought about a change in the self-perception of the Germans, a new image that excluded the Jews. Postwar Germany was the new order from which, according to *Mr Lublin*, the Jews were to be displaced. Despite his compassion for wounded soldiers and prisoners of war, the narrator in *To This Day* contemptuously refers to the brain-injured German soldier as a "golem," a man of clay. In the novel's context, this man is less a traumatized soldier than a metaphor, a blank tablet upon which anything, even Germany's future, could be written. His homecoming in the novel is unfortunate for the narrator. The injured soldier is welcomed home by his German family as if he were a prince, while the narrator, who had been occupying his room as a much-loved lodger, is relegated to a bathtub, the Jew evicted.[76]

On the other hand, wartime in Germany had unforeseen positive consequences within the German Jewish community itself. While the desired "community of the trenches"[77] did not materialize, the home front strengthened the ties of even the acculturated German Jews like Mr Lublin with the East European immigrant Jewish community. The narrator and Mr Lublin have little in common other than their origin in Galicia, but despite Mr Lublin's aversion to the hometown they share, he pursues his friendship with the narrator. Rather than rejecting the *Ostjuden*, German Jews discovered solidarity with East European Jewry during the war.[78] Their fading hopes of German Jewish accommodation led to their growing conviction that authentic Judaism was to be

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found only in the East.[79] This, in part, accounted for Agnon's popularity within the cultured Jewish community in Berlin.

Agnon's *Mr Lublin* provides a kind of "filling" for the historical facts, its fictionality approaching "a higher order of truth."[80] The novel, in addition, is Agnon's commemoration of the East and Central European Jews, a resurrection of the communities as he remembered them. In this sense, his war novels and stories are monuments to these Jews and the places in which they lived before and during the two world wars. In the surreal final chapter of *Mr Lublin*, the narrator is visited by a ghost, the spirit of an old friend and fellow townsman whose displacement from the Galician town of their birth is a consequence of the wartime persecution of the East European Jews. This silent, mournful figure fades away before the narrator's eyes. It is Agnon's last word on the Great War in *In Mr Lublin's Store.*

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Notes

1. See Beverly Southgate, *History Meets Fiction* (London, 2009), 197.
2. For a discussion of postmodernist historians, see Patrick O'Brien, "Book Review: An Engagement with Postmodern Foes, Literary Theorists and Friends on the Borders with History," *History in Focus* 2 (Autumn 2002), Online journal (London Institute of Historical Research), https://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Whatishistory/obrien.html.
3. See Susanna Gierds, *The Relationship between History and Fiction: Why Historical Fiction Captures Our Malleable Identities*, Booklet (Munich, n.d).
4. William VanderWolk, *Rewriting the Past: Memory, History and Narration in the Novels of Patrick Modiano* (Amsterdam, 1997), 103.
5. Ruth Franklin, *A Thousand Darknesses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction* (Oxford, 2011), 13.

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6. See Dan Laor, *Agnon: A Biography* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1998), 103 [Hebrew].
7. Aharon Appelfeld credited Agnon with having taught him how it was possible to "carry the town of your birth with you anywhere and live a full life in it. Your birthplace is not a matter of fixed geography. And you can extend its border outwards or raise them to the skies." See Tamar S. Hess, *Self as Nation: Contemporary Hebrew Autobiography* (Waltham, MA, 2016), 96.
8. *Ad Hena*, originally published in two sections in 1952 and 1953. Translated by Hillel Halkin as *To This Day* (New Milford, CT, 2009).
9. *Baḥanuto shel Mr Lublin.* This work consists of eight chapters. The first four chapters and the last one were published separately in the 1960s and the book came out in its entirety in 1975, five years after Agnon's death in 1970. His daughter edited the unpublished chapters from notes and drafts. Hundreds of pages and notes constituted the manuscript which, for some reason, Agnon did not organize into a coherent whole. It is generally designated a novel because of the elements of fantasy interspersed with autobiographical sections.
10. Page 71; quotations and page numbers are from *In Mr Lublin's Store*, translated by Glenda Abramson (Jerusalem, 2016), hereafter *Mr Lublin.* See also Glenda Abramson, "The Return of the Soldier: Agnon's Novels of the First World War," in *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook 2014*, ed. Dan Diner (Göttingen, 2014), 263.
11. George L. Mosse, *The Jews and the German War Experience* (New York, 1977), 3.
12. See Franklin, *A Thousand Darknesses*, 13.
13. See Laor, *Agnon: A Biography*, 103–21. See also Laor, "'Their New Dreams' II: Where Was Mr Lublin's Store? A Visit to Leipzig in the Footsteps of Haim Be'er," *Oneg Shabbat* (11 July 2014): 2–21 [Hebrew]; Laor, *S. Y. Agnon, New Perspectives* (Tel Aviv, 1995), 98–126 [Hebrew]. The Israeli novelist and scholar Haim Be'er spent some months in Leipzig visiting the sites of Agnon's various dwellings there. I was privileged to have him as my guide during my own visit to these sites.
14. It is not difficult to see Zalman Schocken in the figure of Mr Lublin.
15. For Agnon's comment on an acquaintance of his who sought permission to reside in Leipzig, see *From Myself to Myself*, a series of autobiographical fragments, speeches, essays, and lectures (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1976), 266–67. [Hebrew]
16. See Laor, *Agnon: A Biography*, 108. In the guise of a protagonist called Hemdat, Agnon explains that the effort to avoid conscription derives from nothing more than the fear of having to eat proscribed foods and profane the Sabbath (*From Myself to Myself*, 12).
17. See Todd Presner, "'What a Synoptic and Artificial View Reveals': Extreme History and the Modernism of W. G. Sebald's Realism," *Criticism* 46, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 349.
18. Evelyn Ender, *Architexts of Memory: Literature, Science and Autobiography* (Ann Arbor, 2005), 13.

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19. "An event" (February 1952), *From Myself to Myself*, 265.
20. On the one hand, Agnon denies that his characters represent specific individuals; on the other, he writes in an essay on his narrative probity, "I won't say a word about [the Balfour Declaration] due to my respect for the Jews who made the mistake of considering it to be complete redemption. But I have expressed my opinion of it in one of my short stories." *From Myself to Myself*, 340. One of the clearest examples of Agnon's manipulation of reality appears in his presentation in honor of Martin Buber's eightieth birthday in February 1963. He writes: "In those days the late David Feldman was the head of the Beth Din of the Orthodox community there [in Leipzig]. Every day … we used to sit together and study Talmud." One of the central themes of *Mr Lublin* concerns the nightmarish obstacles, including the war, always hindering the narrator in his attempts to study Talmud with "Rabbi Jonathan," who represents the real Feldman. This learning is never achieved. See *From Myself to Myself*, 265.
21. Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (Oxford, 1991), 93.
22. Ezra Mendelsohn, ed., *Studies in Contemporary Jewry XV. People of the City: Jews and the Urban Challenge* (Oxford, 2000), 86.
23. Robert Allen Willingham II, "Jews in Leipzig," PhD dissertation (University of Texas at Austin, 2005), 19.
24. Ibid.
25. Laor, *Agnon: A Biography*, 110.
26. Tobias Brinkmann, "From Green Borders to Paper Walls: Jewish Migrants from Eastern Europe in Germany before and after the Great War," *History in Focus* 11 (2006), Special Issue on Migrations/Crossing Borders, http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migration/articles/brinkmann.html.
27. See Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers*, 113–14.
28. Agnon, *To This Day*, 112.
29. Holder H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914–1918* (London, 1997), 35.
30. See Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War 1914–1918*, 2nd rev. ed. (Cambridge, 2004), 16.
31. Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge, 2000), 234.
32. Ibid., 235.
33. Death notices in German newspapers at the beginning of the war differed markedly in tone from those that appeared later. Traditional wartime phrases such as "he gave his life for the fatherland" had almost disappeared by 1917. See David McKibbin, "The Leipzig Working Class and World War 1: A Methodology for Inferring Historical Attitudes from Behavior," *Historical Methods* 23, no. 4 (Fall 1990): 152. In *Mr Lublin*, Agnon is mocking this patriotic mantra. See also David Welch, *Germany and Propaganda in World War 1: Pacifism, Mobilization and Total War* (London, 2000), 2; John Horne, ed., *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War: Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare* (Cambridge, 1997), 5, 21–38.

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34. Antonello Biagini and Giovanna Motta, eds., *The First World War: Analysis and Interpretation*, vol. 2 (Newcastle, 2015), 27.
35. See Tim Grady, *German-Jewish Soldiers of the First World War in History and Memory* (Liverpool, 2011), 27; Abraham G. Duker, *Jews in the First World War: A Brief Historical Sketch* (New York, 1939), 9.
36. German text reprinted in Wolfdieter Bihl, ed., *Deutsche Quellen zur Geschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Darmstadt, 1991), 49.
37. Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914*, 160.
38. Grady, *German-Jewish Soldiers*, 24, 25.
39. Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All: A Portrait of Jews in Germany 1743–1933* (New York, 2002), 294.
40. Agnon, *To This Day*, 30.
41. For Zionism and the First World War in Germany, see Jehuda Reinharz, "Consensus and Conflict between Zionists and Liberals in Germany before World War 1," in *Texts and Responses: Studies Presented to Nahum N. Glatzer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday by His Students* edited by Michael A. Fishbane and Paul R. Mendes-Flohr (Leiden, 1975), 236; Hagit Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe: The Distinctive Past of German Zionism* (Detroit, 1996), 37–38; David Aberbach, *The European Jews, Patriotism and the Liberal State, 1789–1939: A Study of Literature and Social Psychology* (Abingdon, 2013). "In the early days of the war German Zionists felt committed to aid their fatherland, but this only lasted for the duration of the war." Yehuda Reinharz, in Reinharz and Anita Shapira, eds., *Essential Papers on Zionism* (New York, 1996), 281. See also Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers* (Madison, 1982), 142.
42. Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, 128.
43. "I know that people here get stirred up by a military march on Independence Day, I know that women become very emotional about it but it makes absolutely no impression on me." Agnon in *Ma`ariv*, 27 September 1964.
44. Lit. "birthplace." In the Jewish historical context it has accrued greater significance, having come to mean "homeland." The word *moledet* has a strongly Jewish nationalistic connotation, signifying the Land of Israel, interpreted as the birthplace of the Jewish people.
45. Elon, *The Pity of It All*, 304.
46. See Grady, *German-Jewish Soldiers*, 43–44.
47. Agnon does not tell us which branch of the Red Cross he is referring to. All Red Cross organizations in combatant countries were involved with prisoners of war.
48. For treatment of prisoners of war, see Heather Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in Britain, France and Germany 1914–1920* (Cambridge, 2011), 70–120. We do not know the source of Mr Lublin's comment, other than the instruments of German propaganda, newspapers, posters, and films, which were well distributed. See Welch, *Germany and Propaganda in World War 1: Pacifism, Mobilization and Total War.*
49. See also Agnon's little-known story, "Merutsat ha-sus" [The Galloping Horse], in which men and women work in the fields without singing, "perhaps because the war has left women without their husbands and

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the young girls see nothing but old or disabled men, so there's no point in singing." A Bundle of Stories (Jerusalem, 1984), 28–34. [Hebrew]
50. *From Myself to Myself*, 266. In *To This Day*, a grocer in Grimma comments, "There's no food available. The town has barely enough for itself and no-one wants to share it with a stranger, especially if the stranger is a Jew" (42).
51. Sean Dobson, *Authority and Upheaval in Leipzig, 1910–1920: The Story of a Relationship* (New York, 2001), 139.
52. In *To This Day*, Dr Mittel tells the narrator, "Once upon a time doctors told us that saccharin is bad for our health. Now that there's no sugar in Germany they tell us how healthy it is" (146).
53. Agnon, *To This Day*, 39–42.
54. Laurence V. Moyer, *Victory Must Be Ours: Germany in the Great War 1914–1918* (New York, 1995), 160.
55. Ibid., 167.
56. Dobson, *Authority and Upheaval in Leipzig*, 146.
57. Moyer, *Victory Must Be Ours*, 146.
58. Ibid., 167.
59. Ibid., 263–64. See also Herwig, *The First World War*, 288–89.
60. Moyer, *Victory Must Be Ours*, 262.
61. One young schoolboy, evidently echoing the adults, wrote that a submarine was "the Hindenburg of the seas." Moyer, *Victory Must Be Ours*, 186. See also Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, 89–90.
62. Moyer, *Victory Must Be Ours*, 181–87.
63. Martin Gilbert, *The First World War* (London, 1995), 157.
64. Christa Hämmerle, Oswald Überegger, and Birgitta Bader-Zaar, eds., *Gender and the First World War* (Basingstoke, Hampshire/New York, 2014), 1.
65. Dobson, *Authority and Upheaval in Leipzig*, 113.
66. Horne, *State, Society and Mobilization*, 285n22.
67. Hämmerle, Überegger, and Bader-Zaar, *Gender and the First World War*, 1–5.
68. Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, 119.
69. Agnon, *To This Day*, 36.
70. Hillel Weiss, "The Presence of the Holocaust in Agnon's Writings," in *Agnon and Germany*, ed. Hans Juergen Becker and Hillel Weiss (Ramat Gan, 2010), 427–43.
71. Dan Laor, "Did Agnon Write about the Holocaust?" *Yad Vashem Studies* 22 (1992): 43.
72. Francis Ludwig Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism*, 2nd rev. ed. (Berkeley, 1992), 25–26.
73. Grady, *German-Jewish Soldiers*, 32.
74. Yaakov Ariel, "Good Germans, Confused Jews, and the Tragedy of Modernity: S. Y. Agnon Remembers Leipzig," in *Leipziger Beiträge zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur*, vol. 3, edited by Dan Diner (Munich, 2005), 286.
75. Laor, *S. Y. Agnon, New Perspectives*, 99.

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76. Once again, Agnon is tapping into the culture of the time: many golem narratives developed around the First World War. For example, in the preface to his book *Der Prager Golem*, serialized in 1917, published in 1920, Chaim Bloch notes that the wartime world itself is a golem. See Maya Barzilai, *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters* (New York, 2016).
77. See Michael Brenner and Derek Penslar, eds., *In Search of Jewish Community: Zionist Identities in Germany and Austria 1918–1933* (Bloomington, 1998), 32.
78. Ibid.
79. See, for example, ibid., 145; Maya Barzilai, "S. Y. Agnon's German Consecration and the 'Miracle' of Hebrew Letters," *Prooftexts* 33 (2013): 53; Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 184; Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Palo Alto, CA, 2010), 113; Sander Gilman, "The Rediscovery of Eastern Jews," in *Jews and Germans from 1860–1933: The Problematic Symbiosis*, ed. David Bronsen (Heidelberg, 1979), 338–42.
80. Kate McLoughlin, Lara Feigel, and Nancy Martin, "Writing War, Writing Lives," *Textual Practice* 29, no. 7 (2015): 1219.

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