Writing as a Survival Mechanism during War: Agnonâ€™s â€œThe Doctor and His DivorcÃ©eâ€•

Irit Nagar

Prooftexts, Volume 41, Number 2-3, 2025, pp. 189-220 (Article)

Published by Indiana University Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.2979/ptx.00021*

Writing as a Survival Mechanism during War
Agnon's "The Doctor and His Divorcée"

IRIT NAGAR
Ben-Gurion University

This article examines Shmu'el Yosef Agnon's "The Doctor and His Divorcée" through the lens of intertextuality, focusing on its connection to the biblical story of Dinah's rape and its original context in the novel A Guest for the Night. *It argues that the story, while ostensibly a tale of romantic jealousy, serves as a vehicle to address broader themes of war, violence, and the cyclical nature of conflict in Jewish history. It posits that Agnon's use of intertextuality functions as a counterforce to the destructive power of war, preserving and revitalizing traditional texts in the face of cultural and physical devastation. By interweaving biblical, midrashic, and modern narratives, Agnon challenges the notion that Zionism alone can solve the problems of Jewish exile and violence. Instead, the article suggests that the act of writing itself, particularly through intertextual engagement, offers a means of spiritual renewal and cultural preservation. This approach is presented as an alternative to physical power, proposing that the creation of new literary artifacts that engage with traditional texts can break the cycle of violence and provide a path toward meaningful continuity in Jewish culture.*

The voice's circle closes.
The same rule applies to all our games
In the heavens and on earth
That calls to my blood. And covers
My blood[1]

PROOFTEXTS 41, 2025, 189–220.
 • doi: 10.2979/ptx.00021.

These lines conclude Abba Kovner's collection *Ruḥot basar vadam* (*Spirits of Flesh and Blood*), a set of poems that retell the biblical story of Dinah's rape. Forming part of a volume that deals with the region around Shechem, they link numerous historical events that took place there—from Shechem's despoliation of Dinah, through the blessings and curses God set before the Israelites when they entered Canaan, to the Six Day War and Israel's capture of Shechem. The poem hereby creates a metatemporal cycle of violence instigated by Dinah's rape and the murder of the Shechemites by Simeon and Levi. Like the perpetual cycle of violence, the biblical story of Dinah lies at the heart of Shmuʾel Yosef Agnon's "Harofe ugerushato" ("The Doctor and His Divorcée").[2] Analysis of the links between these two stories and others evinces the way in which bloodshed remains a constant factor and feature of human life, even in the Jewish state.

"The Doctor and His Divorcée" revolves around a romantic relationship between an enlightened Jewish doctor, who goes unnamed, and a nurse, Dinah, that unfolds in Vienna in the aftermath of World War I and turns into a dysfunctional and destructive marriage. As the two quickly become close, they decide to marry. While still engaged, however, Dinah tells the doctor that she had "devarim im aḥer" ("things with another").[3] From that moment on, their relationship steadily becomes dominated by the doctor's jealousy, to the point at which they finally agree to split.

After the story was published in *ʿAl kappot hamanʿul* (*At the Handles of the Lock*), which Agnon subtitled *Sippurei ahavim* (*Love Stories*), scholars and readers came to regard it as a romantic tale of male jealousy. In this article, however, I wish to argue that this romantic aspect is a vehicle through which to deal with the subject of war, and that the story's intertextual resonances with the story of Dinah's rape reveal its close engagement with this theme and the role art and writing play in such conflicts.[4] As such, the text serves as a counterforce to hostilities, preserving and refashioning that which conflicts destroy and obliterate. War finds expression in the story not only in its biblical and midrashic echoes but in the original context of the story—that is, as part of the novel *Oreaḥ natah lalun* (*A Guest for the Night*). Depicting the devastated townlet of Szybusz in the aftermath of World War I, and composed and published between 1938 and 1939 during the outbreak and early years of World War II and the Arab-Jewish riots in Mandatory Palestine, the novel

underscores its associations with warfare.[5] Similarly present in the background of "The Doctor and His Divorcée," war adds another level to the romantic relationship between the physician protagonist and his erstwhile beloved. The diverse violent incidents and unending wars, both in Europe and in the Land of Israel, cast doubt on the Zionist solution, as it fails to bring an end to the cyclical nature of warfare, which continues to intensify even after Jews arrive in their homeland—and by their own hands, too. In contrast to the cyclical nature of war and the continuation of bloodshed even after the establishment of a Jewish state, the text emerges as an alternative solution, an opposing force promoting growth and renewal.

War and intertextuality are linked in "The Doctor and His Divorcée" on two different levels. The description of the intimate relationship between the doctor and the nurse contains echoes of the biblical description of the rape of Dinah, and the connection between the two narratives indicates a human tendency tooward envy and destruction. Furthermore, intertextuality itself functions as an opposing force that continuously creates a stable conceptual and ethical foundation. In other words, the connection between the Agnonic story and the biblical story is not only linguistic and thematic but also structural; both can be read as failed love stories, but the context of wider war and the militant atmosphere frame the hero's violent behaviour toward his love as a representation of national warfare.

"The Doctor and His Divorcée" was first composed as an accompanying narrative, one among many within the novel *A Guest for the Night*, relating to a minor character: Kuba Milch.[6] Hillel Barzel describes the role of the accompanying narratives in this novel: "Looking into the past is illustrated and deepened through the accompanying narratives. Each protagonist has his own story, one or more, related to his past . . . These narratives should be viewed as fate-illustrating stories, anchored in extreme situations and laden with terror."[7] In the original manuscript of the novel, Kuba gives a detailed account of his failed marriage to the novel's protagonist, thus the story fits into the entire novel. When the novel was published in September 1939, however, this story was left out. Two years later, Agnon included it as an independent tale in an anthology entitled *Baḥur* (*Chosen*) and then again in 1941 in *Elu ve'elu* (*These and Those*).[8] It was later included in the 1953 edition of *At the Handles of the Lock*, and it is as part of this volume that it is best known today.

The great interest the story has garnered is due to the love relationship that stands at its heart. I suggest, however, that in its original setting in *A Guest for the Night*, it assumes a different character. In this context, the relationship between the biblical and Agnonic stories subverts the antithesis between exile as a problem and Erets Yisraʾel as the solution; the tale offers a new polarity—namely, war as a destructive force and writing as a form of creativity and renewal. In contrast to the interpretations that see the novel *A Guest for the Night* as negating the diaspora and embracing Zionism as the only remedy to Jewish exilic existence, "The Doctor and His Divorcée" presents a different perspective. This story portrays violence as a universally destructive human drive, a hermetic circle informed by an instinct in which no distinction exists between Jew and gentile, the diaspora and Promised Land. In both the Vienna and Mandatory Palestine tales, jealousy leads to violence that draws more in its wake in a perpetual, ineluctable cycle irrespective of the actors, whether Jew or gentile, exilic Jew or Zionist.

The intertextual link between the modern tale and the biblical account of Dinah's rape sharpens the critique of this ineluctible cycle of violence. Dinah's rape occurs right after Jacob and his brothers enter Canaan, beginning a circle that never ends, as the sexual abuse leads to mass murder despite the Israelites' inheritance of the Promised Land. *A Guest for the Night* concludes with the narrator's second immigration attempt, and with Kuba and his new wife preparing to make aliyah. By echoing the story of Dinah's rape, the modern tale places immigration and the Zionist dream in a new light, intimating that a physical homeland does not guarantee an end to violence and murder—that Zionism is not an absolute solution to the destruction of European Jewry.

What alternative to Zionism does "The Doctor and His Divorcée" offer? In the face of the destruction of war, violence, and jealousy, which cause more and more devastation, a space exists to create, write, and preserve traditional texts. The expectation that the national homeland will save Jews from the universal cycle of violence is replaced by faith in the *text*—wherein they can survive, grow, rejuvenate themselves, and thrive peacefully. In other words, the intertextual writing of a story in and of itself produces a counterforce to war and destruction. The tale of the divorced doctor thus highlights the significance of keeping traditional texts alive precisely when news of the Holocaust was arriving from Europe and the threat of Jewish terror was raising its ugly head within the borders of the Promised Land. A

national solution will not stand on its own as long as the treasures of the spirit are not preserved within it, as long as traditional texts do not engage with reality and literature from other times and spaces and, out of this, create anew in a way that builds the world rather than destroys it.

We shall now turn our attention to the essence of Agnonic intertextuality. The study of Agnon's sources from within the corpus of Hebrew literature is a very broad field.[9] The idea of intertextuality was first developed by Julia Kristeva, who defined the text as a locus for a conscious or unconscious encounter between textual passages from diverse periods and places so that their very meeting and the way in which they shed light on one another creates a new literary artifact.[10] Under the influence of Mikhail Bakhtin, the concept reflects the principle that culture in general and literary creativity in particular are the product of a complex system including all the discourses the author has read or heard throughout his or her life. According to Bakhtin, rather than a "closed system presuming nothing beyond" itself, a literary work is dialogical, interacting with and emerging out of earlier texts.[11]

The question of the hierarchy between earlier and later texts lies at the heart of numerous intertextual theories, as in traditional source criticism, wherein the author is regarded as inferior to earlier texts, or the view of Harold Bloom, according to whom strong writers perpetually struggle with others, seeking to prove their superiority.[12] Chana Kronfeld contends that the dichotomy between these two approaches must be bridged by a "critical intertextuality." This approach recognizes the limitations of the text compared to previous canonical texts and a hegemonic textual system that threatens it, but at the same time also recognizes the power of the text to confront and "to contract complex kinship relations with other poetic subjects through an intersubjective, intertextual dialogue."[13]

Kronfeld perceives dialogue to be a central bridging point between old and new, creating a possibility of renewal beyond the hierarchy by challenging rather than replicating power systems.[14] In this sense, critical intertextuality gives us access to the textual complexity of Agnon's works. While he draws on traditional texts, the encounter between them interrogates them, shedding new light on them and sometimes even changing their meaning. As Kristeva notes, however, the hierarchy is not completely eliminated, as traditional texts gain their force precisely from their subversion of and association with other, later ones. The very undermining of textual

authority and new interaction with it are what brings it center stage, giving it new life and renewing its relevance and authority.[15]

Regarding Agnon's oeuvre as part of the long history of Jewish writing, I perceive it as exemplifying the belief that destruction and crises serve as textual change agents. Various scholars have outlined the way in which, during times of real and present danger to the Jewish Torah, scholars have reluctantly conceded that the Oral Law should be written down.[16] For example, Daniel Boyarin observes that after the destruction of the Temple and its aftermath, the rabbinic sages employed intertextuality to preserve texts that otherwise would have been lost.[17] It is in this manner that I propose to view the intertextuality in the story "The Doctor and His Divorcée." In a world of destruction and chaos between the world wars, Agnon's extensive use of textual fragments from various contexts and periods transforms his narrative into a space where diverse texts meet and challenge one another, thereby also preserving each other. The act of writing the story is thus itself a response to war and devastation, one that enables the preservation of texts in a manner that does not merely replicate them but brings them to life anew.

My approach to Hebrew literature here seeks to "highlight precisely the complex and fascinating links between different periods and genres."[18] As Haim Weiss and Moria Dayan Codish remark, the view that modern Hebrew literature is an outgrowth of the revolutionary spirit of the Enlightenment has prompted the emergence of distinct disciplines within the field, each with its own interpretive methods and tools. In the following, therefore, I examine—linguistically, thematically, and structurally—the contexts and connections between the biblical account of Dinah's rape and Agnon's tale. These links evince a circularity and repetitiveness that undercuts the possibility of separating out and compartmentalizing distinct periods.

In one of his statements in the story, when the destructive jealousy is already taking place and is undermining his relationship with his wife, the protagonist deals with this issue clearly: "We are enlightened individuals, modern people, we seek freedom for ourselves and for all humanity, and in point of fact we are worse than the most diehard reactionaries."[19] This comment blurs the boundary between old and new, tradition and modernity, critiquing the way in which early twentieth-century human beings perceived themselves in the wake of the Enlightenment and progress—a revolution that also led to World War I, in which millions died.

The present article thus applies the intertextual method to Agnon's story in order to show that it is an archetype of the human propensity toward war and chaos that deconstructs the view of the modern world as progressive and essentially and developmentally different from the biblical past. The encounter between biblical and modern texts enables us to discuss them critically and elucidate the age-old human proclivity for jealousy, violence, and devastation. It thus locates the actions of the biblical Simeon and Levi upon entering the Land, war-torn twentieth-century Europe, and the violent Jewish response to the 1929 Palestine riots along a single, universal continuum and asks what alternatives exist and how the cycle of bloodshed can be stopped. In the face of human failure, I would argue, stands the text; in opposition to destruction and ruin stands writing and creation.

To delve deeper into the connection between the two texts that form the foundation of this article, we shall now commence with an examination of the biblical text and its broader context. The biblical story of Dinah's rape opens with Dinah going out to "visit the daughters of the land" (Genesis 34:1[20]). Shechem, the son of Hamor, prince of the land, seizes and rapes her, then falls in love with her and seeks her hand in marriage.[21] His request for her from Jacob is immediately linked to license to settle in the land: "You will dwell among us, and the land will be open before you; settle, move about, and acquire holdings in it" (Genesis 34:10). Jacob's sons set one condition—namely, that all the male Shechemites will circumcised, this being the only way in which they can truly integrate into the local culture. Shechem and Hamor agree and circumcise all the men. Three days later, however, Simeon and Levi arrive and slaughter them all, plundering and looting the city. Jacob's reaction to this act is described in a single succinct sentence: "You have brought trouble on me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land . . . my fighters are few in number, so that if they unite against me and attack me, I and my house will be destroyed" (Genesis 34:30). His sons pithily retort: "Should our sister be treated like a whore?" (Genesis 34:31).

At first glance, the episode appears to be a story of violent family relationships, each member choosing his own way of dealing with the trauma the unit experiences. As Haim Hayun observes, however, "it is not an isolated tale. Dinah's rape forms part of the Jacob cycle. It thus cannot be properly interpreted without examination of the broader context and background."[22] When we explore it as part of the patriarch's efforts to establish himself as a local, we note that the previous chapter (Genesis 33)

ends with Jacob stopping in Canaan, close to Shechem, after his charged meeting with Esau. Here Jacob is wary and apprehensive rather than belligerent, sending gifts to his brother ahead of his arrival and seeking every means possible to avoid violence. Born into a sibling rivalry, he was a "mild man, raising livestock" (Genesis 25:27), contrasting with Esau as the "skilful hunter, a man of the outdoors." He nevertheless employs cunning and deceit to defeat his enemies, stealing Esau's birthright and fleeing from Laban. Conflict and strife follow him wherever he goes, including on his return home at night, when he wrestles the angel at the Jabbok until dawn, somehow surviving the encounter. Although accustomed to physical struggle, the midrashic tradition tends to present him as a man of brains rather than brawn.

This conflict between innocence and deception, morality and revenge, structures Genesis 34. As Mishael Masori-Caspi remarks, the plot revolves around two households: Jacob's and Hamor's. While Shechem, Hamor, and their family represent absolute evil at the beginning of the story and relative virtuousness at the end, as they become victims of the treachery committed by Jacob's sons, Jacob and his sons move in the inverse direction, from exploited to perpetrator. In this way, the account highlights the ethical disparity between the two houses.[23]

Dinah's rape forms part of the unit relating to Jacob's arrival in Canaan with his family. I therefore suggest that it should be read in this context. After fleeing from Esau to Haran, Jacob raises a family and earns vast wealth, reconciling with his brother on his return home. The first place in which he settles is on the outskirts of Shechem. Reaching the city "safely" (*shalem*), he is uninterested in conflict or war. When Dinah goes out to "visit the daughters of the land" (Genesis 34:1) and is raped by the local prince, however, he is forced into a stark choice between full assimilation or separatism.

There are numerous and varied possibilities for reading Genesis 34. I propose to offer a literary reading based on a *Leitwort* ("leading word"), which, I argue, reveals the central theme of the chapter. The term *erets* ("land") occurs six times in this chapter, thereby turning a familial story into a story of national integration in a new land. The first occurrence of the word "land" is in Dinah's going out: "And Dinah . . . went out to see the daughters of *the land*" (Genesis 34:1). The final occurrence is in Jacob's words of rebuke to his sons: "You have brought trouble on me, making me odious unto the inhabitants of *the land*" (JPS 1917). Between these two verses, which create a framework for the entire narrative, the *Leitwort* appears four

additional times, all in the context of Shechem and his father: "And Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of *the land*" (Genesis 34:2), "And ye shall dwell with us, and *the land* shall be before you" (JPS 1917), and "These people are our friends; let them settle in the land and move about in it, for the land is large enough for them." (JPS 1917).

The narrative adduces three divergent attitudes toward the question of the land's integration, associated with three different groups of characters: Dinah, Jacob, and Dinah's brothers. Dinah's perspective is reflected in her going out to visit the daughters of the land; she seeks to assimilate. This desire is doomed to failure, however, because as soon as she leaves the house, she is raped. Jacob is passive and pragmatic. He desires to live alongside the locals with as little friction as possible. He thus says nothing throughout the incident; when asked for a response and decision, he is robbed of this right by his sons, who react with disproportional violence to Dinah's rape. The brothers have no interest in compromise but assume that they can settle in the land by force. They thus act unscrupulously, employing any method at their disposal to demonstrate their superiority and achieve their goals.

The author appears to privilege the perspective of Dinah's brothers, giving them the last word in the chapter. When Jacob blesses his sons on his deathbed, however, he singles out Simeon and Levi for criticism:

> Simeon and Levi are a pair;
> their weapons are tools of lawlessness.
> Let not my person be included in their council,
> let not my being be counted in their assembly.
> For when angry they slay a man,
> and when pleased they maim an ox.
> Cursed be their anger so fierce,
> and their wrath so relentless.
> I will divide them in Jacob,
> scatter them in Israel. (Genesis 49:5–7)

The motif of the land in Genesis 34 and the diverse familial positions regarding the issue of becoming part of it are also associated with the symbolism the city of

Shechem bears in the context of the Israelites' entering and settling in Canaan. At Abraham's first stop in the country ("Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the terebinth of Moreh," JPS 1917), God reveals himself to him for the first time. When blessing his sons, Jacob refers to Shechem as his first property: "And now, I assign to you one portion more than to your brothers—the ridge of Shechem which I wrested from the Amorites with my sword and bow" (Genesis 48:22).[24] When the Israelites enter the land under Joshua's leadership, the ceremony of blessing and curse was held on Mounts Gerizim and Ebal. Shechem is the city in which the first Israelite kings are anointed: "All the citizens of Shechem and all Beth-Millo convened, and they proclaimed Abimelech king at the terebinth of the pillar at Shechem" (Judges 9:6). It thus symbolizes the first place in which Abraham's descendants come into contact with the local inhabitants and face the issue of assimilation, and this happens after Abimelech brutally murders his family members, "seventy people, on one stone" (Judges 9:5). The story of Dinah's rape should thus be read as referring to this question of integrating into Canaan, of violence and murder, and the various options open to Jacob and his sons.

The acculturation question also arises in the extended dialogue between Shechem and Hamor and Jacob's sons, the women serving as a key factor in the power games they conduct. Hamor declares: "Intermarry with us: give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves" (Genesis 34:9). Jacob echoes this theme when, breaking his silence in the wake of the violence, he adopts a political rather than a paternal stance: "You have brought trouble on me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land . . . my fighters are few in number, so that if they unite against me and attack me, I and my house will be destroyed" (Genesis 34:30). Although the brothers' final (unmet) response appears to turn the subject back to the personal and familial—"'Should our sister be treated like a whore?'" (Genesis 34:31)—it is unconvincing, considering all the siblings' involvement in the mass slaughter and plunder. The relationship between Shechem and Dinah takes on a directly political hue when placed in the context of the arguments raised by the various actors.[25] This unit is thus plausibly read as representing the time-honoured discourse regarding internecine conflict, which also clearly emerges in Agnon's story of Kuba and Dinah.

As several scholars have observed, numerous intertextual ties are apparent between "The Doctor and His Divorcée" and the biblical account of Dinah's rape. Agnon's decision to call only Dinah by name, leaving the other characters in the story nameless, underscores her character and the close correspondences between this tale and the biblical narrative. Her profession as a nurse, which shares the same word in Hebrew as sister (*aḥot*) likewise recalls the brothers' retort: *Hakhezonah yeʿaseh et aḥoteinu*, "Should our sister be treated like a whore?" (Genesis 34:31). Drawing attention to the fact that, while the biblical story represents Dinah as a sacrifice, the midrashic tradition treats her as a whore, Nehama Aschkenasy suggests that the Agnonic protagonist shifts between these two figures, and that Dinah assumes aspects of both.[26]

Nitza Ben-Dov distinguishes between the male and female characters in the two stories. While the male characters do not change but remain with the same tendencies toward force and war, a change can be seen in the female characters in both stories: the biblical Dinah is passive, brutally rescued by others, while the Agnonic Dinah stands up and exits on her own initiative from her unhealthy marriage to her physician husband. The blending of biblical and modern highlights the gap between the two periods and the "problematics of the modern man . . . who combines within himself all the mysterious, jealous, and sacrificial figures of the biblical story."[27] The affinities between the two tales challenge modernity's claim of enlightenment and progress, suggesting that men and women are still violent and jealous.[28]

Like Ben-Dov, Haim Be'er refers to the story "The Doctor and His Divorcée" as part of Agnon's German-story oeuvre based on the tension between the traditional text and the modern world described in these stories. Be'erʾs claim is that, despite its secular nature, and even though it might be expected that the intertextual tool would be less dominant in these stories, "The Doctor and His Divorcée" engages in close dialogue with the Jewish bookshelf no less intensely than the ancient sources in his other works.[29] These two claims regarding the close connection between the modern story and the biblical story complement each other in my opinion. The modern Agnonic story and the biblical story both deal with jealousy and aggression, both involve marriages that lead to destruction, and war forms the literary background for both. The connection between Agnon's German stories and traditional Jewish texts is no weaker than in Agnon's other stories,

and perhaps even stronger, because it is precisely in these war stories that a deep anxiety arises for the loss of the traditional texts. Although the propensity toward conflict and self-destruction is deeply engrained in the human psyche, an antidote exists—namely, the text. In a war-torn environment in which texts and books are sidelined by the fight for survival and victory, modern warfare creates a deep anxiety that they will disappear as symbols of culture and civilization. In this context, it is Agnon's German stories that are tied most tightly to the Jewish bookshelf. This angst is twofold, relating to the physical loss of books and, even more disturbingly, their content, given that no one may be left to take an interest in or read them.[30] In the face of the destructiveness of war and jealousy, writing emerges as a constructive counterforce.

As previously mentioned, "The Doctor and His Divorcée" deals with the failed marriage of a doctor and nurse in Vienna in the aftermath of World War I. The wife is explicitly named "Dinah." Although the husband is nameless in the standalone story, in *A Guest for the Night* (published earlier in 1938) he is given the name "Kuba," a nickname for "Jacob." Rather quickly, they decide to marry. While still engaged, however, Dinah informs Kuba that she had a previous romantic relationship. From that moment on, their relationship deteriorates, as Kuba becomes more and more obsessively jealous. Returning it to its original place within *A Guest for the Night* discloses the way in which the love story mirrors the human condition in a world plagued by conflict.

Set in interbellum Szybusz, the plot of *A Guest for the Night* depicts the townlet in ruins, the Jewish survivors scattered both geographically and psychologically, the inhabitants having lost lost limbs and faith in God. From an incidental tale told as part of the larger novel, Agnon transformed it into an independent story with a postwar narrative component, published as part of *At the Handles of the Lock*.[31] Comparing the two versions, Barzel demonstrates how the short story retains the novel's central themes—war and its effect on society—as exemplified in the devastation of the Jewish townlet. Like the central tale, which deals with the narrator's visit to his hometown after the war, so, too, the numerous ancillary stories depict the lives of various figures after the Great War, reflecting the destruction people wrought upon themselves during it: "The narrator is concerned with extraordinary events brought about by war—or chance"[32]

The ancillary story that deals with Kuba and his first marriage to Dinah demonstrates how war robs individuals of their freedom, as well as the physical and mental suffering mass war inflicts on humanity.[33] According to Barzel, the violence between the pair thus symbolizes the analogous violence between nations, as their relationship ends up in loss of control, jealousy, and hatred that drive them to desperate acts.[34]

Like "The Doctor and His Divorcée," additional stories and sentences were deleted from the published version of the novel, *A Guest for the Night*, such as *Maʿaseh hamufti* (*The Mufti's Tale*), as well as sentences dealing with Arab violence in Mandatory Palestine.[35] These two sections and several other sentences that were omitted from the manuscript of the novel upon its publication deal with violence and murder between people for a national reason, both in the Land of Israel and in exile. I suggest that these erasures change the central tension on which the entire story is built; the way in which *A Guest for the Night* was published emphasizes the gap between Promised Land and exile, between the place that represents longing for a lost world and the contemporary real world. The original manuscript that contains the deleted sections reflects the destructive tendencies of people everywhere, including war and jealousy. Palestine is no different from the diaspora; the people who live there are the same people who live around the world and fight each other in an endless cycle. It seems that the story was originally written as part of the description of the catastrophe that humans create for themselves in endless wars, everywhere and in every age.

While *A Guest for the Night* depicts a shattered townlet and the calamitous consequences of war, it also describes the old study hall that, although still standing, is locked and empty of books. Entrusted with looking after it, the protagonist begins seeking out people to re-create a community and a religious life. Here the tension is between the destruction of war and the constructive potential of the study hall as emblematic of literature and culture. I submit that the key question *A Guest for the Night* addresses in this regard is how to protect the lost world and enable it to rise again and create a new life within it through text.[36] Numerous scholars have explored this theme in the novel, examining whether the lost world can be recovered and, if so, how. Is Zionism the appropriate solution, or do Jews now face a new world that bears no resemblance to the lost culture of European Jewry?

The earliest critics of *A Guest for the Night* remarked upon how the novel serves as a form of soul searching regarding past and present Jewish reality in the face of an uncertain future and, in particular, the place of the text within this reality.[37] The protagonist's characterization as a guest highlights his status as an observer and outsider, both with respect to his visit of the diaspora townlet and his return to Palestine. This perspective governs his view of Zionism as the remedy for exile. As Shmuel Katz argues, Agnon presents the latter as the optimal alternative: "Eretz Israel is the only solution in the wake of the spiritual and physical bankruptcy of diaspora Jewry."[38] Shimon Halkin distinguishes between the protagonist's relentless championing of aliyah and manual labor to the townlet's residents and the unconscious longing for the intangible and ethereal—the yearning for the lost homeland. He suggests that Palestine is merely a possible rather than a decisive solution.[39] According to Baruch Kurzweil, World War I was not only a Jewish but also a human watershed, irreparably distorting intra- and interpersonal relationships.[40]

Like other stories by Agnon, "The Doctor and His Divorcée" is informed by a deep anxiety over whether Jewish tradition could stand the test of regrowth and revival. The ruined study hall of Szybusz, the key to which is lost to the protagonist, represents the destruction of Eastern European Jewry, with Zionism and the reconstructive activity of the Jewish state as affording the opportunity for renewed building and flourishing. In the white spaces, however, hovers the question of whether the physical reestablishment of the Jewish homeland will necessarily allow for the revitalization of Jewish tradition. The Szybusz study hall, which the narrator manages to open, air out, and heat up again, nevertheless remains empty, unable to serve its purpose because those who attend it use it only as a way of meeting their corporal needs: warmth, food, and sleeping accommodations. Will Erets Yisraʾel ultimately suffer the same fate, the homeland thus becoming a bare edifice devoid of any substance or spiritual meaning?[41]

At the end of *A Guest for the Night*, the protagonist receives the news that Kuba has married Arella, R. Shlomo's daughter, and that the couple are preparing to make aliyah. This scene of Kuba's remarriage and rebirth—in which the same jealous doctor from "The Doctor and His Divorcée" turns his life around—gives the story a happy ending and opens up the possibility of repair (*tiqqun*). Ultimately, however,

the narrator returns to the strife and dissension that erupt among R. Shlomo's circle, even after they immigrate to Erets Yisraʾel:

> From this the talk turned to the old men in the *Kvutza*, who kept quarrelling with each other about every little thing, for each believed that the Torah had been given in his town alone, and every custom that he had not seen in his town did not seem to him to be a Jewish custom at all.[42]

Erets Yisraʾel is thus populated by the same fractious people as the diaspora. In his words, R. Shlomo suggests that aliyah and the physical rebuilding of the Jewish homeland are not the solution to exile.

Humans are presented in both stories as quarrelsome and argumentative people who find and emphasize differences and divisions. In contrast, the texts themselves, despite their great differences, manage to meet each other within the story in order to challenge, confront, and shed light on each other. As we shall see below, "The Doctor and His Divorcée" draws on diverse texts, and the very encounter between them sheds light on each, allowing them individually to assume a presence and significance. The challenge of preserving tradition during times of destruction is thus not fully met by the Zionist enterprise. Even in offering a physical solution, Jews continue to engage in controversy, hatred, and violence in the State of Israel. Written when the whole world was engulfed in the flames of war, the story as originally written thus presents *itself* as the remedy. Despite war and destruction, the writing of tales in general and intertextuality in particular serve as sustaining and constructive forces.

The novel's attitude to the act of writing and to literary texts is complex and ambivalent. *A Guest for the Night* regards legends and stories as alternative forms of solace, as Kurzweil describes: "The legend opens up the treasures of its consolations just as cruel reality closes the scroll on Szybusz, on the past."[43] The legend creates an alternative reality, so the text comforts and compensates for the destruction and devastation of war. In contrast, modern literature is depicted in that story as helpless by describing the war-torn reality it brings into the world. According to Gershon Shaked, "the artist in a declining society is a rhymester who engraves his words on

the tombstones of the dead."[44] The disparity between art and reality in the book leaves the former worthless; because the narrator records the latter without changing or activating it, its activity becomes senseless. In her commentary on the novel, Michal Arbell links the destruction and loss of the war with creativity and writing: "The work is born out of the attachment of longing and anchoring to a lost perfection and seeks to stand as a substitute for that perfection, to be a gravestone for it and to mark the space left with its disappearance."[45] Literature emerges from the horror and responds to it; in a certain sense it is the destruction that enables and produces creativity.

In a later article, Shaked points out another reference to literature and writing in *A Guest for the Night*. According to him, real literature is defined in that novel as literature that grows out of deepened connection to traditional literature:

> After all, a writer in his [Agnon's] eyes, is someone who returns and immerses himself in traditional literature, and manages to add another shelf to the existing bookcase. A person who invents a new work by virtue of his imagination or inventiveness is not considered a writer in his eyes. From the beginning, a "modern" writer is at a disadvantage compared to the traditional writer.[46]

This definition of real literature establishes intertextuality as an essential element of Agnon's literary fiction. Intertextuality serves as a bridge between tradition and modernity, between the world that has been destroyed and the writing about it. Integrating the various arguments of Shaked and Arbell, we may say that the novel *A Guest for the Night*, and within it the story "The Doctor and His Divorcée," reveals that the very writing of a text or creation of a complex literary artifact out of others serves as a counterforce to war and devastation. In my view, literary activity is not merely a response to chaos, an attempt to replace what has been lost (à la Arbell) but also directly affects reality, as it constructs and designs—through intertextuality—a new layer upon the existing one comprised of old texts that, meeting and joining, illuminate and challenge one another and thereby reestablish their relevance. In this framework, the fusion of the modern with the biblical story both produces a contemporary tale and makes the biblical one relevant again.

The fact that "The Doctor and His Divorcée" was originally a part of the novel *A Guest for the Night* highlights its main themes: the connection between destruction and creation and the tension between tradition and modernity. Kuba is not a marginal character, and his preparation, with his new wife, to immigrate to Israel appears at the end of the novel, where it allows an optimistic point of view about the possibility of building a new and healthy home, in private and in national life. However, the connection between Kuba's personal story and the biblical story about Jacob, the father of the nation, and his entry into Canaan, undermines the certainty of this possibility because violence and destruction also accompany the patriarch's story in the Promised Land. The restoration of this short story to its original context within the novel does not cancel out the love story; rather, it adds another layer of meaning.

Let us now examine one of the passages in "The Doctor and His Divorcée" in which war erupts through the cracks of the love story and the power of intertextuality stands against the horrors of combat. In a scene in the first part of the tale, Agnon depicts the doctor in the ward in which Dinah works:

> Even our professor, accustomed as he was to concern himself less with the suffering of the sick than with the orderliness of their beds, made no fuss if he found her sitting on a patient's bed. This old man, the master of so many disciples and the discoverer of cures for several diseases, died in a concentration camp where a Nazi trooper tormented him daily by forcing him to go through exercises. One day the trooper ordered him to lie flat on his belly with arms and legs outstretched, and as soon as he was down, he was commanded to get up. As he was not quick about it, the trooper trampled him with his cleated boots until the old man's thumbnails were mutilated. He contracted blood poisoning and died.[47]

This passage originally appeared only in the stand-alone version published in the periodical *Baḥur* (1940), not in the version of the story included in the manuscript of *A Guest for the Night*. Throughout the *Baḥur* version of the story, the professor's unethical behavior is embodied in his choice of order and cleanliness over patient care, and this framework ironically highlights its shockingly cruel ending as he is

utterly humiliated by his German captors in a thoroughly untidy manner. This passage itself violates the aesthetics of the literary text and thus bursts out of the love story as a gruesome description of unrestrained cruelty. The contrast between the aesthetics of the literary work and the brutality of war intensifies in light of the fact that both are the result of human action. This contrast is also emphasized in this literary passage by allusions to two previous texts that create a discourse regarding the role creativity and art play during wartime. The singular phrase *niqtsetsu ʿelyonei yadav* ("his fingers cut off") recalls a midrash about the Levites exiled to Babylon after the destruction of the First Temple:

> "On its ruins we hung our harps," for there we asked of our captors words of song. Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Why are you sitting and crying?" They prepared themselves until we eat and drink. "I ask that you stand and play before me and before this foreign worship with your harps, as you would play before your God." They looked at each other and said, "It is not enough that we destroyed his Temple, but now we are about to play before this idol and this foreign worship" . . . . All the people stood up and took matters into their own hands, putting their fingers in their mouths and crushing them. They sang for us the Song of Zion. We will not sing, but we will say how we will sing. They pointed to their fingers and said, "We were bound and cut off our fingers." This is what is meant by the verse in Ezra 8:15, "I assembled them by the river that flows towards Ahava." I did not find any Levites there. They were there, but they could not play the harps (Midrash Tehillim 137:1).

According to this tradition, the Levites refused to play the temple instruments for Nebuchadnezzar and gnawed off their fingers in order to avoid being forced to do so. This decision comes back to bite *them*, however, because when they return with Ezra they are no longer halakhically fit to serve in the Temple due to their physical flaw. The loss of their creative ability during the exile was thus final and absolute rather than temporary and conditional, and it resulted from their own actions. Whether the inlay of these words from the midrash is conscious or not, it does not allow the story to be read as purely romantic. The midrash, which describes

the human responsibility to preserve the creative ability even in times of war and crisis, charges the story dealing with Vienna between the world wars with weighty questions.

The motif of cutting off one's fingers recalls a well-known legend about R. Amnon of Mainz's death, which runs like a thread through *A Guest for the Night* (the original context of "The Doctor and His Divorcée").[48] When commanded to convert to Christianity, R. Amnon asks for three days to come to a decision. Brought before the bishop, he requests that his tongue be cut out for having even allowed for the possibility that he might become an apostate. The bishop instead amputates his feet and fingers and salts the wounds to add insult to injury. Some days later, on Rosh Hashanah, R. Amnon went to synagogue, recited the *Unetaneh toqef piyyut*, and expired.[49]

Over time this account has become a form of Jewish martyrological hagiography exemplifying the willingness to die rather than convert.[50] Agnon interweaves the character of R. Amnon through his various stories, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly. In the novel *A Guest for the Night*, R. Amnon's name is explicitly mentioned once, when the infant Raphael, who has mystical vision, defines himself as the incarnation of this character. The explicit mention of R. Amnon's story sheds light on the entire story and allows for an in-depth discussion of the traditional model of *Qiddush Hashem* and the possibility of applying it to the reality of a world of swords between two world wars. As Arbell describes, the motif of the amputation appears repeatedly throughout the story and echoes the legend about R. Amnon.[51] Everywhere he goes, the protagonist encounters figures with amputated limbs: hands, feet, nose, ears. But this motif is not only expressed in amputated limbs: "Children are also cut off from their parents, fathers are cut off from their sons, and honor, livelihood, stability and community are also cut off, not to mention religion and tradition."[52] Perhaps the word of Daniel Bach in his debate with his father best reflects the connection between the two stories and the theological question that arises from them distinctly:

> "A man can bind himself on the altar and give up his life for the glory of God," cried Daniel. "With his dying breath he can pronounce the confessions of faith, 'Hear, O, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord

> is One,' and prolong the final 'One,' like the great Rabbi Akiba in his torment, until his soul departs. But to be pound every day, every hour, every moment, on seven altars, to have one limb consumed today and another tomorrow—that is something not every man can stand . . . and when my flesh rots and my blood stinks, my lips cannot utter the praises of the Almighty."[53]

Daniel Bach's words allude to R. Amnon's story through the close connection between creativity and destruction on the brink of extinction. R. Amnon's ability to stand when his limbs were amputated and his blood was flowing, as well as to recite poetry, was seen throughout the generations as an example of the sanctification of God, but for Daniel Bach it is a model that is unattainable.

As Arbell observes, the various echoes of R. Amnon's story in *A Guest for the Night* make his character an example of the romantic notion of the creative act. This view sees the act of creation as comprised of three elements: the production of a something that is greater than life, creation as resembling the divine act, and the price to be paid for its completion.[54] Bodiless and limbless, what remains of R. Amnon is mere spirit and text. He thus epitomizes the abject state of European Jewry, helpless against those seeking to destroy it. The antithesis of this martyrological model is the Zionist project, which promotes the building of a national homeland that can protect the Jewish people. Through the echo of R. Amnon and the ethos of martyrdom, the novel thus addresses the issue of power: "The might of martyrs is that of the helpless victim who cannot protect himself against his enemies. This kind of power is inconsistent with the wish to be like all the other nations—a people capable of defending themselves."[55]

As reflected both in this midrash and the story of R. Amnon, whose hands and feet were cut off, martyrdom represents the power of those who have lost control over their life and, in the only space left in which to move, choose to die in their own way. The profound question that emerges from the pages of *A Guest for the Night* is "what is different" now, when the Jewish people have a state and power but Jews continue to be murdered in their own land? Does war in Israel differ in any way from war-torn Europe: "Like what happened here, when the gentiles came and fought each other and killed each other"?[56] What are the limits and goals of power?

Is it a temporary deterrent or does it have to be employed over and over again? Can it not destroy morality?

Arbell's answers to these questions rest on the plot itself. When the protagonist arrives in Mandatory Palestine, he brings two items with him: a key and a book. The latter is a copy of *Yadav shel Mosheh* (*Moses's Hands*), a guide to easy and healthy birthing. As she observes, its title, which is drawn from the Israelites' war against Amalek after leaving Egypt (Exodus 17:8–13), both highlights the hostilities that continue to plague the people even in the Promised Land and offers a solution. Renewal of the traditional world will restore the Jewish spirit and help keep the fighters' hands firm and steady. She concludes, "Only the story—a textual reconstruction—can save Szybusz and its inhabitants from the loss; only it can revive the old study hall and bring it back to itself. This is the key it holds—whereby it witnesses to a world that is gone and vanished."[57]

Returning to "The Doctor and His Divorcée," we see that its original placement in *A Guest for the Night* sheds light on both its significance and the intertextual echoes it contains. The pedantic professor's brutal murder is a faint adaptation of the martyrological legend; rather than being killed for some principle, he embodies the violence and cruelty that characterizes Jewish history in general and the European Jewish experience in particular. Jews are murdered arbitrarily just because they are Jews, without any connection to their actions and choices. Later, however, the Jewish doctor becomes an incarnation of this experience in his own person, as he brutally abuses the patient and thus blurs the clear dichotomy between Jew and gentile, righteous and wicked.

I posit that Arbell's argument can be further elaborated and expanded upon. While the solution the story proffers to the problem of power is indeed textual, it goes beyond mere reconstruction of the traditional text; rather, it imbues the traditional text with new vitality. The content overwhelms the perpetual problem of power and violence, presenting the solution in its very form of writing—namely, its intertextuality. Texts are not revived by memorization or precise reconstruction but by the creation of a new literary artifact, one that brings ancient texts into contact with others. The diverse textual encounters enable each to shed light on or even conflict with and challenge the others, thereby making them relevant again. It is possible that Agnon learned this way of preserving texts, consciously or unconsciously,

from the sages of the midrash, who used intertextuality to preserve the sacred texts after the Temple's destruction, as Boyarin asserts.

By blending biblical, midrashic, and martyrological sources into a modern story, "The Doctor and His Divorcée" addresses the issue of power. It is a meeting of different texts that all deal with violence and the destruction to which it leads, regardless of the place and time in which it occurs—either in exile or in the Promised Land—and question the solution of a physical national home. Because of this, the question of power is inextricably linked to the question of preserving Jewish texts and cultural treasures. Only if we manage to preserve the texts and revive them—only then will the physical house stand. The main task is not only to restore but also to revive the lost textuality as a force against the destruction, so that the intoxication of power does not lead to a never-ending cycle of violence.

The fate of the protagonists in "The Doctor and His Divorcée" is revealed in the conclusion of *A Guest for the Night*. Kuba and Arella, the daughter of R. Shlomo and his new wife, prepare to emigrate as a potential solution to the problem of war and exile. The entry to the Promised Land is an important point, because the story of Dinah's rape begins precisely at this point in the Jacob cycle, when he returns to Canaan with his family. Like Agnon's story, in the biblical story there is also violent and aggressive action, fuelled by jealousy and cruelty, but in this story the violence takes place after entering Canaan and not before. The perfidious murder of the Shechemites by Simeon and Levi, followed by the plundering of their property, underscores the fact that the Zionist enterprise cannot solve the problem of the diaspora. Although the homeland is reestablished, it risks being spiritually empty and vacuous. The link forged between "The Doctor and His Divorcée" and the biblical narrative of Dinah's rape creates a new story rather than tracing backward to a common past; it looks to a physical future that does not preserve the traditional founts of culture.

Agnon wrote "The Doctor and His Divorcée" in 1939, when nationalist movements were growing stronger in Europe, and he published it a few months after the outbreak of World War II, when the rumors about what was happening there spread to those who living in Palestine:

> All the time, letters poured into Agnon's house from relatives from Germany and Poland . . . and each of them begged Agnon—who in their

> view was all-powerful—to provide them with assistance. Agnon sat in his home in Talpiot and wrote without hesitation—literally from a Trance—the story of his meeting and parting with the world of Eastern European Jews, whose doom seems to have been decided.[58]

What does a man of words respond to the devastation of war? Agnon, it appears, conceptualized writing as a potent force capable of resisting and counteracting the destructive power of conflict. In the face of horror and physical ruination, he posited words as instruments of construction and vitality. Agnon did not merely theorize about this concept; he actualized it through the act of storytelling itself.

However, in those exact years, Agnon also opposed other violence. In August 1939 a pamphlet called "Against Terrorism" was published as a response to violent acts by Jews against Arabs and British in which dozens were killed and injured. The pamphlet was preceded by a proclamation titled *Lo tirtsaḥ* (*You Shall Not Kill*), which was signed by many leaders and prominent cultural figures, including Agnon, and it says:

> Thou shalt not kill! This imperative, originating from the nascent stages of an ancient nation's development, persists to the present day. We shall not construct our national future by emulating the bellicose practices of other nations. Such impure methodologies will not only fail to advance us toward our objective but will, in fact, further distance us from its attainment.

In the pamphlet published a month later, Agnon wrote as follows:

> Our brethren, the entirety of Israel, may it be inconceivable that holy Israel should be suspected of murder. I am assured that every individual harbors within their heart the divine teachings that distance them from any act bearing even the slightest semblance of homicide. However, having been apprised that suspicion has fallen upon various individuals—that due to malevolent decrees and approaches, some are engaging in aberrant acts of vengeance against their adversaries—I feel compelled

> to add my voice to those issuing cautionary statements. I hereby remind all who desire the nation's continued existence and cherish our collective vitality to exercise utmost vigilance in their conduct and refrain from participating in any act that might be construed as murderous. May the Lord safeguard his people from vulnerability and guide us to our Promised Land.[59]

Agnon with his prickly gentleness undermines the distinction between Jews and gentiles and warns against the instinct of revenge leading to murder. Among these words can be heard the voice of Jacob responding to the murders of his sons: "Ye have troubled me, to make me odious unto the inhabitants of the land, even unto the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and I being few of number, they will gather themselves together against me and smite me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house" (JPS 1917).

In order to analyze comprehensively the interrelationship between "The Doctor and His Divorcée" in its initial context and the use of intertextuality in periods of conflict and destruction, I will now examine the concluding part of the story. This particular passage appears exclusively in the original manuscript of the narrative, effectively ending Kuba's personal story as an accompanying narrative:

> I said to Kuba: "and what will be the fate of that woman with her second husband? Will he not come to her with complaints because of you?"
>
> Kuba said, "Why would he come to her with complaints? He knows he is marrying a divorcée. This is an additional virtue in religious law: a man marries a widow or a divorcée, and she is like new in his eyes. On the contrary, I am certain he will have a good life with her. After all, such a good woman is a gift to her husband."
>
> I said to him, "Are you a Kohen?"
>
> He said, "What does being a Kohen have to do with this?"
>
> I said to him, "A Kohen is forbidden to remarry a divorcée, while all other men are permitted."
>
> Kuba said, "That is how you are. One offers you a finger, and you want the whole hand."[60]

This passage appears to represent an endeavor by the protagonist to rectify Kuba's situation by proposing a renewed, potentially more salutary marital union with his former spouse. Yet the intrusion of halakhic law into the narrative's reality precludes such a resolution. The definition of Kuba as a Kohen imposes specific limitations: unlike ordinary people, he is prohibited by halakhic decree from marrying a divorced woman or widow, thereby preventing any possibility of correcting the circumstances of the past. In his response, Kuba addresses the protagonist with criticism and accuses him of taking more than he received, using a well-known proverb. What is the significance of this critique? Within what context does it emerge and develop? I propose that we should analyze this passage through the lens of a central textual resonance present within it, which illuminates the entire segment and interconnects the diverse themes addressed in the article.

In his discourse, Kuba states that when a man marries a divorcée, "she is like new in his eyes." This expression uniquely echoes Rashi's commentary on a verse from Deuteronomy: "This day, the Lord your God commands you to do this statutes and ordinances; you shall therefore observe and do them with all your heart and with all your soul" (JPS 1917). This verse is situated within a broader passage known as "*Bikkurim* (firstfruit) declaration," which delineates the obligation of a Jew, upon settling in the Land of Israel, to bring the firstfruits of each year's harvest to the Temple and consecrate them God. This chapter commences with a description of the arrival in Canaan: "And it shall be, when you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance" (JPS 1917). Subsequently, it repeatedly emphasizes the paramount importance of remembering God and observing his commandments, particularly after settling and dwelling in the Promised Land. The emphasis on observing God's commandments, particularly after settling in the land, is accompanied by the phrase "this day," which has prompted various exegetes to attempt to elucidate the significance of these words. Rashi, drawing upon an earlier Midrash Tanhuma, explicates: "Every day they should be new in your eyes, as if on that very day you were commanded concerning them."[61] Rashi's interpretation has since become a prevalent expression regarding the manner in which one should fulfill God's commandments, as if they were being given anew each day.

The resonance of these words within Kuba's speech connects to the Zionist expectation felt throughout *A Guest for the Night* that mere arrival in the Promised Land would generate a sufficient solution to all problems and enable a renewed life free from all concerns. Along with this expectation, however, comes the biblical warning that recurs repeatedly in the *Bikkurim* passage regarding the futility of a physical home devoid of spiritual content. The act of bringing the firstfruits to the Temple and presenting them to the Kohen opposes the sense of ownership one has over their land. An action compels one to suppress one's immediate enjoyment of the fruits grown from the soil and instead to offer them to the Kohen. Along with this act of consecrating the *Bikkurim*, the individual is obligated to deliver a brief, structured speech that recounts the journey that led the people to the land. One cannot become mired in the present but must continually connect, year after year, to a spiritual narrative. This practice does not allow one to sink into the physical anchor—the land—but requires one to remember that the essence of the land is spiritual and moral.

Agnon employs an analogous technique. He systematically prevents the reader's immersion in themes of power, jealousy, and territorial proprietorship by constructing a narrative that iteratively returns to the spiritual discourse, thereby maintaining a persistent engagement with the metaphysical dimension. Textual fragments from diverse temporal and spatial contexts converge within the narrative text of "The Doctor and His Divorcée," illuminating one another and rendering forgotten texts relevant. This textual encounter not only generates commentary on reality but also actively operates within it, serving as a counterforce to the destruction and devastation wrought by wars and hatred. The very act of writing a story in turbulent times enables a renewed sense of a spiritual anchor, which is no less important than a physical anchor and perhaps even more so. The possibility that correction is both necessary and feasible thus becomes clear. One can return to the Promised Land in such a way that, instead of feelings of possession and jealousy that might lead to cruel violence, there exists a spiritual movement that creates a textual space. This space brings together diverse cultural treasures, allowing them to be revitalized. In this manner, the texts are transformed and appear new to our eyes.

The tale's intertextuality creates a chain of events that runs from the biblical period through the interbellum Viennese present to a future Israel. Hostilities lead

to more war and conflict, jealousy leads to violence. The only way in which the cycle can be halted is through the stylistic counterforce of the text—its intertextuality. This channels the trajectory backward, toward the treasures of the past and tradition, bringing them into the present in such a way as to make them relevant and significant. The introduction of the biblical Dinah's rape into modern interbellum Western history challenges both text and reality. At the same time, it gives the traditional text a new life. Although the tale offers an optimistic perspective on the Zionist enterprise in the face of the destruction of European Jewry, it also clearly declares that Zionism is no magic potion. If we do not take pains to create new texts that interlink with, challenge, and revive earlier ones, we shall continue to live in exile—even in Israel.

I can do no better to conclude this contribution than to draw attention to Kuba's own statement at the end of *A Guest for the Night*, as he sums it up in his own inimitable fashion: "All the troubles of the Jews come from nothing but controversy. Sometimes I say to myself: we are no better than the gentiles; they make war upon each other and spill visible blood, while we make controversies and spill blood that cannot be seen."[62]

NOTES

1 Abba Kovner, *Laḥaqat ḥaqetsev mofiʿah ʿal Har Gerizim. Poʾemah* (Merḥaviah, 1972), 43–57.

2 Shmuʾel Yosef Agnon, *ʿAl kappot hamanʿul* (Schocken, 1960). Robert Alter translated this story into English under the title "The Doctor's Divorce"; see Agnon, *A Book That Was Lost: Thirty-Five Stories*, ed. Alan Mintz and Anne Golomb Hoffman (Toby, 2008), 309–33. But the literal meaning of the title is "The Doctor and his Divorcée."

3 The word *devarim* is significant given that the same root is used in Genesis 34:3: *Vattidbaq nafsho beDinah bat Yaʿaqov vayyeʾehav et hanaʿarah vayedabber ʿal lev hanaʿarah.*

4 For intertextuality as a whole and in Agnon in particular, see Yaniv Hagbi, *Language, Absence, Play: Judaism and Superstructuralism in the Poetics of S. Y. Agnon* (Syracuse University Press, 2009), 37–64.

5 Shmuʾel Yosef Agnon, *A Guest for the Night: A Novel*, trans. Misha Louvish (Terrace, 2004).

6 The story was published daily in *Haaretz* between October 18, 1938 and April 7, 1939. For the significance of the accompanying narratives in *A Guest for the Night*, see Hillel Barzel, *Sippurei ahavah shel Shmuʾel Yosef ʿAgnon. ʿIyyunei meḥqar* (Bar-Ilan University Press, 1975).

7 Barzel, *Sippurei ahavah*, 16.

8 See, respectively, Shmuʾel Yosef Agnon, *Baḥur. Meʾasef ben zemano* (Ovnayim, 1941) and Agnon, *Elu veʾelu* (Schocken, 1941).

9 See, e.g., Hagbi, *Language, Absence, Play*; Tzachi Weiss, *Mot hashekhinah. Biytsirat S. Y. ʿAgnon* (Bar-Ilan University Press, 2009); Gedalyah Nigal, *S. Y. Agnon umeqorotav hahasidiyim* (Bar-Ilan University Press, 1983); Hillel Weiss, "Meqorot yehudim vetafqidam beʿKisuiy hadam leShai ʿAgnon," *Yedaʾ ʿam. Bamah lefolklor Yehudi* 20, nos. 47–48 (1980): 29–40; Adina Abadi, "Darkhei shimush bemuvaʾot mehameqorot be*Hakhnasat kallah* leShai ʿAgnon," *Mekhqarim belashon* 5–6 (1992): 479–96; Gershom Scholem, "Meqorotav shel maʿaseh Rabbi Gadiʾel hatinoq besifrut haQabbalah," in *Leʿ Agnon Shai*, ed. Dov Sadan and Ephraim E. Urbach (Jewish Agency, 1959), 295–305.

10 See, e.g., Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. L. S. Roudiez (Colombia University Press, 1980), 64–91.

11 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (University of Texas Press, 1981), 273.

12 Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford University Press, 1973).

13 Chana Kronfeld, *The Full Severity of Compassion: The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai* (Stanford University Press), 147.

14 Although Kronfeld exemplifies this thesis through the poetry of Yehuda Amichai, I submit that it can also be applied to Agnon's texts.

15 See, e.g., Michael Marmur, "Why Jews Quote," *Oral Tradition* 29, no. 1 (2014): 5–46.

16 Yaakov Sussmann, *Torah shebaʿal peh, peshutah kemashmaʿah. Kokho shel qotso shel yod* (Magnes, 2019), 146.

17 Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Indiana University Press, 1994), 22.

18 Haim Weiss and Moria Dayan Codish, "Petakh davar," *Mikan* 22 (2022): 5–8, here 7.

19 Agnon, *Book*, 319–20.

20 In this article, I have primarily utilized the NJPS translation of the biblical text. However, in specific instances where JPS 1917 better captures verbal echoes and resonances between the biblical text and Agnon's prose, I have opted for this translation instead. In such cases, the source (JPS 1917) will appear in parentheses after the quote.

21 There is disagreement about whether Dinah is raped, as the verses do not explicitly state that this was the case. The root *ʿayin-nun-heh* appears in two additional contexts in the Bible related to rape. The first instance is in the laws concerning rape: "Because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days" (JPS 1917). The second instance is in the story of Amnon and Tamar, which parallels the story of Dinah in several other respects: "But he refused to listen to her, and being stronger than she, he raped her" (2 Samuel 13:14). In both cases, it is an unequivocal instance of rape, using a word identical to the one in our chapter. Perhaps for this reason, the starting point for many commentators and most midrashim is that Shechem raped Dinah. Scholarly opinions are also divided regarding the rape of Dinah; see, e.g., Tikva Simone Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories* (Schocken, 2004), 179–98. For a comprehensive review, see S. David Sperling, "Dinah, ʿinnah, and Related Matters," in *Veʾeileh divrei David: Essays in Semitics, Hebrew Bible and History of Biblical Scholarship* (Brill, 2017), 260–81; Mary A. Bader, *Tracing the Evidence: Dinah in Post–Hebrew Bible Literature* (Peter Lang, 2008); Bader, *Sexual Violation in the Hebrew Bible: A Multi-Methodological Study of Genesis 34 and 2 Samuel 13* (Peter Lang, 2006); Gavi S. Ruit, "Rabbinic Commentaries on Genesis 34 and the Construction of Rape Myths," *Journal of Jewish Ethics* 3, no. 2 (2017): 247–66; Frances Klopper, "Rape and the Case of Dinah: Ethical Responsibilities for Reading Genesis 34," *Old Testament Essays* 23, no. 2 (2010): 652–65; Caroline Blyth, *The Narrative of Rape in Genesis 34: Interpreting Dinah's Silence* (Oxford University Press, 2010); Yael Shemesh, "Rape is Rape is Rape: The Story of Dinah and Shechem (Genesis 34)," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 119 (2007): 2–21; and Susanne Scholz, "What 'Really' Happened to Dinah: A Feminist Analysis of Genesis 34," *Lectio Difficilior* 2 [2001]: 2–5.

22 Haim Hayun, *Vattetse Dinah. Qeriʾah basippur hamiqraʾi veʿiyyun beziqotav* (Magnes, 2011), 52.

23 Mesori-Caspi, Mishael, "The story of Dinah," Beit Miqra 28, 3 (1982): 237.

24 Most English translations render *shekhem* as "portion" here.

25 L. Juliana M. Claassens, *Reading and Writing to Survive: Biblical and Contemporary Narratives in Conversation* (Sheffield Phoenix, 2020), chapter 4.

26 Nehama Aschkenasy, *Eve's Journey: Feminine Images in Hebraic Literary Tradition* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 134.

27 Nitza Ben-Dov, "Sister, Sister, Come to Me: 'The Doctor's Divorce' and Dinah's Rape," in *"And She is Your Glory: Studies in the Works of S. Y. Agnon, A. B. Yehoshua and Amos Oz* (Schocken, 2006), 90.

28 It is interesting to observe that, while the gender roles are very clearly defined in the biblical narrative—women are raped and men take revenge—there is a gender blurring in the modern story: when the protagonist dreams about the clerk whom he suspects of sleeping with his wife, the clerk accuses them of rape. The Hebrew form of the word "Inastani" does not allow for an unambiguous understanding of who raped the clerk, Dinah or the doctor.

29 Haim Be'er, "Hashoshanim Haʾadumot. Qeriʾah Intertextuʾalit beʿHarofe ugerushato,'" in *Hasifrut haʿIvrit kegiborat tarbut*, ed. Orr Scharf (Schocken, 2021), 5–67, here 56.

30 Irit Nagar, "Otiyot ani roʾeh, sefer ʿeini roʾeh. Intertextuʾaliut beʿʿAd henah' leʿAgnon, qeriʾah tsemudah" (PhD diss., Ben-Gurion University, 2023).

31 For details on turning the story into a independent story, see: Barzel, *Sippurei ahavah*, 19.

32 Barzel, *Sippurei ahavah*, 19.

33 Agnon seems to also almost intimate thereby that father and daughter become a couple in a taboo relationship.

34 Barzel, *Sippurei ahavah*, 35.

35 Stephen Katz, "The Development of the Story of the Mufti from *A Guest for the Night* to 'Shira,'" *Criticism and Interpretation* 26 (1990): 49–56. When the protagonist imagines what happened in Palestine on the Passover eve, he remarks: "The murderers may be planning to fall upon us."

36 This issue also lies at the heart of "Thus Far," which takes place during World War I, its protagonist endeavoring to save Dr. Levi's books; see Nazar, "Otiyot," 25–37.

37 Shimʾon Halkin, "ʿAl oreʾaḥ natah lalun," in *Leʿ Agnon Shai*, ed. Dov Sadan and Ephraim E. Urbach (Jewish Agency, 1959), 92 and E. Z. E., "Oreaḥ veḥeshbon nefesh," *Moʾznayim* (1940): 119.

38 Katz, "Development," 55.

39 Halkin, "On *A Guest*," 122.

40 Baruch Kurzweil, *Masotʿal sippurei S. Y. ʿAgnon* (Schocken, 1966), 53.

41 This question recalls the inner-Zionist tension represented by Theodor Herzl, on the one hand, and Aḥad Haʿam, on the other; see, e.g., Aḥad Haʿam, "The Jewish State and Jewish Problem" (1897), Jewish Virtual Library, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/quot-the-jewish-state-and-jewish-problem-quot-ahad-ha-am.

42 Agnon, "Guest," 513.

43 Kurzweil, "Masot," 57.

44 Gershon Shaked, "Baʿayot mivniyot biytsirato shel ʿAgnon," in *Leʿ Agnon Shai*, ed. Dov Sadan and Ephraim E. Urbach (Jewish Agency, 1959), 328.

45 Michal Arbell, *Katuv ʿal ʿoro shel kelev* (Keter, 2006), 53. According to Arbell, both narratorial creative acts in the novel—the attempt to rejuvenate the lost world and the endeavor to create a myth of continuity that will connect the old world with national existence in the reestablished homeland—fail (54).

46 Gershon Shaked, "The Author as a Torah Scribe: S. Y. Agnon's *A Guest for a Night*," *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 20 (2006): 240.

47 Agnon, *Book*, 310.

48 The story was preserved in the book *Or Zarua*, B, 276. For details regarding the incarnations of the *piyyut* and the story about it, see Avraham Fraenkel, "R. Amnon and the Penetration of 'Unetaneh toqef' into Italy, Ashkenaz and France," *Zion* 67 (2002): 125–38. The figure of R. Amnon appears on several occasions in the novel, directly and indirectly. The child Raphael defines himself as his incarnation; his severed limbs are adduced dozens of times; the children, separated from their parents, allude to the legend; and Daniel Bach notes: "But to be bound every day, every hour, every moment, on seven altars, to have one limb consumed today and another tomorrow—that is something not every man can stand. . . . when my flesh rots and my blood stinks, my lips cannot utter the praises of the Almighty"; see Agnon, *Book*, 310.

49 For *piyyut* as the "*locus classicus* of intertextuality," see Yehoshua Granat, "Intertextual Polyphony: Scriptural Presence(s) in a Piyyutim Cycle by Joseph ibn Abitur," *Zutot* 1 (2001): 64–76.

50 Martyrdom rather than conversion is one of the three cardinal Jewish principles: "the preserving of his own life overrides all of the Torah's prohibitions. This is the halakhah concerning all prohibitions except for those of idol worship, forbidden sexual relations, and bloodshed. Concerning those prohibitions, one must allow himself to be killed rather than transgress them" (b. Sanhedrin 74a).

51 Michal Arbell, "R. Amnon of Mainz as an Exemplary Figure: The Development of a Cultural Icon in Agnon's Works," in *Studies in Jewish Narratives*, vol. 2 of *Maʿaseh sippur*, ed. Avidov Lipsker and Rella Kushelevsky (Bar-Ilan University Press, 2009), 325–60.

52 Arbell, "R. Amnon," 340.

53 Agnon, "Guest", 34.

54 Arbell, *Katuv*, 328.

55 Arbell, *Katuv*, 356.

56 Agnon, *Guest*, 373.

57 Arbell, *Katuv*, 359.

58 Dan Laor, *Ḥayyei ʿAgnon. Biografiyah* (Schocken, 1998), 300–301.

59 Shmuʾel Yosef Agnon, *Neged hateror. Maʾamarim, reshimot, neʾumim, giluyei daʿat*, ed. R. Binyamin (Jerusalem, 1939) 68.

60 This constitutes my translation of a passage that is extant solely in the original manuscript; no alternative English rendition exists.

61 Midrash Tanhuma, *Ki tavo* 1.

62 Agnon, *Guest*, 460.