

Let the Other be Me - The Theo-Political Predicament and the Arab in Shin Shalom's Early Writings

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Volume 20 Issue 1 (March 2018) Article 5**Haim O. Rechnitzer,****"Let the Other be Me - The Theo-Political Predicament and the Arab in
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Abstract: In his article "Let the Other be Me - The Theo-Political Predicament and the Arab in Shin Shalom's Early Writings" Haim O. Rechnitzer explores the theo-political predicament as reflected in the writings of poet, playwright and novelist Shin Shalom (Parczew Poland 1904–Haifa, Israel 1980). Particular attention is given to writings composed during the intensification of violence between Arabs and Jews in Mandatory Palestine from the early 1920s through the Arab revolt of 1936-39. This period is also a volatile period in Shalom's life; *Aliya* (Zionist immigration to the Land of Israel) with a Hasidic Zionist group, leaving the Hasidic settlement *Kfar Hasidim* and way of life for the mostly Arab populated Galilee, traveling to Germany for a couple of years and back to the *Yeshuv* (Pre-State Zionist Society in the Land of Israel), this time to Tel-Aviv. Shalom's writings during this period tell the story of a theological and existential crisis caused by the collision between mystical Hasidic aspirations for union of the self with God and his creation and the presence of the Arab as the *other* and the enemy. Reading Shalom's works with an eye towards the theological-political predicament offers a perspective that is yet to be fully articulated in scholarship dedicated to Shalom's works and more broadly to the theological undercurrents of what is considered 'secular Zionist culture,' and the unique role of the poet as a prophet of the Jewish national revival.

Haim O. RECHNITZER**Let the Other be Me - The Theo-Political Predicament and the Arab in Shin Shalom's Early Writings**

Shin Shalom, was the penname of Shalom Joseph Shapira, an acclaimed Israeli poet, playwright, essayist and translator. Shalom was born in Parczew, Poland in 1904 to a distinguished Hasidic family. His grandfather, the Admor (Hasidic leader) Haim Meir Yehiel Shapira was a descendant of the Maggid of Kuznitz and the Admor Israel Friedman of Ruzhin, both disciples of the Great Maggid of Mezeritch (1704-1772) lineage. His father, Rabbi Avraham Yaakov Shapira was known as *the Admor the Painter*, a rabbi-artist, a unique phenomenon in the Jewish tradition. From childhood, Shalom received a traditional Jewish education in the spirit of Hasidism that included Kabbalah teaching and its mystical customs and rites. At the breakout of First world war (1914) the family fled to Vienna where his parents decided to incorporate secular studies into Shalom's religious education. Within a short time of relocating to Vienna he mastered the German language and was able to write poems that earned the appreciation of his private tutor. The family immigrated to Jerusalem in 1922, and in 1925 joined 50 Hasidic families in establishing a pioneering religious agricultural settlement, known later as *Kefar Hasidim*, in the Jezreel Valley. In 1928 Shalom left his family and moved to the new Jewish settlement *Rosh Pinnah* in the northern Galilee. During the first three decades of his life Shalom settled in various locations including Jerusalem, Rehovot, Tel-Aviv, and Rosh-Pinnah. After the Arab riots of 1929 (*Meora'ot Tarpat*) he left to study philosophy at the University of Elangen, Nuremberg (1931-1933) where he met his wife, the violinist Clara Fried. In 1951 he finally settled in Haifa and became the city's poet laureate and honoree Citizen. He died in Haifa in 1990 (Barzel, *Mysticism* 13-54). Shalom's literary career stretched over more than six decades, from the late 1920s to early 1990s, and over more than two dozen books of poetry, several plays and numerous essays. He was amongst the prominent Hebrew literary figures of the *Third Aliyah* (Zionist immigration to the Land of Israel) and during the first two decades of his career enjoyed the support of one of the greatest Hebrew poets of modern times, Hayim Nahman Bialik and that of the author Shmuel Yosef Agnon as well as the appreciation of many in the Hebrew literary elite. Especially within the circle of the poet and editor Yitzhak Lamdan (1897-1954). Shalom received highly regarded prizes such as the 'Bialik Prize' for poetry (1940), the Tschernichovsky Prize for translations (1945) the Brenner Prize for his collected poems (1966), and the most prestige Israel Prize for literature (1973). However, his popularity declined over the years and his writings became less known to contemporary audiences of Hebrew readers.

My interest in Shalom is driven by the cultural and scholarly importance of the encounter between a mystical-Hasidic perspective that challenges the demarcations between the Arab and the Jew, and the realization of Zionism via violent struggle. Previous scholarship has commented on the mystical aspects and Hasidic influences in Shalom's poetry but stopped short of identifying its particular sources or pursuing their theo-political ramifications (Lipsker, *The Poetry*; Avneri, *The Poetry*). Though Shalom is at the focus of this paper we should note that he is one amongst several poets including Avraham Shlonsky, Avraham Ḥalfi, and Amir Gilboa to name a few, who were influenced by Hasidism and its mystical tradition. I believe that a closer analysis of Shalom's verse can heighten our appreciation of the influence of Jewish Hasidic-mystical sources on Zionist political theology of its own and later eras. This research is part of a larger project aimed at the reconstruction of theology and political-theology of Modern Hebrew poetry. The list of poets includes Avraham Shlonsky, Uri Zvi Greenberg, Yitzhak Lamdan, and Amir Gilboa. By 'political theology' I mean the use of a theological perspectives within which political reality receives its meaning and interpretation and by which political actions are prescribed. Theology assumes a political role when it determines or impacts our definition of the "is" as well as the "ought," namely our assessment of reality and our value judgment in all matters of society (Lorberbaum, "Making Space"; Rechnitzer, "Tell Me"; Rechnitzer, *Prophecy*; Schmidt, "What Is"; Jobani, *The Role*). In recent years scholars have a growing interest in political theology within Jewish thought and Hebrew literature (Hever, *With the Power*; Rechnitzer, "From Honolulu; Rechnitzer, *Prophecy*; Rechnitzer, "When Joseph").

This paper focuses on a few of Shalom's early mystical poems and on his play *Gunshots Toward the Kibbutz* (יריות אל הקיבוץ) and short novel *The Galilee Dairies* (יומן בגליל). These works were written during the period that parallels the intensification of violence between Arabs and Jews in mandatory Palestine from the late twenties through the Arab Revolt of 1936-39. They provide us with the opportunity to examine the impact of Shalom's Hasidism on his account of the Arab as the *other*.

Shalom's departure from *Kefar Hasidim* in 1928 marks his departure from the Hasidic religious life and adherence to Jewish Law (Halakhah). Through his entire life, however, Shalom kept an ongoing

dialogue with Hasidic teachings that nourished his literary work. Shalom was among several modern Hebrew poets, including Haim Nachman Bialik, Uri Zvi Greenberg, and Avraham Shlonsky, who professed the Hebrew poet to be of the prophetic tradition. In their poetry, they describe the existential experiences of the individual as situated within the history of the nation and set forth a national vision and ethos (Miron, *The Prophetic*; Barzel, "Revelation"; Hever, *Beautiful Motherland*; Hever, *With The power*; Bar-Yosef, *Mysticism*; Reznitzer, "From Honolulu"; Reznitzer, "To See God"). Although Miron introduced the term "prophetic mode" into the discussion of Hebrew poetry he did not consider the option that poets like Shalom claimed in fact to be a conduit for God's direct word (Miron, *Prophetic Mode* 4). However, Shalom's prophetic poetry included another layer less explored by scholarship, a mystical aspect typical to the Hasidic *zaddik* (the spiritual leader of a modern Hasidic community). He dedicated himself to the sacred mission of a poet who strives to offer testimony to and educate towards, a higher spiritual life that includes encounters of the mystical kind. In this context, this paper is part of a larger project that examines the theological and mystical underpinning of modern Hebrew poets, such as Shlonsky and Halfi and their unique value and distinct contribution to the general discourse of Jewish thought. It also challenges dichotomies between secular and religious poetry and diversifies our understanding of modern Israeli literature juxtaposed to Zionist secular culture (for recent works on Jewish secularism see Fischer, "The Concepts"; Ben Rafael, Gegely, and Gorny, "Jewry between Tradition"; Jobani, "Three Basic"). By "prophetic" then I mean the coming together of mystical-magical experiences and practices as are found in Kabbalah and Hasidism with the characteristics of the classic biblical prophet. "Kabbalah" here refers mainly to "ecstatic Kabbalah" or "prophetic kabbalah" which is identified with the teaching of thirteenth century kabbalist Abraham Abulafia and later Kabbalists and Hasidic teachers influenced by Abulafia's teachings. This brand of Kabbalah is "less concerned with divine inner structures" or theosophy rather it is more interested in mystical experience of the individual and the "restructuring of the human psyche in order to prepare it for the encounter with the divine," that is the ability to approach God or unite with him (Idel, *Absorbing* 13; See also, Idel, *Kabbalah*; Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic*; Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*) By mystical-magical I mean the ability of the mystic to leave this world by ascending to, or assimilation with, the divine. The mystic, explains Idel, undergoes "a deep transformation of the self through a temporal spiritualization, self-effacement [התבטלות], annihilation [ביטול היש], and cleaving to the divine [דיביקות]" (Idel, *Hasidism* 104). This kind of teaching and practices are magical as well as mystical because the mystic (the Hasidic *zaddik*) is not only seeking intimate knowledge of, or experience of, the divine (mystical experience) but pursuing shamanic powers as well. This phenomenon is described by Garb as the ability to "facilitate social renewal and balance, as the Tzaddiq both transcends given social limits and then returns to distribute new vitality to his followers" (Garb, *Shamanic Trance* 75).

Examples of these mystical-Hasidic themes abound in Shalom's poetry. Here I will examine a few that furnish the base for the theological and existential crisis that occurs from the encounter with the Arab, the other. The poem "Knife, Knife, Plunge!" (להב, להב, להב רד!) from the book *Who? (מי?)* is a concise expression of the poet's quest to find himself by way of self-effacement and annihilation: Knife, Knife Plunge! / I am all (an) altar. / Cast seven flames in my firmaments! / Scatter my ashes to seven seas – / That I may find my *self*! (Shalom, *Who?* 5; Unless indicated otherwise, all translations of Shalom's works are mine).

(להב, להב רד! / כלי מזבח. / הטל ברקיעי שבע דלקות! / פזר אפרי לשבעה ימים – / למען אמצאני! [שלום, מי? 5])
The poet craves the annihilation of his self in order to find the 'self' immersed with the divine through a total participation in the divine dialectic of 'emanation' and 'withdrawal', of 'יש' (being) and 'האין' (naught, non-being, nothing). (Elior, "The Paragidm" 168) Or in the words of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, the founder of Habad and student of the Great Maggid, "This is the purpose of the creation of the worlds from *ayin* to *yesh* is to reverse them [by man's religious consciousness] from *yesh* to *ayin*." (Shneur, *Torah* 22).

(כי זהו תכלית בריאת העולמות האין ליש כדי לאהפכא מבחי' יש לבחי' אין" [שניאור, תורה 22]).
The poem evokes the Binding of Isaac but, the entire structure of the biblical story collapses in on itself. Isaac, Abraham, the altar, the lamb, and God become one within the poet. Preempting the angel's petition "Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him" (*Gen* 22:12), the speaker entreats the knife to complete the act of sacrifice, and infuses the verse "for now I know that thou art a God-fearing man, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me" (*Gen* 22:12) with new meaning – the conclusion and execution of the binding, that is, annihilation of the 'self' in order to transform and manifest the 'self' on a higher level. The poet is both Isaac and lamb but by commanding and executing the sacrifice he "finds [his] *self*" as the embodiment of Jahweh (Idel, *Ben* 60) or even more so as Abraham-Jahweh incarnate (Magid, *Hasidism* 5-10). The transfor-

mation of "yesh" to "ayin" in order to be one with God requires an annihilation of corporality, a detachment of the "I" from its attachment to this world in its corporal manifestation. As R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk teaches: "For this is man and the goal of his creation – to elevate all things from down below upward, to subjugate outwardness to inwardness, to discover His divinity, blessed be Him, in all things, and there is no place devoid of Him" (Vitebsk, *Pri Ha'arets* 35).

"כי זה כל האדם ותכלית בריאתו, להעלות כל הדברים ממטה למעלה ולהכניע החיצונית אל הפנימית במציאות אלהותו ית' בכל דבר, ולית אתר פניו מיני" [וויטבסק, פרי הארץ [35]].

The detachment is expressed by the correlation that Shalom draws between the poet's proclamation "Cast seven flames in my firmaments!" and the biblical sacrifice of the *Korban Ola* (burnt-offering) which must be burnt in its entirety – "And Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is upon the wood that is on the fire: it is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord (Lev 3:5). Shalom echoes here the Hasidic descriptions of unification with the Devine as *hitlahavut*, an expression that denotes "enthusiasm" but also literally translates to "being ablaze" (Garb, *Shamanic Trance* 82-83). This theological concept appears in several of Shalom's poems and takes a center stage in his book *Face to Face* (פנים אל פנים). We should also note that the title of the book refers to Biblical verses that elevate Moses's prophecy above all other prophets and becomes the depiction of the highest prophetic level "And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Exo 33:11), and "Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses -- whom the Lord singled out, face to face" (Deu. 34:10). In the poem-cycle titled "Around the Bonfire" (סחור למדורה) Shalom writes "I have sworn: the fire for my flesh is set." ... "fettered [on the altar] I'll wait for the inexhaustible fire. / And if the distance to the hilltop be too great, / I'll become but a 'burnt offering'" (Shalom, *Face* 15-16; Shalom, *Writings* vol.2 13-14).

"נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי: עָרוּכָה הַמְדוּרָה לְבִשְׂרִי. ... כְּנִעַקֵד אֶחֱפָה לְדִלְקָה הַגְּדוּלָה. / וְאִם יִשְׁגַּב הַמְרָחֵק אֶל פְּסָגוֹת הַשָּׂאֵפָה, / אֶהְיֶה נֶאֱמָר מוֹקֵעַ בְּנִתְיָבָה הַעוֹלָה" [שְׁלוֹם, פְּנִים 15-16]; שְׁלוֹם, כְּתוּבִים כֶּרֶךְ 2, [13-14].

The act of self-binding and annihilation is rewarded by unification with God and incarnation, as is expressed in the following poem titled "Jah-Man" (יה-אדם):

A.

In my nights' wandering I found a ladder,
in Tohu (formlessness) all around.
I climbed – and the steps disappeared
Lost are heavens and earth –
And I become heaven and earth!

B.

I am the knife and my thoughts are ablaze,
ringing off the blade.
I enter into myself and listen to the stream –
the stream of the world!
I hear your bloodstream pounding...

א.

סֵלֶם מְצֵאתִי בְּנִדְוֵי בְּלִילוֹת,
בְּתוֹהוּ לֹא-עֵבֶר.
עָלִיתִי - וַיִּכְבּוּ הַשְּׁלֵבִים הַמְּאִירִים,
אֲבוּדִים הַשְּׁחֻקִים וְאֲבוּדָה הָאֶרֶץ -
וְאֶהְיֶה שָׁמַיִם וְאֶרֶץ!

ב.

לֵהָב אֲנִי וְלֵהָב רַעְיוֹנִי,
וְצִלִּיל יֵשׁ לְלֵהָב.
נִכְנָסְתִי אֶל תּוֹכִי וְאֶאֱזִין לְזָרָם -
הוּא צִלִּילוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם!
שׁוֹמֵעַ אֲנִי מְרוֹץ דָּם כְּלִכְם...

(שְׁלוֹם, פְּנִים 23-27; שְׁלוֹם, כְּתוּבִים כֶּרֶךְ 2, 19-23)

The ascension on high, climbing the "ladder," is equated with the destruction of the order in nature and entering into a realm of "Tohu all around". Through the dismantlement of nature's structure, the speaker's self is released and can incarnate as the sacrificial knife that disembowels his own body and becomes as a "darkness over the surface if the deep" (Gen. 1:2). The speaker completes the undoing of being, of "yesh." He becomes "... one with bodies that unite / in darkness, / In mysterious chambers my hand embroiders eyes for the advent ..." ([Shalom, *Face* [24]; Shalom, *Writings* vol.2 [20]).

"אָהד אַנכי עם גופים מתלפדים / בלבבו של אפל. / ידי רוקמת בתאי מסתורין / עינים לבא...") (שלום, פנים [24] שלום, כתבים כרך 2, [20]).

And only after his complete self-annihilation and emersion into the primordial darkness the speaker pronounces "I am the child that is born!" "אני התינוק הנולד" (20). The "child" has been transformed and is god incarnate – "Jah-Adam."

During his years in the Galilee where he worked as a school teacher, Shalom came into daily contact with Arabs, and especially with the young Bedouin girls who worked there as aides. One of them caught his attention and inspired the character of Lina in his 1932 novel *The Galilee Dairies* – the story of an impossible love between the daughter of a Bedouin Sheikh engaged to be married to an Arab in her village and a young Jewish man working as a teacher in the Jewish settlement – *Moshavah*. Their love is pitted against religious and national divides, as well as differences between the Bedouin and western Jewish culture. For a while it seems that Lina's presence and his love for her opens up the teacher's awareness not only to the existence of the Arab as the other, but to the Arab as the indigenous local versus the Jew as a foreigner on his own historical homeland:

I hear voices singing from afar, pleasant Arab tunes, ... they blend in the *hulah Valley's* night and become part of it, its life, as a thing that cannot be given away. The music, the tents, the mountains, the Bedouin – all belong here, all are part of one tapestry – and I – am I a stranger here? Is there not a heart here that will beat with my heart? Is there not a soul here that will answer my call in the midst of this glory? Oh Motherland, Motherland, I'm here!!! You have called to me from the first days of my life, you told me that you have been waiting for me for thousands of years! Where are your outstretched arms? Where is the place you've designated for me in the midst of your vast nights? Where are you? (Shalom, *The Galilee* 61-2)

(אני שומע זמירות ממרחקים, מנגינות ערב ערבות, ... נבלעות הן הזמירות בתוך ליל החולה כדבר השייך לו, לנשמת אפו, כדבר שאינו נתן לוותרין. הזמירות, האוהלים, ההרים, הבדואים – כולם שייכים לכאן, כולם נארגים במסכת – ואני – הזר אני כאן? האין לב כאן אשר ידפוק עם לבבי? האין נפש כאן אשר תענה לקריאתי בתוך קפאון התפארת הזאת? הי מולדת, מולדת! אני כאן!!! אני פלוני בן פלוני אשר קראת לי משחר ילדותי, אשר אמרת לי תמיד כי מחכה את לי זה אלפים בשנה! אי זרועותיך המושטות לקראתי? אי המקום אשר פנית לי בתוך לילות שממונק? איפה את? [שלום, יומן בגליל [61-62]])

Setting aside the highly romanticized "western" depiction of the Arab as a noble savage (Said, *Orientalism* 65-67), the recognition of the Arab's authenticity as surpassing the protagonist's shatters and transforms his sense of identity and his claim to the Motherland. Like a boy abandoned by his mother, he cries to the personified Land with a sense of betrayal – "You have called to me ... Where are your outstretched arms?" "קראת לי ... אי זרועותיך המושטות לקראתי?" (Shalom, *The Galilee* 61-2). Her "arms" seem to embrace the "other," the Arab. Is he, the Arab and not the Jew, her beloved son?

This situation takes place in the midst of skirmishes between Arabs and Jews, in particular during organized attacks of Arabs on the protagonist's *Moshavah* [Jewish town]. To intensify matters, the teacher is called to take part in the defense of the *Moshavah*, thus positioning the revered "other" now as "the enemy." His sympathy and adoration of the Arab is replaced with a wave of vengeance and animosity towards "Arabs," every Arab person, even those who work in the *Moshavah*. Our protagonist is torn between opposing forces that only grow worse because of his love for Lina. On the one hand, he feels solidarity with his fellow Jews and strongly believes in his ancestral right to the Land. On the other hand, he recognizes that beyond the Arab's political claim to the land, he is part of what makes this land, the protagonist's "Promised-Land," precisely what it is. In the *Galilee Dairies* this predicament is not resolved. In the political and social reality of the story the couple is doomed to hopeless love. However, Shalom does not simply describe the predicament, nor portray the protagonist as the archetypal young Zionist swayed by Jewish solidarity and patriotism. Such a depiction may have been emotionally moving but ultimately banal. What makes Shalom's *Galilee Dairies* intriguing is the heretical stance of the protagonist: "...my heart wanders far. What is a people? What is a homeland? What are these cloaks with which our unrealistic being is covered? For what purpose do we hold to these chains, these sufferings, this inconsequential existence?" (Shalom, *The Galilee* 74).

"...וליבי מרחיק נדוד. מהו עם? מה מולדת? מהם הצעפים האלה שנתעטפה בהם הויתנו הערטילאית? לשם מה הכבלים האלה, העינויים האלה, הקטנות הזו? [שלום, יומן בגליל [74]].

At one point while on guard duty, the teacher fantasizes about the couple's escape:

In the hidden-deep of being, in bygone caves of our childhood, windows are open towards that which is beyond the veils [of separation]. There life clings to legends and the mark of inevitability is not yet revealed. Why can't I come to you from there? Why can't I unclasp all that has happened ever since ... Rise up my bride and we will become one against this inferno of separation. ... I'll dress in an Arab coat, who shall rec-

ognize me as foreigner in this ancient vast land? Let us build our tent on desert sand and our love will be its stakes ...You will herd the flock of sheep and I'll mount my horse to seek out pastures, scout and preempt any danger and return the lost sheep to our tent. We'll set a camp fire on top of the mountains and dance. My flesh will become one with yours and my heart will cling to yours, and I'll undress the ever-changing clothes and see in you the eternal. I will ask no more, and my hands will not be defiled with matter of a fabricated life, and my mouth will not be dried up of thirst on the banks of deceitful springs. And my soul will return to its rest and my mouth will drink peace. (Shalom, *The Galilee* 75)

(במטמוני הישות, במערות לא ראינום מראשוני ימי ילדותינו פתוחים החלונות למה שמעבר לצעיפים. שם לא גורים הדרכים ושדה הפלאות עודו מתגלה לעיניים. שם עוד חיים באגדה נאחזים וסמן הודאות המאובנת אינו עדין. מדוע יכול לא אוכל להגיע אליך משם? מדוע יכול לא אוכל לפשט מעלי כלבוש כל זה שהיה מאז ועד היום ... קומי אחותי כלה, קומי ונהיה לאחדים התופת הפרוד הזה. ... סודר של ערבי קבלתי במתנה ומקל רועים יש עמדי. מי יכירני כי אחר אני בזה המרחב הקדום? על חולות במדבר נקים אהלינו ובחבלי אהבה נתמך יתדותינו, ובבוא השואה והתלכדו גויותינו באמון גורל משותף. את, את הצאן תרעי, ואני על סוסי אדהר לתור מקומות מרעה, לחזות בסכנה מראש ולהשיב האובדות האוהלה. מדורה נעלה בראשי ההרים ובמחול נצא מסביב למדורה, אני ואת במחול. ודבק בשרי בבשרך ולבי בליבך ידבק, ופשט לבוש החליפות וחזה בך חזות העולמים, ולא אשאף ליותר ולא אשאל יותר, וידי לא תגואלנה בחומר חיים מעושה, ופי לא ייבש מצמא על שפת מעינות אכזב. ושבה נפשי למנוחתך [שלום, יומן בגליל] [75].

The protagonist imagines a pastoral reality that transcends the cultural, religious, and political divides. A reality portrayed as a state of being rooted in a primordial essence of life, stripped from the "ever-changing clothes." It is a romantic pastoral depiction of life in alternate "Land" revolving and evolving through the dynamic of annihilation of reality, turning *yesh* into *ayin* that is aimed at both the personal and the national, the historical and the geographical in order to gain access to a redeemed state of life. The allusions to the verse "Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh" (*Gen. 2:24*). The reference to the protagonist's connection to the Arab woman, and to the Psalm's critique of the Israelites "... They are a senseless people; they would not know My ways ... They shall never come to My resting-place!" (*Ps. 95:10-11*) intensifies the criticism of a Jewish Zionist existence that defies the ideal of living with God.

The play *Gunshots toward the Kibbutz* opens with the return of the lead character Yehiel from his night guard shift. In response to his roommate's question: "Were you redeemed tonight"? he replies: "No, I was not redeemed tonight, he did not come near, did not reveal his face, I could have slept the entire shift." (*Shalom Gunshots* 8)

נו... איך עבר הלילה? (בחיור מר) הנגאלת? .. יחיאל: לא נגאלתי, שוב לא בא ... לא קרב... לא נגלה אלי פנים. היה לי " לישון על השמירה כישנך כאן... [שלום, יריות 8]

This is indeed a peculiar opening dialogue in which the reference to a potential attacker is expressed in distinctly religious language. The potential violent encounter with the enemy is depicted in terms of "revelation" and of "redemption." In response to the bewilderment of his friend, Yehiel continues: "Not for the enemy outside do I mourn and lament... he is not the essence of it all. I seek the enemy within, that which resides in our hearts. And this enemy is real, it exists. ... Why are you surprised? Haven't I told you what I know from the bottom of my heart ... that which we all know... Everything is one in this world. All is tied together in a knot... every person is a letter (*ot*) [in Hebrew *ot* is also a sign] and every event is a secret language... and if gunshots are fired from outside – there is something in the house that calls them... and the enemy is the reflection of the enemy within the heart" (*Shalom, Gunshots* 8-9).

("לא על האויב אשר בחוץ מיצר ליבי ודואב... לא הוא העיקר... תר אני ומבקש אני את האויב אשר בפנים, את זה שבלבנו כאן... וזה ישנו, ... מה התמהון הזה? כלום לא אמרתי לך עדיין את אשר אני יודע מעומק הלב... את אשר כולנו יודעים... הכל אחד בעולם הזה. הכל קשור ומהודק... כל אדם אות הוא וכל מאורע שפת רמזים... ואם יריות באות מבחוץ – יש משהו בבית הקורא להן... ואם אויב עומד במבוא – אין הוא אלא בבואה של האויב אשר בפנים... בלב" [שלום, יריות 8-9].

Enduring the Arab attacks is portrayed as a manifestation of the individual and collective disharmonious and disturbed disposition, and the grounds for the need to amend, to redeem the self and the collective. Redemption will come when the individual, and the collective, are able to fully comprehend and act upon the highest truth – we are all one, we are all in God, and in order to "return," to be redeemed, we embark on self-abnegation, a self-effacement. The Hasidic mystical teaching is transplanted into the Zionist arena and the heart of the conflict with the "other," the "enemy," the Arab. For Yehiel the opportunity presents itself at night while he is at his guarding post. He describes the encounter with the enemy in a dreamlike manner. The enemy approaches "...a gigantic shadow...a black shadow...standing above me with the rifle in his hand, and an apparition of written words standing above me ... uttering only two words – 'Soon' Soon' ...'me or you!'" (*Shalom, Gunshots* 68-9). ("שחור וגדול קרב אלי... והרובה בידו...ורק שתי מילים הוא אמר... 'בקרוב'... 'בקרוב' ... 'אני או אתה'" [שלום, יריות 68-9].

The following night, Yehiel decides to return to his post, this time leaving his rifle behind. "I do not need it," he says to his friends, "if the enemy comes, I'll struggle with him face to face" (Shalom, *Gunshots* 69).

"ואת הרובה הזה... איני זקוק לו... אם יופיע האויב – פנים אל פנים איאבק עמו" [שלום, יריות 69].

By seeking to "struggle face to face" Yehiel foreshadows the events to come and imbues them with biblical and mystical allusions. Before returning to his father's land, Jacob wrestled throughout the night with God's angel on the banks of the Jordan River (*Gen* 32). The fervent struggle of Jacob with the angel ends with a transformative experience as the angel said: "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with beings divine and human, and have prevailed" (*Gen*. 35:10). The Hebrew word for "striven" is "שרית" denoting "struggle," its root letters are ש.ר.י (s. r. i) which are incorporated in the Jacob's new name "Israel" meaning being (and seeing From שר (*sar*) past tense of "to behold" and "to watch") with God. In fact, after this event Jacob-Israel "named the place Peniel (God's face), meaning, "I have seen a divine being face to face, yet my life has been preserved" (*Gen* 32:31).

An additional allusion is to Psalm 27 and in particular to verse 4: "One thing I ask of the Lord, only that do I seek: to live in the house of the Lord (Yahweh) all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord (Yahweh), to frequent His temple." This verse became an emblem for the early Jewish mystical tradition of the *Heikhalot* (divine chambers) and *Pardes* (orchard of Divine knowledge, garden of Eden). The *Heikhalot* mystic "descends to the Chariot" and enters into the *Pardes*, attempting to encounter the Divine directly. This venture is characterized by the quest to attain a vision and not necessarily to contemplate God's true nature (Elior, *The Three*; Wolfson, *Speculum*). However, the "illumination" experienced by the mystic as a result of seeing God's glory yields a spiritual transformation (Arbel, "Understanding" 32; Wolfson, *Speculum* 107) Both allusions infuse mystical-transformative aspects to the protagonist's anticipated "face to face" struggle with the Arab. A few nights later, posted on a clifftop at the periphery of the defense lines, Yehiel stands nearly delirious. Concerned for his health, another guard suggests that he be replaced and sent to his room to rest. However, eager to fulfill his task, Yehiel refuses, saying, "I seek the last battle ... the decisive one... I seek my enemy ... the one in my heart."

"מבקש אני את הקרב האחרון... המכריע... מבקש אני את האויב שלי – את זה אשר בלב" [שלום, יריות 83].

Yehiel is both victim and assailant, the self and the other transcend boundaries to become one as the internal and external enemies converge on the battleground. The battleground broadens to multiple dimensions, the earthly and spiritual, the physical and psychological. Personal redemption and Israel's redemption from exile climax in one person, one hour, one place one battle.

Every flash of light presents threatening shadows. Yehiel doubts his own sanity. His religious ideals collapse – "it's all a mistake! There is no value in the struggle, no reason for battles! No conscience! No 'me'! No love! No union! No kibbutz! [collective] All is scattered! Broken! ..."

"טעות... הכל טעות! אין ערך להתאבקות! אין שחר לקרבות אין מצפון! אין אני! אין אהבה! אין אחדות! אין קיבוץ! הכל פירורים שברים!..." [יריות 86].

All turn into 'ayin,' into nought, into non-being. In the heat of the battle, borders between the Arab and the Jew are constructed only to be breached with the first shots. Yehiel discovers that he almost fired upon a friend returning from a clandestine mission, still disguised as an Arab as he approached the kibbutz fence from the "outside" – a deceptive carousel of revolving identities – the self, the friend and the Arab. On the verge of losing his mind, Yehiel is suddenly revived and transformed. He perceives these events in a mythical biblical context – that of the struggle of Jacob with the angel on the banks of the Jordan. Just as the angel appeared as a man to Jacob, so does the Arab appear as man, instead of the enemy. Only after this ecstatic mystical experience can Yehiel, as did Jacob, cross the river and enter the Holy Land.

One may rightfully question Shin Shalom's classification of the "Arab" as an "other." After all, the Arab does not appear clearly as a separate entity. The Arab "is" only by being a part within the protagonist's existential drama. Nevertheless, the distinct identity of the protagonist, his-*self*, collapses and melts into the totality of "being" and then turns into "non-being" in order to find that *self* again, echoing the poem's "Knife." It is worth noting at this point the symbolic meaning of the protagonist's name. Yehiel in Hebrew means "Long Live God." The quest for a living God, who is the dynamic force between *yesh* and *Ayin* manifest, is the emblem and crux of the drama. Yehiel finally validates the meaning of his name – Yehi-el, God is alive, personifying the famous teaching of the founder of Hasidism, the Besht "The whole earth is full of His glory and there is no place void of Him." (Baer and Schatz Uffenheimer, *Magid Devarav* 240, my trans.)

"מלוא כל הארץ כבודו ולית אתר פנוי מיני" [בער וש"ץ-אופנהיימר, מגיד דבריו 240].

In his book *Barriers: The Representation of the Arab in Hebrew and Israeli Fiction- 1906-2005*, Yochai Oppenheimer claims that in spite of the fact that Shin Shalom disputes the Zionist humanistic worldview and exposes the gaps between the national narrative and the brute aggressiveness that is at the foundation of the encounter between the Jew and the gentile or the Arab, he did not doubt the validity of the Zionist claim and did not promote a heretical politics (Oppenheimer, *Representation* 148). However, I have tried to show that the heretical imperative in Shalom's art runs deeper than a political manifesto. It demands personal transformation via self-annihilation. The secularization of Israeli society and the lack of familiarity with Jewish religious sources undercut the capacity of Shalom's potential readers to uncover the Hasidic teaching and fully appreciate his subtler, but nevertheless heretical, message. Tracing the dynamic of permeable borders between national and religious groups and between the self and the other can provide insight into the complex dynamic of forming the Jewish-Zionist and later Israeli identity with its theological component, as well as identifying the inherent forces that push against the formation process. This oscillation between poles of humanism and nationalism, east and west, reflects the centrifugal forces that pull at Israeli society to this day, and continue to be explored by contemporary Israeli poets.

Examining Shalom's work diversifies and complicates our understanding of modes of secularization in Israeli culture and pushes us to consider a model of secularization in which religion is kept within the secular as its ultimate judge. Here, the secular enveloped rather than dispersed the religious, because it needs the religious worldview for its development. My opinion regarding the religious mode in Shalom's poetry is in opposition to that of Baruch Korzweil's. Korzweil claims that Shalom's poetry, as most of modern Hebrew poetry since the Haskalah movement, is "an extreme and superfluous utilization of Jewish mysticism for the purpose of deification of man, who replaced God" (Korzweil, "Diving Into" 93). I argue that this religious-Hasidic lens plays a major role in Shalom's interpretation of reality and in particular the political reality and the spiritual challenges of the Zionist enterprise. I hope that by presenting Shalom's case to a new generation of Israelis and other readers of Hebrew literature I provided inspiration to develop further paths that radiate from the trailheads marked by Shalom.

The following poem was published later in Shalom's career, well after the establishment of the State of Israel. I believe that it captures some basic teachings of Shalom regarding the Arab as other:

Ishmael, Ishmael

Ishmael, my brother,
 how long shall we fight each other?

My brother from times bygone,
 my brother - Hagar's son,
 my brother the wandering one.

One angel was sent to us both,
 one angel watched over our growth –
 there in the wilderness, death threatened through thirst,
 I, a sacrifice on the alter, Sarah's first.

Ishmael, my brother, hear my plea:
 it was the angel who tied thee to me.
 the caravan progresses, out of breath,
 crossing the desert, a march of death.
 But we have seen a mission divine,
 eternal secrets are thine and mine.
 Why should we blind each other's eyes?
 Let us be brothers; brother, arise!

The heat of the desert has narrowed our mind,
 our common grazing ground we cannot find.
 Let us remember our father's kind heart,
 let brother never again from each other part.

Remember "the well of the Living God Who sees me,"
 let bonds of friendship bring me to thee.
 Time is running out, put hatred to sleep.
 Shoulder to shoulder, let's gather our sheep.

The shepherds are out and down,
 dry and empty the crocks,
 Let's roll the stone
 from the well, and water the flocks.

(Shalom, *Poems* 49-50; An Hebrew version of the poem is printed in Shalom, *Writings vol.9* 83. The two are different versions of the same motif.)

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