

**"A Generation of Wonderful Jews Will Grow from the Land": The Desire for Nativeness in Hebrew Israeli Poetry**

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**Abstract:** This article examines the ways in which the desire for nativeness is constructed in Israeli Hebrew poetry through several historical episodes: H. N. Bialik's 1896 poem "In the Field"; the poets as pioneers/immigrants in the 1920s, in contrast to the "nativist" poet Esther Raab; and the "nativist" poets of the 1950s (Statehood Generation), focusing on Moshe Dor. The desire to be native—to belong to the land in a way that is natural, self-evident, and therefore absolute and unquestionable—is one of the constitutive desires of nationalism in general, and of Zionism in particular. In Bialik's poem, written during the formative stage of Zionism, this desire emerges as the desire to be a beloved son of mother-earth, which is an allegory for the universal "family of nations." This desire is realized paradoxically in the form of *ownership* over the land. In the 1920s, the stage of the *realization* of Zionism, the immigrant pioneers imagine nativeness in the form of their masculine desire of the land as woman—a desire to conquer, fertilize and to own it. The poetry of Raab, being both a biographical native and a woman, exemplifies the "poetics of nativeness." With the foundation of the State of Israel and the *symbolic* realization of Zionist desire, nativist poetry (such as the poetry of Moshe Dor) emerges as a poetry of *men*, who see themselves as the *sons* of the land, and who are nostalgic about their native position as a lost privilege.

## Hamutal TSAMIR

### "A Generation of Wonderful Jews Will Grow from the Land": The Desire for Nativeness in Hebrew Israeli Poetry

In an 1896 article, published in the British *Jewish Chronicle*, Theodor Herzl proclaimed that "a generation of wonderful Jews will grow from the land." He thus became the first person to articulate the aim of Zionism in terms of the rebirth of the Jews, both as individuals and as a nation—an aspiration that could, in an analogy with the vegetable world, be realized only on and from the soil of the Land of Israel. These words can be considered a point of departure for an emergent Zionist discourse about the desire for nativeness. This concept is one link in a series of transformations that each Jewish individual, and the nation, must undergo: to be born from the land, to grow from it, naturally, *autochthonously*, in a way that both expresses and ensures a kind of belonging that is physical, concrete, unquestionable and complete—much like children belong to their mother (Kamon "HaShiva"). This connection to the soil is intended to also serve as an alternative to the historical bond with God and with Judaism qua religion. The new Hebrew literature, which evolved in deep conjunction with the Zionist movement and ideology, construes this ideal of nativeness in a variety of ways, some of which I will discuss in this paper.

The notion of the native is an invention of western discourse, based on a reality of colonialism, and a distinction the European colonists made between themselves and the indigenous people (Young 165). Yet while this notion refers to a reality, the Zionist version of nativeness is an ideal, an aspiration of immigrants who hoped to *transform into natives* on the basis of their perception of the Land of Israel as the old-new homeland, which Zionism seeks to reconstruct. The Zionist native "is perceived as born to the place for which Zionism claims continuous, organic ownership, from time immemorial," but, at the same time, "he is a new beginning—the new Jew" (Hever, *MeReshit* 15). There is thus a fundamental difference between nativeness as a biographical fact, and the political and ideological meaning that nativeness-by-aspiration maintains. These two types of nativeness possess a variety of meanings: political/ideological, gender related, and ethnic. I will refer to the distinction between them in presenting a developmental narrative concerning changes in the aspiration to nativeness in Hebrew literature and literary discourse in the period from the 19th century until the 1950s. I will dwell, therefore, on three "episodes": Haim Nahman Bialik's poem "In the Field," written in the same year as Herzl's article (which was also the year of the first Zionist Congress); the poetry of the 1920s, and especially Esther Raab's works; and the poetry of Moshe Dor, from the "statehood generation" of the 1950s.

#### From the Rejected to the Beloved Son: Haim Nahman Bialik's "In the Field"

Haim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934) was perceived as the "national poet" from very early in his career (Holzman "Aliyato"). "In the Field" ("BaSadeh," 1896) is an early poem, in which the speaker describes his hardships as "a despised and tormented soul" who has escaped to the field like a tormented, despised dog, "from the sorrow and weakness of his [own] hands." This is an allegorical speaker, who represents the diasporic Jewish people. In the second stanza, he admires the field and envies the farmers, who are engrossed in working their soil and live off its yield; and he seeks to become one with the corn stalks in order to hear "what God has spoken from the harvest." Then he kneels to the ground and weeps:

I buried my face in the earth, I fell to the wet soil,  
And I asked the mouth of the earth, and wept greatly at her bosom:  
Please tell me, Mother Earth, who is wide, full and large –  
Why would you not extend your breast to me too, a poor yearning soul [like me]? (Bialik 36)

The speaker turns to mother earth as her rejected son, and begs her to love him, to be allowed like her other sons to suck from her "breast." The reference, of course, is to the Jewish people's wish to be embraced by the universal "family of nations." Within the poem's allegorical story, the field receives an additional, implied meaning—pointing at the "universality" of the "family of nations," which embodies and includes, in fact, the universal form of the nation-state, which every people has or should have, and deserves to have. The farmers, owners of the field, the poem suggests, are mother earth's favorite sons, while the field, fruit of the earth, is her breast. It is them, not him, whom she nourishes. The speaker, who knows this, asks why this is so, a question whose answer will become clear presently.

The speaker subsequently wanders in the field at sunset, looking at the corn sheaves moving in the wind, and compares them to "frightened sheep" who "were driven and fled to a new land." He wonders about the meaning of their "wandering":

Are you flowing to the place where the clouds are going?  
Where the day blows away? Where the shadows flee  
To lands where our dreams take us  
You are fleeing, hurrying, oh golden ears of corn? (Bialik 37)

This reflection provides him with an insight into what troubled him earlier in the poem, and now he himself answers the question:

Like a poor man I stand before the glory of the radiant, joyfully ripened grain,  
And only now I know how great is my poverty, only now I see!  
Not my hands have shaped you, stalks of corn, not my hand has grown you,  
I did not sow my power in it, not I will be the one to reap it;

Not the drops of my sweat have wetted the scrapings of your black soil,  
Nor has my prayer brought the rain to your furrows.  
Not my eyes were amazed by your full heads, not my heart expanded,  
Nor the cheers of my song have shaken your calm or descended on your harvest. (Bialik 38)

He understands that the problem is that these stalks *are not his*; the many possessives indicate that everything hinges on their *ownership*. He must grow these stalks himself, with his own sweat, prayer and song. This is his response to mother earth: "And I know now how great is my poverty, only now I see!" This "poverty" (*onyi*; עֲנִי) resonates with the "tortured" (*me'unekh*; מְעֻנֵךְ) dog in the first stanza, to whom the speaker likens his running to the field, while the phrase "Not my hands have shaped you" (*lo yaday 'itzvuxen*; לֹא יְדֵי עֲצֻבוֹךָ) is the inverse as well as correction of "the sorrow and weakness of my hands" (*'itzvon yaday*; עֲצֻבוֹן יְדֵי) from the first stanza. Furthermore, if the stalks are mother earth's "milk," then this suggests that if he wants to be mother earth's beloved infant who feeds from her breast, he must, somewhat paradoxically, "first of all" be her or its owner. In other words: to produce her or its "milk" or harvest himself. What leads him to this conclusion is his walk in the field and his thoughts (the implications of his own desire) about the stalks' "wanderings" to "a new land"—which is the Land of Israel, precisely the land which now must be owned and cultivated.

The poem "In the Field" is a national allegory concluding with the Jewish people's need for a territory of its own to repair the problem of exile. The speaker *produces* the national desire for territory from his own experiences as an allegorical representative of the people, while his conclusion connects the allegorical and the real dimensions. The desire to be a beloved son of mother earth—an allegory for the desire to be an equal member in the "family of nations"—will be fulfilled by means of the Zionist desire for the concrete Land of Israel. Thus the national wish to *belong* to a universal mother earth—a wish that is likened to an infant's need to cleave to its mother and is a wish to be "a nation like all other nations"—is revealed as an expression of the desire for *ownership* of a specific tract of land. Owning the land therefore constitutes the condition for achieving a sense of organic belonging. The desire Bialik expresses comprises a first, implicit version of the Zionist-national desire for nativeness. As did Herzl, Bialik expresses perceptions that were being formulated as Zionism was developing into a national movement (Shavit). This necessarily included a certain view of the Land of Israel and of an associated new Jewish national identity.

### The Poetry of the 1920s and the Native Daughter

By the 1920s, the Zionist movement's stage of territorialization and fulfillment had set in. Concomitantly, the Land of Israel was becoming the center of Hebrew culture, with questions arising about representing existence there, as well as about the clash between ideological vision and reality. Thus the desire for nativeness shifted from being a vision of a remote future, to a real and concrete possibility, something which also makes an impact on poetry (Holzman, "Hoy" 206-13). Two main changes can be observed in the conception of this poetry and its imagery: a change in the desire for nativeness itself; and the way its achievement is imagined.

Let us first consider this desire for nativeness by looking at two poems that explicitly deal with the idea of birth from the earth. One is a poem by David Shimonovitch (1891-1956), from the cycle "In the Spring":

Should I lie down in the black field  
On the moist and fertile soil  
Under the warm clouds of Nissan  
In the warm, steamy mists?

I am tired of wandering  
I have had my drunken fill of the winds of joy  
Should I lie down in the black field  
To rest a little in the swamps,

Where the potent oryx lolls  
Wallowing like a weak frog...?  
Yes we have one mother, mother of all,  
Yes, my soul is new, is new

Should I lie down in the black field  
And turn into a modest seed?  
How good I will feel to be rotting in the earth,  
How good to lie in the earth unmoving...

And in the summer, when the light pours out plentifully  
Under the blue of bright heaven,  
I will not know my own  
Among thousands of buds like me. (232)

Tired from his wanderings and drunk with joy, the speaker wishes to rest on the "fertile soil," likening himself to animals that are close to the ground. He explains this by saying that they share the same mother—the soil. The repose he is looking for, then, will be in the form of an animal existence, close to mother earth. The following line suggests a somewhat enigmatic connection between proximity to the land and his new soul—in that the soul requires this animal existence and proximity to the soil, or alternatively this very closeness comes to characterizes it.

Subsequently, the speaker reverts to his wish to become a "modest seed" and dwell within the soil. To be thus buried inside the soil would appear to express a death wish (the Hebrew words for being buried and rotting share the same consonants). Yet when we reach the last stanza it transpires that this is rather a yearning for fertility and a new life. The speaker's seed-like prostration, in other words, denotes his fusion with the field and his impregnation of it. This also illuminates the previous phase "my new soul"; for this soul is new also in the sense that it seeks to continuously renew itself.

In the poem "To my land" by Pesach Ginzburg (1894-1947), the speaker describes his travels in the Land of Israel:

...my land, my dreams' horizon and shore of my awakenings:  
So favored you were in my dewy childhood dream!  
So hardened in the poor waking present –  
Your rocks my waking pillows!

Ascending your mountains I went in search of my dream;  
I knew: between the rocks he still wanders,  
Clinging to the flute of every Arab who tends his flock  
In the flanks of your mountains, where my dream wanders.

And when I arose to the land and saw your peaks  
Surging up high like a virgin's breasts, waiting  
For one to open pure wells,  
To nurse the children of the future between your peaks.

And I sank into your lap, rock's cradle, my land  
From its depths a fetal prayer sprang up at me:  
Our mother wants to reproduce! She is longing for your grace  
Come, beget us! So have your fetuses spoken, my land.

Then my childhood dream crashed on the rock  
And my heart took fright and reached toward waking  
And my scarlet thread of hope spanned between my beginning and my end  
And then I knew you, my land, in the rocky wilderness.

This poem begins with the discrepancy between the wonderful image of the land as it appears in the speaker's childhood dream, and its harsh and rocky reality. He eventually perceives the land as a woman who wishes to become pregnant and give birth, and her call/prayer initially arouses the speaker's fear. He recovers, however, and accepts the call in the final stanza. The speaker thus describes the land as

a feminine-maternal entity, yearning to be impregnated by the pioneer-immigrant, and to give birth to his child. Obviously, this is merely a projection of his own desire.

These two poems illustrate the nature of the desire for nativeness as it was manifested in the poetry of the 1920s—a direct continuation of the form given it by Bialik's poetry. For if the Jewish people thinks of itself as the rejected son of a universal mother earth (allegorical representative of "the family of nations"), then acceptance (paradoxically) requires it to first become a "father" of a *concrete* national territory. Achieving ownership/paternity of the land is a main objective of the Zionist movement at this stage of actualization. What will constitute this ownership/paternity is the ultimate goal: to establish a state. Until this happens, the desire to be born from the land remains by definition unrealized, while Zionist society and culture are in the state of *preparation for ownership/paternity*. Already no longer a universal mother earth, the land now is a concrete national territory; and the Zionist subject, no longer a child, has grown into a man who formulates his relationship to the land in gendered terms of eros and property, *possession* that confers *ownership* (*be'ilah / ba'alut*: Hebrew words that come from the same root). The land becomes the erotic object of desire of the pioneering man, who consorts with it and impregnates it with the sweat of his work, his seed and blood—often through self-sacrifice. It is this erotic desire and copulation with the soil that will give rise to the plants, the "future's children," and eventually to the state. He will, in other words, gain ownership and possession of the land, which will ultimately lead him to be reborn as its son.

This desire for nativeness is revealed as a masculine desire and fantasy, as rebirth from the land through an erotic act of copulation. Like any other desire, it is based on *distance* between the man-pioneer and the woman-land (Goodblatt; Hever "HaShir"; Segal). This is not only the distance caused by gender difference, but also a difference between the pioneer as an immigrant and of a sense of belonging to the land. This is also rendered in the *poetics* of literary works of the 1920s; both contemporary literature and literary discourse seek to describe the land "from within," "to sing it, not about it," to express, that is, a direct connection with the land as such, without conflict or ambivalence (the fate of the immigrant) and without an artistic mediation that is perceived as artificial. For many contemporary poets, the goal is articulated in terms of "nudity" or "complete exposure" (Greenberg "Hu haya"; Bluvstein), simplicity and authenticity (see Shlonsky's essays "Ra'ananut" and "HaMelitza" in his *Masot* 71-7); "sincerity" in Brenner, by means of the "art of non-fictive fiction" (Brinker), and "the simplicity of thistles" in Shlonsky's poem "Gilboa" (Mann). This clearly is a paradoxical expression of Zionist ideology about the imagined meaning of nativeness, about a representation which *as it were* is not a representation, *as it were* non-ideological, and *as it were* non-artistic.

The use of this fantasy as an ideal discloses how it is predicated on an actual distance, as well as on the external perspective of recent immigrants who are eager to become natives: "We are strangers in our surroundings," is for instance how the poet Avraham Broides put it; "Foreign lands still linger in our eyes. And a partition divides us from the land and its Hebrew poets" (Broides, "Shiratenu"). This notion of the partition—*mehitsah*, the ritual partition used to separate men and women in the synagogue—confirms the gendered structure of this perception that separates the male poets from the land as a female. What is more, it signals the distance between the world of traditional Judaism, the textual world of these men, and the material world that is a visual object of description and direct reference (Mann). This remoteness can be observed in the poems by Shimonovitch and Ginzburg, as well as in other poems of this period. One instance is, as Barbara Mann shows, the representation of the Land of Israel as a "textual experience" and/or as textually negotiated (in Shlonsky's poem "Gilboa": "Behold my land a wild corpse./ her skin like parchment,/ parchment for the Torah" (Shlonsky, *Shirim* 162; Mann). What is more, this concept suggests the manner in which nativeness and a poetics of nativeness were imagined. Since the desire for nativeness is the masculine desire of a non-native, and since it originates in the distance between this male immigrant and the land, then nativeness itself—the realization of this masculine desire as organic belonging—is predicated on the lack of distance from the land, and it pertains only to those who are not men and/or not Zionists: women and Palestinians/Bedouins are perceived as identified with the land, as belonging to it organically. Rather than *desiring* to be natives, they *are* the natives. It is no surprise, then, that it was a woman who was considered to have realized the desire for nativeness and this poetic ideal: the poet Esther Raab (1894-1981). From its earliest publications in the 1920s and up to day, her poetry has been described as "growing [directly] from the earth," as "describing the land as it is, without embellishment," and as an expression of organic belonging and absolute identification with it (Perry; Lichtenbom; Bass; Ben-Ya'acov [Dor]; Feingold; Golovsky; Ne'eman; Ben-Sha'ul; Besser; Zach, "Nofah"; Zmorah; Knaz; HaMe'iri; Miron; Shoham 30; Mann; Dickman).

This is a view that relies on the fact that Raab was both a woman and a biological native, as well as on her particular poetics—the fact that her landscape descriptions were considered "concrete" and

"sensual," and therefore authentic. This is exactly the conceptual constellation that enables her to be seen as someone who *realizes* the masculine desire for nativeness. It is a conceptual constellation in which nationalism is a masculine desire, in which soil and woman are analogous, and in which the Zionist "native," *the Jew qua native*, cannot be anything but a woman. This implies that "native" poetry, which "grows from the land" and describes it "as it is," cannot be written otherwise than on the basis of the metaphorical analogy between the soil and a woman. At this stage of territorialization and Zionist consolidation, marked by preparation for ("paternal") ownership of the land, the land can only bring forth its "daughter," the likeness of the land-as-woman. Esther Raab is this daughter.

This view of Raab and her poetry is confirmed by the fact that scholarship has denied or ignored many non-native elements in both her poetry and life (Tsamir, *BeShem HaNof* 120-21; Olmert 106): she grew up with other languages than Hebrew; she acquired a European literary education (Ben-Ezer 201-15); many of her poems do not mention local scenery; and her use of poetic strategies do not go hand in hand with "concreteness" and "sensuality." One major example is found in the thorny plants that inspire the title of her first collection (*Thorns*), which are directly and explicitly inspired by Baudelaire's *fleurs du mal* (Ben-Ezer 270)—symbolist poetry that detaches itself from any "authenticity" or concreteness, and aspires to the abstract and artificial. Thus the vetch plant, which appears in the poem "To [my] Father," makes an appearance in the Sabbath prayer (in a passage about the "filling the incense," cited from the *Talmud*), and this is almost certainly where Raab first encountered it. The fact that most of the criticism and scholarship on Raab ignored or overlooked these non-nativist elements of her life and poetry reveal that perceiving her as embodying nativeness is *based* on this overlooking of these elements. In other words, what is revealed here is that Raab suits her readers' *desire* or *fantasy* of nativeness (in the eyes of her readers, the national community)—and that any element that did not fit this fantasy had to be "left out" of critical attention.

An example of Raab's "native" poetry occurs in the poem "On Your Nakedness a White Day Rejoices (which opens the volume *Kimshonim*), and in which the speaker's femininity features powerfully:

On your nakedness a white day rejoices  
You who are so poor and rich,  
A mountain wall of water froze,  
Transparent like an illusion,  
Sticking to the horizon.  
Afternoon. Your fields' expanses are thrilled  
And at your breast a wreath grows rowdy and rises  
To face the white skies,  
Like a screen, extends and trembles  
It will not stop  
On the plains  
A hill will rise round like a breast  
Its top covered by a white tomb;  
And in the abandoned harvested fields  
A lone boxthorn lingers.  
And should the eye tire, rises  
From the streams of light-specters  
It could dip into the green-turning-blue boxthorn  
As in a pool of cool water.  
You who are so poor with your reddening cracks  
Within the faraway gold,  
With the floors of your ravaged white streams –  
So beautiful you have become! (Raab 7)

This scene is dominated by the phenomenon of shimmering waves of heat, which seem to make the air visible while at the same time blurring one's vision. The poem presents this as the (female) land making love with the (male) day or light. Through this act, opposing elements come together: space and time; solid matter with air and heat; motion and stasis; the real and the illusory; the earthly and the heavenly; eros and death. The description moves from high to low, and from far to near, from the mountains and the horizon to the fields. If initially it seems as though only the day "rejoices" at the land's "nakedness," it transpires that the fields "are thrilled"—which in the Hebrew original is rendered by *mishtalhavim*, a word that yokes together excitement with a fire and also represents the color of the fields. This thus makes clear that the land also participates in the embrace of love. The hill is presented as a breast, or rather, it is the hill's movement that "will rise," which itself is but a semblance of movement revealing the eye's movement as it observes. It is, in other words, the speaker's eye.

The eye's presence subsequently grows stronger, and its own relations with the land replace those between land and day. If or when the eye tires "From the streams of light-specters" (the blinding, deceptive light which forms the climax of the intercourse between day and land), it will "dip" into the boxthorn's blue-green (representing a woman's pubic hair) as if it were a pool. In this image, the thorn, a dry and prickly bush which has been a symbol of fire and death ever since the parable of Yotam (*Judges* 9:8-15), transforms into the color of refreshing water. Through this movement, the eye it creates alternative relations between itself and the land, relations that include more than a hint of something intimate, even erotic. The final lines, with their reference to reddening cracks and ravaged streams, accompanied regally by "faraway gold," continue this imagery of the land as a naked woman, as the speaker cries out that its beauty inheres within its poverty.

Using the erotic metaphor of land as woman, the poem transforms the ostensibly poor aspect of the dry land on a hot day into the story of a passionate act of lovemaking. In doing so, it expresses a fervent love for the land that resonates with the hegemonic Zionist discourse. The metaphor, however, also undermines this discourse in two ways: the love of the land contradicts the need to till and settle it; and the narrative of the land's specular relations with the eye, representing the (female) speaker, inverts the convention of heterosexual love for the land. For here we no longer have a man who conquers and takes possession of the female land; we have instead an intimate relationship between two female figures of equal and interchangeable standing. Referring here to the historical manifestations of the desire for nativeness, I would like to stress that the link between the two components of Raab's identity (as a native and as a woman) is crucial in constituting her poetry and her position as a "native woman poet," while enabling her to be perceived as representing nativeness rather than the (masculine) desire for it.

#### **Desire Fulfilled and Annulled, and the Birth of the Native Son**

It is the main objective of a national movement to establish a state. This is made possible by gaining ownership of the land, while *symbolically* it spells out the fulfillment of national desire, as a masculine desire for the land qua woman—including the desire for nativeness. The historical moment in which the state is established spells the moment in which, symbolically speaking, Bialik's child-speaker, who becomes a man-pioneer desiring the land, becomes the land's lawful "husband." This ownership is now both the symbol and the condition of native belonging. Within this developmental and symbolic narrative, the United Nations vote of 29 November 1947 in favor of partition of the land is precisely the event that *symbolizes* the change in the attitude of mother-earth (the "family of nations") towards Bialik's Zionist boy (the Jewish people)—from the rejected to the beloved son. Wherever a desire is fulfilled, however, it becomes defunct and dies, by definition. Thus the establishment of the State of Israel marks the demise of national desire as a form of masculine desire, to give birth to the state and to revive, by means of that state, Judaism and the Jews. What remains to be done is to protect and keep what has just been born and to reproduce pre-statehood desire. It is a moment of historic rupture: a process that has reached exhaustion, a climax following which the question is inevitable—where do we go from here? (Gertz 56-7; Shaked 181-8; Tsamir, *BeShem hanof* 76-80). The nation moves on from a mode of existence as a national movement seeking to fulfil its masculine desire in an active, linear-progressive process, to one that is based on realization, in other words: an existence tantamount to a "feminine" state or time, based on reproduction and reference in a kind of perpetual, fulfilled presence (Lloyd 72-3). Moreover, the national movement shifts from being a movement based on voluntary participation (of part of the nation) through ideological and emotional identification—to a state, which is a legislating and legal institution that constitutes new civic affiliation and community, including people who are not necessarily (and not only) Zionists or Jews (Ophir). The desire for nativeness has also been met now that possession/paternity of the land has been obtained, and, symbolically speaking, the distance of desire that hitherto motivated it has been erased.

This change does not mean that the national movement has achieved all its goals, or that the new immigrants' sense of strangeness and their longing for their original homes, lands, families and languages have passed. Rather, within the collective historical framework, the *meanings* and *status* of these goals and these feelings are now unlike those during the pre-state stage. Consequently, the relations between individuals' various feelings, on the one hand, and their cultural representations on the other, are also different now: which feeling, goal and position gains collective representational status? Thus, if in the pre-state period there was only one exceptional woman who occupied the feminine position of fulfillment, of a lack-of-distance between national desire and the land (Raab as daughter or image of the land), this, now, is the collective position: the nation itself is in this "feminine" state of fulfillment. The entire nation, reborn when the state was established, is now "native," and men also

embody and represent this position. It is now men—traditionally in possession of the authority representing the nation—who occupy the position of the native.

The new poetry written by the "Statehood Generation" poets was both product and symptom of this new state of affairs, and it expressed this situation in a number of ways (Tsamir, "MeHistoria"; Tsamir, "HaMeshorer"). Soon enough, however, two opposing tendencies became apparent. The dominant group, named "cosmopolitan," included Nathan Zach (1930-), Yisrael Pinkas (1935-), David Avidan (1934-1995), Yehuda Amichai (1924-2000) and Dahlia Ravikovitch (1936-2005). It sought to rebel against the prevalent Symbolist poetry by opening itself to the influence of Anglo-American Modernism, espousing an individualist-universalist poetics that turned its back on the collective and rendered the experience of an alienated individual in the modern world. Nathan Zach, for example, wrote: "When a modern poet says 'I', one must not automatically assume that by this he also means 'you' or 'we'" ("Le'Akliman"), and pronounced himself a "citizen of the world" (in a well-known poem with the same title; Zach, Shirim 98). Yehuda Amichai stated, very shortly after the War of Independence, that: "I want to die in my bed," comprising an explicit anti-heroic and anti-war declaration (Amichai, *Achshav* 95).

The poets of the second group, less dominant and famous, emphasized a local affinity with the land, the concrete scenery of their childhood. Moshe Dor (1932-2016) termed this affinity "nativist," explaining it as being "tied umbilically to the scenery of this land," and it is only in these real, concrete and unique landscapes that it can be written, for the place in which a person is born "is sealed in the passport of one's soul" (Dor, "Shishim"). Poetically, their work is more continuous with the symbolism of the previous generation (Dor, "Ksheholot" 110), and it teems with geographical metaphors, of the self as nature, of the land as woman and of woman as land. One example is his poem, "And once more: Homeland":

Homeland is the sandy slope  
Whose sliding seaward never ends.  
It is the rocks and the hyssop. Least  
Of all it is the word. (Dor, *Sirpad* 148)

In another poem, "Your Foot Print," the speaker addresses the land as a woman, and says:

Your foot print on the wasteland of my flesh  
No longer a stranger, I will never be a foreigner again.  
Blessed be the rising sun. Blessed the wind. Blessed the ringing of the hills.  
(Dor, *Im nagi'a* 46)

The bone of contention between these two groups is thus the question of the relation between identity and space. The "cosmopolitan" group claimed it detached itself from the national landscape and turned away from the collective. This denial serves, in fact, to produce a seemingly-self-evident belonging, which is both the outcome and the symptom of a situation in which the desire to belong to the land has been fulfilled—through the fulfilment of the desire to own the land—and thus "cancelled." Therefore, though Zach may have declared himself a "citizen of the world," in his poem by this title, a closer reading shows that he is not all that interested in making good on this citizenship of the world, since

In the meantime I like to go  
Cover very short distances  
The feeling is that these short distances  
Expand further and further  
(Zach, *Shirim* 98)

In other words, the "small" area in which he dwells, namely the Land/State, is totally sufficient, and this is precisely what enables him to feel as if the distance is expanding. And the very fact of *having* "short distances" in which one can travel and feel as though they were long (i.e., a state), is what allows him to feel a citizen of the world. This is, in fact, the ultimate realization of cosmopolitan identity (Tsamir, *BeShem* 63-7). Moreover, when Amichai writes, "I want to die in my bed," he is only apparently voicing anti-war and anti-heroic opposition to sacrificing one's life for country and nation; He is, in fact, expressing a new political-civic situation, in which it is no longer necessary to make sacrifices for nation and country, precisely because of the triumph in the war and the foundation of the state. At this historical moment, one may really die in bed; it has become legitimate to desire it as well as to declare that desire.

In contrast, however, to this seeming repression of the particular national landscape and of national affiliation, "nativist poetry" actively brings the particular national landscape into view and glorifies national affiliation. What is more, a different perception of time is involved. For while "cosmopolitan" poetry mainly focuses on the historical present as anti-climactic, as well as on the sense of exhaustion, and on the question "Where do we go now?" (Tsamir, "MeHistoria"), "nativist" poetry focuses on a nostalgic appeal to childhood.

What, then, does this turn to the landscapes of childhood involve? In several interviews Dor has said that he has been "shaped by the scenery of his homeland [...] product of this soil, this sea, this sky;" that he is "a product of the great Zionist revolution" (Dor, "Ksheholot" 109-10). And despite all his great empathy for the Jewish Holocaust in Europe, he "cannot ignore the strangeness he feels between the *Sabra* and those who are not-*Sabra* or that did not grow up in this country" (Dor, "Ksheholot" 109); For, in contrast to those for whom Jewish life was a concrete experience that offered self-definition, for him and children like him, he says, "there was only the land to be brought to blossom and from which we could gain power" (Dor, "Ksheholot" 109). That is to say, the land is also a source of strength.

Understanding this power requires an understanding of the way Dor perceives of the foundation of the state as a fracture, a "wound":

Then there was mass immigration, and the structures started to crumble, as though everything familiar was hit by an earthquake, everything known and usual. We were not prepared for this earthquake. This is where the breaking point occurs. Intimacy vanished. [...] Our Land of Israel was no longer. Our grip was lost. [...] No "simple" yearnings for the past can resolve the feeling that a wound had opened up. ("Ksheholot" 108-9)

The "mass immigration" is perceived as a wedge between the natives and their land at the historical moment of statehood. This description refers precisely to the transition described above, from a national movement, grounded in desire, to a state, which is an institution installing law, civic identity and a new community of civilians. This transition is formulated here through the difference between "mass immigration" and the natives: the natives are those who could identify with Bialik's speaker in "In the Field," who had sought to "father" the land by claiming it through labor and erotic intimacy. The hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants arriving to the young State of Israel in the 1950s, from both European and Arab countries, became citizens with equal rights while lacking this historical connection to the Zionist fervor leading to the establishment of the state. In other words, Zionist desire was not theirs, yet their status as citizens was achieved through the fulfilment and death of this desire upon declaration of the state. This moment, then, is the ruin of "everything known and usual," of "our Land of Israel," and the "intimacy" fostered with it. Establishing native identity as the basis of "nativist" poetics rests on this loss. For it is exactly this power that the natives have lost: national desire as a force that mobilizes, acts and conquers, the same desire that was fulfilled and hence died and became redundant.

This is the reason for the animosity towards the "foreigner," expressed in many of Dor's poems. Hannan Hever argues that this animosity is the result of, and the "escape" from, Dor's ambivalence toward the past—his simultaneous erasure of the Jewish/diasporic past, and his contention that poetry is an ancient inscription engraved in rock; Hever, *MeReshit* 80-91). I argue, however, that, first of all, there is no contradiction between erasing the Jewish/diasporic past and clinging to an archaic Eretz-Israeli (i.e., spatial) past; I also argue that this animosity originates precisely in the difference between the natives, whose Zionist Eretz-Israeli past is their symbolic capital (in Dor's words, "a source of strength"), on the one hand, and the new immigrants, on the other hand, whose inclusion as citizens of the essentially post-national state, and as partners in the state's constructed Israeli identity, threatens this power.

Whereas for Zach and his fellow "cosmopolitan" poets "the landscape loses its name"—that is, they suppress it as a way to produce self-evident belonging—for Dor and his fellow poets, it is *they* who lose identity: "I forgot my name, / ID card lost /lost./ The streets go on without end," as he says in his early poem "I for myself" (*Tzav Ikkul* 40). His nativeness serves as his source of identity—and to this identity he now clings, exactly at the historical moment when Zionist ideology has reached its point of fulfilment, become redundant and defunct. Dor thus turns to the past and his native identity, and brings back the concrete, explicit scenery of his childhood as a way of *reproducing* pre-statehood national desire.

Dor's poem "Growth" is an example of this "nativist" poetics:

Green are the lilac's ropes around my heart.  
The fruit of my breath is yellow in ripening.  
The weedy soil has thoroughly shaken my bones  
Tomorrow I will grow to reach the lake of the skies

And the sun will shine on the branch of my head.  
Today I count the secrets of soil between my hands.  
My spine grows brown roots.  
Do not wake me. (Dor, *Tzav Ikkul* 23)

The speaker and nature—which is nature of the Land of Israel—have become one. For his heart seems to be wrapped by “the lilac’s ropes,” his breath yields fruit, the weedy ground shakes up his bones, his head is like a branch, and his spine takes root. The processes rendered in the first three lines lead the speaker to the possibility—and expectation—that tomorrow he will grow all the way up to the sun and the sky. This growth seems grandiose, even mythical, especially since the phrase “the lake of the skies,” bringing together water and air, implies archaic times before creation. Until tomorrow arrives, however, the direction is actually down to death-suggesting “secrets of soil.” Furthermore, though connoting affiliation and belonging, roots also seem to imply stasis and constraint. The final line presents the speaker as being asleep (though paradoxically he speaks from his sleep, as well as asking not to be woken). The image of the hybrid nature-man may therefore be a dream—a happy dream perhaps, which the speaker does not want to interrupt. In the face of this we are led to suspect that the grandiose-mythic hope or plan for growth and expansion will not be fulfilled. The speaker seems to be caught in a state of suspension, associated with “the secrets of soil” and roots, as well as with a sleep that also connotes death. This speaker is thus wholly fused with nature and has become one with it. It is this fusion that will allow him to grow plant-like from the “weedy soil,” which is like loose earth in his bones—to grow dramatically, grandiosely into the skies and upwards to the sun. This process, though, is interrupted, whether because it is a dream or because his awakening is imminent.

Reality and the present spell an ending and a death, and interrupt the dream in which the speaker is one with nature. The speaker is thus revealed as ambiguously oscillating, or rather stuck, between this dream and reality, between the fusion with nature—revealed as a dream that is gone, and as a reality that interrupts or “ruins” this dream.

### Conclusion

Zionist nativeness is the expression of the European Jew’s desire for rebirth from the soil of the Land of Israel. In its first formulation by Bialik, this is implied by the allegorical desire of the diasporic Jew, who feels he is the rejected son of a universal earth mother (allegorically the family of nations) to become a beloved son. Zionist desire presents itself as a solution to this problem: it embodies the wish to become owners of a particular national territory. When the Zionist movement reaches the phase of active realization, in the 1920s and 1930s, the desire for nativeness becomes that of the masculine pioneer and immigrant—Bialik’s boy, now matured, desires the land as a man desires a woman. By extension, nativeness means identification with the land and is therefore feminine. Raab, a biographical native who is significantly a woman poet, is consequently perceived—and perceives herself—to be both daughter and image of the land. Yet the foundation of the state—spelling the symbolic realization of Zionist yearning, including the desire for nativeness—means the annulment of this desire. The entire nation, having achieved ownership/paternity of the land (the acme of aspirations in Bialik’s poem), has now attained nativeness. In this context, the “cosmopolitan” poets (predominantly immigrants) appear to be children of the new *state*, while the “nativist” poets (born in the Land of Israel) present themselves as children of the *land*. Thus Bialik’s child-speaker, having matured into a pioneer who wishes to conquer and impregnate the land, has fulfilled his desire, and—precisely by gaining ownership of the land—has now realized the allegorical narrative Bialik foresaw in his poem. This pioneer becomes the beloved son of “mother earth,” a nation-state that spells the realization *and therefore* the birth of nativeness.

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