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Created in the Image? Holocaust Perpetrators in Israeli Fiction

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Abstract

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This dissertation studies aesthetic, political and ethical dimensions of the representation of Holocaust perpetrators in Hebrew and Israeli fiction published since the mid-1940s. Drawing on recent scholarship by Holocaust historians, such as Christopher Browning and Daniel Goldhagen, and on classical and post-classical theorists of narrative, such as E. M. Forster, Wayne Booth, and James Phelan, I examine modes, models, and possibilities applied in the treatment of Nazis, Nazi collaborators, and Germans in this fiction. My dissertation demonstrates that in Hebrew and Israeli fiction published before the mid-1970s, the dominant – but not exclusive – mode of characterization renders Holocaust perpetrators as relatively simple, stereotypical, and marginal characters. In contrast, as of the mid-1980s, the dominant mode of perpetrator characterization in Israeli fiction renders Nazis and Germans as significantly more complex, nuanced, and central characters, and the conventional boundary between them and their Jewish victims is blurred. These observations are based on a comprehensive survey of the major Hebrew

and Israeli texts responding to the Holocaust, and more specifically on Ka-Tzetnik's *Salamandra* as a case study of earlier writing, and on David Grossman's *See Under: Love* and A. B. Yehoshua's *Mr. Mani* as case studies of recent fiction. As I show in detail, these contrasting literary approaches towards the perpetrators correspond to developments in other venues of Israeli public discourse, such as political speeches, journalism, and textbooks. My discussion also explores various ethical commitments and implications involved in the aesthetic and mimetic choices this fiction makes in its treatment of evil, as well as evaluating accomplishments and future developments in Israeli literary construction of the perpetrators. Although focused on Israeli fiction, the principles of inquiry utilized in my dissertation may contribute to understanding how other literatures respond to the Holocaust. Furthermore, my study can promote our understanding not only of how Israel perceives the Holocaust, but also how it perceives itself.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
History, Aesthetics, and Ethics in the Literary Representation of Holocaust	
Perpetrators.....	10
Holocaust Perpetrators in Israeli Fiction, mid-1940s-mid-1970s.....	49
Holocaust Perpetrators in Israeli Fiction, 1986 Onwards.....	92
Ka-Tzetnik's <i>Salamandra</i>	148
David Grossman's <i>See Under: Love</i> and A. B. Yehoshua's <i>Mr. Mani</i>	190
Conclusion.....	245
Notes.....	261
Works Cited.....	270

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Introduction

No no: they definitely were
 human beings: uniforms, boots.
 How to explain? They were created
 in the image.

(Dan Pagis, "Testimony")

Bitterly, with agonizing irony, the Hebrew poet Dan Pagis utilizes the Biblical verse "God created man in his image" (Gen. 1:27) to reply to an implied argument, which expresses a prevalent conception: that the Nazis were monsters and demons, rather than humans, and as inhuman they committed the genocide against European Jewry, which came to be called the Holocaust. Classifying Nazis as exceptions to humanity, or, at least, classifying Germans as nationally distinct in a way that enabled their violence in the Holocaust, was a popular perspective in the aftermath of WWII. Under the traumatic impact of the horrors conducted in the camps and ghettos, with the growing Jewish but also wider public sense of guilt, rage, and helplessness, excluding the Holocaust from history and the Nazis or even the entire German people from humanity seemed reasonable. It is also somewhat comforting to think that mass-murderers, such as Eichmann or Hitler, are fundamentally of a different make-up, of another – distorted – psychology, if not a different species. Positioning such a rift between victims and victimizers was also a way to maintain confidence in the human race, while knowing what one group of people did to another only a few years earlier. Considering this perception of the Holocaust and its perpetrators, which manifested (and continues to manifest) itself in various vehicles of cultural expression, the recent shift in the shaping of Holocaust memory is remarkable. In the decades following the war, studies of

Holocaust perpetrators concentrated mostly on leading Nazi figures and on the Nazi ideological and institutional mechanisms. Among the dominant texts published between the forties and sixties, one finds, for example, various psychological studies of high ranking Nazis and the Nazi dictatorship as a whole by Gustave Mark Gilbert, who served as a psychologist for the Nuremberg prisoners; Raul Hilberg's monumental *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), which portrays the destruction and its mechanism on a very large scale; and Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963). In the past three decades, there has been a stronger focus on the victimizers who are less central, often anonymous, individuals and collectives. Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men* (1993) and Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996) were both especially popular studies of one relatively unknown police battalion. Films, such as *Schindler's List* (1993) and *Valkyrie* (2008) and novels, such as Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader* (1995), and Jonathan Littell's *The Kindly Ones* (2006), present the same fascination with the mostly untold story of anonymous individuals and groups in the Nazi service. "What is evil?" and "what makes a person a Nazi war criminal?" are two of these texts' central underlying questions, made more relevant than ever by the atrocities of our own time, from the Balkans to Rwanda.

Within this cultural development, which incorporates the Nazi into the human realm, or, in any case, complicates the conventional opposition between victims and victimizers of the Holocaust, literature finds itself in a position of both privilege and duty because of its imaginative ability to explore the private and inner world of the individual. It is the dialogue of perspectives and voices, as Mikhail Bakhtin argues, which defines the novel, and Dorrit Cohn finds the presentation of mind the distinctive quality of

fiction. While perceiving perpetrators as inhuman tends to confine their literary embodiment to flat and marginal characters, usually limited to their historical role in the Nazi death machine, their inclusion within the human realm finds a strong mimetic manifestation in the embodiment of perpetrators as literary individuals, central characters that may be as complex as their victims. William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* (1979), David Grossman's *See Under: Love* (1986), Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader*, and Jonathan Littell's *The Kindly Ones* are dominant examples of novels that aim to explore the complex inner life of perpetrator characters.

However, the unique privilege of a fiction writer to imagine with detail where a sociologist will only surmise and a historian can say very little bears ethical responsibility. Plato was the first to warn against the influence of mimesis, but Wayne Booth's fundamental observation is more precise in this context. "Inside views," he argues in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, "can build sympathy" and force us to see "the human worth of a character whose actions, objectively considered, we would deplore" (378). Although the characters Booth had in mind were Jane Austen's and Henry James', his observation becomes strikingly crucial when the characters are Gestapo officers rendered from within. On the other hand, flat demonization of the Nazis and their collaborators often produces poor art. More importantly, it may locate the Holocaust and the individuals that generated it outside of history. Such mimetic practice, common in religious representations of evil, is perilous in the case of the Holocaust. Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer puts it well: "If the problem is perceived as being primarily one of God's intervention, or of Satan's, then we do not have to bother about historical understanding. Instead of the Nazis being responsible, an inexorable, mysterious, super-

natural force caused this event” (45). The ethical responsibility laid on the shoulders of fiction writers dealing with the Holocaust is therefore one of the heaviest in the history of imaginative writing. The writer must negotiate ethics and aesthetics in a morally responsible way, avoiding judgmental demonization of the perpetrators on the one hand and their humanizing exonerations on the other. Moral ambiguities are most likely inevitable in such negotiation, and here literature proves its virtue once more in addressing the challenge of perpetrator representation. As Jèmeljan Hakemulder establishes empirically, literary narratives, especially ambiguous ones, simulate a “moral laboratory,” which develops the reader’s ethical competence. In contrast to theoretical texts dealing with ethical problems, fiction is able to maintain the complexity of the moral situations it treats, and its influence on the reader is greater since it aims more at identification than at understanding, working on emotion rather than solely on cognition. At the same time, the reader always maintains a degree of distance, allowing a critical observation. These qualities make the genre of fiction especially productive in confronting and communicating the conceptual, factual, and ethical complexity of the Holocaust and its perpetrators. Formulating the models and possibilities, accomplishments and failures of these confrontations is central to my study.

My focus on Israel is grounded in the distinctive qualities of its culture. Israeli writers deal with the Nazi era in national terms, as Jews but even more as citizens in a state which is in many ways a reaction to the genocide. Israeli writing about the Holocaust is inscribed in a national, religious, and cultural infrastructure, which roughly overlaps with an opposition rooted in historical facts: Jews as victims and Nazis as victimizers. This is not to say that this division is not complicated by disputable issues

such as the debates over Jewish collaboration, but the attention this debate gained in Israeli public discourse diminished after the Eichmann trial (1961) and it never gained notable expression in Hebrew and Israeli fiction, which consistently focuses on Jews as victims and Nazi as victimizers. When looking at the course of Israeli literary responses to the Holocaust, one finds that despite this basic moral position towards the catastrophe associated with the identity of Hebrew writers and readers, the portrayal of perpetrators evinces a striking line of development, which locates in the forefront tensions and nuances repressed and restrained in earlier writing. While in early Hebrew and Israeli Holocaust writing, the conventional mimetic paradigm for casting perpetrators was in the form of flat prototypical characters, recent writing tends to “humanize” and complicate them, and so it blurs the boundary between victim and victimizer. Whereas in the literary testimony of Ka-Tzetnik, written immediately after the war, there is an unambiguous division between the helpless Jew and the powerful German hunter, for the survivors’ biological and psychological descendants, writing from the mid-nineteen eighties onward, victims are sometimes also victimizers, perpetrators are multi-dimensional individuals, and under the category of “perpetrators” one finds women, civilians, various levels of accountability and even victims of some sort. Sometimes the victimizer’s act is downplayed in relation to worst acts; sometimes Germans and Jews develop a connection of friendship or blood; and often narrative techniques involving perspective or representation of language abolish the gap between reader and perpetrator, consequently mitigating the latter’s historical accountability in favor of some understanding of his or her actions. The ethical dimension of such representation, in reader response as in the very act of writing, complicates or even undermines conventional dichotomies and

conceptions of accountability. Although my project considers relevant European and American literature and scholarship, concentrating on Israel allows close reading and focused contextualization of a corpus that is a telling and interesting case study.

For scholars of Hebrew and Jewish literary responses to the Holocaust, the representation of perpetrators is uncharted territory. The pivotal questions addressed until now by scholar in the field are of trauma and silence, survival and memory, while the significance of perpetrators in this fiction remains under-examined. The development in the representation of evil may indicate changes in Israeli self-perception related to the country's rising capacity for self-defense, and, in the wider Jewish context, it may reflect a change in contemporary Jewish self-definition in relation to the catastrophe and to victimhood. In regard to these questions, my research can make a pioneering contribution. It also suggests a model for the study of representation in other literary traditions, such as American and German writing. Theoretically, my conclusions regarding the possibilities of narrative treatment of evil and fascism may contribute to our understanding of conundrums located at the intersection of literature, historiography, and philosophy, especially in regard to the growing field of narrative ethics. The modes and models of representation which I formulate can apply to other discourses representing the Holocaust while struggling with similar challenges, such as historiographical scholarship, journalism, and high school textbooks. Most importantly, formulating the moral tensions generated in complex and humanized representation of evil reinforces the enterprise of this fiction to replace simplistic dichotomies with a fresh confrontation, and renews an important lesson – or warning – about the Holocaust and its perpetrators: that they, also, were created in the image.

My dissertation divides into six chapters. Chapter one establishes the theoretical infrastructure of the research. It inquires into the definition of “Holocaust perpetrator” in general and then focuses on the Jewish and Israeli context, formulating the prototype which dominates representation in this corpus. Once the prototype is defined, the chapter discusses the possibilities of its poetic embodiment through various theories of character and narrative devices, such as voice, perspective, and analogy. Special attention is paid to the rhetorical effects generated in the act of reading, which enable the manipulation of ethical values. A central section argues the possibility of literary representation of the Holocaust, and more specifically, the representation of evil within the Holocaust. Berel Lang asserts that “when the commitment to evil in principle is set in the network of bureaucratic and technological causality which further diffuses the role of individual agency, the options of literary representation are proportionately limited” (147). Based on a critical reading of Lang’s theory and on my findings regarding literary responses to the Holocaust, I argue that in fiction the subjectivity and agency of the individual perpetrator gain revealing and powerful expression.

Chapters two and three establish the textual ground of the study through a survey of Hebrew and Israeli responses to the Holocaust; mainly fiction, but also journalism, political discourse, and textbooks. Chapter two demonstrates how before the mid-seventies, during the early period of Holocaust representation, writers such as Katzetnik, Naomi Frankel, Hanoch Bartov, Yoram Kaniuk, and Amos Oz typically embody their perpetrators in flat, static, and demonized prototypes, generally dominated by their historical image. Chapter three examines how in the later period, since the mid-eighties, writers such as David Grossman, A. B. Yehoshua, Savyon Liebrecht, Rivka Keren, and

Itamar Levi characterize perpetrators as nuanced individuals, generating a distinction between Germans and Nazis, and both are humanized or at least complicated in a manner which invites readers' sympathy and obscures the opposition between victim and victimizer. Both chapters trace the cultural, political, and ideological forces within Israeli society which impacted this poetic evolution. The following two chapters conduct close reading of central Israeli Holocaust writers as manifestations of this literary tradition. Chapter four deals with the opening three books of Ka-Tzetnik's *Salamandra* sextet (1945-1961), which established the perpetrator prototype dominating the fiction of the time. Chapter five examines David Grossman's *See Under: Love* and A. B. Yehoshua's *Mr. Mani*; both present an unprecedentedly complex portrayal of a self-contradictory Nazi. It was Grossman's Obersturmbannführer Neigel – the death-camp commander who is also a childish story-teller and a loving father – and the ethical challenge he poses, that initially propelled my research.

My conclusion discusses issues that are tangential to the focus of my study. First, against the background of this remarkable change in the ways Hebrew and Israeli fiction represent Holocaust perpetrators: which aspects of representation persist from the earlier writing to the recent fiction? What are the reasons for this continuity and what are its implications? In answering these questions, I examine two factors – direct rendition of mind and the emphasis on the character's persistent Nazi affiliation – to determine how, despite the developments, recent Israeli novelists remain committed to the perspective and conventions of earlier writing. Second, what are the ethical complications involved in fiction which portrays Nazis as fully-fledged individuals, often agonizing ones? Here I try to determine the moral risk and value in recent perpetrator representations in Israeli

fiction, especially in the context of Holocaust memorialization. Finally, where is Israeli fiction heading in its treatment of Holocaust perpetrators? Considering *Fine People*, published by the Israeli writer Nir Baram in 2011, I try to determine if Israeli writers are following the trends developed since the eighties or if they are taking a new path in confronting the mimetic and ethical challenge of embodying Holocaust perpetrators as literary characters. I end this dissertation with an attempt to evaluate what type of texts are most successful in dealing with the challenge of perpetrator representation, the example they set for future writing, and their contribution to the memorialization of the Holocaust.

Chapter 1

History, Aesthetics and Ethics in the Literary Representation of Holocaust Perpetrators

The present chapter establishes the factual and theoretical infrastructure of this research. It is conducted simultaneously on two different axes. One relates literature to history: how Holocaust perpetrators are imagined in literature in relation to historical facts of specific perpetrators or their category. The other is within literary tradition: how perpetrator characters develop over the course of Israeli literary history.

The first section of the chapter addresses the question “Who is a Holocaust Perpetrator?” based on historical facts but with special attention to the perspective of Jewish writers and readers. The second section, “Evil and the Individual in Literature,” opposes the long-standing claim that literature’s subjective bias limits and distorts its representation of the Holocaust. The third section, “Holocaust Perpetrators in Fiction – Theory and Method of Investigation,” discusses theoretical perspectives on fictional character, which will be applied in my study of perpetrator characters. Using examples from European and American literature, this section examines the obstacles and possibilities of representing Holocaust perpetrators as individuals. Section four, “Two Modes of Characterization: A Historical Perspective,” presents some introductory observations regarding my study of Holocaust perpetrators in Israeli fiction as a corpus.

I. Who is a Holocaust Perpetrator?

An answer to this question integrates two separate discussions, one for each component of the phrase “Holocaust perpetrators.” Of the two terms, “Holocaust” and “perpetrators,”

the former term is simpler to define. The Greek *holokaustoma* is used in the Septuagint to designate a type of ritual sacrifice that was to be completely burnt, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the term came to indicate complete destruction by fire but also by natural causes. In the 1950s the term was applied primarily to the destruction of the Jews and other groups under the Nazi regime. “Holocaust,” however, is problematic since the Nazis did not intend any sacrifice or offering in the religious sense, nor were their actions an act of natural catastrophe. Hebrew, since the early 1940s, has used the term *Shoah* (from Isaiah 10:3 and Proverbs 3:25), and Yiddish uses *khurban* (applied usually in reference to the Temples); both mean destruction.¹ The Hebrew and Yiddish terms are therefore semantically more accurate than “Holocaust,” and *Shoah* is probably more precise than *khurban*, which is traditionally used to describe catastrophes in Jewish history, hence obscuring the Holocaust’s uniqueness. Both, however, are limited to the point of view of the victim and do not place the destruction within the overall deeds of the Third Reich. For this reason Berl Lang suggests the term “the Nazi genocide against the Jews,” which characterizes the event by “its most essential property; namely, the effort by the Nazis to destroy the Jews as a group, and to destroy the individual members of that group because – and only because – of that membership” (xii). This term also expresses a fundamental characteristic of Jewish literary responses to the events: the texts comprising this corpus focus on the persecution of Jews, and their treatment of the annihilation of other groups or simply the atrocities of WWII as such is marginal. Lang’s approach is most suitable for accuracy, and the Yiddish and Hebrew terms are most suitable for Jewish literature because they reflect “from within” the viewpoint of the Jewish victims, writers, and readers. Nevertheless, “Holocaust” has the simple advantage

of being a conventional English word, and it is dominant in the scholarship to which my study belongs. For this reason, as well as for the sake of economic writing, and since the terminological complications have been clarified above, “Holocaust” is used predominantly throughout this essay.

Given the focus of the Hebrew and Israeli corpus on the “Nazi genocide against the Jews,” perpetrators in Hebrew Holocaust fiction are the people involved in the persecution of Jews, as part, in support of or even just under the protection of the Nazi system. Roughly speaking, we can say that Holocaust scholarship observes several categories of “perpetrators,” all of whom are to be distinguished from “victims” (Jews in my context) and “bystanders.” The most dominant category of perpetrators, in both act and classification, is that of the Nazis, diversified by sub-categories and affiliations of national-ethnic identity (Germans or not), or organizational and ideological affiliation: military, Nazi party or forces, civilians. These traits may easily intersect, depending on individual cases and the perspective of investigation. Such possibilities of overlap and divergence, as we shall see, find clear expression in literature. Another category of perpetrators is that of the non-Jewish collaborators with the Nazis, who supported, participated or even led persecutions of Jews. Such collaboration can be a random act or a more systematic conduct, independently or as part of an official police or military unit. The most familiar example these days is that of Ivan Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian convicted in May 2011 for facilitating the death of over 28,060 Jews, while serving as a guard in the Sobibor death camp during 1943. The central evidence against Demjanjuk was his service record, testifying he was working with and trained by the SS. The very affiliation, rather than documented actions, was sufficient for the German court to convict. The third

category of Holocaust perpetrators is that of Jewish collaborators, often identified with members of the Judenräte (Jewish councils) and the ghetto police or Kapos (work supervisors). Finally, the fourth category in this classification is what Primo Levi, in *The Drowned and the Saved*, calls “the gray zone,” including “low-ranking functionaries” and collaborators “only apparently,” who in some measures, perhaps with good intentions, collaborated with the authorities (45-46). As my study examines Holocaust fiction rather than the Holocaust as an historical phenomenon, the following discussion is oriented by the shaping of the category of perpetrators in Israeli Holocaust consciousness.

Chronologically, Jewish collaborators gained much attention in Israel of the two decades following the Holocaust. Not so much in fiction, with the exception of *Ka-Tzetnik*, but they are evident in Israeli drama in both early and later Holocaust writing. Among the most successful plays we should mention Natan Shaham’s *New Account* (*Heshbon hadash* 1954), Ben-Tsyon Tomer’s *Children of the Shadow* (*Yaldei hatsel* 1962), Yehoshua Sobol’s *Ghetto* (1984), and Moti Lerner’s *Kastner* (1985). It is no coincidence that none of these dramatists could be involved in any way in collaboration due to both age and geographical distance. In Israel’s ideological climate, collaborators were not encouraged to tell their stories. The timing of publication of these plays can be explained in relation to the rarity of treatment of collaborators in Hebrew prose of the time. Drama (like poetry) is much faster to response to life than novels, and by the early sixties, before fiction had the time to respond, the issue of perpetrators was excluded from the Israeli scene. In the same manner, drama was much quicker to identify new ways to portray perpetrators in the early eighties, a few years before fiction followed this development. Non-Jewish collaborators among the local population in the countries

occupied by the Nazis gained little attention in Israeli fiction, again with notable exception in the early writing of Ka-Tzetnik.²

It was for dealing with Jewish collaborators that the Israeli Parliament legislated the “Nazis and Nazi Collaborators Punishment Law” (1950).³ Yechiam Weitz observes that the law manifests the attitude of Israeli society towards the Holocaust in the 1950s: focusing the blame not on the killer but on the victim, which reflects the difficulty of accepting the totalitarian nature of the Holocaust and the Jews’ complete lack of power to prevent it. While the Nazis and their actions were inconceivable at the time, almost fantastic in nature and magnitude, individual or collective acts of collaboration and passivity seemed tangible. They stood in stark contrast to the Zionist ethos of independence, evoking quick condemnation among Israelis. The alleged collaborators were reachable within the *Yishuv*, and even if not lynched on the streets, they were known by name.⁴ Most importantly, the identification and prosecution of Jewish collaborators strengthened the Yishuv’s perception that European Jews went “like sheep to slaughter.”⁵ In perception, proximity, and ideology, Jewish collaborators made convenient perpetrators. This perception reached its peak manifestation in the trial against Israel Kastner (1954-55), who was accused of sabotaging rescue attempts of Hungarian Jewry. Between the early fifties and the mid-sixties, about forty Israelis stood trial for collaboration. Some were exonerated and some received light sentences. The trials were more of interest to the community of survivors than to the Israeli public, which was focused on the construction and defense of the young state. Yet, the trials, the accusations, the negative atmosphere towards the collaborators which brought the

legislation of the law, and especially the Kastner trial – all put a face, a Jewish face, on the vague concept of a Holocaust perpetrator.

It is no coincidence that the delicate issue of collaboration gains its explicit and significant treatment probably for the last time in Ka-Tzetnik's *Piepel*, published in 1961, the year of the Eichmann Trial. Hanna Yablonka observes that the Eichmann Trial allowed Israeli society to encounter the Holocaust through the individual, while before it was perceived only in general terms, on the national level. The trial allowed a change to take place in the attitudes towards the survivors, and the Yishuv began examining its own actions during the catastrophe. Now it was legitimate to avoid a critical stance towards European Jewry during the war. This was a process, Yablonka notes, in which the perception of the survivors changed from "sheep to slaughter" to martyrs. After the trial, judges understood better the complexities of the Holocaust and the impossible choices it posed to the Jews. Exposed to the horrors through the Eichmann trial, the judges realized that in no way could they put themselves in the place of the collaborators, and their verdicts in the trials during the sixties tended toward leniency and sympathy for the collaborators (Yablonka 1996, 149-151).⁶ Most importantly in connection to my discussion here, the trial put the face of Eichmann, of the Nazis, on the category of Holocaust perpetrators. This time not the collaborators stood trial, but the murderers themselves. A new type of perpetrator, external and non-controversial, became visible when an entire country was magnetized to the voice and face of Adolf Eichmann.

Eichmann, "the architect of the Holocaust," exemplifies the first and the most prominent category of Holocaust perpetrators, both historically and in Israeli literature: Nazis who are active participants in the genocide against the Jews and also of German

national-ethnic origin. Beyond his high position within the Nazi leadership and the SS, Eichmann was a Transportation Administrator of the Nazi system. This position entailed, simply, the transportation of Jews to their death in the camps, such as that of 430,000 Hungarian Jews. A Nazi, a central figure in the genocide, a German – these attributes made Eichmann a founding clear-cut example of a Holocaust perpetrator in Israeli eyes. This category was present in Israeli collective consciousness before the 1961 trial, but only from a distance, through meditation, as opposed to the more tangible presence of the Jewish collaborators. The Nazis and Nazi Collaborators Punishment Law, for example, was legislated under public pressure to deal with collaborators who lived in Israel, rather than with the Nazis, only two of whom were ever actually tried under this law (Eichmann and Demjanjuk), versus about forty trials of Jewish collaborators.

In Israeli public discourse of the fifties and sixties, Nazis gained a popular demonization. This image is evident, for example, in Ka-Tzetnik's animalization of Nazi characters, the attribution of blood-thirsty insanity to the Nazi mind common in history textbooks of the time, and the kind of titles journalists gave Eichmann: the "executioner," "the murderer of millions of Jews," and "Satan," to whom Kastner "sold his soul," as was written in the verdict.⁷ In the 1950s, during the fierce debate regarding the reparations money from Germany, which was perceived in the public as an act of forgiveness and trade in Jewish blood,⁸ Menachem Begin represented a major portion of Israelis when arguing:

They say that a new German government has risen with whom we can talk, conduct negotiations, and sign an agreement. Before Hitler came to power, the German people voted for him. Twelve million Germans served in the Nazi army.

There is not one German who has not murdered our fathers. Every German is a Nazi. Every German is a murderer. Adenauer is a murderer... All his assistants are murderers (cited in Segev 1993, 216)

Such absolute negation of Germans and Germany as they are equated with the Nazis found expression in some of the laws and regulations in young Israel. Israeli passports at the time carried a small note declaring them invalid in Germany; some suggested outlawing visits in Germany; the German language was shunned in Israel, and German products were unofficially boycotted for many years. All this was feeding into an image of Eichmann as the epitome of the perpetrator. Other dimensions of the man, which contradicted this narrow and even reductive view in favor of a more accurate understanding of the situation, were denied. Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), which perceives Eichmann as a simple man whose evil was banal rather than monstrous, was rejected in Israel and not translated until 2000. Sharp criticism against the book, more concrete than ideological or moral, was also drawn against Arendt's accusation of the Jewish leadership's collaboration with the Nazis. This argument was originally made by Raul Hilberg in his 1961 study *The Destruction of the European Jews*, which was never translated to Hebrew. Hilberg was severely criticized, as was Arendt, by Israel's Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority.

In Israeli popular, cultural, and institutional perception of the trial, Eichmann acquired a one-dimensional image as a Holocaust perpetrator. The image manifests in the clearest and most concentrated manner the three typical and neatly overlapping attributes of this category of perpetrators as portrayed in Israeli writing from the end of the war

through the seventies: Nazi, German, and active participant in the persecution of Jews. Therefore, and although the transition in Israeli perception of perpetrators – from Jewish collaborators to Nazis – took place only following the trial, in the middle of the early period of Israeli Holocaust fiction, I refer to Eichmann’s public image as the “Eichmann prototype.” The prototype, embodying both earlier and later representations, constitutes the model of perpetrator characters. It sets background against which Israeli writers imagine their literary perpetrators, as well as the background against which Israeli implied readers understand these representations. It therefore also guides my investigation.

Not all cases were so indisputable. Eichmann’s excuses of “just carrying out orders” were rejected in court, and the justification for that is evident given his position of power within the Nazi administration. But Eichmann’s irrefutable accountability, although shared by a very large group of Nazi officials, cannot apply – certainly not to the same extent and accuracy – to the masses from which the Nazi regime drew its power. The potential incongruities among the attributes comprising Eichmann as a prototype of a Holocaust perpetrator present cases in which the classification is complicated or even undermined. If Eichmann is perceived as a Holocaust perpetrator because he answers the three criteria (also perceived as overlapping), German=Nazi=willing participant in the genocide, how are we to classify a German who is not a Nazi (ideologically or organizationally) or a Nazi by organizational affiliation or even by ideology, who acts to save Jews? Eichmann’s prototype of a Holocaust perpetrator also assumes male gender and power. How are we to perceive a German woman or a passive supporter, a bystander, a novice, and even a victim who is also German and/or Nazi? None of these cases (and

some others not mentioned here) fits the dominant model of Holocaust perpetrator embodied in Eichmann, and therefore it poses a challenge to our classification and judgment.

Different discourses deal with these ambiguities in different ways. The Israeli Nazis and Nazi Collaborators Punishment Law – grounded in the legal code of the Nuremberg trials and adapted to refer to Jews specifically – addresses crimes against Jews, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. It refers to a variety of violent actions of persecution, including some relatively indirect ones, such as instigation to persecute Jews, desecration of Jewish cultural or religious sites and values, transportation of Jews by force, and limitation of Jewish reproduction. Even a membership in a “hostile organization” is considered a crime, and there were many of those under the Nazi regime. But the law, as a law, is limited to actions, therefore ignoring a much wider troubling question, which cannot be ignored in the humanities: what is the responsibility of the masses of Germans who allowed, by action or lack of action, the Nazi genocide? What are the motivations behind their response? For Begin and large portions of the Israeli public the answer was clear. In West Germany and the world, the issue of Jewish collaboration was marginal, naturally, to the issue of Nazi or German accountability, which drew attention already during the war. Post-war sociological, psychological, and political theories, such as Adorno’s *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), tried to formulate some psychological qualities leading to fascism and antisemitism. In *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Hannah Arendt speaks of the “banality of evil,” that is the atrocities produced by bureaucratic systems, not by monsters. In the eighties, the German Historians debated division of responsibility: what role was played by the Nazi party and

what role was played by the German people. The controversy gained much exposure in the nineties in two books presenting opposing views. Examining testimonies and interviewing members of Reserve Police Battalion 101, conducting mass-killing tasks in Poland, Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men* (1992) argues that these were ordinary people who committed the massacres, not monsters or even Nazis. Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996) examines the same battalion and reaches a different conclusion: that it was the German culture and people that led to the genocide, following centuries of anti-Semitic propaganda. The debate continues today, growing more complicated with the increasing stream of discoveries in regard to the Holocaust.

On such ambiguities art prospers. For the Hebrew and Israeli literary responses to the Holocaust examined in this essay, this tension between unflinching accusations of all Germans on the one hand, and awareness of complexity on the other, is a source of fascination and an object of continuous contemplation. Furthermore, the literary treatment of this ethical ambiguity is amplified by fiction's distinct ability to render the mind. In the literary portrayal of Holocaust perpetrators, then, the plot thickens: not only known or documented actions or affiliations at the time of events are in play, but also intentions, dilemmas, emotions, and everything that takes place in the private domain of the individual. To the private domain we should add a whole range of factors involved in the act of artistic representation: perspective and narration; selection and combination of materials; literary form and genre; cultural patterns and traditions of perception and representation of specific items. All these have a direct impact on readers' classification and judgment of the characters in the fictional world. As we shall see, the writers studied here utilize these artistic devices to imagine a variety of mimetically complex and

ethically ambiguous possibilities ranging between the Eichmann prototype of absolute accountability and its complex opposites.

II. Evil and the Individual in Literature

In “Coming to Terms with Failure: A Philosophical Dilemma,” Kenneth Seeskin admits philosophy’s failure to understand evil. “To understand something,” he writes, “is to understand its purpose and function.” Goodness and intelligibility are related, but evil is “outside the bounds of rationality” (111). Despite the failure to offer a philosophical explanation of the Holocaust, Seeskin insists that “writing itself can be an act of resistance” (120). However, complex, interior literary representation of the agents of evil must demonstrate at least some grasp of evil’s nature. Irving Howe, in “Writing and the Holocaust,” formulates the difficulty of imagining evil in the novelist’s work. The novelist, Howe argues, assumes a “structuring set of ethical premises, to which are subordinately linked aesthetic biases, through which he can form (that is, integrate) his materials.” But confronting the reality of the Holocaust, the imagination is “intimidated, overwhelmed, helpless” in producing these premises and biases, certainly when it comes to creating the “autonomy and freedom of complex fiction” (188). When telling a story, according to Howe, the novelist must “make sense” of its materials and fictional world, a task which repeatedly proves itself impossible when the fictional world is also the world of the Holocaust, leaving the writer’s imagination a “captive of its raw material.” In this respect, the writing of a memoir, diary, chronology or historical description of events places the writer in a less difficult position. Howe’s essay refers to the annihilation of Jews, but his observations apply also to the perpetrators. If the novelist cannot imagine

evil – as he must do for a complex representation of evil’s individual agents – how can he write about it?

Another constraint of representing the perpetrators gains elaborate theorization in Berl Lang’s *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide*. Lang asserts that imaginative representation, by nature, personalizes even events that are impersonal and corporate, and it dehistoricizes and generalizes events that occur specifically and contingently. When it comes to a mass and impersonal historical event such as the Nazi genocide, the “contradiction” between the subject and the forms of literary representation, according to Lang, is evident, and with it the moral peril of falsification and misrepresentation: the “requirement of human agency cannot be met in writing about the Nazi genocide...in narrative fiction about the Nazi genocide, no literary basis is available for that one principle source of the discourse” (147-48). Such lack of agency exists also on the perpetrator’s part. The individual’s motivation for evil, Lang argues, may vary, but if the Nazi genocide “involves a knowing commitment to evil in principle beyond the psychological motives of the individual agents,” as he perceives the phenomenon, “the difficulties of literary representation will also be encountered there” (148). As Lang is central to my discussion, I cite his claim regarding perpetrators at some length:

What stories could be told of a person whose identity, whether in the representation or before it, was so *constant*, as to suggest that no choice or decision has motivated them? ...When the commitment to evil in principle is set in the network of bureaucratic and technological causality which further diffuses the role of individual agency, the options of literary representation are proportionately limited. (148; Lang’s italics)

It is precisely the individual consciousness that is denied in the act or idea of genocide – and the imposition of a representation of agency on that subject, involving also the persona of the author, conduces to a distortion that is both conceptual and moral. (154)

Lang grounds his argument about the misplaced literary role of subjectivity on Adorno's observation against representation of fascism:

The impossibility of portraying fascism springs from the fact that in it, as in its contemplation, subjective freedom no longer exists. Total unfreedom can be recognized, but not represented. Where freedom occurs as motif in political narrative today, as in the praise of heroic resistance, it has the embarrassing quality of impotent reassurance. The outcome always appears decided in advance by high politics, and freedom is manifested only ideologically, as talk about freedom, in stereotyped declamations, not in humanly commensurable actions (144).⁹

These bleak observations leave very little space, if any, for a portrayal of the individual – certainly victims, but also victimizers – in the literary representation of the Holocaust. However, Lang repeatedly clarifies that he is speaking on the level of principle, which logically, in his view, establishes that literature's focus on human agency introduces falsification into the representation, even if some works of literature are more successful than others. It is in regard to the balance between the level of principle and the actual literary corpus that I tend to disagree with Lang. As a close examination of Holocaust fiction and historiography reveals, the principle Lang formulates is constantly challenged

by both historical facts and their imaginative representation. Literature, I therefore argue, is not only adequate in the representation of the Holocaust, but in fact, can accomplish the task in modes beyond the reach of historiography.

Lang asserts that when the victims of the genocide – who became victims as a collective – “were faced by its imminence, they could (and did) respond individually; it could be argued that at *that* point, they became agents who then, in historical fact and potentially in literary representation, could motivate narrative structures” (147; Lang’s italics). In Lang’s own terms as informed by these lines, the constraints of literature in representing the Holocaust are lifted if characters respond individually to the persecution. What qualifies as “individual response”? From Lang’s use of “agents” and “historical facts,” and, elsewhere, “corporate events,” it seems that he refers to response as an act of resistance with a palpable impact on historical events. But – and that is what I think is missing from Lang’s perspective – for the individual and for individuality under fascism, talk of freedom, imagining freedom and even failing attempts to secure freedom are agency. Freedom under fascism finds expression even in the preservation of human agency and independent, if not critical, worldview and voice. These are the realms of human experience which can find particular expression in literary art.

Yet, in “Writing and the Holocaust,” an often-cited essay in the study of literary representation of the Holocaust, Howe seems to agree with Lang. Literature, this literary scholar observes, is fundamentally dramatic, while the Holocaust is not:

Of those conflicts between wills, those inner clashes of belief and wrenching of desire, those enactments of passion, all of which make up our sense of the dramatic, there can be little in the course of fiction focused mainly on the mass extermination... The basic

minimum of freedom to choose and act that is a central postulate of drama had been taken from the victims... The moral energy upon which drama ultimately depends, had largely been snuffed out of the victims before they entered the gas chambers. (189)

The first comment I would make regarding these observations has to do with the fact that literary responses to the Holocaust began at the time of events themselves. Anthologies, such as David Roskies' *The Literature of Destruction*, compile and discuss literature written in the very ghettos and death camps. If under those circumstances literature could be written and theater could be performed, it is doubtful that further evidence is needed to testify that the Holocaust could be imagined in literature. I would also question Howe's perception of the type of situations comprising the Holocaust. Why does he constrain this catastrophic sequence of historical events to "mass-extermination" and "gas-chambers"? What about the persecution and displacement in the pre-war years? What about ghettos, the hiding places, the forests? These situations evoke experiences different than those of the camps, hence a different potential for literary drama. But even when it comes to the death camps, Howe seems to exclude a central dimension of existence and its representation: that in the camps, as Primo Levi testifies, the struggle for physical survival was tied with and as essential as the struggle "to save at least the skeleton, the scaffolding, the form of civilization," to defend the "power to refuse consent" (1961, 36). Jean Améry makes similar observations regarding the collapse and failure of the spirit and intellect when facing the "absolute" in the camps. Like Lang, Howe finds that the material which makes a literary drama does not exist for the actual victims and therefore also not for literary characters. In that material he includes both "conflicts between wills,

those inner clashes of belief” and “the basic minimum of freedom to choose and act.” Beyond “the power to refuse consent” revealed in Levi’s testimony, the extent to which freedom to choose existed in the reality of the Holocaust may be debatable: was there really a freedom of choice between resistance, escape, death, or surrender? However, “conflicts between wills, those inner clashes of belief” cannot but abound in a community that is persecuted as a community exactly because of its belief. Personal and collective conflicts between faith and necessities, ethics and survival, are one of the main textual generators of literary responses to the Holocaust.

The realm of perpetrators offers drama too. The fictional ghetto elder named I. C. Trumelman, in Leslie Fiedler’s *King of the Jews* (1979), is based on M. C. Rumkowski, head of the Lodz ghetto. The constant dilemma the novel presents – how to save as many Jews as possible as long as possible – is an imaginative representation of a historical situation. Jonathan Safran-Foer’s *Everything is Illuminated* (2002) renders the inner turmoil of a Ukrainian villager forced to hand his close Jewish friend to the Germans. The choice that must be made here is heart breaking: not reporting the Jew puts the entire village in danger, but obeying the order means the death of a dear friend. To what extent this was actually freedom of choice is a philosophical question. But for the individual himself it certainly is an agonizing decision to make. The villager’s traumatized inner turmoil, given in a stream of consciousness technique, gains its most convincing and accurate expression in fiction exactly because of the medium’s focus on the individual and, to use Dorrit Cohn’s terms, due to fiction’s distinct potential to represent the mind. The two novels and many others disprove the gloomy predictions regarding the prospects of imaginative rendition of the Holocaust made by Adorno, Lang, and Howe combined.

Christopher Browning's study of Reserve Police Battalion 101 establishes the inevitability of inner and social struggles in the life of Holocaust perpetrators. Each individual in the Battalion could not escape at least one hard choice at least initially, if not on a daily basis: whether or not to participate in the atrocities the battalion was instructed to commit. The fact was that the soldiers were given the choice to fulfill alternative duties or even to be transferred to another unit. Browning describes in detail conversations between the soldiers, reflecting what was involved in making the decision, as well as several officers and soldiers who simply collapsed physically and psychologically. Even though in terms of masses and actions the battalion continued to perform its horrendous role in the Nazi genocide, the facts Browning presents about individuals establish undoubtedly the existence of freedom, agency, and inner and social conflicts. The facts also refute Lang's stipulation regarding the "network of bureaucratic and technological causality," which "diffuses the role of individual agency." The distinctive virtue of imaginative writing to access the mind, its focus on individual motivation, and its intrinsic subjectivity – every quality Lang finds to be a limitation – in fact complement historiographical discourse to a more complete representation and understanding of the Holocaust.

In moral terms, to conclude, it is because of its focus on the individual that an imaginative representation of the Holocaust is essential. Focusing on the individual in circumstances which were meant to erase individuality; rendering human agency under fascism which was supposed to eliminate it; tapping freedom where it was not supposed to exist – all these are acts of resistance to fascism, defending the values it tried to deny its victims. Even in the camps and ghettos, the individual continued to exist as an

individual, daily making impossible choices between life and death, human and inhuman behavior. The mind continued to think, perhaps in ways it did not think before; hope and dreams persisted. To ignore these under the constraints of historical discourse – and not, as Lang argues, to assign agency where it did not exist – is the falsification, distortion, and misrepresentation, which assume that fascism prevailed not only in the external world of action but also in inner life. To maintain subjectivity in imaginative writing – for both narrator and character – is to express the individual voice, which is lost in historical discourse focusing on the masses. Imaginative writing about the Holocaust, therefore, is writing against the silence that was imposed not only on the dead but also on the living. In the representation of victims, abolishing that voice implies the notion of “sheep to slaughter.” When representing perpetrators, ignoring the individual choice to obey or resist is simply accepting for granted the diffusion of individual agency within a bureaucratic and technological causality. That is, to relieve the perpetrators from accountability for their actions.

III. Holocaust Perpetrators in Fiction – Theory and Method of Investigation

The first part of this section examines various approaches to character and locates my discussion among them; the second part discusses theoretically how a character develops and individualizes; the final part presents the methodology of studying the growth of Holocaust perpetrator characters in Israeli fiction.

Approaches to Character

Theory of character has been debated since the earliest days of literary scholarship. The debates usually revolve around the status and independence of character within the narrative system. One approach emphasizes the function of character within the artistic act of representation, while another, post-romantic approach, focuses on the affinity between characters and actual people. The earlier approach dates back to Aristotle, who argues that “it is not, therefore, the function of the agents’ actions to allow the portrayal of their characters; it is, rather, for the sake of their actions that characterization is included...tragedy is a mimesis of action, and only for the sake of this is it mimesis of the agents themselves” (*Poetics*, VI). Similarly, in Formalist-Structuralist theory, Boris Tomashevsky’s “Thematics” defines character as a “living embodiment of a given collection of motifs” (88), and Valdimir Propp’s *Morphology of Folktales* views character as a plot-function. The most renowned advocate for the post-romantic approach is probably A. C. Bradley, whose *Shakespearean Tragedy* locates characters and their actions in the center of Shakespeare’s work. In regard to *King Lear*, Bradley asks passionately, “how can there be such men and women? How comes it that humanity can take such absolutely opposite forms?” (225).¹⁰ Recently, Robert Alter argues that the reason for the poverty of structuralism is its linguistic model, which cannot account for the complexity of characters. “Literary tradition,” he argues, “constitutes itself as a trans-historical human community,” which allows readers to understand characters as people regardless of interpretative and historicized codes (76). The opposition between the two approaches to character manifests, in fact, a more profound rift between two opposing

perceptions of art, each of which promotes to dominance one of two dimensions of the work: the artificial act of representation or the represented reality.

The divide between approaches to character notwithstanding, a definition of character recently suggested by Uri Margolin seems to be assumed by the various trends and scholars: character designates “any entity, individual or collective – normally human or human-like – introduced in a work of narrative fiction. Characters thus exist within storyworlds, and play any role, no matter how minor, in one or more of the states of affairs or events told about in the narrative. Character can be succinctly defined as storyworld participant” (Margolin 2007, 66). In regard to the abovementioned debates about the role and place of character in the system, Margolin observes that literary character is not an “independent existing entity with essential properties to be described,” but rather a “theory dependent conceptual construct or theoretical object, of which several alternative versions exist in contemporary poetics.” Therefore, various theoretical perspectives on character are complimentary, and all should be kept in mind simultaneously as tools enriching our discussion of character.

Margolin observes three such perspectives. The first is “character as literary figure, that is, an artistic product or artifice constructed by an author for some purpose” or an “abstract cultural entity.” Characters in this view are “paper people” (in contrast to “actual people”), who exist only through “textual descriptions and inferences,” and they are assigned properties governed by principles of selection “ranging from lifelikeness (verisimilitude) to an ideological, thematic, aesthetic, or purely inter-literary one” (2007, 66-69). A second approach sees characters as a “non-actual individuals,” who act and exist independently of and prior to any narrative about them. “From this standpoint,”

Margolin observes, “character can be understood as an individual existing in some world or set of worlds, both individual and world being very close or very far from the actual world in terms of properties and regularities” (71). While “paper people” stand, at least theoretically, in opposition to “non-actual individuals,” the third approach to character complements the two when considering the reader. “Character as readerly mental construct,” a cognitive-psychological approach, is concerned with the “textual base of the representation, the operations involved in its formation, the principles governing or guiding these operations and the architecture of the final construct” (76). This view attributes a crucial role to the reader’s inferences in constructing the mental representation of character, inferences based on direct characterization, genre and form, and the reader’s world knowledge. As we will see, the combination of this set of terms and perspectives becomes especially productive in discussing the corpus of Holocaust fiction with its generic diversity and dynamic evolution.

A comprehensive approach, suggesting integration of the various perspectives, is the theory of character James Phelan presents in *Reading People, Reading Plots* (1989). Phelan speaks not of theoretical “perspectives” on character, which imply disparity, but of synthetic, mimetic, and thematic “components” of character. The first component deals with the character’s function within the narrative, the second with the character’s quality of lifelikeness, and the third with the character’s ideational significance. These components, which potentially exist in all characters, become “functions” when they are actualized in the course of the narrative, engaging in interaction and relations of dominance and subordination among themselves. Characters in an allegory, for example, are dominated by the thematic component, as they stand for an idea more than simulating

life. A character in a realistic novel, on the other hand, is generally dominated by the mimetic function as it imitates an actual individual. If the character is only a marginal participant with a narrowly defined narrative role (say, to reveal information), it is dominated by the synthetic function, although it inevitably holds also a subordinated mimetic, life-like function. As we will see, Phelan's theory is especially productive for my study. "Perpetrators" are a factual human category, which, in its history of conventional cultural reception, gained the quality of evil, and this quality dominates the thematic function of perpetrator characters. Formulating the play of this function (agents of evil) with the mimetic one (complex human individuals) provides a useful theoretical framework to understanding the poetic evolution of these characters as investigated in the following chapters.

The Growth of Character

What makes a literary individual? Margolin observes "minimal criteria for possible individuals in narrative" or "essential properties for literary characters in a narrated fictional domain" (1990, 461). These include: (a) Existence: membership of the individual in the narrative, either in the fact domain of the storyworld or its sub-domains (thoughts, intentions); (b) Identity: individuation (ascription of physical, behavioral, communicative, mental properties), singularity (what distinguishes him from other individuals), category or type (what kind of individual is it); (c) Sameness of character over time and across storyworlds; how much can a character change and still remain the same individual? (2007, 70-76). Once the existence and sameness of the character have been established, the more the character develops independently and even in opposition

to categories and their attributes, the more it is individualized. The product, if the process is complete, is an individual in two complementing meanings: individual as opposed to a member or a single element of a group or type; and individual as a fully-fledged person, from within and from without, presenting visible appearance and actions but also inner world and personal history. The convergence of the two tracks is where literature proves its virtue: the focus on the private domain and especially the access to inner life that distinguish literature from historical discourse develops the member of the category into an individual. Or, in other words, literature has the capability of restoring individuality which is lost when the individual is defined by a category. Individualization, therefore, can be conceptualized as an act of resistance to the category, where the mimetic function of character takes dominance over the thematic function. The character “breaks out” from the grip of artificial verbal existence and constitutes itself as a simulacrum of a person; out of the cage of being a representative entity of an idea or a larger class to be defined first and foremost in its own terms.

The pioneer work made by E. M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), setting the round/flat, dynamic/static division, suggests basic means to measure individualization of character. “In their purest form,” Forster observes, “flat characters are constructed round a single idea or quality: when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round” (67). A typical example for multiplicity of factors in Holocaust literature is the SS officer who is also a family man, such as Rudolf Höss in William Styron’s *Sophie’s Choice* (1979). Here there is not only a second quality, but also a strong tension, if not a contradiction, between responsibility for murder on the one hand, and being a family man on the other. Such contradiction is so sharp –

also because it is one of the central questions asked about the Nazis – that it threatens to undermine the character’s subordination to the perpetrator category as its defining quality. A dynamic character acquires new qualities throughout the story or at least changes the relations between existing qualities. A good example is George Steiner’s *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.* (1981), presenting the Führer as a weak and helpless old man abducted from a hiding place in the South American jungle to stand trial in Israel. The change is not within the course of the story, but it is measured against the image of the powerful Nazi leader readers have in mind. The contradiction between central qualities within each of these two characters is so sharp, that – in both textual data and reader response – they have the potential of undermining the character’s categorization as a perpetrator.

Forster’s classification has been justly criticized for being dichotomist and reductive. Shlomith Rimmon Kenan, for example, argues that Forster confuses two criteria which do not always overlap. In Forster’s view, a flat character is both simple and undeveloping, whereas a round character is both complex and developing. Although this criteria often co-exist, there are fictional characters which are complex but undeveloping (Joyce’s Bloom), and others which are simple but developing (the allegorical Everyman) (41). Menakhem Perry asserts that to begin with no character can have a single quality, thus it is better to speak of a combination of attributes. In the case of flat character, the combination is culturally or factually conventional and typical, and in the case of a round character, it is self-contradictory and unique (82-83). Nevertheless, despite its flaws, Forster’s approach profoundly influenced later understanding of character, and his

fundamental observation is indispensable: it is the number of qualities and the relation between them which classifies a character.

Grounded in this observation but rejecting Forster's rigid classification, Yosef Ewen, whom I generally follow in my analysis of character, proposes three practical scales of character dimensions: complexity: from the minimum of one central quality (as in allegory) to a multitude of them, especially with some degree of tension or contrast between qualities (as in the modern novel); development: from none to a significant change in the relation between the character's central qualities while maintaining a stable core of identity; inner life: from external characterization to a rich rendition of the character's feeling, thoughts, and dilemmas (7-9). The use of scales enables a much more nuanced perception of character dimensions, and their intersection produces a unique combination which allows stronger account of the character's uniqueness. Minimally characterized literary individuals are located at the bottom of the scales with a minimal number of attributes, which exist and function harmoniously, as in a type. Higher on the scale, character qualities accumulate and interact, sometimes conflict or surprise, rendering complexity which defies assumed classifications. Unlike Forster, whose distinction between characters is sharp in a manner which cannot reflect complex human reality, Ewen's model differentiates and measures relative levels of complexity or development. While Forster implicitly ties complexity to development – flat characters are static and round ones are dynamic – Ewen's scales are independent: character can be located at any point on any scale, regardless of its other two dimensions. Allocating a scale just for the rendition of inner life is greatly advantageous because it allows attention to a vehicle of characterization central to modern fiction and, as we shall see, especially

meaningful to the corpus examined here. The abovementioned characters of Rudolf Höss and A.H., for example, are developed and complex relative to earlier representations of Nazis (which is why the novels drew criticism), but their rendition of inner life is minimal. This distinction, which is lost in Forster's model but is evident in Ewen's, is central to evaluating of the innovation, limits, and effect of these narratives.

Holocaust Perpetrators as Literary Individuals

In Israeli literature and collective consciousness, the "Eichmann prototype" is a model for the uncomplicated character of a Holocaust perpetrator. In terms of its attributes, it fully and harmoniously answers the relevant criteria: Nazi, German, willing and active participant in the war against the Jews. Its characterization in Israeli discourse is minimal; not much is told about the character beyond its prototypical qualities. It is one with its defining category. In Phelan's terms we would say that the Eichmann prototype demonstrates the dominance of the thematic function over the mimetic one. Based on the theoretical discussion above and progressing from the simple and prototypical to the complex and unique, the discussion below formulates the process through which characters of Holocaust perpetrators develop from members of a factual and thematic category to individuals.

At their minimal level of development, literary Holocaust perpetrators are not much more than "storyworld participants" in the literal sense. They are located at the bottom of Ewen's scales (complexity, development, inner life), or dominated by the thematic function in Phelan's terms. In Margolin's theoretical phrasing, they are the "figural projection of an underlying macrosemantic structure" or "theme

anthropomorphized” (1990, 454). The theme can be formulated, simply, as the Nazi evil. These are usually numerous nameless and faceless SS or German soldiers, demonstrating the typical appearance and actions of the factual category: uniforms and weapon, actions of persecution or war, speech related to the action or category, such as giving orders or presenting Nazi or anti-Semitic ideology. In many cases the perpetrators are mentioned only in passing as members of a category, making it more suitable to perceive them not as characters but simply as participants or agents of atrocity, a phrase which reflects better their subordination to a theme of evil. The individuation process develops with the accumulation of qualities which add substance or color to the single member against the background of the category.

Characterized minimally, such perpetrators rely heavily on stereotypes of the German. In *National Characteristics* (1985), social psychologist Dean Peabody discusses the qualities attributed to nations that constitute a national character: “the average (or central tendency) of the characteristics of individuals” (71). Drawing on a variety of sources and perspectives – German scholars and public figures, social-psychologists who surveyed public perception among Germans and non-Germans – the qualities Peabody discusses are prevalent in popular perception of the Germans: an affinity for order, systemization, commitment to society, discipline, strong work ethic, and romanticism. Two concrete qualities attributed to the Germans – a need for structure and a tendency to accept hierarchical relations – have been suggested by the “authoritarian personality” theory developed after WWII in an attempt to explain the participation, active or passive, of the German people in the acts of National-Socialism. As Peabody indicates, the impact of National-Socialism on the perception of Germans was so immense, that the theory of

“authoritarian personality” and that of German national character became virtually identical (109). These observations, external to the field of literary scholarship, are in agreement with recent studies in imagology, a field which Joep Leerssen defines as dealing with “discursive and literary articulation of cultural difference and of national identity” (268).¹¹ Whether or not this German national character is grounded in reality is marginal to my study. What is important is the fact that this conception of national tendencies serves the writers – especially Holocaust writers – as material in their construction of German characters. As Leerssen argues, the “strongest rhetorical effect” of national characterizations “lies in the familiarity and recognition value rather than in empirical truth value” (280). Literary Holocaust perpetrators are often based on stereotypes of German national character: they feature polished and clean-shaven SS officers, an obsession with order and counting, empty ideological slogans, and a pompous hierarchical chain of command with its superfluous medals and salutations. In the case of Hebrew literature, as Ziva Ben-Porat shows, representations of Germans hold an additional characteristic: Germans and Germany are seen as positive embodiments of European culture. This image can be expected in pre-Holocaust Hebrew literature considering the strong pre-WWII German-Jewish cultural ties, but it persists also after the Holocaust. Rather than produce a new cultural construct once Europe became a Jewish graveyard perpetrated by the Germans, Hebrew writers continue to assume the image, but adjust it to the new historical context. The surrender or resistance of the individual to the category of Holocaust perpetrators is conducted in relation to these presumed German national characteristics.

Climbing “up” the levels of individualization, characters of perpetrators grow in opposition to the Eichmann prototype in their qualities as inhabitants of the fictional world and in the narrative vehicles used for their characterization. Individualization reveals tensions between the elements of the prototype, and so we find characters who are Germans but not Nazis, or Nazis by ideology but who do not interpret Nazism as actual persecution of Jews, or Germans or Nazis who do not wish to take an active part in the persecution. The characterization of such opposition to the category is conducted first and foremost through voice and the presentation of inner life. Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of the novel is grounded in the observation that the novel, in contrast to the epic, demonstrates decentralization of the verbal-ideological dimension of the work and the loosening of authorial hegemony. This is manifested in heteroglossia, a “diversity of social speech types” and “diversity of individual voices” which enables “another’s speech in another’s language” (1981, 263, 324); and in polyphony, a “plurality of equally authoritative ideological positions...plurality of consciousness-centers not reduced to a single ideological common denominator” (1984, 17-18). Polyphony and heteroglossia are especially relevant to studying literary Holocaust perpetrators since this category is centrally defined by ideology and its actualization. An interesting example is Styron’s Sophie, whose world-view and discourse constantly shift between anti- and philo-Semitism, and who sometimes includes herself among the collaborators, at least passively, and sometimes excludes herself from that category. The presentation of inner life generates character complexity even more compellingly than voice. Even if the consciousness presented overlaps with the character’s type and with its externality (as when an SS officer thinks about Nazism), the very fact that there is an “in” and an “out”

produces a double-vision of the individual, which resists uncomplicated perception. Rendition of inner life in more than a passing note can never present an uncomplicated mind simply because no mind holds only one simple thought.

In the case of literary Holocaust perpetrators, presentation of inner life is of crucial significance which pertains to the heart of this study. One reason is the unusual acts of the extra-literary individuals on which this group of characters is based. What went through the mind of SS guards or German soldiers executing Jewish population? Did they become different people or did they only reveal hidden sides of their personal, cultural, and national nature? These questions have been addressed by historians such as Browning and Goldhagen and philosophers such as Adorno and Arendt. For literary representations aspiring to produce complex characters, individuals rather than types, some sort of reply to this psychological enigma is necessary. It is here that the “distinction of fiction,” the potential to render the mind, proves literature’s privilege over historiography and biography, especially as it is able to provide maximum exposure to the tensions and oppositions between the components of the Eichmann prototype.

Another reason for the centrality of inner life in perpetrator characters is particular to Israeli fiction. Israel’s founding encounter with the perpetrators was through the Eichmann trial, which was always limited to Eichmann’s appearance and speech, inviting more speculations than answers as to the perpetrator’s motives and state of mind (Arendt was especially fascinated by these issues). The trial hardly made use of recorded interviews recoded in 1957, which Willem Sassen, a Dutch ex-Waffen SS officer, conducted with Eichmann in Argentina. In the sixty seven tapes, transcribed in six hundred pages, Eichmann, not under the threat of a trial, was unreservedly “boasting and

glorying in what he had done,” revealing himself as a “passionate zealous man...the real Eichmann.” He said “I worked relentlessly to kindle the fire. I was not just a recipient of orders... I was an idealist” (Rosenthal). Had the interviews been used more extensively during the trial, Arendt may have reached other conclusions regarding the banality of evil. But the interviews were not revealed to the public, and the glass booth in which Eichmann was seen in the many photographs and video recordings did not only protect the defendant from physical harm, but also, symbolically, abolished any chance of true communication between the perpetrator and the audience. The rendition of this perpetrator’s mind and private domain is, in a way, the removal of that glass. When depicting the inner life of SS guards or German soldiers, Israeli writers respond to a specific cultural lacuna, as well as to prevalent conceptions generated by ignorance, indoctrination, fear, fantasy, and mechanisms of self-defense.

The complexity of the literary Holocaust perpetrator, its transformation from the minimal role of “agent of evil” to a multi-dimensional individual, is attained through the rendition of additional or counter-qualities to those assigned by the historical and thematic category. So far I have discussed how such development is produced through devices which can be termed “penetrative”: they make a move from the surface inwards, from act and appearance to thought and voice. This mode is also “objective”; it renders qualities of the object without assuming a reader’s participation beyond the decoding and integration involved in the reading of any text. Character complexity can also be developed through literary devices which do require the reader’s poetic engagement and therefore can be termed “subjective,” such as control of the reader’s sympathy and

analogy. Examination of these narrative strategies concludes my discussion of character individualization.

In addition to de-categorizing individual characters, the presentation of inner life is a resource in the creation of character complexity and depth through a powerful narrative effect, which Wayne Booth, in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, terms “sympathy.” By this term Booth does not mean affection toward a character, but rather the “reduction of emotional distance,” which may reduce moral and intellectual distance as well (249). One way to evoke sympathy is through the narrator’s judgmental commentary, a technique more common in the early novel. Impersonal narrators, who maintain their commentary to a minimum, regulate the reader’s sympathy to a character when providing or denying the presentation of inner life or “inside views,” to use Booth’s phrase. This is so even in the case of the appalling Gregor-vermin in Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*. Booth argues that by “confining us to Gregor’s vision, Kafka has insured a more sympathetic reading than any amount of traditional rhetoric could do.” And if “granting to the hero the right to reflect his own story can insure the reader’s sympathy, withholding it from him and giving it to another character can prevent too much identification” (282). The origin of the readers’ sympathy toward a character is an overlap of the modes of knowledge. Provided with an inside view, we know the character as we know no one but ourselves, and it is therefore easier to accept what we know of the character, even if we deplore it, just as we accept what we know of ourselves. The term “identification with characters,” usually associated with this theoretical context, is too loose and wide for my needs, as it implies a psychological or psychoanalytical tie between reader and text, conducted on the reflective level of reading. “Sympathy,” on the other hand, describes an aesthetic effect

conducted on the communicative, rhetoric, and immediate level of the encounter with the work throughout the reading process. Besides deconstructing the human category to its constituting individuals, reducing the distance – emotional, moral, intellectual – between reader and character creates a sort of rhetorical and communicative association, in the process of which the reader can see in the character at least something of his own individuality.

Finally, character complexity is acquired through analogical relation. Analogy is always rooted in a ground of comparison, which invites readers to associate two or more objects. Once such ground is established, the relation between the objects is either that of similarity which downplays the differences, creating a “parallel” or “straight” analogy, or a relation of contrast, which rises above the similarity, creating an “opposite” analogy. Such means of indirect characterization can modify and even reverse our understanding and judgment of characters. Browning and Goldhagen document many cases of disparity between victimizers, who showed enthusiasm and sadism in fulfilling their part in the Nazi genocide, and those who seemed to do the required minimum due to either ideology and military conduct or due to personal choice. The strong ground of comparison between Holocaust perpetrators, especially when the SS or other death squads occupy one side of the scales, reveals, in terms of action, a “lesser evil,” although both cases were a matter of choice. My textual analysis in the coming chapters shows that analogies operate in the creation of categories or in their deconstruction to resisting individuals, in agreement or tension versus the narrative devices of individualization discussed above. We must note, however, that since analogy is a reader-dependent narrative device,

different readers may identify and be influenced by analogies differently, resulting in various, even contradicting, classifications and judgments of characters.

Some examples will illustrate my point regarding analogy and complexity in character. Anatoly Kuznetsov's documentary novel *Babi Yar* (1966) mentions an event, in which a small group of retreating German soldiers finds temporary shelter in the narrator's home in Kiev. As the German soldiers feed the starving family and treat them warmly, the mother calls them "good Germans," in contrast to those who wish to kill civilians. The soldier then replies: "those are no *Soldaten*. Those are bandits, a shame to the German nation. We're front-line *Soldaten*, artillery-men. War-piff-paff! Mama, *Kinder*-no piff-paff" (353). In this example the participants themselves draw a distinction between the German military and the Nazi forces, but more often the task of associating the characters and observing the relation between them is left for the reader. In Stanley Kramer's film *Judgment in Nuremberg* (1961), dealing with some of the later trials from the American judge's perspective, a German woman protects her husband's honor. She argues that he was a soldier defending his country, while during the film, Nazi judges are convicted for their share in the persecution of Jews. This argument is prominent in German self-conception, which finds an opposition between the Nazis and the Wehrmacht, holding the former as an external force of perpetration even against Germany itself, and the latter as the reputable traditional military exploited in the service of the Nazis. Such distinctions were repeatedly disproved by historians, but for the needs of my discussion, factual accuracy or falsification is less relevant than the fact that such a common notion – serving a psychological need of self-justification – may inform the creation and perception of the text. The shared category of perpetrators presents

distinction and hierarchy: the Nazis are worse than the soldiers. In addition to similarity or distinction of actions, analogy in modes of narration is also possible. The very fact, for example, that Rudolf Höss, in *Sophie's Choice*, is described at home in his relations with his family, as an individual with his personal and professional dimensions, already creates a rift between him and other perpetrators, whose presentation is limited to the public domain. The various possible combinations and relations of similar and dissimilar qualities in a range of degrees suggest various possibilities for observing analogies, which, in turn, may influence readers differently. Some may accept the German self-perception which distinguishes traditional soldiers from Nazi bullies, some may not. Very few, I suspect, would have anything good to say about Styron's Rudolf Höss or Steiner's old weak A.H., abducted by Israeli agents into the jungle. But the reader's intuition or immediate reaction may be more forgiving at certain points of the narrative sequence due to analogical perceptions, as well as other factors of sympathy control. Perceived comparably, perpetration gains complexity.

The moral perils involved in these strategies of characterization will be discussed more thoroughly in the conclusion of this study, but a theoretical foundation should be presented here. A successful individualization of character can marginalize or even alter its thematic properties to a point of distortion in rhetorical or mimetic terms. "Inside views can build sympathy even for the most vicious character," Booth argues. "When properly used, this effect can be of immeasurable value in forcing us to see the human worth of a character whose action, objectively considered, we would deplore" (378). On Austen's *Emma*, he writes that in "reducing the emotional distance, the natural tendency is to reduce – willy-nilly – moral and intellectual distance as well. In reacting to Emma's

faults from the inside out, as if they were our own, we may very well not only forgive them, but overlook them” (249-250). As examples of “vicious character,” Booth mentions Faulkner’s Mink Snopes, or elsewhere, Jason Compson. His warning against sympathy towards such characters and against acceptance of their values seems almost naïve in comparison to Holocaust perpetrators. For the perpetrators, “vicious” is an understatement, and seeing their “human worth” may lead the reader to neglect their accountability.

Moral peril is evident in the texts’ relation to historical facts. Because literary characters of Holocaust perpetrators are rooted in a well-defined, factual-historical human category (and some are based on or inspired by actual individuals), their resistance to the category, produced by the various characterization strategies (analogy, sympathy, voice, complexity) can falsify the facts. This is one of the problems Lang finds with the subjective nature of imaginative representation of the Holocaust: it endows the individual with centrality and agency he did not have, or – to use the terms of my discussion – it evokes a resistance to a theme, while the resistance is missing from the extra-literary reality of the Holocaust. As I argue above, in the representation of Holocaust perpetrators as individuals, complete subordination of the individual to the masses falsifies history just the same. The falsification, then, exists in both extremes and poses the same moral danger: the character in question can be relieved from accountability for the act and idea of the perpetrator category, either because a member of the category is deprived of agency, or because the individual, when characterized in a certain manner, appears to resist the category even to the point of exclusion from it. When individualizing perpetrators, therefore, the writers examined here are challenged

with negotiating the advantages of the literary medium with the consequential possibility of diminishing or abolishing the individual's categorical affiliation and factual significance. Examining the choices writers make when dealing with this challenge is a central axis of my textual analysis in the following chapters.

IV. Two Modes of Characterization: A Historical Perspective

The various means to measure and formulate characterization allow a precise, nuanced, and concrete examination of Holocaust perpetrators in literature. Such is my discussion of specific examples. In terms of literary history, characterization of Holocaust perpetrators in Israeli fiction constitutes a relatively solid distinction between two oppositional modes in two time periods. As chapter two establishes, between the mid-forties and the mid-seventies, perpetrators in Hebrew and Israeli Holocaust fiction are characterized through one consistent "simple mode": they are located at the minimum pole of Ewen's scales, classified as flat and static by Forster's terms, or subordinated to the thematic function in Phelan's terms. This is where the Eichmann prototype or, as I call the more marginal and less substantial characters, "agents of atrocity," is especially dominant. Since the mid-eighties, as discussed in chapter three, the mode of characterization shifts, fairly sharply, into a very different one which is "complex." Literary perpetrators at this period are often located much higher on Ewen's scales, showing richness or conflict of attributes and the ability to develop throughout the story and participate in the construction of its meaning. Rendition of inner life is still fairly low on Ewen's scale, but the characters in this mode are endowed a meticulous rendition of the "private domain," that is, dimensions of their life unavailable to their surroundings. In

opposition to the earlier mode of characterization, the later mode is dominated by the mimetic function, establishing characters with stronger lifelikeness and individuality which resist thematic classification. The emergence of the perpetrator as a literary individual in opposition to the prototype indicates, therefore, a shift between phases in the evolution of Israeli Holocaust fiction. As we shall see in both Israeli culture and its literature, the “Eichmann prototype” undergoes over time fundamental deconstructive changes, which complicate if not undermine its categorical affiliation. The thematic and moral problems generated by these changes have been implied in my brief discussion of the moral perils of literature above. The topic is further developed in the conclusion of this dissertation.

Chapter 2

Holocaust Perpetrators in Israeli Fiction, mid-1940s-mid-1970s

This chapter surveys the representation of perpetrators in Hebrew Holocaust fiction published in Palestine and Israel between the mid-forties and the mid-seventies. Section one defines the boundaries and substance of the corpus under investigation in my dissertation. Section two surveys the literary and non-literary discourse of the time in an attempt to identify the dominant and conventional portrayal of Holocaust perpetrators in young Israel. As I demonstrate, the popular portrayal of perpetrators leans towards the prototypical and the flat. Section three examines how various literary texts published during this period deal with the conventional perception of the perpetrators, how they adopted and adapted it in their confrontation with the Holocaust.

I. Hebrew and Israeli Holocaust Literature: Periods, Waves, and Generations

The scholarship dealing with Hebrew literary responses to the Holocaust published in Palestine and Israel usually distinguish between two major groups of writers and their time periods (Shaked 1971; Holtzman 1996).¹² The earlier group, part of whose biography is WWII, was dominant in the early period of Hebrew and Israeli Holocaust fiction, before the mid-seventies. Some writers, such as Ka-Tzetnik, Uri Orlev, Itamar Yazo-Kest, and Aharon Appelfeld, are Holocaust survivors. Others are “onlookers,” writers who observed the Holocaust from Palestine. Among the “onlookers,” Holtzman distinguishes between “fathers” and “sons” (2002). The “generation of the fathers,” includes writers who were born around the turn of the century in Eastern Europe and their

writing is strongly connected to their place of birth. Writers, such as Gershon Shoffman, S.Y. Agnon, and Dvora Baron, observed from Palestine how their world of childhood was being demolished, feeling both close to the East European Jewish world and also afar from it in safety, while their families did not survive.¹³ The “generation of the sons” includes writers who were born in Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s, such as Hanokh Bartov, Yoram Kaniuk, Haim Gouri, and those who immigrated early in their lives, such as Naomi Frankel and Yehuda Amichai. These writers’ collective biography was shaped by their tie to Palestine and the struggle for Israel’s independence. The early period of Hebrew and Israeli Holocaust fiction includes, then, a diverse group of writers, with distinct biographical backgrounds, and this diversity is evident in their personal and literary perspective onto the Holocaust and its perpetrators. Some of them published about the Nazis before and during WWII, most published after and some, such as Appelfeld and Kaniuk, continue their literary confrontation with the Holocaust even today. I include them all under “Israeli fiction” first because their work about the Holocaust was published in Hebrew in Palestine, as part of a literary scene which, almost organically, became Israeli after the establishment of the state in 1948. Second because the pre-1948 literary portrayal of perpetrators by Moshe Shamir and Ka-Tzetnik, which is discussed here, was published only a few years before the declaration of the state, and these two writers became central figures in Israeli literature later on (Ka-Tzetnik for Holocaust writing and Shamir for the “1948 Generation”). But most importantly, only a minor portion of the literary corpus discussed here was published before 1948. For all these reasons, it makes both practical and historiographical sense to accept the literary corpus discussed here as “Israeli fiction.”

The later group of writers, which Holtzman terms “the new wave” but is mostly known as the “second generation,” gained its dominance during the mid-eighties. The writers comprising this group were born during the forties, fifties, and early sixties and were educated in Israel, either as native Israelis or as those who immigrated to the country in an early stage of their life (Holtzman 1996, 135). While for earlier writers the Holocaust was a contemporary Jewish catastrophe, experienced either personally or through mediation in real-time or shortly after, the “new wave” is distanced from the event in time, space, and perspective. For them, however, the Holocaust is a personal experience in other terms. “In a sense,” according to Efraim Sicher, the children of the second generation “have become survivors themselves by internalizing the parents’ experiences through their behavior patterns and absorbing their anxieties” (40). For them, as Gilead Morahg observes, “what is at stake now is no longer whether or not to remember the Holocaust, but rather the nature of the personal and national lessons that are to be learned from it” (1997, 144). The common term “second generation” is misleading since, among these writers, some are children of survivors, such as Savyon Liebrecht, Nava Semel, and Amir Gutfreund, and others, such as David Grossman and Itamar Levi, are not, although they were raised in a culture heavily shaped by the impact of the Holocaust. Iris Milner regards the “second generation” as a sociological phenomenon, much wider than the essential group of children of survivors for whose therapeutic needs the term was originally coined (2003). At the basis of the term is the observation that growing up with survivor parents is a powerful experience which creates its own set of problems resulting from a transference of trauma. But, as Milner argues, the second generation exceeds the biographical boundaries and constitutes an imagined

community, which gains voice through a selected group of writers comprising a literary generation.

The generational division manifests itself clearly in the texts' approach to characterization of perpetrators. To formulate a general rule, we may observe that the complexity of perpetrators develops and grows richer relative to the text's distance from the events of the Holocaust in terms of time and mediation. Writers who published before the mid-seventies, whose encounter with the Holocaust was immediate, in time if not in space, who learned and wrote about the Holocaust in proximity to its occurrence even if not as a matter of personal experience – these writers produced simpler perpetrator characters. Those who heard and read fresh survivors' testimonies, who wrote about the Nazis while Eichmann's voice still echoing in their ears and his figure was still occupying their imagination, their perpetrators surrender their human qualities and complexity to the flat dimension of evil. It is important to note, however, that the simplicity of characterization is observed relatively to that of the writing of the eighties, and within this early period and mimetic conventions various writers are more generous than others, allowing greater complexity in their perpetrator characters. Even those writers, however, never venture too far from the prototypes which dominated the public discourse. Such tendency to the mimetic minimum in character construction reflects well the rage, helplessness, frustration, and trauma that flooded the Jewish society in Palestine and Israel in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Under the traumatic and paralyzing shadow of the destruction, sensitive or realist construction of the victimizers did not appeal to the creative resources of the *Yishuv*, which were occupied anyway with the struggle for a Jewish state. In contrast, writers of the new wave, although often obsessed with the

Holocaust, were free from its direct traumatic impact both as a collective and as individuals. Separated by four decades from the events, writers of the new wave, as Holtzman observes, were also less burdened by the sense of guilt and helplessness of not being able to save at least some of their brothers from annihilation in Europe. As chapter three discusses, perpetrators in the fiction of these later writers demonstrate a distinctively higher level of character complexity.

My analysis of perpetrator representation in its various levels and manners of complexity follows the principles presented in chapter one. Here they are again in brief:

- a. The type of character according to the classification of Forster (flat/round, dynamic/static), Ewen (scales of development, complexity, inner life), and Phelan (the thematic, synthetic, and mimetic components). Here I include also elements of voice and perspective.
- b. Analogy is especially instrumental in undermining the boundary between victim and perpetrator, as it endows each with qualities of the other, leading to a higher level of character complexity.
- c. Principles of narration controlling the reader's sympathy towards the character.
- d. The relation of the character to the "Eichmann prototype," located on the minimum pole of the "perpetrator scale," which incorporates neatly the following attributes: German, Nazi, willing participant in the genocide. The relation to the common German cultural image or stereotypes of national character is also relevant here.

Combining these principles with consideration of specific textual qualities, the analysis below demonstrates how the fiction of the early period applies the simple mode in

characterizing Holocaust perpetrators.¹⁴ But perhaps some clarification regarding my classification of fiction into modes and their periods is in order. “Mode” is a debatable term, which gained various definitions throughout the history of narrative studies, from Plato and Aristotle to Frye and more recent narratology. What various theorists seem to share, is the general understanding of “mode” as a category of texts, grouped together on the basis of applying similar types, techniques, or simply ways of representation.¹⁵

“Mode of perpetrator characterization,” therefore, groups together texts which characterize literary perpetrators similarly, and the similarity is especially evident in the contrast between simple and complex characterization. One important implication of this understanding of modes is that within each mode there are, as is typical of an entity so intricate as literature, various ways to characterize and various levels of complexity or simplicity. As I show below, even within the simple mode of perpetrator representation there are texts which demonstrate greater complexity in their perpetrator characters.

Likewise, among the texts I include in the complex mode some characters are inevitably simpler than others. This diversity notwithstanding, the use of the dichotomy “simple” versus “complex” mode seems to me efficient in indicating the remarkable gap that is evident in the levels of complexity, which Hebrew writers apply in their perpetrator characterization in each of the modes. This gap in character complexity, which reaches the level of a rift, is corroborated by other textual factors, such as textual space and the centrality of character in the plot. Before the mid-seventies perpetrator characters tend to be marginal, often nameless, gaining a very limited textual space. The situation is practically reversed since the mid-eighties, when Nazis often become no less than protagonists. Extra-textual factors, such as times of publication and generational division,

support the division to modes and periods as well. The simple mode in perpetrator representation was dominant in Hebrew and Israeli fiction published prior to the mid-seventies, by authors whose biography includes WWII. The complex mode is dominant among writers who were born during or after WWII and published their Holocaust fiction as of the mid-eighties. All these factors, in and out of the texts, are taken into consideration in my analysis and classification of texts, which, in final balance, distinguishes clearly between modes and periods. Eventually, what I hope to accomplish with my surveys of Hebrew and Israeli fiction is a clear classification of the texts into useful categories, based on modes of perpetrator characterization, while allowing each individual texts to express its own levels and manners of complexity.

II. The Simple Mode as the Dominant Characterization of Holocaust Perpetrators in Hebrew and Israeli Literature and Public Discourse, mid-1940s-mid-1970s

Prior to Nazism, German culture was an object of appreciation among secular Jews in the Western world. It was in Berlin that the Jewish Enlightenment emerged in the eighteenth century, inspired by contemporary European Enlightenment. In the early nineteenth century, Jews in the various German states were awarded rights which East European Jews could only imagine. Over the century and until the rise of Nazism, German Jews reached positions of influence in the academy, commerce, publishing, banking, and even in politics.¹⁶ Many Jews participated in and were awarded medals in WWI. In fact, German Jews tended to look down on their Orthodox East European brothers as some embarrassing remnant from medieval times, clinging to their traditional study, dress, and

Yiddish, while in Berlin Jews spoke fluent German and attended universities. The German image gained further prestige in Jewish eyes following the mass anti-Jewish violence in Russia and Ukraine in 1881-1882, 1904-1905, and, most recently before Nazism, in the Russian and Ukrainian civil war of 1917-1919, during which more than fifty thousand Jews were massacred. During that time, German Jews prospered in safety, and their hosts were perceived as an enlightened, educated, and progressive object of imitation. This is one major reason why German Jewry was so slow, even reluctant, to observe the changing atmosphere in Germany following the rise of Nazism and the increasing actualization of its threats.

Immediately after the rise of the Nazis to power in January 1933, Hebrew journalism in Palestine tended to see Nazism as another chapter in traditional antisemitism. But soon it identified Nazism as a unique anti-Jewish hatred, which it described in terms of a collective psychosis. Some journalists and public figures distinguished between Nazis and Germans, between “Hitlers” and Kant or Schiller, while others argued that the massive support of Nazism in Germany went beyond the scope of a political party to testify about the nature of the people as a whole (Segev 1991, 14-15). As reports of the Nazi violence against the Jews gradually became known in Palestine during the early 1940s, the classification of Nazism as traditional antisemitism became increasingly difficult to hold. However, it was not before the end of the war that the Jewish community in Palestine realized the true nature and proportions of the persecution, and the prototype of the German as Nazi or agent of atrocity was formed. Until then, the boundary between Jews and Germans, victims and victimizers, was

somewhat uncertain, wavering between traditional conceptions and reactions to current events.

On November 23rd, 1942, the Jewish Agency announced officially that a systematic annihilation of European Jewry was taking place. In December the message was confirmed by the allies.¹⁷ It was then, writes Nurit Govrin, that Hebrew Holocaust literature in Palestine began (2002, 304). This is somewhat inaccurate. News about the genocide of the Jews in Europe had been published in Palestine since 1940, before the official announcement, the meaning of which was not really understood in public opinion for the following year or two. The news, in print and personal testimony, generated a literary response. Nathan Alterman's long poem *the Joy of the Poor* (*Simhat aniym*), which, according to some interpretations, refers symbolically to the events taking place in Europe at the time, was published in 1941. As Avner Holtzman establishes, as of 1940, writers of the "1948 generation" sporadically published prose responding to the early news about the catastrophe and to the survivors who found refuge in Palestine (2002).¹⁸ Of course, the official November 1942 announcement was an accelerating factor, but such news cannot be grasped immediately. The gradual increase in literary awareness evident following the announcement is more likely a natural continuation of previous writing than a new trend. It seems, in fact, that the most public and powerful artistic expression of the Holocaust in the discourse of the *Yishuv* was given shortly after the war's conclusion. Uri Zvi Greenberg's poem "A Crown of Lament for all Israel" (*Keter kina lekhoh beit Yisrael*), was originally published in the newspaper *Ha'aretz* on September 7th 1945, and it was later incorporated into Greenberg's massive book of poems *The Streets of the River* (*Rehovot hanahar* 1951).¹⁹ The lengthy poem is one of the

earliest texts which actually deal directly, in details, with the horrors, providing graphic descriptions of sights such as mass-rape, mass-murder and mass-burial, piles of bodies – including babies – staining the snow with blood, and the looting of Jewish property and bodies. The perpetrators are faceless and nameless soldiers, who “bark” in German, an image which circulated throughout later fiction. The poem articulates a very clear dichotomy between the nameless powerful perpetrator and the helpless Jews being marched to their death through the peaceful European landscape, while the local farmers watch and plan their looting. The ruthless victimizer, a one-dimensional prototype of a Holocaust perpetrator which will govern Hebrew and Israeli fiction for decades to come, is dominant in this poem.

By 1948 about sixty thousand Jewish refugees from Europe, who came to be called *She'erit ha'pletah* (“The Remnant”), arrived in Palestine. By 1951 about 300 thousand additional survivors arrived in Israel, stabilizing the ratio of survivors at about a third of the Israeli population at the time. During the fifties, especially in 1956-57, about a hundred thousand more arrived. Overall, by the late sixties about half a million survivors lived in Israel (Simrut 253; Yablonka 2000, 298-99). This demographic revolution could not but have revolutionized the face of Holocaust writing with its massive wave of publications and testimonies. I will only mention here the Hebrew translation of memoirs by the fighters of the different ghettos, the publication of which contributed to the creation of the early binary of rebellion versus “sheep to slaughter”, such as Reizl Korchak’s *Flames in the Ashes* (*Lehavot baefer* 1946) and Haika Grossman’s *The Underground Army: Fighters of the Bialystok Ghetto* (*Anshey hamahteret* 1947); as well as the circulation of survivors’ testimonies in the newspapers

or unofficially, among the various survivors' organizations, kibbutzim, and communities. From that point on, perception of the Holocaust and its perpetrators in the *Yishuv* were dominated by the perspective of the survivors and by the grief, frustration, and rage of those who lost their homes and families in Europe. The "Eichmann prototype" and the boundaries between Jews and Germans, victims and victimizers, were formed clearly in journalistic, political, educational, and literary discourses.

With the establishment of the state of Israel in May 1948, the attitudes of the *Yishuv* toward the perpetrators found expression in the legal and political debates that stirred the young Israeli society. The Nazis and Nazi Collaborators Punishment Law (1950) and the discussions around its formation acknowledge several categories and manners of perpetration: Jews, Germans, Nazis, collaborators by force or by choice. One member of the parliament used such terms as "the insanity of the deeds and the madness of the cruelty of the Germans," and therefore argued that the law should say not "Nazis" but "Germans" (Barzel 1994, 265). But most of the legislative debates negotiated the distinction between German perpetrators and Jewish collaborators.

In the fifties, Israeli attitudes towards Holocaust perpetrators gained evident expression also in fierce debates regarding the establishment of diplomatic relations with Germany, the import of German merchandise, and the restitution agreement with Germany. Many Israeli politicians and journalists supported outlawing any kind of Israeli contact with Germany, official and individual, and some extremists called for military revenge against all Germans. The main opponents of establishing Israeli-German relations were survivors of the ghettos and camps and people who lost their families in the Holocaust. They were the ones who called for spiritual revenge, in the absence of the

possibility of a physical one and expressed contempt towards current Germany. But David Ben-Gurion, Israel's founding prime minister, resisted such a "ghetto mentality of isolation," as he saw it, in favor of promoting the state's needs, which necessitated welcoming the emerging post-war German economy and political power. Even if his approach originated in practicality rather than in true acceptance of post-war Germany, it did, in fact, promote such acceptance. In contrast, *Herut*, the right wing opposition party, used expressions such as a "pack of Teutonic wolves" to refer to the Germans, thus expelling them from humankind. *Herut's* leader, Menachem Begin, argued straightforwardly: "There is not one German who has not murdered our fathers. Every German is a Nazi. Every German is a murderer" (Segev 1991, 199). Even Golda Meir of Ben-Gurion's Labor Party, who voted in favor of accepting the reparations money, argued clearly that she had a "racist approach;" in her eyes, she declared, "every German is a Nazi German," and she was unwilling to distinguish between "good and bad Germans" (Segev 1991, 190). A competing argument was that ruling out all Germans would be a Nazi and racist approach, and that many Germans in fact saved Jews.²⁰ Some argued that receiving the reparations and negotiating with Germany was a moral victory of the Jews, while others considered it unbearable forgiveness. Eventually, the reparations law was passed and diplomatic and cultural relations with Germany were established, but this was not simply because the public agreed to distinguish between Germans and Nazis or to accept that now there was a new Germany. While the needs of survival downplayed ethical dilemmas for both government and individuals, the accusative generalizations equating Germans with Nazis continued to prevail among large portions of Israeli society for decades.

A valuable indication of attitudes towards the Holocaust and its perpetrators is evident in high school history textbooks of the time. In the lower grades, instruction of the Holocaust is softened due to the pupils' young age, and only a relatively small portion of students study the period at the university level, which is in any case less susceptible to pedagogic and cultural considerations than to scholarship. The high school curriculum, on the other hand, shapes the world view of future generations, and it also reveals social consensus and cultural currents, albeit those of five to ten years prior to the curriculum's initiation (the period of time it usually takes to produce and implement a textbook). The representation of the Holocaust in Israeli high school textbooks published before the mid-seventies, therefore, mirrors the prevalent attitudes in Israeli society of the fifties and sixties. In fact, most of the books in that period were written by the mid-sixties, providing an even more focused view into the cultural attitudes of the fifties. Haim Schatzker finds that in their treatment of the Holocaust, history textbooks written in the state's early decades use atypical, highly emotive and affective language, hence reflecting perception of the Holocaust as a catastrophe external to history and to the way history is studied. This tendency reflects, according to Schatzker, the state of trauma in which the *Yishuv* and later Israeli society found themselves at the time. In textbooks of that period, Holocaust perpetrators wear the form of demons, as if they were as powerful and non-human as Satan (1982). In *Agents of the Holocaust Lesson (sokhnim shel halekh)*, which surveys the presentation of the Holocaust in Israeli history textbooks since 1948, Ruth Firer shows that before the mid-seventies Israeli history textbooks display a heavy Zionist tone, as well as a simplistic "black and white" approach, especially in comparison to later textbooks. This narrow perspective presents a dichotomy of "us" versus "them," Jews

versus Gentiles, victims versus victimizers, while diminishing the importance of moral dilemmas, the role of the Judenrat as a Nazi tool of control, or the rescue attempts made by world Jewry or other countries and individuals. The earlier books actually tend to explicitly accuse the world of complicity in the Nazi genocide or averting the Jewish cry for help.

The simplified perception of the Holocaust in the early textbooks is especially evident in the representation of perpetrators. As Firer demonstrates in detail, the history high school textbooks used in the first decades of the state make it explicitly clear that all Germans knew of the war waged against the Jews and all of them benefited from it. The textbooks adopt a radical psychological approach to the Holocaust, detecting among the German people sick qualities, which were actualized during the events. The language in these early textbooks is especially emotive in its stereotyping of the Germans as a herd of psychopathic non-humans or murderous blood-thirsty beasts, and it uses terms, such as “insanity”, “sickness”, “barbarism”, and “Satanism” to explain the German capability to actualize the Nazi ideology. Especially interesting is the biological emphasis on the Germans and Nazis as beasts, predators, and viruses operating on instinct, not ideology (Firer 96-98). Such approaches and language are made even more explicit in the writing of the psychologist and pedagogue Prof. Fishel Shneorson, who already during the thirties examined Nazism in psychological-medical terms and published his findings in Europe. Shneorson repeatedly defines the Nazis as sick in a “social-mental plague of genocidal insanity.” The actualization of this insanity is “vicious” and “demonic,” and it finds its satisfaction in “moral corruption” which eliminates any sense of remorse (Shneorson 23, 25, 44). During the forties and fifties, Shneorson voiced his perspective in

Hebrew professional journals of education and medicine, as well as in the daily newspapers. Today, the use of such language in textbooks, for history or any other topic, seems displaced, and indeed with the later and more scholarly generation of textbooks as of the late seventies it gradually dissipated. At the time it was somewhat more acceptable as part of the ideological, pathos filled, and grand rhetoric that governed public discourse. Yet, even in the rhetorical norms typical of Israeli discourse of the fifties and sixties, such writing is exaggerated, reflecting the way Israeli society perceived the Holocaust at the time. As Schatzker (1980, 221) and Carmon (212) indicate, this highly emotive language expresses the conceptual helplessness and frustration of Israelis attempting to understand the Holocaust. Conceptualizing perpetrators in such mystic-demonic radical terms, through clear-cut dichotomies, Jew versus German and victim versus victimizer, helped Israeli society of the forties and fifties to elucidate the horror and rationalize its own helplessness.

Israeli public Holocaust consciousness begins to shift in the late 1950s, the years of the Kastner trial, a shift culminating with the Eichmann trial in 1961. Through the two trials, the Holocaust reached the public, introducing the horror and the impossible situation with which European Jewry was confronted and evoking greater understanding towards the survivors. The trial also brought the image of the perpetrators in Israel to its most explicit and focused expression. This time not the generalized concept of “perpetrators” was at stake, but rather a person, who came to embody a category. Expressing the preconceptions regarding the Nazis discussed above, Israeli newspapers did not restrain themselves in finding innovative, radical, and colorful titles for Eichmann. “Satan” was the name Justice Benjamin Halevi called Eichmann in 1954,

when stating in the verdict of the Greenwald-Kastner trial that Kastner “sold his soul to Satan.” The supreme court, which exonerated Kastner, called Eichmann a “henchman” and a “monster.” When Eichmann was caught in May 1960, the newspapers developed that line of thought and language. “Eichmann is not human,” determined one paper, and another called him an “arche-cannibal” (Segev 1991, 315). Other headlines used terms, such as *Ashmeday* (king of demons in Jewish folklore), the “Nazi murderer” and “the murderer of millions of Jews” (Yablonka 2001, 224). Haim Gouri, who published a daily report throughout the trial, wrote “murderous Germany was brought here” and “the German people destroyed, as is well known, the Jewish people” (244, 246). In public perception, Eichmann merged “perpetrator,” “Nazi”, and “German” to a coherent and feasible prototype, concentrating and strengthening existing conceptions and constituting a self-purifying dichotomy.

In prose fiction, the most significant impact of survivors and their perception of the Holocaust and its perpetrators is evident in the writing of Ka-Tzetnik. Ka-Tzetnik, (the pen-name for Yechiel De-Nur, previously Feiner), was born in Poland in 1909, he was sent to Auschwitz in August 1943 and he immigrated to Palestine in 1945. As a writer, he is known for his sextet *Salamandra*, written between 1945 and 1986. The opening three parts – *Sunrise Over Hell* (*Salamandra* 1945), *House of Dolls* (*Beit habubot* 1955), and *Atrocity* (*Karu lo pieple* 1961) constitute a cornerstone in Hebrew Holocaust fiction, and their influence on the Israeli collective consciousness is indisputable. Ka-Tzetnik’s writing, grounded in his own biography, is unique in its realism or even naturalism, while most literary accounts of the Holocaust take the genre of memoir, allegory, symbolism, surrealism, or any other form, which allows some

refuge from direct confrontation with the experience of the Holocaust. Such direct writing makes Ka-Tzetnik's depiction of Holocaust perpetrators extensive and omnipresent, reflecting the perspective of a Jew in the Holocaust. This is a paradigm later writers will work with or against.

Ka-Tzetnik's representation of perpetrators is unmistakably conducted through the simple mode of characterization. The numerous Nazis, SS, Gestapo officers, German soldiers, and Kapos who populate his books are almost exclusively rendered externally and superficially, dominated by the thematic function of "evil." This simple mode of characterization is so dominant in his writing, that in terms of the corpus of Hebrew and Israeli Holocaust fiction, Ka-Tzetnik's perpetrators actually constitute the "Eichmann prototype," which is located on the radical pole of the "perpetrator scale" as a full embodiment of the agent of atrocity, confined to the model of German=Nazi= willing participant in the persecution. That is in contrast to Ka-Tzetnik's Jewish characters, who are presented as individuals, from within, in complexity matching that of actual people. Most of Ka-Tzetnik's accounts of perpetrators are so limited that the majority of them do not even reach the level of flat characters, but are confined to brief and collective mention or given in a figurative manner, such as through a synecdoche (guns, black uniform, helmet) or simile, as predators. They do not communicate but scream orders. And in the rare cases that Ka-Tzetnik's narrator makes a hesitant attempt to penetrate the inner world of an SS officer or render the greater categorical complexity manifested through a Kapo, he quickly withdraws to indictment. Such unequal division of character complexity easily renders the narrator's understanding of the world of the Holocaust as a dichotomy

of good and evil, persistent sympathy to the Jews and reproach, in any way possible, from narratorial commentary to narrative design, to the perpetrators.

The resemblance that exists between Ka-Tzetnik's writing and non-literary discourses in all aspects relating to the representation of perpetrators is striking. In the Israeli textbooks, journalism, and political discourse of the fifties and sixties, the attitude towards the perpetrators is almost exclusively dichotomist, simplified, and radicalized, and the language is emotive, colorful, and bluntly accusative. Textbooks repeatedly use phrases such as "the German/Nazi animals," the "Nazi virus," "human shaped animals," and "predators thirsty for human blood" (Firer 97). In the Israeli parliament, the Germans were titled a "pack of Teutonic wolves," and their motives were explained as "madness." Eichmann was called a "monster" and an "arch-cannibal." In Ka-Tzetnik, we find the exact same terminology:

The Germans did not scream like humans. It was not a scream but some sort of screech and roar, as evil animals roar when they are very angry. (*Salamandra* 1946, 52; my translation)²¹

The gaze of a predator, which is certain that its prey will not escape it...a cannibals' act of worship. (*Salamandra* 1946, 54; my translation)

These are only a couple of examples from Ka-Tzetnik's first book (further discussion in chapter four), but the resemblance between this author's concepts and language in reference to the perpetrators and those common in the educational, political and journalistic writing of the time is not accidental. All of these discourses express trauma,

rage, and frustration, helplessness and desperation in face of the Holocaust. The resemblance between all these texts is not only manifestation of common ground, but also a causal one. Ka-Tzetnik, Dan Miron finds, “fulfills in Israeli culture an almost official role as the ‘spokesman’ of the Holocaust and its atrocity” (2005, 148). Given that Ka-Tzetnik’s first three books were published in 1946, 1955 and 1961, it is reasonable to assume that they impacted textbooks writers, politicians and journalists, as well as the Israeli public as a whole. This impact grew stronger with the Eichmann trial, where Ka-Tzetnik gave a dramatic performance in his testimony, ending with his collapse. For politicians, news reporters and history teachers who “were not there,” Ka-Tzetnik’s authority was most likely determinative. The “Eichmann prototype” established in his early writing will continue to dominate perpetrator representation until seriously challenged in the mid-eighties.

This development in Israeli public awareness to the Holocaust, which simultaneously placed the blame away from the survivors and voiced their suffering, found expression in literary writing. *Piepel* (1961) was Ka-Tzetnik’s last book dealing in length and detail with the horror of the Holocaust and the world of the camps and ghettos. His *Star Eternal* (*Hashaon* 1961) is more of a poetic recap of the earlier books, but *Phoenix over the Galilee* (*Kahol me’efer* 1966) and *Shivitti* (*Tsofen edma: Masa hagarin shel oshvits* 1987) deal with the survivor and his process of recovery and acculturation to normal life. Aharon Appelfeld, one of Israel’s most known writers-survivors, published his celebrated first collection of stories, *Smoke* (*Ashan*), dealing with survivors and their life under the shadow of the past, in 1962, and he continued to publish other works dealing with this issue during the following decades. Interestingly, Ka-Tzetnik and

Aharon Appelfeld, although both survivors, embody complete opposites in their literary responses to the Holocaust. Ka-Tzetnik is known for his realism, even naturalism, representing the atrocities of the Holocaust in a manner so direct that he has been accused of kitsch and pornography. Appelfeld is known for his silence and indirectness, often in the form of textual or typographical gaps, where the horror remains unspoken. Yet, in their opposing practices, reflecting their personal, unmediated confrontation with the perpetrators, these two survivors share the extremity of the simple mode of perpetrator characterization, that of the minimal possible degree of perpetrator complexity.

Born in Czernowitz in 1932, Appelfeld was sent to a work camp but managed to escape, spending the years of the war in continuous escape through the forests and rural areas of Eastern Europe. His first collection of stories was published in 1962, and after a few other collections, he began publishing novellas, as he does today. Appelfeld's fiction, writes Naomi Sokoloff, is "known equally for its obsessive concern with the Holocaust and for its indirectness in referring to the Holocaust. Time and again, his narratives recount incidents that take place before the war and after" (171).²² The novellas *Age of Wonders* (*Tor haplaot* 1978) and *Badenheim, 1939* (*Badenheim ir hanofesh* 1975), for example, deal with the changing atmosphere towards Jews in the late thirties, while the stories in *Smoke* and other collections deal with the struggle of survivors to acculturate to their new life as free people. This choice of subject matter allows limited space and focus for the representation of the perpetrators. But even when the work takes place within the world of the Holocaust, as is the case with the novella *The Ice Mine* (*Mikhre haqerah* 1997), Appelfeld allows the perpetrators minimal presence at best. The novella *Tzili: The Story of a Life* (*Hakutonet vehapasim* 1984), one of Appelfeld's most direct treatments of

the events of the Holocaust published before the late nineties, narrates the escape of a young Jewish girl in the East European forests. We know that “the soldiers raided the [village] houses” (10). Elsewhere she asks “and they kill everyone?” (33). But who are “they” – German military? SS? It is unclear. No other details are given as to who they are, but their presence is felt indirectly through the urgent sense of escape that pushes this young girl to never cease running.

In his earlier writing, we must note, Appelfeld tends to avoid developed characters in favor of simple characters, which externalize single aspects of human psychology. But even in these terms, we can determine that perpetrators are almost entirely absent from Appelfeld’s work published during the first two or three decades of his career. The absence of perpetrators fosters perception of them as a powerful collective rather than as individuals, an amorphous and faceless extra-human force, which brings with it death and destruction. In one of his essays, Appelfeld’s testifies that the world of the Holocaust was divided “between black and white in the most unambiguous fashion. The division between good and evil gave meaning and purpose to the struggle” (1988, 86). Similarly, Gershon Shaked observes that Appelfeld lives in a bipolarity of Jews and non-Jews, and the Holocaust is merely a violent expression of this fundamental situation (1993, 148). Such dichotomous perception finds strong expression in Appelfeld’s treatment of the perpetrators in his earlier writing: their absence prevents any interaction or confusion between them and their Jewish victim. Furthermore, the perpetrators’ absence invites readers to fill in the blanks with prevalent conceptions of the time, such as those shaped by Ka-Tzetnik. These conceptions enforce the simple mode of perpetrator characterization Appelfeld manifests through absence.

III. Probing the Limits of the Simple Mode: Other Holocaust Perpetrators

The representation of perpetrators in Israeli public discourse in the decades following the Holocaust was dominated by the simpler representation. Conventionally, the Nazis were portrayed through a flat prototype of the agent of evil, the demon and monster, which left very little space for complexity. But this is not to say that there were no other voices at the time, suggesting a more nuanced perception of the perpetrators, and these voices found their expression in the fiction of the time. Yet, the literary resistance to the “Eichmann prototype” never reaches the level of complexity in perpetrator representation that abolishes the prototype, as it will do in the eighties. An examination of the various ways perpetrators are complicated, yet remain within the simple mode of representation, constitutes this final section of the chapter.

In fact, the literary scene in Palestine saw the representation of perpetrators already before and during WWII. Writing in Austria but publishing in Palestine in the thirties, Gershon Shoffman (1880-1972) witnessed the rise of Nazism closely, in its original habitat and from its earlier stage, and he was able to provide some unique insights into the issue of Holocaust perpetrators.²³ In numerous short stories and sketches, written mostly in the early thirties and forties, Shoffman depicts the events but mostly the cultural climate in Austria of the early thirties, when, as he writes in his short story “Complete!” (“Hashlimu”), “the air in the country is thoroughly poisoned, hatred of Israel screams from every wall, and the swastika rules” (II, 276).²⁴ An especially interesting example is the relatively long story “New Light” (“Or hadash”), portraying the cultural and social changes following the rise of Nazism in a small Austrian village.²⁵ In contrast to classifications and dichotomies that will be established in later literature,

this story focuses on Austrian rather than German national identity, it includes women, and it reveals quite a bit of Jewish self-hatred in its negative and stereotypical portrayal of Jews. An especially palpable disparity between the post-Holocaust prototype and Shoffman's characters is the perception and evaluation of non-Jews in terms of generations. People of the old-world (Shoffman often mentions the Austrian prime-minister Schuschnigg, who preceded the Nazis) are mentioned with nostalgia as the narrative recalls a time of Jewish-Christian harmony, while the new Nazi culture brings destruction upon the country and its people – Jews and Gentiles alike. Although written through a Jewish perspective, "New Light" does not give Jewish characters a special advantage in their portrayal in terms of length or sympathy, and more than a story about anti-Jewish violence, it is a story about the changing social and cultural environment. At this early stage, Shoffman's literary portrayal of Nazis is not yet bound to the post-Holocaust prototypes. At most, the Austrians in these stories are perceived through the collective nature of their "people," as in the story "Teutonics," which presents a brief collective sketch of the villagers as simple, hard-working, hefty people, who are also heartless and violent. Only later, too late, will the distinct nature of Nazism be realized. But as early as 1935, Shoffman could not observe the true nature of the changes among his neighbors, allured by a "New Light."

Another early literary precedence for complex representation of Holocaust perpetrators in Hebrew literature published in Palestine is Moshe Shamir's short story "The Second Stutter" ("Hagimgum hasheni").²⁶ If not the first, the story is certainly one of the earliest texts written by a non-survivor, which attempts to present a detailed and direct portrayal of the camps. But unlike the most known portrayal of the perpetrators in

Hebrew fiction – that of Ka-Tzetnik whose *Salamandra* was published a year later – Shamir’s SS officer is a relatively complex and even vulnerable character, certainly in the terms established soon after the publication of the story. “The Second Stutter” tells the story of sturdy Kotler and little stuttering Frantzi who survived a Nazi work-camp, where they worked in a sawmill. Shamir portrays in detail the atrocities of the camp – the violence, executions, torture – as well as the camp’s commandant, Major Kunda, who, uniquely, used to stutter whenever ordering executions, implying an ideological discomfort with Nazism, as well as an emotional difficulty in executing orders. Furthermore, it is implied that Kunda tortured Frantzi, for a failed escape, with the mechanical saws used for cutting lumber in the camp. After the war, in the sawmill of the kibbutz (the Israeli communal village), where the two survivors find a new home, Kotler deliberately causes an accident which cuts three of Frantzi’s fingers. The analogies are striking. Both the camp and the kibbutz employ Kotler and Frantzi in a sawmill and in both Frantzi is injured by a saw, as a result of the deliberate act of another: in the camp it was Major Kunda and in the kibbutz it is his friend Kotler. Consequently, the gap between the SS and Jew is undermined.²⁷ When Kotler, the survivor, duplicates the acts of the Nazi commandant – injuring helpless Frantzi with a *Kirchner Leipzig* saw – the difference between victim and victimizer collapses. Kotler even inherits Kunda’s difficulty with speech, and when trying to report Frantzi’s injury, which he inflicted, Kotler is frozen by fear of stuttering, just as Kunda stuttered when ordering executions. Since Kotler’s aggression is a result of normal human emotions – jealousy and frustration – and his actions lead to the same inability to speak that we see with Kunda, what does that say about the stuttering Nazi Major and the motives for his violence against Frantzi

and in general? One suggestion the story makes is that if Kunda and Kotler act similarly, then their motives may be similar; and in any case, that Jews and Nazis are somewhat similar.

Relative to Israeli fiction published since the mid-eighties, Shoffman and Shamir's characterization of their perpetrators is closer to the minimal possible degree of complexity. This is the case also because their generic choice – short stories – confines the potential development for either Jewish or non-Jewish characters. Yet, within the simple mode, certainly relative to Ka-Tzetnik and Appelfeld, Shoffman and Shamir demonstrate considerable complexity in perpetrator characterization. They imagined their literary Nazis as close as possible to their Jewish victims, and anti-Jewish violence not as driven by Nazism or even dominantly by antisemitism, but rather as an extreme manifestation of recognizable human behavior, individual (with Shamir) and collective (with Shoffman). Neither Shamir nor Shoffman ever made another attempt to convey the perpetrators so closely. Shoffman's later Holocaust writing is mostly dedicated to lamentation on the destruction of his home in Eastern Europe, and in any case he wrote very little fiction in the decades following the catastrophe, focusing mostly on his editorial and critical work. Shamir did include the character of Mika, a young girl who is a survivor, in his celebrated novel *He Walked through the Fields* (*Hu halakh basadot* 1947), but he never repeated his attempt to confront the atrocities of the Holocaust and its perpetrators directly. The representation of perpetrators in “New Light” and “The Second Stutter” remains within the boundaries of the simple mode not only in terms of its level of complexity but also in terms of its minimal impact on Israeli Holocaust writing. The fifties, sixties, and early seventies saw the publication of Hebrew novels presenting

higher levels of perpetrator complexity, which challenged the boundaries of the simple mode, yet remained within them. Some of instances by Naomi Frankel, Khanoch Bartov, Yoram Kaniuk, and Amoz Oz, are discussed below.

Naomi Frankel's *Saul and Johana*

Naomi Frankel (1918-2009) was born in Berlin and immigrated to Palestine in 1934.

Frankel's fundamental contribution to Israeli Holocaust fiction is the trilogy *Saul and Johanna* (*Shaul veyohana* 1956-1967), a "Marxist Zionist-ideological saga," serving as a memorial tombstone to German Jewry, to use Gershon Shaked's words (1993, 59).²⁸

Over a thousand pages long, this "first direct attempt to understand the roots and lessons of the Holocaust," as Malka Shaked observes, portrays the life of German Jewry, stretching to its roots in the eighteenth century (238). Frankel's focus, however, is on the years 1930-1933, as well as on the turmoil of generational transitions in a society that is changing with modernity in every possible way: culturally, technologically, ideologically, and politically. Within these changes in German and European culture, Frankel weaves the Jewish story: the secularization of the older generation, attempting to immerse itself in German culture, versus the youngest generation, interested in a range of ideologies from Zionism to Communism.

Changes and adaptations in this massive novel are not limited to Jewish life. Among the individuals struggling in the name of the Social-Democrats, Communism, and National-Socialism, the novel – generally reflecting Jewish perspectives – pays considerable attention to the growth of Emil Repke, a young police officer and a Nazi advocate. Emil's growth as a Nazi appears early in the course of the novel as he is

romantically involved with Edith Levi, a young daughter of one of the Jewish families around which the novel revolves. The young couple's interaction reveals Emil's inner struggle between his devotion to Edith on the one hand and to the Nazi party on the other. In one passionate dialogue between the two, he refers to the anti-Semitic element of Nazism as nonsense used to allure the masses, but then withdraws into describing Mr. Levi as a Jew, who cannot understand the Nazi ideology as a German can.²⁹ Later in the dialogue, he describes with passion and conviction how Nazism makes him feel like a true and proud German and how Hitler will redeem German honor. Stubbornly refusing to accept Nazism for what it is, he promises his Jewish sweetheart that after the war nobody will remember antisemitism, and they could be married. Edith herself is impressed by Repke's speech, which suggests the possibility of a hidden side of the Nazis as passionate revolutionists, struggling to actualize their vision in time and place swayed by various ideologies. This dialogue and the whole of Repke's depiction are truly convincing: a young idealist searching for a better future for his country and people, naïve to the true nature of his party. By the end of the novel the tension in Emil's character is sharpened and put into action. As an SS officer, involved in the Nazi plans for the future of German Jewry, Emil visits the Levi house and aggressively urges the family to leave Germany immediately. By doing so he overcomes the insult of being unwanted at that house, and he betrays the party's ideology, while risking his own skin. The depth of the perpetrator is undeniable here; although narrated mostly externally, this character gains significant focus and close attention, and its inner struggles are evident in its actions. Even though his attempt at rescue is motivated by his feelings for Edith, rather than by true critique of Nazism, an SS acting to save a Jewish family is not an ordinary

phenomenon. The tensions allowed within Repke's character – the hesitation between good and evil, emotion and ideology, his naïveté towards the future of his own party – may stand for an entire class of people.

The disparity in perpetrator characterization between Ka-Tzetnik and Frankel is undeniable. Ka-Tzetnik's perpetrators are flat and static in Forster's terms, located at the bottom of Ewen's scales of complexity, development and inner life, and they embody, if not invent historically, the "Eichmann prototype." Frankel's Repke, in contrast, develops over the course of the novel. His inner life is not really presented, but it does gain close expression in his speech and actions. Repke's conflict can also be perceived as competing functions of his literary character in Phelan's terms. Ka-Tzetnik limits his perpetrators to the thematic role of evil. Frankel allows complexity and tension between the thematic and the mimetic function of the character, between the Nazi and the individual. The tension between functions of character, or forces in Repke's life as a possible individual, concludes with dominance of the Nazi theme, paralleling the events in German society of the time. It appears obvious, then, that Repke resists the Eichmann prototype of a Holocaust perpetrator in every possible way. One reservation, however, is fundamental: the complexity of character discussed above relates to Repke before he became an SS officer with the Nazi rise to power. The evident dissimilarity between Repke and Ka-Tzetnik's characterization of perpetrators, therefore, does not indicate a shift in mimetic paradigm, certainly not to the degree that the fiction of the new wave indicates it. Whereas Grossman and Liebrecht, writing in the mid-eighties, deal with the complexity of the SS in the camps themselves, Emile Repke operates on the historical threshold that in fact makes such complexity understandable.

Ka-Tzetnik, Appelfeld, and Frankel were all born in Europe and immigrated to Palestine. This biographical common ground is evident in their early texts, situated in Europe, before or after WWII, and occupied with European Jews. The literary map began to change in the sixties, when some major literary responses to the Holocaust were published by young writers born or raised in Palestine. This change in writers' common biography gained also a thematic expression. When Hanokh Bartov, Yoram Kaniuk, Haim Gouri, Yehuda Amichai, and Amos Oz respond to the Holocaust in the sixties, they focus not on the events themselves but on their impact on the life of both survivors and their Israeli contemporaries.³⁰ The fact that major Israeli writers of the sixties, who were born and raised in Palestine away from the Nazi threat, produced the main texts dealing with the Holocaust at the time evidences the turning point that the Eichmann trial (1961) generated in Israeli Holocaust consciousness. Haim Gouri, a central poet of that young *Sabra* generation who covered the trial for a daily newspaper, wrote: "Now the Holocaust took place" (244). Now – during the trial, when the testimonies were made public, while before the survivors' silent cry was constrained to print or hushed conversations within their communities. Now, in 1961 and the following few years – before the 1967 war occupied the focus of Israeli attention – Israelis were forced to confront the Holocaust and realize its impact on their everyday lives. When writing about the Holocaust, therefore, Israeli writers of the sixties were in a position different from that of their predecessors. While Shoffman and Frankel had personal experience with the German and Nazi world, and Appelfeld and Ka-Tzetnik encountered the atrocities first-hand, Bartov,

Kaniuk, and Oz encountered the Holocaust solely through mediation, personal or cultural. Most importantly, these writers wrote in sight of the ominous figure of Eichmann.

Hanokh Bartov's *The Brigade*

Hanokh Bartov was born in 1926 in Palestine, a *Sabra*. Like Shamir, he is a dominant member of the “1948 Generation,” whose main subject of writing, at least during the first decades of the state, was the struggle for independence. That means that Bartov encountered the Holocaust through mediation of survivors and other agents of memory, and that mediation occurred more or less during the events themselves. In the case of Bartov, the encounter with the survivors and the perpetrators was even more direct than typical of the time since Bartov was a soldier in the Jewish Brigade of the British military. The brigade, though taking a small part in the war, came in direct contact with both survivors and local population in the occupied countries. Bartov's impressions from this encounter in the summer 1945, recorded in his biographical novel *The Brigade* (*Pitsei bagrut* 1965), are of great value to this study. This is especially the case since Bartov himself notes that it was the Eichmann trial – reintroducing him to both victims and perpetrators – that motivated him to write the novel. *The Brigade* tells the story of Elisha Kruk, age nineteen, a soldier in the Jewish Brigade, whose unit is sent to serve as an occupation force during the last few months of the war and after. During these few months, in connection with some past experiences, Elisha goes through a process of realization and maturity as he is forced to confront himself and his beliefs. The Hebrew name of the book, *Pitsei Bagrut*, literally meaning “wounds of maturity,” reflects this process clearly.³¹ Elisha's relation to women, his search for friends and role models, and

his loyalty to his family and country, are all challenged in the summer of 1945. The most formidable challenge forces Elisha's to re-examine his conception of both victim and victimizer and especially his place between them. Are all Germans to be accused of the Nazi genocide and are all Jews complete victims? Can he, Elisha, become a victimizer when given the chance and justification, or is he, the proud Jewish soldier, bound to victimhood and weakness? These questions are the axis on which Elisha's moral and emotional growth progresses, and their inescapable resolution towards the end of the novel marks the formation of his identity.

More than producing representations of Holocaust perpetrators, the novel challenges the soldiers' – and readers' – existing image of them. During his stay in post-war Italy and Germany, Elisha realizes that the category of perpetrators he had in mind fails to reflect the actual people he meets: women rather than men, civilians rather than soldiers, potential victims of the Jewish soldiers rather than their victimizers. The collapse of the image the Jewish soldiers held when joining the military, and which fuelled their passion for revenge, generates character complexity: not complexity through the co-existence of contrasting qualities within a character – the supposed perpetrators are marginal characters – but complexity through the tension between the image of the character and its actuality; or, in Phelan's terms, between its thematic and mimetic components.

A dominant example of such opposition, a rift actually, is the various women characters in the novel. Not only are these helpless women, they are potential sexual victims and also sexual attractions, and therefore different from what Elisha expected. When one of the German girls approaches the room the soldiers forcefully took in her

house, Elisha observes that “her breasts bulged like melons within her blouse. A ruffled peasant’s dress covered her fleshy thighs.” And then, the text notes, “she’s a lousy German, cried a voice within. A Nazi. Daughter of an SS man. You hate her” (224). In his encounter with the girl, Elisha’s challenge is not only to maintain a collective hate opposing his nature as a person and as a Jew, but also to ignore his physical urges as a man. The challenge is put to the test when, against the internal voice, he avoids initiating a sexual assault on the girl and prevents one initiated by others. By doing so, he refuses not only to avenge the blood and innocence of Jewish women victimized by the Nazis, but also to satisfy his burning physical urges with a convenient excuse. Another example of such tension between image and actuality is evident through Elisha’s perception of the face of a German girl, which, in Elisha’s eyes, “looked like it came right off a toffee tin—plump, thick lips like mulberries, a white, fleshy neck.” So he thinks, allowing commercial patterns commonly used in the description of German girls to subordinate what he sees in front of him (224). When the soldiers reach a local school, Elisha finds a textbook for the second grade, in which the Führer appears in a photograph of him smiling to a little girl. If he turned this way to me, Elisha thinks, I would be tempted as well. “The people there,” he tells, “were no different than faces anywhere in the world; no matter how hard we tried, we could not make out the features of the devil’s henchman in those towns—people living on the slopes of the mountains” (80). Encountering anything but sadists in black uniforms, Elisha finds that holding to the “hymns of hate” and the desire to revenge is becoming increasingly impossible.

This continuous clash between the image and reality of a perpetrator generates a moral dilemma: can the revenge still be executed, once the soldiers become aware of the

complexity of reality and the heterogeneity of the victimizer category, if such a category can even be established? The dilemma, constituting the novel's "dramatic kernel," to use Mintz's wording (1984, 246), reaches its thematic and practical peak in two different scenes. Following a report of an attack by the Jewish soldiers on two German women, the company finds itself in a long and dramatic conflict of ideologies: those who see their primary role as rescuers of the Jewish survivors in Europe versus those who think that revenge is their purpose. The voices are for and against the moral right, obligation even, to revenge the blood of the innocent Jewish victims, and there are issues of ego and honor, power and impotence, and obligation to one's own creed, not to mention to the military they serve. Those who support the moral obligation for revenge argue, in fact, that all Germans are accomplices in the genocide against the Jews, and all types of revenge – physical, sexual, material – are allowed. Their opponents advocate that the moral obligation to rescue Holocaust survivors takes precedence over revenge (the two are mutually exclusive since the British command will probably dissolve the Brigade in case of violence against civilians). None of the sides, we should note, not even the opponents to revenge, disputes the accountability of these local women. They are perceived as Nazis and accomplices by German ethnic identity alone. All of the Jewish soldiers swore to "avenge the blood of our slaughtered brothers, to wreak vengeance in war or in peace on the butchers and their henchmen, on the people who applauded them, who strewed their path with roses, who welcomed the slaughter and grew fat on the spoils" (116). The doubts never address the classification of certain individuals as perpetrators or even the right and obligation to revenge, but only the priority of the act and the ability to execute it.

The practical test of this dilemma is demonstrated through Elisha, who does not take a stand during that debate. Taking by force a room in a local German house, and intimidating the mother and her two daughters living there, is not easy for him. At night the German hostesses are attacked by several soldiers of the Jewish Brigade, and the noise draws Elisha from his room. This was the ultimate test of his attitude towards the Germans: how will he respond to an act of Jewish revenge? Brodsky, a soldier sharing the room with Elisha, tries to stop him from going downstairs since “they’re our boys,” but Elisha insists. Finding the women sexually attacked by the soldiers, he shoots once as warning. The attackers reply: “Kruk, you’re crazy. They’re Nazis. The whore’s husband is an SS [...] No German ever stood with a rifle to protect a Jewish girl” (230-31). Elisha insists and the attackers escape. This act of resistance marks Elisha’s transition into maturity. Despite the “hymns of hatred” (231) he memorized and the high price of social criticism and isolation he was about to pay, Elisha could not see a young girl assaulted. And with this action, as he thinks to himself in that emotional turmoil after the event, he in fact returned to be his father’s son, a “pure Jewish soul.” His test of maturity is facing his Jewish identity, which not only forbids him to take revenge, but also pushes him to stop it when taken by others. We, the Jews, this young soldier thinks, are “condemned to walk the earth with the image of God stamped on our foreheads like the mark of Cain” (232). Even in the reality of the Holocaust and its aftermath, Elisha cannot betray his principles.

Bartov’s novel both undermines and maintains the simple mode of perpetrator characterization. It undermines it by showing that, in contrast to the image the Jewish soldiers had in mind, the category of “victimizers” does not necessarily overlap with that

of Germans or with men or with anything related to those helpless women. On the contrary, the German women are perceived as sexual objects, cultural products or simply as people. The victim versus victimizer dichotomy is destabilized, when the Jewish soldiers find themselves in a position to victimize the German women. Elisha realizes that he cannot avenge because within the “new Hebrew” he would like to become “resides the old Jew, which cannot hate and avenge like any man,” as Shaked puts it (1993, 84). By avoiding revenge and not being, as they planned, just once “like the Tartars. Like the Ukrainians. Like the Germans,” Elisha demonstrates an approach which can be interpreted in two oppositional ways. Stopping the rape can certainly demonstrate moral superiority which does not succumb to bestial needs and even stop others from actualizing such needs against the helpless. Elisha, however, may also be acting, as Mintz argues, “less out of commitment to ideals than out of a residual softness in his soul that prevents him from fully playing the avenger” (1984, 247). Bartov himself, as Robert Alter notes, “makes it clear that Kruk’s deliverance of the German women is *not* a moral act—it proceeds from weakness, just as to join the rapists would have confessed a different kind of weakness” (178). Whatever the motive for Elisha’s act is, preventing the rape maintains the Jewish soldier in his position as weak, excluded from the category of the victimizer in both intent and action, and it re-stabilizes the dichotomy, which places the Jew as victim in opposition to the German as victimizer. The correlation between being German and being a Holocaust perpetrator is a major component in the conventional prototype, which constitutes the simple mode of perpetrator representation. In both theme and narrative dynamics, placing Elisha’s moral dilemma in the center of the novel and resolving it in a way, which conforms to the conventional perpetrator prototype, restrains

the novel's sincere attempts to examine greater complexity in Holocaust perpetrators and maintains it, in final balance, within the boundaries of the simple mode.

Yoram Kaniuk's *Adam Resurrected*

Yoram Kaniuk was born in 1930 in Tel Aviv, and like Shamir and Bartov, fought in Israel's War of Independence. However, since his writing career blossomed really in the mid-sixties, he is closer to the Generation of the State (like Amos Oz and A. B. Yehoshua) than to the Generation of Independence. And like Shamir and Bartov, Kaniuk had no direct contact with the events of the Holocaust nor did he lose a European homeland, although he did come in close contact with the survivors when participating in their transport to Palestine after the war. For the most part, his encounter with the Holocaust was mediated by Israeli culture and society of the fifties and sixties. These details are important for understanding Kaniuk's achievement in *Adam Resurrected* (*Adam ben-kelev* 1968), which marks a literary breakthrough in the treatment of the Holocaust and the survivors in Israeli literature. Kaniuk, Yael Feldman observes, was the "first native Israeli to adopt the point of view of the survivor as an individual, without imposing on his story any collective or historical interpretative scheme" (1992, 235). Likewise, Mintz notes that "Kaniuk never suggests stigma or judgment. However bizarre the deformities of his characters, they are always understood as imposed by the past and as essentially reasonable responses to insane, unspeakable conditions" (1984, 252).³²

Adam Resurrected tells the story of Adam Stein, a German-Jewish survivor, who, at the time of the story, is hospitalized in a mental institute for Holocaust survivors in Israel. Through the stories of the inmates in the institute and especially through the personal

history of Adam, Kaniuk reveals some of the horror they went through. This kind of mediation, rendering the Holocaust through the characters' inner-world and life stories, rather than through external direct narration as in *Ka-Tzetnik*, allows Kaniuk both realistic justification and cultural legitimacy to treat this subject, especially after its sensitive and powerful exposure in the Eichmann trial.

Adam Stein is not a survivor like any other. He has imaginary yet tangible friends, who reflect different dimensions of his personality and history, and he possesses magical powers and knowledge, which practically allow him to manipulate the institute and its inhabitants. The novel is a colorful carnival in which perspectives, the absurd, and the fantastic intermix. Such components allow Kaniuk access to Adam's horrifying story in the Munchausen camp: he served as Commandant Klein's personal dog, and being a previous circus owner and actor, Adam also served as the camp's clown, who entertained the inmates on their way to death to keep them calm. One can only try to imagine the impossible horror of being forced to amuse an audience marching to annihilation, let alone what went through Adam's mind, when he recognized among the people marching to the gas chambers, trusting the Jewish clown, his own wife and daughter.

Commandant Klein is not developed to the extent Grossman will develop his commandant Neigel in *See Under: Love* (1986), and he comes up only in Adam's streams of memory or the narrator's brief descriptions.³³ But even through this restricted rendition, which accumulates to become a whole picture, Klein resists the "Eichmann prototype." By employing Adam in the camp, Klein saved his life, just as Adam's circus prevented the young suicidal Klein from taking his own life before the war. "Commandant Klein did not hate Jews," Adam recalls, "any more than the average

butcher hates his cows and the average hangman those he hangs” (127). There was something noble about Klein, Adam thinks, some humanity that made him minimize the suffering and panic among the Jews in the camp. Such understatement, even sympathy, on Adam’s part, as the protagonist and focalizer, has the potential of impacting the reader’s judgment. This is in opposition to the Israeli reader’s default point of departure in the sixties, holding Klein as nothing more than an “agent of atrocity,” lacking any measure of complexity, as in *Ka-Tzetnik* or *Eichmann*. The boundary between victim and victimizer is further obscured by a set of circumstances and analogies participating in the construction of Klein’s character. Both Klein and Adam were born on May sixth 1895, Adam in Berlin and Klein in Stuttgart, and both saved each other’s life. It is thanks to Adam that Klein was able to hide after the war under the Jewish identity of a survivor named Dr. Weiss. Towards the end of the novel we learn that Klein is also Dr. Gross, the mental hospital’s director, and although that may be nothing more than a fantasy of one of the hospital’s patients, once more the Nazi and the Jew overlap in their identity. Finally, the Nazi commandant is assimilated among the other participants in Adam Stein’s world – survivors, victims, an imaginary dog, a child, and a twin brother – through the novel’s genre. *Adam Resurrected* is a carnival in which fact and fantasy, the probable and the impossible, are consistently confused. Klein and his improbable story of rescue as a Jew become an element of this carnival, making it all the more difficult to categorize the commandant as a victimizer in the traditional sense, if at all. All these aspects of the novel’s design and approach of the perpetrator will be developed two decades later by the new wave of Israel Holocaust fiction, first and foremost by Grossman. But more than Kaniuk suggests perpetrator characterization which exceeds the

simple mode, he poses the Nazi officer as a riddle, one enigmatic element among many in a carnival which challenges, in approach, substance, and implication, the conventional memorialization of the Holocaust in Israel of the sixties.

Amos Oz's Touch the Water, Touch the Wind

Amos Oz's short novel *Touch the Water, Touch the Wind* (*Laga'at bamayim, laga'at baruah*) appeared in 1973. Oz's biography is very similar to that of Kaniuk. A *Sabra* born in Jerusalem in 1939, Oz was one of the main figures in Israeli writing of the sixties, a strong echo of Israel's sights and sounds. But while Kaniuk's commandant Klein undermines the conventional Nazi image, Oz's pattern of representation echoes Katzetnik's collective, flat, animalized, and demonized character of Holocaust perpetrators. Yet, Oz's Nazis weaken the Eichmann prototype in other terms.

Touch the Water, Touch the Wind tells the story of Elisha Pomeranz, a pensive Polish-Jewish math teacher, who, in the winter of 1939, finds refuge in the East-European forests and later immigrates to Israel. The novel's atmosphere tends toward the metaphysical: Pomeranz and other characters live in the world of ideas as developed in German philosophy, sensing nuanced, even musical or mathematical alterations of physical existence. Such individuals can survive the war only in the semi-fantastic world Oz constructs in the novel, including some unlikely events of chance and magical capabilities, which allow refuge or, simply, produce the end of the war. The semi-fantastic nature of the novel and its metaphysical atmosphere corroborate Oz's characterization of the Germans. The guard post, where Pomeranz is imprisoned and interrogated, is a former seminary or convent, adding a religious tone to the event. The

German guards are described basically as little demons, creatures of the night occupied with petty and ignorant sins, whom Pomeranz, like a priest, tries to bring into intellectual enlightenment. The Jew lectures to them passionately, in excellent German, utilizing the theory of ideas, that he is indeed an immortal Christian saint, returning from the dead to bring redemption. But he fails, and the mob of German guards adheres to its card games, drinking, swearing, childish shenanigans, crying, laughter, and endless frying of pork. The Jew approaches them through German philosophy and Christian miracles, but they stick to their doings. “Beneath their uniforms,” Oz tells us, “these Germans were nothing but brutish peasants, lumps of clay of Silesia or Lower Saxony, endlessly guzzling beer and staring vacantly into space: cloudy glassy bears’ eyes (14). Pomeranz finally flies through the chimney into the forest when realizing, sadly, that “metaphysical wrong cannot be perceived, while perceptible wrong emits a powerful stench of pork fat.”

Oz’s perpetrators are servants of evil, but it is a different kind of evil. Unlike Katzetnik’s Nazi demons, who execute evil in the persecution of Jews, Oz’s Nazis imitate actual demons, in accordance with the book’s fantastic and philosophical genre. While the Eichmann prototype entails willing participation in the genocide, Oz’s Nazis are a ludicrous, harmless herd of low-rank demons, too silly to appreciate the intellectual accomplishments of their own culture as lectured to them by a Jew. Nurit Gertz finds that in this novel Oz attempts to create an opposition between two pure powers of evil and good, which do not intermix. The attempt, according to Gertz, fails because the opposition’s structure is extreme, simplified and schematic, and it is incompatible with other qualities of Oz’s art of writing.³⁴ The novel reflects, Gertz argues, a turning point in Oz’s writing as a result of ideological shifts. His later writing shows greater affinity to a

patient and realistic depiction of everyday life through the characters' eyes, rather than through the ironic judgment of the narrator, all expressing a more forgiving attitude towards Israeli society (159-60). Gertz's observations notwithstanding, her discussion decontextualizes the novel from the conventions of Israeli Holocaust discourse prevalent at the time. Oz's identification of Germans with pure evil and of Jews with pure good proves perfectly typical of Israeli writing about the Holocaust at the time. Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was subtitled *A Report on the Banality of Evil*; *Ashmeday*, the king of demons, was Eichmann's title in the Israeli newspapers, and Oz himself refers to Eichmann as Satan when recalling the days of the trial in his memoir (2006, 17). This cultural climate could not but impact Oz's writing, especially since *Touch the Water*, *Touch the Wind* is his first book dealing with the Holocaust. Of course, the novel's philosophical and fantastic nature may necessitate such a dichotomized perception of good versus evil, but the opposite also works: a philosophical and fantastic novel provides generic justification to the prevalent conception of the time, which renders Nazis as pure evil. This is in opposition to the "banality of evil," a perception Oz rejects (2006, 18). The metaphysical nature of the book also allows the writer to circumvent realistic confrontation with the Holocaust, a tremendous challenge of imagination for non-survivors, who also lack cultural legitimization for such an undertaking. Oz conforms to the simple mode of perpetrator characterization, and the novel evidences the dominance of the thematic role (evil) over the mimetic one (individuals). But this evil is philosophical and religious, silly and harmless, unlike the evil usually assigned to the Nazis. Such variation in type allows a limited degree of perpetrator complexity.

More than case studies, the texts discussed in this chapter constitute the formative core of Hebrew and Israeli fictional representations of Holocaust perpetrators written between the mid-forties and the mid-seventies. Other major writers and works of fiction responding to the Holocaust, such as Uri Orlev's 1956 novel *Lead Soldiers* (*Hayaley oferet*) or Yonat and Alexander Sened's massive *Between the Living and the Dead* (*Bein hametim uvein hahaim*, 1964), deal with the perpetrators only marginally. It is fair to say, therefore, that the paradigm which dominated perpetrator representation in Hebrew and Israeli fiction published prior to the mid-seventies displays a clear subordination of the mimetic function (character as individual) to the thematic function (evil). But different writers imagine different compromises between the two functions, manifesting various levels and manners of character complexity. Ka-Tzetnik and Appelfeld demonstrate the minimal complexity possible, either through prototypical description of the perpetrators or complete lack of reference. Other writers resist the Eichmann prototype in a variety of ways and degrees within the boundaries of the simple mode. Shoffman explains Nazi activity as a radicalized, yet typical, human behavior; Shamir finds resemblance between the SS officer and the survivor; Frankel constructs a naïve believer of Nazism; Bartov reveals the collapse of indoctrinated images in the face of reality; Kaniuk depicts a Nazi who saved a Jew and was also saved by him; and Oz's Nazis constitute a harmless evil that is religious and philosophical in nature. But more than the complexity imagined in these texts jeopardizes the Eichmann prototype, it circumvents it – by avoiding realistic depictions of perpetrators or by locating the sites of events away from the ghetto and camp, or other sites where direct confrontation with the Nazi evil would be inevitable.

Only with the new wave of Israeli Holocaust fiction of the mid-eighties will the Holocaust's traumatizing effect and the paradigms set by survivors' perspective be weakened to an extent that enables direct literary confrontation with the atrocity and its agents. Only then will the mode of characterization develop substantial complexity, and the prototypical representation of perpetrators be truly challenged.

Chapter 3

Holocaust Perpetrators in Israeli Fiction, 1986 Onwards

This chapter examines the representation of perpetrators in the later period of Israeli Holocaust fiction, from the mid-eighties onwards. The first part of the chapter portrays the period's literary and socio-cultural circumstances against the background of which Israeli Holocaust fiction was produced, and the second part examines the representation of perpetrators in this corpus. While the radical shift from the early mode of perpetrator representation to the late one certainly evidences influence of earlier writers on their followers – and this angle will be discussed as well – its emergence and growth have stronger roots in the tectonic movements, which reshaped Israeli collective consciousness in the late seventies and the early eighties. Four such movements and their impact on the perception and representation of Holocaust perpetrators in fiction are discussed here: changing Israeli attitudes towards Germans and Germany; developments in Israeli self-perception; the redrawing of the Israeli literary map as a result of these developments; and the rise of a new generation of writers dealing with the Holocaust. The new circumstances produced a collective perspective and cultural atmosphere demonstrating a generally more complex understanding of the Israeli self and its history, and in particular, a more complex perception of the Holocaust and its perpetrators. Such complex perception, already apparent although restrained in the early period (mid-forties- mid-seventies), gains full expression in the fiction of the later period. As of the mid-eighties, Israeli writers dominantly represent perpetrators as developed individuals, locate them at the forefront of the narrative and render their private and inner world in detail. Although

the object of representation – the Holocaust and its perpetrators – remains stable over the two periods, the circumstances of literary creation have changed, resulting in a sharply differentiated mode of representation, which quickly demoted its predecessor from its dominance.

Israeli Attitudes towards the Holocaust, Germans, and Germany

One extra-literary factor which impacted the change of mode in perpetrator representation is the developing Israeli perception of the Holocaust, Germans, and Germany over the four decades separating WWII and the rise of the new wave. Until the late fifties, the dominant approach in Israel advocated the collective accountability of all Germans, accountability deriving from the nature of the German-Nazi state and Nazi race theory. As historian Naima Barzel indicates, as of 1957 Israel-Germany relations strengthened, mainly due to political and economic interests rather than due to true change in public approach on the Israeli side (1996, 540). The year 1965, with the mutual establishment of Israeli and German embassies, is another landmark in this development, which gathered energy during the sixties and seventies. Recalling his own impressions from Israel of the sixties and seventies, Amos Oz describes a sudden strong interest in post-WWII German literature, which began to appear in translation (especially works by Heinrich Böll, Siegfried Lenz, and Günter Grass). Collective curiosity expanded to include public interest in German culture from periods earlier than the Nazi era as well as in Nazi Germany itself. In those years large numbers of German volunteers joined the Israeli kibbutzim, and many Israelis visited Germany. Different Germans and a different Germany – different than their image in Israel – were revealed to the Israeli public. Oz

describes growing difficulty in maintaining the indoctrinated notions of his childhood perceiving all Germans indiscriminately as murderers, and similarly it became difficult to maintain the boycott of German products. Germany's attempts to deal with its past evoked within Oz a deep sense of respect (2006, 23-26). By the time the new wave began to publish in mid-eighties, it was no longer simple to argue that "an entire nation murdered an entire nation," as Moshe Shamir writes in his 1963 play *The Heir* (*Hayoresh*). That is the case for the Israeli public of the eighties, which comes in contact with German culture and life, and it is especially true for writers who were sensitive to the central role of Germans in world culture throughout history. Amir Gutfreund, one of the second generation writers, was cited in 2007 saying, "in the past we reserved the right to hate Germany. But this has changed. An Israeli who is unwilling to visit Germany today is ridiculous, in my opinion." Gutfreund's expressed wish, that his children live in Israel but adopt German culture – the same culture that had been considered the evil root of Nazism – demonstrates how fundamental is the change in Israeli attitude toward the Holocaust's perpetrators.

This is not to say the Holocaust or its perpetration was removed from Israeli consciousness or discourse during the eighties. On the contrary. In 1978, sociologist Charles Liebman found the Holocaust to be "the central myth of Israeli civil religion today" (45). In that year Israeli television broadcasted the American TV series *Holocaust*, which was heavily criticized for a simplified presentation of the atrocities, while also rendering a German point of view, but it brought the Holocaust to public consciousness in an accessible way. In the second half of the eighties, as Tom Segev observes, a single day did not pass without the Holocaust being mentioned in the

newspapers, while before then its journalistic presence was much narrower (even the Nuremberg trials were not really covered). The sensational peak of the presence of the Holocaust in Israeli life at the time was most likely the trial of John Demjanjuk in 1986, which was covered extensively in the Israeli media. The trial sparked a wave of debates regarding the role of the Holocaust in Israeli life. A notable example is Yehuda Elkana's 1988 essay "A Plea for Forgetting" ("bizkhit hashikhehah") in which Elkana, an Auschwitz survivor, called for eradicating the domination of the Holocaust over Israeli life, definition, and future. The memory of the past and its traumatic lessons, he argues, cannot take an active part in the democratic process. This unorthodox, revolutionary approach encountered strong resistance, which gained a wide public exposure. During the first Gulf War, when Israel was under threat and attack of Iraqi missiles, the memory of the Holocaust was constantly evoked in Israeli journalism: Saddam Hussein was compared with Hitler or Eichmann and the German-made nerve gas he threatened to launch against Israel was compared to Zyklon B. Such comparisons, Moshe Zuckermann argues, are a symptom of the "Holocaust code" (1988). This code is immersed in Israeli collective consciousness, instrumentalizing the memory of the past in the service of the ideology of the present .

Israeli political texts in the eighties were filled with dominant and conflicting references to the Holocaust. The founding example of this discursive pattern is probably prime minister Menachem Begin, who Tom Segev titles the "great popularizer of the Holocaust" (372). Elected in 1977, Begin was both the first prime minister from the central-right wing *Likud* party (after decades of *Labor* party hegemony) and also the first prime minister who could be directly affiliated with the Holocaust (Begin's entire family

was murdered by the Nazis). Begin's agenda generally maintained the old dichotomy of Jews versus Nazis, and expanded it to include Israel under the category of the Jew, and the Arabs or any other enemy of Israel under the category of the Nazi. As Segev observes, Begin's political use of the Holocaust for his own needs was already evident in his raging protest against reparations in the 1950s, and once he became prime minister, his activity was often accompanied by Holocaust symbolism: accepting Vietnamese refugees in 1977 recalled the Jewish refugees seeking shelter; bombing the Iraqi nuclear facility was cast as protecting a nation, "a million and a half of whose children were murdered by the Nazis in the gas chambers" (Segev 1991, 373). Begin often compared Yasir Arafat to Hitler, referring to him as a "two-legged beast," a phrase commonly used in the 1960s political, journalistic, and educational discourse to describe Hitler. Bombing the P.L.O. headquarter in Beirut was for Begin as if he were bombing Hitler's bunker in Berlin (Segev 1991, 382, 375). In 1981, following the rise of Begin to power, the Holocaust was made a mandatory topic of study in high school curricula.

Begin's political use of the Holocaust, which identified Israel with the Jewish victim and the Arabs with the Nazi aggressor, encountered an opposing perspective which tended to blur such opposition. The 1984 election of radical Rabbi Meir Kahane to the Israeli Parliament and the racist laws he proposed (depriving non-Jews of civil rights and forbidding the mixing of populations) revealed a considerable undercurrent in Israeli society, which grew stronger as the Palestinian terror attacks against Israelis increased. Sharp criticism against Kahane and Kahanism compared this proposed legislation to the Nuremburg laws and the increasing violence against Arabs in Israel to violence that once targeted European Jews. The increasing aggression of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle

evoked comparisons to Nazi acts, and soldiers who refused to be stationed in Lebanon or the West Bank often grounded their arguments in the lessons of the Holocaust (Segev 1991 381). The factor that was most influential in this new mind set, which obscures the boundary between Israel, Israelis, and especially the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) on the one hand and Nazi aggression on the other, was the war in Lebanon (1981–82). This was the first of Israel’s wars which could not be undisputedly argued to be a war of self-defense, or at least easily presented to the public as such. Following Israeli bombing in Lebanon in 1982, Prof. Yeshayahu Leybowitz coined the scandalous phrase “Judeo-Nazis.” In protest of the massacre in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps near Beirut in September 1982, for which the Israeli military, as determined by later investigation, was indirectly responsible, poet Dahlia Ravikovitz wrote:

terrified women appeared urgently
beyond the hill: “there, we are being slaughtered
in Shatila...
“return to the camp, march!’ ordered the soldier
To the screaming women from Sabra and Shatila.
He had orders to obey” (64; my translation).

The allusions to the Nazis are clear: the bloodshed, the order “march” which works in both Hebrew and German, and the excuse “just obeying orders,” which alludes to the line of defense taken by Nazis in their trials. When all those are used to describe the Israeli military, its identification with the Nazis is inevitable. An especially striking literary “response to a political constellation that has used and misused the Holocaust for its own

purposes,” as Yael Feldman observes, is Yehoshua Sobol’s play *Ghetto* (1984). The ideological conflicts in Sobol’s reconstructed Vilna ghetto, Feldman argues, closely resemble those of Israel during the Lebanon war, which he targets for critique. The “identification with the Nazi aggressor” in the context of the play implies similarity between Israel’s use of power and that of Germans (Feldman 1992, 226).³⁵ Segev indicates that such comparisons between Israelis and Nazis were not entirely new, but during the eighties, with the morally complex military involvement in Lebanon on the one hand and Begin’s popular use of the Holocaust on the other, they became central in both quantity and degree (381-82).³⁶ The diverse Israeli perceptions of Jews, Nazis, and the relations of similarity and opposition between them, increasingly feeding each other in substance and energy, were generated by two opposing forces. While state authorities maintained the identification of the Jew with the Israeli and the Nazis with Israel’s enemies, the political left strived to undermine this opposition.

Feldman’s analysis of the psychological and ideological “story” of Israeli Holocaust writing suggests several observations, which illuminate my examination of perpetrator representation in this fiction. According to Feldman, the ideological story perceives the Holocaust as part of the Jewish historical sequence, leading to redemption in the form of Zionism, while the psychological story focuses on the individual survivor, victim or bystander, representing the Holocaust in its own terms. With the second generation mostly (although there are precedents in earlier texts, such as *Adam Resurrected*), “one can detect the impact of contemporary ideological crisis – the breakdown of the Zionist codes that emplotted earlier representation of the Holocaust” (227). In this process, the Zionist-nationalistic conception of the Holocaust is undermined

in favor of a psychological conception focusing on the individual (as in Appelfeld's earlier stories) or in favor of humanistic and universalistic conceptions (as in Grossman's *See Under: Love*). This ideological breakdown destabilizes oppositions and enables empathy towards the Other: individualism undermines the opposition between Jew and Israeli and allows empathy towards the "Jew within the Israeli," and universalism allows empathy towards the aggressor and Gentile (Feldman 1992, 227, 237). The weakening of the Zionist national narrative in Israeli society created an ideological divide, in which the official institutional position still holds to the narrative (Israeli governments in the eighties were almost entirely under the center-right-wing Likud party), while the leftist opposition, through the politically inevitable reaction-formation, supports the contradictory conception of the Holocaust. This way, if the right-wing maintains an opposition between Jew and Nazi, especially for political justification (Israelis as Jews, Arabs identified with Nazis), the left undermines this stand.

The complexity in Israeli attitudes towards the perpetrators manifests itself clearly also in educational Holocaust discourse. As Dina Porat observes, Israeli Holocaust scholarship was sparked in response to the Eichmann trial, especially to the assertions, made by Hanna Arendt and Raul Hilberg, regarding Jewish passiveness and the collaboration. Only in 1974 did university instruction of the Holocaust become an established fact. Through its students, the academic setting initiated several changes in Israeli perception of the Holocaust in the following decades, regarding questions of identity, antisemitism, racism, and the relevance of the Holocaust to the Middle-Eastern reality. The new academic discourse replaced the deeply rooted utter rejection of the Nazis with a growing desire to thoroughly understand the inner processes in Germany

that produced Nazism (Porat 1988, 2692-94). Porat is basing her impressions on about 2000 students she taught between 1974 and 1987, and if other Israeli universities are taken into account, the number of students who experienced academic teaching of the topic is much higher. Even if none of the eighties' writers was actually among these students, they were part of a generation which reflected upon the Holocaust academically. The findings and perspective of academic scholarship shaped their consciousness and were transferred to the public, where it balanced and even replaced the personal, traumatic, and inherited impact of the Holocaust. Such scholarly perception is evident, for example, in the writers' meticulous attention to details of the Holocaust reality, and some writers make direct links between their fiction and scholarship. David Grossman's *Neigel*, for example, is based on the biography of Max Koegel, real SS officer discussed in an essay by Tom Segev which Grossman admits to have read (Segev 1986). Amir Gutfreund's *Our Holocaust* is explicitly influenced by Browning's concept of "Ordinary Men," which serves as a strong undercurrent of the novel and is highlighted explicitly on its last page.

Scholarly insights regarding the complexity of the Holocaust are abundant in high school instruction, which, as argued earlier, institutionalizes central undercurrents of society approximately five to ten years old. This is especially the case in regard to the representation of perpetrators. In 1981, Begin's government revised the 1953 law of education, making the Holocaust, for the first time, an official and integral topic of study in the Israeli education system. No other institutional act, it seems, can constitute a stronger connection between the Holocaust and the Israeli national and cultural identity. Yet, in the reality of the eighties, even such an act by the government, which kept a clear

opposition between victims and victimizers, encountered unexpected complications. As mentioned in chapter two, prior to the mid-seventies, the representation of Holocaust perpetrators in Israeli history textbooks reflects the prevalent conception of the Holocaust in Israeli society of the fifties and sixties. Then, under the trauma of the event, the Holocaust was perceived and rendered emotively, as external to history and as justification for Zionism. The earlier textbook constitute a dichotomy of “us” against “them,” Jews versus Gentiles, victims versus victimizers. Accordingly, perpetrators are stereotyped as demons, often animalized, as if they were as powerful and non-human as Satan. This way, no nuances are observed within the category, such as between German and Nazis, SS and soldiers, or Jewish victims and collaborators. It must have been this conception of the Holocaust and its representation, which works very well with Begin’s political discourse, that was assumed by the government in its decision to make the topic mandatory for instruction. However, as of the mid-seventies, Israeli Holocaust commemoration was joined and influenced by academic historiography, and curricula, produced by historians specializing in the subject, leaned more towards scholarly findings than towards national ideology.

The differences in the representation of the Holocaust between textbooks in the two periods are significant. While the earlier textbooks apply a narrow dichotomist perspective, the later texts place emphasis on the intricacy of the Holocaust as a historical event. In the earlier period, victims tend to be categorized under the disgraceful rubric of “sheep to the slaughter,” in contrast to the honorable heroism of the rebels, usually the Warsaw ghetto rebellion. The later books, in contrast, resist the dichotomy when presenting a wider picture of the rebellions, apply the concept of martyrdom (*kiddush*

hashem) and place greater focus on survival under the Nazis in both physical and spiritual terms. While the earlier books deal exclusively with the fate of Ashkenazi Jewry, later ones deal with a diversity of persecuted Jewish communities. While the earlier texts tend to provide descriptions of Jewish suffering, the later texts provide testimonies which allow the suffering to voice itself. In accordance with their uncomplicated approach, the earlier books tend to diminish or ignore the role of rescue attempts on behalf of world Jewry or other countries or individuals. In fact, the earlier books tend to explicitly accuse the world of complicity with the Nazis or avoiding the Jewish cry for help. The later books tend to avoid such accusations in favor of either ignoring the issue entirely or providing a categorization and complex treatment of the world's reaction to the destruction. The earlier books deal briefly with the Judenrat as a Nazi tool of control, while the later books depict a more complex picture of the Judenrat's formation, operation, and moral dilemmas. Finally, the textbooks of the two periods differ in the lessons they draw from the Holocaust and in the manner they present them. The earlier books tend towards explicit and "closed" Zionist conclusions, while the later ones avoid a direct statement of that lesson. They either avoid the lesson or combine it with a more "open" meaning, relating less to Zionism – which may be implied throughout the textbook – and more to the humanistic or democratic lessons of the Holocaust.

Representation of perpetrators is another domain which developed thoroughly from simplification in the early phase of Israeli history textbooks to complexity in the later one. As Firer establishes, history textbooks written since the late seventies refrain from emotive language and the presentation of Germans in demonic terms and images. Rather, they tend to reveal complexity by acknowledging various degrees of German

accountability: rather blaming all Germans, they differentiate the people from the authorities and distinguish between the different attitudes and groups in German society. Some books present a detailed description of the process of socialization, which turns the ordinary person into a death-robot, while raising moral and universal problems (Firer 102). Idit Gil notes that Firer's findings regarding textbooks of the eighties hold true in very recent books, which tend to attribute accountability to Hitler and German ideology, while playing down the role of the German people (14). As Firer indicates, the later textbooks' utter rejection of the "Germans as demons" perception is rooted in the understanding that demons are not subjected to human moral standards. If Satan or God is involved in the Holocaust, there is no need for historical understanding and no lesson can be learned (104).³⁷ Moreover, if, as the early books argue, the Germans are a barbaric herd of murderers by nature and the Jews went as sheep to slaughter due to their inherent exilic passivity, a troubling equation is created, and the accountability for the catastrophe is divided between victims and victimizer. If stereotypization in the early period reflects the conceptual helplessness, rage, and frustration of the time, the shift to complexity evident in the textbooks of the late seventies reflects the increasing involvement of professional historians in educational and general Holocaust discourse. The involvement is complemented by the functionalist explanations incorporated into the books, as well as in the increasing use of testimonies of both victims and victimizers, in contrast to the authoritative descriptions typical of the early textbooks. The general tendency is, to conclude, that Germans were humans who lost their humanity while the Jews struggled to maintain it. But both are humans, and the Holocaust happened within history.

The emotional tone and sweeping accusations of Holocaust perpetration typical of the fifties and sixties period are preserved in later official publications of a more ceremonial nature. The Israeli Ministry of Education publishes packets of material for teachers or other officials in charge of organizing events of Holocaust commemoration. School ceremonies are mandated not only by the ministry's policy but also by the Memorial Day for the Holocaust and Heroism Law (1959). These information packets usually include poems and speeches related to the Holocaust, and also prayers, which were composed especially for the event but which draw on traditional Jewish liturgy and ask God for forgiveness, revenge or peace for the victims' souls. In an information packet for the organizers of such events, published in 1962 by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Research Authority, we find a speech given in 1960 by the spokesman of the Israeli parliament, which repeatedly condemns the Nazis but also identifies them with the Germans and speaks of the crimes of the German people (Public 8-9). In a 1975 publication, the traditional prayer *El male rahamim*, adjusted for the victims of the Holocaust, uses the phrase *Hanatsim veozreihem* ("the Nazis and their collaborators"), a phrase drawn from "The Nazi and Nazi Collaborators Punishment Law" (1950). The *Yizkor* prayers, calling for commemoration of the victims, use terms like "the kingdom of evil" or "the cruel and armed enemy," all maintaining a sharp division between the powerful victimizer and helpless Jew (*Pirkey* 15; my translations). Most interestingly, such language and attitudes are maintained in a 1989 publication designed for high school tours in the death camps in Poland. The *Yizkor* included in this packet uses the phrase "the diabolic Nazi government of the murderous German people and their murderous assistance from other peoples" or just the "murderous Germans and the

collaborators of other peoples” (Ministry; my translation).³⁸ Such radical rhetoric seems like a remnant from the 1950s, and its appearance in a 1989 official governmental publication is made possible by the genre of writing: a prayer, which is conservative by nature and tends towards pathos and figurative language. This coexistence of the radical and sweeping attribution of accountability in the limited domain of prayers, which are older by age and more conservative by nature, and the complex attitude towards the perpetrators in the much wider educational discourse of the 1980s, demonstrates the transformation Israeli society underwent in its attitude towards the Holocaust’s perpetrators. Although the institutional tone and public opinion have developed a more historically and ethically accurate understanding of the inevitably heterogeneous “perpetrator” category, in some manners and domains, the traditional, dichotomist approach persists. Of course, writers of the new wave were out of school by the time all these changes took effect in the Israeli education system after the late seventies. But their writing could not evade these developments, which both reflect and shape the image of perpetrators in the Israeli consciousness of the time.

Developments in Israeli Self-Perception

In addition to the change in Israeli perception of the Holocaust, Germans and Germany, the evolution in the mode of perpetrator representation was directly impacted by Israel’s perception of itself. The early phase of Israeli literary response to the Holocaust concludes in the early seventies, just as a set of fundamental developments in Israeli society, politics, and culture, initiates its course. These developments manifested themselves most clearly in the eighties, around the same time the new wave of Israeli

Holocaust fiction emerged. The simultaneities, of course, cannot be coincidental. As sociologist Uri Ram suggests in his description of the shifts in the Israeli historical consciousness, the late sixties and the seventies are a period of transition in the Israeli project, in which the formative phase of establishing the nation and state has been completed, followed by the weakening and demise of the master-narrative that governed the Zionist enterprise for decades. Following the completion of the formative phase, as well as the temporary weakening of the Israeli-Arab dispute and Israel's integration into the global market, the hegemony of the Israeli elite – embodied in the Labor party, “classic” Zionism, and statehood – found itself competing with alternative elites and also with non-elites, the narratives of which were finally allowed a louder voice, challenging and threatening the Zionist consensus (20). A clear symptom of this transition is a radical shift from homogeneous and consensual Israeli historical consciousness to a heterogeneous and conflicted one. The loosening of the official, institutional voice during the seventies brought forth overlooked or marginalized facts about previous decades. Consequently, as of the late sixties the Israeli academic scene witnesses the emergence of fierce sociological and historiographical debates about the Zionist and Israeli narrative, as well as of anti- and neo-Zionist ideologies.

During the eighties, the most profound and defining paradigm of the Israeli character was being reshaped, directly impacting perception of the Holocaust. The Zionist project of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine began, of course, long before a catastrophe such as the Holocaust could even be imagined. But after the Holocaust, and especially after the establishment of the State of Israel, the destruction became a major factor in Israel's justification for existence. An independent and strong Jewish state was

understood to be indispensable for the safety and survival of Jews. The traditional opposition Zionism/Diaspora was now absorbed by the opposition Zionism/Holocaust. With the weakening of the Zionist meta-narrative and the image of the *Sabra*, with the rising discourse about alternatives to Zionism and the criticism against its social and political implications, came change in the Israeli perception of the other side of the opposition, the Holocaust, which until then was perceived through a Zionist lens. New perspectives emerged, partially or entirely deprived of the impact of Zionism or Israeliness and therefore able to observe the Holocaust in other terms. Historical, universal, ethical, and cultural approaches, informed by academic research and by the impact of the Holocaust and other atrocities on a global scale, began to compete with the traditional Israeli approach to the Holocaust. In these new terms, when the facts are observed through a perspective other than or even opposed to a Zionist, Israeli, and even a Jewish one, “Holocaust perpetrators” comprise a diverse category which both exceeds and reduces, eventually destabilizing, the early “Eichmann prototype,” that equates German with Nazis and willing participants in the persecution of the Jews. Indeed, the changes in the self-definition of one component of the opposition in fact destabilize the paradigm as a whole.

Another fundamental paradigm which was destabilized due to changes in Israeli self-perception is the victim versus victimizer opposition. While within the Jewish realm, Israel as a state and nation perceives itself in opposition to Diaspora Judaism and Holocaust victims, in the international realm, it clearly affiliates itself with the Jewish world and with the victims. In order not be victims once more, a Jewish state is necessary. This identification of Israel with the victims of the Holocaust grew stronger

after the Eichmann trial and perhaps reached a peak in the eighties, with Begin's political discourse and the growing public interest in the Holocaust at the time. The eighties and nineties were also a time when the problematics of Israeli command over a foreign population – the Arabs – in the territories that were taken in the Six Day War of 1967, were realized most tangibly, especially in terms of ethics and the use of power. At that time, Israel and Israeli consciousness found themselves in a paradoxical situation. As Jews and biological, psychological, and symbolic descendants of Holocaust survivors and refugees, Israelis are subsumed under the category of the victim, and this is also true in relation to Israel's positions in the Middle East, where it deals with profound Arab, anti-Israeli or anti-Jewish hostility. At the same time, Israel is in a position of military power and often finds itself accused of all sorts of illegal, immoral, and in any case violent acts against the Arabs under its regime. The result is a clash of oppositions: while the Israeli collective is a descendant of the helpless victim in the Jew versus Nazi opposition, and its central ethos is prevention of such victimization in the future, in regard to the Palestinians, Israel is in a position of military power, which is a basic quality of the victimizer, not the victim. Being powerful, having the ability to apply military power against civilian populations, is a quality which is shared by the Nazis in their relation to the Jews, as well as by Israel in relation to the Palestinians under its command. Despite the fundamental differences between the situations, this basic common trait shared by Israel and Nazi Germany cannot be denied. The degrees and manners of similarity, the use and abuse of power, reasons and contexts – all these are entirely different questions.

These questions are also mostly irrelevant to the investigation of fiction. More than Israeli self-perception is determined by the factual and legal answers to the ongoing

debate about the potential resemblance between the Holocaust and the Israeli presence and conduct in the territories taken in 1967, it is determined by a subjective sense or state of mind of individuals and society. Such a state of mind, equating Israeli military power and actions with the Nazis, can be observed tangibly already in 1967. *Siah lohamim* is a unique collection of conversations between Israeli soldiers, which were recorded in the months following the 1967 war and provide a sort of unmediated glance into the Israeli collective consciousness at the time.³⁹ In many of these candid and direct talks, the speakers agree that the memory of the Holocaust served as a powerful motivation in the fighting, providing a sense of correction and even revenge for traditional Jewish victimhood. At the same time, one of the interviewees reports how reading Ka-Tzetnik developed in him an understanding of the primal animal element hidden in every man, which the speaker defines as a “Nazi-like quality.” He also draws a comparison between the mass-murder of children by the Nazis and the mass-killing conducted by the Israeli military in the Arab village of Kassem in 1956. Another speaker reports that he had a troubling feeling being in the powerful conquering military, and he felt a true sense of the Holocaust when identifying with the Arab refugees (154-56, 167). These candid and direct testimonies indicate that already in 1967, following Israel's rise to power over another people, Israeli self-perception exceeds the category of the victim and begins to include that of the victimizer.⁴⁰

This perception of Israel and Israelis as victimizers gained greater visibility in the early eighties, with the stances taken by Leibowitz, Rabikovitz, and Sobol, and to those we can add numerous later cases. One example is the right-wing perception of the left as Nazis or Judenräte in their advocacy of the forced transfer of Jewish population from

Gaza and the West Bank into Israel, and such language was actually used against the Israeli soldiers executing the evacuations in 2005 and later. In one expression of such a comparison, an official in the administrative authority in charge of the forced relocation of Jewish population out of Gaza was sent a copy of a 1942 Nazi deportation order. For their forced evacuation, many of the Jews attached a small orange star to their shirts, imitating the yellow star which Jews were forced to wear during the Holocaust, hence implying that the troops assigned with evacuating them played the role of the Nazis. The visual peak of this perspective was most likely a photo-montage presenting prime-minister Itzhak Rabin in SS uniform.⁴¹ From the left, Israeli soldiers at the check-points were called “Gestapo,” and Moshe Zukerman, a left-wing intellectual, referred to an Israeli soldier using the phrase a “Jewish-Israeli *kalags*,” *kalags* (“jackboots”) being the Hebrew term reserved almost exclusively for the Nazis (2001, 103–106). In 2011, radical religious leaders in Israel called for separation between Jews and Arabs, forbidding their disciples to rent property to Arabs and forbidding Jewish girls to socialize with them in fear of romantic relations that would lead to the mixing of blood. A radical minority in the Israeli parliament even attempted legislating such separation. In heated public debate, these acts were denounced as racist and Nazi acts, resembling the Nuremberg laws. As these lines are being written in 2011, the accusation “Nazi” is ubiquitous in Israeli public discourse, pointed from any direction against its opposite.

The Redrawing of the Israeli Literary Map in the 1980s

Another factor involved in the emergence of the complex mode of perpetrator representation is the literary system which gave birth to it. Alan Mintz explains the Israeli

self-conception before 1973 through a set of oppositions, in which the first part of the opposition gains privilege over the second: male/female, Ashkenazic/Sephardi, religious/secular, Land of Israel/Diaspora, collectivism/individualism, native Israelis/Holocaust survivors. “The crucial role played by Israeli literature, especially fiction” between 1973 and 1993, Mintz argues, “was to interrogate these oppositions and lay them open to scrutiny” by “giving voice to the suppressed term in the binary opposition or by ironizing the privileged term,” and in “complicating the relation between the two” (8). This is, in Yael’s Feldman’s terms, a process of “growing diversification of Hebrew literature and the destabilization of the old mainstream,” which gained particular expression in fiction, a “fertile ground for generic and thematic innovation giving voice to a number of ‘other’ selves” (1989, 49). Among those “others,” both authors and their fictional counterparts, Feldman includes women, Jews from Sephardi descent or Jewish writers who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries, people from various cities in Israel, Arab writers, and changing attitudes towards pillars of Zionist and Israeli existence, such as the military or Holocaust survivors. This burst into the center, of forces which were formerly confined to the margins, reflects the destabilization and fracturing of the monolithic “Israeli” self, traditionally opposed to the “Jew” as other. These others are embraced as part of the new self of Israeli identity, creating such diversity within it, that Feldman wonders if the experience of “otherness” is not the quintessential Israeli experience (52). Yigal Schwartz describes the same process in different terms. The “old mainstream” or “Israeli self,” in Feldman’s terms, are, for Schwartz, the “modernist-Zionist” master narrative, which reveals the unresolved tension between the individual and the nation or society. This narrative, which dominated the Israeli cultural psyche until

then, begins to weaken in the late seventies, while new narratives and older ones, which until then were marginalizd, gain centrality and strength. These narratives, in Schwartz's account, are the tribal (Jewish)-existential narrative; the feminist narrative; the child-like narrative; the androgynous narrative; and the chaotic-mystic "anti-narrative." The incongruity between Feldman's "others" and Schwartz's "narratives" only emphasizes their common ground: that as of the late seventies Israeli literature undergoes rapid changes of diversification through the movement of the margins to the center at the expense of the collective Zionist narrative in demise.

These developments, which give voice to a variety of formerly marginalized and silenced characters and communities – women, Arabs, Sephardi Jews and Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries, Holocaust survivors, namely, all who are not the male, white *Sabras* of European descent – enabled the emergence of the complex character of a Holocaust perpetrator. Such correlation should not surprise us, because the presence of Germans or Nazis in Israeli culture and literature is as stable and palpable as that of communities located within Israeli geography. One may argue, in fact, that the centrality of the Holocaust in the Israeli collective consciousness makes Germany a part of Israel's imaginative geography. The presence of Holocaust perpetrators in Israeli literature of the eighties corresponds to wider trends which characterize the socio-cultural system of the time: the growing dominance of the Holocaust in Israeli public discourse and the centralization of the margins in literature, a process in which several "others" are redefined as part of the Israeli "self," to use Feldman's terms. It is no coincidence that David Grossman's *See Under: Love* which launched the new wave of Holocaust fiction and especially the complex representation of Nazis; Anton Shammas' *Arabesques*

(*Arabeskot*), one of the few Hebrew novels by an Arab writer and certainly the most influential among them⁴²; Amos Oz's *Black Box* (*Kufsa sh'hora*) and Yehoshua Knaz's *Infiltration* (*Hitganvut yehidim*) – both portraying a multi-layered picture of Israeli society – were all published in 1986.

Centralization of marginal or silenced voices alone, however, cannot account for the full scope of complexity evident in recent literary perpetrators. The mode or paradigm of their representation has fundamentally changed as well, and here we should look again at the example of Arab characters, which are the closest to the Holocaust perpetrators, as an Other of Israeli society perceived as an enemy. In “The Arab as ‘Other’ in Israeli Fiction,” Gilead Morahg argues that the representation of Arabs in Hebrew fiction changes from the unilateral mode, common before the establishment of the state and during its first three decades, to a bilateral mode in the fiction published since 1977.⁴³ Morahg observes that in Hebrew literature of the first seven decades of the twentieth century, the “mode of Arab characterization” remains constant:

Arab characters in Israeli fiction are stereotypical abstractions whose characterization is limited to superficial externals. They are, for the most part, depersonalized figures that serve as schematic catalysis for the internal dilemmas of their fictional [Jewish] counterparts whose inner worlds are much more deeply penetrated and extensively portrayed” (1989, 36).

In sharp opposition, novels written since 1977 create a

fictional context in which Arab characters no longer serve as static, stereotypical points of moral reference for a central Jewish protagonist. The Arab characters are

sharply individualized, gradually evolving figures whose development in the course of the narrative is integral to its thematic signification” (37).

As my literary survey below demonstrates, these observations regarding Arab characters adequately, even accurately, describe characters who are Holocaust perpetrators and the evolution in their making in Israeli fiction from the early period to the later one.

How can this striking similarity between Arab and perpetrator characters be explained? The origin of the shift in the representation of Arabs, according to Morahg, is an understanding that Jewish and Arab destinies in Israel are intertwined and must be perceived as such. The “desire to explore the human implications of this reluctant binding of national destinies” leads writers to relocate “the concern with the Arab side of the conflict from the narrative periphery of the earlier periods to the thematic center of the newer works” (37). This process may also suggest an explanation for the change in Israeli representations of Germans. Even if physically they are located on another continent, Germans and Nazis were and still are very tangible and dominant inhabitants of the Israeli and Jewish public consciousness. Following the warming of Israeli-German relations since the late sixties, as well as the changes in Israeli self-perception noted above, it seems reasonable that the experiential and symbolic bond between the two nations would drive Israelis to explore the Holocaust through the lens of its perpetrators.

But the tie between the two developments in representation – of Arabs and of Germans – is even more straightforward than that. In the late seventies and early eighties, the new images of Arabs set precedent for narratives focusing on individuals and communities located on the periphery of Israel’s collective consciousness, and, once the

path had been paved for transition from the margins to the center, it was taken also by characters of Holocaust perpetrators. This was especially the case within the work of individual writers. Two of the dominant examples for the innovative and individualized representation of Arabs presented in Morahg's essay are A. B. Yehoshua's *The Lover* (1977) and David Grossman's *The Smile of the Lamb* (1983). These two authors have also written two of the early and influential novels that construct complex and individualized representations of Nazis: Grossman's *See Under: Love* (1986) and Yehoshua's *Mr. Mani* (1990). Grossman and Yehoshua themselves serve as a vehicle of transition, from the complex representation of Arabs to that of Holocaust perpetrators. A similar pattern, where one complexity leads to another, is evident in the writing of Savyon Liebrecht, whose short stories, published as of 1986, provide original insight into the life of various individuals and communities in the Israeli cultural periphery: Arabs, immigrants, survivors, orthodox Jews, and also characters associated with committing the atrocities of the Holocaust. Itamar Levi, whose novel *The Legend of the Sad Lakes* (1989) is discussed below as a work producing an elaborate character of an SS officer, presents the reversed order. His novel *Letters of the Sun, Letters of the Moon*, narrated through the consciousness of a Palestinian, was published in 1991, but the proximity of publications of these two novels indicates a link between them, at least in terms of the writer's mindset. Later texts presenting highly developed Nazi characters, such as Rivka Keren's *Anatomy of Revenge* (1993) and Amir Gutfreund's *Our Holocaust* (2000), are impacted by their predecessors but are no longer grounded in the transition from Arab characters to Holocaust perpetrators.

The Second Generation

Finally, Israeli Holocaust writing of the eighties is essentially shaped by the biography and generational profile of the authors. As discussed in chapter two, the term “the second generation” in its literal sense applies only partially: while they share materials, attitudes, and techniques, only some of the eighties writers are actually children of Holocaust survivors. Dan Laor therefore expands the term “second generation” to mean the “biological and psychological descendants of Holocaust survivors,” while Avner Holtzman prefers the term “new wave” in Holocaust fiction, building on the texts rather than on their authors. These writers were born in Israel or Europe between the late forties and early-sixties and grew up in Israel. While they originally encountered the Holocaust in the earlier phase – still holding solid oppositions between victim and victimizers, Jews and Germans or Nazis, Zionism and Diaspora – their writing was conducted in the mindset of the seventies and eighties, when these fundamental dichotomies were weakening in both politics and literature.

Issues of mediation and temporal gap are crucial here. The early writers represented the Holocaust under the powerful impact of experience. Survivors, refugees, and even those who witnessed the events from Palestine were all under the immediate effect of the events as they occurred and as they were revealed in subsequent years. That is true also for those whose encounter with the Holocaust was limited to the public and discursive sphere: the gushing debates over relations with Germany, the Kastner trial and especially the Eichmann trial, which made the horrors of the Holocaust simply inescapable in Israel of the time. The Eichmann trial made the Holocaust personal: by presenting the persons involved in it, both victims and victimizers, and by reaching each

person in Israel, on a personal level. In sharp distinction, by the mid-eighties, when the new wave wrote its fiction, the Holocaust's contemporariness and trauma took the form of history, which in itself may have undergone processes of mythologization or mystification. Furthermore, their encounter with the Holocaust was conducted entirely through mediation, if not familial or social, then through academic studies or through the Israeli public discourse in which the Holocaust plays a central role. Such changes in the Israeli encounter with the Holocaust – from direct to indirect, from a real or imagined sense of “we, here, now” to a sense of “they, there, then” – cannot but produce a different understanding of the Holocaust and a different kind of representation.

One such difference, according to Holtzman, is the absence of the sense of guilt that haunted writers who spent the war years in Palestine. Another is the license that writers of the new wave give themselves to portray the Jewish victims in an unflattering manner, to parodize earlier Holocaust representations or to provide unprecedentedly close descriptions of suffering and atrocities. Holtzman observes another difference between the two groups of writers and texts, one which is crucial to my project here: the time gap allows the new writers to adopt the perspective of the victimizer (1996, 137). The two groups also differ sharply in how they understand the act of representing the Holocaust in literature. Ka-Tzetnik stated that he does not write literature but a chronicle, and Appelfeld confessed to perceiving his writing as a therapeutic activity (1979, 47). Both writers wrote exclusively about the Holocaust and its aftermath, and their writing reflects heavily their personal experience of surviving the atrocities. Hanokh Bartov's *The Brigade* narrated his own encounter with survivors in Europe, and Naomi Frankel's *Shaul veyohana* as well as Gershon Shoffman's stories are based on their own experience in

pre-war Germany and Austria. For the new writers, the Holocaust is a distanced event, mediated through public or personal discourse, which becomes “material” for fiction. In their writing, the personal need or national commitment to tell the story is secondary to or at most equal to artistic motivations, a fundamental of which, especially in the Israeli literary system of the eighties, is the construction of complex literary individuals infused with personal stories and a dynamic inner world, rather than one-dimensional pawns. This artistic propensity towards the complex and the individual is supported by the changing Israeli attitudes towards Germans and Germany described above. Not only does the artistic motivation so dominant in their texts favor complexity, but the actual perception of Germans in Israel of the time could not but be complex. When denunciation of using the German language in Israel of the fifties is replaced with admiration for German culture, and when the note, on Israeli passports of the fifties, that they are invalid in Germany, is replaced with numerous Israeli tourists and students pouring into the birthplace of Nazism, a complex, even conflicted perception of both past and present Germans is not surprising.

The decade and a half prior to the emergence of the new wave in the mid-eighties was a time of radical changes in Israeli collective consciousness, especially in regard to the image and presence of the Holocaust. Four of them were examined here: the growing complexity in Israeli attitude to the Holocaust, Germans, and German; changes in Israeli self-perception; the dramatic reshuffling of center and margins in Israeli literature; and the emergence of a new generation of writers, whose encounter with the Holocaust was conducted through mediation and a time gap. Of course, these developments did not

come to be in the discrete and independent manner my account may render. It was a subtle and intricate process, accumulating in the various aspects of Israeli life and creating, by the mid-eighties, an environment radically different for writing in general and writing about the Holocaust in particular. This new set of literary and socio-cultural circumstances legitimizes, centralizes, and promotes a more complex and even self-contradictory perception of Israeli society of itself, of the Other and of the category of Holocaust perpetrators. Once the complexity of the perpetrator, acknowledged but marginalized or repressed in the writing of the early phase, was recognized externally to literature – among contemporary audiences, critics, and institutions – it finally gained full imaginative exposure in the fiction of the new wave.

Israeli Holocaust Fiction, 1986 Onwards

The seventies were years of relative silence when it comes to Israeli Holocaust fiction. In that decade Aharon Appelfeld, already a prominent Holocaust writer, made his transition from short stories to his earliest novellas, some of which, such as *The Skin and the Gown* (*Haor vehakutonet* 1971) and *The Age of Wonders* (*Tor haplaot* 1978), are considered among his best works. In 1971 Ruth Almog published her short novel *The Exile* (*Be'erez gzera*), narrating a journey of an Israeli woman to her hometown in post-war Germany. In these works the Holocaust is in the background, recalled or anticipated, and this is especially the case with Appelfeld, who is known for his silence about his experiences through the Holocaust as much as he is known as a dominant writer-survivor. This is also the case in Amos Oz's *Touch the Water, Touch the Wind* (1973), which mostly deals with life before and after the war, but much less with life through it. In both quantity of

publications and their thematic focus, the Holocaust was marginalized in Israeli fiction of the seventies, especially towards the second half of the decade. This marginalization is remarkable relative to the sixties, when, following the Eichmann trial, a wave of fiction brought the Holocaust to the literary center, particularly since it was written by *Sabras*, such as Bartov, Gouri, and Kaniuk, or almost *Sabras*, such as Amichai. Against this literary silence in relation to the Holocaust in the seventies, the emergence of the “new wave” is significant. The literary earthquake generated by David Grossman’s 1986 novel *See Under: Love* makes it clear that the new wave is not only a late wave, subsequent to a period of relative silence, but revolutionary in both subject matter and poetic formula. As Morahg observes, one group among the writers of the new wave adheres to the traditional realistic portrayal of the Holocaust world, while another applies post-modernist, iconoclastic, or at least unconventional artistic devices in its treatment of the Holocaust, most dominant of which are fantastic-realism and fragmentation of the narrative (1997, 144). Another innovation of the new wave, perhaps more radical than the formal and generic ones, in my opinion, is evident in the representation of perpetrators and the treatment of the traditional victim versus victimizer opposition. In the writing of the new wave, the restrictions over perpetrator characterization are lifted almost entirely: Nazis become central, multi-layered and multi-dimensional characters; they gain a true voice and internal representation, which can evoke the reader’s sympathy; sometimes they are presented as some sort of victim, naïve and manipulated into their position of power; often they hold strong ties or similarities to their victims, creating some unity with them in poetics if not in substance. All of these elements of the new wave create not only

complex victimizers, but also some who undermine, almost to a point of its collapse, the opposition separating them from their victims.

David Grossman's *See Under: Love* and A. B. Yehoshua's *Mr. Mani*

These two novels are discussed thoroughly in chapter five as case studies of the new wave, and I will refer to them here only briefly in the context of this survey. Both texts were published in the second part of the eighties, and both revolutionized the representation of Holocaust perpetrators, although in very different ways.

David Grossman was born in Jerusalem in 1954, began publishing in the late seventies, and today is one of Israel's most renowned writers. His third book, *See Under: Love*, published in 1986, is dedicated entirely to a confrontation with the Holocaust, and it does so with unprecedented innovation and energy. In terms of his personal and literary biography, then, Grossman is a member of the "second generation" community, although in the more inclusive sense, as he is not a child of survivors. *See Under: Love* did not only launch a body of fiction clearly differentiated – in time and characteristics – from the earlier period of Hebrew and Israeli Holocaust writing, but is also an evident link between the two periods. It develops some materials and modes of writing initially introduced to in Kaniuk's *Adam Resurrected*, but even more than reworking these materials and modes, it has had an incredible and unmistakable impact on later Israeli Holocaust fiction, most evidently with regard to the very factors it adopts from Kaniuk. The most dominant component of this inheritance is the literary confrontation with the Holocaust through the fantastic mode of writing.⁴⁴ Such writing was uncommon in the early period of Holocaust writing (as in Israeli literature of the time in general), and

Grossman gives it full expression, which is adopted by later writers of the new wave, such as Itamar Levi and Amir Gutfreund. Another component Grossman adopted from *Adam Resurrected* is the introduction of artistic activity into the death camp, a theme we see later on in Gutfreund's *Our Holocaust*. In the context of this study, however, I am interested in another component which Grossman takes from Kaniuk and develops much further: the complex, self-contradictory, Nazi commandant.

See Under: Love is comprised of four sections, written in various genres and forms: each treats the struggle of one character – an Israeli named Shlomo Neuman – with the Holocaust, in various settings, stages, and dimensions of his life. The first section tells the story of Momik (Shlomo) Neuman, a child growing up with survivor parents in Israel of the fifties, heavily burdened with Holocaust secrets and memories, which the child desperately tries to unveil. Such stories are a major characteristic of second generation writing. In the third section, Shlomo confronts the reality of the death camps. He does so by accompanying, in mind but not in body, as a second narrator, his grandfather, Anshel Wasserman, in an imaginary concentration camp. Despite the Nazis' multiple and honest attempts to murder him, Wasserman – and this is where the fantastic-realism of this section gains its most dominant manifestation – cannot die. Being also a known writer of children tales, the old Jew makes a deal with the death camp's commander, Obersturmbannführer Neigel, who was fond of the old Jew's stories as a child. The deal is that the two will collaborate in writing another children's story, and in exchange, Neigel will attempt, daily, to kill Wasserman, who is tired of living. The symbolic and moral implications of this unique and impossible situation – the eternal Jew who resists elimination by the force of his word, “cutting a deal with the devil,” and

writing poetry not after Auschwitz but within the death camp itself – shape the novel’s profound meaning and inform every aspect of this section.

As the two progress in their writing, Neigel’s character develops unprecedented and unforeseen complexity. Indisputably, he is a German, a Nazi, and a willing participant in the Nazi genocide against the Jews, and Grossman renders his murderous activity in some detail. But, as the process of (our) reading and (his) writing continues, Neigel is also revealed as a passionate, naïve, and childish admirer of literature. We learn about his loneliness among the officers of the camp, his devotion to his family, his marital difficulties, his literary preferences, and we also gain a meticulous rendition of his appearance, speech, and body language. Such qualities in Neigel’s character inevitably stand in sharp opposition to his actions and ideology as a death-camp commander, as well as to the Eichmann prototype against the background of which the book was written. The result is a remarkable complexity or roundness of character, which in fact exceeds the boundaries of Grossman’s novel and echoes one of the greatest enigmas of the Holocaust: how can these two poles within one man, the Nazi killing-robot on the one hand and the loving, sensitive father and amateur storyteller on the other, be reconciled? And what does such an opposition say about societies and individuals holding prototypical understanding of the Nazi? This is a formidable challenge Grossman poses to the reader and also to the two internal narrators, Shlomo and Wasserman. As Shlomo imaginatively sees Neigel for the first time, he thinks: “Well, well. Not at all as I imagined him over the years,” not “a butcher with a cruel grin” (188). But why would the Shlomo, who grew up in Israel of the fifties and sixties, imagine the Nazis as butchers with a cruel grin? This is the prototype we saw with Ka-Tzetnik in the forties, Begin in his furious portrayal of the

Germans in the fifties, and the Israeli journalism in its treatment of Eichmann in the early sixties. Realization of the complexity of the Holocaust and its perpetrators is treated already in Bartov's *The Brigade*, as Elisha is surprised to discover how the familiar "hymns of hatred" collapse when the "Nazis" are not much more than a couple of terrified German girls. In Grossman's novel, this rift between the prototype and the individual, the thematic and mimetic roles of the character in Phelan's terms, gain their fullest and most effective expression.

On top of being a disharmonic aggregation of qualities, Neigel undermines the perpetrator prototype also by intensive crossing of the boundary between the victim and victimizer. This is done less through a set of analogies, as in *Adam Resurrected* or, as we shall see, in *Mr. Mani*, and much more directly in terms of plot. The devoted collaboration in a literary project unites Neigel and Wasserman through the universal, human, even humanistic property of the imagination. It exceeds the undeniable and violent rift between them and contradicts the very essence of the camp in which they connect. In the course of their work together, the power structure is reversed, as Wasserman's status as the main writer gains him control over Neigel, overturning the most basic quality of interaction between Jews and Germans in the camp. The SS officer and his Jewish prisoner develop, in fact, a true and sensitive friendship, unprecedented in both fact and art and rendering the most complex Holocaust perpetrator that Hebrew and Israeli literary tradition has ever imagined.

Just as complex, although in different ways, is the perpetrator character in A. B. Yehoshua's *Mr. Mani*. Yehoshua was born in Palestine in 1936, launched his literary career in the sixties and quickly distinguished himself as one of Israel's leading writers.

Biographically he is affiliated with the earlier phase of Israeli Holocaust writing, but *Mr. Mani* was written between 1986 and 1990, and although it is uncommonly regarded as Holocaust fiction, section two clearly demonstrates some characteristics of the new wave. This is especially the case regarding the representation of Holocaust perpetrators through the complex mode. As chapter five discusses at length, Yehoshua's multi-faceted and self-contradictory protagonist in the novel's second section manifests a sharp tension between the singularity of the individual and the perpetrator prototype, a tension which is rare and restricted in the earlier phase of Israeli Holocaust fiction. In this regard, as well as in timing and circumstances of publication, *Mr. Mani* shares the breakthrough in perpetrators' representation marked by *See Under: Love*.

The second section of *Mr. Mani* is narrated by Egon Bruner, who serves in the German occupation forces on the island of Crete. The complex mode, through which Egon's character is constructed, is evident immediately in the narrative situation. *Mr. Mani* is comprised of five monologues, that is, a conversation only one speaker of which is cited on the page. This device creates the appearance of first person narration, which is corroborated by the revealing substance of his talk and which poses such sharp opposition to the flat and marginalized perpetrator characters in the earlier period of Israeli Holocaust fiction. This resistance to the Eichmann prototype manifests itself in a variety of qualities in Egon's character. Egon serves in Crete, not a location commonly associated with the annihilation of European Jewry during the war, and at least in the beginning, he serves as a soldier in the German military, not the Nazi forces. His personality, that of a confused, imaginative, and sensitive young man, and his speech, so emotional and rich, are nothing like those sharp barks of orders or the empty ideological

talks about Nazism that we find in *Ka-Tzetnik*. Egon also makes explicit critique of Nazism and the harm it brought upon Germany. He develops a utopian theory of a future situation, in which Jews and Germans co-exist in a world without collective identities. Furthermore, through a net of intertextual ties, as well as through his ideas, psychology, and language, Egon is consistently assimilated to Jews and especially to fictional characters of Jews. There is a strong analogy between Egon and Efi Mani of the first section, who serves in the Israeli military during the first Lebanon war, and the possibility of resemblance between the German and Israeli military presence beyond their defining territorial boundaries is implied here. Systematically, then, Yehoshua undermines the boundary which organizes the German/Jew dichotomy, making it increasingly difficult for the reader to apply the dogmas and prototypes established in the earlier phase of Holocaust representations.

But as the story unfolds, the reader gradually realizes that Egon is not innocent. He joined the Nazi forces to escape military service on the Eastern front, and under the Nazis he works as a Jew-hunter, directly responsible for detection and incarceration. What locates Egon especially high on Ewen's scales of complexity and the shaping of inner life is his insistent repression of the fact that he is indeed a Nazi agent. This imaginative intellectual develops a fantastic theory of a future situation, in which communities will denounce their identities and be "simply people," and that will happen in Crete of all places, due to the place's ancient history, dating to times before Jews and Germans. At the same time, he speaks of Jews as contaminating Crete, using a clear Nazi and anti-Semitic terminology, and he is also responsible for detecting and reporting them, an act which leads to their death and obviously stands in the most direct

opposition to his humanistic persona. Such contradictions, between Egon's actions and his persona or self-awareness, are also the tension between the thematic and mimetic dimensions of his character. Although in final balance it becomes clear that he is a Nazi agent, the layers of disguise Yehoshua sets before the reader, as well as before Egon himself, establish an innovative and rich complexity in the perpetrator character.

Relatively to the prototypes that governed Israeli public discourse in the earlier period, *See Under: Love* and *Mr. Mani* undisputedly mark a breakthrough in the representation of Holocaust perpetrators, although not an entirely surprising one. In the late seventies Grossman and Yehoshua were pioneers in the construction of Arab characters, not as traditional Others, not as flat, stagnant types, but as complex individuals. These two novelists play a major role in a wider movement from the margins to the center that swept Israeli public discourse in the early eighties and paved the way for the complex mode of perpetrator characterization. As we shall see, the impact of that movement is evident also in the Holocaust fiction of Savyon Liebrecht, while later fiction was impacted more directly by Grossman's novel.

The Holocaust Fiction of Savyon Liebrecht

Since the publication of her first collection of short stories in 1986, Savyon Liebrecht has been acknowledged as a central figure in Israeli fiction. Primarily a writer of short stories and novellas, Liebrecht portrays almost every layer of Israeli society: Jews and Arabs, young people and adults, secular and orthodox Jews, native Israelis and immigrants. It is hardly a coincidence that Liebrecht's first Holocaust stories, "Pigeons" ("Yonim") and "Hayuta's Engagement Party" ("Mesibat hairusin shel hayuta"), were

published in 1986, the same year David Grossman published *See Under: Love*. Born to survivors in 1948 and writing about the Holocaust and its survivors since the mid-eighties, Liebrecht can be adequately categorized as a second generation writer.⁴⁵ Two qualifications for this categorization, however, must be noted. Liebrecht is affiliated with that branch of second generation or new wave writing which maintains a realist or mimetic focus, in contrast to the fantastic writing of Grossman or Levy. The realist branch, according to Morahg, is largely descriptive and it uncovers the “deep residue of damage that permeates the lives of Israeli heirs of the Holocaust generation” (1997, 144). But even as a realist second generation writer, Liebrecht distinguishes herself and not only in quality. The writers of the eighties mostly posit their fictional counterparts in the center of their fiction, while the characters of Holocaust survivors serve, historically and functionally, as sources of information and influence. Grossman’s Momik, Guterfreund’s Efi and Amir, Levy’s Arnon, Keren’s Gabriel – all are second generation protagonists. Liebrecht, on the other hand, provides survivors the central role both in the fictional world and in the story’s structure. “Pigeons” (“Yonim”) focuses on a survivor’s struggle with both her son’s turn to Orthodox Judaism and her childhood memories; “Morning in the Park Among the Nannies” (“Boker bagan im hametaplot”) presents the recollections of a survivor who identifies a woman from her past; in “Excision” (“Karet”) Henya cuts off her granddaughter’s hair to dispose of lice, as was done in the camps; in “Valentina’s Mother” (“Ima shel valentine”) a survivor’s close relations with her Polish assistant evokes memories from her childhood in Europe; in “Rochale’s Ideal Groom” (“Hahatan hamushlam shel Rohale”) a survivor realizes that his daughter’s groom is the nephew of a Kapo he killed at the camp.⁴⁶ In all of these stories the

survivors are not only main characters, but also those whose perspective orients the narrative.

Liebrecht's story "The Strawberry Girl" ("Yaldat hatutim" 1992) presents a strong example of a complex perpetrator character and the destabilization of the victim/victimizer dichotomy. The story is one of the rare works in Israeli Holocaust fiction narrated entirely from a German point of view (Egon's monologue in *Mr. Mani* is another one), and at least in this regard, Liebrecht's text is more daring even than *See Under: Love*, which renders Neigel externally, in the third person, in a genre of fantastic realism. First person narration of a Nazi can be also found in *The Legend of the Sad Lakes* and *Anatomy of Revenge* discussed below, but then it is mediated through a letter or a diary and is never the orienting perspective of the narrative as a whole. "The Strawberry Girl" is told in the first person by a nameless wife of an SS officer, who lives with her husband and son in the residential section of a death-camp. The story covers her last few days in the camp, during which she gradually begins to realize what kind of a camp she has been living in. In this sense, the story is a kind of a detective story, where clues are collected and interpreted in an attempt to complete the picture, and the clue that triggers the process is the narrator's encounter with the Jewish girl who provides fresh strawberries. The girl's ill appearance – that of a camp inmate – shakes the narrator's protected and illusionary world, and her questions as to the origin of the strange looking strawberries and the identity of the girl gradually lead her to the truth, although the story ends just before she finds definitive answers. But the reader of the nineties, certainly the Jewish and Hebrew reader who is the text's immediate audience, knows the answers from the very mentioning of "Obersturmbannführer the camp-

commander” in the very first line. The story, then, progresses towards the closing of a gap between what the reader knows all along and what the character attempts to discover. The first person narrator wonders what is being produced in the “factory” on the other side of the fence; where do the fancy dresses she receives come from; what are the “horrible deeds” conducted in the factory she overheard about. It is safe to assume that almost any reader with basic knowledge of world history knows the answer to these questions, and the character’s inability to observe them immediately creates strong tension in the process of reading and a strong effect of defamiliarization.

The demonstrated naiveté of the narrator challenges her categorization as a Holocaust perpetrator. She is German, married to the deputy of the camp commander, literally living off the body and property of the Jews annihilated in the camp. Most likely, although it is not part of the story, she educates Ludwig, her eight year old son, as a future Nazi. To such Germans Begin referred when furiously advocating in the fifties, that “there is not one German who has not murdered our fathers. Every German is a Nazi. Every German is a murderer.” About such women Elisha, Bartov’s protagonist in *The Brigade*, tried to convince himself that “she’s a lousy German... A Nazi. Daughter of an SS man. You hate her” (224). It was against the narrator and her likes that the soldiers of the Jewish brigade took an oath to “avenge the blood of our slaughtered brothers, to wreak vengeance in war or in peace on the butchers and their henchmen, on the people who applauded them, who strewed their path with roses, who welcomed the slaughter and grew fat on the spoil” (116). And while “growing fat on the spoils” may be argued to be somewhat ambiguous in regard to German women in bombarded Berlin of 1945, the wife

of an SS officer living in the camp, wearing dresses taken from Jewish women moments before they marched naked into the gas chambers, falls into this category indisputably.

Yet, the very focus on the wife rather than the husband, the civilian rather than the officer, already probes the margins of the category “perpetrators” and expresses a voice usually unheard, certainly in Hebrew literature. No other sight is more beautiful than that of her husband and child playing in the yard, she thinks while looking out through the window one morning. Such a genuine voice of a wife and a mother is rarely associated with the Nazis. Viewing them play, the mother thinks that if it were not for the constant background of the distanced dog barks, the armed guards at the towers, the fences, and the smoke coming out of the factory and invading everywhere – she could believe she is at home. Such a thought, rendered in the privacy of her inner voice, cannot be false. She really does not know where she is or what her husband does daily, and the realistic narration and meticulous construction of the details demonstrate this factual possibility of obliviousness. In any other setting, these narrative devices should suffice to reduce the emotional or even moral distance between reader and character and develop sympathy, in Booth’s terms, towards the character. And the sympathy can make us accept such a position of ignorance. But is that possible in regard to the Holocaust, when ignorance can mean “not accountable”? Is her ignorance accepted by the Hebrew reader, who keeps identifying the camp by the smoke, the dogs, the fancy dresses that come out of nowhere? There is no accurate way to measure sympathy, but the clash between our most certain knowledge of the nature of the camp and the possibility of not knowing, so well established in the story, seems to me inevitable. And it is this clash that complicates any automatic categorization of the SS commandant’s wife as an accomplice.

The tension within the narrator's character – between prototype and individual, thematic and mimetic roles – becomes especially evident in relation to other characters. Helena, the narrator's friend and the camp commander's wife, knows well the atrocities committed just on the other side of the fence. In fact, she feels cheated by the little girl who provides her the strawberries, and she requests that the girl be sent to death. This German lady serves as a foil to the narrator: while the latter is naïve, the former combines antisemitism and collaboration with the dignity of class. An interesting case is Walter, the narrator's husband and the death-camp commander's deputy. Through his wife, the narrator, we gain a rare angle into his private life, an angle which potentially can alter our view of the "Eichmann prototype" by attributing some depth to the character. But as the story develops, Walter's character gradually reduces itself to the dimensions of prototype. He hides from his wife the true nature of the "factory"; he is strict, merciless, avoids any expression of emotion, and his well-ironed uniform is always present in the couple's bedroom, as a reminder of his duties. A telling scene is when Walter plays with his son and constantly beats him to the ball. Following the mother's implied request, Walter seems to be allowing the child to win, proving that at least toward his child he shows some compassion. The narrator herself believes that and observes her husband warmly. But then, suddenly, Walter springs to the ball, catches it before Ludwig is able to do so, and when the little one complains, his father begins to smack him cruelly, in front of the astonished and terrified mother. "He is a bad man," the child whispers to his mother, and neither knows Walter's official duties. The officer, then, strengthens the prototype of the agent of atrocity, but not through one-dimensional representation which creates a

prototype as in *Ka-Tzetnik*, but rather through establishing that all layers of the person – work and family, father, and SS officer – abide by the same rule.

Liebrecht's sensitive exploration of the private lives of the camp's staff arrives at a complex conclusion. It does reveal diversity among the German community in the camp: an SS official asking to be transferred, a former poetry student who must drink to forget the atrocities he commits during his service, and a wife who does not know where she is. Simultaneously, our prototypical conception of the Nazis is strengthened with Walter and Helena but not by superficial perpetuation of prevalent paradigms. Rather, it is this sensitive exploration, applying the virtues of the literary medium to render the inner world, which reveals evil. The contradictory components of this conclusion work in harmony. It is the confirmation of literary and cultural prototypes of the category's center, not to mention historical facts, that allows the author to question the margins.

Finally, the play of power has a major role in undermining the victim/victimizer dichotomy. Lily Rattok writes that Liebrecht constructs social integration between different sections of society by means of a literary paradigm, in which the Other is observed through the eyes of a representative of the ruling group. First the representative sees the Other conventionally as a threat, but when the unique qualities of the Other are realized, compassion is evoked. The reader who identifies with the protagonist may adapt the same compassionate view (20). This paradigm describes well Liebrecht's depiction of the encounter between different sects of Israeli society – Jews and Arabs, survivors and *Sabras* – but in “The Strawberry Girl” things are more complicated due to the work's historical setting. The little girl, whose ill physical appearance alarms the narrator and haunts her dreams, is an Other to the German lady but

not to the reader, especially the Hebrew reader, who knows the girl to be a Jewish inmate of the camp. At the same time, it is the narrator who can be perceived as an Other in her affiliation with the Nazis. Furthermore, the narrator is indeed a representative of the ruling group in relation to the Jews, but she is an oppressed individual within her own people, first and foremost by being deprived of the most essential information of where she lives. In this regard, the little Jewish girl is superior to the narrator as she holds that information. And the more compassionate the narrator becomes towards the girl – first she bans her from her house and then appreciates the fine German she speaks and gives her a pair of socks – the more the narrator’s weakness is revealed: Why aren’t your parents taking care of your appearance? She asks the girl. You should pay more attention to your clothing, she reproaches the child, who is probably surprised to realize that this German lady, the wife of a commandant, really does not know the first thing about the world around her. In “The Strawberry Girl” the paradigm Rattok describes has an opposite effect: the member of the ruling class does show compassion towards the Other, but instead of instilling this feeling in the reader, the narrator is exposed to be a “member” but not “ruling” at all, and, in fact, she joins the Other in its oppression. Both the narrator and the girl are controlled by the Nazi system, not to mention by men.⁴⁷ These are different types of “control” or “oppression,” of course, but the story suggests a shared weakness and victimhood between the two women, rendering the association of the narrator with the Nazi power and acts almost impossible to make.

Itamar Levy’s *The Legend of the Sad Lakes* and Rivka Keren’s *Anatomy of Revenge*

Itamar Levys' short novel *The Legend of the Sad Lakes* (*Agadat ha'agamim ha'atsuvim*, 1989) reveals Grossman's fingerprints most clearly. It does not only make use of the fantastic genre, but does so with the same elements to which Grossman gives fantastic treatment, such as a grandfather or a cow who refuses to die at the hands of the Nazis, very much like Grossman's Wasserman. But even more significantly, Levy follows Grossman's humanistic tradition perceiving even the Nazis as humans, although in Levy's writing, the idea is radicalized in both theme and form. *The Legend of the Sad Lakes* tells the story of Arnon Greenberg, an Israeli young man whose father, Yohanan Greenberg, is identified one day as the former SS Obersturmführer Yoakhim Kron and is sent to jail while being investigated. Arnon is traveling to Germany to take a photo of Kron's grave as evidence for his father's innocence. But it is gradually revealed that the Israeli father and husband of a survivor is indeed Obersturmführer Yoakhim Kron, who found refuge in Israel under a disguise, and who is still a member of a Nazi organization, ironically named "Odessa." To his wife he says that he is a Jew who hid under the identity of an SS in order to survive: a Jew disguised as an SS and now a Jew again. The relevance of this text to the gradual weakening of the victim/victimizer dichotomy in Israeli Holocaust fiction is apparent. When a Nazi hides as a Jew among Jews, marries a survivor and adopts a Jewish identity, the boundary between Nazis and Jews is undermined immediately, as if it is only a matter of arbitrary division which could be easily reversed to accommodate necessity. This is established also from the opposite direction: during the war, Kron's Jewish wife, Naomi, hid under the German identity of a young student also named Kron. In addition to the exchange of labels of identity, the categories of Jews and Nazis are blended also in their qualities: Kron indeed served in the

SS as a treasurer, who was also an avid reconstructor of books; both qualities, books and money, are stereotypically associated with European Jewish culture. And the very fact that Kron was an SS treasurer (or so he claims), makes it more difficult to keep him in line with the stereotypical Nazi victimizers we know from Ka-Tzetnik and the Israeli public discourse of the fifties and sixties.

The blend of categories reaches its peak, perhaps, with the son, Arnon, who is Jewish through his mother, as well as the son of a Nazi father, the offspring of both the victim and the victimizer. No wonder that at some point he asks himself: Am I Nazi or a Jew? Am I the strong or the weak? Am I the pursuer or the pursued? [...] is every German a Nazi? Am I a Nazi? (54; my translation). Such questions of identity challenge the most basic paradigms of Jewish and Israeli self-perception, if not historical logic: how can there even be doubt concerning to which of these categories one belongs? But the questions are made possible in the reality Levy constructs, a reality which defies the very boundary of blood the Nazis tried to set between Jews and Aryans. This symbolic transgression, again obscuring the boundary between victim and victimizer, is supported by the novel's manipulation of the reader's response. The general reader, certainly the Jewish and Hebrew reader, is closer to Arnon, who is also the protagonist whose story orients the novel. Such a reader is also most likely to reject the Nazi character. But when Arnon is revealed to be the son of a Nazi, a tension is created: can we accept him as an Israeli? Can we continue to sympathize with him? Although his father writes to him, "I am a Nazi and you are a Nazi, and so will be your son" (126), Arnon cannot be held responsible for his father's actions. But the very tension and complexity of Arnon's character, the co-existence of such blunt contrast in one person, renders the Jew versus

Nazi dichotomy over-simplified if not obsolete. And that complexity sets the stage for a passage reminding us of the words of Grossman's Wasserman and equally unimaginable:

Who are all these Nazis who lay here before me? They are business men and they are hat makers, they are bank clerks, and they are locksmiths, they are waiters and they are students and servants, and they are artists and engineers. And they also were children once, and studied once, and insisted once, and took once, and left once, and sang "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles," and once blessed each other with "Zig Heil," and helped once, and rebelled once, and saw once "William Tell," and got drunk once, and mourned their mother once, and mourned their father once, and hugged once, and lurked, and drew, and admired, and decided, and planned, and worked for a living and for others' living, and starved once, and were incarcerated once, and pitied others once, and loved themselves once, and loved their children once, and desired women once, and desired men once. (55; my translation)

This set of questions, which Arnon asks standing in front of Yoakhim Kron's grave in a German village (later on the grave turns out to be empty), challenges, like Wasserman before him, conventional conceptions of the Nazi perpetrator category by providing the perpetrator with human depth and complexity. But unlike Wasserman, who reaches these questions as a Jew in a camp, out of a humanistic perspective and close encounter with Neigel, Arnon's questions are evoked by his fantastic genealogy. The very existence of an offspring of victim and victimizer marks an absolute transgression of the

boundary between the two categories. Almost compellingly, against all odds and intents, it suggests that the reader accept the possibility of complexity among perpetrators as individuals and as a category.

Undermining this boundary is also a main axis in Rivka Keren's short novel *Anatomy of Revenge* (*Anatomya shel nekama* 1993). Keren, however, accomplishes her goal more implicitly than Levy, via a system of parallel patterns and roles, rather than actual mixture of genes. Gabriel is an Israeli professor of German literature, who arrives in Germany in an attempt to reveal his parent's past during WWII. He meets Getz, a German colleague, who is also conducting a journey of self-discovery into his relations with his strict father, Julius Engledorf. Engledorf's diary, found among his belongings, reveals that he was a Nazi officer, who conducted psychological experiments on a Jewish family during the war. He kept the German-looking and German-speaking Jewish parents and their four-year-old child in a cave deep in the forest, in an attempt to engineer their character, especially in an attempt to raise the child as a good Nazi. From the diary, Gabriel learns that Engledorf murdered his mother, Terez, in the forest, and that he and his father are the survivors of that experiment. This is the story his father never told him. The encounter between Getz and Gabriel, where all these secrets are revealed, takes place in a rustic cabin, which, so it turns out, is the very place the experiments were conducted. At the end, Gabriel murders Getz's wife in the same manner his own mother was murdered by Getz's father: pretending it is a hunting accident, caused by the excuse that the mother "looked like a gazelle." This summary of events alone relates parallels between Nazis and Jews and obscures the differences between them. Unmistakably, when Gabriel, who already as a child showed signs and

potential to grow up to be a good Nazi, murders the German woman, at the same place his own mother was murdered by a Nazi and in the same manner, he takes the Engledorf's place. Furthermore, the murder suggests that the Engledorf was successful in converting Gabi the child to a "good Nazi," and that may lead us to conclude that Engledorf and everything he stands for are a result of indoctrination, not choice. If, through training and genes, the Jew can become like Engledorf, how can Engledorf be accused of anything? Other elements imply additional similarities: Engledorf, as a means of removing an infection from his penis, in fact circumcised himself, and both Engledorf and Gabriel's father read the same German literature. Gabriel is a professor of German literature, while Getz, Engledorf's son, who was accused by his father of being as weak as a Jew, is a professor of botany, specializing in moss, which can be equated with Jewish culture in Nazi perspective.

Both Levy and Keren provide a close and inward view of their Nazi character. Yoakhim Kron, the SS treasurer hiding as a Jew in *The Legend of the Sad Lakes*, carries a long address to his son in a letter he leaves behind, explaining his actions and motives. He is not guilty of the crimes the Jews blame him for, he writes his son; he did not murder or rape. He is a proud German and an avid Nazi, but he was not even aware of the horrifying acts the Nazis committed. Even if we do not accept these claims of innocence (and some details in the book contradict them), they present the possibility. The very voice this perspective gains, the personal story of a unique and concrete individual they relate closely, reduce the distance between reader and character, possibly evoking sympathy towards the Nazi.⁴⁸ Such effect is promoted also by the systematic equivocation and confusion of identities between Jews and Nazis in the

novel, especially while the question of whether or not Yoakhim is in fact the Nazi accountable for anti-Jewish atrocities remains open to the end of the book. Legitimacy is given to the Nazi voice also in *Anatomy of Revenge*, although in this case sympathy is much more restricted. Engledorf's diary reveals a disturbed man, cruel, and fairly repulsive. But the clear voice of the character and the reduction of narrative distance to the minimum involved in journalistic self-narration compel the reader to view the world through Engledorf's eyes. Through his naïve confidence in the Nazi ideology and the clumsy experiments he conducts, through his marital and physical problems, he is sharply individualized. In contrast to Egon and Neigel, who evoke tension between their individuality and the Nazi prototype, Engledorf, like the SS officer in Liebrecht's story, affirms the prototype's qualities. But he does so while demonstrating personal idiosyncrasy.

Amir Gutfreund's *Our Holocaust*

The destabilization of the victim/victimizer dichotomy reaches its peak with Amir Gutfreund's novel *Our Holocaust* (2000). Gutfreund is biographically of the "second generation," born in Israel to survivors in 1963, and his novel is typical of this literary generation. The novel's protagonists are two Israelis, Efi and Amir (the author's counterpart), whose childhood among survivors in Haifa of the seventies is governed by continuous attempts to comprehend the Holocaust. These attempts become a life's mission for Amir who, as an adult, is obsessed with documenting his relatives' experience during the war. As with other characters in the novels of the new wave, this obsession influences his life as a father and a husband. As is typical of one branch of

novels in this group, Gutfreund's narrative is fragmented to different narrators – Amir, his father, his grandfather – and rendered through fantastic-realism, commonly in stories of rescue. Through these literary formulas, as well as through its subject matter, *Our Holocaust* conducts an explicit dialog with other works in the new wave, especially *See Under: Love*, although Gutfreund's use of fragmentation and the fantastic is not as extensive (or brilliant) as Grossman's. Towards the end of the book, Amir realizes that his wife is the grandchild of a known Kapo, a pattern we saw in Liebrecht's story "Rochalle's Ideal Groom." When his father tells how, in a school exam in Poland after the war, he wrote about his experience during the Holocaust as a composition and gained the headmaster's compassion, we are reminded of Siegfried Lenz's *The German Lesson* (1968), which applied the same device. In regard to the representation of perpetrators, *Our Holocaust* radicalizes the treatment given to the subject by his contemporaries and reveals the influence of recent scholarly studies, such as Browning's *Ordinary People* and Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. The novel explicitly underscores the complexity and diversity of the categories of participants – Jews and Germans – and undermines the traditional boundary between victims and victimizers to an unprecedented point, perhaps to its utter collapse.

The complexity of the perpetrator in *Our Holocaust* is constructed quite differently than in the other novels. The writers of the new wave usually endow a perpetrator character with complexity when developing it as a fully-fledged individual. This is the case with Grossman's sensitive attention to Neigel's private domain, Egon's monialogue in Yehoshua's novel, first person narration in Liebrecht's story, and Keren's use of the diary form. But more than on the level of the individual character,

Gutfreund develops complexity in the category of perpetrators. “There were and still are good Germans,” says Grandpa Yosef, thematizing, from the perspective of a survivor, the truth that the young Amir discovers (345). This insight of the second generation is evident everywhere in the book. In one case the soldiers of the Wehrmacht are astounded to see the horrors the SS commits (296); in another case a labor-camp commander decides not to go on the instructed death-march and saves the Jewish inmates (313); elsewhere, in a manner which recalls Kuznetsov’s *Babi-Yar*, German soldiers feel sorry for the Jewish family sitting next to an empty table and provide them with food. “That was how it was with those soldiers,” tells Amir’s father. “They were just people” (289). On the one hand, the novel details notorious sadistic Nazis and those Jewish collaborators “who were even worse than the Germans,” and on the other there are German soldiers who knew nothing, and, of course, the millions of Jewish victims. In the middle, there is a “grey zone” wider than the one Primo Levi describes. It includes Jews who had no choice but to point out the hiding place of others in order to survive, and it includes those camp commandants who “did not harm a single prisoner unless it was required for the proper order of the camp” (363), and “tried to give Jews the regulated calories quotas even during shortages” (362). Gutfreund’s main instrument in communicating such diversity of victims and victimizers is reworking well-documented historical facts. This is in contrast to the imaginative and internal exploration of developed characters in other novels of the new wave, which are focused on a smaller set of characters. This choice limits Gutfreund’s ability to evoke sympathy and manipulate readers’ response through rendition of characters’ private domain. But when the narrated reality is factually and morally complex, violating prevalent

stereotypes and demonization of the perpetrators, such explicit use of historical material is instrumental in providing the non-survivor writer with a solid factual ground and narratorial legitimacy.

Establishing the complexity of categories, an iconoclastic argument, raises the question of narrative authority. *Our Holocaust* does not settle with tapping into the experience of survivors, and Amir, the second generation who listens, makes his own research that challenges the survivors' narratives, especially in regard to the problematics of participation. When his father tells of Obersturmführer Miller who only in two cases actually shot Jews, Amir, in his mind, corrects him: Miller was not as murderous as the others, but he was an obedient little SS man, who did shoot many people (303). Most notably, Amir says of his father:

“Sometimes I think that it is because he went through the Holocaust, it is difficult for him to understand. He lived there by instinct, not by thought, the German who shot was evil, the German who did not – does not count [...] my father was too close, too hunted, and the evil that concerned him was the simple one, the self-evident.” (304)

This complex understanding, which reflects the wide and informed perspective of the historian rather than the personal experience of the survivor, is corroborated by Perl, the old survivor, who documents the Holocaust obsessively and serves as a guide to Amir in his investigation: “what happened there, in the *Shoah*, is more complex than what you can derive from my [information] cards” (357). There were the intellectuals who betrayed, and the Poles who risked and lost their lives to save Jews. And there were the Jewish collaborators, one of whom, Hermann Dunevitz, turned out to be Amir's Israeli

wife's grandfather, confusing the categories – victims and victimizers – even more. The investigation Gutfreund conducts in *Our Holocaust* does not only voice the repressed Holocaust secrets hidden in a personal crypt, to use Milner's terminology in her psychoanalytical model of the second generation fiction. Rather, it challenges and corrects the survivors' partial and personal understanding of the Holocaust, an event of enormous magnitude and complexity.

Here again we see the unmistakable mark of *See Under: Love*, in which Momik grows up to be an amateur historian of the Holocaust. But Gutfreund's Amir goes further: he is not only a passionate disciple of the survivors, who acquires additional knowledge on his own, but also a rational interpreter and critic, who challenges, complements, and even corrects the survivor's personal narratives. This newly established authority enables Gutfreund a move, which radicalizes the destabilization of the victim/victimizer dichotomy, hesitantly and carefully initiated by Grossman. *Our Holocaust* emphasizes that the true danger is not the sadistic Nazis – who Amir understands and does not fear – but rather the “non-murderous murderers,” those who only did their job, the ordinary people, as Gutfreund calls them following Browning. And these people, those-who-did-not-hate, those non-sadistic camp commanders, they surround Amir in contemporary Israel (and, by extension, everywhere), and they will emerge when the conditions are right (364). The Holocaust, in other words, was perpetrated by ordinary people and it does not even take a Nazi to produce it.

The most radical manifestation of this understanding is probably Gutfreund's treatment of the Jewish collaborators. If the complex handling of the category of “Nazis” or “Germans” is “toying with explosives,” to use Holtzman's phrase in his

critique of this trend of the new wave, that of the Jewish collaborators is repressed dynamite, almost entirely untouched in Israeli fiction. The sensitive issue of “bad Jews,” as Gutfreund calls them (150), which was removed from Israeli public attention after the Eichmann trial but re-emerged in the drama of the early 1980s, is an object of persistent investigation for Amir. His investigation raises real names of Jewish collaborators and details of their actions. And as if to abolish the traditional dichotomy of Jews as victims and Nazis as victimizers even more, those collaborators are mentioned next to the SS commandants who did their jobs “as best they could,” without sadism. As always, Perl, the survivor, provides his authority and guidance here as well: it is not the person that turns in other Jews, but the body’s molecules which wish to go on living (150). Some Jews “were no better than the Germans” (310), and among the Germans there were naïve soldiers who resisted the SS. This historically-informed understanding, that both Jews and Germans could be victimizers, is put to a practical test with the visit of Hans Oderman, a German scholar Amir hosts (345). Very much like Bartov’s Elisha, who fails to see Nazis in the helpless German girls he was expected to hate and assault, Amir realizes that Hans, with his Aryan appearance, is another indirect victim of the war: an orphan whose father was a *Lebensborn* child and his grandparents unknown. Then, Amir, the second generation who is obsessed with the Holocaust and the guilty ones, understands: Hans is a reflection of himself, and from now on he can no longer say “us and them.” At the last page of the novel, he reaches the conclusion of his life-long investigation: the Holocaust was an ordinary occurrence. Ordinary people made it happen and ordinary people were its victims.

This is not to say that Gutfreund suggests an exoneration of Nazis or even Germans. As if to counter such a conception, the novel provides detailed and documented descriptions of the atrocities – another characteristic of the new wave – as well as a note about those who evaded punishment. But the very need to mention individual documented cases of renowned Nazi sadists or Jewish collaborators, the very need to mention (and even defend) those who were not among them, manifests the collapse of the “Eichmann prototype.” If anyone could be a victim or a victimizer, formulas that equate Germans with Nazis and agents of atrocity, and Jews with victims, are no longer valid.

Although they grew up in Israel of the fifties and sixties, when the Holocaust made its most direct impact on Israeli society, by the time the writers of the new wave published their work, Israeli perceptions of the Holocaust and its perpetrators had changed fundamentally. By the mid-eighties, in fact, the very “Israeli perception of the Holocaust” or even the concept of “Israeli” alone, in both society and its cultural expression, went through a process of transformation and decentralization, which, in turn, altered, fragmented actually, the traditional paradigm of “perpetrators.” Against this political, biographical, and socio-cultural background, the development in Israeli literary responses to the Holocaust is not surprising. The old dichotomies began to weaken. It was initially evident with poetry and drama, works of a more concise nature which allow a more immediate response, and later with the vast vehicle of fiction, enabling a fuller reflection and contemplation of history. The overlap between Jews and

victims on the one hand, and Germans and Nazis or victimizers on the other, became increasingly shaken, while demonic images were replaced with a more nuanced comprehension of the Holocaust, closer to historiographical perspective than to an ideological and personal mindset. This development gains a more radical expression with the most recent work of the new wave discussed here. While writers of the eighties, such as Grossman, Yehoshua, and Liebrecht, restrict their texts to revealing complexity in perpetrator characters and evoking moral challenges, Gutfreund, writing on the verge of the twenty first century, thematizes and explicates various differentiations between sub-categories: Wehrmacht and SS, collaborators by choice or by necessity, “Bad” Jews or Germans, and “good” ones. The cultural and ethical challenges such an approach entails are formidable for writers and readers alike.

Chapter 4

Ka-Tzetnik's *Salamandra*

Ka-Tzetnik's vast literary corpus plays a central role in forming the simple mode of perpetrator representation in Hebrew and Israeli Holocaust fiction. I would argue, in fact, that these were the perpetrator characters in his work that formed the "Eichmann prototype" of simple representation, which governed the Holocaust fiction of the early period (between the mid-forties and the mid-seventies). This author was born in 1909 in Sosnowitz, Poland, to an orthodox family as Yechiel Feiner. He was sent to Auschwitz in August 1943 and liberated by the Russians in February 1945; he immigrated to Palestine in November that year under the name K. Tzetinsky. In 1948 he changed his surname to the Hebrew De-Nur (or Dinur), while keeping his original first name, Yechiel. His full pen-name, Ka-Tzetnik 135633, meaning concentration-camp inmate 135633, is a combination of KZ for *Konzentrationslager* and the Slavic/Yiddish suffix "nik" for vocation or a way of life. The number, which was burnt on De-Nur's arm in Auschwitz, appears next to the author's name in the earlier editions of his books in Hebrew, but persisted later only in translation.⁴⁹ In the beginning of his testimony in the Eichmann trial, when the judge asked him why he hid behind the pen-name Ka-Tzetnik, De-Nur answered, "this is not a pen-name. I do not see myself as a writer writing literature. This is a chronicle from the planet Auschwitz."⁵⁰ What allowed him to survive, he tells in his testimony to the trial, was the oath he gave the victims, an oath to tell. He is their voice.

De-Nur was able to maintain his anonymity until it was publicly revealed in his memorable testimony in the Eichmann trial, when he fainted shortly after the beginning

of his talk. The incident and the unveiling of his true identity played a major role in his exposure to the public eye. His testimony that Auschwitz was another “planet” – where time and life obey different laws of nature, where people had no names, were not born or gave birth – became one of the most common metaphors in Israeli culture referring to the Holocaust in general and to the camps in particular. In the mid-nineties the Israeli education system embraced Ka-Tzetnik and his legacy in the teaching of the Holocaust in high-schools, and his books were disseminated and assigned with unprecedented enthusiasm. Ka-Tzetnik, Dan Miron finds, “fulfills in Israeli culture an almost official role of the ‘spokesman’ of the Holocaust and its atrocities” (2005, 148). However, in the 1940s and 1950s Ka-Tzetnik’s impact on Israeli literature originated less in institutional factors than in the qualities of his writing. Early in its appearance (immediately after the war), considerable in its scope, and remarkable in its direct confrontation with the horrors while Israeli literature was still hesitant and reserved in its approach to the catastrophe, Ka-Tzetnik’s writing constitutes one of the pillars of Hebrew and Israeli literary responses to the Holocaust.

The core of Ka-Tzetnik’s writing is the autobiographic sextet *Salamandra: a Chronicle of a Jewish Family in the Twentieth Century*. The name *Salamandra* (“salamander” in English) is explained on the opening page of the first novel, also entitled *Salamandra*: “When fire burns in one place for seven years without pause, a creature emerges from it called Salamandra.” The information is attributed to “an ancient source.” This concept is also expressed in the name Feiner chose for himself in Palestine: De-Nur, meaning “of fire” in Aramaic.⁵¹ The novel *Salamandra* (Yiddish 1945; Hebrew 1946), translated as *Sunrise over Hell*, tells the story of Harry Preleshnik (who embodies

Feiner himself), from his pre-war life in Poland, to the ghetto and Auschwitz, and then to Palestine. *House of Dolls* (*Beit habubot* 1955) is the story of Daniela (a character based on Feiner's sister) in the women's camp, where she is made a *Feld-Hure*, a prostitute for the German soldiers, and dies. *Atrocity* (*Piepel* 1961) is the story of Moni, based on Harry's young brother, who is shot to death after losing his function as a sex-slave for the *block-meister* in Auschwitz. *The Clock* (*Hashaon* 1961) is a brief poetic recap of the previous books of the sextet. *Star Eternal* (*Kahol me'efer* 1966, or the later version, *Haimut* 1971) recounts the life of Harry Prelesnik as a survivor in Israel, and *Shivitti* (*Tsofen: Edma* 1987) narrates the LSD treatment De-Nur went through in the Netherlands in 1976, his hallucinations, insights, and process of healing. Given Ka-Tzetnik's bilingualism, his inclusion in this study begs for an explanation. We know that although *Salamandra* was published only in Hebrew, it was originally written in Yiddish, translated by the writer's request and with his approval.⁵² *House of Dolls* and *Piepel* are available also in Yiddish, and it is likely that the Yiddish version was written first. The later books were most likely written in Hebrew. Ka-Tzetnik's major impact is felt in Hebrew literature rather than in Yiddish. His writing has been embraced by Israeli literature and culture to the extent that, as Szeintuch indicates, most people do not even know that Ka-Tzetnik is a bilingual writer. The fact that in 1971 Ka-Tzetnik himself revised and significantly shortened the 1946 Hebrew translation of *Salamandra* and that this is the edition most common and influential today, frames the book within the Hebrew and Israeli corpus conclusively.

Regarding its most dominant attribute – its direct, detailed, and uncompromising account of the horrors – Ka-Tzetnik's writing is unique, incomparable not only to later

Hebrew writing but also to its contemporaries. Non-survivor writers in the decades immediately following the events lacked the legitimacy to write directly about the atrocities, and they did not dare approach the unimaginable (with the rare exception of Shamir's naïve "the Second Stutter"). In the writing of other survivors, such as Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel or Aharon Appelfeld, we find silence or gaps, yet Ka-Tzetnik confronts the horrors overtly with descriptions of violence so detailed, that he was blamed with "pornographization of the Holocaust" (Miron 156) and with a "bizarre and startling mixture of kitsch, and what initially appears as outright pornography" (Bartov 45). Ka-Tzetnik populates his texts with a large number of Holocaust perpetrators, probably more than any other text in the Hebrew corpus. His personal experience – which is also a collective one – explains the demography of perpetrators in his writing: mostly men (except for *House of Dolls* which takes place in a women's camp); lower-ranks more than officers; SS and Gestapo more than Wehrmacht; and Jewish or lower class Polish collaborators, as well as German criminals and political prisoners. These are the perpetrators that a Jew encountered in the ghetto and camp, and this encounter constitutes the material, as well the experience and organizing principles, for his literary testimony. For a Jew in the Holocaust, the vast majority of perpetrators form a faceless mass, and only in a few cases does Ka-Tzetnik provide a close, individualized, and concrete description of any of them or their inner world. He represents the Holocaust through the perspective of Jew struggling to survive.

Salamandra, the first novel in the sextet by that name, entwines the personal love story of Harry Preleshnik and Sonya Schmidt into the story of the destruction of the Jewish

community in the city of Metropoli, a literary disguise of Sosnowitz, Ka-Tzetnik's home town.⁵³ It begins in 1939 and gradually progresses towards the outbreak of the war on September first that year, concluding with Harry's liberation from Auschwitz in early 1943. As the atmosphere in Poland gradually grows hostile to the Jews, the perpetrators in the novel gain presence and centrality. Anti-Jewish hostility first comes up in the novel during the Wednesday meeting at the Shaffran residence, where the reader is introduced to the guests and their stories: the professor of mathematics from Krakow who was attacked by a group of students; Dr. Shteinitz, a neurologist, who survived the Nazi persecutions as a patriot, but was finally forced to escape Germany when "uniform wearing SA" visited his clinic; a Jewish lady is attacked by a Polish soldier on the street car (*Salamandra* 1946, 20).⁵⁴ In this story-telling event, participants and readers alike sense the growing fear and danger, becoming more and more tangible with the progression of the German invasion. When the Germans are finally present in the city, the encounter is striking:

All men outside!!

The roars pounded in his ears with the impact of rifle butts on an iron courtyard gate. Brandishing machine-guns, steel-helmeted Germans cordoned off the streets and houses: "All men to City Hall Square!"

Panicking, men scattered from the houses out to the court-yards. The Germans, machine-guns at the ready, closed in, and the men, uncommanded, held their hands up as if that were the natural thing to do.

"On the double! On the double!" It wasn't a human yell, but the scream of a predator drawing the words themselves. The product of training, drill,

indoctrination: “Any man caught inside will be shot like a mad dog!” (*Sunrise over Hell* 35)

The immediate effect this passage evokes is fear. Following a description of sleep, the passage gains the advantage of surprise, alarming the reader as it alarms the Jews hearing these terrifying instructions. The passage draws its strengths from its art and order of description which imitates the perception of the vulnerable Jews. First we are told what they hear while sitting in their homes: orders being shouted with the sound of guns striking the gates of the yards. The safety of the domestic environment is smashed to pieces. Then we are told what they see as it is perceived: not “armed German soldiers” but “Brandishing machine-guns, steel-helmeted Germans” – a description which locates external parts before and above the whole, as the Jews at the scene experience the event in both sense and implication. The aftermath of this terrifying encounter is seen in the following lines, where the frightened Jewish men flee out of the house and then again are instructed in an inhuman voice to run and run, endlessly, without sense or reason.

This first encounter introduces some of the constants of Ka-Tzetnik’s representation of the perpetrators – Germans in his case. (a) The Germans shout orders, they do not speak or address, and their voice is inhuman. Here, and in many other cases, their voice is accompanied with the sound produced in their movement and use of arms, all creating a terrifying cacophony. (b) The Germans are an unindividualized group, always wearing helmets and holding machine-guns. They are a massive presence, an invading crowd, like a powerful wave which sweeps everything it encounters. In this example, the crowd-effect of the German soldiers is emphasized through the contrast of

frightened Jews, perplexed by this force which invades their homes and carries them out. On the following pages, the Germans maintain their anonymous unitary appearance as “black-uniformed Germans” (36) while the Jews they persecute all have individual appearance and behavior depicted with care and remorse. (c) The soldiers are represented through metonymy, in which an element substitutes another close to it in time, space, or causality, and through synecdoche, in which a part stands for the whole. In the passage above these figurative means are only implied because along with the emphasis on helmets, machine guns, and inhuman shouts, the description does mention “German soldiers,” but in many other cases all we are given is an element of external appearance. The elements – guns, helmets (and, later, boots and black uniform) – are constants throughout Ka-Tzetnik’s representation, and already here they gain dominance over the anonymous people who use them. (d) The phrase “predator’s roar,” which is used figuratively in reference to people, gains a concrete and terrifying meaning when referring to people whose actions are inhuman. The animal simile is an especially productive component in Ka-Tzetnik’s writing, and may develop from a single simile to a metaphoric image. (e) When the narrator writes that the German shouts are the roar of a predator resulting from method and training, the content of his words may reflect the perception of the Jews present at the scene, but his language is more appropriate to an external and reflective author. This is Ka-Tzetnik’s retrospective insight, which in other places wears the form of an explicit narratorial commentary. These five components of perpetrator representation, palpable in the passage above, gain different shapes, combinations, and levels of development throughout Ka-Tzetnik’s writing.

It is often not easy to distinguish between a brief literal description of a German perpetrator and a metonymical one:

Beyond the pane of the sealed car door looms the head of an armed SS man, steel helmet lowered to his eyes, gun barrel swaying by his head. He stands outside on the platform of the speeding train and watches over the girls of his class. (*House of Dolls* 124)

A black uniform – shoulder shows at the door pane. Black. Black. Only the little swastika on the side of the helmet is red. A blood spot. (*House of Dolls* 127).

Death's heavy strides approached, thudding beyond the bunker. The outside door to the corridor was now being smashed into by kicking boots and salvos of fire. "Out!...Anyone holing up will be shot like a scabby dog!..." (*Sunrise Over Hell* 173)

From side streets emerged black shadows of Gestapomen with machine guns, leading cowering, trembling girls just dragged out of bed (*House of Dolls* 85)

In the first passage the SS guard is depicted through representative parts, which subordinate the whole and draw attention to distinguishing features: a helmet which hides the eyes (and their human virtue), and an automatic gun near the head, which marks more than anything else a person's function within his surroundings. The second citation presents a synecdochic description, where body parts, colors, and a symbol – interpreted

by the narrator – stand for the person. The third citation fuses the synecdoche “heavy strides,” which stands for the guard in terms of part and whole, with the metonymy “death,” which stands for the guard in terms of cause and effect. This figurative principle develops in the second sentence when the boots kick the door open while shooting, bringing the Jews one step closer to their death. The last passage replaces the Gestapo with their shadows, a metonymy which serves also as a metaphor to what is perceived, from a Jewish perspective, as inhuman or non-human actions and action takers, especially in contrast to the very real and frightened Jewish girls. In these examples and many others the German perpetrators are replaced entirely with visual and acoustic details related to their deadly task, while the agent’s human dimensions are not only downplayed but erased.

In addition to metonymy and synecdoche, which reduce the Germans to their most identifiable and dangerous attributes, Ka-Tzetnik uses animal metaphors to exclude the perpetrators from the human realm entirely.

The Germans did not scream like humans. It was not a scream but a screech and roar, as beasts roar when they are agitated. (*Salamandra* 1946, 52; my translation)

The gaze of a predator, certain its prey cannot escape...the worship of cannibals. (*Salamandra* 1946, 54; my translation)

[Lindner was like] a German wolfhound trained to pounce on Jews and rip them apart on sight. (*Sunrise over Hell* 93)

The bawdy German shouts reach into her ears as from a great distance. Like the wild echoes of a cannibal chant... Huge bare teeth, like beast's (*House of Dolls* 186).

For Ka-Tzetnik, Germans do not speak or gaze or appear as people. They are predators, although not natural predators hunting to survive, but some repulsive cruel creatures lurking to cause harm and death. These metaphors and similes are more extreme and colorful than the examples of metonymy and synecdoche we saw earlier. While metonymy or synecdoche apply a semantic field drawn from the represented reality, metaphors and similes introduce the writer's imagination and, in the case of Ka-Tzetnik, a writer's vindictive mindset. They also convey the impression which the Germans left on the hunted Jews.

The following short extract, which combines all of Ka-Tzetnik's principles in rendering the perpetrators' externality, will conclude my discussion of this dimension of their representation:

Boots. Terrifying German boots stomping up the stairs. As though their hobnails were treading on naked flesh. The door is being stormed. Hayim-Idl's look rolls out of his gaping eye-sockets, brushes over the narrow beds, and stops dead on the empty bed of the Oswiencim girl. The door strains inward. Everyone is numb, paralyzed with fear. Never have the two doors halves arched in this way, as if trying desperately to recoil from the German voices raging at them. Another

moment and the door halves will burst open. Hayim-Idl's feet tear themselves free. He runs to open the door.

Gestapo! Just behind them—blue-white caps of Judenrat Militia. The Gestapoman is holding a list in his hands. Odd, death has ordinary hands, white, human hands—

(House of Dolls 82)

As is typical of Ka-Tzetnik, this description conveys the paralyzing fear of the Jews trapped within, while the hunter is approaching from without. Such fear is evoked by the sounds and voices coming from behind the door so powerfully, that they almost have physical presence of their own. The shouts and sound of marching boots indicate who is coming, but when the perpetrators are finally revealed, they are still depicted through representative parts: the uniform that indicates the Gestapo, the hats of the Judenrat, and the hands of death. Parts substitute for the whole, cause replaces effect, sounds and colors replace the naming of things themselves, and concluding is a philosophical comment on behalf of the narrator. The fact that the perpetrators are people is not reflected in the sensual input and emotional response which orient the passage's narration. On the contrary, their individuality is erased in favor of their portrayal as a terrifying extra-human and irresistible power. This scene reflects succinctly and effectively the impact of the encounter with the perpetrators, which motivates and dominates Ka-Tzetnik's depiction of them throughout his work.

Ka-Tzetnik's depiction of the Germans consistently minimizes, often to almost nothing, their rendition as human individuals. Compared to animals and condemned by the narrator, they either take part in a crowd or are implied through a given part of the

whole. They are depicted from the outside through a set of recurrent key terms drawn from their appearance – helmets, guns, boots, black uniforms; the rattle of fire arms and heavy steps, endless shouting. The repetition of these key terms constitutes a case of what Hanna Yaoz calls “code words” of the “other planet” – although her discussion is of different codes and later writers. Yaoz’s discussion includes codes such as smoke, train-car, snow, 1939, and the European forests, in contrast to the external and conventional archetypes utilized in Holocaust fiction, such as Cain and Abel, the binding of Isaac, or the crucifixion. Synecdochic codes, according to Yaoz, are especially common in Holocaust fiction as they enable the representation of the incomprehensible (143-175). Contradistinctively, Ka-Tzetnik’s Jewish characters gain individual and human form even when portrayed briefly from the outside. For the perpetrators, the very use of codes to depict people works against any effect of verisimilitude, subordinating individuality and uniqueness to a category. Based on the limited information the reader is provided, they all look, sound, and behave the same. In fact, when it comes to the external depiction of Germans, it is practically impossible to speak of them as fictional people or inhabitants of a literary universe. More than fictional people, Ka-Tzetnik’s perpetrators are like demons or shadows responsible for Jewish suffering and death.

In some cases, however, Ka-Tzetnik’s perpetrators do gain a concrete and individualized observation. They may have names and personal history, some presentation of mind or close observation of individual traits and behavior. For this challenge Ka-Tzetnik must rely to some extent on the privilege of the author to imagine what he cannot know, especially as a Polish Jew, who had no real knowledge of German life. His personal experience here is limited as a source of information. As an example,

let us examine, in the novel *Salamandra*, the meeting between the Jew Moniac Matroz and the Gestapo officer, Alfred Dreyer. Dreyer nominates Moniak as the Judenrat leader, and this is how the officer is described at the time of meeting:

Adolf Hitler stood, full-blown, on the wall, and at his feet, in black uniform, sat Dreyer: grey-eyed, aquiline face, his speech unhurried, flexible, polite, a true son of the Third Reich.

“I have invited you here – uh, do be seated – to inform you that German law has laid down certain restrictions regarding your people, who reside in annexed and occupied territories of Germany. And it is our duty to implement this law without delay. Therefore I have decided, in order to avoid unpleasantness from the Jews during its execution, that it would be wise to assign the implementation of these restrictions to you. You – as the leaders of the Judenrat – will be answerable to me, with your heads, and also, I might mention, with those of your families, for the implementation of this law down to its last detail. I have no desire to alarm you; but it is my duty to draw your attention to German Order, Discipline, Precision, and Secrecy.”

Hitler looked down from the wall, his lower lip slightly protruding, as if murmuring confidently into his moustache: I can trust my men (*Sunrise Over Hell* 58-59).

Alfred Dreyer was a Gestapo commandant in the Katowitz ghetto, who Ka-Tzetnik actually met, as he tells in his testimony in the Eichmann trial.⁵⁵ But the description above makes no effort at realism or fidelity to historical details. Rather, the textual Alfred

Dreyer is depicted in stereotypical lines so blunt that they efface his singular existence as either a fictional individual or a historical figure, producing him as the manifestation of a two-dimensional model. First, Dreyer displays signs of “Europe as an Embodiment of Culture,” which is a common cultural construct in Hebrew and Israeli culture.⁵⁶ That can be seen in the formal setting of uniform and photograph on the wall, the “civilized” atmosphere of the quiet office in contrast to the chaos of the first days of the ghetto, Dreyer’s polite speech and manners, and his sophisticated use of language, which both heightens the level of the speech and projects an aristocratic refinement appalled by any personal and close encounter with the true meaning of his words. Second, Dreyer evidences the crux of what imagology terms “German national character:” the famous German affinity for order, authority, and discipline – in fact, he explicates these characteristics in his talk.⁵⁷ In the mouth of any German person or character, such cultural formulas of “order” or “discipline,” especially when they reflect the perception of a culture from without, sound artificial and exaggerated. But Ka-Tzetnik stresses these qualities, and so the individual Dreyer collapses into the extra-literary cultural stereotype which subsumes it, leaving Alfred Dreyer of the text neither a replica of the historical person nor a convincing inhabitant of the literary world. He is nothing but a puppet. James Phelan’s observations regarding the relations between character dimensions – mimetic (character as individual), thematic (character as an idea), and synthetic (character as an aesthetic function) – are helpful here (83). In Ka-Tzetnik’s representation, Alfred Dreyer’s mimetic dimension is not only minimal, but it also subordinated to (if not assimilated into) the thematic one, rendering the character as a

nothing more than a vehicle for common perception of European, German, and Nazi cultures.

Ka-Tzetnik's use of cultural stereotype serves narrative and critical functions. Dreyer mentions German order, discipline, precision, and discreetness in each of his meetings with the Judenrat, each time emphasizing the importance of a different component (*Salamandra* 1971; 51, 58, 76, 124). The repetition produces a mechanical operation, which both empties the stereotypical formula of the little factual value a stereotype may hold and ridicules the speaker, as well as the culture he represents. At one point, when the component of order is violated, the members of the Judenrat themselves are sent to Auschwitz.⁵⁸ Dreyer's polite and refined manner of speech, as if he is trying to minimize contact with the brutal content of what he says, is a particular embodiment of the incomprehensible rift between the German cultural tradition and the inhuman actions committed by Nazi Germany. This opposition is articulated explicitly when Dreyer presents the entire issue as unpleasant but inevitable: "it is our duty to implement this law"; "in order to avoid unpleasantness... it would be wise to assign the implementation of these restrictions to you"; "it is my duty to draw your attention." All that as if Dreyer were forced to operate rather than choosing to do so, especially when later on he chooses to circumvent the rules he "must obey" for financial gain. As an embodiment of a specific Holocaust stereotype, this speech could be (and probably was) given at any of the ghettos by any of Dreyer's equivalents, and it echoes familiar principles of the Nazi occupation: the transference of guilt and authority to local Jewish leadership; the use of bureaucracy and manipulation of language to evade responsibility and personal involvement. One of few exceptions to the masses of gun-carrying-uniforms, Alfred Dreyer gains a concrete

depiction and the appearance of an individual. But even as such, he is not a person, true or fictional, but a representative of the Nazis and their crimes.

Furthermore, while Dreyer's description is concrete, it is limited to what the eye can see. His private domain, including personal history and inner life, remain untold. This is normally the situation in Ka-Tzetnik's writing. The following portrayal of an overseer in the women's work-camp, however, is a rare exception which marks the boundaries of the rule:

Hentschel the "moon," the German overseer, really had a head like a full moon: rotund, ball-shaped, as if traced out with a compass, clean-shaven, tiny ears, a wisp of a nose, a slit of a mouth-all topped with a mass of pink flesh, and a thick, heavy cudgel set in his hand.

When Hentschel flogged – and Hentschel flogged to death – it was never discernable on his moon face whether he was doing it out of annoyance, or hatred, or for the sadistic fun of it. He was like a machine brought here to kill, and kill he does with exemplary precision.

It may very well be that at home Hentschel has a wife and children; it is possible that he is careful to go to church every Sunday; perhaps in the circle of his family, relatives, friends, Hentschel is known as a meek, modest person; is the first to say "hello" to everyone, get up for a lady on the streetcar. It may be that until the war broke out Hentschel was employed as a competent, reliable clerk in a construction company, and every morning, at exactly the same time, his wife prepared him a ham sandwich for brunch; and every morning, at exactly the same time, he gave her a good-bye peck on the brow before leaving for work. But here, in Camp Labor

Via Joy, Henschel swims day in, day out in a sea of blood, in an inferno of human misery for which no language in the world has the idiom.

With the very hands with which, at exactly ten o'clock every morning, Henschel takes the Butterbrodt from its neat wrapping – obviously prepared by dutiful wifely hands –with those very hands he daily crushes young, quivering girlish lives.

It may very well be that after such a day, Henschel returns home, as he used to from the office: takes a footbath; neighbors drop in for a chat or a game of dominoes; a canary warbles in the cage hanging from lintel of the open window; in the yard children play basketball. Henschel gets up, pours water into the flower pots on the window sill: Flowers are like people. They are alive. And just as people must have food, flowers must have water. Deprive them of their water – they wither. And that's very sad. Henschel feels how sad. It may even be that with his own hands Henschel fills the saucer with milk and sets it on the floor for the kitten he is raising at home. Later, when the neighbors leave, Henschel takes the bulky watch from his pocket, winds it for the next twenty-four hours, and makes ready for bed. Tomorrow, first thing, he has to get up again for work at Camp Labor via Joy. (*House of Dolls* 149-50).

Writing from the perspective of the hungry and helpless victim, Ka-Tzetnik focuses on the perpetrator's strength and obesity side by side with the instrument of torture. Here, however, there is also willingness on behalf of the narrator to speculate beyond the immediate encounter with the perpetrator's exteriority. Ka-Tzetnik hardly goes as far as to imagine Henschel's inner world, but he does make an effort to depict Henschel as a

whole individual, although yet a type of individual rather than an idiosyncratic human being, singular in time and space, similar to any extra-literary person. We learn Hentschel's habits and details of ordinary existence away from his deadly acts in the camp, and the depiction is given with care and attention, perhaps even with a sprinkle of jealousy and nostalgia. The tone reflects a candid attempt to understand the contradiction between a family man and complicity with genocide, as well as a gloomy realization that the two can coexist within one person. The realization finds its expression in the language of description. Telling Hentschel's life as a father and husband, the narrator repeatedly uses the words *efshar* and *yitakhen* (meaning "may," "possible," "perhaps"): "it may very well be that at home Hentschel has a wife and children; it is possible that he is careful to go to church every Sunday; perhaps in the circle of his family, relatives, friends, Hentschel is known as a meek, modest person." This language endows this content with a tone almost poetic and even, perhaps, somewhat affectionate. But when hard facts of the death camp are given, the transition is marked with *veulam kan* ("but, here"). But here, in the camp, Hentschel swims in a river of blood, and the same hands that hold the sandwich his loving wife prepared with such devotion, are the very same hands which murder young girls daily. As with Dreyer's description, a judgmental, patronizing, and somewhat ironic tone is evident in this passage, but the effort invested in this detailed passage cannot be all critical. In this passage Ka-Tzetnik tries to understand the impossible contradiction between a family man and a mass murderer, and the conclusion is a sad realization that one person can play both roles. If it is true for Hentschel "moon" who enjoyed more attention than any other perpetrator in Ka-Tzetnik's literary testimony, it is true for all of them.

The narrow scope of Ka-Tzetnik's representation of perpetrators becomes striking when contrasted to representation of the Jews. Most salient are the protagonists – Harry, Sonia, Daniela, and Moni – whose story begins before the war and continues into it (and after it for Harry). For many of the Jews occupying Ka-Tzetnik's Holocaust world, in different levels of centrality, we receive information, even brief, about their behavior, mind, appearance, and life before the war. As I show later on, the Jewish characters gain their own voice and perspective. I agree that Ka-Tzetnik's craft of fiction shows only "limited success in sketching characters with psychological depth," as Jeremy Popkin argues (344), and Bartov is mostly right to call Ka-Tzetnik's writing juvenile and melodramatic, especially when it comes to characterization (46). But it is crucial to observe the difference, a rift actually, in the artistic design of victims and victimizers. For Ka-Tzetnik's Germans, the inner world is a reflection of the external one, and the past, if told, is subordinated to the present it explains. In comparison to his Jewish characters on the one hand and to Grossman's Neigel or Yehoshua's Egon on the other, Ka-Tzetnik's perpetrators exhibit complexity or inner world in ways that are superficial rather than insightful and imaginative. In fact, I would call them "unimaginative" in the literal sense, because the construction of human complexity hardly even attempts to imagine what is unavailable to the eye. Ka-Tzetnik's perpetrators are anchored in the here and now of the observer, confined and frozen, ready-made and pre-conceived. They do not develop or vary, and lack any existence independent from their function in the Nazi system. Another point of comparison is the representation of Germans and Jews as members of a society. Jewish characters do not only simulate extra-literary individuals but also gather to form a community. We know of many of them, in different levels of specification, according to

their role in the story – Paela, Daniela’s friend and ally in the women’s camp, Zanvil Lubliner the tailor, Berl the *piepel* and many others who appear for a moment as part of Ka-Tzetnik’s panoramic presentation of the ghetto or camp. These marginal or semi-marginal characters interact with the protagonists, illuminate their social aspects and create a sense of a thick and living society. Ka-Tzetnik represents Jews as real people in both individual and social terms, while the Germans exist as exteriorities and in an almost complete isolation and anonymity.

For these reasons I prefer to avoid the phrase “perpetrator characters” regarding Ka-Tzetnik’s representation. Perpetrators in the work of Ka-Tzetnik barely even reach what Forster calls “flat” characters, which are “constructed around a single idea or quality” and “can be expressed in one sentence...” (67). These qualifications apply to Dreyer or Hentschel “moon face” and some of the Auschwitz barracks commanders in *Piepel*. But they are the minority in comparison to the mass of faceless Germans rendered collectively or synecdochically – always less than a person. The word “Characters,” therefore, may be too much for most perpetrators in Ka-Tzetnik’s writing, although they do fall under a single idea and can be expressed in one sentence: perpetrators, victimizers of the Jews, whose internal lives or any other quality, as much as they exist, correspond with their actions. The “beginning of the curve towards the round” and certainly the capability of “surprising in a convincing way,” which qualify a round character according to Forster are no where to be found in Ka-Tzetnik’s depiction of perpetrators (78). As such, of course, perpetrators also do not develop but remain “static” (in contrast to dynamic) characters in Tomashevsky’s terms in *Thematics* (89). Perhaps, since their participation in the story is mostly not in speech or thought but in action, the most

efficient way to deal with Ka-Tzetnik's perpetrators is in terms of plot. Propp speaks of characters as action takers, who fulfill a function in the plot, function being "an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action" (21). In Propp's typology of character types, Ka-Tzetnik's perpetrators fall of course under the category of the villain, and the plot function they fulfill, without fail, is the destruction of European Jewry.

The typology of "illustration" and "representation," developed in Scholes and Kellogg's *The Nature of Narrative*, is especially helpful when discussing Ka-Tzetnik's perpetrators. In regard to the relations between fictional and extra-literary reality, Scholes and Kellogg distinguish between "representation," which attempts to create a "replica of actuality," and "illustration," which seeks "only to suggest an aspect of reality" (84). Ka-Tzetnik's perpetrators are illustrative characters whose participation in the Nazi genocide against the Jews is the aspect of reality they demonstrate. Very much like Propp's character-functions, they have no existence beyond that aspect. According to Scholes and Kellogg, a work can present illustrative elements side by side with representational ones, and this is the case with Ka-Tzetnik's characters. While his perpetrators are illustrations of the historical ones (which were, of course, real people), his victim characters are representations, truly developed fictional individuals, which replicate possible and even actual people, as Ka-Tzetnik's family members. A borderline case is that of Alfred Dreyer in *Salamandra*, Rudolf Höss in *Piepel*, and perhaps other perpetrators in Ka-Tzetnik's writing whose names and details correlate with actual people. Yet, even these few cases are illustrative more than representative, symbolic more than mimetic, given in stereotypical lines which absorb singular historical existence. Perpetrators in Ka-

Tzetnik's writing, to conclude, are flat as characters can be, limited to their historical function which is also that of the fictional plot, confined to cultural stereotypes and conform to a set prototype of actions, behaviors, and appearances.

Voice

Voice provides an especially striking demonstration of the sharp distinction between victims and victimizers in Ka-Tzetnik's writing. Bakhtin argues that the defining quality of the novel is a true dialogue of voices. Heteroglossia designates a "diversity of social speech types" or "another's speech in another's language" (1981, 262, 324), and polyphony is "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness" (1984, 6). Such dialog does not exist among Ka-Tzetnik's perpetrators, who hardly express themselves but rather act and speak in the service of Nazism, unless we consider these acts a means of expression. When they do apply common vehicles of voice – speech, perspective, gestures – they do not articulate independence or individuality but rather extra-literary cultural stereotypes and the patterns of shouting and inhuman roaring already noted. This is the exact opposite of what Bakhtin finds as a truly polyphonic novel, in which ideologies and world views are not "reduced to a single ideological common denominator," but hold an independent expression equal in weight to that of the narrator (1984 17). Ka-Tzetnik's world view and apparent feelings towards the Germans, rooted in his experience, reduce the voice of their literary equivalent to a unitary shriek of a monster. In contrast, Bakhtin's views of perspective and speech types do come to life in the variety of voices among Ka-Tzetnik's diverse community of Jewish characters: Moni as a child in the camp, Sonya the resourceful wife, Daniela the young girl, Harry as the

head of the family, the rabbi, and other Jewish individuals in the camps. While the perpetrators' speech is limited to orders or inhuman sounds, their victims use language as a true vehicle of human communication: they speak and greet, cry and declare love, mourn and long, beg and say last goodbyes. The plurality of voices or diversity of speech types, then, exists in Ka-Tzetnik's writing but unequally. Internal to a community, it exists within the Jewish community but not among the perpetrators. Between the two groups of speakers, a "dialogue" is conducted only in the theoretical Bakhtinian sense of diversity or plurality, since the shouting of commands can hardly be called a dialogue.

Voice in Ka-Tzetnik's work is tightly related to the representation of languages. Since the texts are written in Hebrew while their German inhabitants speak German, and the Jewish ones most likely speak Polish or Yiddish, Ka-Tzetnik faces a "formidable mimetic challenge," to use the words of Meir Sternberg: "how to represent the reality of polylingual discourse through a communicative medium which is normally unilingual" (222). For Ka-Tzetnik the problem is more than that of verisimilitude or even historical accuracy; both are of special relevance given the biographical nature of the materials. When Alferd Dreyer and Harry Prelesnik, Ka-Tzetnik and the reader, all share one language, be it Hebrew or any language of translation, an illusion of communication and sameness is produced both as a fictional fact and a readerly effect. Such falsification is typical to any substitution of the fictional language with the textual one, such as English in *Hamlet*, which takes place in Denmark before Shakespearean English was born, or Hebrew in modernist Hebrew prose, which depicts the life of Jews in Russia before Hebrew became a spoken language. However, in Ka-Tzetnik's writing a "suspension of disbelief" or acceptance of the literary convention has severe implications. The sharing of

a central attribute of identity, such as language, and the false appearance of communication such sharing creates, significantly undermines the dichotomy Ka-Tzetnik's marks between victims and victimizers. Furthermore, we must note that the illusion of communication between Jews and Germans is not only contrary to historical details, but also to the undercurrents which generated the Holocaust reality. Not only could Dreyer and Henschel not have spoken Hebrew;⁵⁹ it is their profound hatred of anything related to Jewish culture that led them and others, both fictionally and historically, to be complicit in the Nazi genocide against the Jews.

This linguistic sameness between a hunter and prey imposed by textual constraints is approached directly in both design and report of the story-world. Relative to their massive presence in the literary and historical universe, Ka-Tzetnik's Germans rarely communicate with their victims, and when they do, their language is not a true means of communication. "Barking German," Uri Zvi Greenberg writes in "A Crown of Lamentation for All Israel," and this trope is common in Holocaust writing. This epitaph is not a mere literary device or personal impression. Discussing an inmate's encounter with the German language, Primo Levi observes that the German of the camps was an especially rough idiom which was used to give orders, and the Germans made no effort to acknowledge the fact that most inmates did not speak it. A misunderstood order was repeated with shouts and beating, and the language, which was rendered useless to convey complex thought, became nothing but a signal, as one speaks to an animal.⁶⁰ In *Salamandra*, when the Germans actually speak, Ka-Tzetnik's narrator uses a technique Sternberg calls "explicit attribution": "a direct statement on the reporter's part concerning the language in which the reported speech was originally made" (231). The narrator

repeatedly draws our attention to the fact that the Hebrew text conveys a German speech, and often the kind of German is characterized as SS or Gestapo German. Language, a diverse carrier of literary voice, is especially homogenous in the mouths of perpetrators, and it is as far as possible from human speech. As was the case also with their appearance and mind, Ka-Tzetnik's German speakers are all fused into one prototype. Their actions are inhuman, and so is their language.

In the speech of Jews, on the other hand, Ka-Tzetnik maintains a minimal gap between the Yiddish the Jews most likely speak within the storyworld and the Hebrew used on paper. In some places, Ka-Tzetnik's narrator explicitly refers to the variety of languages Jews speak in the camp or to a Jewish professor who speaks many languages but not Yiddish. But these are exceptions which do not violate the illusion of proximity and even identicalness between the Hebrew on paper and the language or languages Jewish characters speak in the story. Ka-Tzetnik's narrator, Jewish characters, and reader all communicate in a single language, while the perpetrators in another.⁶¹ This "single language" is an illusion of course because it is at least two: that of the fictional individuals and that of the text, shared by narrator and reader (Hebrew or any language of translation). But Ka-Tzetnik erases this duplicity, and the result is some sort of linguistic harmony among all participants excluding the perpetrators. To anyone reading the text in any language other than German, the very mentioning of "he spoke German" produces a barrier, while all other languages spoken in the literary universe are transparent. Beginning with the narrator's commentary and reaching completion in structure and technique, German language and speech are excluded from Ka-Tzetnik's human realm.

As with voice, the organization of perspectives in Ka-Tzetnik's novels complies with the victim/victimizer dichotomy. Ka-Tzetnik's focalizers, that is, the story-world participants whose point of view orients the narrative, are usually the Preleshniks – Harry, Daniela, Moni. An exception is Hayim-Idl, one of the camp inmates and a central figure in *Piepel*, and a very different exception, a rare case in which even a collaborator gains the stage for a short while, is Moniek Matroz, through whose eyes Ka-Tzetnik renders the meeting with Alfred Dreyer. But rarely is the story told from the perspective of the collaborators and never is it told through that of the Germans. The result is a perspectival structure in which the individual points of view of the victims join together to produce a collective perspective absolutely dominant over that of the perpetrators. The story-world is revealed through the eyes of the victims, as individuals and as a collective, while the perpetrators are perceived only externally, mediated as elements of the story-world but never mediating it. Wayne Booth writes that by “seeing the whole thing through the isolated sufferer's vision we are forced to feel it through his heart...because we are absolutely bound to his experience, our sympathy is entirely with him” (281). Ka-Tzetnik's aesthetics utilizes this principle to evoke and regulate readers' sympathy towards his characters – a necessary task considering the disparity between these exilic victimized Jewish characters and the *Sabra* audience of the forties and fifties in Israel. In Ka-Tzetnik's design, both the perspectival structure and the orchestration of voices overlap almost perfectly with the victim/victimizer dichotomy already evident in other terms: hunter and prey, powerful and weak, one-dimensional and complex, roaring and speaking, inhuman and human. The result is a *Chronicle of a Jewish Family in the Twentieth Century*, as the sextet's subtitle reads, not only in thematics or use of historical

material, but also as representation which aesthetically reflects a collective Jewish perspective and experience, looking from the inside out.

The Gray Zone

Discussing victims and victimizers so far I have excluded what Primo Levi, in *The Drowned and the Saved*, calls the “gray zone.” This “zone” includes the group of inmates who in some measures, perhaps with good intentions, collaborated with the authority. It is the “hybrid class of the prisoner-functionary...the zone of *protekcja* and collaboration” (20; 42). It includes “low-ranking functionaries” and collaborators “only apparently,” both of whom Levi can “lightheartedly absolve” of collaboration (45-46). Levi, we should note, places most of the guilt on the totalitarian system itself, which absorbs its victims and contaminates them. In Ka-Tzetnik’s writing, the “gray zone” is heavily populated. Between the Germans on the one hand and the rankless victims on the other, the *Salamandra* sextet abounds with functionaries and collaborators: Moniek Matroz as the Metropoli ghetto’s elder; Kapos and various members of the Judenrat; servants and assistants to the German masters; Jewish officials and bureaucrats in the ghetto, and rank holding Jews in the camp. The ethical dimensions of this “demographics” have been at the heart of recent Ka-Tzetnik criticism. Omer Bartov argues that

[I]f the Nazis are always in the background of the evil he portrays, his [Ka-Tzetnik’s] attention is focused much more on the disintegration of even the most basic human relationships and moral codes among the inmates, the cruelty of the Kapos, the murderous instincts to which hunger, deprivation, and humiliation give rise, the fall of those who under other circumstances would have been the most

admired members of the community. Very few figures retain their humanity for long in his version of the camps, and the isolated figures that do so are quickly destroyed precisely because of their failure to adapt to that new and for them unacceptable world. Underlying his representation of the Holocaust, even if rarely asserted, is the assumption that only those who adapted by shedding their humanity, forsaking their loved ones, their fate, indeed leaving old selves behind in the crematoria, had even the faintest chance of surviving. (63)

Along the same lines, Iris Milner argues that Ka-Tzetnik cancels the difference between functionaries and simple inmates, while regarding “these options as two poles of an unbroken spectrum of dehumanization” (2008, 116). In fact, according to Milner, although

they express vehement abhorrence of outright betrayal (by some functionaries who fulfilled their tasks with particular enthusiasm), *Salamandra*, *House of Dolls*, and *Piepel* reveal an empathic stand towards all inmates, including functionaries and “prominent ones” (*Prominenten*). These works conceive all of them as victims of a malicious system where traditional definitions of humanism no longer obtained. (116-17)

Both Bartov and Milner are influenced by *Shivitti (Tsofen EDMA: Masa hagarin shel aushvitz)*, the sextet’s concluding volume, which relates Ka-Tzetnik’s LSD treatment in the Netherlands in 1976. During the treatment he hallucinated himself in SS uniform and realized that there is only one planet and one human race, producing both victim and

victimizer. “Wherever there is humankind, there is Auschwitz” (107), he writes in his diary, hence contradicting the victim/victimizer dichotomy underlying his earlier texts. *Shivitti* and its insights are discussed in the following section. In the context of the gray zone, I argue that this late understanding does not apply to the earlier books of *Salamandra*. Although the gray zone is certainly a part of Ka-Tzetnik’s comprehensive representation of the camp and ghetto, the overall depiction of the Holocaust world in his early writing leans towards “black and white” when we consider it in relation to the novels’ aesthetic design. In aesthetic terms, which seem to me indispensable for any literary investigation, we see that Ka-Tzetnik’s dichotomized representation of victims and victimizers is applied also in regard to the Jewish collaborators, although not as bluntly as with German characters. While depicting and certainly acknowledging the existence of moral ambiguity, Ka-Tzetnik adheres not only to historical facts but also to his own principle of dichotomous representation.

Within Ka-Tzetnik’s “gray zone” we must distinguish between low functionaries and collaborators. It is not clear what exactly Bartov means by noting, in the citation above, that Ka-Tzetnik’s “attention” is “focused” on the disintegration of human relationship and moral codes among the inmates. But if by attention and focus Bartov means textual space, plot function, and thoroughness of depiction – in these terms it is on the poles of the gray zone that Ka-Tzetnik’s attention is focused, thus revealing a dichotomist perception of the zone without excluding a panoramic presentation of it. In terms of the story’s events, full-scale collaborators play a significant role in the development of the plot, especially in regard to the main characters. In regard to survival – as a factor determining the “shedding of humanity” as well as a writer’s attitude

towards his characters – the members of the Metropoli Judenrat are sent to Auschwitz, where they die not in the most common way – murder, work, hunger, disease – but under the excruciating torture of the *block meister* who intentionally targets “such pigs” (*Salamandra* 1946, 229). The camp’s Kapos simply fade away at some point in the course of the plot. Ka-Tzetnik’s collaborators, then, make a tangible and functional appearance, and once they have fulfilled their mimetic and aesthetic duties, they just disappear. In contrast, those who survive in each volume – Harry in *Salamandra*, Paela in *House of Dolls*, and Hayim-Idle in *Piepel* – were all functionaries. Harry is a member of the medical staff, Paela begins as a *Feld-Hure* but quickly advances to a personal maid and friend to the supervisor in the women’s camp, and Hayim-Idle finds a function as a comedian, kitchen worker, and a print expert. All three did all they could, constantly risking their lives, to help other inmates, and they certainly did not harm any Jew. In fact, righteousness is a central property of these characters and the roles they play in the overall story. The assistance they provide fellow inmates not only does not undermine their survival, it even strengthens their spirit. Bartov’s point that “very few figures retain their humanity for long,” lacks any evidential support, such as characters’ names or events, not to mention a close reading of texts. Those figures, who “retain their humanity” in Ka-Tzetnik’s representation are indeed “very few,” but they are also very central, and they certainly are not “quickly destroyed precisely because of their failure to adapt to that new and for them unacceptable world.” On the contrary, they survive and save others, leaving the gray zone narrower than it may seem.

The characterization of Jewish collaborators and lower functionaries manifest clear disparity. The sextet’s main characters – Harry, Paela, Hayim-Idle, Moni – are

functionaries at different levels. Under the limelight, they gain a life story, conflicting inner worlds, distinct and independent voices. Jewish collaborators, on the other hand, show similarity to the Germans not only in behavior and appearance, but also in principles applied in their representation. The first of the extracts below describes a supervisor in the Metropoli ghetto's sewing factory, the second a Judenrat officer in that ghetto, and the third a Jewish officer in the women's camp where Daniela Prelesnik is held.

Poldak lights a cigar, his fleshy lips spitting out crumbs of tobacco. His eyes are buried in the fatty folds of a bloated face. His jacket hangs over a protruding belly, and his head shakes in permanent negation. No, he's not happy, things aren't moving fast enough. "Today each of you'll give me a hundred and seventy five pieces!" His eyes peer out through their slits, his ears pricked to catch any protest his announcement may have inspired in anyone. (*Sunrise Over Hell* 113)

At the sealed door of the trolley stands the "13." A Hamburg-born Jew-Militiaman, whose nickname alone spells terror in the ghetto. "13"! He has the number 13 on his blue-white cap. He is the crown and glory of the Jew-Militia. They know him even at Gestapo Headquarters. It's common knowledge: once "13" has been ordered to turn in a "head," the order will be carried out to a "t", with German punctiliousness. He speaks pure Gestapo Germanese, and revels in it. He himself is a refugee from Germany. His hair is cropped, true German style. He wears a brown leather jacket and high officer's boots. His face bloated, rubicund, and his eyes are bleary and bloodshot from constant bibbing. (*House of Dolls* 89)

Spitz was a stumpy fellow of about twenty, born in Germany. His sister worked in the Labor Commissioner's office in Metropoli, for which Spitz regarded himself as a man of high station. When he was sent to the labor camp, she probably used her influence to get him appointed Jew-Chief. Actually no one knew if he was born in Germany, or if he really came from Galicia. He himself boasted of having been deported here from the old Reich. He talked pure SS, had a large hump of a nose, arched like a sickle, which gave his face the appearance of a vulture. (*House of Dolls* 163).

As with the depiction of German perpetrators, the collaborators hold and project power and authority. Poldak runs a factory, which provides its workers with the work permit saving them from deportation to the camps, at least temporarily. The "thirteen" and Spitz are Jewish officials who draw their power from their affinity to German language and culture.⁶² Like Henschel, the German commandant, Poldak and the "thirteen" are abundantly strong, obese, and repulsive in their luxurious nutrition and consumption of alcohol, all made possible through the money they extort from the Jews of the ghetto. All these are emphasized, in both details and narrator's commentary, in contrast to the masses of poor, hungry, and helpless Jews enslaved by these collaborators. The collaborators also share the Germans' flat and frozen rendition of inner life. When Poldak looks around for non-compliance, or speaking Gestapo-German pleases the "thirteen," these are not imaginative investigations of the characters' private domain, but extensions of visible behavior and appearance. As in the limited renditions of the perpetrator's mind,

the representation only confirms what any spectator may observe rather than revealing a voice, a perspective or an inner conflict. Jewish collaborators constitute a monolithic entity of a perpetrator both as a category of characters – all fashioned by the same perpetrator model – and also within each member of the category, who reveals no tensions between his inner and external domains. The distinction within the community of Jewish characters between victims and collaborators is important, of course, for factual accuracy, especially since Ka-Tzetnik defines his writing as a chronicle rather than fiction. But it is also important for our understanding of his craft and style of writing because it reflects complexity and social subtlety. The absence of these qualities in his stereotypical and prototypical representation of the Germans is, therefore, most likely intentional, a part of the narrative design of the novels.

These complexities of narration are flattened by Bartov and Milner. Their analysis observes the existence of the gray zone within Ka-Tzetnik's overall depiction of the concentrationary universe, but it abolishes the division between center and margins, forefront and background, and it ignores the principles of their presentation: perspective, plot function, selection and combination of materials, narrative rhetoric. In terms of these properties, the righteous functionaries gain most centrality. Following in the hierarchy are individual Germans and collaborators, and only then, at the background, Ka-Tzetnik locates the anonymous Jews comprising the gray zone. Those "functionaries who fulfilled their tasks with particular enthusiasm" towards whom, according to Milner, Ka-Tzetnik expresses "vehement abhorrence of outright betrayal," are indeed fewer in number than the many Jews comprising the gray zone, but they are second in narrative focus only to the protagonists and are distinctive in their representation and status within the world of

the story. Ka-Tzetnik's account of the ghetto and camp, in conclusion, certainly relates the entire "spectrum of dehumanization," to use Milner's words, but the literary properties of this testimony make two categories rise above that sequence and form a victim/victimizer dichotomy.

The Other Planet – Our Planet?

The sharp victim/victimizer dichotomy I formulated so far based on Ka-Tzetnik's first three books – *Salamandra*, *House of Dolls*, and *Piepel* – seems to be completely overthrown in *Shivitti*, which concludes the sextet. Unlike his previous literary testimonies, this thin volume is a diary recounting Ka-Tzetnik's LSD treatment in Leiden in 1976. Ten years later, based on recollection, conversations with his psychiatrist, and the tapes recorded during the treatments, Ka-Tzetnik narrates his hallucinations and their mental consequences. The turning point in the healing process is manifested in Ka-Tzetnik's visions, which abolish the victim/victimizer dichotomy underlying his earlier writing:

And I stand and stare and see my own face up in the sky, wearing the S.S. cap
superimposed on a swarm of vipers. I am terrified of that S.S. man – he is me – and
I cry (*Shivitt* 61)

I, the burnt one!?! I am Nucleus too! (*Shivitti* 103)

Auschwitz has lumbered its way to everyone's doorstep. Wherever there is humankind, there is Auschwitz. It wasn't Satan who created the Nucleus, but you and I. We did! (*Shivitti* 107)

According to Ka-Tzetnik and his psychiatrist's understanding of the healing process, Ka-Tzetnik's realization that he and the SS man can trade positions, that it is man who created Auschwitz and that Auschwitz exists within our own planet, not in "another planet," led to a merge of two selves. Ka-Tzetnik, the persona who swore to voice the horror, and De-Nur, the person trying to live a normal life, were merged into one person, liberated from nightmares. Now, he writes, he sees the nightmare during the day, which may mean (he does not explain), that this is the reality of our world. The name "nucleus," which he mentions as the devil or entity which created Auschwitz, and the mushroom cloud in which it lies, probably refer to the nuclear bomb, a post-Holocaust version of man-made hell. Bartov writes that Ka-Tzetnik "appears to finally find peace only by resolving this contradiction in a manner that is devastating for the present, that is by extending the planet of Auschwitz to include our own world and time" (55). As Popkin observes, Bartov's may be an "excessively optimistic reading," considering that *Shivitti* was still published under the name Ka-Tzetnik and considering the scandal the writer committed in 1993. In that year, De-Nur removed from the National Library in Jerusalem a rare copy of his 1931 Yiddish poetry book, burnt it, and sent the remains back to the library with a request to complete the act of burning, just as his dear ones were burnt in the crematoria. Such an act can hardly characterize a man who has found any kind of

peace. On the contrary, it explicitly reflects Ka-Tzetnik's inability to reconcile his Holocaust experience and survival with his pre-war life.

But Ka-Tzetnik's agonizing private life is not the point here, and my use of his biography is only instrumental to the investigation of his writing. What is important to indicate in regard to *Shivitti* is that although it marks a sharp turning point in Ka-Tzetnik's public perception of the catastrophe, in no way does it undermine the clear victim/victimizer dichotomy he draws in the earlier books. This simple fact must be asserted for two reasons. *Shivitti* was published in December 1987, written in about two weeks in July 1986, and it is based on a gradual process of realization and insight which originates in the LSD treatment given in 1976. These details are important in terms of literary evolution because Ka-Tzetnik's insights in *Shivitti* conform with the new wave in the representation of Holocaust perpetrators, that characterizes Israeli Holocaust fiction starting in the second half of the eighties. As discussed in chapter three, Holocaust perpetrators in the fiction of Grossman, Yehoshua, Liebrecht, and others who published since 1986 are rendered through the complex mode, as whole and intricate individuals, blurring the boundary between them and their victims. This similarity in timing and approach toward the representation of perpetrators may be accidental, and it certainly differs in motivation. But when Ka-Tzetnik, not merely a representative but a national symbol of survivor-writers, whose texts pose such a sharp victim/victimizer dichotomy, presents a personal insight which confirms that of the new wave, the turning point in Israeli Holocaust representation of the mid-eighties becomes undeniable. This turning point may also be one motivating factor behind the recent trend in scholarship on Ka-Tzetnik's writing. While scholars of Israeli Holocaust fiction, such as Mintz (1984) and

Morahg (1997), have ignored Ka-Tzetnik entirely, and Szeintuch's study of Ka-Tzetnik (2009) demonstrates a more traditional biographical and textual approach, Bartov (1997) and Milner (2008) look at the moral aspect of *Salamandra*, including the blurred boundary between victims and victimizers.⁶³ This is the very same boundary blurred in the fiction of the new wave since the mid-eighties. In their perception of Ka-Tzetnik's early work, Bartov and Milner may be impacted not only by his late *Shivitti* (1987), but also by recent Israeli Holocaust fiction, such as *See Under: Love* (1986), which humanizes an SS officer, or *Our Holocaust* (2000), which deal with Jewish collaborators.⁶⁴ Finally, the misreading of Ka-Tzetnik's early writing I find in the essays by Bartov and Milner may result from the critical preference of these two scholars not to apply techniques of close readings in their treatment of the texts. I hope that my approach here, which incorporates close reading, can offer some new insights.

The impact Bartov's essay has had on the study of Ka-Tzetnik and Israeli attitudes towards the Holocaust (it is cited very often) necessitates a clear refutation of its central argument. *Shivitti* relates Ka-Tzetnik's late assertion that there is no other planet but rather one planet which includes Auschwitz. The death-camp is man-made, and anyone can become a victimizer, hence Ka-Tzetnik's hallucination of himself in SS uniform. Bartov argues that this principle in fact underlies the entire sextet, from the first book to the last. As I demonstrated in my discussion of the gray zone, this argument, contended also by Milner, is ungrounded. It is ungrounded because Bartov does not provide it proof, and it is ungrounded when Ka-Tzetnik's writing is considered not as historical testimony, but as a work of literature, in which elements of background and forefront, perspective, voice, and plot reflect the book's ethical judgment. Here I would

like to address another central flaw in Bartov's argument. Towards the end of his essay, Bartov explains why Ka-Tzetnik's writing never became a best-seller as did Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* which offers the same kind of popular "thick descriptions." The reason, according to Bartov, is the very notion I contradicted above: that Ka-Tzetnik's realization in *Shivitti*, that there is no other planet and all can be victimizers or victims, is "in fact all along the crucial subtext of his representation of the concentrationary universe" (Bartov 66). And since no reader wishes to realize this unpleasant fact, Bartov continues, *Salamandra* had only limited success. This "subtext" has no ground in the texts themselves. Furthermore, if indeed, as Bartov argues early in his essay, in the 1950's and 1960's Ka-Tzetnik was read by Israeli youth as pornography, it seems to me doubtful that such young readers noticed any kind of subtext, moral or other. Even if they did, the possibility that the moral and theoretical implications of them becoming victimizers confined their enthusiasm for pornographic reading material is hardly convincing.

A Survivor's Poetics

This detailed examination of Ka-Tzetnik's depiction of perpetrators is especially valuable considering his formative influence on later Israeli responses to the Holocaust. My conclusion is that in his earlier writing, Ka-Tzetnik creates a sharp distinction between victims and victimizers. The victims constitute a Jewish community, diverse as its extra-literary equivalent: secular and orthodox Jews, rabbis and Zionists, old people and youths, from various places over Europe. In contrast, the perpetrators are portrayed according to a single model, keeping to a minimum individuality, which is always

subordinated to official categorization. They have no individual depth, and the narrator's language of description erases not only their individuality but also the very fact that they are people. This type of depiction is evident in principle but especially in comparison to Ka-Tzetnik's depiction of the victims, who are full and complex characters, as human as fictional individuals can be. The Jewish collaborators are somewhat in the middle, not in terms of judgment (they are held responsible no less than the Germans), but their depiction, although conducted in the simple mode reserved for perpetrators, gains some of the length and details usually kept for the victims. However, the final effect is that all perpetrators are produced as a prototype, while victims are individuals.

How can Ka-Tzetnik's deliberately limited depiction of perpetrators be explained? An explanation is needed because later writers betray the paradigm creatively, when producing complex Nazi characters and questioning the victim/victimizer dichotomy. An explanation is also needed because in terms of the novel as a genre, Ka-Tzetnik's depiction of perpetrators could be considered totalitarian rather than sensitive and dialogic, simplified rather than complex and refined, ideological rather than imaginative. In these terms and in relation to later literary responses to the Holocaust, Ka-Tzetnik's writing may be perceived to be aesthetically inferior. Bartov's insights into the paradox of Ka-Tzetnik's writing are relevant here:

Ka-Tzetnik is the kind of writer who under different circumstances would have appealed mainly to a juvenile readership; his prose is mediocre, and his ability to reconstruct human relations, to infiltrate the minds of his protagonists, and to enter the sphere of the emotions with any degree of subtlety is at best limited.

Love, loyalty, tragedy, even loss are all treated with dramatic brush strokes, often

accompanied by bombastic explanations; sexual relations between lovers are described in almost embarrassingly adolescent manner. (46)

Whenever Ka-Tzetnik writes about “our” planet, namely, describes “normal” events and relationship, his prose is so replete with kitsch and clichés that it can only appeal to a juvenile audience; but once he plunges into the “other” planet, the very predilection towards the banal makes possible a remarkable transformation whereby the author achieves devastating insights into the human condition that have been barred to far more sophisticated writers – not least, perhaps, due to their greater concern for the aesthetic aspects and moral effects of their work. (51)

Juvenile writing, dramatic brush strokes, and abundance of kitsch and clichés – all these suggest a strong explanation for Ka-Tzetnik’s dichotomist representation of victim and victimizers. A narrow perception and representation of reality can create such dichotomies in both content and form in a situation which is anything but simple. Nevertheless, by no means does Bartov’s insight sum up Ka-Tzetnik’s literary art, and its qualities must be recognized in their own right, and, even more importantly, as a background for later development of Hebrew literary responses to the Holocaust. First, as Bartov mentions, it is the stiff and banal style that allows Ka-Tzetnik to succeed where others did not dare – with “thick descriptions” of the horror. Moreover, the bombastic and banal style subsides with Ka-Tzetnik’s flexible and affective utilization of figurative tropes. Secondly, in terms of poetics, that is, the overall design of the narrative as a

system in which the various means and modes of representation operate together to reflect or convey an underlying idea or experience, in these terms Ka-Tzetnik's writing presents a stable, coherent, and effective poetics, which communicates to the reader the experience and the psychological impact of surviving the Holocaust.

I do not plan to engage in a debate regarding Ka-Tzetnik's greatness as a writer, but in order to understand his representation of the Holocaust in general and perpetrators in particular, it seems to me crucial to consider the biographical ground and drive of his writing, especially because these are entirely different for later writers. The fact that Ka-Tzetnik, in his own words, wrote not literature but a chronicle and not his own story but that of many, accounts for his orchestration of voices and the perspectival structure, which reflect the hunted Jew's experience in the very moment of persecution. In sharp contrast to second generation writers encountering the catastrophe through mediation, Ka-Tzetnik's early work, written in the two decades following the war, constructs a perpetrator who is not a complex entity for either understanding or representation. Ka-Tzetnik's narration inhabits the perspective of a Jew, for whom any German or Judenrat officer is a threat; a Jew who watched his dear ones marched by the Nazis and their collaborators to their death – for this individual, the definition, appearance, and behavior of a perpetrator pose no riddle. The words repeatedly used for depiction of the perpetrators – boots, uniform, guns, shouts – are not just a code of fear agreed upon between author and reader, but actual signs of threat or glimpses a hunted Jew must identify quickly. The focus on the perpetrator's strength and obesity reflects the gaze of the weak and hungry. The speculations about the family life of a German officer are the fantasies of one who yearns for his love ones. Stereotypical and prototypical perpetrators,

the judgmental tone that penetrates their portrayal, as well as the confinement of their plot function to their historical acts, all reflect the personal experience of a Kat-Tzet in the sites, moments, and atrocities of the Holocaust.

Chapter 5

David Grossman's *See Under: Love* and A. B. Yehoshua's *Mr. Mani*

Complex representation of Holocaust perpetrators gained its initial and most striking expression in two novels published in the second half of the nineteen-eighties. David Grossman's *See Under: Love* (1986) and A. B. Yehoshua's *Mr. Mani* (1990) present two of the most developed and individualized Holocaust perpetrators that Israeli literature has ever imagined. Interestingly, the characterization of the perpetrators is not usually examined in the rich and diverse critical discourse on these two celebrated works. These two novels and authors also serve as central links in the evolution of Israeli literature during the late seventies and early eighties, a time dominated by a socio-cultural process of movement from the margins to the center without which the complex mode of perpetrator representation would not have been possible. For studying Hebrew and Israeli representation of Holocaust perpetrators, a close examination of these two books is not only valuable, but indispensable.

David Grossman's *See Under: Love*

No other writer is more strongly affiliated with the new wave in Israeli Holocaust fiction than David Grossman. Born in Jerusalem in 1954, Grossman began his publishing career in the late seventies, with immediate success. Of special note, his second book, *The Smile of the Lamb* (1983), was innovative in its complex representation of an Arab character, who engages in an imaginative dialogue with an Israeli soldier. This theme responds to A. B. Yehoshua, who was the first Jewish Israeli Hebrew writer to truly give voice to an

Arab character in his 1977 novel *The Lover*. The dialogue with one Other – the Arab – prepared Grossman to give voice to additional Others in his third novel, *See Under: Love* (1986), whose importance and impact among the texts of the new wave cannot be exaggerated. *See Under: Love* announced the new wave not merely by being the earliest work of a new type. Rather, it captures all of the factors – theme, genre, form, place in the Israeli literary history, and writers’ biography – that characterize the new Israeli writing about the Holocaust. It inherited several of these factors from Yoram Kaniuk's *Adam Resurrected* (1968), and transferred them, along with many more of its own invention, to its successors – none of which, I believe, is comparable to *See Under: Love* in philosophical depth and artistic sophistication.

The novel's first part narrates a period of about five months in 1959 in the life of Shlomo (Momik) Efraim Neuman, a nine year old child growing up in Jerusalem, who is the son of Holocaust survivors. Momik’s childhood is obsessed with attempts to reveal what he sees as the secrets of the Holocaust, which are implied everywhere around him but also hidden from him by adults, especially his parents. Shortly after his ninth birthday, this sensitive child hears about the “Nazi Beast.” He does not understand that the phrase is a common metaphor for the Nazis, in line with the typical bombastic rhetoric of Israeli discourse of the fifties.⁶⁵ Being unfamiliar with the term “Nazi” or what it stands for, Momik focuses his inquiry on the “beast,” which – he is mature enough to understand – is not some dinosaur or imaginative monster. Bella, the survivor from whom he heard the phrase, finally admits, reluctantly, that the Nazi Beast “can actually come out of any animal, if given the right food and treatment” (13).⁶⁶ The child concludes eventually that the Nazi Beast is indeed a beast, although it is hidden within

other animals. He even imagines Simon Wiesenthal, the “Nazi hunter,” residing in a house carpeted with animal furs and filled with upholstered heads of the Nazi Beast.

Deeply affected by the agony of the community of survivors around him,

Momik made up his mind to find the Beast and tame it and make it good, and persuade it to change its ways and stop torturing people and get it to tell him what happened Over There and what it did to those people...down in the small dark cellar under the house, [he was] raising the Nazi Beast. (30)

This amusing instance demonstrates well Grossman's focus on the child's incomplete understanding, which, as Naomi Sokoloff observes, “helps alleviate the adult narrator's struggle with language and artistic expression, for the young character's incomprehension serves to indicate the incomprehensibility of the catastrophe” (1992; 153). The strong effect of defamiliarization created in such dramatization of a conventional metaphor may also critique the way the Holocaust was simultaneously nationally memorialized and personally silenced in Israel of the fifties. It may also reveal that although Momik's misconception of the phrase is realistically motivated in a child's perspective, his misunderstanding is not merely a matter of confusion. This is especially the case considering the novel's third part. In this part, the character of Herr Neigel, the Nazi commandant is constructed through complex mode of characterization, and his individuality is thoroughly interrogated by the narrator, Momik the adult. The complexity in approach to the perpetrator – which will be thoroughly investigated later in this section – has its inception with Momik the child. The type of questions he asks, defamiliarizing and even doubting the most fundamental conventions of representing the Nazis in Israel

of the fifties, reflects the mindset of the new wave of the eighties. With this mindset, which he participated in shaping, Grossman's complex representation of the perpetrators begins already in part one of the novel.

As the beast is imaginary, Momik's initial confrontation with it is conceptual. He tried to "figure out how the Beast feels things, what affects it. He tried to draw a picture of it, but it came out looking like a lonely little polar bear, full of anger and hating the whole world" (59). A child's perspective indeed, but this is also an attempt to represent the perpetrator, the very same challenge Momik the adult (and Grossman himself) faces later in the novel, when rendering the character of Herr Neigel. And, as he will be doing later as an adult mastering the facts of the Holocaust down to their finest detail, Momik realized that "what he needed in order to fight the Beast was the very thing that most scared it, the thing he'd been avoiding all along, which was to get to know more about the Beast and its crimes" (65). But Momik does not settle for attempts to understand the Nazi Beast. He wishes to interact with it and change it. To complete his mission, Momik cages in a dark storage room a group of small animals he has collected – a bird, a cat, a porcupine – and gathers there a local group of helpless and confused survivors to serve as a decoy for the Nazi Beast to reveal itself. The operation fails, of course, and the scared and hungry animals do not reveal anything but groans of fear and pain. The section concludes with Momik's mental collapse, implying the futility of the attempt to comprehend, interpret, and represent the Holocaust, at least in the means available to Israeli discourse of the fifties.

Through the perspective of a child, Grossman questions the Israeli perception of Holocaust perpetrators, and especially the perception and presentation of the perpetrator

as existing outside the human realm. By doing so, the *Momik* section of the novel combines two perspectives. The storyworld is that of Jerusalem of the fifties. The sights and sounds, the diverse aggregation of characters, the unique type of Yiddishized Hebrew and the cultural concepts it reflects – all convincingly reconstruct Israeli life of the time, especially life under the shadow of the Holocaust.⁶⁷ *Momik's* imagining of the Nazi Beast and the operation he conducts to confront it can still be perceived as part of that world. But his reflections as to what the Beast's nature is and how it should be studied are more typical of the new wave of Israeli Holocaust fiction and its innovative approach to the Holocaust. In this sense, the *Momik* section serves as a transitional stage between the perception of the Holocaust and its perpetrators in the earlier period and the later one, the perspective of which is dramatized in part three of *See Under: Love*.

In this part of the novel, *Momik* is the poet and author Shlomo (Shleimeleh) Neuman, who is still obsessed with the Holocaust. This part occupies an impossible intersection of time and space: it takes place in an imaginary but very concrete Nazi death camp – that is, before *Momik's* time. One of the camp's inmates is Anshel Wasserman, the old and deranged survivor who lived with *Momik* the child for a few months in 1959, promoting the child's fascination with the Holocaust. In the camp Wasserman is younger and lucid. Shlomo, then, travels to a space and time he cannot visit in real life. However, this particular fantastic element does not impact the world of the story since Shlomo does not intervene in the events. He is merely an observer, a narrator able to communicate with Wasserman, who is a character within the storyworld, and he relates his impressions to us. Among the most interesting of Shlomo's impressions are those left by Neigel.

And there stands Herr Neigel. Well, well. Not at all as I imagined him over the years—fat and bestial, a **butcher with a cruel grin**. He is rugged-looking, though: tall and muscular, with a well-developed cranium, visibly balding, despite his close-cropped black hair, with two deep inlets over the forehead. His face is unusually large, his features elongated, with dark patches of stubble where the razor missed. His mouth is small and tense, and there's a kind of aggressive contempt in the corners of his eyes. The overall impression he makes is of a strong man who wishes to avoid attention. (188; my emphasis)

I see now that there is something peculiar about his face: his nose and chin are strong and determined, impressive at first glance. His compelling eyes are vaguely unsettling. But then you notice dead spots in the big face. The long cheeks, for instance, and the very broad forehead. Even the area under the mouth. A wilderness, where not a single distinctive trait has taken root. (198-99)

Such descriptions clearly constitute sharp opposition to renditions of Holocaust perpetrators in the earlier period of Hebrew and Israeli Holocaust fiction; in addition, none of Grossman's followers reached such a level of concreteness. In both subject matter and manner of narration, these detailed, careful, interpretative, even empathic descriptions produce a strong and vivid impression of an individual. Such an impression opposes the dominance of category we saw in the writers of the earlier period, first and foremost in Ka-Tzetnik who established the literary paradigm of the perpetrator

prototype. For comparison, let us take another look at two passages discussed in length in chapter four. Here is how Ka-Tzetnik describes two SS officers:

[Dreyer has] grey-eyed, aquiline face, his speech unhurried, flexible, polite, a true son of the Third Reich. (*Sunrise Over Hell* 58)

Hentschel the “moon,” the German overseer, really had a head like a full moon: rotund, ball-shaped, as if traced out with a compass, clean-shaven, tiny ears, a wisp of a nose, a slit of a mouth-all topped with a mass of pink flesh, and a thick, heavy cudgel set in his hand. (*House of Dolls* 149)

Dreyer demonstrates the ideal type of Nazi appearance, while Hentschel is a caricature. The contrast to Grossman’s rendition of Neigel as a concrete and very possible individual is especially compelling considering the similarity between these characters as perpetrators: all of these Nazis – Neigel, Dreyer, and Hentschel – are officers, Neigel and Hentschel are in the camp itself. This is while practically all other perpetrators in Hebrew and Israeli Holocaust fiction are removed, in various manners and degrees, from the full manifestation of the perpetrator prototype in their most defining and symbolic moments and sites of action.

Grossman’s Neigel appears to confirm the the perpetrator prototype but he also resists it in the most direct way. He does confirm the prototype’s most conventional qualities: he is a German, a Nazi, a willing and even central, participant in the genocide against the Jews. He appears to us at the time and place of action, in the camp, in his uniform – all that leaves no doubt as to his role in the Nazi machine of extermination, not

only from a Jewish perspective, but even in terms of the law. Nazis like Neigel were tried after the war in large numbers, although many others evaded trial. It is therefore not in the classification of the character by factual qualities that Grossman presents his innovation, but in the mode of narration, which is significantly richer in nuances than was acceptable until the mid-eighties. Even when confined to external depiction, Grossman goes beyond the surface and into the perpetrator's private domain, where no Hebrew writer has gone before. He does so, however, very carefully, while attempting to secure legitimacy for the act of perpetrator representation. The following words are uttered by Wasserman, the survivor who came to know Neigel intimately, rather than by Shlomo, the second generation Israeli who narrates the third section:

He [Neigel] too was a child once [...] and who knows what he endured at the SS Fuhrerschule, for surely no one becomes a murderer without forfeiting happiness, and if I knew how a man like Neigel could be **turned into a murderer**, perhaps I would try to turn him around and reform him [...] after everything this arch-murderer Neigel did to me, I spent the last hour with him and saw his face as a boy, and I was beginning to think that these many months in Neigel's camp I was wrong not to **count him a human being**, with a wife, perhaps, and children... (205; my emphasis)

Such language is unprecedented in the Holocaust fiction of the eighties and earlier, and, even in the mouth of a survivor-character, it is almost heresy, certainly at the time of *See Under: Love's* publication, when Israeli society was heavily preoccupied with the Holocaust. Neigel is presented not only as human but even as some sort of victim, who

was turned into a killing machine by SS indoctrination. Wasserman goes through a process opposite to the one Ka-Tzetnik's narrator conducted. The private-domain of the character does not duplicate the externality, making a villain from within and from without, but rather the opposite occurs: personal history and the inner world are speculated in resistance to external appearance. Neigel's past, family life, imagination, and all that should count him as an individual are revealed. Such a possibility of human multi-dimensionality, in Hentschel's description, brings Ka-Tzetnik to a sort of "narratorial anxiety," which he tries to relieve through self-assuring declarations, such as those rendered in bold below, reminding us that Hentschel, the husband and the perpetrator, is indeed one and the same person:

With the very hands with which, at exactly ten o'clock every morning, Hentschel takes the Butterbrodt from its neat wrapping – obviously prepared by a dutiful wifely hands – **with those very hands** he daily crushes young, quivering girlish lives. (*House of Dolls* 150, my emphasis)

Ka-Tzetnik's perception of the perpetrator is virtually deconstructed by Grossman's, which complicates the relations between the components of the Nazi perpetrator. While Ka-Tzetnik sees subordination of the family man to the mass-killer, of the officer's private past to the public present, Wasserman realizes that the human and inhuman coexist and that relations of power between them can be reversed. At the journey's point of departure, the opening scene of the novel's third part, we – as well as Shlomo and Wasserman – meet Neigel managing his deadly work in his office as the camp's

commander. By the end of the section, in a process taking place within the same office, step by step, Neigel is stripped of his uniformed-status and exposed as a naïve, childish, and sensitive person, so lonely that he acquires a Jew as a friend. Forty years separate Ka-Tzetnik's testimony and Grossman's imaginative fiction. Both confront the challenge of creating a literary perpetrator, and the rift is dramatic.

The striking opposition between Ka-Tzetnik and Grossman in their rendition of the perpetrators is also the gap between Momik, the child growing up in traumatized Israel of the fifties, and Shlomo the adult, who reencounters the Holocaust in the eighties. The extra-textual factors that shaped this conceptual and mimetic development were discussed in chapter three, but they also gain thematization in section two of *See Under: Love*. In this section, Shlomo is fantastically able to swim with the Sea, an amorphic but animated entity, with whom the Israeli writer conducts a dialogue, which reveals to him the story of Bruno Schultz. The Polish-Jewish writer was murdered by the Nazis, but in Grossman's novel he survives as a salmon swimming with the Sea. Gilead Morahg observes that the creation of the Bruno story is not "the product of Shlomo's singular imagination, which has repeatedly failed him, but of his ongoing dialogue with the fantastic character of Sea" (469). The creation of the Bruno story negates the monologic credo that Bruno himself postulates and "introduces a dialogic alternative that becomes the principal mode of narration and the driving ethical force in the subsequent sections of the novel." This dialogic credo, according to Morahg, "maintains that the uniqueness of the self is contingent upon its empathic openness to the uniqueness of others," and it is "the confluence of the capabilities of the fantastic mode with the possibilities of dialogic narration," that leads to a "successful telling of the Wasserman story." That story could

not be told in part one of the novel since at the time Momik was captured in the Zionist or at least Israeli perception of the Holocaust, alienated from the voice and experience of the victims. But the Wasserman story is not the only story that could finally be told. Among the “perspectives that have traditionally been suppressed” and are given voice in Grossman’s “truly polyphonic narrative,” as Morahg observes, there is also the “increasingly distinctive voice of Neigel” (472). Morahg’s discussion focuses on the Jewish survivor more than on the SS officer, while for my discussion, it is the perpetrator’s voice which is most important. This voice is also more striking because, while voicing Wasserman requires transcending Zionist and Israeli codes of Holocaust sanctity or the condemnation of the victims for going “like sheep to slaughter,” voicing Neigel requires the breaking of boundaries which are not only Zionist and Israeli, but also Jewish and even universal. In this sense, I believe, voicing Neigel demonstrates Shlomo’s – and Grossman’s – commitment to empathy towards the Other and a dialogic mode of narration even more than voicing Wasserman.

The very same ethical credo, which Shlomo develops in part two, leads to an ethical dilemma. On the one hand, it is the commitment to a dialogue as the “preferred mode not only of human interaction but also of literary narration” that allows the voice of Wasserman” (Morahg 470). This voice could not be heard as long as Shlomo’s engagement with the Holocaust was censored by the Zionist unilateral perception of the catastrophe and its survivors. On the other hand, it is Grossman’s honest, adamant adherence to this credo which produces, inevitably, the voice of Neigel, and even, to a lesser extent that of Staukeh, his deputy. The more dialogic the narrative is, the more authentic and convincing the perpetrator’s voice becomes, leading to the problematic

situation discussed in chapter one. “Inside views can build sympathy even for the most vicious character,” Booth argues. “When properly used, this effect can be of immeasurable value in forcing us to see the human worth of a character whose action, objectively considered, we would deplore” (378). Indeed, *See Under: Love* does not provide Neigel's “inner views” (Booth's term for rendition of consciousnesses), but he is allowed a voice, and his rendition is so close and sensitive, and so much can be learned about this officer from his actions and speech and gestures, that the effect is almost as powerful. Ultimately, then, once committing to dialogic narration, the novel takes a path that evokes sympathy towards the perpetrator. Sympathy, at least, in Booth's sense of “reduction of emotional distance,” between reader and character, which may also reduce moral and intellectual distance (249). But I would not exclude a momentary sense of warmth and empathy towards this rough officer, who, in some sense, turns out to be a vulnerable child.

This is the ethical challenge Grossman and Shlomo must confront: how to maintain an impartial commitment to dialogic narration and interaction, allowing Neigel his unique voice, without creating a historically distorted and ethically biased portrayal of the commandant. The focus on the unique and rare voice of Neigel the individual may readily downplay, even disguise, the simple fact that Neigel – like his historical equivalents – is not only a Nazi, but a death camp commandant, directly and personally accountable for the death of so many Jews, some of whom he murdered with his own two hands. While accepting the survivor as Self rather than as an Other of Zionist and Israeli discourse can be attributed a positive value – it is, arguably, “good” that the survivors who have been relegated to the margins were allowed a place in the center – pursuing

dialogic narration of perpetrators allows a voice to those whose actions and motivations are equated with evil.

Grossman is well aware of this dilemma, as well as of the fact that its unsuccessful diffusion undermines his ethical enterprise of dialogic narration and interaction. This awareness is made explicit in Shlomo's metapoetic hesitations regarding the portrayal of Neigel. "I'm not ready," he thinks, "I'm not ready yet to 'enter all the way'" into Neigel's character (281). As an alternative, he narrates Neigel based on the common biography of SS officers, such as the details provided by Rudolf Höss in his book of testimony (281). In fact, the very use of Shlomo and Wasserman as sources of information and narration about Neigel from within the story is a device employed by Grossman in his own hesitation to "enter all the way" into the character of the Nazi. The fantastic setting of the story, as well as its humor, facilitates this effort to establish protective barriers between the writers – Shlomo as character and Grossman as the author – and the commandant. Neigel's story relies on Höss' biography and is told by Shlomo, who draws much of his information from Wasserman and also from an imaginary dialogue with Neigel's deputy, Staukeh. All these layers and sources of narration construct a barrier that protects not only the writer in his treatment of this sensitive material, but also the reader, who is confronted not with direct historical or psychological realism, but with a heavily mediated fictional world, which strongly resembles history but is still distanced from it. These multiple barriers and layers of mediation operate also to restrain readers' sense of identification with Neigel, as well as critical resistance to his portrayal in a positive light. This is imaginative fiction, Grossman is telling us, not history.

Another barrier, which separates the novel's readers and narrators from Neigel as a sympathy-evoking character, is the limited rendition of the commandant's inner life. Interestingly, although Neigel is rendered closely, in a complex mode which was revolutionary at the time, even so, Grossman does not dare to present the Nazi's inner thought. He reports at length regarding other categories of the character's private domain: personal history, speech, gestures, and physiognomy, but he never renders the commandant's mind. Even Grossman, and even in a novel as unconventional and revolutionary as *See Under: Love*, does not dare violate this taboo. At the same time, the reader is equally deprived of the inner life of the survivor. Wasserman, however, does gain the advantage of being able to communicate directly with Shleimeleh, who narrates the story from within and from without, to whom the old survivor tells volumes about his pre-war life. Likewise, although to a lesser degree, Neigel's personal life gains another venue of expression through Shlomo, who imagines brief flashes of an interview conducted with Staukeh after the war. That is in addition to information and interpretation regarding Neigel given by Wasserman. Altogether, then, in opposition to the traditional perspectival structure in Hebrew and Israeli Holocaust fiction, Grossman makes strides toward impartiality in the mode of narration of both victims and perpetrators. By generating greater similarity between them, not only in qualities, but also in the means of rendition, he brings the two characters even closer to each other.

Shlomo's meticulous study of Neigel's facial expressions and body language, substituting for presentation of the character's consciousness, does not deprive the narrator and his reader of valuable insight. On the contrary, the attention to the commandant's body language tells volumes about his inner life, and it does so in a way

which is perhaps more convincing, especially to an Israeli audience, that may not be ready to read the inner life of a Nazi. Wasserman reports that when Neigel shot him, the commandant “did it according to the rule” and “averted his eyes in order not to see” (205). That is, Neigel was uncomfortable with the act of shooting the Jew, as seen also in another place:

Every day at five in the afternoon, Neigel would leave his office for a stroll in the garden...He was in the habit of attaching himself to one of the work squads just then returning to camp—before, on one pretext or another—is there ever a lack of pretexts?—selecting a prisoner and shooting him on the spot...but in order to kill he had first to make himself so angry his faced seemed to burst in flames! (192)

This passage demonstrates the ethical and narrative constraints that shape Grossman's rendition of Neigel. The Nazi commandant follows a habit well-known among the Nazis: to stop any of the crews of Jews marching in the camp or ghetto and to randomly execute some of them. This action could not even be defended as “following orders.” In resistance to this startling tradition of habitual murder, Grossman, through the merciful Wasserman, adds that Neigel had to “make himself so angry,” that is, the action was not to satisfy any personal needs. Neigel had to basically force himself into a state of rage in order to commit violence. It is not natural to him, and he does not enjoy it. The anger is not rendered directly through Neigel’s mind, but rather deduced from his facial expressions.

Equality in mimetic technique is especially dominant in the realm of language, since all the characters are depicted in Hebrew. Within the storyworld, Wasserman and

Neigel are communicating in Polish, and the text is rendered by Shlomo in Hebrew. But unlike Ka-Tzetnik, who assigns his Nazis very limited speech – which he consistently characterizes as merely mechanical, a product of drill produced by predators – Neigel's Hebrew is not very different from that of the reader. This SS officer speaks contemporary Israeli Hebrew, unmarked by a dominant stylistic register, except for various German words when military vocabulary is incorporated into the sentences. Such similarity between the Hebrew style of the reader and that of the commandant weakens the latter's most conspicuous markers of Otherness, or, at least, reduces his technical distance from the reader's linguistic position. It is Wasserman's Hebrew, interestingly, which is unusual. An old and educated Polish Jew, conducting himself in the manner of the old world, Wasserman has a style that consists of purely literary high diction, suffused with Hebrew and Aramaic forms drawn from the Jewish textual tradition, as well with a large Yiddish lexicon. The result is a distinct Hebrew, rarely seen elsewhere, which distinguishes Wasserman's voice from any other Hebrew speaker, in and out of the novel, certainly in contemporary Israel but perhaps even in the entire course of Modern Hebrew. It characterizes its speaker as a literary person, well-schooled, a gentleman, harmless and vulnerable, as one might expect a children's writer to be. Ultimately, both the Jew and the German occupy different places on a single linguistic plane, sharing one language, that of the Hebrew reader. Paradoxically, it is the Nazi that seems less remote and more accessible.

The most meaningful tool, perhaps, applied in *See Under: Love* as means of resistance to the perpetrator prototype is a set of comparisons between Neigel and his peers on the one hand and Wasserman on the other. Although both Neigel and his deputy,

Staukeh, are officers in a death camp, both legally and morally accountable for active participation in the genocide, and both of whom even murder Jews with their very hands, there is still a difference between them as individuals. While Neigel is an ideologue, fighting a “secret war” to evade any expression of emotion while conducting his genocidal activity, Staukeh draws from his acts of atrocity a sadistic pleasure. Staukeh “did not shut his eyes when he fired the bullet at my head as poor Neigel had always done,” Wasserman tells us. “Into me he looked” (448). Against the background of a greater evil, Neigel's actions are reduced and his moral character is strengthened, even if yet within the realm of the Nazi evil. In fact, one may argue that in comparison to his deputy, Neigel was a “Nazi” but not “evil.” Such understanding of Neigel gains powerful support in the comparison between the commandant and Wasserman, which shows what they have in common. The possibility of an analogy between them is suggested already in part two of the novel, when in a discussion of Shlomo's difficulties telling the story Wasserman wrote with Neigel, Ruth, Shlomo's wife, says that Wasserman and Neigel were, eventually, “two human beings, and one tells the other a story. That's it” (103). This seemingly “simple” principle underpins Shlomo's enterprise in part three of the novel: to render the dialogue between two people, as people, and by doing so to enter a dialogic interaction with both the Nazi and the Jew. As the dialogue unfolds, both Wasserman and Neigel shed the categories of victim and perpetrator, revealing themselves indeed as two individuals, engaged together in a creation of imaginative children's literature, a strong manifestation of human compassion. The process does not only reveal the human within the Nazi, but in fact subverts, symbolically, one of the most fundamental processes governing the Nazi camps, that is, the erasure of individuality.

Although he continues to discharge his genocidal duties, Neigel, in essence, becomes a traitor to the conceptual project of the camp. In this sense, he joins Wasserman in resistance.

The victim/victimizer dichotomy collapses entirely in “the White Room,” a semi-imaginary and semi-physical location in the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum in Israel, where one can merge psychologically with the Holocaust situation. Ayala tells Shlomo: in “the White Room everything comes out of your own self, out of your own guts, victim and murderer, compassion and cruelty” (210). In that special room, or psychological situation of merger with the Holocaust experience, Shlomo – or anyone else in pursuit of the truth of the Holocaust – may find that he contains within himself both the victim and the murderer: the barrier between the two becomes situational since both are human qualities, which any person may actualize. Shlomo also develops an insight regarding “the little Nazi within you,” not in the conventional sense, of any person's capability for cruelty, racism, and murder – these, Shlomo thinks, are only conveniently identified symptoms of a deeper human condition – but in terms of a more profound root cause (291). He notes that the Nazis “merely outlined it and gave it a name, an army [...] They put it into operation. And in a sense became vulnerable to it. They relaxed their grip and dropped gently in” (296). The true “disease,” the situation that produces cruelty and racism and Nazism by negating any attentiveness to individuality and Otherness, is a situation in which Momik was deeply immersed from the moment he was born. “From the moment I began,” he explains,

to despair and relate to people as self-understood, when I stopped trying to invent a special language for them, with new names for every object. And from the moment

I stopped being able to say 'I' without hearing a tinny echo of 'we.' And I did something to protect myself from the pain of other people, from other people. And I refused to maim myself: to become lidless and see all. (296)

This passage corresponds directly to a confession Shlomo made earlier. For him, the most horrible thing about the Holocaust is

the way every trace of individuality was obliterated. A person's uniqueness, his thoughts, his past, his characteristics, loves, defects, and secrets—all meant nothing. You were debased to the lowest level of existence. You were nothing but flesh and blood. It drives me mad. (153)

The Holocaust obliterated human individuality because Nazism is a symptom of that fundamental disease of perceiving the individual as subsumed by a category or even a community. This is also the perceptual constraint that prevented Shlomo from really listening to the voice of Wasserman, the survivor, who, in Zionist codes, is subsumed by the category of the “victim.” Wasserman himself gradually learns that Neigel is an individual too, as does Shlomo and, in turn, the reader. All participants, then, Holocaust victim, perpetrator, and narrator, suffer from the same flaw and all learn to recover from it through dialogue as a mode of both narration and human interaction, recognizing and expressing individual uniqueness. In fact, by the logic of Wasserman and Shlomo, classifying Neigel under the Nazi prototype is the same kind of blindness that is the fundamental disease of which Nazism is a symptom. Not allowing Neigel – or any other perpetrator – to tell his individual story, not tapping into any unique self, is surrendering

to the weakness that generated Nazism and committing a crime of the conceptual type of crimes committed in the camps. Such perspective recognizes in the Holocaust perpetrator the same human complexity it recognizes in the victim, ultimately abolishing the perpetrator prototype and the Israeli popular conception of the Nazis as demons. It renders the boundary between victims and victimizers of the Holocaust as situational, contextual, not absolute and impassible. In principle, it removes this boundary entirely.

But understanding the roots of Neigel's violence does not necessarily mean forgiveness. For this reason I disagree with Avner Holtzman, who critiques what he sees as the post-modernist ethical code in *See Under: Love* (1996). Grossman, according to Holtzman, evokes sympathy towards Neigel and so the boundary between the Jew and the Nazi is diffused. Indeed, Neigel may have been “infected with humanity,” to use Shlomo’s wording, or, more accurately, we can say that Wasserman’s tale reveals the commandant’s inherent humanity, which is conventionally subsumed under his indisputable genocidal acts. But Grossman's moral investigation does not end there. Part three of the novel conducts a process during which Neigel resists and eventually, perhaps, even refutes our preconception of who he is, so the picture of his ethical responsibility is complicated. This is a process in which the ethical code of dialogue manifests itself through both thematization and character growth, culminating in Neigel and Wasserman co-parenting Kazik, their literary baby. Part four of the novel, *The Complete Encyclopedia of Kazik's Life*, then shuffles our perception of the perpetrator once more.⁶⁸ This part of the book, even more radical than the others in its use of post-modernist form, is a set of entries which attempt to embrace

most of the events in the life of a single individual, as well as his distinctive psychosomatic functions, orientation to his surrounding, desires, dreams, etc. Those normally “resistant” to analysis manifested their unfamiliar aspect and capitulated to the objective demands of an exhaustive study with their first introduction to the rigorous and (seemingly!) secure framework of arbitrary classification. Perhaps it is this very arbitrariness –i.e., the alphabetization of the entries–that transformed various illusive and equivocal figures into widely and effective raw material, and helped to reveal the simplicity of basic mechanism animating all members of the human race. (*See Under: Love 303*)

The encyclopedia is supposed to be focused on the life of Kazik, the protagonist of the tale that Wasserman told Neigel, but in the process it includes many other relevant participants such as Wasserman and Neigel themselves. Once more, this time through a scientific and objective mode of writing, the Nazi commandant is explicitly included among “all members of the human race,” animated by the same “basic mechanism” which animates his victims. However, it is through the arbitrariness and objectivity of encyclopedic investigation that Neigel's classification as a Holocaust perpetrator is modified.

The moral issue comes up in the entry “choice” (*bechira*), which opens with a brief definition: “a voluntary selection of one possibility out of many.” Wasserman observes that the act of choice is the “fulfillment of the truly human in man,” to which Neigel responds that he chose to execute the Nazi values and orders (312). In the commandant's view, any act conducted by a human must be a human action, including

murder. It was his choice to start killing, a choice that requires significant “effort of will.” Wasserman contends that beginning to kill or hate is not a choice at all, but rather a continuation of an existing action. Accordingly, it is the choice not to murder, not to hate, which is an actual choice, actualizing the human within the individual. Wasserman, then, is more compassionate towards Neigel than Neigel is towards himself. The old Jew sees the Nazi as he who did not choose, who did not actualize his humanity but can do so at any moment by ceasing to murder, and so redeem himself. Neigel, on the other hand, insists that he is making a choice, although the opposite one. Committing genocide, in the perpetrator's mind, is a matter of conscious choice, not of human weakness.

Neigel's perspective about the ethics of genocide, as well as his character as a whole, become clearer when considered in light of scholarship about the death camp commandants. In an analysis based on Nazi documents, biographies, and testimonies, historian Steven Katz outlines the process in which high-ranking SS officers were reshaped by the Nazi indoctrination as a “murderer-technocrats.” Katz notes that the officers “diminish all traces of subjectivity” and integrate themselves “into the [Nazi] system by cancelling any potentially competing, autonomous realm of feeling or value.” This way, “the private and public self coalesce into one external actor who identifies totally (in the ideal) through this reductive merger, with the ends of the system to which he has made himself servant.” Consequently, “the objective agent, active though ideologically docile, through the loss of interiority, overcomes the inherent alienation of his social situation by identifying with the very public order which seeks to castrate his subjectivity” (Katz 16). Katz's observations are directly relevant to Neigel because, first and foremost, they refer to Neigel's historical counterparts – the death-camp

commandants, such as Max Koegel on whose character Grossman based Neigel's character (Segev 1986). Furthermore, in their treatment of the commandants, both Katz and Grossman rely on the testimony of Rudolf Höss, the commandant from Auschwitz, who commonly serves scholars as the prime example for the making of a Nazi, probably because Höss was not only a key figure, but also left behind a detailed autobiography, *Commandant of Auschwitz*. Shlomo indicates this biography specifically as the source for some of the details he tells about Neigel. Like Höss, Neigel was designated to be a priest, and was inspired by his father's stories about his military service in Africa. Like Höss he grew up in a strict home, and his personality was thoroughly shaped by the value of uncompromising obedience, one of the main components in the “mentality of the SS murderous robots,” as G. M. Gilbert terms this phenomenon (36-37).⁶⁹ Considering these intentional and well-designed similarities between Höss, as he presents himself in his autobiography, and Neigel, as portrayed in *See Under: Love*, Katz's scholarly observations can contribute to our understanding of the inner process Neigel goes through in his dialogue with Wasserman.

In fact, reading Höss' autobiography, written while he was awaiting trial in Poland after the war, one can sense that its impact on Grossman's creation of Neigel exceeds the incorporation of selected biographical details. Rather, *Commandant of Auschwitz* reveals that Neigel is a literary version of Höss – or at least of the Höss presented in that testimony. Like Höss, Neigel is conflicted about his service at the camp, a task which he conducts professionally with a strong sense of duty, but also in agony, certainly in regard to the brutal treatment of the inmates. Like Höss, Neigel is concerned about his wife and children, dreads the price of being expelled from the SS in case of insubordination, and,

most importantly, like Höss, Neigel does not even contemplate the possibility of disobeying the order to commit genocide, even if he does not understand how it serves the Nazi vision that he supports so passionately. Most striking in comparing the textual portrayal of the two commandants is their strong sense of displacement, their sense that they do not belong among the criminal, sadistic, and incompetent people under their command, that they do not share the hateful and brutal nature of the camp, that they are tortured, physically and mentally, by the endless whistle of the trains. Höss' concluding sentences may be able to capture Grossman's enterprise in imagining Neigel: "Let the public continue to regard me as the blood-thirsty beast, the cruel sadist and the mass-murderer; for the masses could never imagine the commandant in Auschwitz in any other light. They could never understand that he, too, had a heart and that he was not evil" (181). It is this heart within the commandant that Grossman dramatizes through Neigel. And yet, as both Neigel and Höss teach us, one does not need to be a "blood-thirsty beast," a "cruel sadist" or even heartless to accept, facilitate, administrate, and initiate mass-murder.

When Wasserman and Neigel meet, the officer has already completed, to use Katz's scholarly terminology in Grossman's imaginative context, his integration into the Nazi system, which erased his interior and subjective existence and convinced him that his world was "divided between Aryans and Jews, and the competition between them was total and uncompromising; both could not continue to live" (Katz 19). Accordingly, the commandant does not even speak to Wasserman before he tries to murder him, since for him the Jew is not more than a statistical afterthought whose only function is to serve and die. It is only when the Jew refuses to play his "role" in the Nazi system that a dialogue

can emerge. As the two come closer in their artistic collaboration, and although he cannot completely divorce himself from his anti-Jewish perspective and violence either physically and verbally, Neigel gradually develops empathy towards the Jew and even admiration for his artistic authority. At some point he even calls him “Herr Wasserman” (396) or “you piece of dreck,” a phrase Wasserman takes as a compliment since it conventionally refers to humans (432). The Nazi, who would not even look at the Jew before he failed to shoot him, now spends hours at a time listening to his prisoner’s tales, debating with him on matters of art and ethics, often succumbing to the artistic demands and judgment the old storyteller presents. When this rough officer learns to replace one-sided expression with human communication, when he not only is perceived as human in the eyes of the Jew but also perceives the Jew as equally human, the dialogic principle governing the novel proves to be comprehensive. To use Katz’s terms once more, we can observe that through his artistic work with Wasserman, Neigel regains his subjectivity and consequently disassociates himself from the Nazi system as he develops competing values. One value is empathy and openness towards others, including Jews; another is a private self which must be kept hidden from the public domain; a third is the very imaginative activity that cannot be supervised by the system and therefore must be perceived as rebellious, regardless of its content. All these changes in Neigel are generated by his work with Wasserman on the tale of the “Children of the Heart.” It is language, used in a place that is conventionally considered to be beyond representation, that unearths the human within the murderer-technocrat and evokes empathy in a world of hatred and violence.

The most striking manifestation of the changes generated in Neigel is seen in moral terms. Here, again, we find strong ties between Grossman's construction of Neigel and historical scholarship. Katz refers to an SS who, in a trial for his extreme cruelty, reports his experience during training in one of the SS indoctrination schools. The Führer and Himmler, he says, became their conscience, while they lost their "personal moral self-determination" (26). Wasserman says about Neigel: "who knows what he endured at the SS Führerschule [...], and if I knew how a man like Neigel could be turned into a murderer, perhaps I would try to turn him around and reform him" (205). Indeed, Neigel does appear to have been "reformed" to some extent, and the process is especially tangible in the officer's weakening identification with the Nazi code. First and foremost, the very discussion that the SS officer conducts, let alone with a Jew, about the role of free will in collaboration with the genocide indicates the loosening of Neigel's conviction in the Nazi worldview. Although in these discussions with Wasserman, Neigel reiterates his confidence in the morality of his actions and in the Nazi project as a whole, at this advanced stage of his career as a commandant, such dilemmas are not supposed to come up. The very situation where the officer must provide these answers, and to a Jew, in the public stage of a novel read by a post-Holocaust audience, as well as the specific answers he provides, such as the division of responsibility which renders a commandant an innocent cog in the machine, bears strong resemblance to the defenses presented at the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials. In various places in the novel, Neigel reveals his confusion about his violence and agonizes about his misery at the camp, where he cannot tell anymore whether he is the prisoner or the warden (435). "I wanted to believe that I had finished my war and that it was possible to erase everything and start things afresh,"

he confesses in a way that leaves no doubt about the distance he feels and desires to create between himself and the Nazi world (435). At the same time, however, Neigel does not cease from his violence against the Jews, against the guards at the camp, and even against Wasserman. In fact, his brutality gets out of hand, generated by emotional outbursts, and this is another indication of loss of balance for an officer who once took pride in emotionless conduct of his genocidal task, in accordance with the SS creed.

Neigel's developing moral conflict culminates, in both plot and meaning, in his suicide. Staukeh pressures him to kill himself after discovering the commandant's relations with Wasserman and threatening to make them public. Why did Neigel surrender to Staukeh's pressure? He could have reinstated the status quo ante and maintained his command. But after creating, with Wasserman, the tale about the "Children of the Heart" (and this is another success they accomplished in their struggle against evil), Neigel's internal turmoil was unbearable. Upon his return to the camp, after a series of violent and emotional explosions, Neigel meets with Wasserman one last time to complete the telling of the tale. "Only don't stop talking," he begs Wasserman, "because there's a terrible noise here and a terrible stench, and when I breathe, my breath smells of smoke, and when the train whistle blows in the station, I want to get up and run away, and I want the sentinels at the gate to shoot me" (437). At that point Neigel finds himself deprived of any source of identity and solace. Wasserman's tale has generated within him a "new confusion" and empathy not only towards the Jew, but also towards himself (386). Looking inside, he realizes that he can no longer integrate himself with the Nazi values and be a one dimensional extension of the system. He can no longer be "Camp Commander Obersturmbannführer Neigel," as he is introduced on the second

page of the third part, but he can also no longer be pre-Nazi Kurt, as his wife calls him in his last visit, and that is the only time his first name is mentioned in the novel. Realizing, after all that time and bloodshed, what he has committed in the camp and at home, and being no longer able to justify it with empty slogans and ideological passion, and since the tale of “The Children of the Heart” came to an end and can no longer provide one more reason to go on, Neigel can only end his agony by ending his life. Language and imagination, Grossman tells us, can defeat evil from within, by making its agents realize the sacrifice they must make. Before they sacrifice their enemies to actualize their vision, they must sacrifice themselves.

The entry “plagiarism” in the Encyclopedia (part four of the novel) provides a tangible, shocking actualization of the theoretical discussion between Neigel and Wasserman. This entry narrates the last few hours prior to Neigel's departure for a vacation at home. It reveals that Neigel has written Wasserman's story in letters to his wife, pretending to be the author, all in an attempt to regain her love. Now he is begging the reluctant Wasserman for the story's last piece. “Help me, Herr Wasserman,” he begs. “My life is in your hands now. You too, have a wife and child somewhere. You must understand me” (403). With this statement Neigel finally reverses the balance of power between himself and Wasserman, whom he beat cruelly earlier that night. And this request by a needy SS commandant, mentioning Wasserman's wife and daughter, brings the Jew to reveal the painful facts he kept from Neigel and from readers all throughout the novel, and must be presented here in full:

“Two and one-half months ago, seven and sixty days to be exact, I arrived here unwillingly on the morning train with my wife and daughter. We stepped off the station platform, and my little girl flew like an arrow to Officer Hoppfler’s buffet... You were standing there with the selfsame gun in your hand. My daughter ran to the buffet and reached for the chocolate. And then, nu, well, it happened, you see... you shot her. That is all, Herr Neigel.” Neigel turned pale. His face gleamed unnaturally for a moment, as though a magnesium bulb had exploded inside him. He wobbled. He leaned against the cupboard [...] Neigel groaned: “And you never said a word?” “What could I say?” The German gripped his knees [temples] and pressed them as hard as he could. His lips contracted with pain. Then he looked up. His eyes were red and scared. “Believe me, Wasserman,” he said, “I love children.”⁷⁰ (404).

This passage presents the complexity in Neigel’s character in the most succinct way possible. He beats Wasserman cruelly but also begs for the rest of the tale. The Jew is physically helpless but discursively powerful, when he refuses to tell the remainder of the story. We realize that Neigel himself, with his own gun and on personal initiative, murdered Wasserman’s little girl, and this cold-blooded murder of a child – one of so many in the Holocaust – is especially striking as a result of the combined impact of various factors. This murder is told so vividly, while so far Neigel’s genocidal activity is generally not rendered in much details. Furthermore, we are told about this act by the father, who has evoked our sympathy throughout the novel, in a historically unimaginable conversation with the murderer. Most importantly, Wasserman’s telling of the murder as

well as Neigel's confession is utterly surprising. How is it that Wasserman did not reveal it earlier to Shlomo and the reader, if not to Neigel himself? How was he able to cooperate with Neigel and make the incredibly compassionate statement that,

after everything this arch-murderer Neigel did to me, I spent the last hour with him and saw his face as a boy, and I was beginning to think that these many months in Neigel's camp I was wrong not to count him a human being, with a wife, perhaps, and children. (205)

When this statement is made early in part three, we do not know yet, that what Neigel did to Wasserman is the murder of the Jew's only child in front of his very eyes. Only in part four of the novel is the horror behind this phrase exposed. Until then, the process of revealing the human behind the SS uniform is shared also by Shlomo, who listens to Neigel and allows him a voice in his narrative, and by the reader through a variety of narrative techniques employed in the construction of the commandant's character. The process is powerfully countervailed by Wasserman's note about the murder of his daughter, clear-cut evidence that supports the pre-conceptions which introduced Momik the child into the world of the Holocaust: that the Nazis are, to use the terms of the Israeli discourse of the fifties, monsters, demons, and blood-thirsty beasts. The tension between the two perspectives – Neigel as human or as a beast – which increasingly expands Neigel's complexity throughout parts three and four of the novel, reaches its explicit peak in this dialogue, where it is also resolved. At this late point in the novel, Neigel's statement “I love children,” is undoubtedly sincere. We know for certain

how much he loves his own children and how much he is committed to the world of childhood, through the reading and writing of children's tales. But Neigel also chose to be a Nazi, and he kept making this choice consciously, even struggled and sacrificed to keep making it, as he tells Wasserman in the entry "choice." He also opted to murder Wasserman's little girl in one of the most brutal cases of murder one can imagine. The conclusion to which Grossman leads us in this dialogue and in the novel as a whole is unmistakable: Neigel and the Nazis are as human as Wasserman and their Jewish victims. It was as humans, not as monsters or demons, as loving parents, loyal husbands, naive and shy admirers of children's tales, that they committed their atrocities.

But why did Shlomo locate this crucial piece of information in the last part of the novel, although temporally the murder happened in the beginning of part three? Why convey it as an encyclopedia entry, making it more likely to be overlooked, considering the challenge of reading such a text carefully, certainly in comparison to the compelling narrativity of the earlier parts of the novel? Shlomo's narratorial choice serves to create a readerly effect which conveys his (and Grossman's) understanding of the Holocaust. Giving the information about the murder of Wasserman's little girl in its chronological place in the sequence of events, that is, at the opening of part three, would only strengthen the reader's pre-conception about the Nazi Beast. On the other hand, withholding the information until part four allows the reader to accumulate understanding, if not empathy, towards Neigel as an individual. Only then is the information about the murder given and in a particularly striking manner. These literary dynamics strive to emphasize, through the effect of surprise, the "Holocaust lesson" Momik could not have learned without his dialogues with the Sea, with Wasserman and

especially with Neigel: that the commandant is not an inhuman monster who appears to be and behave like a human – that was the Nazi perception of the Jews – but vice versa, that Neigel is indeed human, even as he inhumanely kills the children whose fiction he admires.

This conclusion seems to me unquestionably evident in this dialogue, especially when understood against the background of part three and four of the novel. I can therefore only partially accept Alan Mintz's critique of *See Under: Love* for being too naïve. Mintz observes correctly that Wasserman's moral code supports the naïve universal values taught by children's tales, such as “all men are brothers” and “be faithful and courageous in the face of evil” (204). Mintz also observes that this vision stands in the novel “unmolested and unreconstructed, as if to say that *this* is the truth of art, everywhere and always” (204; Mintz's italics). Here I disagree. Even if the tale of “The Children of the Heart” conveys this message, it does not save Wasserman's little girl from being shot in front of his very eyes, just as it does not save any other Jew in the camp or elsewhere. Mintz argues that “Wasserman had managed to lure the commandant into emotional identification with the victims of the persecution,” and although the tale could not make Neigel “morally regenerated,” it did take him through a process of psychological growth, which eventually made him “hateful towards himself” to the extent that suicide was the only way out (Mintz 201). Since the tale eventually brought Neigel to take his own life, it is reasonable to argue that Grossman's belief in the redemptive power of language “saves Neigel from his bestiality” (Mintz 204). This is indeed a naïve message and that is the crux of Mintz critique of the novel's moral dimension.⁷¹ But I would argue that while eventually eliminating Neigel's bestiality, this naiveté also

amplifies it, when revealing the commandant as an individual who walks the path of bestiality as a free, conscious human choice. While demonstrating strong belief in the magical power of language, Grossman never forgets what was done by Neigel and his collaborators.

Likewise, I cannot accept Mintz' understanding that, except for the description of Momik's childhood, "what this novel has to teach one about the Holocaust itself, in any of its dimensions, is in the end quite limited" (205). Such a perception demonstrates the common fascination of critics with *Momik*, at the expense of the novel's later parts. Ruth Wisse, for example, argues that *See Under: Love* lacks "moral tension" of "the kind that derives from the decisions of protagonists who must take reality into account in the conduct of their lives" (46). But what about the concept of "the little Nazi within you," that Shlomo develops? Such profound and disturbing insight derives directly from his dialogic understanding that the Nazis are humans, capable of storytelling. Wisse's review of the novel focuses on the *Momik* section, which Mintz defines as the novel's "ostensible subject" that is "reduced to a backdrop" by the later sections (205). In opposition to Mintz and Wisse, I argue that parts three and four of the novel have a great deal to teach us about the Holocaust, even more than the *Momik* section, and this teaching is conducted with great moral complexity. This complexity anticipates historical scholarship published in the few years following the publication of the novel, such as Tom Segev's *Soldiers of Evil* (*hayalei haresha* 1987) and Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men* (1992), both of which refute popular conceptions of the perpetrators as avid Nazi monsters, obsessed with eagerness to kill Jews. What the historians teach us through biographical and documented facts, Grossman captures in the construction of Neigel as a multi-faceted

character and by weakening the boundary between victim and victimizer, suggesting that Holocaust perpetrators were not inhuman by nature, but rather humans who chose to take an inhuman path.

The categorization prevalent in Israel until the eighties – which excludes the Nazis from the human realm, hence protecting the perception of who humans are and what they are capable of – is contested in Grossman's novel. This is not to say that *See Under: Love* is not invested in the Jewish dimension of the Holocaust. This is what the *Momik* section does so well, and perhaps this is one reason why many critics in both Israel and the U.S. were captivated by it (Mintz would like to see “how Momik's life is affected by his success in telling the Wasserman story” [204]). But *See Under: Love* also goes beyond Jewish suffering and reaches an answer to a universal question about morals and human nature: that the Nazis were human, parents, children. For a literary text, it is doubtful whether there is a more powerful way to express this philosophical and historical truth than as Grossman does it, by juxtaposing, only a few sentences apart, a grieving father's silent note about witnessing the brutal murder of his little girl, and the killer's spontaneous cry: “I love children.”

A. B. Yehoshua's *Mr. Mani*

Rarely is the name of A. B. Yehoshua associated with Holocaust literature.⁷² Born in 1936, Yehoshua is a leading figure among the writers of the Generation of the State (with Oz and Kaniuk) and one of Israel's most prominent writers and thinkers today. In the first three decades of his writing, between the sixties and the eighties, Yehoshua's fiction was consistently focused on the ethnic, national, and ideological tensions of Israeli life. Its

setting tends to be the “here” and “now” of Israel, rather than 1940s Europe. But in the formidable archaeological excavation into Jewish past and identity conducted in *Mr. Mani*, perhaps Yehoshua’s most profound novel and certainly a major accomplishment of Israeli fiction, the impact of the Holocaust on the Israeli situation is explored in innovative indirectness in the second conversation. My discussion focuses on the speaker, a young German named Egon Bruner (born 1922), as a Holocaust perpetrator, or, more precisely, on the variety of means Yehoshua applies in complicating such categorization. The second conversation, in both content and form, in relation to the events it unfolds and in relation to its place in the overall architecture of the novel, thoroughly undermines the prototype of a Nazi and even of a German soldier, as well as the boundary between Egon and the Jews. Consequently, the text evokes potential sympathy towards Egon and complicates our moral judgment of his actions.

The novel, published in parts between March 1986 and May 1990, when it was finally released in book form, is comprised of five monologues: that is, dialogues only one speaker of which is cited on the page, requiring the reader to reconstruct the speech of the other speaker. The five sections, about sixty to eighty pages each, are given from the latest in time to the earliest one, each conducted in a different location at a critical junction in Jewish and Western history. The shifts between sections, speakers, and points of view are evidence of Faulkner’s heavy influence on Yehoshua. The regressive order of conversations simulates a psychoanalytical treatment or an archaeological dig, each layer revealing Jewish life at a certain place and time. In the second conversation, which takes place at the city of Heraklion, Crete, on August first, 1944, a few months before the German retreat from the island, Egon conducts a long

and apologetic conversation with Andrea Sauchon, his authoritarian step-grandmother, who visits him on the island. While giving the old lady a well-planned three-hour-long tour on a hill viewing the relics of Crete, Egon narrates his war experiences and some recent developments in his worldview. Although Egon does not realize it, these fundamental developments are generated by his encounter with the Jewish Mani family on the island, to which they were deported from Palestine by the British in 1918.

The basic aggregation of qualities that comprises Egon's character resists association with the perpetrator prototype or even the Holocaust itself. The setting of the second conversation is the island of Crete, which, unlike locations on the turbulent Eastern or Western fronts, remained marginal and quiet between its occupation by the Germans in May 1941 and its evacuation in October 1944. Crete is atypical also in terms of its Jews: their number on the island was barely a few hundreds, and, being of Sepharadi origin, they differ from the prominent image of the imprisoned and annihilated Eastern European Ashkenazi Jews. This is especially the case with the Mani family, which immersed itself among the local Greeks (and so evaded detection). In terms of appearance, Egon observes that Efrayim Mani "looked like one of us," undermining the Jew/German dichotomy that the Germans suppose (99). Egon Bruner himself is an antithesis of the German soldier and certainly of a Nazi. While an image of a soldier, certainly one in the elite field unit in which Egon served, projects qualities of strength, such as courage, survival skills, physical tenacity, and focus on the target at hand, Egon embodies the exact opposite of this model. He is a military medic, trained to save lives, and it was the stretcher he was carrying when jumping off the airplane that, due to the wind, carried him further from his friends, so many of whom died as they

landed. The wind also took his glasses, rendering him entirely helpless and unable to engage in the fierce battle, where he was most likely to join the grave German casualties. Evading the battle doomed Egon to a long imprisonment for defection, while the remnants of his unit were sent to the collapsing Eastern front. It was Egon's weakness as a soldier that saved his life.

Egon's non-military nature manifests itself most clearly in his imagination. The monologue of this sensitive and emotional young man reveals a complex and rich inner world, which expands his character from any stereotype to a full fictional individual, a round character, whose qualities hold constant tension. Struggling with a stereotypically authoritative and strict German grandmother who accuses him of cowardliness and defection and would probably prefer to see him die in combat if it means heroism (she tries to transfer him to the Eastern front), Egon explains that he did not escape the war, but only tried to understand it; that is, to theorize the philosophical and cultural logic behind it and the possibilities it grants (101).⁷³ In Egon's theory of universal humanism, people can cancel their national, ethnic, and religious identity and become "simply humans." The ideal location for the actualization of this vision is Crete, where the ancient culture – so believes this amateur scholar confused by childhood stories – did not have gods, guilt or fear. The ancient time in Crete was a time of peace, a time before Jews and Judaism, and it is for the actualization of such a theory – so Egon believes – that the Germans came to the island and started the war to begin with, even if they do not realize that. Such a theory, which is far from the historical facts about Crete, is sharply opposed to the Nazi advocacy of superiority of one race over others and the actualization of this doctrine by means of war. Indeed, Egon criticizes

Nazism for reducing people and nations, including the Germans, to types and races as if humans were animals, as well as for bringing Germany to its destruction.

Egon's incompatibility with the model of "Nazi" or "perpetrator" is further established by a meticulous and multilayered architecture of analogies and repetitions, one of *Mr. Mani's* most dominant qualities. When Egon, who joined the secret German police on the island, comes to arrest the Manis, waving a birth certificate which indicates Joseph Mani's Jewish origin (born in Jerusalem), Efraim Mani answers: "I was Jewish, but I am not anymore...I've canceled it..." (123). And this argument, which never saved any Jew from the Nazis, completely satisfies Egon, who is delighted to spare the life of this "canceled" Jew and even embraces the idea in his lecture to Andrea: if the Jews can cancel themselves, so, in a future Judgment Day, the Germans could say, "We were Germans but we are not any more...we've canceled it" (125). In Egon's vision of universal humanism, the cancellation of identity, allows each individual to "become simply human again, a new man who can cancel the scab of history that sticks to us like ugly dandruff" (128).

A rich web of similarities exists also between Egon and the Jewish ideological and literary tradition. For one thing, as a dreamy and feeble young man, away from his native ground in an intellectual stimulating environment, rebelling against tradition and authoritative figures in favor of a revolutionary vision – Egon echoes, paradoxically, the figure of the "uprooted Jew" (*talush*), typical of turn-of-the-twentieth century Jewish literature. The term, coined by Shimon Halkin after a story by that name by Y. D. Berkowitz, indicates the situation of the young Jew from an Orthodox background, a student in Berlin or Odessa or a pioneer in Palestine, living in isolation away from his

home, while agonizing over questions of faith and identity. Egon's preoccupation with theories of identity and how it may be modified, the basic human situation he finds himself in, his physical weakness (his helplessness without his glasses and the fact that he's probably not much of a soldier with them), the growth of his inner world in an isolated new environment, his imaginative vision and the overtaking confession – all evince the qualities of the *talush*.⁷⁴ Within the novel's storyworld, Egon's helpless wandering in Crete upon his landing resembles that of Hagar in Jerusalem in the first conversation of *Mr. Mani* or that of Efrayim Shapiro in Basel in the fourth. Another example of parallelism: Admiral Werner Sauchon is Egon's biological father but is called "grandfather" or "Opapa," and this pattern of generational mixture is typical of the Mani family, in which grandfathers substitute for fathers. Furthermore, Egon speaks of Crete as the "warm, true blue womb" (88), and Efrayim Shapiro speaks of Jerusalem as a "stone womb" (265). These are only a few examples of a system of analogies between the German soldier and Jewish characters, in and out of the novel, which undermines the boundaries between them and the domains they inhabit.

Egon's language constitutes another strong tie between the soldier and the Jewish world. Egon's speaks German with Andrea, but his words are rendered in Hebrew. This intra-textual translation from fictional to textual language, to use Meir Sternberg's terminology, obscures Egon's being German and places him on one level with other speakers in novel, who are Jews, whose speech is also rendered in Hebrew although fictionally uttered in English, Yiddish or Ladino.⁷⁵ Furthermore, Egon's Hebrew reveals concrete intertextual ties to traditional texts. Formulating his vision of universal humanism, for example, Egon explains that the cancellation of identity, allows one to

become simply human again, a new man who can cancel the scab of history that stick to us like ugly dandruff and put the dark, moldy rooms full of warm-eaten books, the faded oil paintings, the grotesque sculptures, behind him for the sunlit aperture [that is Crete]. (128)

This wording echoes fundamental principles of the Jewish Enlightenment. Haim Nahman Bialik, for example, in “On the Treshold of the House of Prayer” (*Al saf beit hamidrash* 1894) and “The Talmud Student” (*Hamatamid* 1898) refers to the Jewish study-house, and by extension the traditional Jewish world, as a dark and crumbling “prison house.” The Enlightenment, on the other hand, in Bialik’s “Alone” (*Levadi* 1902) or in Ze’ev Feierberg’s novella “Whither” (*Lean*, 1898), is perceived in terms of light.⁷⁶ This thick intertextual net, which is woven behind Egon’s back as a sophisticated play between Yehoshua and his implied Israeli and Jewish audience, ridicules this young amateur scholar by endowing him with the language and ideas of the very people his culture perceives as inferior and seeks to destroy.

Details of the fictional reality, language, genre, intra- and extra-textual ties to Jewish life – all these factors collaborate in resistance to the prototype of the Holocaust perpetrator, as well as in undermining the boundary between the victim and the victimizer. Egon’s strongly developed private domain weakens his affiliation with the category of the Nazi, under which he is conventionally and historically subsumed, and instead shows him as an individual, and a fairly charming one too. It is tempting to sympathize with this apparently harmless, vivid amateur scholar, whose imagination is both naïve and wild. Egon’s appeal, generated by the qualities of the character, is

strengthened on the level of novel's structure. Dan Miron indicates that all of the conversations in the novel in fact duplicate a single narrative situation: a young person narrates, before an authoritative figure, a sin and his powerful experiences involving members of the Mani family. The silent interlocutor demands concision in the narration, but the speaker begs to be allowed to tell the entire story as he sees it. Each narration is a declaration of practical or intellectual independence, as well as a request for some sort of forgiveness or approval (1995, 47-49). The sharing of a similar narrative situation immerses Egon within the group of the other speakers, all of whom are Jews at central junctions of Jewish history, and this process is strengthened through the reader himself. The combination of two factors – the monodialogue's first person narration and the absence of mirroring and countering created by a second speaker – promotes identification with Egon. Booth's fundamental observation, that inner views reduce distance between reader and character and evoke sympathy, is especially relevant here. Yehoshua's biographical supplements for each character aside, Egon is our only source of information or contact with the world and events he narrates. Although the young German can certainly be perceived as an unreliable narrator, his emotional and candid speech quickly removes any suspicion in the immediate, communicative level of the reading. In all five conversations, the speaker serves as a sort of goggles, a mask in which the reader places his face (mind, senses) when observing the narrated reality, merging himself with a speaker, who is never rendered externally as a distinctive being, by either the narrator or another character. Since the reader becomes one with all other speakers, and since the individual reader is stable, Egon and the other speakers merge through the reader's mediation.

The second conversation, where Jews and Germans actually meet, offers a variety of parallels between them while also presenting them as antagonists. It therefore both strengthens and cancels the dichotomy they comprise. Egon and the Manis, for example, share a view of the “simply human,” bare of traditional markers, living outside of history. Furthermore, both sides, as Ziva Shamir observes, are unified by a Greek root: Egon as a vehicle of the German spirit, commonly perceived as the Hellenism of the new era (145), while the Mani dynasty dates back to Abraham Mani, born in Salonika in 1799. Both sides are saved in Crete, rescued from other locales where the course of their life was about to place them during the war: Egon from the Eastern front and Joseph Mani from British Palestine, where he was convicted of treason and was about to be executed. In addition, both struggle against a future imposed on them by family history. Egon must actualize the expectations of his parents-grandparents, to be as good as his elder (deceased) brother Egon or die like him in battle, and the Manis who, even if only by dint of reading of their history backwards, seem to be trapped in a magic circle of Jewish fate. Finally, the German-Jewish encounter takes place in an actually and symbolically neutral zone. Egon and the Manis are foreigners in Crete, which is not part of either’s history or geography but belongs to a pre-historical time, before Jews and Germans. This is a place where mutual reaching beyond traditional categories is invited, and in theory – and, indeed, in the theories of Egon and Mani – it can occur. The bitter irony is that the battery of similarities between the German and the Jew cannot resist the violent course of history. By the end of the conversation we learn that the dichotomy was never really cancelled, and although it is only for facilitating the escape of Jews (his

wife and child) and not for being Jewish himself, Egon finally imprisons Efrayim Mani and sends him to his death.

But Egon's collaboration with the Nazis should not surprise us, and it was implied all along, despite the young soldier's observation that Nazi propaganda is simplistic and insulting for the Germans themselves. On the one hand, he insists that his grandmother admit her knowledge of Nazi atrocities and he defines the SS officers who visit Crete as "those gorillas with diplomas, those supermurderers, those geniuses of destruction – the scum, the scandal of Germandom!" (131). Yet when Egon refers to Efrayim Mani as an "ex-Jew," who had become an "ordinary human being, pure unadulterated *homo sapiens*, at home in an ancient, blissful" civilization (of Crete), he describes this civilization as "free of the self-invented contamination of Jewry" (131). Elsewhere he cannot bear the thought that the Germans withdraw from the island while Efrayim Mani's wife and son remain and continue to "contaminate our pure blue womb."⁷⁷ Such paradoxical statements, which mix Nazi ideology with Egon's humanistic vision, reveal that Egon never really or at least completely renounced the antisemitic line of thought. This language could still be explained as slips of the tongue or force of habit, if it were not supported by action. What allows Egon to remain on the island rather than be sent to the Eastern front is his choice to join the German secret police, where he serves as a prison guard and later as a guide for German tourists, but also as a Jew hunter, an expert in the inspection of birth certificates. He incarcerates Efrayim Mani and restlessly searches for his wife and child. In the final account Egon is a willing participant in the Nazi genocide against the Jews. The exact nature of the ideology which motivates him is irrelevant to the consequences of the actions he elects to take.

How can this blunt contradiction, between Egon's self-image as a humanist and critic of Nazism on the one hand, and his actions as a Jew-hunter on the other, be reconciled? Hypocrisy does not suffice as an explanation. On the surface, of course; Egon presents himself as a cultured person who despises the Nazis and is inspired by the idea of cancelling identity, while he also works for the Nazis in hunting Jews. But then the question is why take this pretence before his grandmother and reveal details of his Nazi activity to begin with? As for the Jew-hunting itself, his initial avoidance of arresting the Manis can expose Egon as a traitor to the Nazis. On the other hand, Egon's service to the Nazis does not really contradict his vision: he does see Jews as a threat of contamination – not of the master race but of the “blue womb” of Crete – and he participates in their violent removal. There are also issues of jealousy, childish anger and frustration, but what makes understanding Egon especially complicated is the fact that he is an unreliable narrator. His conversation is a means of justification before his grandmother but also a well prepared story; he is a dreamer to say the least, if not somewhat hallucinatory; he claims to be a humanist, but so readily shoots goats, a mule and almost Mani himself; his narration downplays his service to the Nazis but still reveals it.

This set of self-contradicting behaviors and stands that Egon demonstrates can be reconciled through two complementary perspectives on character dimension. One perspective leans towards what Phelan calls the character's “synthetic” dimension, which emphasizes, in this case, its comic and symbolic function within the story. The various narrators in *Mr. Mani* tend to be exaggerated in their verbosity and emotional reactions to a point that the text ridicules them, just as their fantasies – about identities

that could be dismissed or about Arabs who are in fact Jews – are cast as farfetched. In this sense, Egon can be perceived less like a fictional person and more of a literary device which serves, in an amusing way, as a vehicle for evoking us to contemplate issues of Jewish and German identity and their relation to the Holocaust. Within such a character, the self-contradictions are less troubling for the reader because, to begin with, the character is less realistic in its nature, and second, because its function to amuse the reader and also to evoke in him consideration of philosophical issues is fairly palpable. At the same time, Egon does reveal enough human substance to be considered also through the “mimetic” dimension of his character, to use Phelan’s terms once more. And the tension between the two dimensions of character and the play of perspectives in its understanding contributes to Egon’s complexity.

In a mimetic perspective, taking Egon as a fictional equivalent of a person, the self-contradictions in his character can be resolved in psychological terms. Egon tells Andrea that he memorized his story, and it is obvious he prepared the setting well (placing chairs along the way and choosing viewing points), but his narration reads as very spontaneous, gushing out of control. This is evident in the antisemitic terminology that slips into Egon’s explicit denunciation of the Nazis, and also when he digresses into his experience as a Jew-hunter in the secret police, the official name of which (SS, Gestapo) he consistently, systematically, avoids explicating. These are not mere accidents of narration. Egon is a passionate advocate of his vision, but perhaps this is why he has not thought it through (not to mention that the vision itself is fantastic), and he cannot see that his actions in the service of the Nazis contradict the idea and spirit of his vision and his self-perception as a humanist. To the extent he does realize that, he

suppresses this realization, but it finds expression in his language after all. Finally, it is reasonable to conclude that partially Egon feels guilty about his Nazi police service, which saved him from almost certain death on the Russian front. He therefore attempts to justify it through another theory, which is intellectually superior to Nazism, hence satisfying his self-image. This sense of guilt compels Egon to criticize Nazism, insist that his grandmother admit her knowledge of its atrocities (and so share the blame), and confess, although through suppressed digressions, his role under the Nazis; all because of his need to attain consent and approval.

Perhaps more than any other passage, the following lines demonstrate Egon's denial unmistakably:

I've entered many houses uninvited, turned closets and beds upside down, broken into drawers, made sieves out of mattresses with my bayonet, and learned that if I want to keep my sanity, I mustn't be too polite, which means that as soon as I kick in the door I blame whoever is on its other side and march firmly, with no may-I's or apologies, into rooms that enrage me by the very presence of closets, drawers, and even walls, as if a conquered house expected to be a single, undivided space that you could charge through at the drop of a hat. (121-22)

"Confession of a repressed Nazi" is probably a suitable title for this passage. Reading through this poetic and sensitive depiction, one may easily miss the simple fact that it relates the experience of serving in the Nazi forces. Since the narrator consistently refuses to acknowledge and name the true nature of his work, his indisputably active and willing participation in Jew hunting may escape the reader. Such ambiguity, of course, serves

Yehoshua's creation of character complexity. Similar to Grossman who emphatically suggests that Neigel is a victim of SS indoctrination, Yehoshua implies the unnatural character of the search, which forces the searcher to struggle for his sanity and a house to be "single, undivided space," just awaiting a search. Yet, to what extent must a person blind himself to call a Gestapo search an "uninvited" entrance? What degree of self-absorption must an officer develop to occupy himself with protecting his own sanity, while the violence he commits devastates not only the minds of its victims, but also their lives? These sincere lines present a clear admission of participation in the Nazi violence, and yet, the participant's denial is so profound, that he – and potentially his affected reader – does not realize the true gravity and nature of these actions.

Egon's convoluted and suppressed recognition of his collaboration brings forth the problematic nature of "Holocaust perpetration." The reality extracted from Egon's rich and deceptive narration is simple: he is a German soldier who evaded being sent to the front by joining the Nazi police, in the service of which he took an active part in the destruction of the Jewish community on the island. Had he admitted or attempted to deny these facts, he would have been perceived as just another Nazi. But the journey that the reader must take to reveal Egon's true story, a journey through a net of theories, personal insight, half-truths, denial, and quite a bit of critique against Nazism, a journey made especially deceptive due to the reduction of distance between reader and character in first person narration – such a journey lays bare the complexity of complicity and the difficulty of identifying it, for both perpetrator and reader. Moral judgment is complicated here in a unique manner. Yehoshua's careful design not only constructs Egon to be as far as possible from prototypical perpetrators, but also obscures Egon's

affiliation with the Nazis so much that it can easily be missed. The message is not far from Grossman's. Even the humanists, Yehoshua tells us, could collaborate with the barbarians they renounce. Or perhaps it is the very nature of humanism that is questioned here. After all, it is the very vision of universal humanism and "simply people" that Egon's postulates as an excuse for hunting the Mani wife and child.

Being Nazi and Being Human

In an interview conducted with Grossman shortly after the publication of *See Under: Love*, a journalist observed that the presentation of Neigel as human made him "forgivable." Grossman replied:

We are not used to reading about the Nazis as humans. Until today, the books written from an Israeli perspective described the Nazis as a sort of monster. I wanted to examine the process and I read a fair amount of psychological studies on the camp commanders. I took an ordinary person, banal, without any special markers, non-Aryan. Hitler was not Aryan either [...] There are Israelis that will ask how I dare treat Neigel as human. This is exactly the kind of approach that brings distancing from the subject and inability to understand how such things grow [...] Neigel is human, a mediocre man, a lovable character. A man confronts two options: to be human or to be Nazi. It is Neigel's choice which is unforgivable.

(Karpal 42; my translation from Hebrew)

Grossman's emphasis on the Nazi as a human making a conscious choice finds its explicit manifestation in various places in his novel. Wasserman confesses that he was

wrong not to count Neigel as a human being, and Neigel himself insists that he made a consistent human choice to be a Nazi. Yehoshua also explicitly unveils the human in the perpetrator by thematizing Egon's vision of a future, in which people can cancel their historical and communal identities and become "simply human again." If this is true for the Manis, Egon hopes, it will also be true for the Germans on a possible Judgment Day, as a way of clearing themselves from their past. But more compellingly than in explicit statements in and out of the literary text, Grossman and Yehoshua actualize their view of perpetrators in the construction of their characters – and Neigel and Egon are the most developed characters of Holocaust perpetrators in Israeli literature. Their development manifests itself first and foremost in the principle that makes a character "round": through a multifaceted aggregation of qualities and the tensions between these qualities. Neigel and Egon are not only as developed as their victims, but, in a sense, even more: Neigel is a loving father who murders a child, and Egon is an elitist critic of the Nazis who sends Jews to the death camps, both exemplify an enigmatic self-contradiction of human nature. On Yosef Ewen's scale of complexity, these two characters, echoing one of the greatest paradoxes raised by the Holocaust, reach the highest degree, and this degree of complexity increases significantly through its tension with the discursive tradition it revolutionizes. Four decades after Ka-Tzetnik's pioneering representation of the Holocaust and its perpetrators in *Salamandra* (1946), Grossman's *See Under: Love* and Yehoshua's *Mr. Mani* mark a radical shift in paradigm of representation. This shift finds its best theoretical formulation in Phelan's terminology. In the mid-eighties, we can observe a complete reversal of the relation between the thematic and mimetic dimension of the perpetrator character. While in the earlier period of Israeli Holocaust fiction, the

mimesis of perpetrators was dominated by a theme or category of "the Nazi demon," with the new wave of Israeli Holocaust writing, it is the mimesis that dominates the theme. Now, it is the concrete, sensitive, and individualized representation, which subordinates the theme of the Nazi almost to the point of its dissolution.

See Under: Love and *Mr. Mani* are more than case studies which demonstrate the new wave in Israeli Holocaust fiction and its construction of perpetrator characters through the complex mode. The early eighties were a time when the Israeli literary map was being redrawn with growing diversification: the old Zionist mainstream went through a process of destabilization as several "Others" – Sephardi Jews, Arabs, women, Holocaust survivors – migrated from the margins of Israeli society and public discourse to the center.⁷⁸ This new cultural atmosphere promoted, probably unintentionally and even unwillingly, the literary mindset, precedent, and practice necessary for the centralization and voicing of another group – the perpetrators – which was marginalized even more, for different reasons, of course. That is the case with the fiction by Levi, Keren, and Gutfreund. However, *See Under: Love* and *Mr. Mani*, each of them *individually*, capture the profound transformation that Israeli society underwent during the late seventies and early eighties and found its manifestation in Israeli literature as a *system*. Yehoshua's novel explores Jewish history through the less common venue of Sephardim, a major ethnic group in Israeli society, which gained a significantly greater cultural visibility following the political shift of power in the late seventies. *See Under: Love* conducts a candid dialogue with Wasserman, a Holocaust survivor – another Israeli community which was marginalized, at least discursively, until the eighties. These two novels also present the most developed perpetrators in Israeli literature, and so they

encapsulate the entire cultural transformation of the time within the boundaries of a single text. The impact of the precedents set by Grossman and Yehoshua is seen clearly in later writing. In Amir Gutfreund's *Our Holocaust* the complexity of perpetrators is not conveyed in an attentive study of a single character as in *See Under: Love*, one of the novel's intertexts, but is rather thematized and expanded to Germans as a community. The absence of a need to ground and justify perpetrator complexity evidences its acceptance as a convention.

Grossman and Yehoshua are also major political thinkers identified with the Israeli left-wing and especially with the calling for dialogue between Israel and its Arab inhabitants and neighbors. Through multiple intra- and inter-textual ties, these writers' dialogic interaction with one Other of Israeli life, the Arabs, manifests itself in the dialogue they conduct with a second Other, Holocaust perpetrators. *Mr. Mani's* opening conversation takes place during Israel's war in Lebanon, and although the war is only in the background, it is brought forth in a critical light through a system of correspondences between the first and the second conversation, taking place in Crete under German occupation. The tie between the two conversations is seen clearly in ideological terms, which Morahg formulates well. "Egon's initial aspiration for national transformation," Morahg observes, "coincides closely with the fundamentals of the Zionist dream. Both are idealistic visions of a national renewal that require casting off the heritage of a despised past," and both draw on "tropes of an ancient Mediterranean culture to evoke the redemption that will occur upon the nation's return to a mythic land of origin." The violence and inner contradictions that the actualization of such a dream involves for Egon, as Morahg shows in detail, demonstrate the "devastating consequences of

extending the life of a nation beyond the territorial boundaries that define its singularity and imposing its presence on the unwilling population of another nation” (2006; 173). Morahg is very careful not to observe in the novel the simplistic equation that “the Israeli occupation is like the Holocaust,” and his wording does justice to Yehoshua’s text. The Lebanon war is only indirectly referred to in the first conversation, and the connection between the war in Europe and the one in Lebanon must be made through the various corresponding story details as well as through Egon’s complex psyche and quasi-Zionist vision, which clarifies itself more in the following sections of the novel.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Crete is hardly a familiar site of the Holocaust, and Egon is an unconventionality complex Nazi character, who strongly resists the perpetrator prototype. The equation between Israel’s presence in Lebanon and Germany’s in Crete, therefore, is toned down not only by keeping the war in Lebanon implied in the first conversation, but also by disguising the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Crete in the second, first and foremost through an innovatively complex perpetrator. Consequently, any correlation between the Holocaust and the Israeli presence in Lebanon is restrained, gaining the value of careful and well thought out critique, when channeled through a careful consideration of the relation between the two sections. Nevertheless, and perhaps even against Yehoshua’s intent, an analogy works both ways, and since creating an oppressive reality in Lebanon or elsewhere was never among the goals of Zionism, then – indirectly and by the sheer force of analogy – Egon’s actions against the Jews in occupied Crete are mollified, leading to the weakening of his categorization as a Holocaust perpetrator.

In 1987, about a year after the publication of *See Under: Love*, Grossman published *The Yellow Wind (Hazman hatsahov)*, a collection of reportages conveying his

impressions from a series of visits to the West Bank conducted in the early eighties. In one passage Grossman speaks to a group of Jewish settlers about their perception of their Palestinians neighbors. He realizes that these Jews do not allow themselves even a split second of “empathy and uncommitted participation” in the lives of the Palestinians residing around them. Fearing to be weakened by compassion, as Grossman puts it, they block and isolate such emotions in their soul, making detours around this closed area, which gradually ceases to be theirs. Grossman asks them:

Is the soul a modular mechanism in which specific “parts” may be disconnected, or in which entire sections may be made non-operational for a period of time, in the meanwhile, until the danger passes? Can it be [...] that in the very making of this dramatic separation you do not turn yourself, in the course of time, into just such an impenetrable mechanism, a mechanism that you sometimes control and sometimes control you and is capable of deeds that once were only imagined [...]? (1988; 40-41).

Grossman's insight here relates directly to his engagement with the Holocaust. Neigel tells Wasserman that to remain a good officer, he must “suspend” part of the “machine” (he points to his heart) “till the war is over” and then “put it back and enjoy the new Reich” (240). Wasserman answers that the soul, the brain, and the heart are not a machine, and “he who turns himself into a machine will quickly discern that everyone around him is made the same way, and those who are made differently he will not even be able to see, or else he will want to be rid of them” (241). The striking resemblance between the two passages indicates that although *See Under: Love* deals with the

Holocaust in its plot, theme, and characters, and although three of its four parts take place in the territories of the Holocaust, it is integrated, most likely intentionally, into the political context of its creation. Most importantly, the resemblance between these two texts by Grossman demonstrates his perception of the Nazis as individual members of the human race, who share human qualities with the Jews. In *The Yellow Wind*, it is a Jewish community which blocks its empathy from the Palestinian. In *See Under: Love*, it is the Nazi who blocks empathy from the Jew. Perhaps the novel's honest commitment to openness and empathy towards both survivors and perpetrators of the Holocaust is directed also towards Israel's Arab neighbors.

This literary focus on the perpetrator's private domain and inner life, in opposition to the conventional Israeli conceptual lens, corroborates historiographical developments that took place during the late eighties and early nineties. Tom Segev's *Soldiers of Evil*, which analyses the biographical background of the concentration camp commanders, was published in Israel and the U.S. about a year after *See Under: Love*. Grossman, in fact, bases Neigel's character on details from the biography of Max Koegel, a commander of several camps, which Segev published in a journal article and then included in his book (Segev 1986). Segev's study concludes that there is nothing unique about the personality of the death camp commanders, not radical evil or ideological zealotry. Rather, they were ordinary, even mediocre people, making their way up in the Nazi system, adjusting as they went. They were "soldiers by choice," and that choice was made mostly on personal and emotional grounds (170-71). In *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, a massive study of the German perpetrators, Daniel Goldhagen observes that "the perpetrators were not robotic killing machines. They were human beings who lived 'thick' lives, not the thin, one-

dimensional ones that the literature on the Holocaust generally suggests” (266).

Goldhagen describes how the members of police battalions were ordinary Germans, who, at their place of service, held onto family, social, and love life, participated in sports and artistic events, and conducted religious and scholarly activity, including discussion of moral issues. At the same time, they carried on their murderous task with very little resistance. In both scope and readerly effect, Goldhagen's rendition of the “thickness” and multi-dimensionality of the perpetrators' life is confined by its scholarly methodology and by the collective nature of the investigated phenomenon. His account can only tell us about this thickness, not show it.

It is here that imaginative fiction demonstrates its virtue. Art, Yehoshua argues, this time as a literary critic, can penetrate where no documentation has reached and utilize readers' identification with characters to create an intensive and profound mental bond with the texts (1989, 135). Literary responses to the Holocaust, by Jewish or German writers, which deal with the conflicts within each side rather than between sides, reach the greatest aesthetic power, he contends, since in such cases the distinctions to be made are the most complex and ambiguous. Mentioning writers such as Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass, Yehoshua observes that it is the scale of responses to the Holocaust among the perpetrators which is most fascinating (1989, 138-39). It is doubtful that any historiographical documentation of the perpetrators' multi-dimensional life can present the individual's complexity and moral dilemmas, or identification with ideology and its collapse, as intensively as fiction; particularly, the fictional form of a commandant who, off-duty, composes a children's tale, or a Jew hunter for the Nazis, who passionately envisions an imaginative reality without racial distinctions.

Conclusion

No no: they definitely were
 human beings: uniforms, boots.
 How to explain? They were created
 in the image.

I was a shade.
 A different creator made me.

And he in his mercy left nothing of me that would die.
 And I fled to him, floated up weightless, blue,
 forgiving – I would even say: apologizing –
 smoke to omnipotent smoke
 that has no face or image.

(Dan Pagis, “Testimony”)

My introduction to this dissertation opens with the first stanza of Dan Pagis’ poem “Testimony,” which observes that the perpetrators of the Holocaust were human beings, and that boots and uniforms – and death camps – were invented by humans, created in the image of God. Later in the poem, Pagis complicates things. While the first stanza resists the idea of Nazis as inhuman, a popular conception in the post-war decades, the second stanza suggests that the victims were made by a different creator, and therefore, by implication, the victims are external to the human realm. This remark ironically reflects the Nazi point of view, which indeed perceived the Jews as non-humans created by the devil, hence deserving to be treated only as a deceptive imitation of humans.⁸⁰ The poem’s third stanza stirs things even more. The shade floats up as smoke – a reference to the Jews burnt in the crematoria – and this smoke meets its creator, appearing as smoke as well. Biblical references implied here recall the God who guided the Israelites in the desert as a “pillar of cloud” (Ex. 13:22). Both Nazis and Jews, Pagis tells us, are created in the image of one God, although each actualizes a different dimension of that God. The perpetrators took the form of humans, capable of genocide, and the Jews, in keeping with

God's incorporeality (an important tenet of Jewish faith), took the formless existence of shade in life and smoke in death, floating up from the chimneys of the Nazi camps. Both, however, were created by the same God and through it, they share one realm.

Published in Pagis' collection "Transformations" (*Gilgul* 1970), "Testimony" (*edut*) undermines strict binary opposition of perpetrators and victims, even as it reinstates and then again challenges a sense that the two remain very distant from one another. In this way the poem evinces the process that over many decades has typified Israeli response to the Holocaust and its perpetrators. This response develops from dominantly – but not exclusively – excepting Nazis and Germans from the human realm, to locating both victims and victimizers of the Holocaust on a single plane and even undermining the boundary between them. Furthermore, when playing with the various possibilities of who is human and who is not, when presenting the common ground between Jews and Nazis indirectly, through deep irony, biblical allusions, and the linkage of opposite creatures to their one creator, "Testimony" renders the difficulty and discomfort involved, especially for survivors like Pagis but also more generally to Israelis, Jews and non-Jews, in placing both the Nazis and their victims in the category of the human. This play of attitudes in conceptualizing Holocaust perpetrators, its developing complexity, artistic possibilities, and ethical implications, have been manifesting themselves in Israeli public discourse since the 1940s. They fulfill a major role in the development of Israeli fiction responding to the Holocaust.

The four decades that passed between Ka-Tzetnik's *Salamandra* (1946) and Grossman's *See Under: Love* (1986) demonstrate a fundamental shift between modes of perpetrator representation in Hebrew and Israeli literature. In retrospect, it seems almost

as if the Nazis portrayed before the mid-seventies were not more than initial sketches to the literary people we meet after the mid-eighties. This poetic evolution, as I tried to establish throughout this dissertation, develops from an image, governed by the extra-literary prototype of the “Nazi demon,” to an individualized, concrete, and nuanced construction of a fully-fledged literary person. For my conclusion, I would like to examine three issues, which are complementary to the discussion conducted thus far. First, considering the fundamental shift in the mimetic conventions of perpetrator representation, are there, perhaps, aspects of perpetrator representation which have been less, if at all, impacted by this development, while evidencing continuity with the earlier perpetrator characters? In other words, what are the constants (vs. variables) in perpetrator representation in Hebrew and Israeli writing? And what are their implications? Second, the ethics of perpetrator representation was discussed consistently throughout this study but mostly in regard to narrative effect. Another question regards the more philosophical complications involved in such representation. What are the ethical perils and virtues of the very act of endowing perpetrators with a literary figure and voice, especially in the wider context of the ethics of Holocaust representation? Finally, looking forward: Gutfreund's *Our Holocaust*, the most recent novel discussed here, was published in 2000. A decade later, where is Israeli literature heading in its representation of Holocaust perpetrators? A combined discussion of these three issues concludes my study.

Within this remarkable literary and cultural growth in Hebrew and Israeli representation of Holocaust perpetrators, which rebels so explicitly against earlier mimetic conventions, two major aspects of character seem to persist. One is the

consistent avoidance of rendering the Nazi's mind in the most direct manner. In their renditions of literary perpetrators, the writers discussed here typically (and in the recent writing, generously) apply direct means of characterization, such as explicit narratorial commentary, as well as indirect means, such as commentary by other characters and, of course, the characters' own speech, gestures, and actions. But within this wealth of details about perpetrator characters, what is consistently missing or marginalized is what Dorrit Cohn calls "psycho-narration," that is, "the narrator's discourse about the character's consciousness" (14). Hebrew and Israeli writers consistently minimize if not exclude the use of this device in their characterization of Holocaust perpetrators, and any excursions they conduct into the mind of the perpetrators are brief, implied, and scarce. Even Grossman and Yehoshua, who present the Nazis most closely, make significant efforts to distance themselves from the characters they construct so sensitively: Grossman uses Wasserman to make explicit humanizing statements about Neigel, and Yehoshua only cites Egon's speech in a monologue, which appears like first person narration on the page but is yet a conversation. Even when writing fiction, with its poetic license and aesthetic possibilities, such as character complexity and psychological realism, and even when writing in a socio-cultural climate that demonstrates great empathy and openness to the Other, the Nazi mind remains sealed.

A second constant of perpetrator representation in Hebrew and Israeli fiction pertains to the character's affiliation and collaboration with the Nazis. In the earlier period, when perpetrator characters were simpler and prototypical, the conviction of an SS in the Nazi cause could be taken for granted by writers and readers alike. It is not an issue to contemplate or doubt, certainly not in the brief appearance these characters make.

For the later representations, the moral aspect of the Nazi ideology, actions, and way of life is a major concern, which gains explicit thematization. Egon, Neigel, Liebrecht's first person narrator, and Gutfreund's anonymous German general express unmistakable critique or at least discomfort with Nazism. Against the background of this consistent theme, it is important to observe that, while creating these fissures in the Nazi camp and individuals, recent writers also make efforts to maintain their characters within the perpetrator category. Gutfreund, for example, divides the Germans into "good" and "bad," and this way at least the latter category falls into the perpetrator prototype smoothly. Similarly, the unnamed wife of a commandant in Liebrecht's story never completes her attempt to discover what is actually happening in the camp, and therefore she cannot renounce or even advocate it. Yehoshua's Egon never really changed: he critiques Nazism for personal reasons of self-image and according to his fantastic vision of a possible future, but eventually he works for the Nazis and plays a role in the liquidation of the Jewish community of Crete. Grossman's Neigel, in contrast, demonstrates remarkable change in the emotional domain, with his growing empathy towards Wasserman, and even more than emotionally, Neigel grows morally. Under Wasserman's guidance, the commandant is confronted with the fact that his complicity with genocide is a matter of choice, and he can choose otherwise. But Neigel chooses to continue and even enhance his murderous acts, in which he takes pride. Eventually he does realize the evil to which he is committed, and this realization is one of the factors leading him to a mental collapse, which ends not with condemnation of his old Nazi self, but with suicide. This conclusion of Neigel's life indicates that this commandant – and, by extension, his historical equivalents – is ultimately unable to defeat the Nazi mindset.

The furthest this literary character can reach is recognition, which generates not self-change, but self-destruction. Complex representation enables doubt and fissures within the perpetrator's Nazi identification, but eventually, the recent perpetrator characters, like their simpler early predecessors, fulfill their role in the Nazi genocide.

It seems, then, that despite the remarkable differences between the two periods, contemporary Israeli writers are still committed to some of the conventions of the tradition against which they rebel. But why these two particular conventions? Why is it that of all the earlier conventions of perpetrator representation, the avoidance of direct rendition of the mind and the emphasis on the perpetrator's Nazi identity or affiliation are being preserved? A variety of motivations may offer an explanation for the persistence of these two conventions. Perhaps the writers feel that a direct rendition of the Nazi mind by an Israeli will be perceived as unreliable, and it may deprive the text of any cultural legitimacy in the reading public, which is already suspicious of a complex representation of Holocaust perpetrators. The need for public legitimacy may also explain why recent literary Nazis, although well-rooted in the details and possibilities of the Holocaust, tend to be unrealistic, and somewhat ridiculous and exaggerated. Neigel is a tough SS officer who develops a sense of guilt, who inhabits a fantastic and phantasmagorical storyworld, and who is doubly imagined: a product of the unfettered imagination of Shlomo, that is, a character imagined by Grossman. Egon, who is only loosely in touch with the reality of war around him, develops imaginative and unreasonable theories about humanity, and they make him save some Jews and persecute others. Kron is an SS but fulfills the almost absurd position of a treasurer in the organization, and who, almost fantastically, finds refuge in Israel. Engeldorf is isolated in forest with a Jewish family, which he sincerely

believes he can engineer into Nazis, and in the process he erroneously circumcises himself. By shaping each of these characters as improbable in both historical and psychological terms, the authors distance their fictional perpetrators from the historical ones, therefore strengthening their claim, as those “who were not there,” to writing about the Holocaust and especially about its perpetrators.

And perhaps, more than an intentional artistic choice, the persistence of conventions from an earlier era results from the personal challenges involved in imagining complex perpetrators. Humanizing a character complicit in genocide suggests ties if not similarities between writer and murderer, and these can pose a threat to the writer’s perception not only of the Nazi as Other but also of himself as human unwilling and unable to commit such atrocities. If the Nazis are not demons and monsters, they are dangerously close to us, and this threat is felt most powerfully by the characters’ creators. For a perpetrator character to demonstrate a substantial inner life rendered from within, such as, say, Momik the child, it is necessary for the author to “take the character’s place,” and immerse himself more thoroughly in the Nazi mind. That is a challenge that Israeli writers may not be ready to take just yet. However, as long as the character is rendered from the outside, even as closely as Grossman renders Neigel, and even if there are some brief excursions into its inner world, the distance between the Israeli writer and the Nazi character is maintained. Likewise, as long as the character’s Nazi identity or affiliation is emphasized, the basic categorization of the perpetrator is preserved, making it safer for the writer – as well as for the reader – to imagine a mass-murderer’s human dimensions and even doubts against the system he serves. By securing a stable ground in

the perpetrator category, the adherence to these two conventions enables recent writers to handle to the creative challenges posed by greater complexity of the literary perpetrator.

These constants of perpetrator representation put into relief the potential ethical perils involved in the complex mode. When literary perpetrators are individualized, when they are constructed as fully-fledged fictional persons and the historical rift between them and their victims is blurred, they are humanized, potentially evoking understanding, sympathy, and even identification on behalf of readers. A certain degree of sympathy towards Neigel or Egon may be an almost inevitable effect of reading such close and sensitive descriptions of characters, which certainly can, in some sense, be considered a sort of victim of the German and Nazi cultures. Other characters, such as Liebrecht's nameless first person speaker or Keren's Engledorf can capture the reader's immediate sympathy simply through the sheer force of first person narration applied in internal monologue or a personal journal. But in Israeli writing, such reduction of the emotional and intellectual distance between reader and character, which is evoked through the mode of narration, is held in check. First, the complex characterization of perpetrators in the texts discussed here never exhausts its full potential, as it never provides a comprehensive presentation of the perpetrator's inner life, as it does with Jewish characters. We do not have, for example, a direct rendition of a Nazi's thoughts at the time of killing. To the extent that sympathy and understanding towards a character are generated by direct rendition of its inner life, such effect is minimized. Just as importantly, the authors consistently emphasize that, despite any conflicts of identity or critique of Nazism, their imagined perpetrators continue to fulfill their function within the Nazi system. Even Neigel, who show the greatest discomfort with Nazism of all the recent perpetrator

characters, continues to actualize his genocidal duties until his last moment. In final balance, despite their innovative character complexity, practically all perpetrators in the new wave maintain their conventional plot-function which overlaps with historical precedence: complicity, if not initiative and even leadership, in the Nazi genocide against the Jews.

The persistence of these earlier mimetic conventions in recent Israeli writing becomes especially clear in view of texts bordering the literature examined here both synchronically and diachronically. Two recent novels by American-Jewish authors are especially instructive in this context. Jonathan Safran-Foer's *Everything is Illuminated* (2002) tells the story of a young American Jew traveling to the Ukraine in search of its pre-war family origins. His guide on the trip is an old Ukrainian who turns out to be the very person who extradited the American's grandfather to the Nazis. The novel uses a compelling stream of consciousness monologue to render the Ukrainian's agonizing moral and emotional dilemma: to hand his Jewish friend to the Nazis and save his village, or hide the Jew and risk the life of his community. In terms of presenting the character's mind, Safran-Foer is more daring than Israeli writers. He does, however, maintain a considerable distance from other aspects of the perpetrator in portraying not a German but a Ukrainian, and not a Nazi or SS but a collaborator, whose collaboration serve as means to save his own life, family, and village. This safe distance from any other quality of the perpetrator prototype provides Safran-Foer the solid ground for his daring rendition of mind. Notably more daring in representing the inner world of the perpetrator is another American-Jewish writer, Jonathan Littell, in his French-language novel *The Kindly Ones* (2006). This massive book is a fictive but historically grounded first person narrative of

an SS officer, including detailed description of the atrocities he witnesses and commits, as well as the officer's confessions and thoughts. Never before, certainly in Jewish writing, was a perpetrator so directly affiliated with the Nazi genocidal machine given such clear voice and almost a thousand pages to speak his mind, and this is one reason why the book was criticized as strongly as it was acclaimed. Little does apply means for distancing many readers from forming a sense of closeness with Max Aue, the Nazi officer, such as involving this character in especially vivid and gruesome scenes of massacre and disfigurement, as well as in vulgar sexual scenes sex. Nevertheless, this SS officer is given an unlimited opportunity to present his version of the Holocaust, from his perspective, with all the narrative effect involved in first person narration, first and foremost, the reduction of distance between reader and character and the evocation of sympathy. This is the ethical boundary, which Israeli writing has been probing for the last two and a half decades through the various means of complex representation. Probing the limits, but never daring, or perhaps even attempting, to cross.

In the Israeli scene, the literary representation of perpetrators, especially in terms of continuity and innovation, takes an interesting turn in a very recent text. *Fine People* (*Anashim tovim* 2011), by a young Israeli writer, Nir Baram, tells two stories which eventually intersect during WWII. One is of Natasha Wiseburg, a young Russian Jewish woman who serves as an investigator for the Stalin regime, and the other is of Thomas Hazleberg, an opportunistic young German businessman and marketing specialist, who initially thrives in the Nazi service, although not being committed to its ideology. In keeping with the conventions of the new wave of perpetrator representation, the German and the Jew demonstrate a striking analogy, which weakens the boundary between them:

both are young people who prosper by utilizing their personal skills for “reading people” – interrogation or propaganda – in the service of murderous dictatorships.

Unconventionally, Baram’s narrative violates the two constant elements of perpetrator characters kept by earlier writers. First, while other writers of the new wave avoid direct rendition of the perpetrator’s inner life, the narrator in *Fine People* renders the German’s mind directly and authoritatively. Second, while other writers emphatically reaffirm the characters’ complicity in the genocide against the Jews, Thomas lacks any direct connection to the Nazi genocide. His work for the German ministry of foreign affairs consists of composing psychological profiles for the nations Germany occupies, such as the Poles and the Russians, and what Thomas is mostly concerned about is his personal and professional situation. As if to justify this inner and complex rendition of this operative of the Nazi system, in various cases this character – and others it comes in contact with, including SS officers – expresses abhorrence for the Nazi violence.

May Baram’s novel be indicating the emergence of a new trend, which rejects the remaining constants preserved by his immediate predecessors in Israeli Holocaust fiction? Perhaps. In such case, however, Baram’s innovation is not in the sense that Israeli Holocaust fiction since the mid-eighties differs from to the writing conducted before the mid-seventies. One factor that unites the representations of the Holocaust in both the early and the later periods is almost self-evident: the centrality of the Holocaust as the novel’s motivating force and thematic focus. In fact, the recent writers provide descriptions of the Nazi horrors on a level of detail that was uncommon in the earlier writing, with the exception of Ka-Tzetnik. In Baram’s novel, the fate of Jews during the war gains minimal and marginal presence in the novel. Besides some rumors or

accidental sights the main character witness, the Holocaust is completely absent from the story. It is this marginalization, almost absence, of the Holocaust in the novel that enables – in terms of ethics and cultural legitimacy – such generous characterization of Thomas, as a complex character who resists Nazism and is rendered from within. In this sense, the most tangible innovation about Baram's text is the fact that an Israeli writer can write a novel about Nazi Germany which is not concerned with Jews and their destruction.

Fine People demonstrates that although the complex representation of perpetrators continues and perhaps increases in Israeli literature of 2011, the moral challenge that this complexity generates is lighter. This challenge reached its peak with the breakthrough of the new wave in 1986: first and foremost with Grossman's *See Under: Love* and Yehoshua's *Mr. Mani*, which involve the most developed perpetrators in Hebrew literature at the very site and act of killing. The challenge is also seen, although on a smaller scale, in Liebrecht's "The Strawberry Girl," which takes place in a concentration camp. In later works, such as Levi's *The Legend of the Sad Lakes* (1989) and Keren's *Anatomy of Revenge* (1993), the moral challenge posed by a humanized SS persists, although it is more limited since Yoachim Kron and Julius Engeldorf are not as developed and self-contradictory as Neigel and Egon. Gutfreund's *Our Holocaust* (2000) explicitly categorizes Germans – and Jews – as "good" or "bad," and this complexity on the level of the category substitutes for complexity on the level of the individual character. *Fine People* takes place in Nazi Germany, and one of its two protagonists works for the Nazis, but the Holocaust and the Jews are marginal to the storyline. Perhaps these last two novels anticipate the completion of the process that characterizes Holocaust perpetrators since the mid-eighties. The level of complexity in the individual perpetrator,

which makes the character both human and monstrous, an individual as well as an agent of evil, a literary person rather than a puppet or an image set by an extra-literary category, has not been matched since the novels of Grossman and Yehoshua. Neither was the level of moral challenge such complexity presents to its readers.

Baram's novel, however, evokes a different ethical problem. If Grossman was criticized for humanizing Neigel to the extent that may evoke sympathy and forgiveness, Thomas' involvement in perpetration is obscured to an extent that diffuses the problematic issue of German collective and indirect accountability for the Holocaust. Such approach is already seen in Gutfreund, who, by dividing "bad" and "good" German and Jews, in fact evades full confrontation with the problem of silent complicity with genocide by a single person or a community. The ethical implication of Baram's evasion of the issue of Holocaust perpetration is that such evasion indirectly leads to exoneration, as if the Holocaust involved only bystanders and victims, but no victimizers; or, in Gutfreund's novel, as if Jews and Germans are "bad" or "good" in the same way and for the same reasons. It is here, I think, that the writing of the eighties and nineties – especially in its pioneer phase – demonstrates its innovation and contribution. The new wave can certainly be accused of humanizing the perpetrators, but it also attempts, in various ways and to varying degrees of success, to restrain this humanization and the sympathy it may evoke. Just as importantly, what makes the humanization of evil so unsettling on the level of readerly effect is the ambiguities it generates: were the perpetrators humans or monsters? "Ordinary Men," as Browning defines them in the nineties, or "Murderous Robots," as G. M. Gilbert finds them in the sixties?⁸¹ These questions, which have been occupying historians, social psychologists, and philosophers

for decades, gain a valuable treatment in literature. As Yehoshua argues, literature deals with truth which is “evasive, personal, partial and often controversial entity” (2000, xxii). Furthermore, as he emphasizes, literature can “touch and focus not only on reality, but also on the region of moral determination.” The moral focus is especially powerful in literature, which locates the moral issue not in the reader’s cognition, but rather, through the power of identification, immerses it within the reader’s personality, as his own personal dilemma.

Yehoshua seems to be utilizing this moral stance in his imaginative writing, when time and again he places Egon at a junction, which requires a choice involving moral implications: risking his life on the Eastern front or hunting Jews in Crete? Supporting or critiquing Nazism? Incarcerating the Manis or just as easily overlooking their existence on the island? These dilemmas and choices are not evident on the surface of Egon’s monologue, and they are revealed through a reading which resists the sympathy and sense of identification that this charming and displaced young German may evoke among readers. The process, in which the reader realizes that he has been identifying with a Nazi, leads effectively to an inner moral conflict. Grossman seems to be taking a similar approach when Neigel, who gains our sympathy in part three of the novel, engages in theoretical debates about the ethics of genocide early in part four, and only towards the end of the novel is revealed to have brutally murdered Wasserman’s daughter. In both cases, the sharp incongruity between various dimensions of one character involves the reader personally in the moral judgment of the perpetrator. Such works of fiction, which can deal with this profoundly problematic challenge of representation in a balanced, responsible, and complex manner, set example for future Holocaust writing.

The art of balancing the literary representation of perpetrators between the demonic and the human is not easy to master. As Browning and Goldhagen establish, the perpetrators did have a choice. And they did experience conflict, psychologically and socially, over if, how, and why they should initiate and continue to execute their role in the genocide. Being conflicted makes them human; it is the choice they made that is inhuman. Simplified, flat, and prototypical constructions of Nazi characters, such as those dominant in the Hebrew and Israeli fiction written in the decades immediately following the Holocaust, cannot convey this complexity. It leads not only to an unbalanced portrayal, which duplicates the mechanism of anti-Semitic propaganda, but also to diffusion of the perpetrator's individual agency within the Nazi "network of bureaucratic and technological causality," to use Lang's terms. If not presented as individuals, if not presented as people who made a choice to become Nazis and serve the Nazis, the perpetrators are reduced to a faceless mass or dismissed as some freaks of nature, excluded from the realm of humans, who are accountable and are subjected to human ethics and judgment. In contrast, assigning the perpetrators individuality and moral accountability refers the Nazi evil and its collective execution back to concrete intelligible agents. When the perpetrators of the new wave are given a rich life and unique voice, when they present their case, the risk of sympathy indeed arises, but so does the opportunity for readers to confront the Nazi evil in a complex way. When confronting the perpetrators as individuals, not puppets or demons, readers are offered the opportunity to apply their own judgment. The chance of perceiving them as some sort of helpless victims make this judgment all the more challenging and therefore more valuable and sincere. Furthermore, an active confrontation with perpetrator characters who subvert

the conventional prototype deautomatizes prevalent conceptions and replaces them with a portrayal, which not only challenges the reader ethically and aesthetically, but also reflects the perspectives and moral considerations of the contemporary reading audience. As long as it maintains its factual, aesthetic, and ethical balance, such deautomatization ultimately serves the task of memorialization effectively, as it forces us to confront – emotionally and intellectually, actively and continuously – the enigmas, relevance, and evil of the Holocaust.

Notes

¹ For further discussion of the term “Sho’ah” see Lang (xii-xiii), Bartov (1998), and Tal.

² These collaborators received a more central part in American-Jewish novels, such as Leslie Esptein’s *King of the Jews* and Jonathan Safran-Foer’s *Everything is Illuminated*.

³ For a comprehensive discussion of the “Nazis and Nazi Collaborators Punishment Law” and its social context and impact, see Yablonka 1996. For a similar English version see Yablonka 1998.

⁴ The “Yishuv” is the Hebrew term for the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine before 1948. We should mention that the negative attitude towards the Judenrat and the masses of victims, who went as “sheep to the slaughter,” originates in that group of survivors who participated in the rebellions against the Nazis. When justifying the way of struggle, these survivors criticized the rest (Yablonka 1996, 136).

⁵ The source of the phrase in the context of the Holocaust is in a pamphlet posted in the Vilna ghetto in December 1941 , calling the Jews to join the rebellion rather than go “like sheep to laughter.” It was later utilized in in young Israel as critique of the millions who did not rebel.

⁶ For further discussion of the impact of the Eichmann trial on the shaping of Holocaust memory in Israel see Yablonka 2000, 2004, and Anita Shapira: “The changes in public discourse subsequent to the Eichmann trials led to a more sympathetic assessment of the dilemmas faced by Jewish leaders during the Holocaust. In the event, the issue of the Judenrat faded from Israeli public discussion” (33).

⁷ These headlines and others appear in a collection of photographs in Yablonka 2001, unnumbered pages beginning after page 224. For an elaborate discussion of Eichmann’s perception in Israeli culture see chapter 2.

⁸ This historical sequence of events is covered thoroughly in Segev 1991, part IV.

⁹ These observations, from Adorno’s passage “All the world’s not a stage” in *Minima Moralia*, are later developed in his “Engagement,” which presents his known dictum regarding poetry after Auschwitz.

¹⁰ It was dominantly Bradley that L. C. Knights criticized (if not mocked) in his famous lecture “How many children had Lady Macbeth,” while concluding that “the only profitable approach to Shakespeare is a consideration of his plays as dramatic poems, of his use of language to obtain total complex emotional response” (10). However, we must note that although Bradley may have been carried away in his practice, his first lecture (in the passage cited by Knights himself!) moderately postulates a balance between action and character: “The centre of the tragedy, therefore, may be said with equal truth to lie in action issuing from character or in character

issuing in action” (7). Bradley distinguishes between action and plot but the relation between the two is strong, and through this relation, Bradley in fact relates character to structure in the same way Aristotle and Propp do it, although from the opposite direction.

¹¹ Beller and Leerssen’s *Imagology* offers an introduction to the field and a survey of various national characters. See pages 159-166 for a discussion of the Germans.

¹² Holocaust writing in Hebrew conducted in Europe during WWII, as well as writing in Yiddish and other languages, constitute entirely different bodies of literature, which their own literary map and historiographical scholarship. Roskies (1984, 1989) provide a thorough critical survey of this corpus.

¹³ Nurit Govrin titles this group of writers, who were both present and absent in the destruction, “On their Flesh from Afar” (2002, I, 303-323).

¹⁴ For my definitions of the “simple” and complex “modes,” see chapter 1, section IV.

¹⁵ For a review of various approaches to “mode” see Ryan (315-16).

¹⁶ Saul Friedlander provides a concise but rich account of the accomplishments of German-Jewry just before the rise of Nazism (77-80).

¹⁷ See Dina Porat’s *Hanhaga bemilkud* (23-73) for a compelling survey of the growing awareness of the Yishuv to the events in Europe. The agency’s announcement is cited on p. 64.

¹⁸ The “1948 Generation” refers to writers born or grew up in Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s. They started publishing at the late thirties. Among them: Moshe Shamir, Hanokh Bartov, S. Yizhar, Aharon Meged.

¹⁹ Greenberg (1896-1981) was born in Galicia and immigrated to Palestine in 1923. He was working as a journalist and editor in Poland in 1939 and escaped to Palestine two weeks after the war broke. His family was left behind and perished in the Holocaust.

²⁰ Especially interesting is the argument made by *Mapam*, the socialist party. They, as Neima Barzel observes, placed responsibility on the Nazi leadership rather than on the German people as a whole, and focused their criticism on West Germany. The East was under Soviet sponsorship, which *Mapam* considered morally superior (Barzel 1994, 261).

²¹ The 1946 edition of *Salamandra* is not available in English (the English translation is based on the 1971 edition of the book). All translations from the 1946 edition are mine.

²² This observation, made in 1992, holds true for the bulk of Appelfeld’s writing. As of the late nineties, he moves into a more direct treatment of the Holocaust.

²³ For a thorough discussion of Shoffman's life and writing see Govrin's biographical study (1982).

²⁴ My translation. The bulk of Shoffman's Holocaust prose appears in the volumes 2-4 of *Kol Kitvei Gershon Shoffman*. For references to many of these texts, interpretations, and a survey of his life and work at the time, see Govrin 1982, especially 169-198, and 2002, II, 303-323.

²⁵ The text was originally published in the Hebrew journal *Moznayim* in 1935. See Govrin, 1982, 684. Here I refer to the story as it appears in Shoffman's collected writings, III, 47-58.

²⁶ "Hagimgum hasheni" was written in April 1945 and published in the short-lived journal *Yalkut hareim* (1943-1946), in the summer of that year, right after the war ended. The pagination used here refers to the 1992 reprint of the journal. The story gained notable critical attention recently within the ongoing debate on the attitude of young Israel to the survivors. See, for example, Gertz (2004, 107-108), Malo (2009, 141-142), Holtzman (2006), Govrin (2002, 335-344).

²⁷ Another consequence of all these similarities between the camp and the kibbutz – both are small communities organized around labor, both employ the two survivors in a sawmill, and in both the two Jews are subordinates, either as Jews under Nazis or as refugees among *Sabras* – is a strong analogy between the kibbutz and the camp, which draws a sharp social criticism of the way *Sabras* treated newcomers.

²⁸ *Shaul veyohana* is not available in English translation. All references are to the 1999 Hebrew edition. Scholarly and critical discussions of the trilogy are relatively limited in both length and number, especially in recent decades. For some of the available discussions, see Gershon Shaked (1983, 1993), Malka Shaked (1990), and Hanna Yaoz (1980).

²⁹ The dialogue between Emil and Edith appears in volume II of this edition, 100-105. Hannah Yaoz deals with the social-economic dimension of Repke's development, in contrast to pure Nazi and anti-Semitic motivation (30-31).

³⁰ I refer here to Haim Gouri's novella *The Chocolate Deal* (1965) and to Yehuda Amichai's massive novel *Not of this time, Not of this place* (1963). Both narrate the return of Jews to Germany after the war. Bartov, Kaniuk, and Oz are discussed below. For a critical survey of these texts of sixties (except Oz) as well as of the cultural atmosphere that led Israeli writers to confront the Holocaust at that time, see Mintz (1984, 239-259).

³¹ *Pitsei bagrut* also means "acne." The English translation is titled *The Brigade* for some unclear reason, while its fourth chapter, whose Hebrew title is similar to that of the novel, is called, much more appropriately, "growing pains." All citations here are from the English edition.

³² Mintz, however, although appreciative of Kaniuk's ambition, is less impressed with his accomplishments in this novel, which Mintz finds to be "full of hits and misses" (252).

³³ Gilead Morahg (2001) observes that *Adam Resurrected* is an antecedent of Grossman's *See Under: Love* in various way: treatment of the Holocaust through a non-realistic mode of writing, the resemblance in life story between Kaniuk's Adam Stein and Grossman's Anshel Wasserman, and also revealing the human side of the perpetrators.

³⁴ Nitsa Ben-Dov seems to be more appreciative of the novel and suggests an interesting interpretation of how the opposites unite in the novel's narrative closure (2000, 37-38).

³⁵ Another play, in which Sobol demonstrates Israel's new perception of Germans and Germany is *The Father*, based on a *Der Vater*, a German play by Niklas Frank, son of Hans Frank, the Nazi governor of Poland who was hung in Nuremberg. In *The Father*, Frank and Sobol collaborate in the creation of a play that ridicules Hans Frank and expresses the son's powerful rejection of his father's crimes and even personality. Sobol's participation in the project, which differentiates old Germany from a new Germany critical of its past, serves as a strong indication of a new trend in Israeli perception of Germans. I thank Yehoshua Sobol for providing me a copy of this unpublished play.

³⁶ Arab-Nazi and Judeo-Nazi analogies gained clear expression also in Israeli cinema and drama. For valuable discussion of the topic see Tsimmerman (134-139).

³⁷ Firer is following here the path initially identified by Haim Schatzker, who already in the early sixties warned against demonization of the Holocaust in instruction. Schatzker also warns against dwarfing and diminishing the Holocaust, if instead of realizing its abnormality, it is "explained away" as one possible venue of human behavior. The educational dilemma, then, is realizing the mid-way between the demonic and the banal (1980, 221-22). This view is also contended by historians such as Yehuda Bauer: "If the problem is perceived as being primarily one of God's intervention, or of Satan's, then we do not have to bother about historical understanding. Instead of the Nazis being responsible, an inexorable, mysterious, super-natural force caused this event" (45).

³⁸ See also Segev, 1991 (453).

³⁹ Literally means "*Veterans' Talk*," translated as *The Seventh Day: Soldier's Talk about the Six Day War*.

⁴⁰ Tsimmerman attributes great significance to the 1967 war as the time of the shift in the perception and discussion of the Holocaust in Israeli society. It was then, he argues, that the Holocaust could be discussed in Israel as a relevant and tangible experience (225). That is in

opposition to the common agreement that this point was the Eichmann trial in the early sixties or the Kastern trial in mid-fifties.

⁴¹ For a partial list of “Holocaust vocabulary” in contemporary Israel language and journalism see Rubik Rosenthal.

⁴² The first Hebrew novel by an Arab writer is Atallah Mansour's *In a New Light* (*Beor hadash*; 1966), translated into English in 1969. However, it is Shammas' 1986 novel that left its mark as the breakthrough of an Arab writer into the Israeli literary scene.

⁴³ Moshe Tsimerman observes similar developments in the representation of Arabs in Israeli Cinema (2002, 114).

⁴⁴ See Morahg (2001) for a detailed discussion of the net of ties between *See Under: Love* and *Adam Resurrected*.

⁴⁵ For Liebrecht's biographical background, see Liebrecht (1993, 125–130) and Rattok (10–13).

⁴⁶ Some of these stories are available in English translation in *Apples from the Desert*. See Rattok.

⁴⁷ Bonds between women are central in Liebrecht's work, which Rattok characterizes as women literature (12).

⁴⁸ Levi's representation of the Nazi from within and the sympathy it may evoke lead Holtzman to harsh criticism of the book, the same kind of criticism he leveled at *See Under: Love*, for the same reason (2005, 93).

⁴⁹ As Feiner himself made efforts to erase his pre-Holocaust personal history in an attempt to maintain his Holocaust persona (born in Auschwitz 1943, his official CV reads), his biographical details are somewhat doubtful. Most accounts date his birth to 1917, but Yechiel Szeintuch's recent monography of Ka-Tzetnik, which is the most thorough study of Ka-Tzetnik available today, presents new and reliable information that the year is 1909 (31-32). See chapter five and six in Szeintuch for other biographical details and Jeremy Popkin for an analysis of the cultural and biographical dimensions of this unique pen-name.

⁵⁰ A transcript of Ka-Tzetnik's testimony in the Eichmann trial is conveniently available in Szeintuch (407-408).

⁵¹ Bartov explores some other possible meanings of the names De-Nur and Ka-Tzetnik (1997, 43).

⁵² For a detailed discussion of the variations between the Hebrew and Yiddish versions of *Slamandra* see chapter 3 in Szeintuch. The Yiddish original of the book was never published.

⁵³ Szeintuch thoroughly establishes that *Salamandra* is rooted both in Ka-Tzetnik's biography and the historical facts of his community during the Holocaust. In fact, *Salamandra*, according to

Szeintuch, is credible enough to be used as an independent document for the historical research of the Jewish community of Zaglambia, Poland, under the Nazis (Szeintuch, chapter 3 and 67-68). Szeintuch establishes the factual ground of Ka-Tzetnik's other books as well, although more generally.

⁵⁴ *Salamandra* 1946 indicates a citation from the 1946 edition, and the translation is mine.

Salamandra 1971 indicates the 1971 edition, and the translations are from the English edition, *Sunrise over Hell*.

⁵⁵ In Dreyer's office Ka-Tzetnik first saw Eichmann, who destroyed the Jew's foreign passport, dooming him to remain in the ghetto. See Ka-Tzetnik's written testimony in preparation for the Eichmann trial. Moniac Matroz is the literary equivalent of Moshe Merin, chairman of the Judenrat in Eastern Upper Silesia from its inception in September 1939 to liquidation in August 1943 (Szeintuch 25-29).

⁵⁶ In her "German Embodiments of Europe in Modern Hebrew Literature," Ziva Ben-Porat finds that even after the Holocaust Hebrew writers maintain this positive image in relation to German characters. Rather than revise the cultural construct once Europe became a Jewish graveyard, writers use it as a tool of criticism, but its positive ground persists.

⁵⁷ See Beller, 159-166; Peabody, 109-123. These characteristics have been associated with the "authoritarian personality" theory developed after WWII to explain the participation, active or passive, of the German people in the acts of National-Socialism.

⁵⁸ In both Ka-Tzetnik's text and historical research of Moshe Merin and his Judenrat, the violation was related to the foreign passports, which the Judenrat was reluctant to convey to those Jews, who were able to acquire them. Ka-Tzetnik mentions Moshe Merin in his testimony in the police (Szeintuch 25).

⁵⁹ Eichmann, who studied some Hebrew and Jewish history, is a rare exception.

⁶⁰ See Levi's chapter 4, "communication," in *The Drowned and the Saved*.

⁶¹ Szeintuch indicates the gap in style, content, and idea between the Yiddish original and the Hebrew translation of Ka-Tzetnik. In the Yiddish original the Germans speak German, and the Jews use the Yiddish idiom of Poland and particularly that of Zaglambia, Feiner's home-district in Poland, as well as the terminology of the camp and ghetto. These linguistic nuances disappear even in the 1946 Hebrew translation which is the fullest and most accurate. Szeintuch argues that the very translation to Hebrew weakens the communicative power of the book because Yiddish was the language of the victims (164).

⁶² Knowledge of the German language could endow a person a “function” within the Nazi administration. Primo Levi articulates the issue succinctly from first hand in *The Drowned and the Saved*: “knowing German meant life” (95).

⁶³ Interestingly, while both Morahg (1999) and Mintz (1984) gladly recognize Appelfeld as the talented exception to the scarcity of Israeli Holocaust fiction in the first decades of statehood, they do not recognize Ka-Tzetnik, who is a survivor as well and even in a more symbolic sense as he went through Auschwitz. By the time Appelfeld published his first collection in 1962, Ka-Tzetnik was already a well-known figure and writer, especially due to his testimony in the Eichmann trial, which both Mintz and Morahg discuss.

⁶⁴ There are other factors that may have drawn the attention of current scholars to Ka-Tzetnik’s early writing, regardless of their interpretation of his work. One issue is the scandal of 1993, when Ka-Tzetnik stole his old book of poems from the national library and burnt it. The other is Ka-Tzetnik’s death in 2001.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of the Israeli Holocaust discourse of the fifties, see chapter 2.

⁶⁶ In Hebrew, the word *haya* is used for both “animal” and “beast” in the phrase the “Nazi Beast.”

⁶⁷ It was the meticulous and skillful reproduction of this specific moment in Israel, which mostly captivated the critics, especially in book reviews following the novel’s publication in 1986 in Hebrew and 1989 in English. See, for example, reviews by Alan Mintz (2001), Ruth Wisse, and Gershon Shaked (1989).

⁶⁸ This is not the only innovative dimension of part four, which, according to Naomi Sokoloff, “challenges the conventions of the genre” and “creates a dynamic that undermines faith in encyclopedias” (145). Sokoloff’s essay investigates in detail the tension between traditional Holocaust encyclopedias and Grossman’s imaginative one, which demonstrates unique virtues, such as a focus on the personal dimension of the Holocaust.

⁶⁹ The corresponding details can be located on pages 280-282 in Grossman and 31-32 in Höss’ autobiography.

⁷⁰ The Hebrew original reads that Neigel gripped his “temples” (*raqotav*; 359), while the English, for some reason, reads “knees” (404).

⁷¹ In her discussion of Ruth Minsky Sender’s Holocaust memoir, Hamida Bosmajian develops the same kind of critique that Mintz is making against Grossman in regard to a perpetrator’s affection for literature. Bosmajian argues that even if such humanistic moments did exist in the camps, and even if it did save individual lives, it is naïve to ignore the oppressive and victimizing context in which art comes up (165-66).

⁷² One rare exception is Adam Newton's essay on *Mr. Mani* and Sebald's *The Emigrants*.

⁷³ For a reason unclear to me, Halkin chose to translate *milhama* (107 in the Hebrew) as “battle” rather than as “war,” creating the sense that Egon tried to evade and understand the battle and not the war as a whole.

⁷⁴ See Michael Gluzman's *The Zionist Body* for an examination of the physical metamorphosis the Zionist revolution was supposed to procure: from the weak exilic Jewish body to that of the Zionist pioneer and soldier in Palestine.

⁷⁵ It is evident in the novel that Yehoshua attempted – as he affirmed in interviews – to endow the Hebrew of his characters some qualities of the language of conversation. Nitza Ben-Ari finds that the Hebrew of the second conversation reveals “traces” of German, while Yedidya Itzhaki argues that Egon's language is very close to current Hebrew. I think that although the traces are certainly there, the text is read fluently and creates a strong illusion of real speech. The long and complex sentences, that are said to reflect German, can easily be accounted for by the speaker's emotional state, and they are in fact typical of all conversations in the novel, conducted by excited speakers. The sense of foreignness becomes much stronger in the concluding two conversations, given in an older Hebrew style.

⁷⁶ Feierberg's novella also concludes with a vague prophecy about the reemergence of the East. The Jews, argues Nahman, should join the East not as Zionists – who separate themselves from their neighbors – but as revivers of the ancient Orient and its culture. Such a vision of immersion beyond identity in a site of historical glory, resembles that of Egon.

⁷⁷ The phrase “contaminate our pure blue womb” is my translation to the phrase, which appears on p.139 in the Hebrew original. It is missing for some reason from p.137 of Halkin's translation.

⁷⁸ See chapter three for an elaborated discussion of these transformations in the Israeli socio-cultural system during the early eighties.

⁷⁹ Multiple story details support the correlation between the German presence in Crete and the Israeli one in Lebanon: both Egon and Efi, the Israeli soldier in the first conversation, lose their glasses and a Mani provides them with a substitute; both are scholars of the humanities and military medics serving unwillingly in occupied territories. See Gertz for a more detailed discussion of the rich net of ties between Israeli culture and Egon's language and thought (1995, 314), and Balaban for additional correspondences between Egon and Jewish characters in the novel (57–58).

⁸⁰ “Shade” is the English translation for *tsel* in the Hebrew original, which also means “shadow.” In the context of the poem, the Jews are shadows of humans – imitations, as the Nazis believed.

Another nuance lost in the translation is that *tselem* echoes the sound of the word *tselem*, translated to English as “image.” The relation between the two Hebrew words demonstrates orthographically the view that Jews are less than humans.

⁸¹ Browning speaks of Police Battalion 101 and Gilbert, the prison psychologist at the Nuremberg Trial, on the SS, and this transition from the center of the Nazi killing machine to its margins is indicative of the development in approach to the perpetrators. Although these scholarly models are based on different organizations and communities of perpetrators, the questions they raise permeates the category of perpetrators as whole, especially to the Israeli, but also general, public eye, where they compete for dominance in defining the perpetrators.

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