Skeletons in the Hebrew Closet
Yiddish Translations of "In the City of Killing" by Y. L. Peretz and H. N. Bialik and the Conflict over Revival

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The scholarship on Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik's most canonical Hebrew poem, "In the City of Killing," persistently returns to its origin story in the 1903 Kishinev pogrom. This article turns to the poem's Yiddish translations—the first by Bialik's colleague, admirer, and ideological opponent Yitskhok Leybush Peretz, and the second by Bialik himself—and challenges notions of origins, originals, and unfaithful translations. It pays attention to a consistently suppressed fact: parts of the poem in the canonized form known to us today, particularly those that bring the poem's fascination with the gothic and grotesque to new heights, were introduced into the poem through Peretz's Yiddish rendition. Bialik then borrowed these images and tropes and incorporated them into his own Yiddish translation, ultimately translating them into Hebrew and integrating them into the final, canonized version only in 1923. Rather than contesting accusations of Peretz's "disloyal" translation or accusing Bialik in turn of plagiarism, this article grapples with the philological impetus to search for definitive originals and the desire for textual stability. An entangled web of bibliographical evidence, unfaithful renditions, and unacknowledged textual relatives exposes translation as a productive and unruly site of literary transfer, as a site of conflict. That conflict should be understood in political terms, as a conflict over the means, character, and grounds for a Jewish national revival. The poem's translational history reconstructed in this article summons, finally, a renewed evaluation not only of the ties between Hebrew and Yiddish and between original and translation, but also more broadly of Jewish textual culture in Eastern Europe in the early twentieth century.

I mmediately after the publication of Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik's "In the City of Killing" ("Beʿir haharegah"), the bilingual, Hebrew-Yiddish writer Yitskhok Leybush Peretz expressed his admiration for Bialik and his poem and began translating it into Yiddish. When Peretz sent his Yiddish version of the poem to Bialik, however, the latter became enraged upon recognizing how far the translation was from the original. In one of his attempts to appease the aggrieved poet, Peretz wrote the following in a letter:

> I shortened the poem in my translation, because the difference between us is great: You work with metal, and I—with sandstone. The prophetic language [Hebrew], in its very solid nature, redeems even the weaker points. This, our mother-tongue [*mame-loshn*, Yiddish] does not and could never do. One needs to kill oneself in order to harden it into a stone.[1]

Invoking familiar notions of an ostensibly essential difference between languages in general and Hebrew and Yiddish in particular, of the different feeling of languages and the multiplicity of meanings that are lost in translation, Peretz argues here that the Hebrew pathos and its proximity to a prophetic mode smooths over inferior parts of the text. By contrast, Yiddish, in the colloquial, everyday qualities of its vocabulary, exposes these weaker poetic moments. Yet in what terms should we understand this conflict over translation, mistakes, rage, and apologetics? How can this conflict help us in reevaluating the history of this monumental poem? And how, finally, might this case contribute to our understanding of the life of literary translations?

In this article, I revisit this work—arguably the most canonical modern Hebrew poem, first published under the title "Masaʾ Nemirov" ("Word, or Prophecy, of Nemirov")—through the lens of translation and its cultural and political workings. I continue the work of translation scholars who have challenged the hierarchy of original and translation and the common understanding of the translator's task as hanging in the balance between fidelity and betrayal. As Karen Emmerich points out, the terminology of "original" versus "translation" willfully ignores the fact that the "original" itself often relies on moments of instability and multiple variations.

Originals, Emmerich argues, "are not given but made, and translators are often party to that making. [. . . a] particular text becomes an 'original' only when another, derivative text comes along to make it so."[2] In tracing the convoluted bibliographi-cal trail of Bialik's poem between Hebrew and Yiddish, I show how back-and-forth translational moves were instrumental in shaping the poem in its canonized version known to us today. Peretz's translation, I argue, introduced new themes and images into the poem, which Bialik then adapted into his own self-translated Yiddish ver-sion and finally incorporated into the final, canonized Hebrew version of the poem. The poem's Yiddish renditions serve therefore as a back door to the instability of the literary text, where one finds acts of trespassing, plagiarism, and lies, as well as friendship and loyalty; these renditions thus invite us to consider translation as a conflict zone.

Rather than contesting accusations of Peretz's "bad" or "disloyal" translation, or accusing Bialik in turn of plagiarism or creative "borrowing," I probe the set of assumptions that Peretz's work as a translator reveals. I ask, along similar lines to Adriana X. Jacobs in her work on what she terms "Extreme Translation," how we can think of such translational practices as "creative modes of 'loss' [. . .], generative practices of misreading and mistranslating." Translations in the conflict zone, Jacobs argues, "emerge out of radical, and even unconventional, strategies of translation that test the limits of linguistic legibility, comprehension and translatability."[3] Attention to these moments of conflict and devotion, expressed through notions of textual criminality, trespassing, and generosity and revealed through the act of translation, ought to alert us to the life of the literary text as a material phenomenon. Through a focus on Peretz's case of extreme translation, I examine Bialik's poem as a text that is "not one" in the sense that it is radically multiple and fragmented, given that it has circulated for decades among ever-growing audiences and readerships in multiple and unstable forms.[4]

This attention to the conflictual character of translation allows me, in turn, to rearticulate notions of untranslatability. In the second part of this article, I tackle translation as a political site of conflict, following Lidya Liu's suggestion that we should not dismiss popular notions of untranslatability, incommensurability, and the supposedly essential difference between languages such as those Peretz invoked in his apologetic remarks to Bialik but should consider what such debates tell us

about the political conditions of translation. Liu argues that translatability—the supposedly inherent capacity of signs, ideas, and texts to be transferred from one language to another—is never simply given but is produced through the laborious and intricate work of dictionaries and globally circulated texts and the constant work of, well, translation. Discussions about the shortcomings of exchanges between languages, Liu claims, "is often a displaced global struggle (displaced onto metaphysics) over the reciprocity of meaning-value among historical languages."[5]

In this article I similarly read discussions of Hebrew-Yiddish translatability or untranslatability of the kind Peretz developed in his letter to Bialik as displacements of political conflict over power and control. In Liu's words, appreciating this displacement, which occurs in the discourse on translatability from the political to the metaphysical, should encourage us to be "less inclined to insist on the plentitude of meaning and [to] begin to articulate the problem of translation to the political economy of the sign."[6] Peretz's comments on the untranslatability of the poem and the essential, metaphysical difference between the prophetic Hebrew and the feminine, quotidian Yiddish are similarly a displacement of the political onto the metaphysical.[7] Toward the end of this article I show how the translational conflict between Peretz and Bialik illuminates another conflict—between Hebrew and Yiddish—that should be understood, in turn, as a political struggle over the terms and means of a Jewish national revival around the turn of the twentieth century in Eastern Europe.

ORIGIN STORIES

The scholarship and wider reception of "In the City of Killing" consistently returns to its origin story. In the aftermath of the pogrom in Bessarabia's capital, Kishinev, in the spring of 1903, Bialik was sent to the city on behalf of an intellectual initiative, The Jewish Historical Committee, comprised of the historian Simon Dubnow and the Hebraist intellectual Aḥad Haʿam, among others. The committee tasked Bialik with collecting evidence on the pogrom and incorporating it into a comprehensive report. Bialik indeed documented eyewitness testimonies in Yiddish, translated and edited them in Hebrew, and gathered photographs and records. Yet in place of a report he composed a long poem in Hebrew, described by scholars as a

"watershed" event in Hebrew writing and a defining moment in the crystallization of a nationalizing Hebrew literature.[8] The evidence that Bialik had collected in Kishinev was kept in his archive and published in full only posthumously, ninety years later.[9] The poem itself has circulated widely in at least six languages, chiefly Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, Polish, German, and English.[10]

"In the City of Killing" is constructed as a long monologue by God, who commands his poet-prophet in language resonant of the prophetic book of Ezekiel to bear witness to the pogrom's aftermath. The divine voice guides the prophet through the sites (or sights) of destruction: brutal murder, blood and dried brains splattered on walls, an image of a child murdered while calling for his mother, a living baby latched on to his mother's cold breast. Hearing tales of atrocity "that puncture the brain," the divine voice commands the prophet to suppress his pain and his rage, setting him up to fail in his task as a discursive prophet.[11] This powerlessness is not his alone. God, the commanding speaker, is also powerless, and God attests to his own impotence when apologizing to the poor victims, exposing his bankruptcy, admitting that their deaths were in vain and that their prayers have no influence. Yet the poem attributes the most profound powerlessness and impotence to the pogrom's Jewish victims, and it appears in a most degrading articulation in a scene depicting the brutal rape of Jewish women by pogromists. The Jewish men cowardly peep through the cracks of their hiding places, passively accepting their condition, not virile enough to protect their national-sexual honor. Bialik's final verdict for them, in one of the most famous scenes of this poem, which will be of prime interest to us here, leaves no hope for their future rehabilitation: *vekhaʾasher peshatetem yad tifshotu vekhaʾasher shenorartem tishnoreru* ("And as you stretched out your hands for alms so will you stretch it, and as you schnorred so will you go on schnorring").[12]

As many scholars have by now pointed out, the testimonies that Bialik himself collected in part directly contradict the poem's descriptions and stand in contrast to the poem's harsh judgement of the pogrom's victims and of diasporic Jewry more generally as passive beggars.[13] Since the publication of the testimonies in the 1990s, scholars have labored to recover the suppressed, apparently original voices from the archive, which were denied and eliminated in the poetic text. Iris Milner and Mikhal Dekel, for example, have tended to the stark distinction between how the victims themselves, particularly the raped women, described to Bialik the bare facts

of what had happened to them and the poem's theological conceptualization of these events, turning them into pawns in an ideological and theologically charged narrative.[14] Michael Gluzman has paid attention to the surprising affinities between Bialik's translation and adaptation of the rape testimonies, the autobiographical remarks on his own childhood traumas that he was writing at the time, and his formulation of the rape scene in the poem, suggesting that Bialik imposed his own feeling of shame on the victims whose voices he aimed to represent.[15] Taking another approach to the question of origins and originals, Naʿama Rokem has animated the tension between prose and poetry in the history of the poem's writing. Rather than highlighting the discrepancies between the original testimonies and Bialik's poem, Rokem has demonstrated how the remnants of Bialik's unwritten prose inform the poem and its manufacturing of imaginative space essential for Hebrew literature at the time.[16]

Already here, before addressing the poem itself and its translations, we encounter contested origins between the historical events as narrated by their victims in Yiddish and the Hebrew poetic text. The story of how the poem came to be translated into Yiddish will not only add another layer to this contest between the original Yiddish voices and their Hebrew poetic adaptation (or, in fact, misrepresentation) but also challenge the very distinction between original and translation. As I demonstrate below, tracing the back-and-forth movements between the Hebrew and Yiddish versions of this poem shows that the Yiddish translations in fact played a major role in the production of the poem in its final form known to us today.

SLIPPERY BIBLIOGRAPHY: HOW THE POEM CAME TO BE TRANSLATED INTO YIDDISH

The stories of both how the poem came to be translated into Yiddish and how the convoluted bibliographical trail was left behind in the wake of these translations are worth recounting because they expose the act of translation as a creative, non-linear site of literary encounter. While the field of bibliography has traditionally been understood as a practice devoted to recovering pure originals uncorrupted by the interventions of other agents (transcribers, editors, printers, translators) in the transmission of the text, the historian Leah Price points to another side of the

bibliographical practice when she writes: "Poststructuralism reinvented the articles of skepticism that bibliographers had long taken for granted: the instability of the text, the productivity of misreading, the slipperiness of authorial intention."[17] Following both the bibliographic impetus to document and its attention to the elusiveness of textual stability, I will animate the skeletons in the closet of "In the City of Killing"—namely, the bibliographical evidence found in correspondence, the various versions of the poem between 1903 and 1923, and some of what we might call the poem's textual "relatives."

Where should such exploration begin? Bentsiyon Katz, the publisher of the journal *Hazeman*, where the poem appeared, recounted how Peretz began working on a Yiddish translation of the poem immediately after its publication (in its first title, "Masaʾ Nemirov").[18] Yet letters from Peretz to Bialik problematize the notion of Peretz as actually working on the translation. As mentioned, when Peretz sent his Yiddish version to Bialik, the latter became enraged upon recognizing how far the Yiddish translation was from the Hebrew poem, and he was especially furious at a literal mistake.[19] When Peretz tried to appease Bialik, he acknowledged the mistake and explained how it occurred:

> The mistake is indeed a mistake, but not my mistake. This is what happened. I do not have time, as you well know. I require to hang about in idleness [*lalekhet batel*]. Therefore, I tasked one of the young writers to translate your poem literally, word for word. And this young man is well-educated and a good translator, and it didn't even cross my mind to check his translation. And this indeed is a bad habit—laziness.[20]

I was unable to find any corroborating evidence for this story of a translational middleman in the making of Peretz's Yiddish version of the poem. His rendition is also so far from a literal translation that it is hard to imagine what sort of resemblance this literal version by an anonymous translator, if it ever existed at all, shares with Peretz's published rendition. Moreover, to readers familiar with Yiddish printing culture, this story sounds like Peretz's fantastic explication of a euphemism common in Yiddish publishing, of accusing the *bokher hazetser*, the typesetter for the writer's mistakes. Rather than dismissing this moment of uncertainty, however, I wish to

embrace it. With this renewed skepticism and feeling of textual instability, we can return to the correspondence between Bialik and Peretz and our effort to trace the poem's bibliographical trail.

Deeply insulted by Bialik for replying belatedly and shortly, Peretz signed off the letter by saying "I write briefly, since you too didn't expand. You go ahead and correct the translation yourself." Peretz went on to publish the first translation without correcting the mistake, despite Bialik's fury. Further justifying the partiality and inaccuracy of his translation, Peretz explained his motivation for publication in another letter. He accused Bialik of holding on to his elitist Hebraist readership and of never speaking in the vernacular Yiddish to the Jewish "masses," but conversing instead with a small group of Hebraist idle-goers who sit around the study house, thinking haughty thoughts about redemption. "Why did I translate your poem? Why do I continue to do so? My wish was to make up for your absence, to give you to the people to whom you belong."[21] By alluding to a sense of national ownership over poetry and poets and discussing those in terms of a class conflict between Hebrew and Yiddish, Peretz brought to the surface the political conflict he had previously displaced onto the metaphysical when he complained of the Hebrew-Yiddish untranslatability. This political conflict and his populist investment in Yiddish (the language of the "masses") also informed his views on literature and ownership. Convinced of the moral supremacy of his political motivation over other rules of literary decorum or etiquette, Peretz informed Bialik that he was working on a translation of yet another poem, "The Scroll of Fire" ("Megillat haʾesh"). This time, he exclaimed: "I am not requesting your permission for it. For I do not believe in a writer's intellectual rights over translations."[22] Peretz's disregard for the concept of intellectual property cuts both ways; he did not care too much about his own intellectual property. "With regards to the translation," Peretz devotedly wrote in yet another letter to Bialik, one of his dearest friends despite this conflict (see fig. 1): "the poem is yours, the translation is yours, and I am yours. Do as you wish."[23]

Indeed, Bialik's own translation, which appeared a few months later under the title "In shkhite-shtot," or "In the City of Slaughter," in a small chapbook titled *Fun tsar un tsorn* (*Of Sorrow and Wrath*) relied heavily on Peretz's Yiddish rendition. In a letter to his close friend, the Russian writer Ben Ami (another member of the Jewish Historical Committee that sent Bialik to Kishinev), Bialik apologized
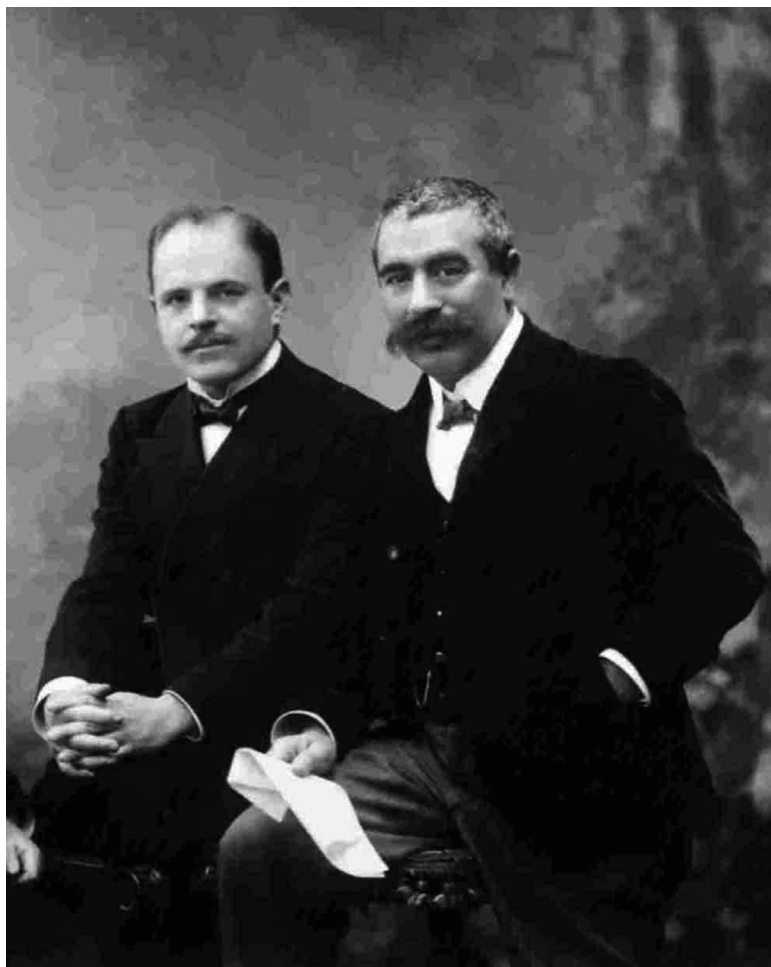
Figure 1: Photo of Bialik (left) and Peretz, taken in Warsaw in 1904 after Bialik temporarily relocated there to assume a role as an editor in the Hebrew journal *Hashiloaḥ*. During that year the two grew ever closer. Image from the Bialik House Archive, Tel Aviv.

for producing a book in Yiddish, the despised "Jargon": "And I, the sinner and transgressor, wrote in Jargon. I translated 'Masaʾ Nemirov' into Yiddish, and I am sending you a copy. Peretz's awful translation forced me to do so."[24] Despite Bialik's professed dissatisfaction with Peretz's "awful translation," his own translation borrows a significant share of its language and imagery from Peretz's. In fact, as I demonstrate in the following, Peretz's heavy influence on Bialik transcended

the Yiddish translations and penetrated into the final, canonized Hebrew version of the poem published in the jubilee edition of Bialik's collected works in Berlin in 1923.[25]

THE ARCHEOLOGY OF BEGGARY: THE CONTESTED BIBLIOGRAPHIES OF THE POEM AND ITS TRANSLATIONS

In the 1923 Hebrew edition, the poem includes a stanza that had not appeared anywhere beforehand in Hebrew but does exist, with significant variations, in both Yiddish renditions, by Peretz and Bialik. In the added stanza in the 1923 canonized version, the poet-prophet orders the Jews of Kishinev to go to the graveyard and dig up their dead ancestors' bones, carry them around the world in a parade of beggary, and use them for "schnorring," or begging—the Hebrew version imports this Yiddish verb as an expression of disdain:

לְבֵית הַקְּבָרוֹת, קַבְּצָנִים! וַחֲפַרְתֶּם עַצְמוֹת אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם	To the graveyard, beggars! Dig up the bones of your fathers
וְעַצְמוֹת אֲחֵיכֶם הַקְּדוֹשִׁים וּמִלֵּאתֶם תַּרְמִילֵיכֶם	And the bones of your martyred brothers and fill up your bundles
וַעֲמַסְתֶּם אוֹתָם עַל־שְׁכֶם וִיצָאתֶם לַדֶּרֶךְ, עֲתִידִים	And bear them on your shoulders and set forth, ready
לַעֲשׂוֹת בָּהֶם סְחוֹרָה בְּכָל־הַיְרִידִים;	To turn them into goods at the all the market fairs;
וּרְאִיתֶם לָכֶם יָד בְּרֹאשׁ דְּרָכִים, לְעֵין רוֹאִים,	And you will find youselves a spot at the head of the road, where all can see,
וּשְׁטַחְתֶּם אוֹתָם לַשֶּׁמֶשׁ עַל סָמַרְטוּטֵיכֶם הַצֹּאִים,	And you will spread them out under the sun on your soiled rags,
וּבְגָרוֹן נִחָר שִׁירָה קַבְּצָנִית עֲלֵיהֶם תְּשׁוֹרֵרוּ.	And with a hoarse throat a begging song you will sing for them.
וּקְרָאתֶם לְחֶסֶד לְאֻמִּים וְהִתְפַּלַּלְתֶּם לְרַחֲמֵי גוֹיִם,	And you will call for the charity of nations and appeal to the mercy of peoples
וְכַאֲשֶׁר פְּשַׁטְתֶּם יָד תִּפְשֹׁטוּ, וְכַאֲשֶׁר שְׁנוֹרַרְתֶּם תִּשְׁנוֹרֵרוּ.	And as you stretched out your hands for alms so will you stretch it, and as you schnorred so will you go on schnorring.[26]

The genealogy of this stanza is contested. Dan Miron has argued that the added stanza appeared in Bialik's original, unpublished Hebrew version, which he circulated privately among friends. This is currently the dominant theory.[27] A minority view, held by the critics Fishel Lachower and Yitzhak Bakon, suggests that Peretz developed this scene, and that Bialik adopted it from Peretz's Yiddish translation and inserted it into his own Yiddish version of 1906, ultimately integrating it into the canonized Hebrew version only in 1923.[28]

In what follows I juggle competing urges—to dig up bibliographical evidence and arrive at conclusive originals and, as I face discrepancies, to lean into the feeling of textual instability and uncertainty—those very feelings that the dominant theory, which celebrates Bialik as the national Hebrew poet, seeks to suppress. I animate the skeletons in the Hebrew closet, challenging the grounds of this dominant theory, and propose not only that, for multiple reasons, we should accept the minority view that Peretz developed this stanza, but also that we should explore what this episode in the history of the poem can tell us about a momentous event in the relationship between Bialik and Peretz, between Hebrew and Yiddish, and between original and translation.

According to the dominant theory promoted by Miron, the stanza existed in a privately circulated Hebrew manuscript—the existence of which is a conjecture, as we have no corroborating testimonies that such a manuscript ever existed—and was omitted from the published version at the request of Aḥad Haʿam, Bialik's friend and mentor and a Hebraist intellectual. Aḥad Haʿam had purportedly demanded that these lines be excluded from publication because they bring the poem's rebuke of the Jews to unprecedented extremes. This theory also suggests that, because the stanza had already resurfaced in the translation by Peretz (who presumably had access to the conjectured, privately circulated original), Bialik decided to incorporate them into his own Yiddish version of 1906, ultimately publishing them in the 1923 canonized Hebrew edition.

Miron bases this elaborate theory on a single testimony by Gershon Stavsky, an occasional contributor to the provincial Yiddish press in Poland who published memories of his acquaintance with Bialik after the latter's passing in 1934.[29] Resembling hagiography, Stavsky's account focuses on trivial anecdotes from the time both were living in Sosnowiec, all of which paint a portrait of Bialik as an

honest and modest man who idealizes the study of the Talmud and kabbalah and follows this ideal in his life. Stavsky's testimony relates the following events: When Bialik passed through Sosnowiec in 1905—a year before Peretz's Yiddish translation, that is—he told Stavsky about the missing lines that Aḥad Haʿam forbade him to publish and wrote them down on Stavsky's copy of *Hazeman* where the poem appeared. When Bialik passed through Sosnowiec again in 1931, twenty six years later, he asked Stavsky for that copy, saying that he had lost his original manuscript with the missing stanza, and that he required Stavsky's copy in order to print the full poem in a new edition to be published in Palestine. It is thanks to Stavsky, the reader is led to deduce, that we have the poem in its full form today.

Aside from the obvious attempt by a marginal writer to position himself at an important crossroads of modern Hebrew literature, several factual errors diminish the credibility of Stavsky's account.[30] For example, the missing stanza already appeared in the 1923 edition, published in Berlin and not in Palestine, a full eight years before Bialik's last visit to Sosnowiec, when he ostensibly got hold of the lost lines through Stavsky. Stavsky also relates that Bialik wrote down on his copy of *Hazeman* another, separate group of lines that were censored by the St. Petersburg censorship, adding an explanation that the poem was initially supposed to be published in the Odessa-based journal *Hashiloaḥ* but ended up being published in the St. Petersburg-based *Hazeman* instead, where it was subject to the local office of imperial censorship.[31] Contrary to Stavsky's story, however, the poem was never meant to be published in *Hashiloaḥ*; the editor of *Hazeman* had in fact payed Bialik twenty-five rubles as an advance before Bialik even wrote it.[32] Furthermore, Stavsky's recollection of Bialik inking in the censored lines on the print copy of *Hazeman* might explain his confusion or misconstrued memories. In other words, without corroborating evidence, there is no reason to accept Stavsky's account.[33]

Still other pieces of evidence contribute to a refutation of this theory. The stanza is missing, for example, from Vladimir Jabotinsky's Russian translation of the poem, which also appeared in 1906 under the title "Skazanie o pogrome" ("Tale of a Pogrom").[34] Jabotinsky, who was then only just learning Hebrew, worked on the translation with the help of Bialik's close friend Yehoshuʿa Ḥana Ravnitski and Katz, the editor of *Hazeman*.[35] Presumably, Jabotinsky could have had access

to the privately circulated missing lines, those from which Peretz ostensibly drew. As Michael Stanislawski has shown, moreover, Jabotinsky's translation significantly diminishes the poem's theological currents, emphasizing instead the effeminate Jews' blame in the events.[36] Castigating the Jews and mockingly describing their act of "schnorring" as grotesque perfectly suits this agenda. Its absence from the Russian translation suggests, therefore, that Jabotinsky did not possess it.

The earliest place where I could find the graveyard stanza in a language other than Yiddish is in a 1907 Polish translation of the poem, "W mieście pogromu" ("In the City of the Pogrom").[37] The Polish translation was published in a chapbook titled *Powieść o Pogromie* (*The Story of a Pogrom*), which follows the contents and order of a Hebrew collection published a year earlier in 1906, *Mishirei hazaʿam* (*From the Poems of Wrath*). The title page of the Polish collection states that it was translated by Samuel Hirszhorn from Hebrew. Crucially, however, the translator doubtlessly relied on Bialik's 1906 Yiddish translation as well, evident from his inclusion of a series of additions to the poem—expanded descriptions, emphases, and images—that exist solely in Bialik's Yiddish rendition of the poem.[38] Despite some similarities between the Russian and Polish translations (evident already in the choice of title as "tale" or "story" of the pogrom), what distinguishes them is that by 1907 Hirszhorn already had access to the Yiddish versions of the poem that include the added stanza, while Jabotinsky, who published his translation in early 1906, did not.[39] Similarly, in the German context, the stanza is missing from early twentieth-century German translations of the poem.[40] The only German translation that includes this stanza is one by Ludwig Strauss published in 1921, yet, tellingly, this German translation of the poem, like the Polish one, relied on Bialik's Yiddish version, "In shkhite-shtot," and appeared in a volume dedicated to the translation of Bialik's *Yiddish* oeuvre into German.[41]

KILLING ME SOFTLY: THE POETICS OF BRUTALITY BETWEEN HEBREW AND YIDDISH

The mounting (and yet constantly unstable, partial) bibliographical evidence urges us to return to Peretz's comments on Hebrew-Yiddish untranslatability, as does the origin story told (or fabricated?) by Stavsky and theorized by Miron regarding

Aḥad Ha'am's rumored assessment that this stanza brings the poem to unprecedented degrees of disdain toward the victims. Particularly, we must return to Peretz's distinction, quoted at the beginning of this article, between the prophetic harshness of the Hebrew and the everyday, mundane, feminine, and folksy softness of Yiddish.

This distinction between the languages on the basis of their presumably essential differences has in fact informed all of the scant comparisons between the Hebrew and Yiddish versions of this poem. The Yiddish critic Shmuel Charney (known also by his penname Sh. Niger) used this distinction to explain the appearance of a poetic couplet at the beginning of Bialik's self-translated Yiddish version, which does not appear in the Hebrew poem: "mit shtol un ayzn, kalt un hart un shtum / shmid oys a harts far zikh, du mentsh,—un kum!" ("With steel and iron, cold and hard and dumb, / forge yourself a heart, you human,— and come!").[42] Despite evident differences, what unites Bialik's Hebrew and Yiddish versions, according to Charney, is his overall effort to move away from conventional "pogrom-poems," to not let the poetic message be overcome by powerful imagery of the pogrom, or by the heartbreaking lament over its victims.[43] In self-translating the poem into Yiddish, Charney speculated, Bialik feared that the language itself, by its ostensible nature of intimate and feminine familiarity and high emotive power, would draw him closer to the literary tradition of lament and tears—the very tradition from which he sought to break away. For this reason, argued Charney, Bialik's Yiddish version begins with an added couplet, a sort of a motto, that serves as a warning to the translated, Yiddish poetic self.

Other critics followed Peretz and Charney in this distinction, alluding to the inherent "softness" of the Yiddish version. Such, for example, was Lachower's assessment, who argued that both Yiddish versions were "softer" than the Hebrew.[44] Following Lachower, Bakon came to a similar conclusion in his more expansive comparative analysis of the various versions, in which he argued that Bialik's final Yiddish version is artistically superior to the previous versions, for in it he could no longer rely on the Hebrew prophetic mood with its stringent biblical form and had to reinvent the poem's poetics in order to maintain the poem's harsh forcefulness in a "soft," intimate Yiddish.[45]

The only critic to deviate from this characterization of the differences between the Hebrew and Yiddish versions of the poem on the basis of their "harshness" or "softness" was Yedidiah Peles, who argued instead that the Yiddish version expresses a far more rigid and harsh tone. Rather than basing that evaluation on the translation's poetics, however, he did so relying on the very appearance of the missing graveyard stanza, by way of promoting Stavsky's questionable account and Miron's subsequent theory that the stanza existed in the original and was omitted at Aḥad Haʿam's request.

This discussion over the inherent qualities of Hebrew or Yiddish and the consequent untranslatability and incommensurability of the two is, as I argued above following Liu, a political negotiation displaced onto the realm of the linguistic, the aesthetic, and the symbolic. In order to examine this claim, I need to first show how the so-called harshness and softness manifest in the language and imagery of the poem and then illuminate how these manifestations can be discussed in political terms. This politicization will contribute another layer of support to the theory that Peretz developed the missing stanza, and that Bialik adapted it and incorporated it into both his Yiddish and the final, canonized Hebrew version from Peretz's translation.

THE BONES AND ROTTEN FLESH OF TRANSLATION: THE GOTHIC AND THE GROTESQUE ACROSS THE POEM'S VERSIONS

We may begin such analysis by challenging the alleged claim by Aḥad Haʿam (as conveyed/fabricated by Stavsky) that the missing stanza should not be published due to its severe harshness toward the Jewish victims. One of the stanza's core images—that of the Jews using their grotesque physical injuries in their act of "schnorring"—already appears in the preceding stanza, which did in fact exist in Bialik's first Hebrew publication, and where, crucially, the grotesque descriptions surpass those of the added scene. The following lines are from Bialik's Hebrew version:

Hebrew	English
וְהָיָה כִּי־תַשְׁכִּים מָחָר וְיָצָאתָ בְּרֹאשׁ דְּרָכִים—	And as you rise on the morrow and take to the high road—
וְרָאִיתָ הֲמוֹן שִׁבְרֵי אָדָם נֶאֱנָקִים וְנֶאֱנָחִים,	You will see a torrent of human shards groaning and sighing,
צוֹבְאִים עַל חַלּוֹנוֹת גְּבִירִים וְחוֹנִים עַל־הַפְּתָחִים,	Clammering at the windows of the rich and camping at their doorsteps,
מַכְרִיזִים בְּפֻמְבֵּי עַל־פִּצְעֵיהֶם כְּרוֹכֵל עַל־מַרְכֻּלְתוֹ,	Publicly declaring their wounds like a peddler does his wares,
לְמִי גֻלְגֹּלֶת רְצוּצָה וּלְמִי פֶּצַע יָד וְחַבּוּרָה,	One has a shattered skull, the other an injured arm and lesion,
וְכֻלָּם פּוֹשְׁטִים יָד כֵּהָה וְחוֹשְׂפִים זְרֹעַ שְׁבוּרָה,	And they stretch out a dark hand and expose a broken limb,
וְעֵינֵיהֶם, עֵינֵי עֲבָדִים מֻכִּים, אֶל יַד גְּבִירֵיהֶם,	And their eyes, the eyes of beaten slaves, affixed to their masters' hand,
לֵאמֹר: "גֻּלְגֹּלֶת רְצוּצָה לִי, אָב 'קָדוֹשׁ' לִי— תְּנָה אֶת תַּשְׁלוּמֵיהֶם!"	As if saying: "I have a smashed skull, a 'martyred' father—pay their recompense!"
וּגְבִירִים בְּנֵי רַחֲמָנִים מִתְמַלְאִים עֲלֵיהֶם רַחֲמִים	And the merciful rich take pity on them,
וּמוֹשִׁיטִים לָהֶם מִבִּפְנִים מַקֵּל וְתַרְמִיל לַגֻּלְגֹּלֶת,	And hand out from inside a stick and sack to each,
אוֹמְרִים "בָּרוּךְ שֶׁפְּטָרָנוּ"—וְהַקַּבְצָנִים מִתְנַחֲמִים.	Saying "good riddance"—and the beggars are consoled.[46]

The humiliating tropes familiar to us from the missing stanza—of the beggars swarming from crossroads to crossroads and cramming at the doorsteps of rich Jews, begging for mercy on the basis of their revolting injuries and dead ancestors—appear already in this stanza in Bialik's Hebrew poem. What is absent from the first Hebrew publication is thus not the degrading language toward the victims; rather, it is the macabre image of digging up the bones of the dead.

Furthermore, other lines that do appear in the first Hebrew version invoke a much harsher verdict for the pogrom's victims than "And as you stretched out your hands for alms so will you stretch it, and as you schnorred so will you go on schnorring." Such, for example, are the words of God ordering his prophet to not take pity on them, for "they have accepted their lives of shame, and what is there to gain by consoling them?" ("vayashlimu ʿim ḥayyei boshtam, umabetsaʿ ki

tenaḥameim?").[47] This conclusion follows the logic developed earlier in the poem, where the bankrupt God speaks to the victims, saying: "your deaths are in vain, nei-ther me nor you / know why you died, nor who nor what for, / and there is no reason for your death as there was no reason for your life" ("ḥaleleikhem—ḥalelei ḥinnam, vegam ani vegam attem / lo yadaʿnu lamma mattem veʿal mi veʿal ma mattem, / veʾein taʿam lemotkhem kemo ein taʿam leḥayyeikhem").[48] It is difficult to think of a more dehumanizing reaction to the victims and survivors of extreme violence than the declaration that both their lives and deaths were pointless, and that there is no use in consoling them.[49] Indeed, all of these lines were either omitted or signifi-cantly adapted in the Yiddish versions by both Peretz and Bialik, and this serves to support the claim that the Yiddish versions "soften" the Hebrew poem.

The Yiddish versions not only soften Bialik's critique of the Jews of Kishinev but also weaken the thrust of the theological protest that the poem stages in the image of the bankrupt and helpless God who cannot alleviate the suffering of God's chosen people and cries out in renunciation of the Jewish martyrological ethos: "Your deaths are in vain."[50] Using a prophetic form of swearing, the godly speaker in the Hebrew version vows to never shed so much as one tear over the dead, for God's pain is mixed with great shame. Against this divine oath, in both Yiddish versions the godly speaker significantly elaborates God's apology for the victims and describes how, night after night, God will descend from the heavens to mourn and cry and weep over their graves.[51]

To sum up: The graveyard scene appeared in print for the first time in the Yiddish versions, which adopt as a whole a far more restrained tone regarding the victims' humiliation and their discourse of martyred victimhood. The first Hebrew version includes other parts that exhibit a far more forceful degradation of the vic-tims. How, then, can we accept the conjecture that, in ostensibly excluding the graveyard scene, Aḥad Haʿam was concerned with its potential offensiveness towards the Jews of Kishinev?

A closer look at where the graveyard image first appeared in print will allow us to reevaluate both its genealogy and the role it plays within the poem as a whole. As mentioned, the only element existing in this scene yet absent from the preceding stanza (where the Jews are described as exposing their wounds and cracked skulls for a penny) is the injunction to dig up the dead bones. Yet this statement needs

to be corrected. Indeed, in Bialik's final Hebrew version from 1923 there are two separate stanzas: the first describes the Jews begging the rich using their revolting injuries, and the second instructs the Jews to dig up their ancestors' bones and roam the world with them. But the earliest articulation of the dead bones image appears in Peretz's Yiddish version, where we find not two distinct stanzas but one stanza that integrates the two, oscillating between images and phrases that belong to the two separate stanzas in the later, final version. In Peretz's Yiddish rendition, the Jews are seen digging up bones and flesh in the graveyard, tearing them to pieces, and packing them up in their beggary bundles:

און צו מאָרגנס—	And on the morrow—
זע, וואָס זיי טוע. . .	see what they are doing . . .
אויפֿן בית־עלמין וועלן זיי מאָרגן גיין,	To the graveyard they will tomorrow go,
די דערשלאָגענע,	the beaten up,
די איבערגעבליבענע,	the last surviving,
די האַלב טויטע,	the half dead,
מיט די האַלב אויסגעפּאָכטע נשמות,	with their half perished souls,
האַלב אויסגעפֿוילטע הערצער. . .	half decaying hearts . . .
אויפֿן בית־עלמין גייען זיי,	To the graveyard they go,
מענער, וויַיבער און קינדער גייען;	men, women, and children, they go;
מיט טאָרבעס,	with bundles,
מיט קבצנישע טאָרבעס	with beggary bundles
אויף דעם געבויגענעם אַקסל	on their bent-over shoulders,
גייען זיי. . .	they go . . .
און זע, מענטש, וואָס זיי טוען!—	And see, man, what they do!—
צו די פֿרישע קבֿרים גייען זיי,	To the fresh graves they go,
צו די קדושים—	to the martyrs—
און עפֿענען די קבֿרים אויף —	and they open up the graves—
און צעריַיסן זייערע ליַיבער	and tear apart the corpses
מיט די תּכריכים צוזאַמען,	along with their shrouds,
אויף שטיקער, אויף שטיקער צעריַיסן זיי,	to pieces, to pieces they tear them.
און יעדערער כאַפּט אַ שטיק,	And each grabs a piece,
יעדערער אין טאָרבע אַריַין אַ שטיק —	each sneaks a piece into his bundle—
זיי וועלן בעטלען גיין	they will go begging

אין נאָמען פֿון די קדושים,	in the name of the martyrs,
מיט זייער פֿלייש און ביין —	with their flesh and bone,—
פֿון יריד צו יריד וועלן זיי גיין,	from one market to the next will they go,
פֿון שטאָט צו שטאָט	from city to city,
און בעטלען:	and beg:
זעט דאָס הייליקע פֿלייש, – רחמים!	Watch the holy flesh,—have mercy!
די הייליקע ביינער זעט – רחמים!	The holy bones, watch—have mercy!
ייִדן בני רחמנים,	Jews, sons of merciful Jews,
רחמים, אַ גראָשן גיט!	have mercy, give a penny!
און אַ לאָמער,	And a lame,
און אַ בלינדער,	and a blind,
און אַן אַלטער, אַ געבױגענער,	and an old gimp,
און מיט קרומע ביינער	and with crooked bones
שלעכט גענערטע קינדער	malnourished children
וועלן בעטלען מיטן פֿלייש	will beg with the flesh,
מיט די ביינער פֿון די קדושים	with the bones of the martyrs,
און לידער זינגען!	and sing songs!
קבצנישע הונגער־לידער,	Beggary hunger-songs
איבער הייליקע,	about the holy ones,
איבער אומגעקומענע על קידוש־השם —	about those dead in Sanctification of the Name—
פֿאַר אַ גראָשן!	for a penny![52]

Peretz's stanza integrates present tense with future tense and combines what in the canonized Hebrew version are two distinct scenes. Yet, based on my rejection of Stavsky's claim, a more adequate formulation would be that Peretz took the first scene that appeared in Bialik's Hebrew version—of the Jews begging the rich for mercy with their fractured bones—and further developed it to include a description of the Jews using not only their own abject bodies for their act of begging but the dry bones and rotten flesh of their dead relatives, too. Differently put, Peretz's addition constitutes the elaborate dramatization of the act of begging.

Yet Peretz's revision does not simply dramatize Bialik's portrayal of the beggars. By adding the dead bones and rotten flesh, and by locating the scene at the graveyard, it also introduces an entirely new theme into the poem. In digging up their ancestors' remains, the poem's "schnorrers" embody the inversion of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. In Ezekiel 37, the dead, dry bones rise from their graves, are enveloped in new flesh and skin, and revive and return to Erets Yisraʾel. In Peretz's Kishinev graveyard, on the other hand, the dry bones are being dug up neither by God nor his prophet, nor are they being dug up in order to live again, become whole, and be delivered. They are being dug up only to remain mutilated and serve as a prop of beggary for the humiliated Jews of Kishinev. Instead of a "tkhiyes hameysim," a redemptive resurrection, we find here a gothic image of reanimated corpses.

The graveyard scene thus goes beyond a critique of the diasporic, passive victims (the "beggars") to challenge the very narrative of the Jewish national revival. By turning the ultimate Jewish redemptive vision into a macabre and grotesque nightmare, Peretz's added lines interrogate the prospects of the nationalist discourse on renaissance. Significantly, despite the highly evocative descriptions of decaying flesh and gruesome injuries, the poem in Peretz's version carries what we might call a "softening" effect, because instead of a total indictment and outright rebuke of the Jews of Kishinev and their actions of self-defense or lack thereof, Peretz's rendition shifts the readers' attention away from a castigation of diasporic Jewry and toward broader ideas, stirring up anxieties shared by the readerly collective.

In other words, Peretz's version of the poem exhibits this "softening" tendency through images that, paradoxically perhaps, belong to the gothic, the macabre, and the grotesque. This tendency is manifested not only in the graveyard scene, but also in other choices he made when rendering the poem into Yiddish. Overall, Peretz's version is much shorter than the first Hebrew version. There are many sections that he translated only in part, occasionally skipping a line or half a sentence. He also omitted full stanzas on two occasions (totaling 54 lines).[53] Yet there are also places where he added elements or expanded the text. Most expansions serve two main trends: to strengthen the repetitive free rhythm that Peretz produced for this poem, creating an impression of oral delivery, and to strengthen the grotesque, macabre, and gothic effect of the poem.

For example, when the poetic speaker orders the prophet to go into an attic and listen to a chain of stories told by a spider dancing on a cobweb, the spider tells of a living baby latched onto his mother's cold breast. Yet in Peretz's version the harrowing effect results not only from the proximity of the single living baby to the synecdochical dead breast of his mother, but from multiple babies, all sucking their mothers' fresh blood rather than milk directly out of the dismembered breasts.[54] Similarly, while Bialik's condensed Hebrew version mentions a child who began crying "mommy" but only a "ma" was heard, Peretz elaborates and explains this image by adding: "a knife slashed the word apart."[55] After the prophet is guided to escape the attic, the godly speaker commands him to keep silent and not cry out in anger or sadness. Peretz added a justification for this order: "Do not shout! Do not wake up the dead!"[56] The prospect of the dead coming back to life is absent from Bialik's Hebrew version, and it carries a strong gothic effect, which materializes later in Peretz's rendition in the added graveyard stanza. Finally, the grotesque, macabre, and gothic effects of the poem are reinforced by a shift in the overall balance between the prophetic-discursive parts of the poem, which focus on the castigation of the Jews of Kishinev, and the visual, descriptive parts, which depict their gruesome suffering.[57] While Peretz kept most of the graphic descriptions and even added to them, the majority of the many lines that he excluded in his translation belong to God's discourse of wrath and vengeance delivered to his prophet.

In his own Yiddish translation, Bialik adopted many of Peretz's poetic, visual, and conceptual choices. Aside from adding the graveyard scene, he excluded lines 213–46, as Peretz did. And so we find in Bialik's Yiddish version a shift in the overall balance between the discursive and the descriptive, leaving less room for theological, conceptual, and national discussions and emphasizing the gothic and the grotesque. Bialik also adopted Peretz's image of the babies sucking their mothers' blood instead of milk and even integrated some more gruesome depictions and gothic tropes of his own. For example, the scene that takes place in the "stable of the killing" opens in the Hebrew version with a description of the drunk pogromists lying around like "an encampment of giant owls and terrifying bats" (*ukhemaḥane tinshemot ʿanak veʾeimei ʿatalleifim*).[58] In Bialik's Yiddish version, however, the owls and bats are turned into vampires (*vampiren*, in Yiddish), echoing the vampiric, blood-sucking babies. The prophet then roams the garden surrounding the stable,

seeing images such as "cast away wheels / broken, sprayed with blood and brains / with spokes wide open and stretched out / like murderous fingers stretched out to someone's throat" ("tsvorfene reder / tsebrokhene, mit blut un markh farshpritste, / mit shpitsn ofene un oysgeshtrekte, / vi finger merdershe tsu emetsens a haldz").[59] Overcome by sorrow and terror, Bialik's Yiddish version describes a black huppah, or wedding canopy, hanging over the prophet's degenerate head. The image of the black huppah integrates Jewish folklore with gothic tropes and conjures a troubling fusion of wedding and funeral, life and death.[60]

Roaming the garden, the prophet then encounters another being. In the Hebrew version, this figure is an abstraction of sorrow:

וּכְעֵין צַעַר נֶעְכָּר, צַעַר עוֹלָם, תּוֹסֵס שָׁם וְחָרֵד.	And a somewhat murky sorrow, an infinite sorrow, ferments there in horror.
אֵין זֹאת כִּי אִם־רוּחַ דַּכָּא רַב־עֱנוּת וּגְדָל־יִסּוּרִים	It is no other than the inconsolable and agonizing spirit of anguish
חָבַשׁ כָּאן אֶת־עַצְמוֹ בְּתוֹךְ בֵּית הָאֲסוּרִים,	That had confined itself here in this prison,
נִתְקַע פֹּה בִּדְוַי עוֹלָם וְלֹא־יֹאבֶה עוֹד הִפָּרֵד.	Trapped here in eternal agony and wishes never to depart.[61]

Bialik's Yiddish version expands these four lines into thirteen lines, describing an embodied spirit of suffering—or, perhaps, the *ghost* of suffering (*gayst*, in Yiddish):

אַ וויי, אַ שטומער וויי, אַ צער, אַ גרויסער צער. . .	A pain, a muted pain, a sorrow, a great sorrow . . .
יסורים שטומע פלאַטערן. . . שאַ, שטילער,	Silent miseries flutter . . . Hush, quiet,
ס'איז נאָך דאָ עמעצער מיט דיר, ער בלאָנדזשעט	**there is someone else here with you**, he wanders
מיט צוגעמאַכטע אויגן אין דער פֿינסטער,	with eyes shut in the dark,
פֿאַרטיפֿט אין אָפּגרינדען פֿון גרויסן אומעט,	absorbed in an abyss of great sadness,
שטרעקט אויס פֿאַר זיך צוויי דאַרע הענט אַנט צום שוואַרצן	stretching his thin arms forward into the black
מיט שטומע אַנגסטן אָנגעפֿילטן חלל	void filled with silent angst,
און טאַפּט דאָס פֿינסטערניש מיט בלינדע פֿינגער,	and he taps the darkness with his blind fingertips,

ניט זוכנדיק קיין אויסוועג פֿאַר זײַן טרויער—	not searching for an outlet for his anguish—
ס'איז ער, ס'איז ער אַליין, דער גרויסער שמערץ-גײַסט,	it is him, it is he himself, the great Agony Spirit [/Ghost],
וואָס האָט זיך זעלבסט פֿאַרשלאָסן דאָ אין תּפֿיסה	who had locked himself up here as in a jail,
און אָן רחמנות זיך אַליין פֿאַרמישפּט	and without mercy he gave himself a verdict
אויף אייביקע, אויף גרויסע שטומע לײַדן.	of eternal, immense, silent misery.[62]

In rewriting his poem in Yiddish, Bialik, I conclude, followed Peretz's turn to the gothic and the grotesque not only in adopting the cemetery scene, but also in the overall mood and imagery of the poem.

This shared inclination notwithstanding, a fundamental gap separates the use of the gothic and the grotesque by Peretz and Bialik, respectively. The initial evidence pointing to this difference lies on the level of the text. Bialik adds, in both his Yiddish and his final Hebrew versions, a couplet that concludes the cemetery scene with his final verdict for the Jews of Kishinev: "And as you stretched out your hands for alms so will you stretch it, and as you schnorred so will you go on schnorring." Peretz, on the other hand, does not fold this scene back into the prophetic discourse and avoids providing an immediate didactic elucidation for the prophetic vision of bones being dug up from their graves; rather, he lets the disturbing image resonate.

This difference between the two poets' use of the gothic and the grotesque should be understood, once again, in political terms. The supposedly inherent "harshness" of Hebrew and "softness" of Yiddish is yet another displacement of a political struggle onto the symbolic and the metaphysical. That political struggle, and the divergent positions on it taken by Peretz and Bialik, can best be explained against their use of the gothic. As Karen Grumberg has shown in her study *Hebrew Gothic*, producing a unified definition of the gothic is a complicated task.[63] Identifying quintessential gothic characteristics such as the figures of the ghost or the vampire, images of graveyards, abandoned ruins, and decaying castles still comes short of a productive definition. Beyond those, Grumberg suggests, we might get closer to an understanding of the gothic by pointing to its goals, effects, and means.

The gothic relies on the unnatural, the fantastic, the exotic, and the bizarre in order to produce terror, and this terror in return functions within the text in several ways. For Grumberg, the Hebrew gothic and the terror it produces through its representation of the past both serve to challenge common notions of Jewish history. Several critics have similarly noted the concurrent rise of gothic fiction in Europe with the Enlightenment notions of subjectivity, rationality, and history, wherein the gothic constantly returns to the past as a locus of alterity while refusing rational modes of telling that past—namely, linear and chronological.[64] While history touches on the past in order to draw from it a lucid narrative, and perhaps even meaning, the gothic, argues Jerome de Groot in his study of the historical novel, invokes the past not as "a source of information or something to understand, but rather a place of horror and savagery."[65] Whereas the nationalist discourse turns to the past in search of national renaissance and resurrection, constructing a linear historical narrative of national restoration, Peretz reanimates the Jewish past in order to terrify the present, refusing to draw a national critique and an enlightened, lucid project of reformation from it.

Conversely, what does the emphasis on the abject suffering and horrifying decay of the Jews of Kishinev serve in Bialik's version? Hamutal Bar-Yosef and Miron have conceptualized Bialik's simultaneous invocation of national renaissance and passive decay as constituting, respectively, an "embarrassing conflict" or a "gloomy skepticism" regarding the successful prospects of national revival and Hebrew renaissance.[66] Yet, rather than describing these two ends as contradictory, we should note that, for Bialik, they serve as a generative and productive dialectic in constructing the national discursive apparatus. The prospect of revolting decay not only grants meaning to the project of a national renaissance through its negation, but it also functions as a disciplining device. In this sense, we could follow Jack Halberstam's analysis of the vampire and similar gothic figures as "not simply a monster, but a technology of monstrosity"—an overdetermined character that aggregates notions of race, class, gender, and sex, a machinery that produces otherness.[67] Bialik's monstrous and revolting spectacle of beggar-Jews similarly acts as a technology of othering, a discursive machinery that generates Bialik's nationalist formulation of revival. Bialik's poetic speaker, we recall, is a sovereign God who talks to God's poet-prophet, who, in turn, stands outside of the victimized collective.

This chasm between the prophet and the people is most profoundly expressed in the graveyard scene, where for the first and only time in this poem, the addressee is not the prophet but the Jews of Kishinev themselves, who are commanded by God and God's prophet to dig up their ancestors' bones. This separateness constitutes Bialik's prophet as the ultimate literary and critical imaginative figure in Hebrew literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—"Hatsofeh leveit Yisraʾel," or "The Watchman/Observer to the House of Israel." Divorced from the people yet still knowing their ins and outs, autonomous yet integrated, the *tsofeh* is best positioned to criticize the people in order to solve the collective "Jewish question" as an all-knowing, powerful national intellectual.[68] Bialik's imaginative figure, the prophet-watchman, uses the gothic and grotesque as a discursive technology of nationalizing and disciplining, generating a productive, nationalist dialectic of revival and decay, whereby those who fail to nationalize are being punished through their abject humiliation.

Bialik's expansive description of the humiliation, abjectness, and degeneration of the Jews of Kishinev, in other words, is part and parcel of his political device. It imagines and encodes power and powerlessness, revival and decay, as the only and ultimate binary choice for the national collective. In simpler terms, we can say that the poem produces the nationalist, and particularly Zionist, negation of Jewish diaspora—a *negation* whose role is to portray the national, territorial project in *positive* terms.[69] I conclude that the idea of revival and the images of decadence in Bialik's versions of the poem are therefore not contradictory. Instead, together they generate the productive tension of life and death that animates the nationalist discourse on revival, that gives it meaning and power.[70]

In contrast with Bialik's use of the productive tension between revival and decadence, I argue that Peretz's turn to the aesthetics and thematics of the gothic and the grotesque serve other purposes, collapsing the binary tension between revival and decay. Peretz's version of the graveyard scene does not end with a bleak verdict to the Jews of Kishinev, and it does not enact the same shift of speaker and addressee from the prophet to the people; this choice serves to blur the stark distinction between the prophet and the collective. Peretz's divergent use of these literary materials is, moreover, evident not only in his translational choices, but also in another work of his, the renowned drama *Ba nakht afn altn mark* (*A Night in the*

Old Marketplace), which, I argue, is another unacknowledged source of the final, canonized version of Bialik's "In the City of Killing."

RESURRECTION AND INSURGENCE: THE BELATED RETURN OF A SUPPRESSED ORIGIN

Peretz first published his drama *Ba nakht afn altn mark* in 1907, a year after Peretz's Yiddish rendition of "Masaʾ Nemirov," yet he began working on it as early as 1904 and shared early drafts of it with Bialik when both were living in Warsaw that year. Bialik then wrote enthusiastically in a letter to the Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem that "Peretz wrote a drama with which he will shock the entire world."[71] After first publishing it in 1907, Peretz continued editing and rewriting the drama. There are three significantly different versions of the full text, and smaller excerpts of it were published with additional changes over the years until Peretz's passing in 1915.[72]

In the drama, night falls on a stereotypical marketplace of a Polish Jewish town. As the last living slowly disperse and go home in the first act, souls from purgatory, from "oylem hatoye," appear in the second act, and, after them, in the third act, which is described as "a ballet of the dead," the dead arise from their graves and take over the abandoned marketplace in a demonic *danse macabre*. In the fourth and final act, the dead grow weaker toward the break of dawn because they cannot tolerate the sunlight.[73] When they return to their graves, the living appear again in the marketplace. The drama is therefore another instance in this web of textual relatives where we encounter the image of the dead rising from their graves.

Yet Peretz's drama not only constitutes a suppressed origin of the poem's graveyard scene (in its early drafts from 1904) but also, in its 1907 version, articulates a direct response to Bialik's concept of national decay and revival. The drama, especially in its first publication (1907), has no real plot. Most of its characters appear for a short while on stage, and many never speak more than once. Among both the living and the souls from purgatory we find Zionists, revolutionaries, and Sejmists (members of the Jewish Socialist Workers Party, supporters of Jewish Autonomism), who argue over the best form of Jewish revival or solution for the Jewish condition symbolized in the play by the weeping and sighing old synagogue.[74] Parodying the very idea of a revival, national or otherwise, the dead rise from their graves in the

town's old cemetery, yet they remain dead. They appear as both physically revolting and petty, as they often complain about what we might call their living conditions in their graves, where they are constantly being eaten up by worms or suffering from frostbites.[75] The rebellious Apikoyres, the Heretic, calls on the other dead to refuse to return to their graves and instead dust themselves off, tear off their corpses the cobwebs of Torah and tradition of generations past, and dance the can-can.[76] In later versions of the play, the Apikoyres was merged with another character, the Lets—a joker/demon/prankster—into the main figure of the play, the Badkhen, or Jester, who becomes its only full protagonist.[77] Among the dead characters we see grayish looking dead who cannot remember their names, old dead who argue over who will lead them in prayer, children running around and playing hopscotch, a young woman and her mother who complain about the style of their shrouds, and a klezmer group playing without instruments. They are thus neither living nor entirely dead, but at the same time they are comically, painfully human and are therefore entirely unsuited for an apocalyptic, prophetic vision.

At other times, the reanimated dead are happy and charming. This is the case with the macabre figure of a bride who appears accompanied by four *shamosim* holding extinguished candles and carrying a black huppah over her head. While scholars who have studied the drama, chief among them Chone Shmeruk and Avraham Novershtern, argue it is a dramatization of Bialik's poem "In the City of Killing," I argue the opposite—namely, that the play provides an inversion of the poem and a critique of Bialik's binary discourse on national revival and decadence.[78] The scene of the bride under the black huppah constitutes one of those inversions. Peretz refers to Bialik's image of a black huppah which appeared in the latter's 1906 Yiddish version of the poem as an emblem of horrifying and contagious decay. In the play, this image refers to the folk tradition of positioning a black (rather than white or colorful) huppah over a dead man or woman who were engaged to be married but died before their wedding.[79] Against this macabre image, however, in Peretz's drama we learn that the young bride never wanted to marry the older groom chosen for her by her parents because she loved another boy, so she is in fact very happy to be dead. That boy, we learn (in the third version of the drama from 1915), is still alive and has turned into the town drunk, sleeping at night in the old square. Suddenly she finds him, and he stares in shock at the hole dug in her cheek

by worms. He drops dead, and the two are happily reunited in death. Death, in other words, is their redemption. It is a grotesque, worm-infested redemption, but a redemption nonetheless. The play therefore inverts not only the solution for the Jewish "problem"—a solution of rebellion and insurgence—but also the very idea that such a solution and rebellion are needed. The bride under the black huppah, after all, is very much content. She is not mourning her bitter fate, as the black hup-pah did in Bialik's "In shkhite-shtot," but blesses her redemptive death.

Questioning the means to bring about redemption or national renaissance, or the character of such redemption is not the only way Peretz inverts Bialik's poem. Peretz also challenges the very claim that a national revival is required or desired. After all, in order to aspire for national revival, one must first assume that the nation is dead. As I am showing in this article, the play in its entirety challenges this assumption first and foremost in its structure; at the end of the play, when the sun rises, the dead remain dead, and the living go on living their uninterrupted lives. In the last version of the play, Peretz finally crystallized his inversion of Bialik's poem and his critique of Bialik's revivalist discourse by invoking historical figures, the Maccabees, who are celebrated in Jewish nationalist discourse overall and used in Bialik's poem in order to humiliate the present-day Jews of Kishinev. This is the context in which these heroes appear in Bialik's Hebrew version of the poem:

וְעַתָּה לֵךְ וַהֲבֵאתִיךָ אֶל־כָּל־הַמַּחֲבוֹאִים:	And now go and I shall bring you to all the hiding places:
בָּתֵּי מָחֳרָאוֹת, מִכְלְאוֹת חֲזִירִים וּשְׁאָר מְקוֹמוֹת צוֹאִים.	The soiled outhouses, pigpens, and other foul places.
וְרָאִיתָ בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֵיפֹה הָיוּ מִתְחַבְּאִים	And with your own eyes you will see where they hid—
אַחֶיךָ בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וּבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם שֶׁל־הַמַּכַּבִּים,	Your brothers, your people, the descendants of the Maccabees,
נִינֵי הָאֲרָיוֹת שֶׁבְּ"אַב הָרַחֲמִים" וְזֶרַע הַ"קְּדוֹשִׁים",	Heirs to the lions in "Father of Mercy" and the seed of the "Martyrs,"—
עֶשְׂרִים נֶפֶשׁ בְּחוֹר אֶחָד וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שְׁלֹשִׁים,	Twenty souls in one crack, and thirty upon thirty,
וַיַּגְדִּלוּ כְבוֹדִי בָּעוֹלָם וַיְקַדְּשׁוּ שְׁמִי בָרַבִּים. . .	They have magnified my glory across the world and sanctified my name in full view . . .

מְנוּסַת עַכְבָּרִים נָסוּ וּמַחֲבֵא פִּשְׁפְּשִׁים הֶחְבָּאוּ,	Like a flight of mice they fled, and hid like fleas,
וַיָּמוּתוּ מוֹת כְּלָבִים שָׁם בַּאֲשֶׁר נִמְצָאוּ.	And they died like dogs, there, where they were found.[80]

Attesting to the supposed radical distinction between the brave, masculine, and heroic Judean ancestors and the humiliated, abject, and cowardly Jews of Kishinev who preferred to hide, covered in feces, rather than fight their oppressors, Bialik again uses a binary opposition of heroism versus humiliation, and the prospect of a national revival versus the reality of cowardice and anxiety of a failed renaissance. The mocking invocation of the Maccabees is yet another technology of discipline and sanction in Bialik's poem.

In the third and final version of the drama, Peretz crystallized his inversion of Bialik's model through his own allusion to the historical Jewish heroes. This reference appears in the second act (inhabited by souls from the purgatory). A group of speakers propose solutions to the Jewish problem: a national home in Palestine, a voice in parliament, or another homeland, not in Palestine, on a land not soaked with Jewish blood. A group of proletarian laborers stand up against them and call instead for a rehabilitation of the Jewish subject, a "new hero," a new Jew. In response to their visions of the new heroic Jew, the figure of the "folk poet"—who, as Shmeruk notes, serves as an ironic parody of pompous national poets—provides a vision of his own:

היימישער דיכטער:	*Folk Poet*:
עס גייען טעג, גרויסע טעג . . .	Behold the day!
הנה ימים באים, ימים באים—	And there shall come to pass
גרויסע העלדן – שוין אין וועג!	Great heroes and great doings . . .
בדחן:	*Jester:*
געקומען! אין חורבה פֿאַרשטעקט	It already has. They're stranded in the ruin.
(צו דער חורבה רופֿנדיק)	(Calling out to the ruin)
העי גיבורים! חשמונאים!	Hey, you New Maccabees,
ווערט אַנטפלעקט!	Let's have a look at you:
	Come show yourselves!

(די חורבה הילט זיך איין אין אַ טויטלעך־בלאַס־ בלאָלעכן שיין, אין דעמזעלבן שיין אינגעהילט קומען, זיך אונזיכער וואַקלענדיק אַרויס—די.)	(The ruin is enveloped in a deathly pale blue light, in which the martyrs are seen groping their way out into the street.)
קדושים (און נעמען זיך קלאָגנדיק און, אין איינוועגס, לויבנדיק, די ריכטונג צו דער שול)	*Martyrs (boastfully lamenting, they hobble toward the synagogue):*
אָפּגעריסן אַלע ריפּן!	Our ribs are cracked in two!
און געלעכערט ווי די זיפּן!	We're full of holes like sieves . . .
בדחן:	*Jester:*
גרויסע טעג! הויכע טעג!	O grand new times!
העלדן—גאָר אַ נײַער מין!	Heroes of a brand-new kind!
קדושים:	*Martyrs:*
מיר צייכענען מיט בלוט דעם וועג . . .—	With our blood we have made signs To show the way.[81]

In this scene, the folk poet produces a poetic vision in the prophetic mode, imitating the language of biblical prophets as well as that of Bialik's poem. Yet, in reality, the great new heroes he anticipates are the same old Jews who hide in the ruins and preserve the ethos of dying in sanctification of God's name instead of in a heroic battle. What differentiates Bialik from Peretz in their invocation of the Maccabees is that Bialik blames the cowardly Jews in the failure of revival, while Peretz rejects the very aspiration for such renaissance. Following the image of the Maccabees in the ruin, we encounter two visions of revival: a character named Someone, a romantic figure who calls for a resurrection of the dead in search of the fantastic and magical, and the traditionalist and mystic figure named the Recluse, who invokes Ezekiel's vision of the valley of the dry bones and hopes for that vision to materialize.[82] Finally, the act ends with the Jester commanding the dead to rise from their graves.[83] The following act, we recall, is inhabited by the dead corpses rising from their graves. Both the romantic fantasy of magical revival and the theological hope for redemption or resurrection materialize in what we may describe as a grotesque attack of reanimated corpses. Peretz's narrative thus fully materializes the idea of renaissance and drives it to its final revolting, yet comic conclusions.

What use, then, does Peretz make of the gothic, the demonic, and the grotesque? And how does this use differ from Bialik's? In staging a national resurrection, Peretz essentially asks whether the people is indeed dead and in need of revival. He also challenges the conflation of the theological and the secular in the romantic fantasy of revival, thus interrogating the role of redemptive revival in civic, political discourse.[84] Whether coming back to life in a demonic *danse macabre* or in a messianic *tkhiyes-hameysim*, or resurrection, the dead and the Jewish past function in the play as haunting figures, instead of usable to produce a romantic narrative of Jewish renaissance. As in the gothic tradition, the past and the dead ancestors appear in the text in order to terrify the present, not to enlighten or reinvigorate it.[85] Peretz's drama, in a sense, stages a rebellion against Bialik's notion of national revival, which pejoratively views the Jews of Eastern Europe as degenerate, destitute, repulsive, and hopeless.

Similarly, in contrast with Bialik's ultimate literary figure of the prophet, who follows the emblematic figure of modern Hebrew literature, the Watchman, or *Hatsofeh*, Peretz envisioned another literary-critical figure altogether: the rebellious Jester—a prankster, a demonic leader of mockery, a revolutionary, an iconoclast. Against the Hebraist tradition of poet-as-prophet and critic-as-watchman, Peretz creates a literary persona that rejects the role of an all-knowing, transcendental, and sovereign critic. Instead of turning the image of the Jewish undead on its head, while still maintaining its power as a technology of othering as Bialik did, Peretz embraces the political peculiarity of the Jewish condition in Europe. He thus uses the Jewish past not in order to discipline it, normalize it, sublimate it, and contain it but in order to find in it the means and devices with which to speak about the diasporic present.[86] As far as Peretz was concerned, that present was very much alive and not at all dead or in need of resurrection. It is in the realm of daylight, when the dead retreat to the graveyard and the living return to the marketplace, where the townspeople are concerned with their troubles and joys of everyday life. While in Bialik's model, shared by other Hebraists such as Mikhah Yosef Berdyczewski, the tension between revival and decadence activates the nationalist discursive apparatus, in Peretz's model, the grotesque and its aesthetic relatives collapse that very opposition.[87]

Ba nakht afn altn mark, from its early drafts in 1904 to its final version in 1915, is therefore both an unacknowledged *origin* for the missing/added graveyard scene and thus of the belated, canonized version of Bialik's poem as a whole, and a *response* to and critique of Bialik's Hebrew and Yiddish versions and the nationalist discourse they establish. As such, it encourages us to reevaluate not only the history of this poem as a definitive moment of Hebrew and Yiddish literatures but also the presumed linearity of original and translation and the divergent political articulations evinced across its many variations.

CONCLUSION: TRANSLATION AND LITERATURE'S MATERIAL MULTIPLICITY

A bibliographical excavation of one of the most canonical works of modern Hebrew literature, "In the City of Killing," against its various translations and textual relatives and alongside a consideration of the possibilities of textual criminality or deceit reveals the poem as a heterogeneous, unstable text. We find in it multiple layers of concealment and trespassing, from the actual events in Kishinev in the spring of 1903, to the final, canonized version of the poem printed in 1923 and widely circulated in that final form ever since. Reading this poem must therefore be an act of archeological digging or sleuth-work.[88] This work involves recovering the suppressed testimonies that Bialik collected in Yiddish, translated into Hebrew, and then suppressed and contradicted in his poem; tracing the lines struck by the St. Petersburg censorship; identifying the missing stanza (the cemetery scene) and locating its origins in Peretz's translation and early drafts of his drama, which he shared with Bialik; noticing that Peretz never requested permission to translate or publish his translation, and that, per his questionable account, he tasked a young anonymous writer with producing a literal translation; following the missing stanza's adaptation in Bialik's Yiddish version; recognizing the inverting references to the poem across the three versions of Peretz's drama from 1907 to 1915; and finally encountering the cemetery scene in the 1923 canonized Hebrew version, which cements over the ruptured genealogy of the stanza and of the poem as a whole. We are prepared to perform this excavation when we consider translation not as the search for lost, pure originals, but as a contested and

unruly process, a back door to the literary text that allows us to commit our own acts of interpretive trespassing.

The fraught relationship between Peretz and Bialik turns our attention to translation as an act of amity and enmity that involves total devotion and transgression, admiration and disloyalty. Far from serving as a liberal practice of mutual legibility between languages or cultures, the translational story I tell here aims to return the question of commensurability from the metaphysical to the political. The entangled web of breaches and gaps in the poem's translational genealogy is an opportunity for a materialist reading of the poem, one that is invested in the political, material effect produced by a literary text. By 1907, the two Yiddish translations, Jabotinsky's Russian translation and Hirszhorn's Polish translation, had made the poem available to overlapping audiences across languages, ideological convictions, and cultural registers, so that virtually every Eastern European Jewish reader could have read it in at least one (and for some probably two or three or more) of its various versions. Jabotinsky had made the poem famous to the Russian and Russian-Jewish readership even earlier, when he published a poetic introduction to his translation of the poem in 1904 in the Russian-Jewish journal *Evreiskaia zhizn*.[89] The 1904 poetic introduction was published under the mishnaic motto *Im en ani li mi li* ("If I am not for myself, who will be for me")—the same motto that headed Leon Pinsker's influential nationalist, proto-Zionist manifesto in 1882, *Autoemanzipation!*—so the Russian-language readership of Bialik's poem had been given an interpretive framework with which to approach the poem even before it appeared in Russian. As demonstrated here, the two Yiddish renditions also framed the poem differently, altering and emphasizing its emotive language and evocative imagery—or, in Peretz's terms, "softening" Hebrew's prophetic harshness. The Polish translation, on the other hand, integrated Bialik's Hebrew and Yiddish versions and offered a textual hybrid and another original in its own right. Finally, Peretz's 1906 translation together with his 1907 drama not only enabled an alternative reading of this canonical poem but ultimately staged a demonic and parodic rebellion against Bialik's nationalist discourse on revival and decay.

The divergent and simultaneous manifestations of this poem—its material multiplicity—should therefore alert us to the multiplicity of political avenues to the poem for its contemporaries. The same poem, in its various articulations, stages a

political conflict over the means, forms, and even language of national revival, as well as a consistent resistance to the very national framework. The translational archeology of beggary therefore allows us to hope to narrate a new genealogy of Hebrew and Yiddish literatures beyond definitive originals and stable interpretations, precisely from their generative moments of destruction, brutality, and violence.

NOTES

1   Y. L. Peretz, "Iggerot el Ḥ. N. Bialik," *Kenesset. Divrei sofrim lezekher Bialik* 4 (1939): 31. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Hebrew and Yiddish are mine. I aimed to provide the most accurate English substitutes I could find, at the expense of Hebrew and Yiddish rhyme, meter, and rhythm in order to make the comparative reading of the various sources as transparent as possible. I also provided the Hebrew and Yiddish sources to benefit the readers who will find those useful. At the same time, as this article argues, insistence on binaries of original versus translation, loyalty versus betrayal, and literality versus creativeness should itself be scrutinized, so at this point I leave the question of my own added layer of translational intervention in the history of this poem open to future critique. I also thank Adriana X. Jacobs for her help in making these translations.

2   Karen Emmerich, *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 13–14.

3   Adriana X. Jacobs, "Extreme Translation," in *Prismatic Translation*, ed. Matthew Reynolds (Oxford: Legenda, 2019), 154–70.

4   The expression "not one" is a paraphrase of Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Syracuse, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.

5   Lydia H. Liu, "The Question of Meaning-Value in the Political Economy of the Sign," in *Tokens of Exchange*, ed. Lydia H. Liu, Stanley Fish, and Fredric Jameson (New York: Duke University Press, 2000), 14.

6   Liu, "Question," 13.

7   For more on the gendered and sexualized aspect of the conflict between Hebrew
     and Yiddish in the modern Jewish imagination, see Naomi Seidman, *A Marriage
     Made in Heaven: The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of
     California Press, 1997).

8   David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish
     Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 84. See also Alan
     Mintz, "Kishinev and the Twentieth Century: Introduction," *Prooftexts* 25, nos.
     1–2 (2005): 2; Dan Miron, "Meʾir haharegah vahalʾah. Hirhurim ʿal hapoʾemah
     shel Bialik bimeloʾt meʾah lehofaʿatah," in *Beʿir haharegah, biqqur meʾuḥar. Bimeloʾt
     meʾah shanah lapoʾemah shel Bialik*, ed. Dan Miron (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2005),
     71–154; Hannan Hever, "Qorbenot hatsiyyonut. ʿAl beʿir haharegah meʾet Ḥ.
     N. Bialik," in *Beʿir haharegah, biqqur meʾuḥar. Bimeloʾt meʾah shanah lapoʾemah shel
     Bialik*, ed. Dan Miron (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2005), 64–65; and Ariel Hirschfeld,
     Kinnor ʿarukh. Leshon haregesh beshirat Ḥ. N. Bialik (Tel Aviv: ʿAm ʿOved, 2011). A
     brilliant reassessment of the characterization of the poem as a watershed moment
     can be found in Olga Litvak, "The Poet in Hell: Ḥ. N. Bialik and the Cultural
     Genealogy of the Kishinev Pogrom," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2005):
     101–128.

9   Yaakov Goren, ed., *ʿEduyot nifgeʿei Kishinov 1903* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad,
     1991).

10   The Russian, Polish, and German translations will be discussed briefly below. For
     the English translations, see the monumental translation, produced in the 1930s
     and republished in 2005, by the Canadian poet A. M. Klein, "*Beʿir hahareigah*/The
     City of Slaughter," *Prooftexts* 25, nos. 1–2 (2005): 8–29. For an analysis of Klein's
     translation, see Lawrence Kaplan, "A More Contemporary Voice: A. M. Klein's
     Original and Revised Translations of the Hebrew Poems of Hayyim Nahman
     Bialik," *Prooftexts* 25, nos. 1–2 (2005): 128–52. A second English translation by
     Atar Hadari appeared in Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, "City of the Killings," in *Songs
     from Bialik*, trans. Atar Hadari (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 1–11.

11   Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, "Beʿir haharegah," in *Shirim*, vol. 1 of *Kitvei Ḥ. N. Bialik
     umivḥar targumav*, 4 vols. (Berlin: Ḥoveve hashirah haʿivrit, 1923), 320–31, esp.
     322 line 54.

12   Bialik, "Beʿir," 331, line 266.

13 For a comprehensive historical account of the pogrom, see Steven Zipperstein, *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History* (New York: Liveright, 2018). Comparisons between the poem and the testimonies appear in Alan Mintz, *Ḥurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Litvak, "Poet"; Miron, "Meʿir"; Hever, "Qorbenot"; and Michael Gluzman, "Ḥoser koaḥ—hamaḥalah hamevishah beyoter," in *Beʿir haharegah, biqqur meʿuṿ ar. Bimeloʾt meʾah shanah lapoʾemah shel Bialik*, ed. Dan Miron (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2005), 13–36.

14 Iris Milner, "'In the City of Slaughter': The Hidden Voice of the Pogrom Victims," *Prooftexts* 25, nos. 1–2 (2005): 60–72 and Mikhal Dekel, "'From the Mouth of the Raped Woman Rivka Schiff', Kishinev, 1903," *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 36, nos. 1–2 (2008): 199–207.

15 Gluzman, "Ḥoser koaḥ."

16 Naʿama Rokem, "Haim Nahman Bialik's Icy River of Prose," *Prosaic Conditions: Heinrich Heine and the Spaces of Zionist Literature* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 95–118.

17 Leah Price, "Introduction: Reading Matter," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 121, no. 1 (2006): 15. See also David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, "Introduction," *The Book History Reader*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 2.

18 Bentsiyon Katz, "ʿAl 'Masa Nemirov,'" *Moznayim* 4, nos. 28–29 (178–79) (January 8, 1933): 32–33.

19 In fact, as Yitzhak Bakon and Yedidiah Peles have both shown, there are at least two mistakes. The first is in the translation of the line "uveʿerev dam shenehem" ("and as their blood intermixed") which Peretz translated as "un az untergangen iz di zun" ("and as the sun set"), mistranslating the word *ʿerev* as "evening" instead of its homonym "intermixing." The second mistake is in the line "kakhah teʾenok umah asher avdah avadah" ("so sighs a nation that is lost"), which Peretz translated as "azoy klogt an oreme, dershlogene / dinst far a groshn" ("so cries a poor, beaten / maidservant for a penny"). This mistake is rooted in the nonvowelled spelling of the word *ummah* ("nation"), which visually resembles *amah* ("maidservant"). It is unclear to which one Bialik and Peretz are referring in their correspondence. See Yitzhak Bakon, *Bialik bein ʿivrit leyidish* (Beersheba: haqatedrah leyidish, 1987) and Yedidiah Peles, "Letoldot 'In shkhite-shtot'," *Iton 77* 8, nos. 54–55 (1984): 36–37, 55.

20 Peretz, "Iggerot," 31.

21 Peretz, "Iggerot," 32.

22   Peretz, "Iggerot," 32.

23   Peretz, "Iggerot," 33. Earlier in his career, it is worth mentioning, Peretz expressed other views about text and ownership when he himself was infuriated after Sholem Aleichem had edited his Yiddish poem "Monish" and published it with revisions without his consent.

24   Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, "196 [Letter to Ben Ami]," ed. Fishel Lachower, in *Iggerot Bialik*, 5 vols. (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1938), 2:17.

25   From here on I relate to four versions of the poem. (1) The first Hebrew version: Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, "Masa Nemirov," *Me'asef Hazeman* 1, no. 3 (1903): XXX. See a facsimile of this version in the appendix to Dan Miron ed., *Beʿir haharegah, biqqur me'uḥar. Bimelot meʾah shanah lapoʾemah shel Bialik* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2005). (2) Peretz's Yiddish translation: Y. L. Peretz, "Bialiks 'Masa Nemirov'. Fray ibergezetst durkh Y. L. Peretz," *Der Veg* 2, no. 18 (1906): 3. (3) Bialik's Yiddish translation: Bialik, "In shkhite-shtot," *Fun tsar un tsorn* (Odessa: Kadimah, 1906), 7–22. (4) Bialik's final, canonized Hebrew version: Bialik, "Beʿir," 320–31.

26   Bialik, "Beʿir," 331 lines 258–66.

27   Dan Miron, "Beʿir haharigah," in *1899–1934*, vol. 2 of Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, *Shirim*, ed. Dan Miron et al., 3 vols. (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University and Dvir, 1990), 165–67. Others have accepted this theory; see Peles, "Letoldot"; Chone Shmeruk, "In shkhite-shtot," in *Shirim beyidish, shirei yeladim, shirei hakdashah*, vol. 3 of Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, *Shirim*, ed. Dan Miron et al., 3 vols. (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University and Dvir, 1990), 69–72; and Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siecle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 195.

28   Yeruḥam Fishel Lachower, *Bialik, ḥayav viyetsirato*, 3 vols. (Tel Aviv: Dvir and Mossad Bialik, 1955), 2:587–91 and Bakon, *Bialik*.

29   Gershon Stavsky, "Kh. N. Bialik in Sosnowiec," *Der Moment*, July 13, 1934, 8 and July 27 1934, 8. The *Index to Yiddish Periodicals* documents only four articles by Stavsky, two of which are his memories of Bialik. Yet the *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur* (New York: Alveltlekher Yidisher Kultur-Kongres, 1965) suggests that there were more in the local Yiddish press of the Sosnowiec area.

30   Bakon, *Bialik*, 62.

31 For more details on the history of this poem and its censorship, see Katz, "ʿAl masaʾ,"
     as well as Bentsiyon Katz, "Letoledot hatsenzurah shel hasifrut hayisreʾelit,"
     Hatoren. Yarḥon lemadaʿ, lesifrut, uletsiyyonut 4, no. 10 (1922): 48–51.

32 Katz, "ʿAl masa." Stavsky might be conflating the history of the publication of this
     poem with that of another poem. The bibliographer Eliezer Raphael Malachi,
     "Peraʿot Kishinov beʾaspaqlariyat hashirah beʿivrit uveyidish," *ʿAl admat Bessarabia*
     (Tel Aviv: Jewish World Congress, 1963), 64–65 relates that "On the Slaughter"
     ("ʿAl hasheḥitah") was meant to be published in Warsaw and was instead
     published in Odessa because of Russian censorship. Bialik wrote and published this
     other poem in *Hashiloaḥ* before traveling to Kishinev.

33 Such corroborating evidence is indeed absent from Bialik's correspondence and from
     biographical accounts written by closer friends such as Nathan Goren (Grinblat),
     Pirqei Bialik. Kenes massot ureshimot, ed. Ziva Shamir (Tel Aviv: Safra, 2014).
     A more puzzling perspective arises in a 1933 article by the journalist Shmuel
     Rosenfeld, who at the time of the poem's publication was a member of the
     editorial board of *Hazeman*. Rosenfeld describes the censorship obstacles and his
     own contribution to the renaming of the poem from "Beʿir haharegah" to "Masaʾ
     Nemirov." With regard to the graveyard stanza, he writes that he does not trust
     his own memory of the events, and that he has no concrete memory of the censor
     omitting these lines, although in recounting the rest of the censor's decisions he
     writes in detailed accuracy. We are thus left with the question of how to understand
     and conceptualize Rosenfeld's selective forgetfulness on this matter. Without
     corroborating evidence, there is no reason for us to accept Stavsky's account, which
     is replete with inaccuracies, and to favor the memories of a marginal, occasional
     writer over those of celebrated bibliographers such as Malachi and of central
     journalists and editors such as Katz and Rosenfeld.

34 Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, *Skazanie o pogrome. Perevod s evreiskavo iazyka i vvedenie
     Vladimir Zhabotinskavo* (Odessa: Kadimah, 1906).

35 Katz, "ʿAl Masaʾ" and Stanislawski, *Zionism*, 187.

36 Stanislawski, *Zionism*, 193–95.

37 Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, *Powieść o pogromie. Poemat*, trans. Samuel Hirszhorn
     (Warsaw: Głos Żydowski, 1907).

38 For instance, Hirszhorn's opening line of the poem integrate both the Hebrew and
     Yiddish openings and add an adaptation of the Yiddish introductory couplet that
     guides the prophet to harden his spirit and not fear; Bialik, *Powieść*, 5. Another

example is in Hirszhorn's choice to expand certain descriptive parts of the Hebrew poem, following Bialik's Yiddish rendition, as he does in the scene that depicts the prophet going around the "stable of the killing" and encountering the "spirit of anguish," which has been expanded from four lines in Hebrew to thirteen lines in Yiddish; Bialik, *Powieść*, 10. I dedicate a discussion to these changes between the Hebrew and the Yiddish in the next pages.

39 The Odessa censorship approval on Jabotinsky's translation states the following date: December 7, 1905 (December 20 in the Gregorian calendar).

40 It is absent from the 1911 collection of poems translated by Ernst Müller, where the poem is titled "Nemirow" following the first publication of the poem, as well as from the 1922 and 1935 updated and expanded editions of Müller's translations. It is also absent from Abraham Schwadron's 1919 translation of the poem, which appeared in a booklet, *Nach der Pogrom* (*After the Pogrom*), dedicated to Bialik's pogrom poems "In the City of Killing" and "On the Slaughter." See Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, "Nemirow," *Gedichte*, trans. Ernst Müller (Köln: Jüdischer Verlag, 1911), 93–99; Bialik, "In der Stadt des Würgens," *Ausgewählte Gedichte*, trans. Ernst Müller (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1922), 134–40; Bialik, "In der Stadt des Würgens," *Ausgewählte Gedichte*, trans. Ernst Müller (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1935), 157–63; and Bialik, *Nach dem Pogrom*, trans. Abraham Schwadron (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1919).

41 Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, "In der Stadt des Schächtens," *Gedichte (Aus dem Jidischen übertragen)*, trans. Ludwig Strauss (Berlin: Welt Verlag, 1921), 21–39. I thank Matthew Johnson for bringing this translation to my attention.

42 Bialik, "In shkhite-shtot," 7.

43 For a review of such poems published in the aftermath of the pogrom, see Shmuel Werses, "Bein tokheḥah le'apologetikah. Beʿir haharegah umisaviv lah," *Meḥqerei yerushalayim besifrut ʿivrit* 9 (1986): 23–54.

44 Lachower, *Bialik*, 2:587–91.

45 Bakon, *Bialik*. A similar argument regarding the Yiddish "softness" appears in a review article that appeared in 1906 after the publication of Bialik's Hebrew collection *Mishirei hazaʿam* and the Yiddish collection *Fun tsar un tsorn*; see Hillel Zeitlin, "Yetsirot veyotsrim: hirhurei sifrut," *Hazeman* 4, no. 163 (August 9, 1906): 1–2.

46 Bialik, "Beʿir," 330 lines 247–57.

47 Bialik, "Beʿir," 330 lines 238–39.

48 Bialik, "Beʿir," 326–27 lines 153–55.

49   Miron, "Meʿir," 76–77 has acknowledged the severity of these lines, yet he holds
      on to the theory that the missing stanza was omitted at Aḥad Haʿam's demand.
      Miron does not explain how Aḥad Haʿam could support the publication of these
      dehumanizing lines.

50   Bialik, "Beʿir," 326, line 153 in Hebrew.

51   Compare Bialik, "Beʿir," 326–27 lines 148–67 in Hebrew with Peretz, "Bialiks 'Masaʾ
      Nemirov.'" and Bialik, "In shkhite-shtot," 16–17.

52   Peretz, "Bialiks 'Masaʾ Nemirov.'"

53   Bialik, "Beʿir," 326, 329–30 lines 128–37 and 213–46 in Hebrew; see Peretz, "Bialiks
      'Masaʾ Nemirov.'"

54   Peretz, "Bialiks 'Masaʾ Nemirov,'" lines 49–50 in Hebrew.

55   Peretz, "Bialiks 'Masaʾ Nemirov,'" line 51 in Hebrew.

56   Peretz, "Bialiks 'Masaʾ Nemirov,'" lines 56–57 in Hebrew.

57   See also Bakon, *Bialik*, 105–17.

58   Bialik, "Beʿir," 324 line 101.

59   Bialik, "In shkhite-shtot," 14–15.

60   Bialik, "In shkhite-shtot," 14. The black huppah may refer to two Ashkenazi folk
      traditions. The first is the tradition of performing marriage-related ceremonies
      for the dead. When a person who died was engaged to be married, they would
      be carried to their grave under a black huppah, be buried with their wedding
      rings, or even married to the living partner under a black huppah; see Moshe
      Klein, *Minhagei ḥatunah etsel haʿam hayehudi leʾedotav* (Tel Aviv: Y. L. Peretz,
      1994), 114–15. The second tradition is that of marrying orphans or invalids at a
      cemetery as an act of charity in order to stop a plague or another threat; see Klein,
      Minhagei ḥatunah, 113–14 and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Weddings," *YIVO
      Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx
      /Weddings. For a history of this second phenomenon, see Natan Meir, *Stepchildren
      of the Shtetl: The Destitute, Disabled, and Mad of Jewish Eastern Europe, 1800–
      1939* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 89–116 ("The Cholera
      Wedding").

61   Bialik, "Beʿir," 324 lines 118–21 in Hebrew.

62   Bialik, "In shkhite-shtot," 14–15 (emphasis original).

63   Karen Grumberg, *Hebrew Gothic: History and the Poetics of Persecution* (Bloomington:
      Indiana University Press, 2019), 5.

64   Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 2014) and David Punter, "The Ghost of a History," *New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1–10.

65   Jerome de Groot, *The Historical Novel* (London: Routledge, 2010), 16.

66   Hamutal Bar-Yosef, *Maga'im shel dekadens. Bialik, Berdyczewski, Brenner* (Beersheba: Ben Gurion University, 1997), 84, 58–67 and Dan Miron, "Literature as a Vehicle for a National Renaissance: The Model of Peretz versus that of Bialik," in *The Enduring Legacy of Yitzchok Leybush Peretz*, ed. Benny Kraut (New York: Center for Jewish Studies, Queens College, 2006), 45.

67   Jack (Judith) Halberstam, "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's 'Dracula'," *Victorian Studies* 36, no. 3 (1993): 337.

68   On this contradiction in the image of "Hatsofeh," see Hannan Hever and Amir Banbaji, "Mavo. Historiyah sifrutit uviqqoret hasifrut," in *Sifrut umaʿamad. Liqrat historiografiyah politit shel hasifrut haʿivrit haḥadashah*, ed. Hannan Hever and Hannan Banbaji (Jerusalem: Van Leer and Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2014), 12–101. On Bialik's hybrid positioning vis-à-vis the national collective—he represents it, yet never its full substitute; he remains critically distant from it yet maintains an a priori, intimate knowledge of it and its desires—see also Hamutal Tsamir, *Bialik baʿal guf. Teshukah, tsiyyonut, shirah* (Benei Braq: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2019), 87–109.

69   On the negation of diaspora in Zionist thought, see Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile within Sovereignty: Critique of 'The Negation of Exile' in Israeli Culture," in *The Scaffolding of Sovereignty: Global and Aesthetic Perspectives on the History of a Concept*, ed. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, Stefanos Geroulanos, and Nicole Jerr (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 393–420.

70   In conceptualizing this seeming duality between revival and decay as in fact not a contradiction but a generative duality that constructs Bialik's nationalist discourse, I follow Tsamir, *Bialik*, 41–45. Tsamir rightly criticizes the scholarship on Bialik that highlights an artificial separation between the national and the individual and Bialik, and shows how the two in fact coalesce to create Bialik's national subject. Bialik's nationalist discourse, like all nationalist discourses, ultimately relies on contradictions that Tom Nairn, "The Modern Janus," in *The Break-Up of Britain*, (London: New Left, 1977), 317–50 called the "modern Janus."

71   Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, "95 [Letter to Sholem Aleichem]," *Iggerot Bialik*, ed. Fishel Lachower, 5 vols. (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1938), 1:203.

72 Y. L. Peretz, *Ba nakht afn altn mark. Dramatishe poeme in fir aktn* (Warsaw: Haʾor, 1907) and Peretz, "Ba nakht afn altn mark. A zakh in fir aktn," in *Dramen*, vol. 3 of *Ale verk*, 11 vols. (Warsaw: Progres, 1909), 1–86 (separate pagination). The third and final version was published only posthumously; see Peretz, *Ba nakht afn altn mark. A troym fun a fibernakht* (Vilna, 1922). Citations here to the final version refer to the following source: Peretz, "Ba nakht afn altn mark. A troym fun a fibernakht," in *Dramen*, vol. 3 of *Ale verk*, 19 vols. (Vilna: B. Kletskin, 1925), 229–350. For an English translation based on the final version, see Peretz, "A Night in the Old Marketplace," trans. Hillel Halkin, *Prooftexts* 12, no. 1 (1992), 1–70. Detailed analyses of the drama in its various articulations have been presented by Maks Erik, *Konstruktsye-shtudyen. Tsu der Konstruktsye fun 'der goldener keyt'. Fun 'bay nakht afn altn mark'. Batrakhtungen vegn patos* (Warsaw, 1924); Chone Shmeruk, *Peretzes yiesh-vizye. Interpretatsye fun Y. L. Peretzes 'bay nakht afn altn mark' un kritishe oysgabe fun der drame* (New York: YIVO, 1971); and Avraham Novershtern, *Qesem hadimdumim. Apoqalipsah umeshiḥiyut besifrut yidish* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2003). Shmeruk's study includes a critical edition of the final version, and the appendices include earlier published excerpts of the drama.

73 Peretz, *Ba nakht afn altn mark. Dramatishe poeme in fir aktn* (1907), 58.

74 Peretz, *Ba nakht afn altn mark. Dramatishe poeme in fir aktn* (1907), 13–14, 28–30.

75 Peretz, *Ba nakht afn altn mark. Dramatishe poeme in fir aktn* (1907), 45, 49, 58. The image of the dead complaining about the worms eating them up draws on the talmudic saying "The gnawing of maggots is as excruciating to the dead as the stab of a needle is to the flesh of the living" ("kashah rimah lemet kemaḥat babasar haḥai"); see b. Shabbat 13b.

76 Peretz, *Ba nakht afn altn mark. Dramatishe poeme in fir aktn* (1907), 52.

77 Erik, *Konstruktsye-shtudyen* and Shmeruk, *Peretzes yiesh-vizye*. On the role of the Badkhen in the later versions, see Novershtern, *Qesem*, 62–66.

78 Cf. Shmeruk, *Peretzes yiesh-vizye*, 113 and Novershtern, *Qesem*.

79 Klein, *Minhagei ḥatunah*, 114–15.

80 Bialik, " Beʿir," 323 lines 86–94.

81 Peretz, "Night," 35.

82 Peretz, "Night," 37 and 38, respectively.

83 Peretz, "Night," 38.

84 On the political theology generated by Bialik's poem, see Hever, "Qorbenot."

85 "One cannot seriously claim that bringing characters from earlier generations on stage is consistent with the neo-Romantic vision prominent in Peretz's work at the turn of the century and after. In *A Night in the Old Marketplace*, the past displays no spiritual superiority over the present; nor are its representatives in any way superior or inferior to the living persons on stage. The chimerical ambition to imbue the dead with new life is presented in the play as a purely demonic impulse doomed to fail"; see Abraham Novershtern, "Between Dust and Dance: Peretz's Drama and the Rise of Yiddish Modernism," *Prooftexts* 12, no. 1 (1992): 75.

86 A similar appreciation of Peretz's writings and politics as presentist appears in Michael Steinlauf, "Hope and Fear: Y. L. Peretz and the Dialectics of Diaspora Nationalism, 1905–1912," in *Warsaw, the Jewish Metropolis*, ed. Glenn Dynner and François Guesnet (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 227–51. I disagree with Steinlauf's interpretation of Peretz's work wholly in light of the ideology of diasporic nationalism. As argued here, in his literary works Peretz renounced the very idea of national revival, and such incongruities between his outspoken ideological convictions and his literary works characterize his work throughout.

87 As Shmeruk, *Peretzes yiesh-vizye*, 194–95 has noted, despite elements of the drama that might bring to mind Nietzschean notions, Peretz does not use decadence as a source of national revival, as such use appears in Berdyczewski's work. Peretz expressed his reservation from Berdyczewski's use of decadence and admiration for Nietzschean ideas in a letter to Berdyczewski; see Y. L. Peretz, "Mikhtavim leMikhah Yosef Berdyczewski me'et Y. L. Peretz," *Moznayim* 8, no. 1 (1939): 93–95. For more on Berdyczewski's version of decadence, which informed his espousal of national renaissance, see Bar-Yosef, *Maga'im*, as well as Roni Masel, "Revival and Decay: On the Politics of Gothic Ambivalences in Modern Hebrew Literature," *Middle Eastern Gothics: Spectral Modernities and the Restless Past*, ed. Karen Grumberg (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2022).

88 On archeology, see Michel Foucault, "What is Critique," in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer, trans. Lysa Hochroth and Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Semiotexte, 1997), 41–81. On sleuthing as a critical practice in the production of political hope, see the remarks of Ernst Bloch, "Something's Missing: A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing," in *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1988), 14: "It is from the Marxist viewpoint definitely necessary to act like a detective and to trace and

uncover what each case is about—without any kind of positivism. [. . .] For the purpose of the exercise is not the technocratic." Rather, it is utopian.

89 Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik, "Mart 1904, pered paskhoi," *Evreiskaia zhizn* 11 (1904): 160–62. On Jabotinsky's translation, see Stanislawski, *Zionism*, 178–202, as well as Svetlana Natkovich, *Ben ʿanenei zohar. Yetsirato shel Vladimir Jabotinsky baheksher haḥevrati* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2015), 112–16.